

strikes the antipodes. But the apostles, that night, had no vision of Easter. Utterly desolate, they take their dead Lord from the Cross and bear him to the tomb. And there, amid the spices and the silence, we must leave him, waiting for Easter Day.



AUSTERITY AND REALITY IN DIET

DR A. G. BADENOCH

FATHER Gerald Vann, O.P., in an article in a 1951 *Blackfriars* accused the modern world of flight into phantasy and counselled a return to reality. The Editor, in a later number, suggested forming some sort of Blackfriars Group, where questions so raised might be discussed in the light of what many of us are calling the Dominican Way. The Editor of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* has been suggesting for some time that I should write something on diet, and especially fasting.

Can I, no philosopher, put all these three indications together and write on that one aspect of reality to which I give most of my study, nutrition?

We may phantasise a good deal about many practical matters and get away with it, but the fundamental things of nature pay a quick dividend, in good coin or bad, according to how we deal with their crude reality. Nutrition and dietetics might once have been classified with what Whitehead called 'matters of fact', the things we take for granted. Catering was for the housewife, food-preparation was for the cook. 'Come and git it' was the cry in the Wild West shack; or the dinner-gong rang in the Priory; and we ate and were filled. And there was an end to it. The rest was silence, the silence of the good digestion that waited on appetite and the quiet processes of metabolism that waited on both.

We moderns have changed all that. Nutrition is no longer a matter-of-fact in this country. Sometimes I think the word is rather a *lucus a non lucendo*: it suggests by contrast between what is the reality and what might be, what ought to be, the (quite attainable) ideal. Unfortunately our tendency to phantasise, our flight from reality, makes us wishfully suppose that some sort of approach to the ideal is being automatically attained; and with the *panem nostrum quotidianum* petition devoutly murmured we file

into a refectory to be refected with a meal where the filling starches overbalance the elements of real body nourishment.

Most popular writings about food, said Professor Witts, of our Medical Research Council, tend to be cranky. A man who tries to bring back to reality this fundamental of our physical life has to take that risk, and bear, in some quarters at least, that opprobrium.

What are the facts? On the one hand, slightly more food consumed per head now than before the war. On the other, a definite shift towards the carbohydrate side, and a relative deficiency of animal fats and proteins. On the professional classes, who lead (it is said) some sort of intellectual life, the shift bears more hardly. Also it is probably true that some classes admittedly underprivileged before the war are now in the position of obtaining priorities for the more valuable foods. Fortunately, on the whole (though not always), children tend to fall within the group of the newly-privileged. So much for the figures.

Against this not gloomy picture we must place other facts, less demonstrable but not less cogent. The man of the house is often heard to complain: 'I am hungry, but when I sit down to my food, somehow I don't want to eat it. And somehow, when I have eaten it, I don't feel satisfied.' He is describing in his simple way a state, not of subnutrition but of malnutrition. His food is lacking in some of the elements that sustain and build bodily vigour and resistance to disease. This is seen on a national level. Absences from work increase, work is less efficiently carried out: this goes for the plumber in the house, the type-setter who prints this journal, the proof-reader, the solicitor's clerk who makes mistakes in important letters (once an unheard-of thing). 'Errors excepted', that once delightful fiction on bankers' documents, now indicates a reality today. Without the morning break and cup of tea the workman cannot put in the long spell till dinner. Notwithstanding new and potent remedies, minor maladies are on the increase—and some major maladies too. On a higher, a near-spiritual level, apathy is a common characteristic of our mental climate.

There can be only one explanation of these rather confusing facts: the quality of our food-stuffs. If I wished to make this article more medical, I might implement this charge by pages and pages. The only possible answer would be Dr Witt's, but it is implicit in the annual report of his great predecessor, Sir Edward

Mellanby, and explicit in at least one long and telling passage, that on the whole scientific opinion is more with me than otherwise. The Departments, scientifically well-advised whatever line expediency may dictate, are beginning to be alive to two great dangers: the sacrificing of quality to quantity, of goodness to yield, in the matter of our major food crops, namely, wheat and potatoes; and the danger of what has been officially condemned as 'the sophistication of foods', i.e. chemical adulteration in the interests of preservation and convenient handling.

Perhaps the correspondence columns will give me a chance to document some of these statements. Meantime, for a practical solution.

Bread: To avoid the malnutrition that comes from removal of the germ of the wheat (possibly the *adeps frumenti* of the psalmist), with its valuable proteins, vitamins and mineral salts, all communities that can possibly do so should bake their own bread from whole-wheat flour. The technical term is 'straight-run', and this nearly always implies grinding (not crushing and fractionating) in stone mills. This is difficult to get: wishful thinking will neither get it nor supply its place in the dietary of a score of hungry young novices. Mass-produced wholemeal loaves are not, in this fallen world, always reliable, and are rather expensive. Bermaline may be mentioned, and Allinson's, and, best of all, the Howard loaf where a baker can be persuaded to produce it.

Potatoes: Grow your own, without artificial manure. You may lose a little in yield off the ground, but they will keep better, pare better, and cook better. Less will be left on the plate. A large 'Majestic' potato of Father Vavasour's growing at Stonyhurst is, with milk, a meal in itself. Failing facilities to grow your own, avoid bulk-buying from bulk-producers. Get in touch with the small local men who use compost or farmyard manure, and get your other vegetables from them too.

Fortunately only wheat has been tampered with by the mass-producers. Other cereals are reliable. Oatmeal (porridge or oat-cakes), rye (rye-vita, the hard bread of Scandinavia), and whole barley for puddings—all conserve the germ of the grain, and all are relatively unpoisoned by chemicals.

Reform in most other articles of the table is impossible on the level of individual effort. The changes I have suggested should suffice to restore the reality of sound nutrition.

A word on fasting, since the Editor wishes it to be so. Our dietary position is such that we are dependent on the immediate upper-tract stimulation of food taken. The real physiological stimulus, long-lasting, that comes of healthy metabolism, is wanting in the case of most individuals, most communities. In my opinion any but a nominal fast (some small act of self-denial) will defeat its purpose, by lowering too far the substructure of nature on which divine grace builds. It will be a great pity if, on the analogy of continental Europe (where the state of nutrition is, to my observation, much higher than ours), rigorous compulsory fasts are imposed on this country at the present time.



DISCOVERING A SAINT

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE fact that two great Carmelite saints should both have been called Teresa has inevitably led to a constant comparison between 'the great' and 'the little' saint, according to the various points of view of the critics. Miss Sackville-West compared them, in her study published eight years ago, as eagle and dove, with a strong bias in favour of the 'eagle'. We naturally feel uneasy about such a valuation since they are both canonised saints and are therefore both great in the eyes of the Church. But perhaps there is some justification for such a comparison of value even for the Catholic who fully acknowledges the heroic greatness of both in the order of supernatural virtue.

The appearance at this time of several studies of the one and of the other St Teresa, together with the translated *Letters* of 'Avila' herself, gives us the occasion to weigh Miss Sackville-West's title once again. Miss Kate O'Brien's *Teresa of Avila* which appears in Max Parrish's series of 'Personal Portraits' leaves the, by now, traditional view of St Teresa of Lisieux rather overshadowed by the broad expanse of the wings of this 'eagle'. The contrast be-