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Advice on Health (No. 114)

"THE HAIR SHIRT"

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Department of Health)

AS far as food is concerned, sometimes it is necessary to wear "a hair shirt," and sometimes one is better without it. Perhaps this futile statement had better be backed up by something less ambiguous and more substantial, lest the accusation be made that it is tantamount to saying that "Circumstances alter cases," which was what a humorist stated would be his election slogan when he stood for parliament.

The hair-shirt, nutri-metaphorically speaking, should be worn by those for whom the pleasures of the table result too easily in a deposition of fat under the skin. As one physician says, there is no mystery about how it got there—there was only one portal of entry, and that was the mouth. Weight reduction (by diets prescribed by competent persons, be it emphasised), is desirable in those who are overweight because obesity favours the production of a number of diseases, including diabetes, and certain diseases of the heart, blood vessels, and kidneys. It is also desirable because, after a few weeks on a restricted regime, the overweight person having lost weight, feels surprisingly better. By calculation, the conclusion has been arrived at that an extra 100 calories taken a day—a mere trifle—over and above your needs for your occupation and activity, means putting on 10 pounds a year, and that may mean doubling your weight in 10 years! An early scientist named Sanctorius, sat on a balance while he ate. He brought the balance back to a constant weight each meal time. A bit cumbersome, but he had the right idea.

A Word for the Epicure

Wearing the hair shirt, however, is not an end in itself—there is no special virtue in it unless it achieves some desirable objective. Cooking potatoes in their skins will certainly cause the potato to retain more of its nutrient value, but there is no serious harm done if you remove the skin and put it on the side of your plate. Indeed, there are those who get along better if they do not eat the skins of potatoes or fruit. Contrary to the idea of wearing the hair-shirt, many humans benefit by a dash of what might be misconstrued as Epicureanism. There is virtue in studying the dishes of other races and introducing more variety into our foods.

We have heard of a balanced diet. We have heard of Sanctorius and his balance. We also need a balanced judgment about making our food attractive and yet exercising restraint in face of that attractiveness.



GLAD
RAGS...

There's a glad time coming... may it be soon!... when you'll step from that trim, grim uniform. There'll be a dream dress and a silky foundation and lace and luxury and an escort in a white tie. Some night when we have won our right to peace. Until then, keep your head high; be stoical about stringencies. Try to understand the dire need behind Government standardization which limits the beauty of your war Berlei, and bear with it. When beauty's fiesta begins again, we promise you glamour undreamed of. There are big things happening in fabrics,

in nylon, in boneless boning, in stretchables... awaiting sounds of revelry again by night, when your man is back in his glad rags and you, little woman, step forth again in all your glory.

* * * * *

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