

Lentils and Lent.

STORIES OF ITS OBSERVANCE AND OTHERWISE.

(By FRANK SCHLOESSER.)

There is an old Lenten story of "Poodle Byng," a noted diner-out of the early part of the last century. He met Sergeant Murphy, M.P., at a dinner party at which several Roman Catholics were present, and, as was his custom, endeavoured to impress the company by stories of his aristocratic acquaintances. The conversation turned on the subject of fasting, and Byng said: "It is strange how little the highest ranks regard fast days. I was dining at the Duke of Norfolk's on a fast day three weeks ago, and there was not a bit of fish at dinner." "I suppose," said Murphy, "that they had eaten it all in the dining-room."

Byng is said to have been so chagrined at this implication that he wore mourning for three months, and only dined in his own rooms.

EASY CONSCIENCES.

There has always been a certain desire on the part of good livers and easy consciences to dispense with the stricter forms of fasting. In bygone times the upper classes did not always submit tamely to all the stricter ethics of Lent. They were not content with the simple pottage of lentils which the Church ordained, but were fain for more elaborate dishes. Kings and princes used to send

STRICT FASTING.
Of course there are many who take Lent as it ought to be taken, sincerely and seriously, and bind themselves to a Lenten dietary according to the usual dispensations. For those who are bound to fast, the week-day allowance is one full meal only, namely, dinner, which is not to be taken before mid-day. A col-

loured eggs on Ash Wednesday, and cheese, dripping, and lard on Good Friday. Moreover, fish and meat are not allowed at the same meal on any day in Lent or any fast day throughout the year. Suet is never allowed when fresh meat is forbidden. Dripping and lard are allowed every day, except Good Friday, even with fish, either as a condiment or for cooking.

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According to the "Morning Chronicle" of March 10, 1791, the peasantry of France distinguished Ash Wednesday in a very singular manner. They carried an effigy of a similar description to our Guy Fawkes round the adjacent villages, and collected money for his funeral, as this day, according to their creed, was the death of Good Living. After sundry absurd mummeries the corpse was deposited in the earth.

This custom is no longer observed, but its origin is plain enough.

INFLUENCE OF VEGETARIANISM.

A very curious passage occurs in that wonderful old book, "Eothen," by Kinglake. He is writing of Smyrna, and says: "The number of murders committed during Lent is greater, I am told, than at any other time of the year. A man under the influence of a bean dietary (for this is the principal food of the Greeks during their fasts) will be in an apt humour for enriching the shrine of his saint, and passing a knife through his next-door neighbour." This seems a rather gratuitous inference as to the moral effect of beans and lentils and a vegetarian diet in general, and hardly perhaps borne out by facts in other parts of the world. At the same time, Kinglake's authority may not be disparaged.

The old plays are full of allusions to those who do or do not fast through Lent; but perhaps none is so quaintly put as that contained in the following passage from Skelton's "Colin Clout," the last two lines of which are particularly to the point:—

"Men call you therefore prophanes.
Ye pick no shrimps nor pranes;
Salt fish, stock fish nor herring,
It is not for your wearing."



PLOCKTON, FROM BUNCRAIG SIDE, NEAR STATION.



THE UPPER LOCH AND AVIEMORE HOTEL, AVIEMORE.

logical certificates to the Pope, humbly begging, for one reason or another, to be graciously allowed to eat meat. The Holy Father was even asked to adjudicate upon individual dishes. Pope Zacharius forbade roast hare, which his predecessor had by special bull allowed.

Under Pope John XXII. the brotherhood of the Franciscans were much vexed as to whether they really "owned" the soup that they ate, or whether they only enjoyed the "usufruct" thereof. These were nice questions of the utmost import, and even in more modern times grave fathers of the Church have been asked to explain why the pious Catholic may eat widgeon in Lent, which is strictly orthodox, but not teal or plover, which are heterodox.

That even the superiors of the Church are not above a little Lenten quibble is evident from a story told of a dinner given by the Legate of Avignon to the Prior of Chartreux, at which a superb fish, cooked to perfection, that would have tempted the Pope himself was handed to the prior. He helped himself, and was on the point of eating when one of the brothers said to him: "My father, do not touch that; it is not unallegre. I went into the kitchen and saw things that would make you shudder. The sauce that you fancy is made from carrots and onions is made from ham and rabbits." "My brother, you talk too much and are too curious," replied the father; "the kitchen is not your place, and curiosity is a grievous sin."

lution of bread, fruit, and other vegetable substances, fish in small quantity, and by way of condiment, dripping and lard except on Good Friday; milk, butter, and cheese—except on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday—about eight

Those not bound to fast by reason of their age, labour, or other cause, but bound to abstain, are forbidden to take fresh meat and suet on Wednesdays, Fridays, Ember Saturday, and the last four days in Holy Week. They are also for-



LOCH BALADERAN AND THE AVIEMORE HOTEL, AVIEMORE.