

STAR AND FURROW

Issue 1 Autumn 1953

C. A. Mier

When in 1928 the first steps were taken to apply Rudolf Steiner's agricultural ideas in this country, the need for a journal was soon felt. For two years a collection of notes, articles and letters was published in duplicated form. When we decided, in March, 1931, to have this printed, various names came under consideration, but *Notes and Correspondence*, the modest description of what it was originally intended to offer, was adhered to for the time being - and was kept for the next fifty issues.

From 1931 to the end of the war the journal was edited by Mama Pease, assisted first by the writer, then by the present editor. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Mrs. Pease for her perseverance and care, and remember her at this moment when her "child" changes its name. The journal's function was in the first place to hold together what was then called the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation, but also to make available to English readers significant original articles, such as the new (and then the only existing) translation of Goethe's '*Metamorphosis of Plant*', and articles by George Adams, Ernst Lehrs and others.

As the organisation grew, and new readers and contributors came on the scene, the journal gradually became less like its title. The new title, *Star and Furrow*, sums up, in a kind of shorthand, what the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association stands for. The origin of all life is the cosmos, the universe around us of which we and our earth are integral members. Our sphere of action is the earth - our fields and our gardens. Man is the mediator between the forces of heaven and earth, but he can fulfil his tasks only as long as he works with both a true knowledge of the stars in a wider sense than astronomy, and a feeling of responsibility for the earth which sees her as something more than the provider of food. These are the pillars standing at the gateway to the future as we see it.

There cannot be wider limits to human endeavour than heaven and earth. The farmer should never forget this; nor should those who depend on the farmer's work, whether the farmer lives next door, or in New Zealand or Canada. The problems of farming must always be seen as belonging to the sphere of life; they cannot be solved analytically. It has been the curse of agriculture the world over that the specialist, useful as servant, has become the master. Equally dangerous is the essentially urban attitude that food must be cheap. The ultimate value of a farming practice cannot lie expressed exclusively in financial terms any more than the consumer can live from the bulk of his food alone, expressed in terms of calories, weight or the like. To maintain and increase the fertility of the land must be the farmer's aim; to obtain food of truly nutritive quality, fit to nourish the whole man, must be the consumer's endeavour. We must overcome the modern tendency on the part of the producer, as well as the consumer, to express everything in terms of money. It is human labour, guided by insight into the laws of the universe, which provides food; it is a truly human existence, health in body, soul and spirit, that the consumer should aim at.

The interests of producer and consumer are not antagonistic, for the life of man and the life of the earth are interwoven in their origin and in their continuance. Much of the antagonism

which exists is due to wrong standards being applied by both, and the disregard of quality as a criterion of sound production and wise consumption.

It is often objected that "quality" is a vague and unscientific term which cannot be measured, and which cannot therefore become a standard. The difference between quantity and quality points to, and is intimately connected with, the difference between dead and living. We must understand that the needs of human life can be met only by products from a living soil, part of a living earth and cosmos, and it is up to us to use the concept "quality" in a scientific way.

But quite apart from this specific bio-dynamic, or better, anthroposophical approach, a stirring of interest is becoming noticeable, a seeking for a fundamental re-orientation. Responsible farmers, doctors interested more in promoting health than in combating disease, mothers concerned about the health of their children, teachers and sociologists alarmed by the instability of human life, economists worried by the unreality of the very foundation of human existence, all these and many more realise the need for action, and much valuable work is already on foot. But have we gone deep enough in our search and diagnosis? The problem is too great, and societies or institutions can at best tackle only particular tasks. We must see the problem not only in its complexity but also in its wholeness, and must boldly go beyond the expression of it in terms of producer and consumer; we must recognise it as one of life and death for mankind and the earth. A new impulse is needed, strong enough to shake us from our lethargy, from being spellbound by economic caution, or the need for "scientific" proofs in terms of a quantitative science. What better description than to call the impulse a hygienic one; an impulse directed towards the "principle of health." (OED).

If we take this concept in its full significance, we can bring together everyone, wherever he stands, in garden or field, in laboratory or hospital, in kitchen or school, in trade or parliament. We must become conscious of this hygienic impulse, and must serve it. It is not a question of programmes - political, economic, nutritional or the like. Nor does it mean cutting across the valuable work of existing societies and associations. There must grow a movement which starts from the recognition of man standing alone in the wilderness of nature. Deserted as he is by what guided him in the past, he faces the desert, partly of his own making, in which he may starve. The key to the solution lies in Man; it is man who farms and gardens; it is man who has to be fed. But all will depend on whether we see in man a machine or higher animal, or whether we see in him a being capable of fulfilling his tasks in thinking, feeling and willing, striving for harmony with Creator and Creation.

Just a generation ago Rudolf Steiner gave to mankind many concrete ideas in all fields of human endeavour, and it is these which can show us the way to make this hygienic impulse a real basis for our work. It is the aim of *Star and Furrow* to help in making known these ideas, to serve the workers in the field, to help the consumer to better insight into his true needs. Small as our numbers may still be, we are not alone, and just recently, in other countries of Europe, endeavours have begun to converge under the name of "Demeter" as an expression of this hygienic impulse. Why this name has been chosen, and what is being done, will be reported in future issues of this journal.

