

"WHY I AM A VEGETARIAN."

BY CAPTAIN A. E. POWELL, R. E.

"*The future is with the vegetarians.*"—*Virchow.*

THE Editor has asked us to state, in a few pages the reasons why we advocate vegetarianism. Within the very narrow limits allowed, it will be possible to do little more than briefly enumerate arguments and conclusions, without attempting in any way to put before the reader the facts, figures and other data upon which the arguments are based and from which the conclusions are drawn. In self defence, however, we must intimate that none of our arguments or conclusions have been arrived at in any other way than that of conscientious and deliberate study of the evidence available, and that if space allowed we should be only too ready to produce our facts and figures *in extenso*. We will further, moreover, make reference to the sources of our information whenever necessary.

Our reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet may be roughly classified as physiological and chemical, historical or empirical, economic, æsthetic, humanitarian and religious; a somewhat formidable array to deal with in a few hundred words. The above are not arranged in any order of relative importance or weight, but simply in an order easy for treatment *serialim*.

Commencing with the physiological evidence dealing with the diet for which man is by nature and structure adopted, we find emphatic testimony emanating from physiologists and others that man is by nature neither carnivorous nor herbivorous, but frugivorous or fruit eating. This testimony covers four pages, filled with quotations, of a book of reference which we have before us. In addition, we have a plate exhibiting the fact that the teeth of man—so-called "canine" teeth and all—do not in any way resemble those of a carnivore, but are exceedingly like those of a frugivore, such as a fruit eating ape.

Chemically, we find that the products of the vegetable kingdom, including cereals, nuts, pulses, fruits, and vegetables, contain in abundant, readily accessible, pure and correctly proportioned quantities all the elements of food necessary for human nutrition. Flesh-meat of course does not contain in itself all these elements, being entirely lacking in the important carbohydrate (sugar and starch) constituent. The flesh of dead bodies, moreover, as everyone to-day knows, contains quantities of one of our great enemies, uric acid or xanthin. In addition, figures could be given to establish the fact that a large proportion of the

animals slaughtered for food are diseased, and that those diseases are capable of being transmitted, by absorption, to those who eat their flesh.

The evidence of history reveals the fact that even to-day the greater portion of humanity is vegetarian, or practically so, and that in the past the proportion has been far greater. We have, moreover, before us at the present moment over fifty extracts from numerous writers establishing the fact that in practically every portion of the globe, at one time or another, men have lived or are living in full and robust health and strength without flesh-meat. The following names are also extracted from a list of over eighty-two individuals of distinction who have been vegetarians: Socrates, Ovid, Buddha, Daniel, Asoka, St. Matthew, Origen, Milton, Newton, Voltaire, Rousseau, Maeterlinck, Wesley, Shelley, Edison, Marconi, Sir Isaac Pitman. The full list would show that it is possible for a fleshless diet to enable men to be truly great in practically every department of human activity.

Economically all the arguments are with vegetarianism. Cereals, pulses, nuts and dried fruits contain about four-fifths solid nutriment. Flesh-meats are two-thirds water, a pound of beef containing nearly 12 oz. of water. Flesh-meats are of course notoriously more expensive than vegetarian foods; further, land which would support one huntsman would support ten agriculturists or one hundred fruit-eaters, whilst land would also provide far more employment were it devoted to cereal, vegetable or fruit crops than if it were laid out as pasture. The importance of these facts is too obvious to need comment, even if there were space for such.

Aesthetically, vegetarians surely have it all their own way. No one can maintain that the eating of the dead bodies, corpses in fact, of animals, is in any sense artistic or æsthetic, whilst the whole series of operations connected with the preparation of these dead bodies for human consumption is repulsive in the extreme to refined natures. "Ladies" and "gentlemen" do not often visit slaughter houses; a butcher's shop, with the mangled parts of dead bodies hung up for sale, is scarcely a beautiful sight. "Ladies" delight in making with their own hands dainty dishes of fruits and cereals, but they shrink from handling the dead bodies of animals, leaving such work to menials and servants. Children are frequently kept as long as possible in ignorance of the facts connected with the slaughter of the animals they are given to eat.

What shall we say of the humanitarian aspect of vegetarianism? Sometimes a single sentence suffices to open the eyes:

sometimes a whole volume will not convince. The first step is to open the eyes; most flesh-eaters eat, metaphorically speaking, with their eyes closed, and do not know the facts of the slaughter-house, of the cattle-ships, of the mode of killing living things. Many still believe that sentient animals can be and are transported over thousands of miles, by sea and by land, and are killed, painlessly and without suffering. Would to God it were so; for then would be lifted from the world of animals a mountain of pain and torture, the ghastly immensity of which the world at large utterly fails to realize. But facts are facts, and it is our duty to face facts, especially those for which we are, directly or indirectly, responsible. We have before us many pages of extracts, selected from a much larger number, written by those who have seen with their own eyes. The facts, the bare facts, are appalling. We have many friends who cannot even read these written extracts, so terrible are they; much less could they have faced the actualities of which these are but descriptions in words. Space, as usual, forbids us to quote; let those flesh-eaters who recognize the duty of knowing for what they, by their dietetic habits, are responsible, read or investigate for themselves. If this were done by any great numbers, then the age of vegetarianism would be at hand, and articles such as this would soon be no longer necessary.

Already we are drawing near the end of our allotted space, so must conclude. There are many arguments and lines of reasoning, all pointing the same way, which we have been unable even to mention. It has only been possible to outline roughly the skeleton of the logical structure upon which vegetarianism in modern times is based. After honest study of the subject, we find that physiologically, chemically, historically, economically and æsthetically a non-flesh diet is the one indicated for human beings. From the point of view of humane treatment of animals, and of religion, we come to the same conclusion. There are some who would say that vegetarian humanitarianism is nothing more than sentiment. Sentiment let it be, if you will: would to God there were more of such sentiment in the world to-day; it is the same kind of sentiment which has abolished bear and badger baiting, and cockfighting; which is abolishing coursing and pigeon shooting; which has brought into being the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; which is slowly arousing feeling against the horrors of the sealskin and fur traffic and that of birds' plumage for the adornment of women's dress. It represents a feeling of kindliness and love for the animal kingdom which is slowly but steadily growing

every year, and which in time will surely bring to an end the slaughtering of sentient creatures for "sport," and, after that, their slaughter for food. If animal flesh were in any sense necessary for the support of human life, then the ethics of the case would be arguable; but as it has been abundantly proved by science, and by the experience of nations and of individuals, that animal flesh is totally unnecessary for the food of men, then surely it ought to be needless to argue against the murder of sentient creatures to gratify the whims of men's palates. Cowper has expressed our feelings admirably as follows:—

"The sum is this: if man's convenience, health,
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs:
Else, they are all—the meanest things that are—
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first;
Who, in His sovereign wisdom made them all—
Ye, therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons
'To love it too.'"

Shakespeare wrote:

" . . . we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."

"The nobler a soul is," said Francis Bacon, "the more objects of compassion it has."

[Any who may be interested to know more of the points of view set forth in this article, will find the arguments for vegetarian diet elaborated and examined, as well as a treatment of many other matters dealing with diet generally in its relation to health, in Captain Powell's Book "*Food and Health*" (Methuen and Co., 3s.-6d.)—Ed.]

FACTS *VERSUS* FALLACIES OF VEGETARIANISM.

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VEGETARIANISM is a variation from the accepted system of diet that presents several points of some interest to the critic.

This system teaches that the food of man should be derived directly from the plant world. It is more than a mere dietetic program, for its followers believe that the use of animal food is morally wrong, as well as erroneous with respect to the processes of nutrition. Vegetarianism has been divided into many subvarieties each suited to the peculiar fancies of its particular exponent, and