

WHY NOT LIVE FOREVER

No. 2. VEGETARIANISM

WOMEN who eat egg-plant become jealous. Carrots are conducive to a quick temper. String beans encourage profanity. Potatoes lead to laziness and spinach to activity. Onions invite a perpetual grudge, and green peas often lead to the divorce court by arousing the flirtatious instinct. So say no less an authority than the government department of agriculture.

These statements are made in an official bulletin just issued. It is held that green vegetables are in harmony or in discord with given temperaments and that the individual may be benefited or harmed temperamentally by his choice of the vegetables he eats. Therefore, says the government, eat only those vegetables that are suited to your temperament.

If government experts state boldly that vegetables exert these strong influences upon man's temperament, is it altogether unreasonable for the

vegetarian to argue that the vegetable diet rightly chosen is efficacious in prolonging human life. Not very long ago, no less a personage than Dr. Wu, the former Chinese minister to this country, came out flat-footed in favor of the vegetarianism. By following its mandates, it is said, he expects to live to be considerably over 100 years old. As a method of prolonging life vegetarianism is believed in by many. Its theory is almost world-wide.

Though Cain seems to have been the first vegetarian, either because of the disfavor his practice encountered at the outset or his fratricidal disposition, he is safely referred to by followers of that cult, who originate from two quite diverse sources—one physiological, the other religious.

Both of these classes, however, assert that the quality of the food which one eats is all important, that animal food tends to putrefaction and disease, while the acid principle found in vegetables tends to prevent this and at the same time preserve a normal condition of the organism.

Dr. George Cheyne, who has been called the father of modern vegetarianism, was a voluptuary in his

early life and attained the enormous weight of 448 pounds. By adopting a diet of milk, water and vegetables he reduced himself to 140 pounds and lived in uninterrupted health to the age of 72. He wrote several valuable works on the subject.

Among early vegetarians are enumerated the Pythagoreans, the Essenes and the Brahmans, and many celebrities are claimed as adherents of the system, including Pythagoras, Cyrus the Great, Cicero, Plautus, Plutarch, Porphyry, Lord Bacon, Sir William Temple, Lord Kaim, Dr. Thomas Dick, Alexander Pope, Sir Richard Phillips, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Howard, the philanthropist, and the poet Shelley.

Dr. William Alcott, in a word on "Vegetable Diet," argues that man is fitted for this kind of food, because anatomically, his teeth and digestive organs show that he is "built that way;" physiologically, he has a better appetite, disposition and resulting

form and features; medically, from the improved health and immunity from disease resulting.

Vegetarians claim that not only are the necessary elements for the repair and upbuilding of the body found in vegetables, but that such a diet, persisted in for a number of years, tends to make men less brutal, more thoughtful and humane. This idea is carried to the point of enthusiasm.

"There is an urgent need for an investigation of the diet question," says Albert H. Snyder, recently president of the Chicago Vegetarian society. "The food problem may seem an insignificant one to those who have given it no thought, but viewed from the standpoint of vegetarianism it is a momentous one. I may be prejudiced when I say it, but I honestly believe that the universal acceptance and adoption of the vegetarian idea would mean the banishment—indirectly, if not directly—of most of the ailments and troubles which perplex human kind. Drunkenness and cruelty would be unknown. War would be

unheard of. There would be less sickness, and less poverty. There would be little excuse for the existence of jails, and insane asylums would cease to exist."

It is true that malt and spirituous liquors, which directly cause drunkenness, are of vegetable origin; but it is doubtless assumed in the above that without the prior stimulus of a meat diet the appetite for liquors would not be engendered. A purely vegetable diet, it is claimed, does not require the same amount of drink, and, indeed, one vegetarian, Dr. William Lamb of the College of Physicians, London, has expressed the doubt whether man naturally is a drinking animal.

Those advocating vegetarianism from religious conviction are largely Hindus, whose reasons are presented in a lecture given by Swami Abhedananda before the Vegetarian society of New York, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Because meat is not the natural food of man. The cows of Cape Cod

eat the refuse of fish; horses can be taught to eat beef; bears can be trained to smoke tobacco; monkeys easily learn to drink tea, coffee and wine. Will such artificially acquired habits supply arguments for man's eating flesh? Certainly not. The natural food of man is not animal flesh, but vegetables, fruits, cereals, etc., which grow spontaneously from the earth.

2. Because it is a sin to kill animals for filling one's stomach. "Do not kill any animal for pleasure, see harmony in nature and lend a helping hand to all living creatures," say the Hindu scriptures.

3. Because, according to Ramayana, the great epic of the Hindus, we should treat the lower animals as brothers. In the ecopomy of nature the struggle for existence demands that one animal should live upon another. It is a law governing the lower animal world—a brutal law.

4. Because murderers and ruffians generally come from the meat-slaughtering and meat-eating classes.

5. Because vegetarianism tends to develop spirituality.

6. Because we wish to realize that we are one in spirit with the lower

animals—one with every living creature.

Without reference to the merit of this argument, to assert that meat is not the natural food of man depends on what we mean by "natural." Certainly there are few aboriginal tribes—men in the most aboriginal state—who will not eat meat if they can get it; while to refrain from killing animals for pleasure might prevent us from destroying mosquitoes and microbes, as well as larger brutes.

David Harum remarked that "a few fleas are good for a dog," which illustrates the principle that "one animal shall live upon another," but in case of an excess would a man's spirituality be lessened in relieving the poor dog by killing the fleas? The very fact that many thousands of pious Hindus die from snakebites in India every year is a sad comment upon this feature of this peculiar faith.

Vegetarianism is well worthy of consideration, yet curiously enough not only is it opposed by the meat eaters, but by a still more restrictive class, the fruitarians.

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