

We know that all animals are adapted to their allotted food, and have no repugnance to procuring and eating it in a natural manner. Foods natural to man are inviting and not repellant, their flavours pleasing, their taste refreshing, their constituents satisfying and sufficient for the requirements of the whole being.

Surely we have rich and abundant supplies of provision for our sustenance and enjoyment in the golden grain, the luscious fruits, the delicious nuts, and exquisitely-flavoured variety of berries, without resorting to the lifeless, decomposing bodies of fish, fowl, or other animals. What beauty can be seen in a carcase, which when alive was so animated and cheerful, enjoying its own existence of which it is unjustly deprived?

It is not a little singular that people who clamour most loudly for flesh foods are often those who protest most energetically against cruelty.

The Food Reformer cannot see where one's consistency is, when he or she talks blatantly concerning the fowl, hare, pheasant, or rabbit on the table ready for feasting, and deprecates the over-driving of the "poor horses," or shudders at the thought of even a stubborn donkey, having felt the driver's cudgel. One wonders if our fair friends ever think of the cruelty a flesh-diet entails. Do they ever think of the poor hare, or rabbit, in a trap sometimes for hours; or of the fishes cast in heaps upon the beach, panting out their breath, some of them even skinned and cut up alive; of the many thousand fowls sent long and tedious journeys in small coops; of vast herds of oxen, and flocks of patient sheep tossed about for days and even weeks in mid-ocean, far away from the firm land, which is their only true home; of the sufferings of animals when deprived of their young, or of the young ones early deprived of their dams? Do our friends remember these things when partaking of their flesh,—at their by no means enviable or elevating feasts? Let them at least be reminded that large numbers, yea, whole nations of people exist on this earth, who never thus defile themselves with impure and soul-depressing diet. Let them make trial of the fruits, herbs and cereals, which abound in almost endless variety; and they will soon experience such a delightful change in the buoyancy of spirit and elasticity of frame, as will preclude their ever wishing to return to barbaric feasts of flesh.

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THE
Food Reform Magazine.

VOL. I.

APRIL, 1882.

No. 4

ON CERTAIN FALLACIES.

IN the January number of this Magazine I attempted to shew that flesh-eating is not in accordance with the dictates of morality or good taste. In the present paper I wish to meet some of the stock arguments that are most commonly advanced by the opponents of Food Reform, and to prove in each case that for those who are once convinced of the desirability of a Vegetarian diet, there is no insuperable difficulty in carrying their wishes into practical effect. In nine cases out of ten it will be found that these objections to Vegetarianism are based on no solid and rational grounds, but rather on some half-dozen prejudices which have taken deep root in the British mind, and are in one form or another continually reappearing. I am aware that in refuting these time-honoured fallacies, I am only going over ground which has already been repeatedly traversed. But as long as our opponents persist in advancing the same arguments, we Vegetarians may be pardoned for reproducing the same replies.

1. One of the first objections by which flesh-eaters attempt to throw discredit on Food Reform, is the statement that "*Vegetarianism is impossible in cold climates.*" We are reminded that our climate is not a tropical one; that Vegetarianism may be all very well in warm and sunny regions, but that in this land of cold and mist "the roast beef of old England" alone can cheer and support us. We reply that actual experience shows this to be erroneous. Those who have conscientiously made trial of a Vegetarian diet have not found climatic influences the smallest obstacle in their path. An

English winter is undoubtedly depressing, but it is not more so because one's food is pure. Passing over our adversary's somewhat trivial remonstrance, "What is to become of the Esquimaux?" we now come to objection the second.

2. "*Vegetarianism is possible only for those who have been brought up to live without meat.*" There is no need to waste words on this argument, for experience shews conclusively that it is false. Change of diet may possibly be dangerous for the aged or infirm; but, in other cases, if it is carried out judiciously and not too suddenly, there is not the smallest risk or inconvenience. Oddly enough, I once heard a flesh-eater advance the exact opposite and counterpart of this argument. He said, "Oh, it is all very well for grown-up people to change their diet, when they have already had the advantage of good flesh-food in their youth; but I doubt if children could be brought up as Vegetarians." When I heard this, it struck me that Vegetarians need not be greatly disturbed by this strange pair of fallacies. We may be content to leave them together to demolish each other—the Kilkenny cats of argument.

3. The baffled advocate of flesh-eating now changes his ground, and adopts a high moral tone, pointing out at the same time some incidental difficulties and drawbacks of Food Reform. "*Vegetarianism involves too much thinking about one's food.*" Hard-working men often seem to think there is a sort of merit in "not caring what one eats." This is a fallacy; for though it is meritorious to be able to content oneself with plain fare, yet mere indifference about one's food can only arise from stupidity or thoughtlessness, since the welfare of mind and body is intimately connected with what we eat. But is it true that a Vegetarian diet involves excessive "thinking about one's food?" A change of diet undoubtedly necessitates some temporary consideration; new recipes have to be found, and substitutes for "meat" must be tried; but this is not an inherent or perpetual characteristic of a Vegetarian régime, which, when once fairly started, is far simpler and less troublesome than the system of flesh-eating. If Vegetarianism had existed as a national custom for some centuries, and flesh-food were now being introduced as a novelty, precisely the same objection might be urged on the other side; it would then be the flesh-eater who would be obliged to hunt out recipes and 'think about his food.' And he would have a much less pleasant subject to think about.

4. "*What should we do without leather?*" is perhaps the commonest

of a host of questions of a similar kind, the object of which is to shew to what desperate straits civilized men would be reduced, if they were deprived of the use of animal substances. Jocular flesh-eaters take a malicious delight in pointing out and enumerating to Vegetarians the many animal substances now in common use, and in taunting them with inconsistency in using them. The consistent Food Reformer, they say, must abjure boots and leather in all its forms; he must not even be drawn by a vehicle where the harness is of leather. His books must not be bound in calf; seal-skin and all furs must be banished from his household. Bone too must be prohibited; and he must bethink him of some substitute even for soap and candles. All this is amusing enough, but the answer to it is of the simplest and most conclusive kind. The difficulties mentioned are only *temporary and incidental*, and are merely owing to the fact that the abundance of animal substance from the carcasses of slaughtered "beasts" has naturally been used to supply our wants, to the exclusion of other material. When once the supply of carcasses began to diminish, invention would soon be busy, and the wants of man would be equally well supplied from other sources. This process would of course be a gradual one, keeping pace exactly with the gradual change from a diet of animal to vegetable food: at no period would there be the smallest confusion or inconvenience to anybody. In the meantime, Vegetarians need not seriously trouble themselves with the foolish charge of "inconsistency." They use leather, &c., now, not from any personal preference for such substances, but because, owing to the unpleasant dietetic habits of other people, it so happens that they can at present get nothing else. It is important, however, for Food Reformers to feel sure that the adoption of their principles would cause no real and permanent deficiencies in the appliances of civilized life; and on this point I think they may feel easy. We hear of many trivial and hardly serious objections, but I do not think any really necessary or important animal production can be mentioned, for which as good a substitute could not easily be supplied from the vegetable or mineral kingdom. It may afford some pleasant mental exercise to our carnivorous friends to tax their ingenuity on this point.

5. And now we come to two of the most amusing and characteristic arguments of our opponents. Finding that direct attacks on Vegetarianism are by no means unanswerable, and that the difficulties of that system are not so insuperable as has been fondly

supposed, they have recourse to what may be considered a most ingenious after-thought. They are suddenly filled with profound concern for the true interests of the animals themselves! "*What would become of the animals?*" is a question to which these humane and unselfish disputants invite our serious attention. If they were not killed for food, would they not soon run wild in great numbers, and be reduced to a grievous state through famine and bodily ill-condition? Would they not lie dying in great numbers by a slow and painful death, instead of being quickly and mercifully despatched by the hands of the butcher?

It is almost incredible that any reasoning person should ask such questions as these; yet the fact that they *are* repeatedly asked must be my excuse for spending a few moments in answering them. Some persons are unaware, or affect to be unaware, that even under the present system the increase of domestic animals is not left free and unrestricted; that the cook makes known her demands to the butcher, the butcher in his turn applies to the cattle-breeder, and animals are bred and supplied precisely in proportion to this demand. If Vegetarianism ever became general, only such animals would be bred, and only in such limited numbers, as would then be required for the service of men; as, for instance, sheep for their wool, and horses for their value as beasts of burden. This change would of course be a gradual one: the demand for other cattle would not cease suddenly, nor would cattle-breeders be ruined by finding their occupation suddenly gone. Nor need we fear that any animals would eventually be left unprovided for on our hands; for there would undoubtedly be some loyal and conservative flesh eaters, who, faithful to the end, would perform the useful task of eating up any otherwise superfluous oxen and swine. Horses are not at present usually killed for the sake of their flesh; yet it is not found that they run wild in great numbers, or lie dying about our fields. Donkeys are not used for human food; yet it is, proverbially, a rare thing to see a dead donkey. So, too, would it be under a Vegetarian régime. Animals would be bred only in such numbers as were actually required. When they were worn out by old age or disease, they would, if incurable, be mercifully killed and buried.

6. "Ah," says some more profound and metaphysical flesh-eater, "but observe that in thus diminishing the number of animals that are born into the world, you are also diminishing the sum of animal

happiness. At present large numbers of animals live a happy life, and die a speedy (?) death, and the balance of pleasure must be surely in their favour. *It is better for the animals themselves to live and to be killed, than not to live at all.*"

Such reasoning, if accepted as a justification of flesh-eating, must also justify vivisection or any torture whatever. A vivisector who breeds rabbits for that purpose, might argue that it is better for the rabbits to live a year and be tortured an hour than not to live at all. The humane flesh-eater may be shocked, but if he will examine the argument he will find it precisely identical with his own. This may lead us to suspect the validity of such reasoning; yet it is so frequently advanced by persons of considerable intelligence and education that it deserves to be carefully examined and refuted. Its fallacy arises from a confusion of ideas about "life," as compared with previous existence or non-existence.

Now animals either exist, or do not exist, before the commencement of "life." If they do exist, this ante-natal condition may, for all we know, be a happier state than "life," and it is therefore absurd to assert that we do animals a kindness in breeding them. On the other hand, if we assume, as seems most probable, that they do *not* exist before birth, how can the transition from non-existence to existence be shewn to be an advantage? That which is non-existent is alike beyond the reach of pleasure or pain, and the terms "good," "bad," "better," "worse," can only apply to that which is already existent. Of the non-existent we can predicate just this—*nothing*. To say, therefore, that we have done a kindness to our born flocks in giving them life, is as sheer and utter nonsense as to say that we have done an *unkindness* to our *unborn* flocks, in not making special arrangements for their birth! Or, in other words, a man brings more happiness into the world, in exact proportion as he eats more flesh-meat and enlarges the trade of the butcher and cattle-breeder. If we all resolve to eat twice as much mutton, there will be twice as many sheep, and the beneficent flesh-eater will observe with complacent self-satisfaction twice as much frisking happiness among the lambs in spring-time!

The fact is that the duty of kindness and gentleness to the lower animals begins only at the time of their birth, and ends only at their death, nor can it be evaded by any references to ante-natal existence, or non-existence. Such devices are only an after thought by which flesh-eaters try to escape the responsibility of their own

acts. It may or may not be better for mankind, that animals should be bred and slaughtered for food: it certainly is not better for the animals themselves.

7. And lastly we come to what is sometimes described as the great justification of flesh-eating, the argument drawn from nature. Flesh-eating, it is said, cannot be immoral, because it is part of the great natural system whereby the economy of the world is regulated and preserved. The flesh-eater triumphantly quotes Mr. Tennyson's lines in "Maud"—

"For Nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;

The May-fly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow is speared by the shrike,

And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey."

This being so, "*is it right,*" asks our pious and scrupulous friend "*to refuse to conform to the dictates of Nature?*"

The fallacy here consists in advancing as a binding and universal law of Nature, that, which is in reality only a special and partial one. It is true that *some* animals are carnivorous; if a cat were to refuse a mouse, her conduct might conceivably be argued to be unnatural and, therefore, immoral. But it is equally true, that, other animals are *not* carnivorous; we are not so unreasonable as to expect a horse to eat rats and mice; why then should it be unnatural or ungrateful in man to decline to prey upon the lower animals? The flesh-eater must first prove that man is actually a carnivorous rather than frugivorous being; and this, we imagine, would be rather a difficult task.

The absurd assertion so often made, that animals were "*sent*" us as food, may be classed under this same head. The mere fact that we have been accustomed to eat flesh-food, no more proves that animals were created for this purpose, than the existence of cannibalism proves that missionaries are "*sent*" to the South Sea Islands solely as an article of food, or the existence of slavery that black men were "*sent*" to be the slaves of white. In barbarous times cruel practices are originated, and afterwards are confirmed by centuries of habit; till at last, when humanity raises a protest against them, men are so blinded by custom as to attribute to God or nature that which is in reality only the result of their own vice and degradation.

I have now answered what appears to me to be the commonest, though hardly the most scientific, of our adversaries' arguments. Would-be Vegetarians are at first so often subjected to annoyance

and molestation, owing to the kindly anxieties of friends and relatives, and the more officious advice of acquaintances, that it is well to be fore-armed in argument. The early career of a Vegetarian is indeed often a veritable Pilgrim's Progress. He meets with no lack of such characters as Mistrust, Timorous, and Ignorance: Mr. Worldly Wiseman, the representative of Society, is always at hand with his plausible remonstrances: even the dreadful Apollyon himself, in the form of the family physician, occasionally bestrides the path of the bold adventurer, with his awful and solemn warning—"Prepare thyself to die." But if the pilgrim presses boldly on his course, these early obstacles will rapidly vanish from his path; even as Apollyon, when he felt the thrust of Christian's sword, "spread forth his dragon's wings and sped him away." H. S. SALT.

FOOD REFORM.

PHYSICIANS find hereditary disease peculiarly untractable; so do Reformers of a nation find hereditary error, hereditary evil customs. The continental nations of Europe reproach us English by the epithet, "an insular people;" by which is meant that our minds are so much shut up into the hereditary customs and thoughts of our own island, that we seem to fancy England to be the whole world. In many topics we are open to this taunt, and not least in the matter of Food: so little do we care to learn of foreigners, so ignorant of them are we nationally. This ignorance cannot be blamed in the millions who have very narrow means of knowledge. The mass of our poor naturally look up to the usual diet of the rich with admiration and a sort of envy. Under the old Poor Law the pauper-peasants would eat no bread but what was white and fine; because such was the bread eaten by the rich. All well-informed persons now know that whole meal bread is far more nourishing: yet prejudice overpowered instinct with the multitudes. Less excusable is it with those of us who are somewhat higher in rank and education, to assume that our habitual diet is the diet natural and normal to man. Those who can read accounts of foreign nations ought not to be shut up into insular prejudice. They ought to know that, when and where fruit can be got adequate in quantity and fully ripened by the sun, fruit is the natural and best food of Man, exactly as of the Apes. To judge indeed by the hairlessness of