



Bermondsey Vegetarian Society.—Various items contributed to the success of the semi-annual meeting of this Society—not the least important being the fact that the Royal Victoria Hall was secured as the place of meeting, and that Mr. Oldfield was the chairman. The whole of the body of the hall was filled by a crowded audience drawn from the neighbourhood, an audience not slow to express their appreciation of the varied programme presented for their amusement with a subtle and almost inappreciable blending of instruction. The proceedings opened with a song, “A May Morning,” from Miss Lily Pritchard, and an excellently well-rendered violin solo from Master Pritchard. Then came the chairman’s address, described by him as “just a few plain words that you can carry home and think about.” There was one question, he said, to which he had never been able to find an answer, and which he had resolved to keep on asking through the whole of this jubilee year, and which he would put to his audience to see if they could find an answer—though he doubted it. And that question was: “*Why should you eat meat?*” Obviously his audience had never had such a question propounded to them before, and a subdued hum of surprise and amusement went round the hall. But Mr. Oldfield had already taken the temper of his audience, for, as he confessed to them before the meeting commenced, he had mingled with the crowd in the pit, and now he reported a little conversation which he had overheard, “Why,” said one man, “if those Vegetarians had to do the work that I have—to lift half-a-hundredweight every minute—why, before an hour was over they would be asking the price of steak!” And a loud laugh manifested that such was the general opinion of the horny-handed sons of toil there present. “Now that assumes,” continued their mentor, “that you eat meat to make you strong. That is not true!” And the eyebrows of his hearers arose with one accord. The strongest animals are not meat-eaters, they were told. A gorilla, living on fruit and nuts, is very much stronger than a labourer, though he may be no bigger. Naturalists say that a gorilla no bigger than a man can bend that man’s rifle across his chest once he gets hold of it. The lion? Yes, the lion is strong, but it is all over in a minute. You never saw a lion dragging a cart all day, did you? And his hearers agreed that they never did. But what about men? Well, continued the speaker, once when he was lecturing on Vegetarianism in the South of France, an old missionary got up after the lecture and said: “The lecturer is quite right, but he forgot one point—how much *stronger* Vegetarianism makes a man!” And that

old missionary began to give instances from his experience in India, and spoke of a man and his wife, both Vegetarians, and said that he had seen the woman carry his piano up hill on her back. "That is rather a tall statement," said Mr. Oldfield, "but it is upon the word of a missionary, and you know that missionaries never tell stories." "Oh—h—h!" cried his hearers. Next the lecturer quoted a colonel of the British Army, who said that when he embarked at Portsmouth it took six soldiers (meat-eaters), to lift his box, but when he disembarked at Cairo, one of the native porters (a Vegetarian) managed it quite easily. A mandoline and banjo trio, given by Miss Lily Prichard, Mr. Haddock, and Mr. Russe, deservedly received an encore, in fact, a second encore was demanded, but the audience were pacified by a song from Miss Alice Davies. A duet from Miss Kempton and Mr. Haddock, and a song from Miss Meta Conneu, both met with the favourable reception they deserved, and the audience were moved to shouts of laughter by Miss Stevens and Miss Spicer in a little skit on the "New Woman," as she is commonly misrepresented. Mrs. McDouall spoke next, telling her hearers that this was not merely a Royal Jubilee year, but the Jubilee of the Vegetarian movement. She described the foundation of the movement in Manchester fifty years ago, and concluded with an appeal to which the audience were quick to respond. Another mirth-provoking sketch, wherein the woes of Edwin and Angelina, when the latter's father happens to be a student of palmistry, were depicted, was ably given by Miss Beaufoy and Mr. C. D. Steele. A song with a chorus from Miss Kempton; a song, "I'll sing thee songs of Araby," and an encore from Mr. J. E. Fraser; "The Gay Tomtit," and as encore, "I want you, my honey," from Miss Gracie Stevens; and "At my window," from Miss Davies, concluded a very pleasant evening.

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