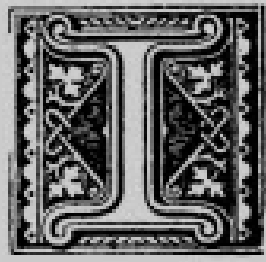


THUS FAR!

By JOSIAH OLDFIELD, B.C.L.



It is so easy to spread the picnic feast on the green sward at the foot of the mountain and lie back on the soft turf and *talk* of glorious views from the summit! It is better, however, to be with those who have started on the upward path, go they never so slowly! Vegetarianism has its hard and stony places, and many a steep bit of climbing is needed, and sometimes the strong hand of a brother or sister climber—one who has secured a strong foothold—is needed, to prevent one who has got thus far from losing hold and heart, and sliding, all down the mountain side again to the place whence he started, and, where bruised and disheartened, he will remain for ever, not only unwilling to try the climb again, but anxious to prevent others incurring the hurt that he has suffered.

We need to be very helpful to each other in our moments of weakness, and very tolerant to each other's mistakes, or by our carelessness or harshness we may be the means of disheartening one who is growing weary, and just longs for that help and sympathy which we can give.

"Thus far" we have climbed, and I should like to sketch a glimpse of what we can see, and pencil a thought as to what is still beyond.

I believe in Vegetarianism because it appears to me to be the formulation in deliberate action of the adjustment of the unit to the cosmic process of the environment.

It may be true that in the earlier stages of life there is a fierce and universal struggle for existence, wherein the strong preys upon the weak, and the rapacious obtains the victory over the meek; but out of this battle there springs up the better fruits of social alliances and common dependencies, and the spirit of co-operation. The struggle for the individual survival of the fittest, at the expense of the less fit, gives place to the sympathy of the community, where the aim of each is the common good.

It may be that man has had to pass through this furnace of fierce trial, but it does not follow that he will always remain there. *Below* it is true that the big fish still eat the little fish; but *Above*, the lion and the lamb are found feeding together on the produce of the earth. Man, then, if he would move up in the direction the cosmic forces would impel him, must ever take as his type that which is *above* and not that which is *below* !

There are few objections to Vegetarianism more common, and few which are to me more sad, than the argument of the lower forms of life, as if *this* is the direction in which man should turn to seek his ideal and his pattern.

It is contended that nature is bloody, bold, and ravenous, and that every beak and claw is stained with gore, and every law of life is built up on the principle of force and cunning preying upon weakness and innocence, and that, therefore, *since this is a law of Nature*, man also should, in bounden duty, perpetuate the same, and recognise that it is by force and cunning and cruelty that he has reached his present stage, and by the same he must continue still further to develop.

As a lower law of the lower life—as we have seen—this may be true, but that this is the step ladder of man's progress towards communion with God is essentially revolting, as it would change the very conception of what God is—from Eternal Love to a force of Malignant Cruelty.

The happiness of life to me is in the assurance that all these powers of force-evils are being overcome, and that little by little the dominance of Force shall give place to the liberty of Love—a love in which all creation shall be embraced, and the true relation of man towards his fellow inarticulate animals shall be rightly determined.

Whither Vegetarianism is leading, and what will be its ultimate developments, I know not, but of this I am conscious, that as a true movement it can never be stereotyped in its past, but must always

be in harmonious progress towards a still more glorious future. I am content and happy in knowing this, believing with Ruskin, that "our happiness as thinking beings must hang on our being content to accept only partial knowledge, even in those matters which chiefly concern us. . . . Our whole pleasure and power of energetic action depend upon our being able to live and breathe in a cloud; content to see it opening here and closing there, delighting to catch, through the thinnest films of it, glimpses of stable and substantial things; but yet perceiving a nobleness even in concealment, and rejoicing that the kindly veil is spread where the untempered light might have scorched us, or the infinite clearness wearied."

So, though I know not the future, I believe that Vegetarianism is an essential of that better future, and am wondrously happy in the conscious privilege of having attained "Thus Far."
