

THE VEGETARIAN

Conscientious Objections

AT a late successful meeting Mr. Beard made categorical replies to a number of objections, and did it extremely well. As to the question whether it would be possible to feed 200,000 men on Vegetarian diet he said it would be far easier than the present mode; they would have contracted less disease, and marched much greater distances, seeing that each man could have carried portable food, which would have reduced the transport difficulties. Vegetarian food was very portable, and the emergency ration now served out for a long march was a Vegetarian ration. If they condensed nuts into the form of protein a man could carry in his waistcoat pocket enough to last him a week; ordinary nuts, raisins, &c., were highly nutritious. He could give a long list of foods which could be easily carried, and on which men could march much farther, and transport difficulties would be greatly reduced. As to the absence of vegetables in the arctic regions, he did not feel called upon to deal with that; he was dealing with the conditions here in England; but it was the fact that the diet of the people there stunted them in mind, body and estate. He was asked with regard to eating fish. He was not there to challenge the eating of fish on moral grounds, and he believed there was no cruelty in taking fish by net. He recommended all their converts to use fish for a time; it would help them over a difficulty for a time, but they would find that they would discontinue it after a while. Then as to the question of Hebrew sacrifices—it was a long and difficult question, but he believed the sacrifices of the Hebrews were simply a relic handed down from a past ancestry. All the prophets were against them, Jesus abolished them, and God did not require them. Jeremiah said God was “sick of their oblations and sacrifices.” He was asked about Jesus and fishing. He had travelled through Palestine, and knew the barrenness of the land, and he believed that fish-eating there was a necessity. The land did not produce enough to keep them alive. Christ sanctioned fishing, but they were discussing to-night whether they should abstain from animal food, and he would challenge anyone to say that Christ ever advocated that.

Another objector contented that there was no cruelty in killing animals, and said that to let them die of old age was worse. He reminded them that if these animals were not wanted to be butchered they would not be bred. At least a million animals were killed every day to provide food—worse than any battle field. Then as to the killing of animals, Mr. Beard said where it was necessary to kill animals it was justifiable, but it should be done in the humanest manner. He did not believe in keeping rabbits to such an extent that it was necessary to kill them, and it was not necessary to eat everything that was destroyed; we did not eat rats and mice. Speaking of the inspection of animals as a guarantee against tuberculosis, it was impossible to detect tuberculosis with the naked eye, which was all they did, and the inspectors did not go into the private slaughterhouses. If the butcher detected a case there was a strong temptation not to lose the cost of the beast.

A Mr. Ressler made the assumption that all the leading nations of the world were flesh-eaters. It all depended upon the standard, and upon what they considered leading nations. Did they mean the most pugnacious, or vital stamina, or moral culture? If they took stamina, then the Turks were our superiors. As a fighting race there was no nation equal to them. The Japanese soldier, who did not eat flesh, could go through more marching and exertion than the English. We had seen how in South Africa, our soldiers had gone down with disease. In vital stamina we were below Vegetarian nations supposed to be inferior to us. We thought this British Empire of ours was never going down; but if our vital stamina went down, and if we became too luxurious we should go down as other nations had done. Speaking of culture, he believed that those nations which were most in harmony with God's laws ought to be considered the leading nations. A celebrated man who was well acquainted with the Burmese expressed the opinion that they are higher than we are in courtesy, gentleness and those things usually considered Christian characteristics. He admitted that flesh eating nations had been the most predatory.

A Mr. Herford brought up the terrible problem of shoes. There were plenty of substitutes for leather already, but at present leather was a waste product. The animals were killed for the purposes of food, therefore humanitarians used the leather, but directly they were killed for that purpose they would not wear it.