



The Logic of Vegetarianism

Henry S. Salt

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PREFACE In preparing this "Logic of Vegetarianism" for a new edition, I have carefully re-read a sheaf of press opinions which greeted the first appearance of the book some seven years ago, with the hope of profiting by any adverse criticism which might point out arguments that I had overlooked. In this, however, I have been disappointed, for, apart from a few such objections as that raised in all seriousness by the Spectator—that I had not done justice to the great problem of what would become of the Esquimaux—the only definite complaint which I can find is that the representatives of flesh-eating whom I have introduced in the dialogues are deliberately made to talk nonsense. "It is easy," said one critic, "to confute an opponent if you have the selection of the arguments and the framing of the replies." I ought not, perhaps, to have expected that the assurance given in my introductory chapter (p. 2) as to the authenticity of the anti-vegetarian pleadings would shield me from this charge; indeed, the Vegetarian Messenger, in a friendly review of the book, expressed doubt as to the policy of using dialogue at all, because, as it remarked, "the arguments against vegetarianism are often so silly that it looks as if the author had set up a man of straw in order to demolish him." Yet, as the Messenger itself added, "there is not an argument against vegetarianism quoted in this volume which we have not, time after time, seen seriously brought forward by our opponents." Surely it would be a strange thing if food reformers had to avoid any terse presentment of their adversaries' reasoning for the very fact of its imbecility! And there is this further question. If I have failed to include in my selection the effective arguments against vegetarianism, where and what are they? Looking through those cited in the press notices, I can discover none that seem to be formidable; but rather than again be suspected of unfair suppression, let me frankly quote the following specimens of the beef-eater's philosophy: "The proof that man should eat meat is that he always has done so, does now, and always will." And again: "Nobody will want to make out that he (the advocate of vegetarianism) is wrong, but folk will just go on suiting themselves as before. Shelley and Thoreau, Wagner and Edward FitzGerald, were vegetarians, but, then, Wellington and Gladstone partook of the roast beef of Old England, and were none the worse." There is a sublime simplicity about these statements which is most impressive, but I cannot think that any wrong is done to the case against vegetarianism by not including them in a discussion which purports to be a logical one. H. S. S.

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