

THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BOX.

[Our Correspondents are reminded that prolixity is a great bar to publication, and that brevity of style and conciseness of statement greatly facilitate early insertion.]

VEGETARIANISM.

IN common with all those who believe that the so-called Vegetarianism is incomparably the best form of diet for man I was not altogether displeased with your annotation on the subject in last week's HOSPITAL; albeit, I think you do wrong to speak of the system as a "fad." A "fad" the dictionary tells us is a "hobby" or "craze," and the word would seem to be derived from the verb "fade," meaning to "wither" or "perish gradually." Now the Vegetarian Society was formed about forty years ago by a very few individuals, and it has since its formation enrolled 3,240 members and 1,500 associates. The society includes representatives of the aristocracy, gentry, clergy, law, medicine, literature, science, merchants, clerks, mechanics, and even such laborious occupations as blacksmiths and iron puddlers; and it is increasing not decreasing its numbers. There are upwards of forty restaurants in England, and there are at least two journals in circulation. Vegetarianism (I use the old word for want of a better) rests on science, on humanity, on experience, on morality, and on economy. On science, because it has been proved that man resembles very closely the frugivorous animals in everything and the carnivorous animals in nothing. On humanity, because no animal is sacrificed, no suffering entailed, to produce the bloodless meal of fruits. On experience, because the testimony of those who have given it a really fair trial is almost unanimous in its favour. On morality, because the vegetarian is nearly always temperate in the consumption of alcohol, and we are told on the highest authority that it is alcohol which causes "infinite sin, misery, madness, and crime." On economy, because the land of England would support five times as many people on cereals as it can do on beef; and the farmer, blessed with plenty, would no longer weep the vanished golden age. As to the practice being preventive or curative of disease it would manifestly be impossible to enter into the question in a short letter; but it has been stated (Metropolitan Inspector, quoted by Dr. A. Kingsford) that a very high percentage, as high as 86 per cent., I think, of the carcasses sold for food is diseased, tuberculous disease being the chief. It is becoming a common belief among medical men that phthisis may be communicated from the inferior animals to man. (Lamalleré, Valin, McColl, &c.), and yet it is almost the invariable rule to order animal food for consumptive patients. This is the *similia similibus curantur* doctrine pushed to its extreme limits. Doubtless perfect cooking impairs the activity of disease germs, but even then the idea of eating tuberculous flesh and drinking tuberculous milk is not pleasant, and it is certain that more than one sufferer from our insular scourge dates his recovery from the day he gave up eating animal food. Apologising for taking up so much of your space, I am, &c.,

Berry Wood,

RICHARD GREENE.

I AM pleased to see in your issue of March 31st so fair an acknowledgment of the usefulness of vegetarian advocacy as tending to aid in the improved dietary of large numbers of people. It is certain that the vegetable kingdom offers a very wide range of food products for selection, and that in combination with such animal products as milk and eggs (these being at individual discretion a part of the vegetarian dietary) pleasant, satisfying, and healthful meals can be obtained without resorting to the use of animal flesh. Should any of your readers desire to know more of the vegetarian system, I shall be pleased to send a few papers to any inquirer on receipt of request.

JOSEPH KNIGHT,

Secretary of the Vegetarian Society.

75, Princess Street, Manchester.

COMPARATIVE EXPENDITURE IN HOSPITALS.

I CAN hardly agree to your criticism on the diet-table of a Northern Hospital. I think English people generally are mistaken as to the quantity and quality of food necessary for health. Of course labouring men require more food than those leading a sedentary life, but that increase should be in the fatty and starchy material. I am sixty-one; height, 5 ft. 9 in.; weight, 132 lbs. Here is my diet: Rise at 6.30, and while dressing take 8 oz. of warm milk. Breakfast, 8.30 a.m.; 3 oz. oatmeal made into porridge, with 8 to 10 oz. milk; a bowl of milk curdled with rennet—about 8 oz. Dinner at 1.30 p.m.; 8 oz. of milk, and the cup filled with coffee; bread, with about 1 oz. cold fat of ham; a bowl of curd same as breakfast. Tea at 6 p.m.; 10 oz. milk, with bread and preserve. Supper; three small biscuits. I have adopted this diet for more than twelve months in consequence of severe attacks of stomach and liver disorder, with hæmatemesis. I have fair health, can walk three miles at a stretch, or dig two hours in the garden, and I have abundance of mental energy. I eat about 1 lb. of bread in the day. The total food is less than 3 pints of milk, 10 oz. meal and flour in porridge and bread, and 1 oz. fat. This is far below the diet you criticise, yet I find it perfectly sufficient, and it leads me to think that there is great misapprehension as to the amount of food required, at least in the later portion of life.

AN OLD PHYSICIAN.

P. S.—Before anyone criticises this letter, I must ask him to try the diet for three months, and report his weight at the beginning and the end. He may increase the quantity, but he must stick to the articles.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. S.—All communications must be authenticated by writer's name and address, *not necessarily for publication.*

DIFFICULT CASES.

[Replies endorsed "Difficult Cases," should be addressed to the Editor.]

MAIMED BY NATURE.

WILL some reader of THE HOSPITAL take compassion on the following case? A young man aged 20, in the Whitchurch Union House, Hants, has been denied by nature the handles of his body,—the arms, having in their place only small apologies for them. He can write well, can dress himself, is very strong, can carry great weights, and is very steady and good-looking. If some kind friend would help him to a place as messenger, or gate-keeper, a great charity would be done. He is anxious to work for his own livelihood.

F. W. HIGHT,

Chairman, Whitchurch Union, Hants.

WE have received some "Lines to a Deserted Study," by S. Weir Mitchell, from which we quote the following:

"Through Time's swift loom our joys and griefs

In braided strands together run,

To weave about this world of ours

Wild tapestries of shade and sun.

And seems it not as if to-night,

Dear, dusty, many-memored room,

Our souls had lost the threads of light,

And like the eve kept gathering gloom?"