

ARE VEGETARIANS BETTER NOURISHED?

WHO has the better nutrition, meat eater or vegetarian? There was no argument about this in the era before Christ. Man in pre-Christian days was nourished mainly on meat and offal. New Zealanders, heavy meat eaters, rather look askance at the vegetarian, wondering how he makes out so well. The vegetarian could come back with some modern experimental work in which weanling rats, fed on malt extract, wheat flour, and soya bean and nothing else, grew very well. When repeated in children, fed on specially processed barley wheat-soya bean mixture, they also did as well as others fed on animal protein.

Meat eaters, however, have impressive studies in their support. An African meat eating tribe was taller and healthier, and had more red cells in the blood than a neighbouring vegetarian tribe. African babies get a serious nutritional wasting disease from having too little animal protein. Indian soldiers who are vegetarians are over twenty times subject to anaemia as the meat eating ones. Vegetarians in U.S.A. are underweight and not as tall as meat eaters. However, there, they do not suffer any more disease because of their restricted diet.

Where is the key to the relative values of these diets? It lies in the proteins in the form of amino-acids. Proteins can be vegetable or animal, and these proteins are valuable for human nutrition according to their amino-acids make-up. Animal proteins have the advantage here. All nutritionists agree that animal proteins are better than plant proteins for human food.

Animal proteins generally contain all the amino-acids essential for health and growth. Plant proteins are often short of one or more of these. When a protein is short-ranged in these indispensable fellows we don't get so much pep from it. Mixing plant proteins can sometimes complete the range, but that takes knowledge of which ones to mix. It's safer and easier to add animal to plant proteins, milk to porridge, cheese to bread and so on.

When we are mixing meat and vegetables we can be pretty sure that any essential amino-acids short in the vegetables will be forthcoming in the meat. Animal proteins have an extra card up their sleeves untrumpable by vegetables, in that they give us cobalt containing vitamin B12. The mixed dieters do not have to worry about their food values. The vegetable dieters do! They have to know protein values. Then they can choose a diet which sustains human nutrition. In temperate countries vegetarians have the necessary education and study their eating. But transport them to a tropical climate, let them catch malaria or hookworm disease and they might not have much fighting power on their vegetarian regime. There's a debilitating disease strain on the blood-forming system in hot climates. That's why the tropical poor, not knowledgeable about right eating, suffer so much anaemia. That's why the vegetarian African or Indian goes to hospital for anaemia treatment over twenty times more frequently than his meat-eating contemporary.

It is easier for the average man to live on a mixed diet. If he has some animal protein each day he doesn't need

to become food conscious. He does need to have some appreciation of the true value of meat and not just plump for meat when incorporating animal protein in the diet. Animal proteins are good eating but not all equally so. Milk ranks above meat in value. Milk, egg and cheese are tops for right eating. If you have plenty of milk in the day's eating, you don't need so much meat. Meat has become an expensive item in the week's budgeting. Well, spare your purse with the dairy products, milk and cheese, and be healthier than on too much meat. New Zealanders are eating somewhere about 10 ozs. of meat daily and that's an average struck over everybody, grandparents to baby. Now father, mother,

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS, by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy - Director - General of Health



and the high school children, will each do well on 4 ozs. of meat a day, including bacon in the reckoning, if they have a pint to a pint and-a-half of milk the same day. A bit of cheese added is all to the good.

To sum up: the vegetarian manages, but has to be food conscious. The mixed animal and vegetable diet is less bother, is safe nutritionally, and is the one recommended.

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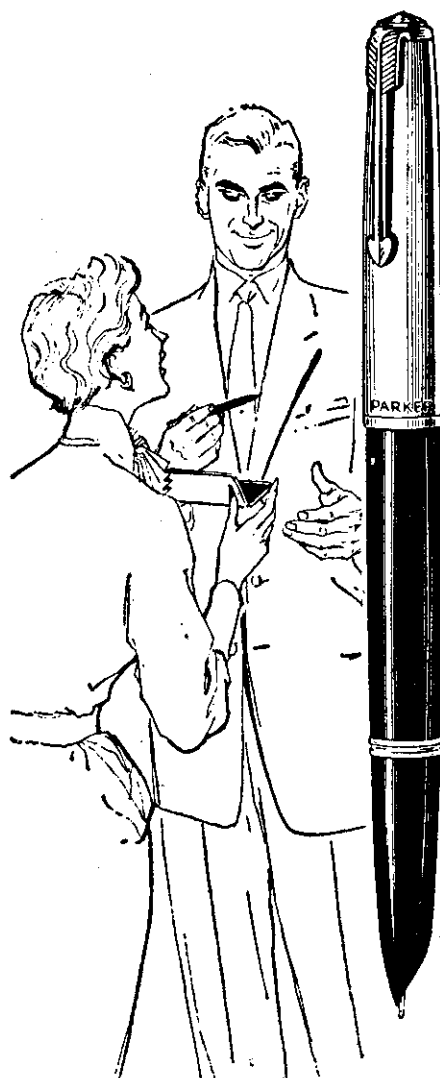
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