

WHY I AM A VEGETARIAN

By Owens S. Parrett, M.D.

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Is A PERSON who does not eat meat peculiar, or is he wise?

My mother tells me that when I was a baby I refused to eat any kind of meat and would spit it out if it was put in my mouth. She thought-as many mothers do-that I needed the meat to make me grow. So she persisted until I finally acquired a liking for it. However, for the past fifty years I have chosen a diet that does not include any kind of flesh food, fish, or fowl.

In my practice of medicine I have always followed the policy of telling my patients the reasons for what I ask them to do. I do not like to do anything without knowing why I am doing it, and I assume that most people feel the same way. So I am going to tell you why I am a vegetarian and why I believe you should be one too.

First, I love life and I want to live, as long as I can. These are stirring and eventful days, and I want to know what is going to happen next. I have passed the Biblical threescore years and ten, and I am thankful to God that I still find the days too short for all I want to do. I still carry a full practice and like to dip into several hobbies even if for only a few minutes a day.

I find that most of my patients are retired at the age I am now. I have no desire to retire so soon. I would rather spend the day helping the sick, many of whom have been forced to retire early because they lacked the knowledge I possess.

It is my certain conviction, having studied the matter scientifically and observed sickness and its causes through many years, that if I had eaten largely of flesh foods during my life, I would now be too aged to carry on the practice of medicine. A doctor

must be able to think clearly and have considerable powers of endurance and nervous energy.

Both aging and fatigue are hastened by flesh foods. Age is the wearing out of the body. The process varies considerably among different individuals. Within the past week I was asked to visit ten men in a certain hotel. One was aged in the late forties and the other in the early fifties. Both were on the county welfare and certainly looked unable to work. Though so young in years, they were both old men. Tobacco and liquor, of course, had played a part; but the part that meat played cannot be overlooked.

The cells of which the body is made up are little units. Each must take on nourishment, give off waste, and breathe oxygen. When this process is interfered with, the cells deteriorate and the organs they make up naturally deteriorate too.

The late Dr. Alexis Carrel, winner of the Nobel prize in 1912, recognized that the efficiency of providing nutrition and eliminating waste was what determined the aging of a cell of tissue. So he attempted to extend the life of a bit of chicken heart by bathing it in a nutritive fluid that removed waste and added nourishment. So successful was he that from 1913 that bit of chicken heart was kept alive until 1947. Finally, after 34 years, it was thrown into a sink where it died. Dr. Carrel himself was already dead. How much longer the chicken heart might have lived is not known. Certainly, then, Dr. Carrel proved that length of life depends largely on eliminating waste and adding nutrition to the cells. Practically applied, this would mean that if we could regularly remove all the waste from our body cells and apply adequate nutrition to these same cells, we might easily reach unheard-of lengths of life. By the same token, if the body fluids that bathe our cells are overloaded with waste, life would be shortened.

Let us take a look at history. The Bible indicates that for ten generations before the Flood people lived an average of 912 years. After the Flood the human race began eating flesh foods. The lives of the next ten generations were shortened to an average of 317 years.

The idea is prevalent that if you are going to work hard and need a lot of endurance, you must have a large beefsteak. The facts are just the opposite. I can refer to only three illustrations to show this to be true.

Some years ago the well-known Yale professor, Dr. Irving Fisher, showed that when vegetarian rookies were pitted against the best athletes of Yale, the untrained men had more than twice the endurance of the meat-eating athletes.

Johnny Weissmuller, the Tarzan of the comic strips and world swimming champion, was invited to the dedication of a new swimming tank in the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Weissmuller had made 56 world records, but for five years he had made no new ones, because he was getting older. After several weeks on a well-selected vegetarian diet he was able to hang up six more world records in the new swimming tank.

Recently the vegetarian swimmer, Murray Rose, of Australian, world champion and winner in the Olympic games, has become widely known. So have his dietetic practices. Rose has been a vegetarian since he was two years old. He not only swims fast but his ability to spurt ahead at the finish demonstrates that superior endurance accompanies a fleshless diet.

Why should this be true? Meat contains waste products that the animal would have eliminated had it lived a little longer. A person who eats flesh food loads himself with the wastes in the meat. When these wastes reach the body cells, they bring on fatigue and aging.

Prominent among the waste products are urea and uric acid. Beefsteak contains about 14 grains of uric acid per pound. The late Dr. L. H. Newburg, of Ann Arbor University, called attention to the fact that when meat formed 25 per cent of a rat's diet the rats became bigger and more active than other rats on a normal diet. But after a few months the kidneys of the meat-eating rats became badly damaged.

Another danger facing the meat eater is that animals are frequently infected with diseases that are common to man. This was called to my attention forcefully the other day when my secretary told me that the dairy where her husband is foreman had four cases of leukemia died four

hours after the veterinary made the diagnosis. Incidentally, the veterinary suggested that the ailing cow be sent to market. I happen to know that many cows that are no longer able to produce milk are sent to market, and the price paid for them indicates that they are not thrown away or used for fertilizer.

Cows with eye cancer are usually milked until they go blind, after which they are allowed by government regulations to be sold for meat, provided only that the cancer does not show up in too many other parts of the body.

I believe it was some of these facts that made the late Dr. J. H. Kellogg remark once, when he sat down to a vegetarian dinner, "It's nice to eat a meal and not have to worry about what your food many have died of."

No one knows better than the inspectors themselves how much disease there is among the animals slaughtered for food. Recently a friend called at my office selling audiometers, instruments to determine the degree of deafness. As we chatted together my friend related the following incident. His wife attended a banquet and ordered a vegetable plate instead of the regular meat being served. At her side sat a gentleman stranger she had not met before. Each eyed the other's vegetables until finally the stranger remarked, "Pardon me, madam, but are you a vegetarian?" "Yes," the woman replied. "Are you?" "No," The stranger answered. "I am a meat inspector."

When it comes to poultry we face an alarming situation. Recently I flew to East Lansing, Michigan, and spent a day visiting a special research project started twenty-one years ago by the Federal Government in collaboration with twenty-five State universities to try to control malignancy in chickens. The problem has become so serious that it threatens the poultry industry of the United States.

I learned that cancer in fowls has several forms. Besides the usual one in which cancerous tumors are found, there is a carrier form in which a chicken may live out its natural life with no signs of cancer, while all the time it is infecting other fowls. This form is so difficult to detect that the only way the research men can finally determine whether a chicken has the disease is to incubate an egg from a suspected fowl for fifteen

days. On the fifteenth day the egg is carefully sterilized on the outside. The embryo is removed and the liver is cut out and ground up. A small portion is then injected into the breast muscle of another chicken. If a cancerous tumor results at the site of inoculation, it is known then, and only then, that the hen that laid the egg had the disease. Obviously, there is small chance that an inspector will cull out every diseased fowl, and still less chance that dad will pick a healthy bird for Thanksgiving.

As for fish, I well remember an occasion when I was fishing in the cold water of Yellowstone Lake. Someone warned me not to eat the fish.

"They have worms in them," he said. I examined several and found it to be true. When halibut is being fried, worms often crawl out.

Rabbits are very subject to disease. According to the laws of hygiene given by Moses, they are unclean. As a lad I used to hunt with a friend who was a very good shot, and I helped him clean the rabbits before he sold them to his customers. Seldom did we find a cottontail that was not loaded with tapeworms. I gave one I had killed to a neighbor, and he remarked as he thanked me, "You don't know what you're missing." I said, "I may be missing a lot of tapeworms."

Anyone wishing to get along without meat will find that it is not as difficult a problem as it may seem at first. For those who like the flavor of meat, some very tasty foods made from grains and nuts are now available. Dr. Wredrick State, of Harvard, well-known authority on nutrition, wrote me that a diet that included mixed grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes (peas, beans, lentils, et cetera), with some nuts, was adequate when meat was left out.

Research carried out at the College of Medical Evangelists has demonstrated that a meatless diet can be adequate when it includes meat like dishes made from nuts, grains, and other vegetables. These vegetable "meat" dishes help to make the change-over to a non flesh program easier.

I keep my table well supplied with a variety of delicious foods, and the lack of meat never enters my mind. In fact, after studying animal diseases in the laboratories, and having observed the effects of a flesh diet on my patients these many years, I would find it difficult indeed to partake of flesh again.

I quite agree with the leading nutritionist of John Hopkins, Dr. E. V. McCollum, who gave it as his opinion that anyone who chose to eliminate flesh food from his diet would be better off for doing so.