

VEGETARIANISM.

BY DR. ALFRED J. H. CRESPI.

There are few subjects on which greater misconceptions obtain than on that about which I am now writing. Without going the length of endorsing all the opinions held by vegetarians, it occurs to me that by laying before my readers some information on this topic I can add to their knowledge of the functions of food, and throw some light on the construction of wholesome dietaries.

What, then, is Vegetarianism? The answer that would at once suggest itself is, abstinence from animal food of all descriptions. In its narrowest signification that would be consistent vegetarianism. But in actual practice we find that strict vegetarians go much farther than this, and also abstain from stimulants—alcoholic and non-alcoholic—tobacco, salt, and apparently also from water. I speak with some reserve on this matter, but I can vouch for the fact that, in my presence, at a public meeting, a person of some standing in the Vegetarian Society denounced the use of salt and of water as injurious and unnecessary, and contrary to every sound vegetarian principle and to the laws of health.

A much larger class of vegetarians, however, hold different views, and only abstain from food which has cast life, that is to say, they eat eggs, milk and cheese, though they would not take pork or beef. These persons, Professor F. W. Newman tells us, practise Brahminism. They are sometimes also called Ovarians and Lactarians, and by their stricter *confrères* are considered only one shade better than flesh-eaters.

Now what are the grounds on which vegetarians of all shades and opinions defend their line of conduct? Just these, that it is wrong to destroy life to obtain food, and that health is endangered by eating animal food, which is an unnatural diet. That terrible inhumanity is practised in driving animals to market and in killing them no one can deny, and few persons can bear to think of this cruelty. Much of—though certainly not all—this awful suffering could, however, be prevented; and it is probable that animals intended for human food might be expeditiously and