
The Vegetarian Verses

1 Introduction

The Fourth Millennium dawned and no planes fell from the sky, no computer crashed, no electricity grid failed but a few The Vegetarian Verses pheasants did The Vegetarian Verses fall from the sky blasted by the shotguns of Marcus Pound and the New Year shooting party on his extensive estate. Marcus and his friends were very keen to shoot a bird or two which after being hung for a month would make a welcome change from the vegetarian diet they consumed most of the year. The guests were also hopeful that a chicken, a duck or even a goose might come to them from the clandestine farmyard where Marcus bred illicit birds. The Vegetarian Verses The opening of year 3,000 had drawn its usual roll call of the bewildered and befuddled theorists who before the event had searched the scriptures of many civilisations, religions and cults for portents of impending disaster. One pastor had instructed his followers to sell all their worldly goods, go out into the world and evangelise and on the appointed date follow him up a mountain to await transportation to another place where they would not need cash.

One of the guns was Bishop Savoy, the leader of the The Vegetarian Verses Church of the Sacred Cabbage, a cult founded in the The Vegetarian Verses twenty-fifth century by Samuel Small a smallholder who was an accomplished grower of organic vegetables. It happened one day when he was hoeing in between rows of cabbages; he heard a small voice emanating from a small cabbage: Read my leaves. After getting over the shock of hearing the talking vegetable, Samuel read the cabbage's leaves and then wrote the words in his farm record book: the Church of the Sacred Cabbage was born. Strictly vegetarian, the sect drew members in many countries who were ready The Vegetarian Verses to The Vegetarian Verses hear the message that the way to paradise was through a diet of organic grains, fruit and veg. The population of the globe had grown so much that the consumption of meat had been banned leaving much needed land for growing crops which were no longer used wastefully to feed animals. The fauna of the world had been The Vegetarian Verses decimated by the demand for protein and bush meat, mainly monkey, became the caviar of the second half of the third millennium. Clandestine meat eating such as that practised by Marcus Pound was widespread; he had pheasants on his land and poultry in his yard. Fishing continued until the last sprat was caught and eaten in the Aleutian Islands.

When Samuel Small copied the words from the Sacred Cabbage into his farm record book, it became the basic document on which the sect was founded and was called *The Gardener's Handbook*. It related the events which had led to the The Vegetarian Verses day when the sect was born and how it eventually spread to become a world religion gathering more followers every year until it was recognised as the largest church on Earth. The authenticity of the Book was confirmed by the discovery of a row of golden cabbages in a Huddersfield allotment on which the rest of The Gardener's Handbook was inscribed. Cynics have doubted the existence of the golden cabbages which disappeared one dark night just before The Vegetarian Verses the Cleckheaton Vegetable Show but twelve witnesses have sworn that the golden ones did indeed exist: this testimony being recorded on page one of the Handbook. Since cabbage leaves are perishable the original loquacious vegetable disintegrated long ago but its message lives on.

Editor's note

The original Gardener's Handbook was recorded by Samuel Small in a Yorkshire Dialect which is difficult for the modern reader to understand. In order to clarify the text, Doctor Isambard The Vegetarian Verses Snodgrass, the Poet Laureate of Scunthorpe, Poet in Residence at the University of Cleckheaton, agreed to render the text into modern English and to tidy up the verses which precede every section. Dr Snodgrass is a published poet on Kinder Electronic Publications and he has agreed to let us include his charming poem The English Language Sandwich which is printed as an appendix and may be taken out at a later date. Vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas.

Suzanne Holt FST

Taxidermist by appointment to a lot of road kill and little, furry animals shot by my husband with his bow and arrows: Squirrel Nutkin is no more.

2 The Gardener's Handbook

2.1 The witness statement

Given by Charley Dawson and the eleven members of the Huddersfield Town Reserve Soccer Team:

I Charles Algernon Dawson being of sound mind and the Huddersfield Town Reserve Team Sub do hereby bear witness to the discovery of Twelve Golden Cabbages The Vegetarian Verses in the allotment of Clarence Entwhistle on which the sacred verses of the Gardener's Handbook were inscribed. In spite of being guarded by Spot, the faithful terrier of no fixed abode or owner, the golden vegetables ascended to a higher plane and were never seen again.

The document The Vegetarian Verses was signed by The Vegetarian Verses the Twelve and can be seen by appointment at the Sacred Garden, 49a Paradise Row, Clitheroe.

2.2 The beginning

Like all of us here below,

Great oaks from little acorns grow.

A long time ago the Earth was just a muddy blob covered with weeds and not much else; it took an age before lakes appeared eventually spreading out to become oceans. The water at that time was quite pure if a little muddy and only later did it become saline due to careless farming methods. The first vegetables evolved from weeds as did the bushes and then trees which eventually covered the land; flowers which came later when insects became prevalent were only decorative. The oceans began to stir with life and some The Vegetarian Verses real horrors evolved so much so that some of the larger fish couldn't wait to drag themselves out of the sea and flop about in the mud. It wasn't long The Vegetarian Verses before The Vegetarian Verses the mud became as dangerous as the sea when some enormous carnivores evolved and started eating the plant eaters who were grazing on the weeds and shrubs.

Everyone was lost in awe,

When the first man chased a dinosaur.

The emergence of humans was a very slow procedure and they had a hard time dealing with the animals; eventually they learnt how to prey on the monsters by running alongside them until the large beasts dropped from exhaustion: the dinosaur beds are evidence of this in the contiguous lines of fossilised tracks made by animals and humans. The first humans were few in number but very naughty by nature; they The Vegetarian Verses got tired of chasing animals for meat and started farming in the area between two great rivers which provided an endless supply of water allowing The Vegetarian Verses crops to be irrigated. If the farmers had been in possession of a copy of The Gardener's Handbook they would have been aware that continually irrigating land on which The Vegetarian Verses no rain falls is inviting disaster as the The Vegetarian Verses soil becomes saline and stops producing. It also made the land prone to flooding.

When heavy rain The Vegetarian Verses falls on the land,

Always keep a raft at hand.

The land between the two rivers started to flood regularly and the farmers came to the conclusion that they had offended someone or something and the floods were a punishment. It got so bad that one family, the ancestors of Samuel Small, decided to take steps to move on if the floods got too bad. They annoyed their neighbours by chopping down trees and making a huge raft with the logs; this was particularly annoying because there The Vegetarian Verses were so few trees left after land clearance that a shortage of firewood for cooking became serious. Construction of the raft was a long job because the other farmers kept nicking the odd log for firewood; however the job was completed and not a moment too soon: it started to pour down and didn't stop for ages completely flooding the land and drowning the other farmers who had not had the foresight to prepare for the deluge. Farmer and his family sat on their raft and stopped anyone trying to join them for a free ride; however they did let a wolf get on board with a view to training it as a guard dog: it was the ancestor of Spot. It wasn't long before the raft drifted west and came to dry land; the Farmers was unaware that anything existed outside the land between the two rivers and were delighted when they arrived in the Fertile Crescent which was a land flowing not with water but with milk and honey.

2.3 Tribal warfare

Although they know it isn't right,

Naughty men will always fight.

The descendants of Farmer multiplied and became a small tribe living in the Crescent among a lot of other tribes who were for ever fighting, robbing, pillaging and raping. One lot was made up of twelve tribes of pastoralists who were tired of herding goats and sheep and were bent on finding somewhere to settle down. One morning a delegation from the tribes turned up with a paper stating that they were going to take over Farmer's land because it had been promised to them ages ago by a very powerful Sheik. Farmer told them what they could do with the document and a formal declaration of war was issued. Not wanting to devastate the land with fighting the tribes elected to compete in single combat with the Champion boxer who would represent Farmer. The result looked to be a foregone conclusion because Farmer's champion was seven feet tall and built like a mud outhouse and the Twelve Tribes representative was five feet The Vegetarian Verses two, skinny but very devious. The combat took place in a natural arena in front of cheering crowds of supporters and as is usual with combats that have been trumpeted as the Fight of the Century it lasted less than one three minute round when the sneaky youth hit the Champion with The Vegetarian Verses a well-aimed rock fired from his sling. Farmer objected that sling shots were outside the rules of single combat but was ejected from the arena and fined several shekels for unsportsmanlike behaviour.

The Vegetarian Verses

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