

The equitable mode in which nature dispenses to her innumerable offspring the food she has provided for their subsistence, apportioning to each the quantity and the kind most consonant to enlarged views of prospective beneficence, is calculated to excite our highest wonder and admiration. While the waste is the smallest possible, we find that nothing which can afford nutriment is wholly lost. There is no part of the organized structure of an animal or vegetable, however dense its texture, or acrid its qualities, that may not, under certain circumstances, become the food of some species of insect, or contribute in some mode to the support of animal life. The more succulent parts of plants, such as the leaves, or softer stems, are the principal sources of nourishment to the greater number of larger quadrupeds, to multitudes of insects, as well as to numerous tribes of other animals. Some plants are more particularly designed as the appropriate nutriment of particular species, which would perish if these ceased to grow: thus the silkworm subsists almost exclusively upon the leaves of the mulberry tree; and many species of caterpillars are respectively attached each to a particular plant which they prefer to all others. There are at least fifty different species of insects that feed upon the common nettle; and plants, of which the juices are most acrid and poisonous to the generality of animals, such as *Euphorbium*, *Henbane*, and *Nightshade*, afford a wholesome and delicious food to others. Innumerable tribes of animals subsist upon fruits and seeds; while others feast upon the juices which they extract from flowers, or other parts of plants; others, again, derive their principal nourishment from the hard fibres of the bark or wood.

Still more general is the consumption of animal matter by various animals. Every class has its carnivorous tribes, which consume living prey of every denomination; some being formed to devour the flesh of the larger species, whether quadrupeds, birds, or fish; others feeding on reptiles or mollusca, and some satisfying their appetites with insects alone. The habits of the more diminutive tribes are not