

that no species exists without its use in the economy of the earth. Of many indeed we witness the direct use, either for the various purposes of civilized society, or for the sustenance of animal life: but for the present let us confine our attention to the latter point in their history; and, although whatever is adapted to the sustenance of animal life in general, is indirectly adapted in a great measure to the actual condition of man, and would therefore justly come within the scope of this treatise; yet, that we may not extend the subject too far, let us consider those species only which constitute the direct food of man; subject indeed frequently to such culinary preparations as make our food not only more palatable, but also more nutritious.

Among the numerous species of vegetables which supply food to man, by far the greater proportion consists of those which may be considered upon the whole as mere luxuries; or at most, as affording an agreeable and sometimes useful variety. Of those species which afford that kind of nutritive matter which is contained in what has been emphatically called the staff of life, or bread, the number is very small; leguminous plants, and wheat, and rice, the fruit and pith and other parts of some of the palms and bananas, and such farinaceous roots as the potato, &c. comprising nearly the whole amount.

It would be unnecessary to point out more