

a part of the "conditions of his existence;" to say nothing of the necessary connexion that subsists between man's sustentation and man's own head and hands, or between it and his domestic and social relations; all which, bearing directly on the matter now in hand, serve to show that, in respect of that which cometh upon him daily—the care of his fleshly tenement—nature, on the one hand, has in a great measure left him out of her reckoning, while, on the other, God has in an especial manner been "mindful of," and has "visited" him.

All that we purpose doing is, to direct attention to the cerealia as a class of vegetable productions, which, as neither *natural* plants themselves, nor growing *naturally* in any part of the world, demonstrate by facts within themselves—facts which our modern science has ascertained, or has verified, and which may be seen and read of all men, that they must of *necessity* have been produced *miraculously*; and which furnish, moreover, with no tradition as to this, nor any specific reference to them in this relation by Moses, a proof the most striking that can well be imagined, and all the stronger that it is *indirect*, of a *special* exercise of the Creator's care for His creature man.

The cerealia, which comprise wheat, rye, barley, oats, maize, rice, and millet, are beyond all doubt man's proper food—the food proper for civilized man—the possession and the use of which leave him free to devote his energies to the advancement of his being, the multiplication of his race, and the accomplishment of the main object of his existence in the world. Without corn, living on wild roots, or by hunting or fishing, and precariously, or from hand to mouth, man is everywhere a savage and a cannibal—improvident, bestial, incapable of taking a single step towards a higher or a better condition. Animal food, indeed, civilized man eats, and was intended, doubtless, to eat; but not his brother's flesh. Such as it is,—beef, mutton, and the like—it comes to him remotely of a plentitude in corn; of the leisure for thought which this affords him; of the habits which tillage engenders; and in many ways besides. Yet corn is his staple food.

Comprised in the great natural family of *grasses*, the cerealia themselves are—all of them—*unnatural* species of this family! Their natural state, because their constant or persistent state—that in which alone they can be cultivated or will grow (unless they be *abused* by man),—and in which alone they are of any value to him, is one which the botanist designates *abnormal*; the gardener, *monstrous*. And around this central fact in their history, there clusters a number of other singular facts, all of which, more or less, cause them to stand out apart from every other kind of plant, invest them with a character altogether special, and, when fairly looked at, are seen to be plain and unmistakable "*marks of God.*"

1. Let it be noted, first of all, as to this condition of *monstrosity*, that, as holding of other kinds of plants, it is one which is *occasional* only, or *accidental* and *transient*, which can be kept up only by careful cultivation, and which continually tends, notwithstanding, to revert back to the natural or primitive condition. With the cereals on the contrary, this abnormal condition is manifestly *their* primitive or natural, and it is, moreover, their *abiding* state. They have no tendency to degenerate, or to assume a lower, and, relatively to other plants, a more natural grade.

2. Man, indeed may *degrade* them. By a treatment of them of his own devising, steadily persevered in, but attended with some trouble to himself, because requiring several years for the accomplishment of the end aimed at, he can reduce them to the condition of a perfectly natural, yet absolutely worthless grass. To understand how this may be done, one or two things must be premised. *Annuals* naturally, bearing seed of such a kind (so monstrous and so large, and withal in such abundance) as draws towards it, on the ripening, all the available energies of the plant, they form no buds at the root (they have in fact, no surplus vigour during the ripening to form any) whence new plants might spring up the following year. Therefore, their seed duly ripened they die, or rather are cut down in autumn, and then they *die out*, root and branch. They are annuals of *necessity*. They die of the exhaustion of seeding. They may be said, to apply