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LITERATURE  SCIENCE  ART
In descriptions of the flora of the Far East we read: "In addition to garden vegetables, the Chinese, Koreans, and others make use in their diet of many wild plants, which take the place of the cultivated varieties. In this there must be seen an adaptability of the people to the local conditions of life, where unexpected floods often inundate fields and gardens, or where tribes who live mainly by the hunt have no time to be occupied with garden culture and yet in the village in spring there is not enough green-stuff. A local population, which uses almost no meat in its diet must vary its table, but the poorest of them, thanks to an acquaintanceship with wild plants, never sits down without food. Early in the spring when rains are usually lacking and there is no green-stuff in the gardens, cultivated vegetables are replaced by young leaves of ferns, by sprouts of marsh plants, by the stems of the white peony; white goose-foot is used in the diet, and wild sorrel, young stalks of worm-wood, the spring leaves of dandelions, sow-thistle leaves and many others.

"People living in marshy country, or along river valleys, eat the young shoots of the bullrush, tubers of arrowleaf, leaves of water lily.

"Among the known wild vegetables of the most nutritive value should be recognized the bulbs of different kinds of lilies, wild garlic, wild cherries, lily blossoms, martagon bulbs, and bracken leaves.

"Of the ferns, the young leaves of Aspidium Felix are made use of in the diet. Leaves of the lily are usually gathered, dried in the sun, and stored away for winter. The lily petals contain starch and prove to be quite nutritious.

"Young greens, the winged seeds of the small-leaved elm, which grows everywhere, go into the diet in raw or cooked form. It is interesting to note that the blooms chakomka are cooked and used for food ".

Then there go on descriptions of edible nuts and mushrooms, as well as of nutritious seaweeds, varieties of beans, coriander, colocasia, batata, inyam; wild yams, edible burdock (gobo), Perilla, Dolichosa, and other useful and nutritious plants, which have long been esteemed by the local inhabitants. If then there be added to this long list all the strawberry, raspberry, lime, and other local teas and vegetable beverages, and it is remembered that even ordinary couchgrass yields a nutritious decoction, one obtains an entire inventory of useful natural plants.

In this connection, it unwillingly strikes the eye that local people actually eat little meat, yet long experience has taught them to find a natural substitute for this universally current food. Compared with the lengthy roll of wild plants suitable for nourishment, the list of cultivated garden vegetables seems a relatively short one. People who often experience hunger and harsh conditions of nature, have actually begun to seek out all possibilities of food-supply. For them it is too common an occurrence, when an on-rushing unexpected flood, in the course of a few hours, turns fields and gardens into sandy hillocks. They know early and late frosts, and for centuries they have felt the destroying power of tornadoes. Indeed, all such necessities have long ago directed attention to the possibility of finding nutritive, sustaining food in the vegetable world.

When hunger breaks out, there usually first begin to be complaints about lack of the generally used grains and meat. But many other possibilities altogether attract no attention. They are simply lost to view, for no one ever remembers about the natural gifts of nature. Science has established the fact that vegetables are more nourishing than meat. Indeed, science has once more whispered that ancient truth that a meat diet is not needed at all, except in cases of unavoidable necessity. In the study of vegetable vitamins, science is usually occupied with cultivated garden vegetables. Now for such investigations it should turn to all the plants which grow in the wild state and thus are so readily obtainable.

Both tropical and Arctic climates yield a great number of nutritious wild plants. How useful it would be and how
necessary to conduct researches upon these nourishing helpmates in life of man! Indeed, outside of their unquestionable nutritive qualities, these plants undoubtedly have also medicinal properties which could unite nutrition with direct aid to healthfulness. Among the cultivated garden vegetables, their medicinal properties are far from always investigated and applied. It could be so easy to combine both a nutritive and medicinal diet. As for that, in the most ancient covenants we see how a weekly change of food was proposed, by which was foreseen not only the nutritive factor but also the remedial. Instead of a great number of patented surrogates, the most natural solutions of many problems have been placed at people's disposal in nature itself.

If the imagination be not stimulated about the paths along which to seek the solution of such problems, then let us turn once again to history, ethnography, to the study of ways of life in all their details, even those apparently strange at first glance. Rural doctors and healers, for the treatment of animals first of all ascertained what herbage they were eating at the time of their falling ill. By such a natural experienced way were found many useful remedies.

Among many peoples we have learned of articles of food not only useful but also most excellent, such as young bamboos, rose petals and other unexpected but nutritious adaptations of surrounding nature. We are not intending to compile a vegetarian cook-book, but through many travels, each one has been struck by the employment of wildly growing plants. Each one who is acquainted with their broad usage involuntarily advances a question as to why such plants should not be investigated scientifically from all their points of usefulness.

We see that up to this time new forms of flora are continually being disclosed. Even from this side the investigations of the vegetation of the planet are far from concluded. It goes without saying that in the sense of study of nutrition and medicinal properties the question is likewise far far from being elucidated. But for each keen-sighted one it is obvious that the age-old experiences of many peoples can be broadly and usefully applied.