

digestion, and in the first stages of assimilation are, in man, the same perhaps, that exist in all organized beings, vegetable as well as animal; and are only a few degrees, as it were, above the agencies of mere inorganic matter. This resemblance is inferred from the phenomena of assimilation; not less than from the peculiar character of the nerves, distributed over the digestive organs; the effects of which nerves, as we shall presently endeavour to show, approach more nearly to the effects of common chemical agents, than to those of any agent belonging to the animal economy. These nerves compose what, from their peculiar structure, are termed the *ganglionic nerves*. In animals of the very lowest kind, the ganglionic nerves alone appear to exist; and though, in the more perfect animals, the ganglionic nerves are connected with others of a higher character, these nerves always form alone, a peculiar system; the functions of which seem to be of the subordinate character above noticed.

2. *Of Alimentary Substances.*—It may be considered as a general rule, that organized beings adopt, as aliments, substances lower than themselves in the scale of organization; or which, if not originally lower, are in some measure lowered, by certain spontaneous changes they undergo. There are, of course, innumerable ex-