

POLYTRICHUM KAMBAUCHIUM. 301
root found in Tahiti. It is highly fuscescent, though less sensitive than the yam; the stem resembles the woadstem or convolvulus. The natives say the flower is small and white; I never saw one, for it is not cultivated, and but seldom sought, as the tuberosous root is small, not more than two are seldom found attached to the same vine or stem.
The natives are acquainted with rice; but, although both the soil and climate would probably favour its growth, it has not yet been added to the culture of Tahiti. We have not been very anxious to introduce it, as the quantity of water required for its culture, would, we have supposed, induce in such a climate a state of atmosphere by no means conducive to health. But though they have not rice, they have a plant which they call Aoi, the shape and growth of which resembles the Potato; but its taste and appearance it is too much like rice, that the natives call the latter by the native designation of the former. It is very hardy, and only sought in seasons of scarcity.
The yam, or arrow-root, abounds among the indigenous and abundant. It is sometimes cultivated; but in most of the islands it grows spontaneously on the high sandy banks near the sea, or on the sides of the lower mountains, and appears to thrive in a light soil and dry situation. Though evidently of a superior quality, and capable of being produced in any quantity, it requires some labour to render it fit for food, and on this account was not extensively used by the natives, but formed rather a rarity in their dishes at public feasts, than an article of general consumption.
The growth of the arrow-root resembles that of the potato. Although indigenous, and growing upon

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