

islands, it appears strange to me that so many of our cultivated plants should be still unknown or only doubtfully known in the wild state. If, on the other hand, many of these plants have been profoundly modified by culture, the difficulty disappears. The difficulty would also be removed if they have been exterminated during the progress of civilisation; but M. De Candolle has shown that this probably has seldom occurred. As soon as a plant was cultivated in any country, the half-civilised inhabitants would no longer have need to search the whole surface of the land for it, and thus lead to its extirpation; and even if this did occur during a famine, dormant seeds would be left in the ground. In tropical countries the wild luxuriance of nature, as was long ago remarked by Humboldt, overpowers the feeble efforts of man. In anciently civilised temperate countries, where the whole face of the land has been greatly changed, it can hardly be doubted that some plants have become extinct; nevertheless De Candolle has shown that all the plants historically known to have been first cultivated in Europe still exist here in the wild state.

MM. Loiseleur-Deslongchamps<sup>4</sup> and De Candolle have remarked that our cultivated plants, more especially the cereals, must originally have existed in nearly their present state; for otherwise they would not have been noticed and valued as objects of food. But these authors apparently have not considered the many accounts given by travellers of the wretched food collected by savages. I have read an account of the savages of Australia cooking, during a dearth, many vegetables in various ways, in the hopes of rendering them innocuous and more nutritious. Dr. Hooker found the half-starved inhabitants of a village in Sikhim suffering greatly from having eaten arum-roots,<sup>5</sup> which they had pounded and left for several days to ferment, so as partially to destroy their poisonous nature; and he adds that they cooked and ate many

<sup>4</sup> 'Considérations sur les Céréales,' 1842, p. 37. 'Géographie Bot.,' 1855, p. 930. "Plus on suppose l'agriculture ancienne et remontant à une époque d'ignorance, plus il est probable que les cultivateurs avaient choisi

des espèces offrant à l'origine même un avantage incontestable."

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Hooker has given me this information. See, also, his 'Himalayan Journals,' 1854, vol. ii. p. 49.