

useful plant to Australia or the Cape of Good Hope,—countries abounding to an unparalleled degree with endemic species,—or to New Zealand, or to America south of the Plata; and, according to some authors, not to America northward of Mexico. I do not believe that any edible or valuable plant, except the canary grass, has been derived from an oceanic or uninhabited island. If nearly all our useful plants, natives of Europe, Asia, and South America, had originally existed in their present condition, the complete absence of similarly useful plants in the great countries just named would be indeed a surprising fact. But if these plants have been so greatly modified and improved by culture as no longer closely to resemble any natural species, we can understand why the above named countries have given us no useful plants, for they were either inhabited by men who did not cultivate the ground at all, as in Australia and the Cape of Good Hope, or who cultivated it very imperfectly, as in some parts of America. These countries do yield plants which are useful to savage man; and Dr. Hooker¹⁵ enumerates no less than 107 such species in Australia alone; but these plants have not been improved, and consequently cannot compete with those which have been cultivated and improved during thousands of years in the civilised world.

The case of New Zealand, to which fine island we as yet owe no widely cultivated plant, may seem opposed to this view; for, when first discovered, the natives cultivated several plants; but all inquirers believe, in accordance with the traditions of the natives, that the early Polynesian colonists brought with them seeds and roots, as well as the dog, which had been wisely preserved during their long voyage. The Polynesians are so frequently lost on the ocean that this degree of prudence would occur to any wandering party: hence the early colonists of New Zealand, like the later European colonists, would not have had any strong inducement to cultivate the aboriginal plants. According to De Candolle we owe thirty-three useful plants to Mexico, Peru, and Chile; nor is this surprising when we remember the civilized state of the inhabitants, as shown by the fact of

¹⁵ 'Flora of Australia,' Introduction, p. cx.