

there is found one assemblage of species in China, another in the countries bordering the Black Sea and the Caspian, a third in those surrounding the Mediterranean, a fourth in the great platforms of Siberia and Tartary, and so forth.

The distinctness of the groups of indigenous plants, in the same parallel of latitude, is greatest where continents are disjoined by a wide expanse of ocean. In the northern hemisphere, near the pole, where the extremities of Europe, Asia, and America unite or approach near to one another, a considerable number of the same species of plants are found, common to the three continents. But it has been remarked, that these plants, which are thus so widely diffused in the arctic regions, are also found in the chain of the Aleutian islands, which stretch almost across from America to Asia, and which may probably have served as the channel of communication for the partial blending of the Floras of the adjoining regions. It has, indeed, been observed to be a general rule, that plants found at two points very remote from each other occur also in places intermediate.

Dr. J. Hooker informs me that in high latitudes in the southern ocean, in spite of the great extent of the sea, Floras of widely disconnected islands contain many species in common. Perhaps icebergs, transporting to vast distances not only stones, but soil with the seeds of plants, may explain this unusually wide diffusion of insular plants.

In islands very distant from continents the total number of plants is comparatively small; but a large proportion of the species are such as occur nowhere else. In so far as the Flora of such islands is not peculiar to them, it contains, in general, species common to the nearest main lands.* The islands of the great southern ocean exemplify these rules; the easternmost containing more American, and the western more Indian plants.† Madeira and Teneriffe contain many species, and even entire genera, peculiar to them; but they have also plants in common with Portugal, Spain, the Azores, and the north-west coast of Africa.‡

In the Canaries, out of 533 species of phænogamous plants, it is said that 310 are peculiar to these islands, and the rest identical with those of the African continent; but in the Flora of St. Helena, which is so far distant even from the western shores of Africa, there have been found, out of thirty native species of the phænogamous class, only *one or two* which are to be found in any other part of the globe. On the other hand, of sixty cryptogamic plants, collected by Dr. J. Hooker in the same island, twelve only were peculiar.

The natural history of the Galapagos archipelago, described by Mr. Darwin, affords another very instructive illustration of the laws governing the geographical distribution of plants and animals in islands. This group consists of ten principal islands, situated in the

* Prichard, vol. i. p. 36. Brown, Appendix to Flinders.

† Forster, Observations, &c.

‡ Humboldt, Pers. Nar. vol. i. p. 270. of the translation. Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 37.