

from his necessarily weak and imperfect handling of the subject, so noble a theme should lose, in the minds of those who hear him, any of that interest which ought to belong to it.

Under the term *Physical Geography* are included a variety of different factors. For, as has been well observed by an eminent writer upon this subject, *mere* description is not sufficient to give us an adequate and connected idea of the whole surface of our globe, not only in its individual parts but in its entirety. We must ascend to the causes and descend to the consequences of the various physical phenomena presented to us in our survey of the earth's surface, ere our system of Physical Geography be complete. I would therefore define Physical Geography to be the aggregate of those facts which we glean from a study of the earth's surface, diversified as it is by sea and land, mountains and valleys, lakes and rivers, winds and tides; and, combined with this, some considerable acquaintance with the causes which underlie the mutual action and reaction of these various natural phenomena. Let me illustrate to you the necessity of some acquaintance with the causes of which I speak. Our geographies inform us that certain fogs arise continually off the coast of Newfoundland; but how meagre and unsatisfactory would be this as a mere fact, were we not also to discover the cause of this phenomenon to be the meeting of two opposite and distinct currents of water—the one proceeding from the cold waters of the Arctic Ocean, the other carrying with it across the Atlantic the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. In a full and complete system of Physical Geography must also be included all climatic influences, such as the prevailing winds, the relative amount of heat and cold, the slope of any particular country or continent, its amount of coast line, and many other particulars, all of which have some bearing on the character of the country, and the occupations and destinies of its people.

Taking Physical Geography in this broad and extensive sense, we shall find, I think, that its connection with the collective life of our race has been close and intimate.

Not only the inspired Word of God itself, but the traditions of nearly all the great races of the world point to the plains lying along the upper portion of the Tigris and Euphrates as the cradle of the human race.

And in the natural features of that country we find many reasons to prove to us the wisdom of the Creator in selecting that particular locality as the birthplace of mankind. The soil is rendered rich by the alluvial deposits left by the periodical overflow of the rivers, and thus agriculture was rendered easy and simple to our infant race; while, on the other hand, the want of rain obliging them to have recourse to artificial irrigation, and also their struggles to keep the rivers within bounds, had a tendency to develop and foster careful industry and considerable attention to the useful arts. But as population increased and the circles of settlement grew wider and wider, the inhabitants of the different sections of country began each to assume different characteristics—each to bear different types stamped on them by their physical surroundings.

The old world may be divided into two great and essentially different portions, viz., the country lying west of the Hindoo Koosh mountains, including the western portion of Asia and the whole of Europe; and that lying east of that range of mountains, which section includes India, Burmah, China, and Japan.

Let us glance briefly at the grand physical characteristics of the latter portion. We find it a region in which the soil is richer and requires less laborious cultivation than in the west; the climate is more enervating in its effects upon the human system. Again, we find that the whole of Eastern Asia is one vast inclosure, shut in by mountain ranges; and across this run mountain ridges which cut it up into countries and tracts, shut out from each other by almost impassable barriers. You will easily see what would be the effect upon national character of these natural phenomena. The easiness of cultivation, combined with the enervating climate, would make the inhabitants indolent and greatly lacking in energy. Again, the great mountain barriers would tend to shut each nation in upon itself, and to prevent free and extensive commerce among the different peoples of the continent. Furnished so easily with all that they required by the hand of bountiful Nature, these Eastern nations had no mind to travel beyond the confines of their own country to obtain all that could make life easy and pleasant. Thus would grow up a spirit of exclusiveness, of intense dislike