

may be described as including the Mediterranean and Aralo-Caspian basins, extending from the Iberian peninsula eastward to the Thian-Chan Mountains of Central Asia. In this great belt, extending over about 90° of longitude, are included all the historic volcanoes of the ancient world, to which we must add the extinct volcanoes of Murcia, Catalonia, Auvergne, the Vivarais, the Eifel, Hungary, etc., some of which have probably been active during the human period.

It is a most significant fact that this region is nearly coextensive with that occupied for ages by the great civilizing races of the world. From the plateau of central Asia, throughout their westward migration to the pillars of Hercules, the Indo-European nations were familiar with the volcano and the earthquake; and that the Semitic race were not strangers to the same phenomena, the whole poetic imagery of the Hebrew Scriptures bears ample evidence. In the language of their writers, the mountains are molten, they quake and fall down at the presence of the Deity, when the melting fire burneth. The fury of his wrath is poured forth like fire; he toucheth the hills and they smoke, while fire and sulphur come down to destroy the doomed cities of the plain, whose foundation is a molten flood. Not less does the poetry and the mythology of Greece and of Rome bear the impress of the nether realm of fire in which the volcano and the earthquake have their seat, and their influence is conspicuous throughout the imaginative literature and the religious systems of the Indo-European nations, whose contact with these terrible manifestations of unseen forces beyond their foresight or control, could not fail to act strongly on their moral and intellectual development, which would have doubtless presented very different phases had the early home of these races been the Australian or the eastern side of the American continent, where volcanoes are unknown, and the earthquake is scarcely felt.*

Besides the great region just indicated, must be mentioned that of our own Pacific slope, from Fuegia to Aliaska, from

* Compare the fine lines of Pope, in the *Essay on Man*, where, of superstition, the poet says:

"She, 'mid the lightning's glare, the thunder's sound,
While rocked the earthquake, and while rolled the ground,
She taught the proud to bend, the weak to pray—
To Powers unseen and mightier far than they,
She, 'mid the rending earth and bursting skies,
Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
Here fixed the baleful, there the blest abodes—
Fear made her devils and weak hope her gods,"