

they wind along the hot lowlands, approaching nearer until they come together at their mouth. The land here is low and flat, and is overgrown with trees and vines. These jungles abound in tigers and rhinoceroses, and the waters swarm with crocodiles.

643. An ignorant people, called Hindoos, who live in Hindostan, look upon the Ganges as a holy river. Mothers, who have not the Bible to teach them the way to eternal happiness, sometimes throw their children into its waters, believing that they will thus be borne to a land of hills.

644. The **Euphrates** and **Tigris** flow through a region remarkable in the records of ancient history.

645. Long ages ago the city of *Nineveh*, to which the prophet Jonah was sent, stood on the banks of the Tigris; and *Babylon*, where Daniel lived, was on the Euphrates. These cities were very large, and were surrounded by high and broad walls. They were destroyed many hundred years ago, and after a long time they became covered with sand and grass, so as to appear like mounds of earth. Lately men have been digging into these mounds, and many curious things have been discovered.

Lakes.—646. The fresh-water lakes of Asia are all quite small, except *Baikal* and *Balkash*, in the south of Russian Asia. Salt lakes are numerous. The *Caspian Sea* and the *Sea of Aral* are the largest. The *Dead Sea* is remarkable for its low situation.

Climate and Products.—647. The southern countries of Asia have a hot climate, and produce cotton, silk, rice, coffee, and many kinds of fruit. Here also we find cinnamon trees, all kinds of spices, and fragrant gum trees, so that the air is filled with rich perfume.

The most fertile countries of Asia are India, China, and the countries south of China.

648. The table-lands of the interior have cold winters and hot summers. The mountains here get all the rain, so that the plains are dry, and unsuited to agriculture. Even the streams which flow from the mountains are soon dried up or lost in the sand. A vast region here is called the *Desert of Gobi*. In the western part of these table-lands there are fertile valleys; but as we go east into Mongolia, there are no streams of water, cultivated fields, houses, or cities. Only near the mountains we find water and pasture-lands.

649. The northern part of Asia, called *Siberia*, is a cold country, like the northern part of America.

Animals.—650. In the forests south of the Himalayas the wild animals are large and numerous, including elephants, lions, tigers, hyenas, and huge serpents. The animals in *Siberia* are similar to those in the north of America.

Inhabitants.—651. Asia is said to contain about three-fifths of all the people in the world. Nearly all are heathens, knowing nothing of the Bible, or the way of salvation which it teaches. In the western part of Asia most of the people are called *Mohammedans*, because they believe in a false prophet named Mohammed; in the east they worship idols.

652. Mohammed lived in Arabia over twelve hundred years ago. He told the people that God had spoken to him through an angel, and had sent him to teach them. He wrote a book called the *Koran*, which he said the angel gave him. When he had gained a few followers, he armed them and went from place to place, compelling all to take him as their prophet and king, and the *Koran* as their Bible.

653. The people who live near the desert plains dwell in tents, and their property consists of cattle, horses, camels, and sheep. Their food consists mostly of milk and flesh, and they are always roving about in search of fresh pasture.

654. The people of Asia are much less civilized than those of Europe and America. In most of the countries they have no schools, books, or newspapers, and know nothing of other parts of the world. Throughout the greater part of this large continent there are no railroads, or even common roads or waggons. Merchants travel in large companies, called caravans, conveying their goods on camels and mules. In crossing the deserts they carry water with them.

655. It is dangerous to travel in the countries inhabited by the roving shepherds. These lawless people not only rob and murder strangers, but they are always at war with each other. Sometimes a plundering company of horsemen come suddenly on an unsuspecting tribe, drive off their flocks, and seizing the women and children, sell them for slaves.

Divisions.—656. The principal countries of Asia are *Asiatic Russia*, *Asiatic Turkey*, *Arabia*, *Persia*, *Afghanistan*, *Beloochistan*, *British India*, *Burmah*, *Siam*, *Anam*, the *Chinese Empire*, and *Japan*.

Towns.—657. The largest cities of Asia are in China, Japan, and India.

In the cities of Western and Central Asia the streets are often so narrow and crooked that carriages cannot be driven through them. The houses have flat roofs, and they usually have no windows towards the street, but are lighted from a court or open space in the middle.

Government.—658. The countries of Asia are generally badly governed. The laws are not made by representatives chosen by the people, as in our own country. The chief ruler, who is often a selfish, ignorant tyrant, makes such laws as please