

INTRODUCTION.

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA.

BY NATHANIEL S. SHALER,
Professor of Paleontology in Harvard University.

Part I.

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THE continents of the earth have two distinct types of form,—the one regular, symmetrical, triangular in outline; the other without these regularities of shape. To the first of these groups belong the continents of Africa and Australia of the Old World, and the two Americas of the New; to the second, the massive continent of Europe and Asia. Some have sought to reduce the continent of Asia to the same type as that of the other continents; but a glance at a map of the hemispheres will show how different is this Indo-European continent from the other land-masses.

These general features of the continents are not only of scientific interest; they are of the utmost importance to the history of man's development upon these several lands. It is not without meaning, that, while man has existed for a great length of time upon all the continents, the only original civilizations that have been developed have been on the lands of the Indo-European continent. Working on several different lines of advance, several diverse races—Aryan, Semitic, Chinese, and perhaps others—have risen from the common plane of barbarism, and have created complicated social systems, languages, literatures, and arts; while on the four other continents, despite their great area, greater fertility, and wider range of physical conditions, no race has ever had a native development to be compared with that undergone by the several successful races of Asia and Europe.¹

In this great Old-World continent there are many highly individualized areas, each separated from the rest of the continent by strong geographical barriers; it has a dozen

¹ Egypt may perhaps afford an exception; but it is probable that the germs of its civilization came from Asia. All its relations are essentially Asiatic.