

**CLASSIC LIVING BOOK**

**THE  
BRITISH EMPIRE**  
AND THE GREAT DIVISIONS  
OF THE GLOBE

Charlotte M. Mason

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GEOGRAPHICAL READER BOOK 2

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## EDITORS NOTE.

Charlotte Mason wrote this book in a time very different from ours. It is fascinating to read about the cities and countries as they were a little over one hundred years ago.

If you are familiar with any of the locations described in this book you will notice how much has changed in the ways people travel, the industries of areas, and how people make their living. Another thing that has changed a lot since this book was written is our understanding other cultures. Because travel was so time consuming and expensive many of the descriptions of distant lands and people included in the book come from the observations and writing of others. Viewed with today's understanding some of these descriptions were ignorant, wildly inaccurate and offensive. Ms. Mason went against the feeling of the day with respect to education and believed that every child, no matter their background, was capable of learning and understanding. Had she had the opportunity to meet many of the people negatively described by others I have no doubt that she would have believed they too were far better than the descriptions that were originally used.

In keeping with what I believe Ms. Mason would have desired I have deleted a few phrases from the book that were particularly negative toward entire groups of people.

Footnotes of what was changed have not been included as I believe some of the original descriptions would only serve to diminish the respect in which Ms. Mason and her work are held.

Anthony

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## PREFACE.

Children should be familiar with the Map of the World before the geography of any division of the earth's surface is studied in detail, and perhaps the year in "Standard III." is a good time in which to lay this foundation for geographical knowledge.

"The situation of the several parts of the earth is better learned by one day's conversing with a map, than by merely reading the description of their situation a hundred times over in a book of geography."—*Dr. Watts, 'On the Improvement of the Mind.'*

It is hoped this little book may prove of use as a "Child's Guide to the Map of the World." The object of the reading lessons is to associate ideas of interest with the various States and regions of the world, with the situation of which the children are made familiar; and, at the same time, to convey in simple language a few of the leading facts and principles of Geography.

The parts of the British Empire are treated in detail; these, being widely scattered, are best studied in connection with the divisions of the earth to which they belong.

It is proposed that only the chapters relating to the British Empire should be studied for examination purposes, the rest of the book being read by the class to promote intelligence in their special work.

C. M. M



LESSON I.  
**THE SEAS AND SHORES OF EUROPE.<sup>1</sup>**

The seas which bound Europe are branches of the Atlantic, excepting on the north, where the cold waters of the Arctic Ocean wash the coasts. The Atlantic is a much smaller ocean than the Pacific, but it is much more used by the ships which carry on the commerce of the world. It lies between the west coasts of Europe and Africa, and the east coast of America.

The bed of this ocean is unlike that of the Pacific; the high places do not often rise into mountains that appear above water as groups of islands, but they are long, level heights, or plateaus, a great way under water, although much higher than the rest of the ocean bottom. The low parts of the ocean floor lie at a depth of about five miles.

Cables by which telegraphic messages are sent from Europe to America extend from the island of Valencia (off the west coast of Ireland) to Newfoundland, along the floor of the sea at a depth of three miles, in some places, below the surface of the water.

A strange fact about the Atlantic is the movement through its northern basin of a mighty river of warm sea-water. This river is larger than all the fresh water rivers of the world together; and instead of having banks of solid earth, it is walled in on either side by the ocean waters.

This river is the *Gulf Stream*, and its waters keep thus distinct because warm water does not mix readily with cold: it consists of ocean-water which has been heated under the burning sun of the tropics, that is, in the hottest part of the world. This stream flows towards the west, into the Gulf of Mexico, where it is shut in for a while under a hot tropical sun, and when it comes out through

<sup>1</sup> For a notice of the general distribution of land and water, see Book I.

the Strait of Florida, it is the broad river of very warm water we have spoken of. Because it has come out of a gulf, it is known as the *Gulf Stream*.

Having swept out of the Strait of Florida, the Gulf Stream flows nearly as far north as Newfoundland; then it crosses the ocean, and one part of the stream passes Britain and Norway. The water loses much of its heat as it flows towards the cold north, but it is still warm enough when it reaches England to keep our harbours from being frozen, and to warm the westerly winds which blow from off the sea over our own country and the maritime countries of Western Europe.

Not only this warm stream, but all the waters which wash the shores of Europe help to make its climate pleasant. Water does not become so hot as dry land in summer, nor so cold in winter. Hence the winds that blow over seas and become filled with watery vapour are cool and pleasant in the summer, and mild and moist in the winter. It is plain, then, that if the winds which reach a country have come across wide waters, that land must have a more pleasant, *temperate* climate than another land which has no sea-breeze to cool it during summer heat, nor warm it during winter cold.

LESSON V.  
**PLAINS AND MOUNTAINS OF EUROPE.**

PART II.

TURNING now to the map of Europe, we notice that the three southern peninsulas are well covered with mountains, while they are marked thickest in Switzerland, the beautiful little country lying to the north of Italy. In fact, the Swiss mountains seem to be the centre of those in the south-west of Europe, and several ranges branch from them into France, Germany, and Austria, as well as into the three peninsulas.

Hungary, a country which forms part of Austria, has a chain of mountains named the Carpathians, curving round its eastern side.

There is also a range, quite away from the rest, stretching from the north to the south of Scandinavia. These are called the Scandinavian Mountains.

All the rest of Europe is very flat, and forms a great plain which takes in the whole of Russia, as well as the countries to the south of the Baltic Sea and the German Ocean. Nearly half of Russia is covered with immense forests, some of them much larger than all the British Isles put together.

Holland, where the sea is kept out by embankments, is one of the lowest parts of the great plain. The other very low part is at the south-east end, round the Caspian Sea; here, a high wind drives the sea-waters over the land; and not only the waters, but the vessels upon them are at times driven upon shore.

In the north of this plain, in Russia, are Ladoga and Onega, the two largest lakes in Europe. Lakes are common in mountain valleys, but sometimes, as here, they fill up the lowest parts of a plain. The long range of Scandinavian Mountains runs close to the Atlantic coast; the sea rushes in between these mountains and

fills the narrow valleys which are called *fiords*. The summits of this range are, in the north, covered with perpetual snow and ice, but the sides are clothed with great forests of pine; indeed, these pine forests cover more than three-quarters of the peninsula. There are several large lakes in Sweden, Wener and Wetter being the largest.

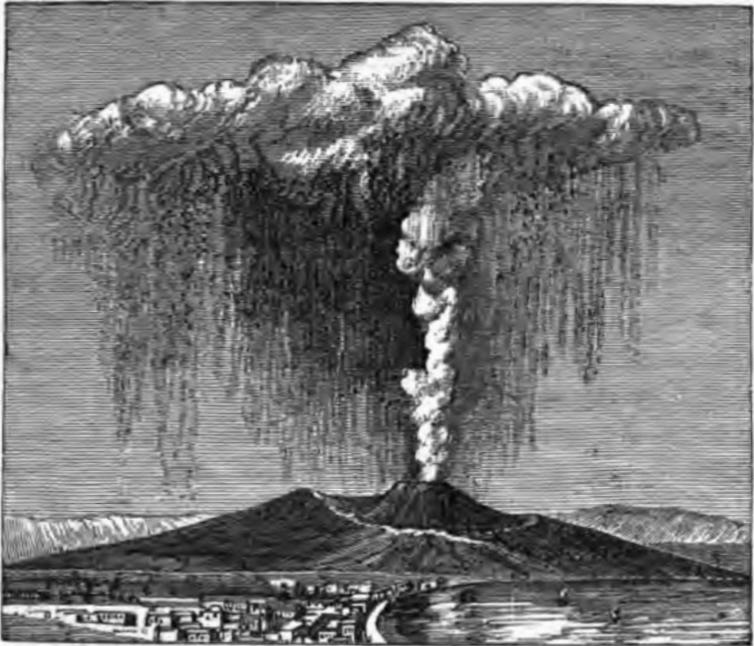
The Alps, the highest and grandest of all the mountain ranges of Europe, nearly fill up the little country of Switzerland; whichever way you look, their snowy summits rise, range behind range, further than the eye can follow. We can only get into Italy from Switzerland by crossing a chain of these high Alps, and several passes lead from the one country to the other, as the Splügen Pass, the Simplon Pass, and others. Mont Blanc, the highest point in the Alps, is also the highest mountain in Europe; it falls within the boundary line of France, and is 15,781 feet in height. Many lovely lakes fill up the Alpine valleys; of these, Geneva is the largest.

The Apennine chain, which is a spur of the Alps, runs through Central Italy from north to south, reaching into the heel of the boot, and down into the toe, and under the water, and out again into Sicily. These mountains are mostly covered with forests of chestnut trees, the nuts of which are a common food of the people. This range contains two volcanoes, or burning mountains, Vesuvius in Italy, and Etna in Sicily. These mountains do not always emit fire, but at times strange rumblings are heard from within them, and smoke and flame may be seen rising from an opening at the top called the *crater*. Then streams of melted matter, called lava, pour down the sides of the mountain, and showers of ashes are shot up into the air and fall upon the plain below. Many centuries ago, two towns which stood at the foot of Vesuvius were buried, the one under ashes, and the other under lava.

Mount Hecla, in Iceland, is also a volcano.

The Balkan Peninsula is full of mountains, the valleys between

which are often only deep dark gorges. The Balkan range, which runs through the middle of the country from west to east, is sometimes called the back-bone of Turkey.



Spain is another mountainous peninsula. The Pyrenees Mountains separate it from France on the north, and several ranges cross the country from east to west. All the centre of Spain, that is, nearly half the peninsula, is a high table-land where green things are parched up in summer for want of rain.

Both the Carpathians and the various mountain ranges of Germany are rich in mineral treasures, and many men are employed in the mines. Gold and silver, quicksilver, copper, lead, and iron are found in these rich mountains.

LESSON VI.  
**RIVERS OF EUROPE.**

THE map of Europe shows many river lines, for the whole continent is *well watered*.

The frozen plains of Northern Russia have, plainly, a northward slope, because the river Dwina flows in that direction into the White Sea. During the short, hot summer of these regions, Archangel, which stands at the mouth of the Dwina, is the great seaport of the north; but for more than half the year no ships can sail in those frost-bound seas.

Look, now, at the Scandinavian peninsula. The mountains which form the *waterparting* of the country run from north to south, so the land has an eastern and a western slope, down each of which the rivers flow. As the mountains run close to the sea on the western side, the rivers have very short courses, and are, for the most part, mountain torrents hurrying to the ocean. The Swedish rivers have a rather longer slope to run down, but as they only cross the country from the mountains to the Baltic Sea, where they empty themselves, none of these are large or important rivers.

The central plain of Europe, which lies along the southern coasts of the Baltic and North Seas, has a northward slope, for four or five large rivers empty themselves into these seas after a northward course. The Vistula and the Oder flow into the Baltic; the Elbe into the North Sea; and further west, the Rhine, coming out of Holland, enters this same sea. The Rhine is a wide, and, in its earlier course, a rapid river, which has its sources in the high Alps. It is more beautiful than any other river in Europe. Most of its course is in Germany, and the Germans love it well and sing songs in its praise.

The Seine, which is spanned by beautiful bridges and has the

fair city of Paris on its banks, is another northward flowing river which empties itself into the English Channel.

Our own Thames, upon which London stands, flows down a slight eastward slope from the Cotswold Hills to the North Sea. Though much smaller than many of the rivers of the Continent, it is as famous as any for its great city, and for all the ships upon its waters. It has a wide mouth, into which the tide wave of the sea rushes. This kind of river mouth is called an *estuary*.

Now we come to the westward slope of the Continent, which we can easily discern, as half a dozen rivers in France and Spain flow in a westerly direction.

Flowing into the Bay of Biscay, is the Loire, a large French river which often overflows its banks, to the great distress of the people, whose houses and crops are thus destroyed.

Further south, the Gironde also opens into the Bay of Biscay. This is an estuary into which two French rivers flow.

The chief rivers of Spain, the Douro, Tagus, Guadiana, and Guadalquivir, flow down a westward slope towards the Atlantic, into which they empty themselves. Each of these rivers has its course between two of the mountain chains which cross the country.

The Ebro, another large Spanish river, enters the Mediterranean after a course down an eastward slope.

When we reach the southern shores of Europe, we expect the land to slope and the rivers to flow southward, as the land usually slopes towards the sea. This is the case with the Rhone, which rises among Alpine snows, flows through "Geneva's blue waters," makes a few turns upon entering France, and then flows southward with a wonderfully straight and rapid course to the Mediterranean, where it empties itself. Rising at so great a height, this river has a very rapid current; it tears up the ground in its hasty course, and brings with it much earth and stones, which it lays down at its mouth.

Land formed at the mouth of a river by the mud which it brings down is called a *delta*, from its resemblance to the Greek letter ( $\Delta$ ) so called; and most rivers divide, as the Rhone does, into several mouths when they reach the deltas they have formed.

The direction of the mountains which fill the two peninsulas of Italy and the Balkan prevents the rivers from having a southern course, wherefore we find that the Po and the Danube both flow down eastward slopes.

The Po, rising like the Rhone in the Alps, is also a very rapid river which flows across Northern Italy and into the Adriatic. As both the Po and its tributaries rise in high mountains, they tear along so fast that they bring much earth with them; so this river, also, has made a delta which stretches more than ten miles into the sea.

The wide and beautiful "blue Danube" flows into the Black Sea. You will see on the map that at one part of its course, near where it first forms the boundary between Roumania and Bulgaria, the mountains on either side of the river nearly meet. The narrowest part of this ravine is called the Iron Gate, where the river flows through a deep and narrow gorge more than a mile in length.

No mountains divert the courses of the slow rivers which flow through the flat steppes of Southern Russia; therefore these, the Dniester, the Dnieper, and the Don, creep down a slight southern slope to the Black Sea. So also does the Volga, which is the largest of all the rivers of Europe, and flows into the Caspian Sea. It is a slow, full river, which has never been near a mountain in all its course, and which never reaches the real sea; for the Caspian, though called a sea, is only a salt-water lake, as it does not open into the ocean.

## QUESTIONS ON THE MAP OF EUROPE.

1. Name the empire which occupies the east of Europe.
2. What two northern countries form a peninsula?
3. What country is a small peninsula, pointing to the north?
4. What country is washed by the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel?
5. How many large peninsulas are there in the south of Europe?
6. What two countries form the most western of these?
7. Name the central peninsula. What small country lies to the north of it?
8. What two countries form the eastern peninsula?
9. Name the two great central countries?
10. What countries of Europe are washed by the Mediterranean? By the Bay of Biscay? By the North Sea? By the Baltic? By the Arctic Ocean?
11. Which are the mountainous countries of Europe?
12. What countries belong to the great plain partly or altogether?
13. What are the Swiss mountains called?
14. Name the mountains of Italy.
15. What mountains divide France from Spain?
16. What mountain-chain crosses Turkey from Asia on the east? On the South?
17. Where are the Scandinavian mountains?
18. What mountains divide Europe from Asia on the east? On the south?
19. Name three rivers that flow into the Baltic.
20. Three that enter the German Ocean.
21. The river on which Paris stands.
22. A river which flows into the Bay of Biscay.
23. The two largest rivers which flow through Spain and Portugal.
24. A French river which flows into the Mediterranean.
25. An Italian river which falls into the Adriatic.
26. A large river which enters the Black Sea from Turkey.
27. The two largest rivers which enter the Black Sea from Russia.
28. The large river which flows into the Caspian.
29. Through what countries does the Danube flow? The Rhine? The Rhone?
30. In what countries are the Po, the Thames, the Elbe, the Volga, the Seine, the Dou, the Loire?
31. What four seas open into each other on the south? How are they connected with each other and with the ocean?
32. Name the countries of Europe which are most broken into by the sea.
33. Name the largest islands in each of the seas of Europe. With what oceans are these seas connected?

# BRITISH ISLES

SCALE OF MILES  
0 20 40 60 80 100 120



LESSON VII.  
**THE BRITISH ISLES.**

WHAT do we mean by the "British Isles"? The large island which contains the countries of England, Scotland, and Wales; and Ireland, the smaller island to the west. These are certainly *the* British Isles, in every way the most important of them; therefore the larger island is called *Great Britain* by way of distinction. But the two or three large and the numerous small islands off the coast of England, and the hundreds of islands off the Scotch coast, and the thousands of islets off the coast of Ireland, are also British isles. These are not *great* Britains by any means; some of them are very small indeed, being merely rocks, rising out of the sea, the wild haunts of swarms of sea-birds; others are large enough to be the homes of a few fisher folk; others, again, are large islands with farms and villages and busy towns upon them.

These British Isles keep on the whole close together, clustering round the large island of Great Britain; that, again, is only separated from the Continent by the narrow North Sea and the still narrower English Channel. If this narrow sea could be drained away we might go by rail to France and Holland and Belgium—a delightful idea to persons who wish to travel on the Continent, while they dread the miseries of sea-sickness.

So narrow are the Straits of Dover, which connect the English Channel with the North Sea, that a man might walk in a few hours the 21 miles which here divide England from France.

If the North Sea were to disappear, the slope to the bottom of its bed would be so slight that we should hardly know we were going down-hill. Imagine any of the low green hills of Southern England to be suddenly lifted from their bases, and set in the midst of this sea; they would not be covered, but would rise as islands, often

high above the waters. Indeed, if the churches in your town could be taken up as they stand and placed on the sea floor, the spires would most likely rise above water; for the seas between Britain and the Continent are in few places more than 150 feet deep.

The fact is, that at one time, ages before "History" began, there were no British Isles and no North Sea, but the Continent stretched into the ocean a good way beyond the furthest coast of Ireland. Now, the eastern shores of England lie so low in some places that huge banks have been raised to keep out the sea; still lower do the opposite coasts of Holland and Belgium lie; wherefore these are called the Netherlands, or lowlands, while "Holland" merely means "hollow land." It is supposed that the land which once lay between these two opposite shores was also low, and that it sank at a slow rate, say a few inches in a year, until a sunken bed was formed. Then the waters of the Atlantic rushed in and filled the hollow, which thus became a narrow, shallow sea; and in this way the land we call Great Britain was cut off from the Continent and surrounded by water. In the same way, the ocean may have rushed into another hollow bed on the west, and so made another sea, cutting off the island which we call Ireland. And how are all the small islands which cluster round the great ones to be accounted for? Most likely these were at one time mountains, rising round the ancient shore; and when the sea covered the lowlands, the mountain tops remained above water, and now appear as islands.

Are you inclined to think it is a pity we should have been thus cut off from the Continent? It is, on the whole, a good thing for us; we Britons like to have our island home to ourselves, just as every English family likes to have a separate dwelling; while on the Continent it is usual for many families to live in a single large house. Being thus divided from them by the sea, we need never be disturbed by the disputes of other nations.