

EUROPE.

POSITION, SIZE, AND BOUNDARIES.

EUROPE and Asia together form one great land mass, which is sometimes called Eurasia; for Europe is only a peninsula of Asia which has been raised to the rank of a continent for historical reasons, and on account of the commercial and political power of its inhabitants. Europe is, in fact, the smallest of the continents save Australia, and consists of about 3,850,000 square miles—an area equal to about one-fifth of Asia.

Europe is bounded by Asia on the east, the Mediterranean on the south, and the ocean on the north and west; and these surroundings have naturally affected the history of its inhabitants. The frontier on the east, between Europe and Asia, is purely artificial, though various physical features might have been selected to form part of it, such as the Ural and Caucasus Mountains, or the depression followed by the Manych tributary of the Don, which rises near the Caspian Sea. The Ural Mountains, however, are not high, and though they form to some extent a boundary between different types of vegetation, they have never proved an important barrier between the inhabitants on both sides, and have been easily crossed by the Siberian railway. The Urals terminate about 350 miles north of the Caspian Sea, and the fact that the grass-lands which extend over the southern regions of the great Asiatic plain also occupied much of Southern Russia and the plains of the Danube has tempted armies of mounted nomads to invade Europe by this gap from time to time, the most noted invasion being, perhaps, that in the fifth century by the Huns, who finally settled down in Hungary.

The Caucasus Mountains contain some of the highest peaks in Europe, and are as yet uncrossed by any railway, though an important road crosses them by the Dariel Pass, at a height of 4,120 feet, about their mid-point, and another road runs between their eastern termination and