

tains and highlands were still more densely clad with forests than at present, and modern methods of engineering and steam locomotion were unknown. These mountains serve, therefore, to mark off the districts around the Mediterranean as a region distinct from the rest of Europe, likely to be the seat of distinct types of civilization. They have also rendered of extreme historical importance such gaps or breaches in these barriers as exist and form natural routes for communication—such, for example, as the Straits of Gibraltar, the gap between the central French plateau and the Pyrenees, the Rhone and Rhine Valleys, various Alpine passes, and the route to the Black Sea by the Dardanelles, Sea of Marmora, and Bosphorus.

The folded ranges partially enclose three great depressions, which form the plains of the Po and of the Middle and Lower Danube, and adjoin the plateaus of ancient crystalline rock in the centres of Spain and Turkey.

QUESTIONS.

1. Draw a section showing the relief of Europe along the meridian of long. 15° E., and another along the parallel of lat. 45° N.
2. Under what circumstances and in what ways can mountains enhance the value of a region to man?
3. What facts have to be considered in order to decide whether it is likely to pay to construct a railway over a range?

RIVER SYSTEM.

Nearly half of Europe is drained by rivers which flow into the northern and western oceans, across the great northern plain. With the exception of those in the British Isles and Scandinavia, these rise in the belt of highlands and ranges which, roughly speaking, cross the continent from south-west to north-east, and form the main water-parting. The southern and eastern parts of Europe are watered by rivers flowing into the Caspian Sea, Black Sea, and Mediterranean; but the area drained to the last-named sea is comparatively small, because the mountains lie so close to the coast. The longest rivers in Europe are those which cross the plains of Southern Russia and Hungary—namely, the Volga, 2,200, and the Danube, 1,700 miles long; but these have the disadvantage of emptying into land-locked, or nearly enclosed, seas.

Several important rivers, like the Rhine, Danube, Rhone, and Po,