

## VEGETATION.

There is a great difference in the natural vegetation of the north-western, south-eastern, and Mediterranean regions of Europe. Much of the north-west was originally covered by forests, and though these have been cut down in the great plains to make room for crops, they still extend over much of Scandinavia and North Russia, besides over the slopes of the central plateaus and ranges. The prevailing trees in the north are pines, firs, and silver birches, while oaks and beeches are most common elsewhere, save on the higher slopes, where pines again take precedence. The crops best suited to the damp equable climate of this region are oats, barley, rye, flax, potatoes, and other root crops. In the extreme north are the Tundra—swamps composed of moss, and frozen throughout the greater part of the year; and south of this, in Britain, Scandinavia, and Russia, there are vast moorlands, covered with bogs, heather, and poor grass. The summits of the chief ranges in Europe are likewise barren, being composed of bare rocks, while many are always buried under snow.

The great plains of the Danube and Southern Russia were originally covered by grass, and much of the land is still in this condition, though cereals, like wheat and maize, which require a warm summer to ripen them, are supplanting the grass in many parts. Around the Caspian Sea the rainfall is so slight as to cause the district to partake of the nature of a desert studded with saline marshes.

Around the Mediterranean the summer drought gives rise to a vegetation adapted to withstand this drawback, except in those favoured districts that can be artificially irrigated. Wheat grows well in many parts, because, if it can obtain a fair amount of moisture in the early stages of growth, it is all the better for little when the ear is ripening. Some plants can endure a long drought because they have long roots, and so can obtain moisture from a great depth, like the vine and the fodder-plant, allied to clover, called lucerne, which are therefore typical of this region. Other plants, like lilies and tulips, have bulbous roots, in which they can store up moisture; others have leaves which are thick-skinned, and so prevent the rapid loss of moisture by evaporation, like the laurel, orange, olive, and lemon. Pine-trees are also characteristic, as the small leaves present little surface from which moisture can be evaporated, and are covered by a hard skin, and similarly certain palms.