

As a rule, the trees in this district are scattered over the land in small clumps, giving it a park-like appearance in places, though formerly large areas were covered by forests, which have been cut down.

We see, therefore, that climatic conditions are mainly responsible for the great contrast in the vegetation, and consequently to a large extent in the scenery, of various parts of Europe. This contrast has been forcibly described by Ruskin in the following passage in 'Stones of Venice,' where he presents us with a picture of the continent as it might be seen by a bird travelling northwards :

'Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their [*i.e.*, the swallows'] flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun; here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light; Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy beaten work of mountain chains; and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plumy palm, that abate with their gray-green shadows the burning of their marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry glowing under lucent sand. Then let us pass further towards the north, until we see the orient colours change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green, where the pastures of Switzerland and the poplar valleys of France and the dark forests of the Danube and Carpathians stretch from the mouths of the Loire to those of the Volga, seen through clefts in gray swirls of rain-cloud and flaky veils of the mist of the brooks spreading low along the pasture-lands: and then farther north still, to see the earth heave into mighty masses of leaden rock and heathy moor, bordering with a broad waste of gloomy purple that belt of field and wood, and splintering into irregular and grisly islands amidst the northern seas, beaten by storm, and chilled by ice-drift, and tormented by furious pulses of contending tide, until the roots of the last forests fail from among the hill ravines, and the hunger of the north wind bites their peaks into barrenness, and, at last, the wall of ice, durable like iron, sets, death-like, its white teeth against us out of the polar twilight.'

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION.

The chief factors controlling the distribution of population in Europe at present are climate, the relief and fertility of the land, and the distribution of mineral wealth, especially that of coal (see p. 11). From the map on p. 25 it will be seen that the regions of densest population on the mainland of Europe: are (1) an area embracing the fertile basins of the Rhine, Scheldt, Somme, and Lower Seine, and possessing several coal-fields; (2) an area stretching over much of Central Germany, and extending into Austria, which is also rich in minerals; (3) the northern portion of Italy, which is extremely fertile.