

The least populated regions are : (1) the northern portion of the continent, where the climate is cold, and the soil relatively unproductive ; (2) the south-eastern portion of Russia, which suffers from drought, and has a salt and sandy soil ; (3) Alpineland and the central plateau of Spain, where agriculture is impossible over large areas. The whole of Russia and the Balkan Peninsula have but a slight population compared with the countries of Central Europe.

In North Africa population is confined, on account of the desert, to the coastal regions and along the fertile valley of the Nile, while in Asia Minor also it is limited to the coast by the plateau of the interior.

RACES AND LANGUAGES.

Most of the inhabitants of Europe and the seaboard of the Mediterranean belong to what is called the Caucasian race, but the Lapps, who live in the North of Scandinavia, and a few wandering tribes in the South-East of Russia belong to the Mongolian race. This race is distinguished by the round heads and slightly oblique eyes of its members, who are, on the average, shorter than those of the Caucasian stock. Languages of Mongolian origin are also spoken by the Finns, the Huns, and the Turks.

The languages spoken by the remaining inhabitants include : (1) Those of Greek or Latin origin, which are predominant in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, France, and part of Switzerland and Austria. (2) Those of Teutonic origin, mainly spoken in England, Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, Denmark, and the western part of the Austrian Empire. (3) Those of Slavonic origin, which prevail in Russia, Bohemia, and parts of the Balkan Peninsula. (4) Celtic languages, which are spoken by the inhabitants of Brittany in France, and by the native Welsh, Irish, and Scotch Highlanders in the United Kingdom. (5) Various corrupt forms of the Arabic language, which prevail in North Africa.

From the preceding pages it will be seen that, having regard to the geological structure, drainage, climate, and vegetation of Europe, the continent naturally falls into the following important regions—*i.e.*, the Mediterranean, north-western, and south-eastern. Of these, the Mediterranean region is here treated first, on account of its early economic development ; and the same consideration has mainly determined the order in which the countries comprising this region are described.