

ASIA.

THE BOUNDARIES OF ASIA, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON HISTORY.

THE mainland of Asia lies entirely north of the equator, and is bounded by the Arctic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans on the north, east, and south respectively. On the south-east it is linked to Australia by the East Indies, and on the south-west to Africa by the isthmus of Suez. On the west it is continuous with Europe.

The European Boundary.—Although, for historical reasons, Europe and Asia are regarded as separate continents, it is well to realize that the present political division is purely artificial; for even the Urals do not form an important barrier to communication, and cease, moreover, about 350 miles north of the Caspian. Through the gap thus left, Asiatic nomads have invaded Europe from time to time; and these inroads have been facilitated by the fact that the grasslands of Southern Siberia are continued across Southern Russia and the Danubian plains. By this route the Huns entered Europe in the fifth century, and the Mongolo-Tatars in the thirteenth. The latter established themselves in Southern and Western Russia, and though their dominion had been greatly reduced by the close of the sixteenth century, the Mongol Khanate of the extreme south-west, which had become a Turkish power, was not conquered till 1783. Meanwhile, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Russians had spread eastward to the Pacific, and thus acquired the whole of North Asia. *N.W. Boundary*

The **Caucasus Mountains**, which may be regarded as forming the boundary between Europe and South-West Asia, although the political frontier lies to the south, are high and as yet uncrossed by any railway. About their mid-point, however, a road leads over the **Dariel Pass**, at a height of more than 4,000 feet; and a railway runs between the eastern end of the range and the Caspian. In spite of this barrier, the region bounded by the Red Sea, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caspian, and Persian