Review: Ratzel's 'Political Geography'

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RATZEL'S 'POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY.'*

PROF. RATZEL has done a service for which geographical students will be grateful, by bringing together for the first time in systematic form the data and problems with which political geography has to deal. The subject, as hitherto treated in our text-books, has been the driest and most unprofitable of all tasks. It was from this barren presentation of the subject that the general conception of "geography" was obtained, and it is no wonder that serious educationists treated it with contempt, and that it was despised and rejected at our universities. Our Society has had a hard struggle in its endeavour to show that this prevailing conception of geography was completely inadequate and unwarranted, and that when dealt with as it might be, and as it is in Germany, it was worthy even of a place in the university. Happily, the Society's efforts have met with a great measure of success, and with Prof. Ratzel's elaborate treatise of about 700 pages at our command, it may be shown that even the hitherto despised "Political Geography" may be made a study full of human interest, worthy of the serious attention of statesmen, political economists, and historians. As Prof. Ratzel points out, the "State" is often treated as if it were "in the air," and had no connection with the land on which communities live and move and have their being. Yet long ago Ritter showed the intimate relations which exist between humanity and the geographical stage on which it plays its part. With even more point and profundity Peschel did the same, though in a somewhat fragmentary way. Prof. Ratzel's 'Anthropogeography' may be regarded as a more systematic attempt to show the general relations between man and his geographical environment. Both in Germany and in France this line of investigation is being now carried out in detail, so that what may be called the literature of anthropogeography is assuming considerable dimensions.

In our estimation, anthropogeography is a convenient term under which to include all those aspects of geography that deal with the relations of humanity as a whole or divided into communities to the earth, with which alone physical geography has to deal. "Applied Geography" might be taken as an alternative term, though on the whole it has a wider scope. "Political Geography" may be regarded as a subdivision or special application of anthropogeography, and therefore Prof. Ratzel's latest work is a natural sequel to that on the more general subject. In 1881, Bluntschli, in referring to Ritter, pointed out what marked progress had taken place since his time in our knowledge of the physical geography of the land, and insisted that "a comprehensive and fundamental investigation into the influence of the physiognomy of the land on

* 'Politische Geographie.' Von Dr. Friedrich Ratzel. München und Leipzig. Verlag von R. Oldenbourg.

humanity would be of immense benefit to political science." Since 1881 progress in geographical research has made vast strides, so that ample material exists for the formidable task which Prof. Ratzel has so successfully completed. He has approached the subject from the purely geographical standpoint, and has adhered to that standpoint throughout. He points out that a "state," which may be anything from a tribe of nomads to a "Great Power," is inconceivable without a more or less extensive area of land on which to exercise its activities. Land and people in a political community are indissoluble; the one is as essential to its existence as the other. This may be taken as the text of Prof. Ratzel's treatise, and, standing firmly on the land, he considers systematically the various relations that exist between the two, and the influence which they exert on each other. Prof. Ratzel has faced the subject boldly and unflinchingly, and his book may be commended to the study of all serious students of geography. Naturally, in what may be regarded as a first attempt to construct a science of political geography, the author may have erred on the side of redundancy. Occasionally it looks as if he had emptied his note-book into his pages, instead of presenting us with a clean and clear statement of conclusions. But we must not expect too much from the quarryman, and we hardly consider this redundancy a fault; if it is, it is a fault in the right direction.

Prof. Ratzel divides his work into nine sections, each subdivided into several chapters, and, as will be seen, he follows on the whole the analytical method. In the first section he deals with the state and its territory (*Boden*). Here he works out some very interesting results from his conception of the state as an organism attached to the land, though this organic analogy may be carried too far. The "state," of course, may be a community at any stage of development, and it will often be found extremely useful to consider the mutual relation of people and territory in their more primitive forms. There is a special chapter on the relationship between territory and state, and another on the interesting point of "Possession and Dominion." The second section treats of "Historical Movement (*Bewegung*) and the Growth of the State." Many interesting problems are discussed in this section from the point of view of geography; among others, those of "Conquest and Colonization," "Political Regions" and "Natural Regions," "Spheres of Interest," "Internal Division and Union." Section III. deals with the "Fundamental Laws of the Territorial Expansion of the State," which is followed by two sections dealing with "Position" and "Dimensions." The latter term scarcely expresses the German "Der Raum," which Prof. Ratzel seems to use for the land available for political settlement and expansion, and under that head he deals with many important political problems. One of the most important sections is the sixth, which deals with "Boundaries," a subject abounding with points of interest. "Transition between Land and Sea" is the subject

of the seventh section, under which the coasts, peninsulas and isthmuses, and islands are dealt with. This is followed by a section on "The World of the Water," and another on "Mountains and Plains." There are many special maps in the text, and ample references appended to each section.

This brief *résumé* may afford some idea of the richly suggestive work which every serious student of geography is bound to consult. For the sake of geographical teachers who cannot read German, it is much to be wished that some enterprising publisher would issue an English translation; he would have to do so, we fear, as a labour of love, for it is doubtful if the sale would prove remunerative, at least in the immediate future. We commend the book to the notice of the Clarendon Press.

CIVIL TIME;

OR TABLES SHOWING THE DIFFERENCES IN TIME BETWEEN THAT USED IN
VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD AND GREENWICH MEAN TIME.

By JOHN MILNE, F.R.S.

[*It is requested that corrections and additions to these tables may be sent to Mr. John Milne, Royal Geographical Society, Savile Row, London.*]

PREFACE.

THE greater part of the information contained in the following tables is based upon replies to a circular which, through the kindness of the Foreign, Colonial, and India Offices, was forwarded to Her Majesty's representatives in various parts of the world.

This circular is here reproduced, first, because it explains the object of the tables; secondly, because it shows the difficulty there is in obtaining the information required; and thirdly, with the hope that persons interested in the matter of time differences will forward notes on the subject, especially in connection with countries and places not included in the following list.

"British Association, Burlington House, London, W.

To _____

"SIR,—It is, I think, remarkable that there appears to be no publication which shows the corresponding value in Greenwich mean time, of the local time employed throughout the world.

"Such a table is indispensable in order to determine accurately the instant of occurrence of earthquakes, sea-waves, magnetic phenomena, the despatch of telegrams, and many other events, the sequence of which in absolute time has to be determined.

"Although application has been made to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, to the Royal Geographical Society, to the Central Telegraph Office in London, to the offices of cable companies, and to other possible sources of information, very little has been obtained.