History of Geography

The Dawn of Modern Geography.' Vol. iii by C. Raymond Beazley

Review by: P. M. S.

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received some damage from heavy seas; in fact, one of the authors observed that if the old navigators had tried to make more southerly courses we would have heard more of the "furious fifties" than of the "roaring forties."

An interesting episode of the homeward voyage was a visit to Gough island, an outlying member of the Tristan d'Acunha group set in the wide ocean 1500 miles from the Cape of Good Hope and 2000 miles from Cape Horn. This island had never been visited before by men of science, and a landing was made with extreme difficulty and at no little risk. The remains of sealers' huts were found on the island, and during the one day which the scientific staff of the *Scotia* spent on shore they made large zoological and botanical collections, though apparently it was not possible to study the geology so fully on account of the difficulty of getting about. From this point the expedition made its way direct to Capetown, only stopping to sound and trawl in the deep water of the South Atlantic several degrees to the south of the track of the *Challenger*. Capetown was reached on May 5, left on the 21st, and on July 21, 1904, the *Scotia* returned in triumph to the Clyde.

The part of the work of which as yet we are best able to judge is the large series of deep-sea soundings, upon which Mr. Bruce has based a new chart of the depths of the South Atlantic, published in the book. His work goes far to fill the gap between the soundings of the *Valdivia* and of the *Belgica*. The deep water of the Pacific coming round Cape Horn is shown as shut in by a ridge, in most places within 1000 fathoms of the surface and probably everywhere within 1500 fathoms, running eastward from Louis Philippe Land and the South Shetlands through the South Orkneys and the Sandwich Group to South Georgia, whence it is probably continued westward again to the Falklands. Depths under 2000 fathoms seem to prolong this ridge eastward through Bouvet island, thus cutting off the deep water of the eastern and western Atlantic basins from the Antarctic Deep. Mr. Bruce sketches a hypothetical boundary of the Antarctic continent, his suggested coast-line running south-westerly from Enderby Land to south of 70° S., and touching 75° S. immediately to the west of Coats Land. He accepts Morrell's longitude for the land reported in 1823, which we believe to have been the east side of Graham Land—an error of 15° in longitude, where degrees are so short as in 70° S., being quite possible in the case of a small sealing-vessel eighty years ago. To us the great peninsula suggested to the east of Graham Land appears unnecessary, and its adoption involves an ungainly crowding and bending of the contour-lines of depth, not required by any of the soundings which are charted. So far as it is worth while to speculate on what is quite unknown, our sense of the probable would have been gratified by sketching the hypothetical coast-line in a graceful sweep from Coats Land to Larsen's farthest position of 1893.

H. R. M.

GENERAL.

HISTORY OF GEOGRAPHY.

'The Dawn of Modern Geography.' Vol. iii. By C. Raymond Beazley. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1906. *With numerous Facsimiles. Price 20s. net.*

In the presidential address recently read by the President of the Royal Geographical Society before the British Association at York, reference was made to the increasingly important position which is being assigned to geography at our universities and schools. Many among us indeed believe that history should not be written or taught without a study of geography, and such views undoubtedly receive fresh confirmation of the strongest character by the recent publication of the third volume of 'The Dawn of Modern Geography,' in which Mr. Beazley has delineated with a masterly hand the birth of that science in medieval times. Those who study

this work carefully can hardly fail to form the opinion that not only should it be read by aspiring historians, but that it is itself history, written on such broad lines and with such clear combinations of cause and effect that the result is to dwarf any writer who would neglect this aspect of the subject.

In his previous volumes, Mr. Beazley has shown us how, until about A.D. 1000, the East was greater in almost all that makes for true greatness than the West. A little later, and Christendom was revitalized by the pagan Norsemen, who, like all converts, were full of zeal. Indeed, they formed the steel tip of the lance with which Latin Europe, in the form of the Crusades, attacked Islam; and Islam, too, it is of interest to note, was also revitalized at about the same period by the hardy Seljuk horsemen, who confronted the sea-rovers of Europe with success.

The volume commences at a period when the Crusading movement had failed; but the widening of the geographical and, consequently, of the general outlook of Europe had been so great that the seed sown in failure was destined ultimately to bear a crop such as the world has never seen. It was owing to the Crusades that the East and its riches emerged from the realm of myth and became a fact. Pilgrims, at first, travelled with singularly small profit to the world, intent on visiting holy places, and heeding nothing else; but, little by little, alert inquirers found means to explore the chief centres of Asia, and, when the Crusades were abandoned, commerce had succeeded to pious contemplation. Again, the development of sea transport, which the maintenance of the Crusaders in Palestine had fostered, led to its ultimate, uncontested victory over land transport.

The period, however, opens with the greatest land-journeys ever recorded, when Marco Polo and his uncles undertake their marvellous explorations, and it is extremely interesting to follow them under Mr. Beazley's able guidance, more especially in view of the recently published third edition of Yule's great work by that able French savant, M. Henri Cordier. One point in which the reviewer differed both from Sir Henry Yule and M. Cordier was that he could not believe that the illustrious Venetian actually visited Baghdad; * but he maintained that he entered Persia near Tabriz, and travelled *via* Sultania, Kashan, and Yezd to Kerman and the Persian gulf. It is of importance to note that Mr. Beazley, too, is unable to accept the Baghdad theory, which he considers to be untenable.

To resume, we are given a most lucid summary of Marco's travels across Persia and Central Asia to China, and thence we follow our hero to Java, Ceylon, India, and home again *via* Tabriz and Trebizond; and we are shown what an enormous influence these explorations exerted on the thinkers and men of action of Europe both at the time, but still more at a later period.

The successors of the Polos were friars, the most famous of whom was John of Monte Corvino. To him belongs the honour of first preaching Roman, as apart from Nestorian, Christianity in the Deccan and in China. The effect of this activity on commerce was soon apparent, as but thirty years after the departure of the Polos, and two centuries before the discovery of China by sea, we hear of a Genoese factory established at Fokien. Surely this is fit to rank among the most marvellous achievements of commerce!

Following on the tracks of the Far-Eastern Mission, we are shown the Persian Mission, the headquarters of which was at Tabriz, although there was an archbishop of Sultania. A brief account is given of the correspondence which took place between Arghun Khan, the Mongol ruler of Persia, on the one hand, and the Pope, Philip IV. of France, and Edward I. of England on the other. In it we have proof that attempts were being made many centuries ago to bridge over the gulf which

* *Vide* "Did Marco Polo visit Baghdad?" in *J.R.G.S.* for October, 1905.

separates the East from the West; perhaps, too, we feel proud that England was known and respected in distant Iran in the thirteenth century. As time goes by, the penetration of Asia by Europeans becomes more and more difficult, until, with the death of dread Tamerlane, thick darkness again settles down on Asia, and Christendom is driven perforce to seek for a sea route to the East, access to which by land is denied.

To Genoa belongs the immortal honour of leading Europe along the difficult route of oceanic advance. Not only was that great maritime state itself privileged to equip the earliest expedition, which was despatched to rediscover the Canaries at a time when the Polos were engaged on their great land enterprises, but, by training a navy for Portugal at the beginning of the fourteenth century, even more was accomplished. Ultimately, Portugal led Christendom round Africa to the East, and thereby gained imperishable fame for all time. Her heroic efforts culminated in the severance of the great trade arteries connecting India and Islam, and, by diverting the commerce in spices direct to Europe, reduced the wealth and, *pari passu*, the power of the Mohamedan world so radically that Europe was freed once for all from the fear of Asiatic dominion.

To conclude, we have to thank Mr. Beazley for three volumes which will constitute the standard work for Europe on this extremely important subject, and we may also express the hope that this is not the last volume which the writer will produce on these bed-rock lines of deep research.

P. M. S.

THE MONTHLY RECORD.

EUROPE.

The Plateau of Aubrac, Central France.—Twenty-two miles south of the Plomb du Cantal, the Truyère, issuing from the mountains of the Margeride, bounds by a narrow gorge a little-known region of pasturage, lonely but rich in verdure and flocks. It is the district of Aubrac, an elliptical plateau 35 miles long and 25 miles broad, forming part of the southern highland of Cential France. An instructive outline of the geography of this plateau is given in the August number of *La Géographie*, 1906. The structure of the plateau is granitic, with basaltic flows in the middle districts. The mean altitude is about 1300 metres (4250 feet). The surface is everywhere covered with a layer of humus from 80 to 100 centimetres in thickness (32 to 40 inches). This is due to the forests which formerly covered the region. In the east the pasturages on stretches of lava-deposit are most extensive, while in the west the country is thickly forested. Volcanic remains, such as craters, have been worn away by subsequent glacial action, while deep valleys have been similarly eroded in the crystalline schists. At the southern base of the plateau is a belt of Jurassic limestone. The climate is naturally severe, and may be regarded as continental. Vegetation does not begin to grow before May, while snow has been known to fall in June. The rainfall is considerable, being from 100 to 140 centimetres (40 to 45 inches) a year. The winds, which often blow with violence from the north, bring blizzards, and put a stop to traffic. Fogs are frequent, but, owing to the dryness of the air, dew and hoar-frost are rare. The absolute humidity is lower than that of the plain; the relative humidity varies from 51 per cent. in March to 88 per cent. in January. There are 170 days of absolute insolation, and 195 days on which rain or snow falls. The barometer varies from 628 to 670 millimetres (24·7 inches to 26·3 inches). The annual mean temperature is about 9° C. (48·2° Fahr.); in winter the