WILEY

Review: Mackinder's Britain

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Mar., 1907), pp. 334-335

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1776718>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 07:23 UTC

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with those which pass unnoticed. The figures for 1906 are not yet available, it is not improbable that the total will be above the average, or it may be less, but no conclusion can be drawn from the fact that a small proportion of the great earthquakes of last year happened to find a large town within the area of their destructive powers. So far as facts go, there is no reason for supposing that any particular town or city is either more or less liable to destruction by earthquakes than it has been in the past.

R. D. O.

REVIEWS.

EUROPE.

MACKINDER'S BRITAIN.

'Britain and the British Seas.' By H. J. Mackinder. Second edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1907. Price 7s. 6d. net.

SINCE its first appearance five years ago, this work has held the field as the only serious attempt yet made to picture the physical conditions of the British Isles in such a way as to bring out clearly the influence which those conditions have had on the human societies dwelling in them. Those, even, who may have been inclined to question the validity of some of the theories advanced, or the deductions made from them, have freely recognized the force with which the author's views were presented, and the unity of purpose and grasp of principles displayed in the whole treatment of the subject. The appreciation which has been accorded to the book is shown by the comparatively short time within which a new edition has been called for. During that space nothing has occurred in the field of geography calling for any radical change of standpoint, and the work is to all intents and purposes the same in its second as in its first edition, while at the same time it has been subjected to a careful revision in matters of detail. Of the minor alterations, some have been made in deference to criticisms and suggestions by reviewers and others. Thus the term "Cheshire gap," to which exception was taken in the review which appeared in the *Journal*, has been replaced by "Midland gate"—the term adopted by the R.G.S. Committee on the nomenclature of the physical features of England. On various other points the author has naturally shown himself unconvinced, and in particular has adhered to the general arrangement of the chapters, which some had criticized as not strictly logical. The additions in the present edition consist in great part of notes at the end of the chapters, calling attention to the results of research, published since the first appearance of the book, or supplying further elucidation of special points. Some new matter is, however, incorporated in the text of the chapters, especially those dealing with the evolution of the river systems, and with ethnographical and historical geography, on which subjects research has perhaps been more active than on others. The fisheries of the British seas also receive fuller treatment. Students may thus feel assured that the book is in every way abreast of the time,

and it will no doubt long remain an indispensable source of inspiration to all who desire to work out the relations between man and his environment within these islands.

ASIA.

THE MALAY PENINSULA.

'British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya.' By Sir Frank Swettenham, K.C.M.G., late Governor of the Straits Colony, etc. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head.

The author of this instructive book, in his preface, remarks that though we have no special school for such training, yet Englishmen excel as administrators. He rightly connects this aptitude with our geographical position, which necessitates well-trained sailors, who, from early life, are accustomed to face the unexpected with equanimity. As he says, "it would be difficult to devise any responsibility, however onerous and unattractive, which a midshipman would not at once undertake, though it had no concern with sea or ship. . . . One may, however, question whether any one but a midshipman would have willingly embarked upon a voyage to discover the means of introducing order into the Malay States when that task was thrust upon the British Government in 1874."

The volume tells how this was done, and the story is as creditable to all concerned as it is gratifying to our national pride. For, to put it mildly, without encouragement from officials at home, and in spite of warning that if the limits of masterly inactivity were exceeded, the local officers would have to take all risk and bear all blame, yet they preferred responsibility to impotence. They boldly took the initiative in reform, and, when distrust was allayed, were completely supported by the Malays.

There are many States in the peninsula: some in the Straits Settlements (a crown colony), others under Siam, and those known as the Federated Malay States. The last group supplies the chief interest of Sir Frank Swettenham's book, whence the steps from chaos to prosperity may be traced. Not least among the factors of success were the Chinese, who worked the tin-mines. French and other European companies were formed for the purpose; "but it was the Chinese who began the work, who have continued it ever since, and whose efforts have succeeded in producing more than half of the world's tin supply. Their energy and enterprise have made the Malay States what they are to-day, and it would be impossible to overstate the obligation which the Malay Government and people are under to these hard-working, capable, and law-abiding aliens. . . . But the Chinese were not only miners; . . . as contractors, they constructed nearly all the Government buildings, most of the roads and bridges, railways, and waterworks. They brought all the capital into the country when Europeans feared to take the risk; they were the traders and shopkeepers; . . . and it is their work, the taxation of the luxuries they consume and of the pleasures they enjoy, which has provided something like nine-tenths of the revenue." This tribute to the race in Malaya may with advantage be considered, and its lesson be applied elsewhere.

The funds obtained from mining operations were used to develop the country; roads, railways, irrigation, and jungle clearance were proceeded with, and cultivation followed. Para rubber was planted on a considerable scale, with results so profitable as to encourage young men with a taste for open-air life and adventure to seek their fortune in these States. The book is attractively got up, and the illustrations deserve special praise.

W. B.