Geography and world power

Fairgrieve James
Title: Geography and world power

Author: Fairgrieve James

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GEOGRAPHY
AND
WORLD POWER

BY
JAMES FAIRGRIEVE, M.A.
RECOGNISED TEACHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF EDUCATION

SIXTH IMPRESSION
WITH NUMEROUS MAPS

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

It would be ungrateful of me not to seize the opportunity presented by the issue of a second edition to express my thanks for the kind things which have been said about this little book. In deference to sundry criticisms, with the justice of which I fully agree, one, but only one, important change has been made: the last few pages of Chapter XVII have been expanded and form a new Chapter now numbered XVIII.

J. F.

October 1919.
PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

"All the world’s a stage."

In this volume an endeavour is made to tell a coherent story and show that there is really some order in the apparently disorderly happenings on this planet. Dealing with world history and geography in such small compass, it is obvious that there must be many omissions. Opinions may differ as to what omissions ought to be made, and some things may not present themselves to others in the same light as they do to the author, but the correctness of the thesis as a whole does not depend on the accuracy of this or that statement or view. In particular it may be as well to emphasize the fact that while the book deals with world history, it deals with only one side of it. Its special concern, in fact, is rather with the setting of the stage than with the action of the drama. Its aim is to point out how the stage was set at different epochs in the history of the world, and specially how the stage has been set for that act of the drama now being played.

At a cursory glance, then, the book may possibly appear to be materialistic, but it is materialistic only in the sense that from the nature of the case it deals with material things. The ways in which geographical conditions affect the actors are traced out, but those spiritual aspects of the drama which do not exhibit the geographical control are naturally not referred to. This does not mean that they do not exist.

J. F.
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GEOGRAPHY AND WORLD POWER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. WHAT THE BOOK IS ABOUT

This book is written to show how the history of the world has been controlled by those conditions and phenomena which we class together under the title of Geography, and to point out which are the really essential geographical facts by noting those which have most effectively controlled the history. In that sentence there are three words about whose meaning we must be quite clear. They are "History," "controlled," "Geography."

1. History.—When we speak of history in this way, we of course imply that we are speaking of the history of man on the earth, but even so history may mean a number of things.

(a) It may mean merely a statement of all the events that ever happened in the order in which they happened, without any comments on them whatever. Now it is very necessary to have a knowledge of events when we study history, but it would not be very interesting merely to know them, nor is it possible even if they could all be found out for any one to know them all. There must be a selection of the most important.
(b) Hence we get another idea of history, as a statement of the most important events in the order in which they happened. In the process of picking out the most important events we must, however, have compared them and judged which were the most important. To do this we must, of course, think why they are important and what we mean by important. Then we find that things are important if they affect the well-being of men to a great extent, and are less important if they do not affect man much.

(c) We have thus almost at once a third idea of history as a story of the important events which have happened, with a statement of the causes which have brought them about and of the effects which they have had on man. In estimating importance we must remember that some events affect man greatly for a time and only slightly afterwards, while others affect man only slightly at first, but continue to produce results for a long time.

When we look at history in this way, we find that some events that are apparently of little account are really the important events, while others that are apparently very important must take a lower place. We find also that the causes and results of history are so entwined that "history" becomes one organic whole. Some particular event has naturally led on to other events. What one man or tribe or nation has done has affected the action of other men or nations. The study of history is so interesting just because it is one of the studies which treat of men, their relation to one another, and the effect that each man or collection of men has on the rest. From a study of history, too, we find that men very widely separated both in time and space have yet possessed very similar characters, so that events very