

### Human Geography.

*Human Geography: an Attempt at a Positive Classification—Principles and Examples.* By Jean Brunhes. Translated by Prof. I. C. Le Compte. Edited by Isaiah Bowman and Prof. Richard Elwood Dodge. Pp. xvi+648. (London, Calcutta and Sydney: G. G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., n.d.) 21s. net.

THE student of modern geography by whom this classical work is read for the first time, might well feel that even in the few years, little more than a decade, since the original issue, most of this manual has become, if not out-of-date, at least somewhat antiquated. A youthful applicant for a situation was asked "Where is Tokyo?" He replied, "I do not know." The employer expressed his astonishment in vigorous terms, and the youth continued, "But if you will tell me where it is, I will tell you why it is there." This youth was a product of his period; the geography of to-day seeks to answer the question "why?" The aim of modern geography is to probe, to evolve generalisations, to eliminate and thus simplify complex phenomena in which the psychological factor is of supreme importance.

M. Brunhes provides a useful corrective. He writes and argues about what he has seen; he aims at a manual, not a treatise, at a collection of observed facts, not an explanation. Again and again he advises caution. The fundamental fact is place-relation, and he shows repeatedly how every thinker whose subject-matter implies some form of human activity needs the geographic sense. The Ricardian law of diminishing returns does not apply where the land, as such, is not the fundamental basis of property. Again and again the reader is referred to six essential facts: houses and roads, cultivated fields and domestic animals, exploitation of minerals and devastation in plant and animal life—facts familiar enough under a slightly different grouping of ideas in the terms shelter, food, and communications.

By numerous illustrations and digressions the reader is led to an idea of geographic method, to a manner of attack upon a seemingly heterogeneous collection of an apparently endless mass of isolated facts, and the whole outlook may be summarised under the query "how?" not "why?" A heavy snowfall is to be expected in January in New York and other places where the mean January temperature is about, or below, freezing point. The "why" of this fact belongs to the domain of physical science: the recognition of the fact as a possible factor in regard to man's life on the earth belongs to physical geography. So far everything is simple, but the human geographer asks the question

how is man affected? It is his business to find out how man reacts to this circumstance, and he finds widely different answers for different parts of the world. The response in New York is different from the response in Italy, and so he arrives at the fundamental concept of location, the tyranny not of Nature as a whole but of place-relationship within Nature.

M. Brunhes is deliberately didactic; he teaches by selected samples and begins with the simplest examples. The easiest studies refer to islands—not only the real islands of the sea, but also the land islands where a community is relatively isolated by physical circumstance; his study of the Balearic Isles leads to thoughts about Java or Japan. Herein, it would appear, lie the elements of age which might repel the modern student, for there is little consideration of the world as a whole; there is no room for the current broad generalisations which underlie the idea of the "major natural regions of the world." A regional synthesis, however, is not lacking. A map of Spain, for example, shows within the area of dry Iberia five regions of steppes and irrigation, and so illustrates a regional classification based, not upon the facts of climate, but upon the ways in which man has responded to one particular element, water supply.

In the last chapter it is argued that space, distance and difference of level are fundamental geographical facts which are becoming more and more the sovereign masters of men, and the final conclusion is reached that "Every people . . . covers the surface of the earth with those outward and visible signs . . . which allow us to divine its past and sometimes even its future." Whither does all this lead? Apparently to the notion that geography is not a science, not an ordered body of knowledge, which is independent of the personality of the investigator, not a set of conclusions which must be universally valid, not a statement of generalisations valid for all time or for every place, but primarily and fundamentally a discipline, an outlook on man's life on the earth, which gives to the thinker that unique geographic sense so invaluable for the law-maker, the captain of industry, and the merchant prince, so useful a corrective in all matters which pertain to the conduct of human affairs on the large scale.

Whatever view may be taken, it must be confessed that the facts of geography are stubborn; they cannot be melted in the mental furnace and run into set moulds; they frequently misfit the theories: but the spirit of geography is of unique value. No other human study permeates so many of the sciences: no other study is so necessary to the equipment of the educated man.