

**BLACKWOODS' EDUCATIONAL  
SERIES. FIFTH GEOGRAPHICAL  
READER, STANDARD VI: ASIA,  
AFRICA, AMERICA, AND  
OCEANIA**

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EDITED BY PROFESSOR MEIKLEJOHN

FIFTH  
GEOGRAPHICAL READER

*STANDARD VI.*

ASIA, AFRICA, AMERICA,  
AND OCEANIA



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(The poetical pieces are indicated in *italics*.)

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## FIFTH

### GEOGRAPHICAL READER.

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#### I.—THE WORLD.—I.

**1. Shape and Size.**—The world on which we live is one of the heavenly bodies called **Planets**, which revolve round the sun, and receive from it the light and heat which are necessary to life. Our earth is a little smaller than the planet Venus, which is often seen shining brightly in our evening sky, and nearly twice as large as the red planet Mars. . . It is not exactly a sphere. It is slightly flattened at the poles, and it bulges out a little at the equator. Hence it is that, of its two diameters, one is longer than the other: the equatorial diameter being 27 miles longer than the polar. A body that is not exactly a sphere is called a **spheroid**; and the earth on which we live is therefore a spheroid. . . Its polar diameter measures 7898 miles; and its largest circumference—that is, the circumference at the equator—measures 24,856 miles.

**2. The Surface of the Earth.**—The area of the globe on which we live amounts to 197 millions of square miles.



Of this amount  $51\frac{1}{2}$  millions are covered by land; and  $145\frac{1}{2}$  by water. There is, therefore, only one square mile of land to three of water; or three acres of water to one acre of land. . . . If, again, we look at the two hemispheres — the northern and the southern — we shall find that the Northern Hemisphere contains 38 millions of square miles of land to  $60\frac{1}{2}$  of water; while the Southern Hemisphere has only  $13\frac{1}{2}$  millions of square miles of land to 85 of water. We see from this that the large masses of land lie almost entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. If we take Antipodes Island as a centre, and draw a circle round half the globe, we shall find that we have marked out a **Water Hemisphere**; if we take Falmouth as a centre, and draw a circle round half the globe, we shall find that we have described a **Land Hemisphere**. Hence we may say, speaking broadly, that Great Britain stands at the centre of all the land in the world, and New Zealand at the centre of all the water.

**3. The Continents.**—The land on the surface of the globe is generally divided into six continents—three in the Old World, or Eastern Hemisphere, and two in the New World, or Western Hemisphere. Lying outside and away from these masses of land is “the island continent” of Australia. The continents in the Old World are Asia, Africa, and Europe; in the New World, North America and South America. Of all the continents on the globe, Asia is the largest, and Australia the smallest. Asia is nearly five times larger than Europe; and North America is more than twice as large. Africa is nearly three times as large as Europe, and about four times as large as Australia. South America is not quite double the size of Europe.

**4. The Shapes of the Continents.**—Africa is the most

simple in form of all the continents. Europe, on the contrary, is the most varied in its outline. While Africa is a compact mass, Europe is broken up on the north, the south, and the west, and sends out long peninsular limbs into the sea, receiving at the same time long arms of the sea into the land. South America comes next to Africa in simplicity of shape and shortness of coast-line. . . Of all the continents, Europe has by far the longest coast-line in proportion to its size. North America comes next to Europe. Europe has one mile of coast for every 170 square miles of surface; North America, one mile of coast for every 260 square miles. Australia has the shortest coast-line of all; and Africa comes next to Australia in poverty of outline.

**5. The Line of Fracture.**—The land-masses of the world are crowded together around the North Pole. But the separation between each mass of land is worthy of special note. Let us begin at the separation between North America and Asia, which is called Behring Strait. If we take Behring Strait as a centre, and the distance between it and the Strait of Gibraltar as a radius, we shall discover some very remarkable facts. Our circle will not only cut the Strait of Gibraltar, but the Isthmus of Panama; and it will *include* the whole masses of three continents—Europe, Asia, and North America—while it *excludes* the whole of South America, Africa, and Australia.

**6. Great Rivers at Right Angles.**—It is another remarkable fact that, if we look at the two largest rivers of each continent, we shall find that they flow at right angles to each other. Thus, in Europe, we find the Rhine and Danube forming a right angle; in Africa, the Nile and the Congo; in North America, the St

Lawrence and the Mississippi; and, in South America, the Amazon and the great system of the La Plata. This is also the case in Asia, though the rectangular flow is not so apparent; for we have the three great rivers of the Siberian Plain flowing to the north, while the two great rivers of China flow to the east.

*com-peat'*, with its parts very close together. | to break. Hence also *refract*, *fracture*, *break*. (From L. *frangere*, | *fracture*, etc.)

1. *Planets*. (From Gr. *planētēs*, a wanderer.) The planets were called wandering stars, to distinguish them from the fixed stars.

2. *Antipodes*, feet to feet. (Gr. *anti*, opposite; *podos*, a foot.)

## 2.—THE WORLD.—II.

1. **The Heights of the Continents.**—How high do the continents stand out above the level of the sea! Some are very high, and some low. The highest of all is Asia, because it possesses the highest and largest table-lands, and the highest mountains. If the whole of the mountains and table-lands of Asia were levelled down and spread over the surface of the whole continent, the mean height of that continent would be 2264 feet. Next to Asia comes South America, which, with the enormous heights of the Andes, gives to the continent a very high mean elevation. Europe is the lowest of all, and its mean height is only 1342 feet. This is due to the fact that Europe has no very high ranges of mountains, and no very extensive table-lands: most of it is plain, and, indeed, low plain.