

the promontories of a continent, were but small islands, or floating fields of ice.*

The outline of the terrestrial hemisphere is only twice interrupted by the sea, in the vicinity of the north and south poles.

This outline forms, as it were, a vast belt of coast around the globe, an *amphibious zone*, participating in the climatic conditions both of the continents and the seas. Starting from the Cape of Good Hope, it strikes across the equator, touches the eastern and southern borders of Asia, circles the north pole, and descends along the western coast of America to Cape Horn. It forms on the earth a great circle inclined towards the equator, like the ecliptic to the celestial equator. It plays, to a certain extent, an analogous part to that of the temperate zones, which represent the passage from the torrid to the glacial climate; the riverine zone is the reunion of the continental climates and of the maritime climates of the islands. This intermediary situation gives birth to an organic life, richer and more varied than exists in other regions of the globe.

A fact well worthy of notice is, that the structure of the great continents—"the pyramidal form of their extremities," as Humboldt calls it—is in some measure radiated towards the south. Towards the north, the great masses of land converge and accumulate; on the other hand, in the direction of the south, they open out like a fan, and terminate in points or in conical peninsulas. The south of Europe exhibits a similar disposition; it is cut up into wedges, pointed southward, as Spain and Portugal, Italy and Greece. The continents of Africa, South America, and Greenland, are, in truth, gigantic peninsulas. In Asia, the Indian and Indo-Chinese peninsulas; in North America, those of Kamtschatka, Corea, Florida, California, and Alaska, have a southern direction.

[It may be further observed that at the extremity of most peninsulas lies an island, or group of islands, as Tierra del Fuego at the base

* [It is not, however, improbable that a considerable extent of land *does* surround the south pole, in the shape of a continent of uninhabitable ice and snow.]