

mately north and south; in the Old World, though less distinctly marked, it ranges on the whole east and west. The intimate relation which may be observed between this general trend and the direction of mountain chains, is best exhibited by the American continent. Europe and Africa may be considered as forming, with Asia, the vast continental mass of the Old World. The existing severance of Africa and Europe is of comparatively recent date. On the other hand, Europe and Asia were not always so continuous as at present. But even where the continents of the Old World are separated by sea, the intervening hollows, though now covered by ocean-water, must be regarded as essentially part of the continental areas. Asia is linked with Australia by a chain of islands. The great contrast between the Asiatic and Australian faunas, however, affords good grounds for the belief that, at least for an enormous period of time, Asia and Australia have been divided by an important barrier of sea.

While any good map of the globe enables us to see at a glance the relative positions and areas of the continents and oceans, most maps fail to furnish any data by which the general height or volume of a continent may be estimated. As a rule, the mountain-chains are exaggerated in breadth, and incorrectly indicated, while no attempt is made to distinguish between high plateaus and low plains. In North America, for example, a continuous shaded ridge is placed down the axis of the continent, and marked "Rocky Mountains," while the vast level or gently rolling prairies are left with no mark to distinguish them from the maritime plains of the Eastern and Southern States. In reality there is no such continuous mountain-chain. The so-called "Rocky Mountains" consist of many independent and sometimes