

of such a river to the country it irrigates, drains, and refreshes. Yet the Iser, "rolling rapidly," is but one of the 34 tributaries of the Danube, which of itself is not included among the greater rivers of the earth.

The geographical canon which imposes the designation of "stream" (*fleuve*) on every watercourse flowing into the sea, and of "river" \* on the affluent of a stream, is by no means well established; and, considering the numerous exceptions, can only be accepted in a very general manner. Malte Brun, in his elaborate work on Universal Geography, thus sets forth the qualifications which, according to their origin and affluents, may be accepted as appertaining to flowing waters:—

"The expansions of springs and the overflow of melting glaciers create small currents, more or less tranquil; these are called *brooks*. The waters of the heavy rains dash headlong with greater rapidity, and furrow the mountain-sides with impetuous and wandering *torrents*. The confluence of these currents forms *rivers*, which, following the dip of the soil, unite very frequently in a broader channel, which is named a *stream* (*fleuve*), and carries to ocean the tribute of the earth."

But the principal tributary of a basin is not always named a *stream*. On the other hand, not a few *rivers* lose themselves in marshes, in the sand, or in an abyss; others there are whose flood is subject to excessive variations.

All this proves that in geographical questions we must not define words with absolute rigour, or establish too severe distinctions. When we aim at systematizing a natural science with too subtle a niceness, we do but establish rules which suffer as many exceptions as they receive confirmations.

The general combination of slopes and valleys, whence well out the crystal brooks which help to swell the flood of a great river, is called its *basin* or *hydrographical region*. The *bed* of a river is

\* [It is almost unnecessary to say that this distinction does not obtain in our English language.]