

which we have passed. To-day we are beginning to study our surroundings, and to see that we have reached our present position because of certain geographic facts. Historians have been slow to accept this view. When they found a piece of downgrade in the track, they looked at the cars and the engine to find its cause. They have failed to see that the swift descent of the United States into a financial panic and the hard pull out of it may be due to the fact that the train is crossing a valley, and not to overloading of the cars in the shape of over-production, or to poor couplings in the shape of a weak financial system, though these may precipitate disaster. It may be, as we shall see, that panics are due to the regular recurrence of periods of deficient rainfall, causing poor crops and fluctuating prices. If this is so, we must not only look to our couplings and our load; we must bridge the next valley, or cut and fill the road-bed so as to diminish the grades.

Again, as we look at the past, we see the track of history double far back on itself at the time of the fall of Rome before barbarian invaders. At present we are facing a similar, albeit peaceful invasion on the part of the starving millions of China: the fear that our track may again turn back is before us. The relapse of Europe in the Dark Ages, as future chapters will show, was due apparently to a rapid change of climate in Asia and probably all over the world, — a change which caused vast areas which were habitable at the time of Christ to become uninhabitable a few centuries later. The barbarian inhabitants were obliged to migrate, and their migrations were the dominant fact in the history of the known world for centuries. We of to-day