

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE GEOGRAPHIC BASIS OF HISTORY

**I**N studying the geography of Central Asia, we have come to three main conclusions. In the first place, we have seen that not only the habits, but to a large extent the character, of the people of Central Asia appear to have been moulded by physiographic environment. In the second place, we have concluded that, during historic times, climate, the most important factor in that environment, has been subject to notable changes. And finally, it appears that the changes of climate have caused corresponding changes not only in the distribution of man, but in his occupations, habits, and even character. We must now go a step farther, and must see whither we are led if we accept without further question the validity of these three conclusions. If they are true, it appears that geography, especially through its influence upon character, is the basis of history in a way that is not generally recognized; and that climatic changes have been one of the greatest factors in determining the course of human progress. This conclusion applies primarily to Central Asia, but there is strong reason to believe that it is equally applicable to western Asia, north Africa, and Europe. Apparently, the same is true of America and of the continents of the southern hemisphere, but it is impossible to consider them here.

The geographic basis of history, as distinguished from the non-physical basis, with which we are not now concerned, consists of what may be called permanent facts, on the one