II.

"Father Neptune one day to Dame Freedom did say,
'If ever I lived upon dry land,
The spot I should hit on would be little Britain.'
Says Freedom, 'Why, that's my own island.'
O, 'tis a snug little island,
A right little, tight little island!
Search the world round, none can be found
So happy as this little island."

T. DIBDIN.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ENGLAND IN RELATION TO ITS HISTORY.[1]

25. Geography and History. — As material surroundings strongly influence individual life, so the physical features — situation, surface, and climate — of a country have a marked effect on its people and its history.

26. The Island Form; Race Settlements — the Romans. — The insular form of Britain gave it a certain advantage over the continent during the age when Rome was subjugating the barbarians of Northern and Western Europe. As their invasions could only be by sea, they were necessarily on a comparatively small scale. This perhaps is one reason why the Romans did not succeed in establishing their language and laws in the island. They conquered and held it for centuries, but they never destroyed its individuality; they never Latinized it as they did France and Spain.

[1] As this section necessarily contains references to events in the later periods of English history, it may be advantageously reviewed after the pupil has reached a somewhat advanced stage in the course.

27. The Saxons. In like manner, when the power of Rome fell and the northern tribes overran and took possession of the Empire, they were in a measure shut out from Britain. Hence the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes could not pour down upon it in countless hordes, but only by successive attacks. This had two results: first, the native Britons were driven back only by degrees — thus their hope and courage were kept alive and transmitted; next, the conquerors settling gradually in different sections built up independent kingdoms. When in time the whole country came under one sovereignty the kingdoms, which had now become shires or counties, retained through their chief men an important influence in the government, thus preventing the royal power from becoming absolute.

28. The Danes and Normans. — In the course of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the Danes invaded the island, got possession of the throne, and permanently established themselves in the northern half of England, as the country was then called. They could not come, however, with such overwhelming force as either to exterminate or drive out the English, but were compelled to unite with them, as the Normans did later in their conquest under William of Normandy. Hence, every conquest of the island ended in a compromise, and no one race got complete predominance. Eventually all mingled and became one people.

29. Earliest Names: Celtic. — The steps of English history may be traced to a considerable extent by geographical names. Thus the names of most of the prominent natural features, the hills, and especially the streams, are British or Celtic, carrying us back to the Bronze Age, and perhaps even earlier. Familiar examples of this are found in the name, Malvern Hills, and in the word Avon ("the water"), which is repeated many times in England and Wales.

30. Roman Names. — The Roman occupation of Britain is shown by the names ending in "cester," or "chester" (a corruption of *castra*, a camp). Thus Leicester, Worcester, Dorches-

ter, Colchester, Chester, indicate that these places were walled towns and military stations.

31. Saxon Names. — On the other hand, the names of many of the great political divisions, especially in the south and east of England, mark the Saxon settlements, such as Essex (the East Saxons), Sussex (the South Saxons), Middlesex (the Middle or Central Saxons). In the same way the settlement of the two divisions of the Angles on the coast is indicated by the names Norfolk (the North folk) and Suffolk (the South folk)[1].

32. Danish Names. — The conquests and settlements of the Danes are readily traced by the Danish termination "by" (an abode or town), as in Derby, Rugby, Grimsby. Names of places so ending, which may be counted by hundreds, occur with scarce an exception north of London. They date back to the time when Alfred made the treaty of Wedmore,[2] by which the Danes agreed to confine themselves to the northern half of the country.

33. Norman Names. — The conquest of England by the Normans created but few new names. These, as in the case of Richmond and Beaumont, generally show where the invading race built a castle or an abbey, or where, as in Montgomeryshire, they conquered and held a district in Wales.

While each new invasion left its mark on the country, it will be seen that the greater part of the names of counties and towns are of Roman, Saxon, or Danish origin; so that, with some few and comparatively unimportant exceptions, the map of England remains to-day in this respect what those races made it more than a thousand years ago.

34. Eastern and Western Britain. — As the southern and eastern coasts of Britain were in most direct communication with the continent and were first settled, they continued until modern

[1] See Map No. 7, page 44.
[2] Treaty of Wedmore. See Map No. 6, page 42.

times to be the wealthiest, most civilized, and progressive part of the island. Much of the western portion is a rough, wild country. To it the East Britons retreated, keeping their primitive customs and language, as in Wales and Cornwall. In all the great movements of religious or political reform, up to the middle of the seventeenth century, we find the people of the eastern half of the island on the side of a larger measure of liberty; while those of the western half, were in favor of increasing the power of the king and the church.

35. The Channel in English History. — The value of the Channel to England, which has already been referred to in its early history, may be traced down to our own day.

In 1264, when Simon de Montfort was endeavoring to secure parliamentary representation for the people, the king (Henry III.) sought help from France. A fleet was got ready to invade the country and support him, but owing to unfavorable weather it was not able to sail in season, and Henry was obliged to concede the demands made for reform.[1]

Again, at the time of the threatened attack by the Spanish Armada, when the tempest had dispersed the enemy's fleet and wrecked many of its vessels, leaving only a few to creep back, crippled and disheartened, to the ports whence they had so proudly sailed, Elizabeth fully recognized the value of the "ocean-wall" to her dominions.

So a recent French writer,[2] speaking of Napoleon's intended expedition, which was postponed and ultimately abandoned on account of a sudden and long-continued storm, says, "A few leagues of sea saved England from being forced to engage in a war, which, if it had not entirely trodden civilization under foot, would have certainly crippled it for a whole generation." Finally, to quote the words of Prof. Goldwin Smith, "The English Channel, by exempting England from keeping up a large standing army

[1] Stubbs, Select Charters, 401.
[2] Madame de Rémusat.

[though it has compelled her to maintain a powerful and expensive navy], has preserved her from military despotism, and enabled her to move steadily forward in the path of political progress."

36. Climate. — With regard to the climate of England, — its insular form, geographical position, and especially its exposure to the warm currents of the Gulf Stream, give it a mild temperature particularly favorable to the full and healthy development of both animal and vegetable life. Nowhere is found greater vigor or longevity. Charles II. said that he was convinced that there was not a country in the world where one could spend so much time out of doors comfortably as in England; and he might have added that the people fully appreciate this fact and habitually avail themselves of it.

37. Industrial Division of England. — From an industrial and historical point of view, the country falls into two divisions. Let a line be drawn from Whitby, on the northeast coast, to Leicester, in the midlands, and thence to Exmouth, on the southwest coast.[1] On the upper or northwest side of that line will lie the coal and iron, which constitute the greater part of the mineral wealth and manufacturing industry of England; and also all the large places except London. On the lower or southeast side of it will be a comparatively level surface of rich agricultural land, and most of the fine old cathedral cities[2] with their historic associations; in a word, the England of the past as contrasted with modern and democratic England, that part which has grown up since the introduction of steam.

38. Commercial Situation of England. — Finally, the position of England with respect to commerce is worthy of note. It is not only possessed of a great number of excellent harbors, but it is situated in the most extensively navigated of the oceans, between the two continents having the highest civilization and the most

1 Whitby, Yorkshire; Exmouth, near Exeter, Devonshire.
2 In England the cathedral towns only are called cities.

constant intercourse. Next, a glance at the map[1] will show that geographically England is located at about the centre of the land masses of the globe. It is evident that an island so placed stands in the most favorable position for easy and rapid communication with every quarter of the world. On this account England has been able to attain and maintain the highest rank among maritime and commercial powers.

It is true that since the opening of the Suez Canal, in 1869, the trade with the Indies and China has changed. Many cargoes of teas, silks, and spices, which formerly went to London, Liverpool, or Southampton, and were thence reshipped to different countries of Europe, now pass by other channels direct to the consumer. But aside from this, England still retains her supremacy as the great carrier and distributer of the productions of the earth — a fact which has had and must continue to have a decided influence on her history and on her relations with other nations, both in peace and war.

1 See Maps Nos. 11 and 14, pages 186, 382.