



"He that knows not what the world is, knows not where he is himself."  
—Marcus Aurelius.



# GEOGRAPHY FOR EVERY CITIZEN

(Condensed from an address by PROFESSOR G. JOBBERNS, M.A., D.Sc., of Canterbury University College, at the inaugural meeting of the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society)

**M**ARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS was Emperor of Rome. These words of his that I take as the whole text of my address this evening belong to the period around 160-180 A.D. Marcus Aurelius was a very competent Emperor. He was also a very enlightened Roman, coming near to the ideal of the philosopher king. He knew his Roman world as few other citizens of his Rome and his era. He knew personally its far-eastern borders and its northern limits on the Rhine and the Danube. To know his world in all its physical and social phases was to him necessary for full and enlightened living within it.

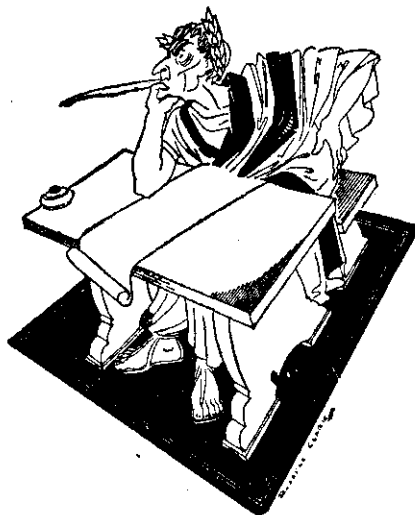
But like all Romans in all the life of the Empire, he seems to have been singularly uncurious about the world beyond the Imperial borders. Much of his life and energy was devoted to keeping his Roman world intact from pressure from the outer darkness. Exploration of northern Europe or Inner Asia, or Africa beyond the Saharan borders, or the wide Atlantic sea seems to have had little or no appeal to the Roman. Descriptive writers there certainly were in the world of antiquity, e.g., Pliny and Herodotus. Herodotus especially had many of the instincts of the geographer, but his ideas of what lay beyond the confines of the well-known Mediterranean world were hazy in the extreme, and he seems to have been uncritically credulous in accepting accounts of the outer world that he did not personally know.

There was no provision in the Roman world for mass instruction of the people and the educated minority seemed content so long as the world they knew held together for them to live comfortably in. When this world fell to pieces about their ears, from the surge of forces from without which they did not know and did not understand, they were hopelessly bewildered. Can you not find plenty of parallels to this in very modern times?

## Nature and Function of Geography

I must keep in mind that I am tonight speaking especially to a group of citizens interested in the formation of a Geographical Society. Many of you I know to be interested in geography because you are interested in teaching, professionally or indirectly. To you teachers I would like to take the opportunity of saying something specially—what I want to urge to all of you is that a sound knowledge of our own country and its place in the general world order is absolutely necessary for our full and intelligent living. Understanding can only be based on accurate knowledge.

I have never at any time made any claim that the study of geography has any special value as an educational discipline. But I feel sure that all of you will be ready to admit that a citizen should have some understanding of the society in which he lives. If you will then further admit that he cannot possibly get this understanding without knowledge of the habitat on which his society is based, then I need urge the claims of geography



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no further. Knowledge of our own immediate living space, land area, or habitat, is not enough. We must understand the place and function of our own country in the world as a whole.

What, then, is geography and its function? Geography, however you may approach it, is simply description and interpretation of the human habitat or the land surface as used by human groups. The geography of New Zealand is merely description and interpretation of all the various aspects of the New Zealand countryside. The special task of those of you who teach geography in our schools is to bring our young people around to an understanding of their countryside. To do this you must know it yourselves—know it in all its physical forms, and know how it has all been changed by a hundred years of occupation by European man. You must know the general history of this progressive change, know how the form and function of our present society is based on the way we have used our land, and know how we have made for ourselves the place we hold in the economic and social order of the world. I should think that is your first task as teachers.

In the English-speaking world there are two great geographical societies of outstanding influence. These are the Royal Geographical Society of London, and the American Geographical Society of New York. Membership (or fellowship) of either of these great societies is not difficult to secure. All that is required in the way of qualification for membership is a general interest in the furthering of geographic knowledge. Both have done much to gather knowledge, but their best and most lasting influence is through the dissemination of this knowledge by the medium of geographical publications distributed to all parts of the world. The outstanding geographical journal in English is the *Geographical Review*, the journal of the American Geographical Society of New York.

The Royal Geographical Society has had a very long and very distinguished history. Its journal is best known as a medium for publication of articles that tend to be of a purely descriptive nature. It has served nobly in the encouragement of exploration, and articles descriptive of the lesser-known and out-of-the-way corners of the world still fill the pages of the *Geographical Journal*.

## A Magazine Everybody Knows

Perhaps the most remarkable of all organisations for the dissemination of geographical knowledge in a popular form that has universal appeal is the National Geographical Society with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Membership of this society merely involves subscription to the *National Geographic Magazine*. Everybody knows it. It is lavishly illustrated and distributed monthly to around a million members.

I think that membership of the New Zealand Geographical Society should extend far beyond those people who are professionally interested in the teaching of geography. Publication of a first-class geographical magazine should be our goal in New Zealand. The Canterbury members have already talked about it and suggested it be called the *New Zealand Geographical Review*. We can also clearly see the possibility of raising it to a high standard among publications of its kind. All we want is a wide basis of membership support. However, I will not press this matter further just now.

## New Zealand Is Unique

Geographically New Zealand is a country of unique interest. In a brief century a people of British stock has transformed a group of Pacific islands into a new Britain in the South Seas. An original flora, scarcely altered by the Maori

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