

<<房龙地理>>

图书基本信息

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内容概要

《房龙地理》(Van Loon's Geography)是一部以通俗的手法描写以人的行动与发展为中心的世界地理巨著,它是由付兰裔美国著名历史学家、作家房龙(1882 -)1944)编著而成。

在简要介绍基本地理知识之后,作者按国别或特征地理地区分别讲述了其地理环境,侧重于分析地理对国家或地区的历史演变、国家或地区性格的形成、民族特性等影响,因此这是一本关于“人的”地理书。

丹麦人喜欢静谧书斋,而西班牙人则热衷于广阔的天地;日本近代疯狂地向外扩张,而国土狭小的瑞士却保持中立,等等,难道国家性格真的与国家地理有关?在本书中似乎能够找到答案。

这本中文导读英文版的经典读本,无论作为通俗的世界地理读本,还是作为语言学习的课外读物,对当代中国的读者都将产生重要的影响。

为了使读者能够了解每篇故事的概况,进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平,在每篇英文故事的开始部分增加了中文导读。

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章节摘录

1. 我们生活的世界还生活着其他人 And These Are the People Who Live in the World We Live in 假设每个人都高6英尺(译者注:1英尺=0.3048米),宽1.5英尺,厚1英尺,就可以将全人类装在边长为半英里那么大的盒子里。

把盒子推入亚利桑那州的大峡谷,人类将被埋葬在那里。

远方的天文学家不会注意到这些,一个世纪后,只有那里周围的山和植物见证着人类被埋葬的所在地。

我们只不过是一小撮脆弱而没有什么防范能力的哺乳动物。

从人类诞生那天起,我们便被大群的生物团团包围,它们天生有比我们更强壮的生理条件。

当我们笨拙地用两腿,而不像厚皮动物那样借助树干行走时,是这些陆地和水域的动物而不是我们主宰着世界。

而现在,它们中的绝大多数在自然历史博物馆中,或是被人类圈养,大部分则回到丛林,不再称霸世界。

人类凭借自己理性的头脑成为世界的统治者,而人类中理性和独立思考能力更强的一小部分人成为人类的统治者。

地球被具有不同智力和思考能力的人类划分,人类借助自己发达的大脑为自己夺取财富,但是底线是不能超越自然的法则,她要求我们研究并顺从她的命令。

过犹不及。

人类对于“创造大法则”,即同类之间应该和平友好的公然违背会使人类陷入灭绝的困地。

其他的物种正在高度警惕,毕竟被它们统治总是比装在盒子里的人类充斥着战舰和武器的世界有更多优点。

本书希望能给读者以启示,指出问题所在。

我们都有责任维护我们的世界的安宁。

T sounds incredible, but nevertheless it is true. If everybody in this world of ours were six feet tall and a foot and a half wide and a foot thick (and that is making people a little bigger than they usually are), then the whole of the human race (and according to the latest available statistics there are now nearly 2,000,000,000 descendants of the original Homo Sapiens and his wife) could be packed into a box measuring half a mile in each direction. That, as I just said, sounds incredible, but if you don't believe me, figure it out for yourself and you will find it to be correct.

If we transported that box to the Grand Canyon of Arizona and balanced it neatly on the low stone wall that keeps people from breaking their necks when stunned by the incredible beauty of that silent witness of the forces of Eternity, and then called little Noodle, the dachshund, and told him (the tiny beast is very intelligent and loves to oblige) to give the unwieldy contraption a slight push with his soft brown nose, there would be a moment of crunching and ripping as the wooden planks loosened stones and shrubs and trees on their downward path, and then a low and even softer bumpity-bumpity-bump and a sudden splash when the outer edges struck the banks of the Colorado River. Then silence and oblivion! The astronomers on distant and nearby planets would have noticed nothing out of the ordinary.

A century from now, a little mound, densely covered with vegetable matter, would perhaps indicate where humanity lay buried. And that would be all. I can well imagine that some of my readers will not quite like this story and will feel rather uncomfortable when they see their own proud race reduced to such proportions of sublime insignificance.

There is however a different angle to the problem—an angle which makes the very smallness of our numbers and the helplessness of our puny little bodies a matter of profound and sincere pride. Here we are, a mere handful of weak and defenceless mammals. Ever since the dawn of the first day we have been surrounded on all sides by hordes and swarms of creatures infinitely better prepared for the struggle of existence than we are ourselves. Some of them were a hundred feet long and weighed as much as a small locomotive while others had teeth as sharp as the blade of a circular saw. Many varieties went about their daily affairs clad in the armor of a medieval knight. Others were invisible to the human eye but they multiplied at such a terrific rate that they would have owned the entire earth in less than a year's time if it had

not been for certain enemies who were able to destroy them almost as fast as they were born. Whereas man could only exist under the most favorable circumstances and was forced to look for a habitat among the few small pieces of dry land situated between the high mountains and the deep sea, these fellow-passengers of ours considered no summit too high and found no sea too deep for their ambitions. They were apparently made of the stuff that could survive regardless of its natural surroundings. When we learn on eminent authority that certain varieties of insects are able to disport themselves merrily in petroleum (a substance we would hardly fancy as the main part of our daily diet) and that others manage to live through such changes in temperature as would kill all of us within a very few minutes; when we discover to our gruesome dismay that those little brown beetles, who seem so fond of literature that they are forever racing around in our bookcases, continue the even tenor of their restless days minus two or three or four legs, while we ourselves are disabled by a mere pin-prick on one of our toes, then we sometimes begin to realize against what sort of competitors we have been forced to hold our own, ever since we made our first appearance upon this whirling bit of rock, lost somewhere in the darkest outskirts of an indifferent universe. What a side splitting joke we must have been to our pachydermous contemporaries who stood by and watched this pinkish sport of nature indulge in its first clumsy efforts to walk on its hind legs without the help of a convenient tree-trunk or cane! But what has become of those proud and exclusive owners of almost 200,000,000 square miles of land and water (not to mention the unfathomable oceans of air) who ruled so sublime by that right of eminent domain which was based upon brute force and sly cunning? The greater part of them has disappeared from view except where as "Exhibit A" or "B" we have kindly given them a little parking space in one of our museums devoted to natural history. Others, in order to remain among those present, were forced to go into domestic service and today in exchange for a mere livelihood they favor us with their hides and their eggs and their milk and the beef that grows upon their flanks, or drag such loads as we consider a little too heavy for our own lazy efforts. Many more have betaken themselves to out-of-the-way places where we permit them to browse and graze and perpetuate their species because, thus far, we have not thought it worth our while to remove them from the scene and claim their territory for ourselves. In short, during only a couple of thousands of centuries (a mere second from the point of view of eternity), the human race has made itself the undisputed ruler of every bit of land and at present it bids fair to add both air and sea as part of its domains. And all that, if you please, has been accomplished by a few hundred million creatures who enjoyed not one single advantage over their enemies except the divine gift of Reason. Even there I am exaggerating. The gift of Reason in its more sublime form and the ability to think for one's self is restricted to a mere handful of men and women. They therefore become the masters who lead. The others, no matter how much they may resent the fact, can only follow. The result is a strange and halting procession, for no matter how hard people may try, there are ten thousand stragglers for every true pioneer. Whither the route of march will eventually lead us, that we do not know. But in the light of what has been achieved during the last four thousand years, there is no limit to the total sum of our potential achievements—unless we are tempted away from the path of normal development by our strange inherent cruelty which makes us treat other members of our own species as we would never have dared to treat a cow or a dog or even a tree. The earth and the fullness thereof has been placed at the disposal of Man. Where it has not been placed at his disposal, he has taken possession by right of his superior brain and by the strength of his foresight and his shot-guns. This home of ours is a good home. It grows food enough for all of us. It has abundant quarries and clay beds and forests from which all of us can be provided with more than ample shelter. The patient sheep of our pastures and the waving flax fields with their myriads of blue flowers, not to forget the industrious little silk-worm of China's mulberry trees—they all contribute to shelter our bodies against the cold of winter and protect them against the scorching heat of summer. This home of ours is a good home. It produces all these benefits in so abundant measure that every man, woman and child could have his or her share with a little extra supply thrown in for the inevitable days of rest. But Nature has her own code of laws. They are just, these laws, but they are inexorable and there is no court of appeal. Nature will give unto us and she will give without stint, but in return she demands that we study her precepts and abide by her dictates. A hundred cows in a meadow meant for only fifty spells disaster—a bit of wisdom with which every farmer is thoroughly

familiar. A million people gathered in one spot where there should be only a hundred thousand causes congestion, poverty and unnecessary suffering, a fact which apparently has been overlooked by those who are supposed to guide our destinies. That, however, is not the most serious of our manifold errors. There is another way in which we offend our generous foster-mother. Man is the only living organism that is hostile to its own kind. Dog does not eat dog——tiger does not eat tiger——yea, even the loathsome hyena lives at peace with the members of his own species. But Man hates Man, Man kills Man, and in the world of today the prime concern of every nation is to prepare itself for the coming slaughter of some more of its neighbors.

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编辑推荐

房龙始终站在全人类的高度在写作，他摒弃了深奥理论，却拥有自己独立思想和体系。他的论述主要是围绕人类生存与发展等本质的问题，贯穿其中的精神是科学、宽容和进步，他的目标是向人类的无知与偏执挑战，他采取的方式是普及知识和真理，使它们成为人所共知的常识。

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