

Whatever Geography may be, it is nothing of all this. Geography probably means fifty different things to fifty different people; and many of their meanings hardly cover any common ground at all. Any tenable definition of Geography would remind me of the mediæval scholastic definition of God: "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere." Geography, indeed, is something like London itself—a world the content and intent of which no living man knows or can know. There are at present seventeen distinct official Londons; and there are as many different real Londons as there are people present here to-night in this audience. But, for all practical purposes, I take Geography to mean: Connected information regarding the conditions of Man's life on this planet.

Geography, however, has hardly been treated in this light; and it remains for the new spirit in education—a spirit of power, of breadth, of common sense—to remould our conceptions of Geography, and to introduce the new conceptions into our school-rooms. Hitherto, ninety per cent. of the Geography taught in our schools has been a mere matter of names—the affixing of names to black dots upon maps; and this fundamental heresy still infests our schools and our school-books.

There are two passages in the early history of cookery—a delightful history which still remains to be written—which shed a significant light upon much of our procedure in the teaching of Geography. A belated person had, a very long time ago, taken to growing the potato-plant; but he seems to have been ignorant as to what part of the plant was fit for the food of man. It never struck him that the roots were to be eaten; and he prepared for himself and family a dish of the fruits—of what are known

to children as "potato-bullets," and these are just as pleasant to eat and as hard of digestion as leaden bullets themselves.

The second error in cookery was even worse. At the time when the use of tea was making itself slowly known in the country parts of this island, a gentleman procured, at great expense, half-a-pound of tea, and invited his friends to share with him in the unwonted luxury. He carefully boiled the tea, poured off the water, and served up the leaves after the manner of a pudding. To give additional flavour to the dish, he added a butter-sauce. Neither the host nor the guests could discover what it was that had made tea so highly prized by the upper classes—and so much sought after; nor was any of the company known to repeat the unhappy experiment.

Now, just as the leaves of the tea-plant were offered to the guests of their benighted host, so many writers on Geography insist on making the very staple of their books long lists of names. These are essential, they say; it is the essentials we offer in our books; and no Geography can be learned without them. One book-maker, whose Geography was published only last year, goes so far as to say in his preface: "Geography is to a large extent a matter of names; if these be omitted, the Geography is omitted, and the work is incomplete." Most true, O geographical Solon! Travelling is to a large extent a matter of money; if this be omitted, the travelling is omitted, and the traveller must stay at home. And this unhappy crammer—fallen on evil days—asks his pupil to get up the names of fifty-two towns in Russia, about most of which nothing whatever is said except that the towns *are there*, and you can find them in the map if you care to look. Here is a specimen:—