

## Special Papers.

## GEOGRAPHY.\*

BY R. R. ROSS, BLAKE, ONT.

GEOGRAPHY is one of the most important subjects on the programme of studies, and I think one of the most easily taught. It is a subject which admits of great variety in the modes of teaching it, and I suppose no two teachers teach the subject in exactly the same way, yet the success of one mode may be as great as that of another. We were taught at the Model and Normal schools how to teach Geography, but when I went into a school of my own I found that, although I had got many good hints at these institutions, yet their method, while very good in theory, was unpracticable in a school having classes from the tablets up, and one teacher to attend to all these. In this way I was forced to form my own methods to a great extent and in doing so I experimented until I found what I suppose to be the best method. By the best method I mean the one that will produce the best results in the least possible time with the least waste of energy on the part of the teacher. Believing that all of you who have had some experience in teaching, did as I had to do (that is, experimented until you found the best method), and believing also that your methods may produce as good results as mine, I do not propose to lay down a number of cast iron rules, or to say to you, this is the method, the only method by which good results may be obtained. I merely propose to tell you, 1st. What I consider necessary to the proper teaching of Geography; 2nd. What I consider should be taught, and 3rd. How I teach it.

The first essentials in teaching Geography are good wall maps, a globe, and in the hands of every pupil a geography containing good maps. The second essential is a thorough knowledge of the subject by the teacher, also special preparation of any particular part under consideration. The third, a liberal use of the blackboard. These I consider absolutely necessary, while there may still be other things that assist.

I shall now try to give a few reasons why I consider some of these things necessary. As to good maps being a necessity no argument on my part is required. I am certain you all admit that. As to a globe I am not so certain. I know that some schools are still without it, and in some that have it, it is seldom used. This last statement I make on good authority, as I have been told by teachers who have globes that they lie in the box from one year's end to the other, or stand in some part of the school as a thing of beauty but of no other earthly use. The globe is indispensable to the proper teaching of the shape and motions of the earth, the divisions of its surface, etc. If there is any teacher here who has one and does not use it, or who has not been in the habit of using it, permit me to advise you to begin at once. I have not a globe myself and know from experience the disadvantage I am laboring under in the teaching of these things without it. With regard to the necessity of each pupil having a geography, some of you will say, "It is needless for you to say anything about that, as in the case of wall maps, we all admit that good geographies are a necessity." To the older teachers I know it is unnecessary for me to say anything about the matter, but I would advise the younger members of the profession to beware of making pupils commit to memory the names and positions of capes, bays, cities, etc., without seeing that in the preparation of their lessons they have found these on the map for themselves. It is possible for a class to commit to memory the names and positions of a great many places, so that they can readily give names and answer all your questions touching these points to-day, but in a week's time review that lesson without giving the class previous warning and you will find that what you supposed they knew so well a week ago, in nine cases out of ten they now know little or nothing about. I made this mistake myself in starting, and that is why I speak of it so particularly to young teachers. See that every pupil has a good Geography and that it is used aright.

My next necessary was a thorough knowledge of the subject by the teacher and special preparation. With regard to this I need only say, that no teacher

can teach what he or she does not know, and the teacher that is forced to teach this subject, and I might say almost any subject, with a text book in his or her hand, is fettered, and can not throw the same amount of life and energy into the work that one can who does not need to use a text-book. Besides, pupils are not slow to take notice and draw their own conclusions, and by constantly using a text-book the teacher is in danger of losing the confidence of the pupils. When this takes place the teacher's usefulness in that school is gone. Even when a teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject, special preparation is still necessary to determine the best way of presenting it, what parts will be best to teach first, etc.

I also put under the head of necessities a liberal use of the blackboard. Why I consider this necessary you will understand when I come to deal with methods. My second proposal was to tell what I consider should or should not be taught to third and fourth classes. As to the amount of ground that we should go over with these classes I shall say nothing, as I understand the programme of studies for those promotion examinations is in preparation, and I trust that the proper amount will be marked out by it. What I want to speak of now is, what of each part shall we teach? What I mean by each part will be understood when I say that in teaching the geography of a country or continent, no teacher tries to teach everything at once, but will perhaps make the rivers the subject of one lesson, cities that of another, bays that of another, and so on. These I call parts. Now how much of each part shall we teach? I consider it unnecessary to burden the pupils' minds with a lot of useless minor details, such as the names of all the stations on a certain line of railway, when the majority of these places are noted for nothing more than that they have a post office and a station. So in regard to rivers, none should be taught but the largest and most important ones. So with capes. I don't think it necessary to teach or to ask a child to remember the name of every point of land that stretches a little farther out into the water than the rest of the shore in that vicinity. What should be taught are the principal ones of each part, that is, the chief or largest rivers, the most prominent capes, as Farewell, Horn, Good Hope, etc., and so on with all the other parts. So much for the mere physical features of a country. But to teach the physical features of a country, though very important, should not be the sole aim and end of a teacher. Of as much importance, in my estimation, are the climate, products, exports, imports, manufactures, etc. These, of course, with a third class, should not be taken up so minutely as with a fourth class.

With regard to the teaching of the railway system of Ontario, I think the main lines might be taught, but to teach or ask children to learn the names of all the different branches, though they be only ten miles long and a hundred miles from home, is a mere waste of time and energy, and can be of no earthly use to the pupils. It is questionable whether we should even try to teach the different railways connecting the largest cities. It is unnecessary for me to say that the motions of the earth, its shape, and lines on its surface, etc., should be taught, but just to what class or classes these should be taught we shall leave it to the promotion examination programme to say.

Having briefly outlined what I think should and should not be taught, I come to my next and last point, viz.: How I teach the subject. And I shall here repeat that I do not propose to lay down a number of rules and ask you all to teach the subject as I do. But I merely intend to tell you as quickly as I can how I teach some of the parts which I think should be taught, and if I can help any one here who may have difficulty in teaching it, I shall be glad. Or if when I am done any one here can put me on the track of a better method, then I shall be very happy to give up the old for the new. The first thing necessary in teaching the physical features of a country or continent is to get the outline and the map in general so familiar to the pupils that they may have a map of it in their minds, so that when the name of that country or continent is mentioned they may see with their mind's eye a map of it as plainly as if there were an actual map hanging on the wall in front of them. And the only way to do this is by map drawing. By using good wall maps, that is, teaching from good maps without much map drawing, fairly good

results may be obtained, but without frequent map drawing the impression is not so lasting, for the pupils are forced in map drawing to observe closely, and the closer the observation the more lasting the impression. This is one of the benefits of drawing. A person may examine, as he thinks, an object closely, and go away from it with the idea that he has seen all about it, but ask that person to sketch the same object and he will likely find that there were many things about it of which he knows nothing. So with map drawing. It forces the pupils to notice many things that they would not have noticed had they not drawn it. And in this way the outline, positions, etc., become fixed almost indelibly in their minds. There are a number of ways in which map drawing may be taken, and by varying the methods the work is pleasing to the pupils. Suppose I am beginning to teach, say North America, I would teach from a map, 1st. the boundaries, then the countries and capitals, carefully showing them with the pointer the extent of each country. Then it makes very little difference in what order the other parts are taken. That, we will suppose will be lesson enough for one day. Next day, before proceeding further, have a short, lively oral drill or review of yesterday's work. This will take up but a few minutes' time. I would teach nothing more then until I had put an outline map of North America on the board, and either had the pupils place the names of the different bodies of water that form its boundaries in their proper places, or had done so myself by their directions. So with the divisions or countries. Now, suppose I began to teach this on Monday, I would on Thursday have taught, say boundaries, countries, capitals and rivers. Then on Friday, as a review, I would have them draw a map of North America, marking on it all they have learned during the week, not hindering them from using their maps as a guide if they wish. But I find that after a map has been drawn a few times by the pupils, the majority do not think of using their geographies in making the outline. I would continue this until all the different parts are taught. Then I ask them to draw it and place on it whatever I ask them to; placing on the board the names of whatever I wish to appear on the map. This time I would not allow any of them to use their geographies. Another very good plan, and one that does not take up so much time and may be used with good third and fourth classes to advantage, is for each to take his or her geography and—suppose I want to teach the rivers of, say Russia—ask them to look at the rivers of that country and either ask some of them to name a river, or name one myself, and ask them to find it on the map. Be certain before leaving it that every one has found it and traced it to its mouth. After all the rivers of Russia have been gone over in this way allow them time to write the names of the rivers, the direction in which they flow, where they empty, etc., in their scribbles. This will have the effect of fixing the proper spelling of names in their memories. And so on with all the other parts. With advanced classes I do not consider that map drawing is necessary oftener than once a week, or once in two weeks, for we must teach other things as well as geography, and map drawing takes time. But with third classes going over the work for the first time, I consider the oftener you have them draw maps the better. I think if this method is followed, varying the exercise as much as possible, good results will be obtained. Map drawing may be varied greatly by having one pupil draw the map on the board and have the others criticize it in a friendly way; then have another mark, say the rivers, and another place the name of one on the map in its proper place, another place the name of another on the map in the same way, and so on, the whole class can take part in the exercise and it will be found very interesting to them. The map can be drawn on such a part of the board that it may be left there as long as you choose, and thus be ready for each day's exercise. This is, of course, intended more for a drill or review than for a teaching exercise. Assign to-day a certain part for to-morrow. Suppose it is the map of North America, and suppose we have the outline map drawn and the boundaries and countries marked to-day, then tell them what particular part or parts you require them to deal with to-morrow. You will see how earnestly every pupil in the class is studying that particular part or parts during the time allowed them at seats

(Concluded on page 127.)

\*Read before the West Huron Teachers' Convention.