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On Teaching Geography.

Paper—read by W. LAWSON, Esq., F.R.S., before the College of Preceptors.

When we seek to estimate the educational value of any particular subject, we are generally guided by two considerations:—(1) What is its value as a means of intellectual training? (2) What is the practical value of the information which it conveys? Now, whatever may be said of the importance of Geography as a means of mental training—and very much may be said—few will be disposed to deny the practical value of the knowledge which it imparts.

Importance of Geography.

It was Dr. Watts, we believe, who stated that geography was one of the eyes of history; but a great advance has been made since his time; and while geography is still necessary to a complete understanding of its sister study, it now ranks as an independent science. Viewed in its full scope, as including physical geography, it is intimately associated with the phenomena of the natural world. It takes cognizance of the changes and temperature of the atmosphere; the causes of winds and oceanic currents; the origins of storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes; and the distribution over the globe of all forms of organic life. Taken in a more restricted sense, its study is of the

first importance to a commercial country like England. It investigates the causes of our manufacturing superiority; it unfolds new fields to our commerce, and makes us acquainted with the character and productions of our vast Colonial empire. Besides all this, it is necessary to the proper understanding of our daily newspaper. The extension of the telegraph system, and the enterprise of the Press, bring to us every morning news from all parts of the world; and the reader who is ignorant of geography can only half realise the accounts which he reads. A striking illustration of the importance of geography in relation to the daily press was recently afforded. Early in the month of November the readers of the *Times* would notice that, day after day, three maps or charts appeared in its columns. There was the usual weather chart, showing the lines of equal barometric pressure and the direction of the prevailing winds; a map of the seat of war; and a map to illustrate the discoveries made by the recent Arctic Expedition. This shows how intimately geography is bound up with the affairs of every-day life and with our every-day reading. It is perhaps unnecessary to dwell further on this part of our subject. Upon its importance I presume we are all agreed. The main question is, How shall it be taught?

First Lessons.

It has sometimes been urged that our first lessons in geography should commence with drawing a plan of the school-room; that we should next proceed with the street in which the school stands; then take the town, and last of all the country: and that in this way we should gradually prepare the minds of our pupils for understanding what is meant by a map. I confess that all this has often struck me as a waste of time. I should commence by telling a child that the world was round, like a ball; that it was so large that the hills and mountains upon its surface bear no greater proportion to its bulk than do grains of sand upon a globe twelve inches in diameter, and the deepest valleys are not so large in proportion as the minute impressions in the skin of an orange. I should next tell him that a map was a picture of the world, or of some part of it; but that the picture was on so small a scale that the rivers could only be represented by lines,