

GEOGRAPHY.

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What object have we in view in teaching this subject?

In teaching geography we wish to acquaint our pupils with the general features of the world we occupy; its resources, and inhabitants, and the consideration of how these various features and resources affect the comfort and determine the welfare of these inhabitants.

Each individual sees but a small portion of this earth on which we dwell, but indirectly with how large a portion of it may he become acquainted? So fertile is nature in method of arrangement, that the various parts of the earth's surface differ rather in variety of combination and degree than in kind. Taking advantage of this fact our first care is to draw the attention of our pupils to the features of the landscape about their own home—hill, valley, lake, river, etc. First familiarize them with the object, then aid them in the acquirement of language to express their idea of the object. Let the subject of the lesson be the neighboring hill. After their observation and conception of it as a whole, lead them to distinguish its various parts,—base, sides, and summit; to notice whether its sides are steep or sloping, covered or bare, its top rough or smooth; whether a single hill or one of a group or range. From the hill to the mountain will not be a very great advance, and as children love the marvellous their imagination may be readily excited by an interesting account of some of those great productions of nature in other lands.

A river, or at least a brook, is easily accessible I may safely say, to all our pupils. On it, too, we must dwell long enough to make our children acquainted with it as a whole, and also its various parts; whether it banks are steep, its channel pebbly or its current rapid. In imagination we follow it up to its source among the hills, etc., downward to its mouth, where it is lost in some greater body.

Let their conception of it be as real as possible, so that their idea of a river is that of some inverted tree whose growth is the result of the union of its many branches.

The mountain in its varying forms and the river are perhaps the most difficult features for the mind to grasp, but entering so largely as they do into their future imaginations and conceptions of other lands, the pleasure to be derived from the prosecution of the study at a later date depends largely on their realization of these things at the present.

After the various natural features have been taken up, the inhabitants of the region are brought to their notice; the occupation of the people; the productions of their own native land; domestic and wild animals; their habits in regard to food, clothing, and dwellings as illustrative of the adaptability of the country to the support and comfort of its inhabitants.

In noting the occupations of our people, in our cities we see them largely engaged in trade and manufactures; on the seashore, fisheries prove attractive and remunerative; in those parts of our country where the forest yet stands, lumbering; where already cleared, the farmer has set to work, and the beautiful soil yields her increase. Oftimes we find him alternating his employments according to the season—farming in the summer, lumbering in the winter. In other places where the soil is scanty, and limestone and granite or other minerals abound, our workmen deliberately set to work to hew down the mountains, or in the coal regions delve into the depths of the earth.

Let them observe the use made of those productions at home, and what becomes of the surplus. We send our ships laden with it to other lands where nature in that particular has not been so bountiful. In due time our vessels return—not empty—but freighted with the superabundance of those lands, supplying to us the wants and luxuries which our own country from lack of development or adapta-

bility is unfitted to do. This can be made interesting to quite young pupils. With the teacher's help they can follow our lumber laden ships to those countries, which from long settlement and cultivation we designate as old, where the thoughtless destruction of a tree would be considered a crime, where the cottager must be content with a floor of clay and roof of thatch, and where his home is warmed with peat from the bog, or coal from the mine. Compare this with the free use and waste of wood at home. Their curiosity is aroused, and they are not satisfied until you have told them something more. In this cold climate, they frolic and revel on the ice in winter; even the ice forms an article of trade, preserved in part for our own use in summer, and in part an article of exchange with such countries as yield us the orange, the grape and the cotton.

The native animals of the district should come in for a large share of attention—their food, how obtained—any peculiarity of structure which aids them in supplying their wants,—whether like the bee and the squirrel, they provide their winter supply during the summer, or like the wolf and the fox seek for food when hunger compels them. Teach them to note the change in colour of some of our native animals on the approach of winter; the hare for example, that it is not merely a change of colour, but a provision made by a wise Creator to provide them with an extra garment, which they are enabled to throw off on the approach of spring, that in cold climates the covering of animals become heavier on the approach of winter, to protect them from the cold. Not only the food and clothing but the callings of both bird and beast should be brought to their notice, and the tender minds of the little ones taught to rise in wonder, love, and praise to Him who in wisdom "when He formed designed them an abode."

Lessons on the cardinal points, as marked by the sun's course in the heavens—on the climate—and seasons and motions of the earth would naturally follow.

Familiar articles of food and clothing brought from abroad, serve as a connecting link between our own and other lands, whose position at this time would be sufficiently defined by reference to the cardinal points.

The occasional visit of some travelling menagerie, delighting our little ones, and as surely emptying our school rooms on the days of its exhibition, is another link between the known and the unknown. What wonderful accounts they can give us on the following day! Seizing the opportunity when their interest is at its height, we can tell them something of the habits and homes of the strange creatures they have seen. Pictorial representation will at all times be found useful. If possible let the picture present not only the animal or object under consideration, but also a view of the striking features of the country which is its home. The buffalo we associate with the prairies of the Northwest, the chamois, with the precipices and crags of Switzerland, and the camel with the sands of an Arabian desert.

After a large field of observation at home with these occasional glimpses abroad, we are ready to enter upon the study of geography in a more formal manner. The pupil by this time is able to avail himself of the assistance of the text book. Here, I think, is where the teacher sometimes makes a mistake, throwing the entire weight of responsibility from his own shoulders to those of his pupil, expecting him to take his book and prepare lengthy home lesson, which he is supposed to know when called upon. Left to himself and his book, what wonder if his imagination take but a low flight, his conception of the country he is supposed to be studying be somewhat vague, and the so called study a weariness?

In time, his interest in the subject and training in how to study will prepare the way for this self-culture, but, at present, before expecting him to memorize facts, let us assist him in gathering up facts to memorize. In imagination let us accompany our pupils to that other land, to which parties of relationship or of intercourse they naturally turn, and by familiar conversations and pointed questions,

pivot the attention on certain points—its position from our own home—form,—area as compared with their own province or country—its surface—inhabitants—productions, etc. All of which should be impressed upon the mind by a comparison with things at home. The pupils may now use the textbook to assist their memory, or supply additional facts. Simple copying from the book will prove effective in impressing the subject upon their memory. Used in this way books become not a burden but a help and a joy. Observation and comparison use continually. Keep the imagination and conception active. We can readily test their knowledge by getting them to reproduce the subject from memory, or for a pleasant change, and the maintenance of a lively interest, let the class take the lesson into their own hands and question one another. Before long their interest will deepen sufficiently to make them treasure up not only what information can be found in their text-book but books of travel will have for them a special interest.

A great aid in teaching geography is map-drawing. Drawing seems to be a part of child-nature. Where will you find little ones who do not amuse themselves with wonderful representations of man, bird or beast? You may not at all times recognize the resemblance, but to them it is quite clear. With the teacher's assistance first a map of their school-room, then the school grounds, are substituted for former objects. At length the map of the county, then that of the province is reached. Let the teacher construct the map on the black-board in the presence of the pupils, not hastily but step by step, as the pupils are able to follow on their slates. Let us suppose the map to be that of our own province. During a conversation on its form and position, when indicating that its greatest extent is towards the north and south, let them point in the direction named, in like manner when you speak of the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the east, or the State of Maine on the west. This makes the surrounding places a reality, having a definite position. After the outline we may add the rivers, mountains, counties and shiretowns. The attention has been held with a three-fold chord, the eye, the ear, and the hand have all aided in impressing the subject upon them.

From their own province they advance to the neighboring one, giving its position from their own by reference to the cardinal points, indicating the direction with their hands as before, then proceed to compare its various features, inhabitants and productions with those of their own home. Interesting bits of history will often fit in nicely, making the lesson more interesting and impressive.

In studying a country, whether by the aid of the ordinary school-map, or one of the pupil's own construction, impress upon them the appearance it would present to the eye, if from some elevated standpoint the whole could be viewed at once. Let them note particularly the position and extent of its great natural features, whether extended plain, mountain range or river basin. The location of the principal centres of trade and manufactures, and their means of communication with one another, and with the outside world should next be dwelt upon.

As we continue the study of geography we soon begin to feel that the cardinal points do not sufficiently express all we want in regard to position. A knowledge of the general form of the earth as a whole is now required, and some means of defining the exact position of places upon it. A globe, or if that be lacking, an orange or ball will supply the first, and a few lessons of latitude and longitude will furnish the means of determining the second.

The pupils are now in a position to understand a map of the world, to note the great divisions of land and water, and observe not only their relative but absolute positions.

We take up the various countries in the order of their importance in connection with our own. From Canada it seems natural to turn our attention to the adjoining Republic of the United States even before entering on the study of the Mother Country. We find the inhabitants in race, customs and religion a

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