

THE CANADA
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY
AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY, 1892.

THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

BEFORE discussing the subject of the evening, it may be as well to try to remove from your minds two preconceptions—or prejudices—which may have effected a lodgment there, and which would interfere with a true insight into the problem before us.

The first of these preconceptions probably is, that I am about to recommend to the notice, and for the adoption, of teachers, a new subject. My proposition is the very reverse of this: it is rather to diminish the already too great number of subjects taught in our schools, and to describe a method which may make those already taught in them easier to teach and still easier to learn. One of the chief banes of education at the present day is the inordinate number of subjects which weaken the power of the teacher, and distract—instead of concentrating—the attention of the pupil. If any man, with the encyclopædic greed which is the characteristic of so many educational faddists, were to press upon us the adoption of a new

additional subject in our schools, I should be inclined to invoke upon his unreflecting head the well-known curse of St. Ernulphus: "Maledicat illum patriarcharum et prophetarum laudabilis numerus . . . Maledicant illum cœli et terra, et omnia sancta in eis manentia . . . Maledictus sit ubicunque fuerit, sive in domo, sive in agro, sive in viâ, etc. . . . Maledictus sit vivendo, manducando, bibendo, esuriendo," etc., etc., etc. But I will spare you the rest of the too theological execration, which occupies twenty-seven pages in my edition of "Tristram Shandy"; and I will sum it all up in the older Oriental formula: "May his face be turned upside down; and may jackasses sit upon his uncle's grave!"

The second prejudice which I ask you to remove from your minds, is the idea that Geography is a fixed subject, with a known and agreed-on content, with defined limits, with a well understood goal, and with a clearly marked road up to that goal.