

THE STATUS OF GEOGRAPHY TEACHING.

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(Continued from last issue.)

WITH respect to other topics that belong to the *Heimatskunde*, or around-home study of geography, the methods of the superficialists are equally unskilful. Ritter, whom the reformer never tires of quoting, if not the father of observational methods in teaching geography, was certainly its champion. His ideas were good, and he was abreast of his times. But since the time of Ritter there has been a wonderful advance in the development of geography. In late years it has become a science far more comprehensive in its scope than any other science, that of astronomy excepted. The writers and lecturers on the pedagogics of geography as a rule, however, do not seem to be aware of this, and the great mass of them fall far behind their model. In other words they are behind the times of fifty years ago. Indeed among the host of writers on the pedagogics of geography I know of but one or two that recognize the recent advances in modern geographic science. The great majority of instructors are content to take the subject as it appears in the text-books of ten years since, basing their instruction on the facts and statements presented in such literature. As a rule, these same text-books are condemned by the reformer—not because they are inexact in statement, but because they are alleged to be faulty in their methods of presentation; judgment is passed not upon the essence, but upon the surface.

As a matter of fact, however, such criticism serves only to show the woeful lack of scholarship on the part of the critic. Text-books of geogra-

phy, especially those of a dozen years ago, are not beyond suspicion so far as accuracy of statement is concerned; indeed they are apt to be very faulty. On the other hand, in methods of presentation they are certainly superior to the average text-book on any other subject. In the February number of the *Review* I copied a few extracts from a recently published text-book. With respect to geographic value, the book possessed little worth, but in spite of its defects it was pedagogically good. The author needed nothing but proper training in the subject to make not only a clever teacher, but one of no little power.

And this brings me to the point that seems to be the chief difficulty. In order to teach geography well the teacher must first educate himself in that subject. A teacher whose stock in trade consists only of a method and a moulding board cannot hope to score brilliant success. Method and system in teaching any subject are certainly necessary to success, but successful methods of teaching can be acquired only when the teacher has a good fundamental knowledge of the subject. To lecture pupil-teachers on the best methods of teaching a subject, the fundamental principles of which they know little or nothing about, is a clear case of charlatany.

Unfortunately a great deal of this same sham work in science teaching is going on year after year. The normal schools are responsible for a great deal of it, and the various teachers' institutes and associations are full of it. It goes on right under the noses of the universities, and these