

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

BY G. R. CRUICKSHANK, M.A., SCIENCE MASTER IN CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL.

(From an address delivered before the Chatham District Teachers' Association.)

In no branch of study should a youth desiring a liberal education be more thoroughly drilled than in geography. In conversation, in reading the newspapers, at every turn of life he is called upon to make use of his store of geographical knowledge. That Yankee who imagined Canada to be about the same size as Pennsylvania, seemed to be ridiculously ignorant; that Englishman impaired the prestige of the *London Times* who said that Montreal was connected with Detroit by the Victoria tubular bridge. The treasure of geographical facts is an unfailing source of gratification to its possessor, and their judicious use in conversation will stamp him among his fellows as a well read man. But do we not devote too much attention to the position of places? Are we not limiting geography too much to one branch of it, topography?

The object of education is to train the faculties so that the best use may be made of them to teach the mind to think intelligently and to form correct conclusions. Education should not only improve reason and judgment but also store up in the mind valuable facts—food for thought. How far does geography work out these results? Are these numerous details of foreign lands desirable in a liberal education? Do our well read men, our shining lights in science and letters, know them? I am not giving you my own opinion only when I contend that fully one-half of our University graduates would be inevitably plucked at the intermediate in geography. Why are they content to remain in such gross ignorance? Why do they not take their attention from letters and learn to sketch the coast line from Copenhagen to Lishon; to name the chief towns on the rivers which flow from near the St. Gothard Pass? Such questions as this do not train the reason, nor do they cultivate good judgment. They exercise the memory; they give a false training and cram it with details intended to be forgotten.

And yet our pupils are expected to trace the outlines of foreign coasts, to remember long lists of towns on far off rivers, while they would not be considered at all ignorant if they knew almost nothing of the air they breathe, or of the ground on which they walk. Of the wind which fans them they know not "whence it cometh or whither it goeth." A friend, who had been a teacher, on being asked the position of an American city, expressed surprise at forgetting it, remarking that a few years ago he knew every important town and stream in every state in the Union. On being asked if he was not sorry that he had forgotten, he replied that he was not sure whether he was or not. "What did you learn it for then?" "To pass the intermediate examination," was the reply. Such is "cram."

A good general knowledge then of places, a particular one of home and of foreign lands attracting public attention by war or notable events, and a sketch of mathematical and physical geography would realize more nearly the object of study. A youth leaves school to settle on the farm; most of the facts he has acquired are forgotten never to be recalled; but the stars, the wind, the rain, the rocks—will day after day suggest thoughts to his mind, keep him thinking, and keep his mind from becoming a cultivated waste. His geography would then be to him a pleasure in solitude, an ornament in society, a benefit always.

[The remainder of Mr. Cruickshank's prelection, to which the above is merely the introduction, contained a sketch of the topics he would include under a course of physical geography, these topics being all arranged under the three heads: (1) Land, (2) Water, and (3) Air.—ED. JOURNAL.]

HOME LESSONS.

BY D. C. McHENRY, M.A.

(Read before the Northumberland Teachers' Association, and published by request of the Association.)

In order fairly to discuss this question, it will be necessary first to agree upon some basis as to the true relation of the teacher to the parent—the school to the home.

That this relation is a very intimate one will appear if we consider that, primarily, every parent is directly responsible for the education of his own children. He may undertake the work himself, not only before his children reach school age, but also during the entire course of their studies. Some parents prefer this method and adopt it. Our school law recognizes the right of parents thus to educate their children—a right which no one thinks of calling in question. In this case *home lessons* are the only lessons formally given or received.

If all parents were personally qualified thus to conduct the education of their children, and if they could devote to the work that amount of attention which is necessary there are at least some very good reasons why it might be generally adopted.

It has been found, however, that in most families this plan of home instruction cannot be carried out. For many reasons it is, as a rule, quite impracticable. Hence the school, and the school-teacher.

Again, the parent may bring the teacher to the home, and, under the parental roof his children may receive instruction. Or, as a matter of convenience, the children may be entrusted to the care of the teacher at a public school, for a certain number of hours a day.

Has the responsibility of the parent ceased, by reason of this transfer? Has it even very materially changed in its character?

Contrary to the prevalent notions of many of the parents, I think we must maintain that they are still directly responsible, in a great degree for the educational progress of their children; that the teacher is but the assistant of the parent; and that it is only in a limited sense that he can be said to stand *in loco parentis*.

The question as to whether there shall be home-lessons thus becomes one merely of convenience or expediency. For, if all that the child properly requires at his age can be obtained at school, there need be no school-work at home. If, however, the child cannot complete at school all that is reasonably required of him, a part of his work should be done at home.

The teacher must be held responsible for his share of the work of supervision and instruction; and the parent must be held responsible for that part of the work which naturally falls to him while the child is at home.

At this point such questions as the following naturally arise:

- I. What is the object of home-lessons?
- II. What should be the nature of home-lessons?
- III. How should home-lessons be assigned?
- IV. What are the duties of parents in relation to home lessons?
- V. What time is required for home lessons, by the various grades of pupils?

I. I think the true object of giving home-lessons will be seen if we can first decide what we do when we are said to educate a child.

I assume that all present are prepared to accept the statement that the art of education consists in the practical application of principles gained by studying child-nature—the central principle being that it is what the child does for himself and by himself that educates him.