

in reading and other studies, effective and skillful education in the elements of all the knowledge and attainments required by man; instead of the ancient stick-government and bastinado system, a mild, earnest, paternal and reasonable method of discipline; loving instruction from well written books; teachers zealously discharging their duties; in short, we in Germany, by full consciousness that something better is always attainable, by laboring forward always to better methods, and by actual attainment, that the best educated nations on earth, the French and English, are behind us in respect to educational matters, we may justifiably take pride in knowing that men from all the civilized nations in the world, even from beyond the ocean, travel hither to observe the German common schools, to understand the German teachers, and to transplant into their own countries the benefits of which we are already possessed.

The young reader who has followed me thus far will naturally inquire, how all this happened; in what manner this better school system came into being. And among the names of those noble men to whose thoughts and deeds we owe so invaluable a creation, all historians will record with high honor that of Pestalozzi.

—*Barnard's American Journal of Education.*

(To be continued.)

## GEOGRAPHY.

Geography receives a large share of attention in the public schools; but there is no study that yields such small returns for the labor bestowed upon it. The practical advantage derived from it is not worth the time devoted to it. A scholar who has passed through all the grades of schools, graduating at sixteen, has probably spent the whole number of school hours there are in two years in studying Geography; and yet he will have to look upon his map in after-life for nine out of ten of the places he reads about in the public prints, or meets in historical and descriptive works. He has learned a great many facts in all that time; but they were so wretchedly arranged, and while he was learning them, were so little associated with the solid earth on which he lived, that they afford about as little advantage to him as the knowledge that craters exist in the moon.

Go into a Primary School and hear recitations in Geography. The book used is probably a compendium of geographical knowledge, called Primary, because it is smaller than the one used in schools of a higher grade. Being smaller, it is more condensed, and less simple and interesting than larger treatises. Little children, who hardly know North from South, and cannot tell the towns that border upon their own, who never fully grasped the idea of a mile, and whose minds have not been stretched enough to take in the conception of a good-sized pond, having studied their lesson diligently and patiently, tell us about the grand divisions of the globe, of vast oceans thousands of miles wide, and talk about great and small circles, latitude and longitude, without the faintest conception of what these terms represent. Such is their introduction to the science of Geography; and if the design of it is to furnish them with a few facts in such form as to make the least possible impression on the mind, and perform no part in its enlargement, no better introduction could be devised.

Then the continuation of the study in schools of a higher grade is much upon the same plan. The scholars may obtain a little better understanding of the subject, but they fall enough short of any just comprehension of it to lose most of its practical advantages. Instead of gaining accurate and inspiring conceptions of the great globe which the Almighty has formed and beautified for their residence, they garner up a store of isolated facts, which, having served their purpose in recitation or exhibition, are soon forgotten, or are stowed away in the dark corners of the mind as rubbish, to come forth once in a while as departed ghosts, but never in an earthly form.

Frequent attempts have been made to improve the prevailing methods of teaching this branch of school study; but it is so easy to keep on in the well-worn paths, that, though in individual cases great advancement may have been made, we cannot see that on the whole Geography is taught much better in our schools than it was twenty years ago. Certain it is that the text-books which have been in general use for the last dozen years, can hardly be called, either in their matter or arrangement, improvements upon those which they displaced.

"Geography is a description of the surface of the earth." So the books tell us. The object of studying it, then, is to gain a knowledge of the earth; to have in the mind some notion of its size, its masses of land, stretching out into wide plains, or rising up into

mountain chains, covered with a diversified vegetation, watered by rivers, inhabited by various races of men, the home of countless animals; some notion, also, of that vast body of waters which spreads out into broad oceans teeming with life, its regular ebb and flow, and constant currents.

Suppose some Primary School Teacher should banish all Geographies from her school; that she should draw upon the blackboard a map of the school-room, explaining the whole process, and then allow her scholars to draw the same either upon the board or upon their slates; then teach them in the same way to draw a map of the school premises; permit them to make maps of their gardens, of some field or larger portion of ground; and so go on till she had taught them to draw a map of the town, representing its roads, hills, forests, ponds and streams, and denoting the towns that border upon it,—would she not give her scholars a better introduction to Geography, a better notion of it, than could be gained by committing to memory all that even the best Primary Geographies in existence contain?

Before scholars can gain any proper conception of the things represented on maps, they must have some knowledge of the things themselves. The natural way, and the only real way, of teaching children is to begin with things. The concrete must come before the abstract. The mode of commencement above described leads to observation. It calls into exercise the most useful mental faculties, and teaches how to retain in the mind well-defined images of what has been seen; and scholars who have made the best use of what there is about them are thus prepared to receive from descriptions ideas of things they have not seen. From the images already gained of rocks, streams, plains, hills, and forests, they can form images of much larger rocks, streams, &c. By making representations of the earth's surface for themselves, they learn to understand better the representations made by others.

A little incident that occurred the other day showed us how little notice is generally taken of the situation of things. Some alterations in the school-yard being proposed, we wished to make a little sketch of it. When it came to locating the trees, we were uncertain in regard to their number. We asked the scholars. Out of fifty boys, two or three could tell how many trees there were, and one only could describe the situation of each; and yet nearly all of these boys had spent an hour each day for years in playing under them. Had these scholars been trained from the outset to habits of observation and accurate description, the number and position of a few beautiful shadetrees in their school-yard would hardly have been overlooked. The same remark may be made of their teacher.

We did not commence this article with any idea of indicating the method in which Geography should be taught, but merely for the purpose of making one or two suggestions. We should place Physical Geography before Political. That seems to be the most natural order. First, the description of the earth in its natural condition; then, the divisions of its surface and the changes wrought upon it by man. By Physical Geography, we do not mean all that is taught in works of that title, but the general outlines of the land and water surfaces of the earth, of its mountain ranges and slopes, river courses, and the like, such as scholars who have received the proper elementary training can easily understand. This should be thoroughly taught, and not made the mere memory of names and facts. Not only by drawing these outlines from memory would we be sure that the map representations were pictured upon the brain, but we would endeavor to have the actual thing delineated upon the map imaged in the mind. The idea of Massachusetts, for instance, should not be a little drawing upon paper, painted yellow, with a wavy line here for a river, and a little dot there for a town; but the idea of a portion of the earth's surface, so many miles in length and breadth, with its rock-bound and its sandy coasts, its land-locked bays and harbors, its undulating surface and flowing rivers.

The utility of map-drawing in connection with the study of Geography is universally conceded; but is the map-drawing so generally practised of the right kind? We visit schools, and are shown really beautiful specimens of this kind of handiwork. We have a number of maps in our desk we take considerable pride in looking at, and are not unwilling to show them to committees and visitors.

But what do they amount to? Simply this: certain boys have considerable taste for drawing, and they have made copies of certain maps. They confined their attention to one point after another till the work was done. They did not think much about what they were doing, and left off with about the same knowledge of the map they had when they commenced. It was not a useless exercise, because it furnished training for eye and hand; but, as a geographical exercise, it was worth but little. We have not forgotten yet the astonishment we experienced when examining the makers of some of