

ONTARIO SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

PART I

THE PRINCIPLES OF GEOGRAPHY

I. INTRODUCTION

Meaning of Geography. The study of geography is the study of the earth and its relation to the plants, animals, and men that live on its surface. When we are learning about the climate and the people of the tropical forests of Central Africa or the wheat fields of Manitoba or about the explorations of Franklin, Nansen, or Peary in the far north, we are studying geography.

When we look for spring flowers on the sunny, sheltered side of a hill, rather than on the north side, or when we send reaping machines to Australia, or lumber to Great Britain, we are making use of our knowledge of geography.

Geographical Facts and Principles. Our study of geography shows us that certain facts are much more important to learn and to remember than others, because some are permanent while others are constantly changing. For instance, the population of Toronto or Montreal, or any other large place, changes daily; hence there is little to be gained from remembering the exact number of inhabitants in any city at a certain date. On the other hand, the location, the climate, soil, slopes, and drainage which have led men to build large cities at the places mentioned, are practically unchanging and are therefore important. Before the white man came, the Indians occupied the island on which Montreal stands; and for exactly the

same reason as the white man—because it was a convenient place to gain their living. Such truths as these are more than mere facts. They are *principles*, for they are true without regard to time or place.

Value of Geographical Principles. In the first part of this book we are to study the more important principles of geography, because they will help us to understand the geographical conditions of the world, and will enable us to understand why men live and act in certain ways in one part of the world, and in different ways in another. Principles, or generalizations, are worked out through the study and comparison of facts. We can understand the principles, only when we know many facts from different parts of the world which serve to illustrate the principles.

For instance, we shall find the soil, the drainage, and the climate of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta to be much alike. We shall find that these provinces produce great quantities of hard wheat. We may then very rightfully say that, wherever the conditions in other parts of the world are like those in these regions, hard wheat can easily be raised. With this principle in mind, it is not difficult to find out, from a study of the maps and texts, the possible areas in which hard wheat can be produced. In other words, a knowledge of the geographical conditions in one part of the world will help us to understand the geographical conditions in another.