

THE QUESTION BOX.

1. SUB.—Is there a railroad from Capetown to Cairo in Africa? If so, will you name the chief stations?

The Cape-to-Cairo railway must as yet be looked upon as no more than a remote possibility. In South Africa there is a railway running northward from Capetown for a distance of about two thousand miles, passing through Kimberly and Bulawayo, and crossing Zambesi at Victoria Falls. It is a part of the system of government railways; and as such, of course, cannot be extended beyond the limits of South Africa. Another railway runs southward up the Nile from Cairo to Khartum. The distance between these two railways is spanned in part by navigable rivers and lakes; but there are hundreds of miles of railways still needed to make connection with these. In the meantime the growing commerce of Central Africa can reach either the east or the west coast by a shorter route over existing railways.

2. A. S.—Why is the top of a map called north, and the lower end south?

2. This is not always the case. We sometimes see a map or plan drawn obliquely with respect to the meridian; in which case an arrow or some other device is drawn to show the true line of the meridian. There is an understanding among map makers that when the direction is not so indicated the lines running up and down on the map shall be regarded as running north and south.

3. R. W. F.—Correct the following sentences, giving reasons.

3. The sentence, "There was no one in the room but him and me" is correct. "But" here is "except," and is a preposition governing the pronouns "him" and "me" in the objective case.

In the sentence "I am very pleased to meet you," "very pleased" is assumed to be the doubtful phrase. This is a question, not of grammar, but of good usage. Whether "pleased" is considered as an adjective or a participle, an adverb may modify it. But it is not customary to use the adverb "very" alone to modify a past participle. We say "very charming," "very exciting" but "very much charmed," "very much excited," "very much pleased."

4. Give a concise account of the life of Lord Strathcona.

4. Donald Alexander Smith was born at Archlestone, Morayshire, Scotland, in 1820. He

received his education at a local school, and, in 1838, as a stripling of 18, he came to America and entered the service of the Hudson Bay Company. He spent thirteen years of his life on the Labrador coast, and was afterwards stationed in the Northwest. He rose step by step to be chief factor. Subsequently he was named resident governor and chief commissioner of the Company in Canada. As a public man he first came into prominence in connection with the Red River insurrection, 1869, being in December of that year appointed a special commissioner by the Dominion government to inquire into the circumstances connected with it. In the next year he was returned to the legislature of the newly organized province of Manitoba. He was also called to the Northwest territorial council, and was returned for Selkirk to the House of Commons. In 1874 he resigned his seat in the legislature, but remained in the Dominion House until 1880, when he was defeated at a by-election. He re-entered the House of Commons, in 1887, as a member for Montreal West. In April 1896, he retired from political life in Canada, taking the high commissionership, which he held until his death. In 1896 he also became Chancellor of McGill University, an institution to which he gave a great deal of money. His benefactions are too numerous to give in detail. He was made Sir Donald Smith in 1886, and in 1897 was created a peer, with the title of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal. He died in January, 1914, and was buried in Highgate Cemetery, North London. The funeral service was held in Westminster Abbey.

R. W. F. sends also five questions in geography. The answers to them would take more room than can be spared.

Five hundred teachers of English have been gathered in Tokyo, Japan, for their second conference in the history of that country. About five per cent of these were English and American men and women. The programme occupied ten days, and the entire proceedings were in English. The rapid spread of the study of English is very striking. In the secondary schools alone in Japan, there are upward of 100,000 boys and girls studying English as a part of their course. The boys in these schools must study English seven hours in each week for five years, and the girls at least half that time, and as Japan claims the largest percentage of school attendance of any country in the world, it is safe to say that within a few generations English will be almost universally spoken there.