

THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

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(Continued from February Number.)

WHAT has hurt and very nearly destroyed the vitality of our teaching of geography is the unholy appetite for facts—the greed for numbers, the value and meaning of which have never been explained nor even inquired into. Even Professor Geikie panders to this appetite. He asks young children to get up the facts that Carmarthenshire has an area of 940 square miles, and a population of 124,864 persons; and that Pembrokeshire has an area of 611 square miles, and a population of 91,824 persons. But these figures are of little or no use—they are mere mental obstruction. They are of use to the professional statistician, but to no other person. The first set of figures give us fixed quantities; but they cannot be rightly interpreted by the young. It would have been quite enough to say that Carmarthenshire is nearly half the size of Norfolk; and that Pembrokeshire is almost exactly two-thirds the size of Carmarthenshire. As regards the populations, every one of them—what with the births on the one hand, and the deaths on the other—becomes erroneous the moment it appears in type. But even if the figures were correct, they have, in themselves, no meaning. To give them a meaning, we have to ask ourselves such questions as these: Why has Hampshire, which is nearly twice the size of Surrey, a population only one-third the size of the latter county? Why has Warwickshire, which is very little larger than Herefordshire, a population nearly seven times as large? Why has Durham, which is only two-

thirds the size of Cumberland, a population more than three times as large? Questions like these can be asked in scores; and the answers to them lie close to us, under our eyes—on the map or in the book.

What geography wants is not facts and figures—true geography is almost crushed to death under the weight of them—but seminal ideas, germs, living nuclei, which may become centres of new life, and which may attract to themselves the raw material in the shape of facts and figures which lie around them. Such ideas need not be difficult or recondite; they may be perfectly simple. But it is the art of the true teacher to find them out and to employ them in teaching. Let us glance at a few.

“Great cities build themselves out towards the west.” This tendency is seen in London, Paris, Vienna; in Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago; and, in general, in all the large towns of Europe and North America. There does not seem to be very much in the statement. But when we come to look at the why, we shall find a great deal in it. We shall find that the cities go out to meet the west wind; that most of our best fresh air comes from the south-west; that south-west winds, in the N. Temperate Zone, blow across the Atlantic and the Pacific for two days out of every three throughout the year; that all our purifying gales come from the south-west; that our largest supplies of oxygen and ozone are carried by these winds; that the Cunard lines charge more for carrying you to New