

GEOGRAPHY.

TELL YOUR PUPILS.—Tell them that deserts are disappearing before the advance of civilization. The farmers of Kansas, Nebraska and Dakota have disposed of much of the Great American Desert. Parts of Africa that were once believed to be arid and uncultivable are fruitful and well populated. Contrary to general belief inner Australia is no Saharan waste, and though uninhabited, it can support a large population. There are grassy plains, large lakes and also traces of gold and precious stones. A north and south railway is now being made through the middle of Australia, and doubtless with its completion the last trace of the desert will vanish. The iron horse and improved agricultural methods are wonderful dispellers of illusions of this kind.—*School Journal*.

THE KANGAROO AND THE BUFFALO IN AUSTRALIA. — Australia is likely before many years to have no kangaroos except in its museums. From the reports of the various stock inspectors, it was estimated that in 1887 there were 1,881,000 kangaroos, but in 1888 this number fell to 1,170,000. The chief objection to the adoption of measures for the effectual protection of the marsupial is his vigorous appetite. One kangaroo is said to consume as much grass as six sheep, a fact to which sheep farmers are painfully alive. It is curious to learn, however, that if the kangaroo is likely to be exterminated, a new introduction, the wild buffalo, has found a home in the plains of Northern Australia, where it is now to be met with in vast herds. These animals, which are said to be of extraordinary size, and to possess splendid horns, are, apparently, the descendants of the first buffaloes which were

landed at Port Essington, in North Australia, about the year 1829.—*The Scientific American*.

A DWARF TREE FROM JAPAN.—Mr. Sowerby recently exhibited to the Royal Botanical Society a curious dwarf tree, the Japanese *Thuja obtusa*, and explained that, though only two feet high, it was 130 years old. These dwarf trees, added the secretary, were good illustrations of the power of endurance of plants under severe ill-treatment, and there were some nearer home which taught the same lesson. In the Society's garden might be seen several specimens of the common oak, between forty and fifty years old, yet only some ten or twelve inches in height. They had been planted as an edging to a flower border, and kept clipped, like the old-fashioned box.

GREAT HEAT IN AUSTRALIA.—Recently the colony of Victoria, in Australia, has suffered much on account of the great heat. Day after day the mercury showed from 90 degrees to 100 degrees in the shade, and from 150 degrees to 160 degrees in the sun, according to different localities. In one day as many as four deaths were announced as resulting from heat apoplexy. Had not a slightly favourable change occurred, it was feared that the mortality in the city itself would have terribly increased, as even the strongest constitutions began to give way under increasing languor. Men whose Australian experience is more than half a century old, say they never felt such a continuance of thoroughly tropical heat.

THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN AFRICA.—Dr. Hans Meyer has re-