

**THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY.
SUGGESTIONS REGARDING
PRINCIPLES AND METHODS FOR
THE USE OF TEACHERS**

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The Teaching of Geography. Suggestions Regarding Principles and Methods for the Use of Teachers by Archibald Geikie

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SUGGESTIONS
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FOR THE USE OF TEACHERS

BY

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PREFACE

FOR some years past there has been a growing recognition of the extremely unsatisfactory position of Geography in the general educational system of this country. Various suggestions and efforts have been made to place the subject on a better footing. But reform in such matters is necessarily slow. Inveterate habits of use and wont are apt to blind us to the need for change, and any attempt to alter the existing system touches many different kinds of vested interests. Even those who sympathise with the proposals for reform raise their hands in despair, and ask where, amid the crowd of subjects now demanded, room is to be found for any new topic, or for any expansion of an old one. I fully recognise the gravity of these difficulties, and am by no means sanguine that they are all likely soon to be cleared away.

Nevertheless, so many influences are now at work, that we may look not unhopefully to the future. The persistent and well-directed efforts of the Royal Geographical Society to raise the standard of geographical education are already beginning to bear fruit, and certainly deserve the grateful recognition of all to whom the progress of education is dear.

The elevation of Geography to the place which it

ought to hold in the school curriculum in this country, as it does in Germany, appears to me to be a matter of vital moment, first, from the value of the subject as a branch of knowledge, and secondly, because it offers a cure for what I conceive to be a radical defect in our educational method, namely, the want of any effective discipline in habits of observation. While the memory is trained from infancy, and almost overburdened with the strain of school-work, the eye is left to train itself. I have long been convinced that an incalculable advantage would be gained, if something like the same care that is bestowed on taxing the powers of memory were given to the cultivation of accurate and rapid observation and inference. Geography, in the wide and true sense of the word, offers admirable scope for this kind of training. It may be begun on the very threshold of school-life, and may be pursued in ever-increasing fulness of detail and breadth of view up to the end of that time. No other subject can for a moment be compared with it in this respect. It serves as common ground on which the claims of literature, history, and science may be reconciled.

I may be told that I am striving after an unattainable ideal; but long reflection has convinced me that it is not unattainable, and that it is worthy of the most strenuous effort to reach it. The first step towards its realisation must be to present it frankly to the teachers, and enlist towards it their sympathy and co-operation. That there are excellent instructors in geography among us, who will find little or nothing new to them in the following pages, I readily admit. But they in turn will probably grant that teachers in

this country, through no fault of their own, but owing to our present defective system of instruction, can obtain no adequate training in methods of geographical teaching. There is good reason to hope that this defect may ere long be remedied. But in the meantime the teachers must train themselves.

The following chapters are meant merely as a series of hints and suggestions, with especial reference to principles and methods which, if followed, seem to me most likely to secure to Geography its proper place as an educational discipline. I have not attempted the ambitious task of writing a systematic treatise on the teaching of Geography. My object has rather been to indicate how, even among the youngest children and in every rank of life, an intelligent interest may be awakened and stimulated in the world around them; how they may be encouraged to look at things with their own eyes, and draw from them their own conclusions, and how in this way their conceptions of their immediate surroundings, of their country, and of the whole globe may, from the very outset, be made vivid, accurate, and enduring. Not without a deep sense of responsibility do I venture to bespeak the candid judgment of the teacher, in whose earnest desire for the furtherance of the cause of education I most cordially share.

HARROW ON THE HILL,
May 1887.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

GEOGRAPHY is commonly defined as a description of the earth. But it deals more specially with the earth as the dwelling-place of Man. It seeks to present a distinct and luminous picture of man's surroundings—the earth he walks upon, the air he breathes, the waters that fertilise his fields, the oceans that bear him from continent to continent, the living things that minister to his existence and enjoyment alike on land and sea. Every department of Nature has its own particular science, in which the minutest intricacies of structure and of process are patiently unravelled, and the facts are classified and arranged in their relations to each other and to the general system of the world. But Geography does not attempt such detailed investigation. It accepts from these various sciences the facts which they determine and the conclusions which they establish, but selects, in preference, those facts and conclusions which bear most closely upon the well-being of man, or which enable us most clearly to comprehend the general plan of the marvellous creation wherein we form a part. Thus, the aspects of the globe, as they present themselves to ordinary human intelligence, and the ever-changing phenomena that surround us and influence our daily life, are the peculiar domain of Geography.

Except the history and experience of man himself, there is no subject of inquiry that yields so profound and perennial a human interest as the story of the globe on which we dwell. We are surrounded with phenomena that