

How to Teach Geography.

Alice J. Quintard.

Index.

The necessity of a knowledge of geography	I.
Our purpose in selecting this subject.	I
The usual method of teaching geography	I-II.
Our opinion of the old method	II.
Our opinion of oral teaching	III.
Use of photographs and pictures	III.
Use of stereoscopic views	IV.
Use of sand box and putty	IV.
The use of text book	IV.
Map drawing	IV-V.
Imaginary journeys.	V.
Pupil should know <u>reasons</u> for things	V.
Illustration of imaginary journey.	VI. VII. VIII.
Use of museum, study of habits of animals.	VIII.
Study of people of the globe.	VIII. IX.
Use of History.	IX.
Knowledge of ancients.	IX. X.
Explorations.	X.
Concluding thoughts.	X. XI.

Ruskin says that it is necessary for an educated man to know, "Where he is—that is to say, what kind of a world he has got into; how large it is; what kind of creatures live in it, and how; what it is made of and what can be made of it."

We agree with Ruskin and say that a man cannot be educated without knowing this, and how is he to know this except by the study of geography. We shall admit then that the study of geography is of the utmost importance to the education of man.

Some one has said that, "Geography properly pursued, touches upon all the other branches, whether of literature, science, or art, and is the foundation stone upon which rests the whole superstructure of human knowledge. It should form a background, a chess-board, on which to marshal the everchanging events of life."

Steele says, "To teach is something that most of our teachers need to be taught, and of geography this is perhaps unusually true."

We propose in this production to give a few hints that may be of some use to those who are thinking of becoming teachers.

The usual method of teaching this branch is to have children commit and repeat definitions

of geography, spheres, hemispheres, of tropics, zones and circles, of latitude and longitude, of river basins and glaciers, of winds and ocean currents and all of which they have not the slightest knowledge of meaning. Then they are put to map drawing and locating a hundred or more cities, rivers, etc. instead of learning the general outline and principal physical features.

"Ritter obtained the following bits of information from geographers: 'Zenith and Nadir are two Arabic words imparting their own significance' (How lucid). 'Land is either level or diversified by elevations and depressions' (How wonderfully clear to the children this must be!) 'Commerce consists in the exchange of commodities' (Is it possible?)

'North America, lying in three zones, and traversed by lofty mountain ranges, is marked by astounding varieties of climate and productions.' (Will this not cause mental dyspepsia?) 'What a frightful waste of energy is there in schools where such unpalatable and indigestible matter is set before the pupils who are told to 'study' their geography lesson'

We say this is all wrong. The child not only does not learn anything, but he grows to dislike the study which can and should be made the

most interesting to him.

We would not give the child a text book at first. In fact we would absolutely do away with the primary geography. The child should not be required to learn a lesson until the whole subject of geography has been gone over orally. These oral lessons may be illustrated.

We quote from Steel, "What possible good can be obtained from making a child learn from a book that glaciers are rivers of ice, which descend the slopes of high mountains, till they gradually melt in warmer regions or reach the river. Should not the instruction concerning glaciers be given more what as follows? To take some snow and pounded ice, & compress it into a hard ice-like mass; to point out how ⁱⁿ a similar way, after a fall of snow the upper layers compress by their weight the lower, and how the ice thus becomes formed in the cavities and gulleys of mountains above the snow line; then to take a piece of ice, and, by means of a wire with weights to show how the ice may be slowly cut and refreeze and thus illustrate the passage of a glacier along its bed. To show by photographs the nature of moraines, the final melting of the ice and the formation of the resulting river. In this way the

knowledge will be real and permanent and the child will be prepared to read of them with appreciative interest."

Stereoscopic views are splendid for this, keeping up the interest and at the same time giving pleasure.

One of the best primary teachers I ever knew told me that the way she got her small children interested in geography was by giving them a box of sand and showing them how to work out the physical features of the land in it. They could show the elevations, rivers etc. and make it seem real to them. Afterwards she gave them moulding sand and putty to work with.

It is best to interest the child first in the things around him. It will be no hardship at all for him to plan and build up in the sand the school yard, his home or the neighboring fields in which he has played.

As the child grows older it is perhaps a good plan to take up the text book but not be confined to it. Even yet there must be a good deal of oral work.

The first lesson in map-drawing should be conducted somewhat as follows. - Let him measure the schoolroom and draw it on the black-

board, reduced to a scale, and compare objects to his picture. Gradually he can go from the school house to the yard, a block, a neighboring county, the state and finally the country. This will fix the principles of map drawing and a map will seem real to him and not simply a page in his text book.

The training of the child's imaginative and observing powers are of the first importance. Both may be accomplished by taking imaginary travels. The teacher may take imaginary journeys with her pupils, first in the immediate neighborhood, then different parts of the country and finally may go abroad, pointing out to them whatever she sees of land, water, animals and their habits, of products, and of cargoes of outgoing and incoming ships.

This is a study in which the reasoning powers can also be cultivated. "It is of more consequence to know what made a city populous than to know its population; to know why a river is long than to know its length." The pupil should be shown why various parts of the country follow various pursuits. Why mining and manufacturing are carried on in some places and agriculture and stock raising in others and why trains and ships go back and

fourth between the countries. The child always wants to know the why's and wherefore's.

To illustrate the imaginary journey and also to show how the reasoning powers are put to use let us suppose we have a geography class before us and take an imaginary journey. Our pupils are not small children so we will go abroad.

We find ourselves suddenly in Africa on a watershed that divides the affluents of the Tanganyika from the head waters of the Luama, just as Stanley is about to leave the place and we conclude to go with him.

"John what makes this water flow down hill and in different directions?"

"This obedience to the laws of nature that it flows down hill and as this is the highest point of land—properly a watershed the water may flow in any direction from it."

We observe that vegetation increases in beauty and strength as we move westward and keeps increasing in strength till at Mpayema it is terrible. Grasses that cut like knives, reeds are tough and tall as bamboos.

"Charley, why is vegetation so luxuriant here?"

"Because of the rich soil and abundance of moisture."

"But why should this part be so well watered

when just on the other side it was so dry and barren?"

"I think it is probably due to these mountains west of us which by their altitude suddenly cool and liquify the vapors driven over their tops by the southeast winds."

"What is this southeast wind that seems to blow so steadily?"

"It is called the monsoon and is the prevailing wind which blows from southwest from April to October and from northeast from November to April."

"What causes this wind?"

"It is caused by the difference of temperature and pressure which form marked features of climate in winter and summer respectively."

"But why should the cooling of these winds cause it to rain?"

"Because the warm wind is laden with moisture. When it becomes cooler it cannot hold so much moisture and so loses it in the form of rain. It is a physical law that the higher the temperature the greater amount of water it takes to saturate it."

We now came to the Ka-Bambaine where we met the people. In the district of Uhumbo we had seen a truly debased Negro type. Here we see people

of the Ethiopic Negro type worthy to rank next to the more refined Waganda. Some of the women are exceedingly beautiful and their ways are winsome and charming. One of the men wore a robe of cloak, made of grass, which when spread out measured twenty-four square yards.

We learn much of the habits of these people by simply and quietly observing.

Their houses are low and separated into two apartments with hard clay floors which can easily be kept clean. The furniture is limited to food-baskets, earthen pots, wickerwork dishes etc.

They are tolerably hospitable, permitting us to enter their dwellings. But the hour is up and we will wait before resuming our journey.

In teaching of animals of the different countries and zones, a museum is a very excellent thing indeed, then the child could become familiar with the animals and could soon learn to locate them in their proper places on the globe. A little knowledge of the habits of animals would help to fix attention and would be interesting. This may be given in story form and what child is there who does not like to hear a 'bear story'.

As regards the different peoples of the globe, the teacher must necessarily give all the instruction

she can as to their life, habits and looks. She can tell how scattered they are, how they became changed by their different conditions and locations. She can tell how the climate affects their looks and mental development.

As the child becomes more advanced we recommend that history be studied in direct connection with geography. Make them acquainted with the limited knowledge of the ancients by reading to them somewhat as follows. "The earth they looked upon as a plain, stretching away from the Aegean Sea, the focus of their knowledge, and ever less distinctly known, until it is ended in an horizon of pure ignorance, girdled by the deep flowing ~~Oceanus~~ Beyond Oceanus even fancy began to fail; there were the realms of dark and darkness, the home of the powerless spirits of the dead; there too the hemispheres of heaven joined its brother hemisphere Tartarus.

The earth was first thought to be flat, variously shaped and as variously supported.

To whom belongs the honor of first propounding the theory of the spherical form of the earth cannot be known. It was taught by the Italian Pythagoras of the sixth century B.C., and was probably one of his own doctrines. This was not

from scientific discovery but was a sphere because the sphere was the most perfect form; it was in the center of the universe because that was the place of honor; it was motionless because motion was less dignified than rest. This belief passed into the schools in the middle ages and has come down to us.

The ancients had all sorts of ideas regarding the distribution of land and water. By some it was maintained that there was one ocean, confluent over the whole globe, so that the body of known lands, that we called continents, was in truth an island, and whatever inhabitable regions might exist were in like manner surrounded and separated by vast expanses of untraversed waters.

Others believed that the existing land so far exceeded the water that it formed in truth the continent, holding the seas quite separate in hollows."

The pupil should now take up the early explorations in order to see how the knowledge of the people constantly increased. In connection with this we should read books of travel along with the lessons.

You may say that all this takes up a great

dead of time and so it does but this branch of study is so intimately connected with other branches that they have to be studied together or we miss one of the most important aids to memory - that of association.

We should say that geography in some form or other should be studied from the child's first entrance in school and on through the whole course.

"If teachers are to do their part of this work, they must be shown how to do it. For this we must look, we hope not in vain, to our normal institutes, training classes, colleges and universities."