Current Events and Geography

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know that the Japanese are a people of proved ability, dauntless courage in war, unswerving loyalty to country and emperor, boundless ambition, restless energy, and yet compelled to live in a little island empire, the size of California, only an eighth of which is arable, with valuable but limited mineral resources.

The pupil should see that such a land can not long contain such a people: that the war with Russia was unavoidable if Japan preserved for her increasing population an outlet into Korea and perhaps Manchuria; that the absorption of Korea by Japan was practically inevitable; that further territorial expansion seems certain and hence the suspicion by some people that Japan desires the Philippines; that Japan has coal and some metals, that her people are mechanically inclined, and that she aspires to become the manufacturer for the East and thus, as in the case of England, be able to exchange the products of her mills for the food stuffs and raw materials which her small area is incapable of supplying.

CURRENT EVENTS AND GEOGRAPHY

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THE study of the earth in its relation to man has established its right in the school curriculum. The question that now confronts us is how to make this subject of geography most vital.

The press is universally making geography a leading topic in its pages and the editorial columns frequently furnish valuable notes for a geographical text. One leading New York paper has gained popularity through such sketches in its Sunday issue. When the great financial problems of the world are brought face to face with the geographical causes that effect them, it must be in the pages of the daily press that the geographical text has its most vital significance. This power of the press in the affairs of men places the current news item as an important factor in the geography instruction of the elementary school.

The value of place location proves itself when the boy and girl begin to read the daily paper, and its chief significance is never apparent before. Memorizing capitals, a questionable exercise in the eyes of the psychologist, then becomes easy. Guthrie has a meaning to the boy who is interested in the current events of Oklahoma, since the news items of its affairs of state are dated from its capital. The unpronounceable Cetinje holds its place in the mind when Montenegro becomes an interesting topic in the pages of the daily paper.

A systematic treatment of current events may produce a combination of exercises relating to civil government, history and geography as well as

maintain its importance in developing the power of oral expression, so essential in the mastery of English. This plan may satisfy both the one who extols and the other who condemns a wholesale system of correlation.

It may not be out of place here to give some concrete examples of our attempt to make the current news item a stimulus in the geography lesson.

In the Horace Mann school, a pupil who shows certain ability in his one minute speeches before the English class, chose as his topic, "The Cotton Picker," as described in a current number of the *World's Work*. The essentials in this long article were so carefully chosen and so clearly stated that he won the attention of the entire class. Questions followed that created a nucleus for elementary research. Other news items relating to the cotton industry were contributed. The discussion led to the following deductions:

"The cotton picker is, at present, best adapted to a rolling surface. It will increase the acreage of cotton in certain regions that are not climatically suitable for the home of the white man."

"Germany has a small area, in her colonies, devoted to cotton culture."

"German Cameroon is the colony that is well adapted to cotton growing but it is not the home for the white man. Its surface makes it suited to the cotton picker and this may make Germany a rival in the cotton markets of the world."

The weekly reports of the Stock Exchange in one of our daily papers brought up a discussion of the climatic conditions in the United States. February notes from the Texas cotton fields made the relation of climate to latitude more vivid; while the March notes from Kansas, predicting a change in the wheat quotations on account of the dreaded drought, gave significance to a review of countries similarly affected by a continental climate.

An illustrated edition of a Duluth paper was received while the coal and iron industry was the topic of study in the geography class. Pictures of the steam shovel, the great ore docks and other facilities for handling this important article of traffic on the lakes, covered its pages. There were also descriptions in detail of the comparative values of the surrounding hills in their mineral contents. Other editorials pointed out the successful transportation of this ore to the distant coal fields of the prairies and the Appalachians. To these were added words of prophecy relating to the outcome of a new steel plant, near the ore fields, to which the coal must be brought as a return cargo.

Maps were first made, as a home lesson, by the entire class. In these were shown the Lake Superior ranges and the several shipping ports. The receiving ports, near the coal fields, were also indicated. By means of the map scale, the relative distances between the ore fields and the fuel regions were estimated.

In a second home lesson, clippings were distributed in preparation for the one minute recitations that were to accompany the lantern slides, similar to those pictures we had studied in this newspaper.

The lantern slide lesson was then entirely in the hands of the pupils, who recited on the topics as they related to the pictures thrown upon the screen.

This use of the picture lesson, as a summary of any topic of instruction, puts the pupil instead of the teacher into the foreground. Any means of accomplishing this result seems to be a helpful sign of progress in our elementary schools. Possibly geography offers greater opportunity for such individual development than do some of the other branches in our school curriculum.

This plan of handling the current news item has proved itself of some value, at least, by turning the pupils' attention to the practical affairs of men as well as by stimulating a more vital interest in geography.

WHAT IS GEOGRAPHY?*

WHEN one hears a geography lesson as it is conducted according to the present course of study in the Chicago schools, one naturally asks whether geography is every thing, or anything. Certainly almost anything is considered raw material for geography. The fauna and flora, the mineral deposits, the rivers and roads, the rainfall, the industries and sciences of man,—all are touched upon with more or less fullness. Hence the query as to whether geography is *everything*. If the content of the geography lesson were assigned to the different sciences from which it is drawn, would there be a residuum that we could call geography? Hence the pertinence of the query as to whether geography is *anything*. This dilemma furnishes the basis for the charge, frequently made, that the geography of the schools is a hodgepodge of miscellaneous material without organization according to any definite principle. In particular, the recent emphasis in geography on the historical and social facts connected with a country or region has led to protests from the teachers of history and the opponents of over-hasty sociological generalization. Nevertheless, the dilemma is not so difficult of solution, nor is it true that there is no clear principle of organization to govern in the selection and arrangement of material. The two elements of geography on the content side are, first, the facts about the earth as the best known and most accessible of the heavenly bodies, the material home of man, and second, the human life that goes on in this material home. The first set of facts alone would ap-

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