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Placing the Emphasis in Teaching the Geography of Europe

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PLACING THE EMPHASIS IN TEACHING THE GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPE.

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EUROPE is entitled to receive in the American school twice as much attention as any other grand division excepting, of course, North America. European energy and intelligence colonized the new world and moulded its institutions. By its naval and military power, by its commerce and manufacturing, by its wealth seeking investment, by the initiative and aggressiveness of its people, Europe has dominated the world's affairs. It is to Europe that our exports largely go; in Europe our people travel; with Europe we have our most intimate relations. Europe manufactures for the world, finances the world's enterprises, and carries the world's commerce.

Europe is made up of many nations with many cities. Its products of farm and factory are almost infinite in their variety. In every one of these countries and cities are things of interest. There is so much that seemingly needs to be taught that the problem becomes largely one of selection—eliminating that which may be omitted, selecting that which *must* be touched upon, underscoring that which demands emphasis.

Looking at Europe as a whole, three facts in its physical geography stand out prominently and challenge attention:

- (1) Its remarkably irregular coast line.
- (2) Its many and scattered mountain ranges.
- (3) Its mild climate, considering its northerly latitude.

COAST LINE: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Among the geographic influences which have fostered the progress of Europe, it seems undoubtable that its coast line has been of primary importance. Outside of Russia there is no region removed from the sea by

more than 400 miles. In proportion to Europe's area, its coast line is of most unusual extent, probably not less than 40,000 miles. International trade is the great civilizing agency. A nation progresses largely in proportion to its opportunities for gathering ideas from many sources. The nation whose merchantmen visit many ports, or whose people travel and trade widely, gathers from many countries the elements which it compounds into civilization. Europe's land-locked seas and her countless harbors have ever invited commerce. From so many ports it was relatively easy for new ideas to reach all parts of the interior, excepting Russia, and Russia's condition to-day shows the results of that lack of easy access to the sea.

The processes which have been chiefly instrumental in giving to Europe such an irregular coast line are three in number:

(1) The uplifting of scattered mountain ranges, producing many peninsulas.

(2) A subsequent sinking of the coast lands, detaching the British Isles, nearly detaching Norway and Sweden from the mainland, and producing the North Sea, Baltic Sea, English Channel, and other indentations. A similar depressing of the land extended the limits of the Mediterranean Sea, and increased the irregularity of its shore.

(3) The erosive action of glaciers, producing the remarkably fiorded coasts, especially of Norway and Scotland.

No other grand division has experienced so extensively the beneficial effects of coastal depression; and no one can doubt the far-reaching effects of this upon Europe's forward movement in civilization. The second of the physical features which deserve emphasis is

THE MANY AND SCATTERED MOUNTAIN RANGES.

Mountains are Nature's boundary lines, the great barriers to communication. In their very nature they obstruct the free movement of men. A plain promotes free intercourse, the establishment of trade, the exchange of ideas. All this leads to similarity of customs, laws, ideals, and language, and unifies the people. Great plains like those of Siberia, Russia, Brazil, and the United States inevitably lead to nations of large size. On the contrary, the existence of many mountain barriers just as naturally leads to more nations and smaller ones. Truly, Europe has political boundaries that are artificial. Yet the ease with which Russia has absorbed the peoples of the great plain of Eurasia, while the mountain-ribbed parts of the continent remained, during the same period, cut up into many nations, well illustrates the influence of mountain barriers.

The third fact of large importance is

THE MILD CLIMATE CONSIDERING EUROPE'S NORTHERLY LATITUDE.

It is not uncommon for people to think of Europe as lying in about the same latitude as the United States. They have the idea that London is about due east of New York; that the sunny, vine-clad hills of France are well to the south and that Italy is probably about east of Florida. People are frequently surprised to find that the British Isles are farther north than Newfoundland; that St. Petersburg is opposite the southern point of Greenland; that Norway and Sweden are in the same latitude as Alaska; and that Germany is farther north than Lake Superior; while Florida, instead of being opposite Italy, is really in the latitude of the Sahara Desert of Africa. Venice is very nearly on the parallel of Montreal, and Naples on that of Denver. The ruling peoples of Europe occupy lands in the latitude of Labrador and Hudson Bay. There are three primary reasons for this condition of unusual warmth:

(1) Europe lies athwart the path of the Prevailing Westerlies. The great drift of waters of the north Atlantic is from the southwest. It is a vast reservoir of stored-up heat. Over these mild waters, the Westerlies blow for three thousand miles. When they reach the shores of Europe they have become mild and moist.

(2) There are no high mountains on the western side of Europe to rob the Westerlies of their warmth and moisture as soon as they reach the land; hence their warming influence extends far inland.

(3) There is a high mountain wall extending irregularly across southern Europe, preventing the bleak north winds from invading Mediterranean countries and leaving those countries open to the softening influence of that great warm sea.

Nature has been lavish in bestowing physical advantages upon Europe and Europe has responded with the world's highest type of civilization.

In studying the nations of Europe it becomes evident that each of the countries has a distinct individuality. Each nation has been under the prolonged influence of certain physiographic, historical, or other, influences. Acted upon by these influences, never exactly alike in any two countries, each nation has developed along its own particular lines. Each nation presents some conditions which are characteristic and of world-wide interest. In some countries the industrial activities are of first importance, from a geographical point of view. The United Kingdom, Germany, and Belgium are types of such countries. In others the matters of greatest interest lie in their past history. Such nations are Greece, Italy, and

Spain. In still others, like Russia, the interest centers around the life and struggles of the people. It seems like a mistake for a teacher always to be drilling her pupils on the productions of a country, or upon its exports and imports, or its manufactures when, as a matter of fact, these are not, in the case of all countries, the important matters.

I shall briefly outline what in my judgment are the kinds of geographical knowledge that may justly claim the emphasis in teaching the geography of the countries of Europe.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

- (a) The greatest manufacturing and trading nation of the world.
- (b) The greatest colonizing nation of the world.
- (c) Along with the growth of her trade and colonies has gone the building of the greatest fleet of merchant vessels that ever sailed under any flag.
- (d) Her colonies, scattered all over the earth, and her great fleet of merchant ships, have made necessary the maintenance of a powerful navy. That navy is kept equal to any two other navies in the world.

It is not clear *just* why the United Kingdom has achieved such eminence as a manufacturing, trading, and colonizing nation. The following have been, undoubtedly, factors in bringing about the results: Being insular, her territory has not suffered the military invasions which have so often checked or prostrated industrial development on the continent. Island peoples naturally become seamen and builders of ships. Exceptionally rich deposits of coal and iron situated near together furnished the most important materials needed for building up manufacturing. The limited agricultural resources of the country, coupled with a constantly growing population to be fed, made it necessary to buy food and many of the raw materials of manufacture in other countries; manufacturing the world's wares was the most logical occupation for the English people, circumstanced as they were. Markets must be found or developed. This led to the policy of acquiring colonies, building a great merchant marine and a mighty navy. Another factor in producing Britain's commercial greatness, though a difficult one to measure, has been the genius of her people; their self-governing, their mechanical, and their commercial instincts. It is not possible to say whether physiographic or racial influences have been stronger in the making of the United Kingdom. It is as a type of the industrial and commercial nation that the United Kingdom should be studied.

GERMANY

While Germany is, like Great Britain, an industrial nation, yet it has achieved greatness through somewhat different channels. In the world's affairs it stands for

- (a) Marvelous progress in industry, pushing toward first rank.
- (b) Splendid system of schools and universities, and a national devotion to science and general education.
- (c) A military system that is regarded the best in the world.

Just as is the case in the United Kingdom, there is a close interrelation among the elements of Germany's greatness. The following facts deserve emphasis:

Central position in Europe, touching nearly all of the other nations. The military training given to all young men; powerful standing army, necessary on account of danger of attack from neighboring countries. The general and technical education of the people, coupled with favorable situation and abundance of iron and coal, promotes industry and leads to commerce. Germany, too, is a typical industrial nation, and should be grouped with the United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

FRANCE

France is almost as impressive on account of what she is not as on account of what she is. For commerce, her situation is the most favorable in Europe. She has coal and iron, good harbors, and intelligent people; moreover, she had a long lead on Great Britain and Germany. Yet, in the struggle for the world's commerce, she has been distanced by them both. France's natural advantages and her opportunities have been superior, but her people have been too unsettled, too unstable, and too much at war, to accomplish the best results in industry and commerce. There are, however, those things in which France leads the world:—

- (a) The unequaled artistic taste displayed in all her manufactures.
- (b) Paris is the world's most beautiful city and the source of the world's fashions.
- (c) In the extent of her vineyards and the amount and beauty of her silk manufactures, France has no equal.

France is a strong naval power, but she is not equal to Great Britain. She has a great army, but it is not equal to Germany's. She has vast manufactures and commerce, but in these she holds only fourth place. When, however, it comes to those employments which call for the finest artistic taste, then France holds undisputed first place.

In teaching the geography of the United Kingdom, Germany, and

France, the emphasis naturally falls on industrial and commercial matters, for those countries stand for industry and commerce in the world's activities.

RUSSIA

Interest in Russia, however, does not center around her industries so much as around her people and her government, her political life, the exile system, and similar topics. The things of most interest and of chief consequence in appreciating the Russia of to-day are, it seems to me, such as these:

- (a) Her tremendous size.
- (b) The long and almost uninterrupted series of conquests by which her boundaries have been pushed farther and farther outward, until now she controls one-sixth of the land surface of the globe.
- (c) The great variety of her people.
- (d) The autocratic government; the oppression under which the people live.
- (e) Her long struggle to reach the open sea and have ports free from ice all of the year; and her humiliating failures.

Russia's wheat and petroleum are large factors in the commercial world, especially as they come into competition with our own. The Trans-Siberian Railway and the great annual fair at Nijni-Novgorod are worth some attention.

OTHER COUNTRIES

There is little that calls for more than passing notice in Austria-Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, or the Balkan States. The weakness of the union between Austria and Hungary, the beauty of Vienna, as a city, the manufacturing activity of the German portion of Austria, the salt mines near Cracow, are interesting, but they are not big items in the world's geography as studied in the grammar grades.

Spain's glorious past contrasted with her inglorious present, her mineral wealth, and her remains of Moorish civilization, call for mention, not for emphasis.

Greece, with her splendid history, may properly claim more than passing attention, though pupils of thirteen are not mature enough to understand the importance of that history. Italy, with her ancient and her modern Rome, her Venice, Florence, and Naples, her Vesuvius and Pompeii, is rich in geographical material. The emphasis should fall rather upon the historical than upon the industrial side.

Switzerland means the Alps and their glaciers, travelers, guides, and wonderful scenery. It means the story of William Tell and of the most

liberty-loving of peoples. It offers the opportunity of pointing out an example of the influence that mountains exert upon the traits of the people who live among them.

The Netherlands means dikes, windmills, canals, proverbial cleanliness, and a commerce and a colonial empire away out of proportion to her small size. The little country is also fitly called "Europe's Dairy Farm."

Belgium is best described as "The Workshop of Europe," a name given on account of her many mills and factories. The abundance of coal and iron has made this manufacturing activity possible.

In teaching Norway, an opportunity is given for laying emphasis on the cause-and-effect relation existing between the people and their physical surroundings. Modern ideals of geography teaching require us to teach as much of rational geography as we reasonably can. It may be overdone, but, as a rule, too little rational geography is taught. There is scarcely any country that better illustrates how people derive their traits and their occupations from the physiography and the climate of their dwelling place than does Norway. The barren lands and the rock-bound coast with its great fiords, made the mediaeval Norwegian a sea-rover, a Viking. The same conditions make his modern descendants the best seamen in the world. Driven to the sea to gain a living, the men of Norway have, perforce, become a race of seamen.

The more important nations of Europe have their distinctive individualities. These countries cannot be properly taught by using the same topical outline for all. In teaching some countries the attention of the class ought to be focused upon productions, manufactures, and trade, but in the case of others the commercial side is distinctly secondary.

I have said nothing about teaching the *location* of places or of natural features. Location is, however, a matter of leading importance in geography and should never be crowded out. The foregoing is not a syllabus, outlining all that the writer thinks ought to be taught about Europe. It is, rather, a sketching of some of the facts which he believes ought to be so emphasized that they will stand out in the memory of the pupil when the bulk of the facts which we taught him have been forgotten.

There are ever present in geography teaching, three dangers:

- (1) Teaching too much.
- (2) Failure to discriminate between the things which are of primary importance and those which are of only passing importance.
- (3) Failure to teach some of those relations between causes and effects which make geography, in some degree, a rational study.