FIRST STEPS IN GEOGRAPHY. BROOKS AND BROOK BASINS

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Trieste

First Steps in Geography

BROOKS AND BROOK BASINS

BY

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"Come forth into the light of *things;*
Let Nature be your teacher"
—WORDSWORTH

BOSTON, U.S.A.:
GINN & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS.
1894.

"Boys, flying kites, haul in their white-winged birds;
You can't do that way when you're flying words."

—WILL CARLETON.

PREFACE.

THE purpose of this book is twofold:

I. TO INSPIRE CHILDREN WITH LOVE OF NATURE.

II. TO SUGGEST TO TEACHERS THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY, WHICH, IN THE FORM OF OUT-DOOR NATURE STUDIES, SHOULD PRECEDE THE USE OF A TEXT-BOOK.

The study of mere forms of land and water, which usually completes the elementary course, is in reality only a very insignificant part of what should constitute the work. The aim should be to teach, *by leading children to discover*, the relations of these forms to the forces or working agencies, such as running water and currents of air, as they affect the development and distribution of plant and animal life.

The reason for selecting BROOKS AND BROOK BASINS as a title is fully stated on the page next following.

If this book possesses any merit, it is that of presenting the earth as a living, working, producing *organism*, in a form adapted to the minds of children.

ALEX. E. FRYE.

HYDE PARK, MASS., JAN. 1, 1891.

TO TEACHERS.

Thoughts from
"THE CHILD AND NATURE."

I. Perception.

Every brook basin is a miniature world.

The forms of land and water; the forces at work wearing and building; the conditions that regulate the distribution of life, — all are there, repeated in endless variety.

The hillside leads to the greatest slopes of earth; the running water illustrates the principles of drainage of the largest rivers; the little delta shows how vast alluvial plains are formed; each blade of grass and tiny earthworm obey the same forces that cover the earth with flora and fauna.

But only after pupils have studied the relations of forms, forces and conditions *in nature*, can they imagine them on the grander scale on which our beautiful planet is constructed; for, in the development of mind, perception must precede imagination.

Teachers are earnestly advised to take their pupils, when practicable, out by a brookside, to read and discuss the topics in this book, where nature can speak for itself, and awaken new thoughts.

The brook basin is the unit-form of continental drainage.

II. Imagination.

Particular attention is called to the importance of cultivating the *power to imagine* the great natural features of the earth, by describing them to children *as soon as* their types have been studied in the school district.

By such teaching, the grove becomes a great selva, the meadow broadens to a vast prairie, the little ravine rises to a cañon of the Colorado; in short, through the geographical forms about home, pupils should be led to study types of families of great natural features, till the whole world lies mirrored in the district.

Not knowledge of particular foreign forms, but *power to imagine*, should be the aim. This is one of the most important steps in the teaching of primary geography. At the close of some chapters will be found stories illustrating this work.

Children revel in analogies, because they lead to the beautiful region of fancy, where all childhood must wander till the discovery of natural cause and effect reveals true relations governed by physical laws, and admits to the higher realm of imagination. Fancy is an iridescent bridge between memory and imagination, and unfortunate the child who is not permitted to cross at his leisure, and grow strong in imaging-power while crossing.

It is because of the great importance of fancy, or phantasy, in the development of the imagination, that so many analogies, in simple metaphor and simile, have been suggested in these pages.

III. Sensibility.

Another element is worthy of special notice; viz. the use of choice quotations as a means of leading children to a more reflective and refining study of nature.

Forms of land and water, whose beauty and lessons lie deeply hidden, are oft unveiled at the touch of the poet mind. Their influence sinks deepest when we are drawn nearest to nature in study; and the forms that first inspired the poet's ideal become the language by which we interpret it.

Science is an ocean of thought, with every wave a poem.

Reach out to childhood, and sow in the forming characters the purest thought-seeds of the noblest minds. To see truth is to love it, and every child naturally inclines to that which is pure and true.

Store the memories with such beautiful poems as lie scattered over these pages like gems in a rough river-bed, and in years to come they will adorn lives made nobler by their presence.

The philosophy of phenomena, difficult to grasp in the lower grades of school work, has been suggested in various figures of speech. For every fledgling idea in the text, there are a dozen pecking at the word-shells. Do not try to break the coverings from without, but wait for them to develop from within.

Let the children taste the joy that springs from the discovery of truth. Effort alone is the soil of growth.