

WANTED—MORE VARIETY IN THE GEOGRAPHIC MENU!

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In one of Mrs. Dwight Morrow's delightful letters describing life in Mexico's capital, she relates an incident which, in this age of mechanization and standardization, furnishes much food for thought.

Needing some chairs for her summer home, Mrs. Morrow had sought out the local carpenter and showed him a sample of a chair she had admired. He agreed to make a duplicate for a certain sum. When, however, she asked him to name a price for a dozen such chairs—all like the sample—he seemed quite dismayed. Finally, after much urging, he named a figure for the entire order, but it was much more than twelve times the price formerly suggested for one! "How is this?" said Mrs. Morrow. "In our country when we order a large number of the same thing, we usually get it at a cheaper rate. You are actually asking me more." "But," said the perplexed craftsman, "just think of the awful monotony of making twelve of them—all just alike!"

We all crave variety. Men and women, and especially children, seek change and are bored by monotonous repetition. This desire extends to our work and to our play; to our dress and our diet; to the environment we work in and to the entertainment we seek.

Doesn't it seem like good sense to recognize that deep-seated natural desire and to plan our school work accordingly?

Too often, however, the recitation is a daily rehashing of a text assignment following the same outline. Today, it is the "climate, topography, occupations, products, and foreign trade" of Argentina. Tomorrow, it will be the same procedure for Brazil. And so on, ad nauseum. It is like serving boiled potatoes and roast beef to the same group of boarders day after day for eight or nine months!

But a good cook doesn't do this! He may have a limited supply of raw materials, but by varying the preparation and seasoning, he makes a formidable array of tempting dishes. We also can change the recipe, vary the form of our materials and the avenue of approach,

thus providing the variety which stimulates interest and thoughtful effort.

The "geographic cook book" has suggestions galore for varying our daily offerings. The possible suggestions are not new. All of you have known of some of them. Some of you are familiar with all of them. Better still, some of you use them. It is one thing to know what to do, but quite another to do it. The late Dean Mumford of the University of Illinois College of Agriculture once remarked that he was not so much concerned with the need for further research activities which might point the way to better agricultural practice as he was with the problem of making farmers actually apply the knowledge they already possess. I suspect the same situation is true among teachers.

So from the many possible variations in the geographic program let me urge the more extended use of two devices in particular which though old, are valuable in practically any grade of work:

(1) *The larger use of important current events and the placing of them in their proper geographic setting.* Properly used this is a most valuable exercise in applied geography. This requires care in selecting worthwhile items and in bringing out the geographical relations. Without such precautions the work degenerates into a rehashing of unimportant happenings of transient interest. Two or three items well done are worth a score of doubtful value. Thus, the accounts of the Chilean earthquake will not only furnish details of the character of such a disturbance but should also recall that Chile is a part of the earthquake belt which encircles the Pacific. The recent inauguration of regular trans-Atlantic air service via the Azores furnishes much material for thoughtful discussion as to Atlantic winds, storms, distances between land bodies, etc. A bulletin board may be used to supplement this work with mounted clippings and pictures of geographic interest. It becomes especially interesting if a large world map is mounted in the center and the location of the

event shown by a thread or string which runs from the item to the proper point on the map where it occurred. A further adaptation of the same general idea is to be found in the geographical scrap book. The pupil's book may be divided up according to continents, and the clippings and pictures mounted in their proper sections with appropriate comments and explanations.

(2) *The more liberal use of maps and graphs.* Desk outline maps upon which distribution data may be shown, and graphs showing trends, are valuable supplements to the textbook. Too often the exercise ends when the pupil has shown the distribution on the map or the trend in production by a graph. Often interesting correlations may be suggested by studying graphs of related figures placed

side by side. Thus, the rise in automobile use is paralleled by a corresponding decline in carriages; the decrease in Chilean nitrate output, by a corresponding rise in artificially fixed nitrogen; the rise in rayon, by a fall in silk prices, etc. In lieu of individual maps and graphs, large ones may be drawn on the board and groups assigned and made responsible for certain parts. Large outline maps printed on newsprint may now be purchased in quantity for about 6c each. Mounted on cardboard they serve the purpose admirably.

There are dozens of other variations in the presenting of material and if one has in mind the basic relations to be taught, the recipe for their preparation may be varied almost indefinitely.
