

Dear Mr. Stanford

You must have thought that I was a long time in making my report on Miss Mason's Readers, but they form a huge mass of MS's to get through, and knowing the great risks you would incur in their publication I was anxious to give them my best consideration before advising you. I have now ~~made~~ read every line of them and think I can give you a fairly accurate estimate of their value.

To begin with, Miss Mason has an eminently bright and pictorial style - a little loose at times - but always vigorous and captivating. Her account of the English counties and of some European countries surpasses anything of the kind with which I am familiar. The subject matter is well selected, both as regards its intrinsic value and its suitability for children, and the mode of treatment is the only one suitable for a Reader.

The Readers I & II are not so interesting as the later standards from the nature of the case. Definitions of geographical terms and general descriptions of large areas could not by any possibility be made as interesting as the geography of our own country or continent. The practical conclusion I draw from this is, that the subject matter of Readers I and II should not be taught at so early a stage, or if taught should be taught only. No principle is better established in teaching Geography than the expediency of beginning at home and working outwards. I am also doubtful whether the language and reasoning of

Reader I would not be found too difficult for Stand: II

Would it not be better to simplify Reader I, omit Reader II, assign Reader III to Standard III, write a special Reader for the Geography of Great Britain + Ireland + the Colonies for Standard IV, another for the Geography of Europe for Stand V, and another for the Geography of the World for St: VI.

You will remember that a child in the second standard has not got over the mechanical difficulties of reading and is, therefore, in an ill position to grapple with such questions as are discussed in Reader I. The form and notions of the Earth, although formerly prescribed for Standard II, are subjects better suited for one of the later Standards.

The books that will be most popular as Readers will be, I am sure, Miss Mason's N<sup>o</sup> 3, 4, + 5.

If possible each Reader should be furnished with maps and pictures. The maps look upon as a sine quâ non. They should be very distinct and contain only such names as appeared in the text. The pictures should illustrate natural objects, towns, cathedrals, monuments, costumes, manners and customs &c. If this would involve too great an expense make a selection.

I will now enter into minutest detail with regard to the separate books.

If Book I be retained its language should be simplified wherever possible.

In Book II the Proper Names should be given in the various descriptions. The omission of the names makes many passages read like a riddle. The author evidently intends children to read her book, map in hand, but the inconvenience attending the omission of the names outweighs

any good which it might produce. The questions are too exclusively search-questions, and do not sufficiently appeal to the intelligence. I would recommend in addition to the search-questions, questions asking,

- (a) The relations between different physical phenomena, e.g. between seaboard, mountain ranges, altitude and climate; between directions of mountain ranges and river directions, &c.
- (b) The relations between physical and political geography, e.g. between the distribution of population and the means of subsistence, coincidences of physical barriers and political frontiers &c.

Questions on the latitude and longitude are not of great educative value.

In Book III legend and history should be kept distinct. I would by no means omit the legends, but I think the reader should be warned by a word or two as to their true character. So with reference to brownies & pixies & fairies. They have been and are believed in; but prosaic Suspectors would fear, object to their being spoken of as though they had a real existence.

I am reluctant to find fault with Miss Mason's style, but I would venture to suggest that she should cut down some of her long sentences and avoid clauses ~~upon clauses~~ that have no grammatical dependence on the main ~~substance~~. She sometimes piles up clause upon clause in a way that somewhat spoils her periods. But I cannot sufficiently express my admiration for her bold inversions and graceful ways of putting things.

Is she Scotch? She has a peculiar use



of "just" in the sense of "merely".

I have ventured here and there to make slight corrections and suggestions in pencil, which may be easily rubbed out if you think it expedient.

As the books are intended for children you will not think the opinion of my eldest girl upon them without value. She said, after reading the account of some of the English counties, "I only wish we had had such geographies at school".

If you would like me to call and talk over the distribution of the Readers in the Standard I could drop in on Wednesday afternoon.

E. Stanford, Esq.