

atrophy through neglect during the years spent at school. This is a point of fundamental importance. At school the habit is acquired of learning lessons—of learning things from books, and after a time it is an easy operation to a boy or girl of fair mental capacity, given the necessary books, to learn what is known about a particular subject. One outcome of this, in my experience, particularly in the case of the more capable student, is the confusion of shadow with substance. "Why should I trouble to make all these experiments which take up so much time, which require so much care, and which yield a result so small in proportion to the labour expended, when I can gain the information by reading a page or so in such and such a text-book?" is the question I have often known put by highly capable students. They fail to realize the object in view—that they are studying method; that their object should be to learn how to make use of text-book information by studying how such information has been gained; and to prepare themselves for the time when they will have exhausted the information at their disposal, and are unprovided with a text-book—when they will have to help themselves. I am satisfied that the one remedy for this

acquired disease is to commence experimental studies at the very earliest possible moment, so that children may from the outset learn to acquire knowledge by their own efforts; to extend infantile practice—for it is admitted that the infant learns much by experimenting—and the Kindergarten system into the school, so that experimenting and observing become habits. The vast majority of young children naturally like such work, and it is to be feared that our system of education is mainly responsible for the decay of the taste with advancing years.

No doubt, just as literary excellence may be attained through the agency of one or other of several languages, scientific method may be inculcated in a variety of ways, and we may expect that, looking at the problem from various points of view, teachers will ere long devise courses suited to the requirements of scholars of different types. My views have been somewhat fully set forth in the Reports to the British Association of the Committee on the present methods of teaching chemistry (B.A. Report, 1888, 1889, 1890), but it is perhaps not superfluous to mention that the draft schemes which I have prepared are but outlines for the consideration of the competent teacher.

(To be continued.)

## GEOGRAPHY.

OYSTER BEDS DAMAGED BY THE FROST.—Since the disappearance of the frost it has been found that serious damage has been done by the severe weather to the oyster beds at Whitstable, the damage sustained by the two companies being estimated at £15,000. The French and Dutch sorts have suffered most, and these

have almost all been killed by the effects of the prolonged frost.—*The School Newspaper.*

AN OLD TOWN.—Near Reading, the Romano-British town of Silchester is being rapidly unearthed. Walls, gates, streets, baths, and private houses have been laid bare; pottery,