

ercise should be very short; and even in our grammar and high schools there is great danger of trying to hold the attention too long on one subject. A fixed, earnest attention, even for a short time, is productive of better mental habits than a languid attention—if it may be called attention—for a much longer period. The chronic indifference of pupils, of which teachers complain so much, I have no doubt is due quite as much to the length of the exercises as to lack of interest in the subjects. I recollect reading several plays of Shakespeare, with a freshman class in college, and feeling all the time that the students were impatient of delay when I ventured any critical remarks or explanation of the text; but the same class, when, as seniors we read the same plays, so beset me with questions that we were able to read not more than one-fourth as much in the hour allotted to the lessons, as formerly.

This, I regarded as evidence that, whatever criticism might be made on our college curriculum, the students had acquired something of that "intellectual patience" to which Newton ascribed his chief success.

Still another important principle, closely related to that of which I have been speaking, is that children can

only be educated by their own mental activity under the guidance of the teachers. Montaigne complained of the teaching of his time, that it gave only the thought of others, without requiring the pupil to think for himself. He says "he has no taste for this relative, mendicant, and precarious understanding." "Like birds," he says, "who fly abroad to forage for grain, bring it home in their beak without tasting it themselves, to feed their young, so our pedants go picking knowledge here and there, out of different authors, and hold it at their tongues' end only to split it out and distribute it amongst their pupils."

The dancing master might as well teach us to move gracefully through the mazes of the dance, without requiring us to leave our seats, as the teacher to inform our understandings without setting them to work. "Yet 'tis the custom of schoolmasters," says the same author, "to be eternally thundering in their pupils' ears, as if they were pouring into a funnel, whilst the pupils' business is only to repeat what others have said before." This, however, was the complaint against the teaching of the sixteenth century. Is it possible that the same complaint might be made against the teaching of the nineteenth century? Judge ye.—*American Teacher.*

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ANCIENT EMBANKMENT OF THE THAMES.—When a modern Londoner looks with pride on the magnificent embankment of the Thames above Blackfriars Bridge he too often forgets that a far more gigantic as well as useful work was executed in ancient times. Few of the multitudes who enter the river think that the great stream is, in fact, an artificial canal, in many places raised above the

adjacent country, which would be inundated but for the banks made by human hands. Of the execution of this grand work, stretching from the Nore to Richmond, no record exists, and it was only conjectured that it was done, or at least directed, by the Romans when Londinium first became the capital of the province. In 1707 a huge breach in the embankment was made by a violent tide at Dagen-