Oundle Grammar School.

This is one of the English public (secondary) schools, which has in a comparatively few years sprung into the first rank. Situated in a quaint little country market-town of Northamptonshire, it is a wealthy school, the value of its endowments having greatly increased lately; of this fact the governing body, acting upon the advice of the vigorous and progressive headmaster, Mr. Sanderson, has taken full advantage. New classrooms, workshops, and boardinghouses have been erected, and new playing-fields laid out. It has the usual classical side, but instead of the modern side found now in most English public schools, it has an engineering department to which a large number of the boys belong. This department is intended to give its members not a professional engineering training, for which they are on account of their age not yet ready, but a general school training with a strong bias towards engineering, especially electrical engineering; while English and modern languages, therefore, are taught in a thorough manner, great stress is laid on mathematics, physical science, drawing, and manual work. All these subjects are studied in a very practical way. The method of teaching chemistry and physics is of especial interest; electricity and magnetism, for instance, are treated in a manner quite different from that in which they are usually dealt with in other good English secondary schools—that is, the method is neither the pedagogic method, in which the individual laboratory experiments illustrate the theories discussed in the classroom, nor is it the ordinary form of the heuristic method, in which the pupils under the guidance of the master perform simple laboratory experiments to rediscover for themselves the main principles of the science under investigation; it resembles, rather, what may be called the American method, as in one form or another it is employed in the science teaching of the high schools of New York, Chicago, and other cities of the United States, more particularly in those secondary schools known as manual-training high schools. Oundle School, it may be remarked, is well equipped throughout all its buildings with electric light, heat, and power; with telephones, electric bells, and so forth; the power being generated in the school workshops. All instruments and machines are accordingly of working-size, not mere laboratory models. The beginners in electricity commence by making themselves familiar with the electric current in actual use; they measure the current, its voltage, its electromotive force, the resistances of various kinds and sizes of wires, the electric units required for various purposes, ascertain the position of breaks in the different systems, and learn how to make and repair electrical apparatus. Their interest is keenly aroused by the practical character of their work, and from time to time they are quite ready to investigate by experiments reduced to the simplest form the reasons for the phenomena they have observed in practice. The laboratory work is directed in their minds not to an end which is more or less abstract, and perhaps only dimly formulated, but to the solution of problems suggested by their observation of the actual behaviour of the electric current. Of the nature and properties of the current they have, too, much clearer ideas than is usually gained in the ordinary laboratory programme taken up in schools. The master who directs the work is not only an expert teacher, he is also a qualified engineer. The method, which was at first adopted only in the case of those belonging to the engineering side of the school, was found so effective that boys of the classical side now do their science work on the same plan. It may be called the analytic heuristic method. The ordinary heuristic method is synthetic in character, as the pupils attempt to build up a science in the same order as that in which its laws were first discovered; whereas at Oundle, and elsewhere where the same system is adopted, the discoveries of modern science are taken for granted, the most perfect instruments are used, and research is then directed to discover the laws on which their working depends. It is obvious that the method can be used in other sciences besides electricity. For example, an approved method in agriculture could be practised first under ordinary conditions, then varied, and finally resolved into its simplest form for the purpose of discovering the laws on which it is based. Similarly with cookery and other branches of domestic science.

Modern languages are taught at Oundle on the direct method; but in this respect and in others which may be named, the school does not call for special mention. It is, in short, one of the best English public schools, faithful to a large extent to the old ideals, but moving forward very rapidly in the new lines along which education to-day is travelling. Above all, it recognises the fact that all boys are not alike—that many for whom Latin and Greek present no attractions should be educated on lines which appeal to their practical instincts, and that the education which they thus receive may be made both real and sound.