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→* The Sanctum. *←

THE Seniors have read their "Theses," and a brief report will be found in another column. This is the third year since this custom was renewed, and a criticism upon the object of these papers in relation to the practical operation of the methods by which it is sought, may not now be out of place. The declared objects are to encourage the student to pursue an extended course of study in some particular direction, to assist him in setting forth his views coherently concerning any subject thus held in consideration, and to furnish a specimen of the work the student is capable of producing when thrown on his own resources. These are good. But does not the bald statement of them seem to cast a reflection upon the conduct of the extended system of essays incorporated into the regular course. Aside from this there are some features in the methods by which these ends are sought which call for notice. The student is required to write his thesis while under full pressure of class

work, and naturally one or the other is slighted. The time allotted for their preparation is too brief for any extended researches, and thus the first object is defeated. No criticism is received from any source to act as an incentive to improved forms of expression, and as a consequence the second object is not attained. The third object appears to be the satisfaction of a harmless curiosity, without any very definite beneficial results. If the student at this stage in his course requires this extra essay in order to complete the finish of his style of expression, why should there not be some special time allowed for its preparation? If the object really is to lead him to make researches and improve in his composition, why is not the subject matter presented by him, the logical sequence of thought, and the formation of his periods, rigorously criticised? And if the reading of them is supposed to be a general benefit, an undisguised blessing, to the body of students, why are not more present to hear them? When a class is large this reading consumes two or three afternoons. Generally a fair audience is present on the first day, but on the last day the audience is largely hypothetical. There seems to be some germinal trouble. The end sought is not obtained, and a successful demonstration of its possibility is yet to be given. Even the Professors petition to have the papers under twenty minutes, and some evade the rendering of them entirely. The public delivery of the essay is thus seen to be incompatible with a full treatment of a subject, and as plain facts are chiefly dealt in, that which is given is usually regarded as a bore. One remedy that suggests itself, a very agreeable one to some parties, would be their entire discontinuance. Another, less radical, would be to allow the Seniors a week or more for preparation. As to the public reading, this might well be discontinued, or at least confined to an examination of the papers by the Faculty. In this way the objects sought could be more nearly attained, and the work, at the same time, would prove far more pleasant and satisfactory to the students.