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LEGAL EDUCATION—A CRITICISM OF METHODS.

It is now thirty-nine years since Prof. Langdell, on the occasion of his installation as Dean, began the use of the "case-system" with his own classes in the Harvard Law School. This inductive method of teaching, so commonly employed in the various branches of natural science, is peculiarly fitted for use in teaching law, because an accurate statement of the rule which governs any particular state of facts can be reached only after careful study of the decisions involving the points raised. Apart from statutes, the decisions of courts are the only true source of law, and Prof. Langdell decided that his students should familiarize themselves while in the law school with the law as it is found at the fountain head, and should commence at once what must always be done in active practice, an accurate and comprehensive study of the cases.

The instruction which was at that time provided in the American law schools consisted of lectures, and the study of the treatises of learned authors. Yet the validity of a rule of law, and its weight with a court must depend, not on the approval of text-writers, but on whether it is laid down and followed by the courts; and the work of a writer is valuable only in so far as it is based on the decisions. Prof. Langdell therefore made for his classes collections of cases which demonstrated the development of legal doctrine. He cut off the head notes and had his students come to class prepared to state the rules of law which from their own analyses they conceived to be involved in the decision. These and kindred hypothetical cases were elaborately discussed, and by the Socratic method the students were made to defend both their version of the actual decision of the court and their view of its soundness. When the student has thoroughly reviewed his notes, he has in effect compiled a text-book of his own, and