

In referring to improved ideals and methods of teaching, it may be noted, as a proof of such improvement, that in the study of literature the main result that is now sought is bringing the student into personal and vital contact with the best English authors, so as to make him thoroughly conversant with their writings, their personality and their most interior literary spirit. Authors are studied as far more important than any facts or dates or incidents about authors. So, as to the English language, while due attention is given to its history, a more particular study is made of the language itself—its structure, salient characteristics, and most of all, its capabilities as an instrument of thought. What the English language may be made to do by the English student as a medium of expression is the leading principle in the teaching. In fine, the teaching of our language on its literary side, and not exclusively on its linguistic side, is one of the most promising indications in modern methods, and is yet to be applied far more fully than ever; its more technical and minute method being reserved for graduate and special work. So, as to rhetoric, mere theory is fast giving way to intelligent praxis; the old, stilted formulæ of the schools to a more flexible and natural order. Best of all, as to method, these three related topics of literature, language and rhetoric are now pursued as one organic branch of study, wholly interdependent and progressive. Here again, the action of the committee of fifteen has done not a little in making these same methods necessary and feasible.

The question as to the needs of collegiate English is one of prime importance. One of these is found in the enlargement of the course where it is comparatively restricted. The catalogues of Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Cornell, as they lie before

me, reveal a substantially complete outline of English studies. The same fact is true of a few other institutions that might be named, such as the University of Virginia, of Michigan and Smith and Wellesley colleges. The majority of the higher institutions, however, need some decided development along this line, and of this they themselves are the most keenly aware. This expansion is urgent in required, elective and graduate work, so that the English student may be thoroughly furnished for his needs without subsequent resort to the universities of Germany and Great Britain to supplement his training. In consequence of this enlargement, a further need arises as to the teaching force. In most of our best institutions this is lamentably meagre, making it impossible for those who have the department in charge to satisfy their students or themselves. I cannot, at present, recall more than a dozen of the larger American colleges where the teaching force is at all adequate to what should be the requirements in English. In the exercise of English essay-writing no lasting results can be reached apart from the personal supervision of instructors, and, in a college of over five hundred students, this demands a large body of instructors. The greatest need, however, in English work, at present, is in the line of library facilities—the need of a liberal supply of the best English authors in multiple copies, so as to enable students to have free access to them and use them as guides in their work—books expressing every order of good English literature, as, also, books of reference and research. Students of English, above all other students, must be book-men, thoroughly at home in the English library.

In English, as in some other branches of educational activity, the province of what may be called disputed and debatable questions is large.