

liberal culture. What they have attained has been gained, however, not through any facilities put in their way by the Law Society or its curriculum, but has rather been reached as the natural outcome of a graduated system of instruction, and of the inquiring spirit which that instruction fosters, and it has been reached by spending seven years in study, while those who enter by the wide-open door of the primary examination, beginning with inferior attainments, need spend but five. It is strong evidence of the general appreciation of the value of liberal culture that so many of those who enter upon the study of law, previously take an arts course. But their number is still much too small, and once professional study is commenced, they too, are thrown wholly on their own resources.

A strong feeling has been growing of late in the minds of many thoughtful and intelligent members of the Law Society that something must be done to elevate the standard of general culture within its pale, as well as to supply means for special legal training, or our ancient and honourable profession, in the midst of the general diffusion of intelligence by our schools, colleges and universities, will fail to win the respect and to exert the influence which its members look upon as its birthright. As was natural, the suggestions have been numerous, and the efficiency of the remedies for the admitted evils of the present mode of legal education would probably vary as much in degree as the proposed changes do in character.

Lectures at local centres under the management and control of the Society have been proposed, and, in some quarters, warmly advocated. The wisdom of such an experiment is doubtful. The lectures given in Toronto have never been a success; and it is not easy to see how the causes which have made such lectures a failure here, can be eliminated at local centres. When we say that the courses of lectures already established have been a failure, we intend no reflection on the present or on former lecturers. These have been not unfrequently able men, erudite and earnest. But the students do not attend. It is, we are told, no unusual occurrence for less than a dozen students to be present at a lecture. The average attendance is lamentably small; we are told that it is probably not more than five per cent. of the whole number of students-at-law in the province. The causes are not far to seek. The average student is largely incapable, owing to his lack of previous study and training, of profiting by the facts and principles presented to him in these lectures. He being often little more than a school-boy of meagre attainments, instruction by lecture is not suited to his capacity, or to his stage of mental growth. There is no inducement for attendance. He has an examination before him. To pass he must be familiar with certain text-books; these must be read, and a fair degree of familiarity with them is enough. He will be no further on if he attends every lecture. Then his presence is required in the office, his duties there conflict with the claims of lectures, and the latter suffer. It will not be easier to find suitable lecturers at local centres than at Toronto, the supply of available men will be smaller, the claim of professional duties on their time will be at least equally strong, students are as much occupied with routine office work, the incentives to attendance on lectures are no greater. It is not easy to see how the extension of the present system, confessedly a failure, can remedy the evil.