

IN a former issue of the JOURNAL we referred to the necessity which exists for a change in the lecture system employed in this and other Universities. Our attention has again been directed to the subject by the quotation of our remarks in the Oxford and Cambridge *Undergraduate's Journal* with favourable comment.

It must be acknowledged by every one acquainted with the different systems of teaching in Universities, that in new and struggling institutions such as America possesses, the lecture system is the only one at present available. We are yet in the pioneer stage, and a few generations will probably pass away before American undergraduates are able to enjoy the advantages of individual tuition, as practiced in the English Universities. Until the increasing wealth and prosperity of this country permits the introduction of a similar custom here, the majority of students must tread the wine-press alone, with the assistance afforded by their lecture-notes. Text-books are unquestionably inferior to the latter, for the reason that a good lecturer condenses the researches of a whole mob of text-book writers into the lectures of a single college session. The lucidity of the latter, of course, depends entirely on the ability of the lecturer.

Excepting the case of the study of languages, and some of the sciences, the subjects taught in our Universities are mere outlines of vast systems, and the professor in each department has the privilege of stamping his individuality of thought on the mass of reading which forms the basis of the lectures delivered to students. And just here we must distinguish between the mere lecturer and the genuine teacher. The former writes his lectures and delivers them without explanation or any attempt to make them clear to the mind of the student,—the latter moulds the thought of the student by a painstaking exposé of the difficult passages, and tests the

learner's progress by frequent oral examinations. The former method may—and undoubtedly does, as in the case of the German Universities, where undergraduates have already been taught in the gymnasia to do their own thinking—produce excellent results, but it seems to us that the requirements of New World Universities at present point to a necessity for *teachers* in the truest application of the term.

Granting, therefore, that in the hands of a competent Professor the lecture system is peculiarly adapted to our Canadian Universities, we conceive it to be the duty of those entrusted with its working—viz, the college professors—to so regulate their special methods of teaching as to produce the most beneficial results in the case of the students. It cannot be denied that a large proportion of the time of undergraduates is unnecessarily wasted by professors, either in needless repetitions, or in the assumption of prior knowledge. Another,—and we regret to consider it the most systematic of any—method of wasting the time of students is the engrossing manual task of writing voluminous notes when following a lecturer on an abstruse subject. Except in a few rare cases the mind is not actively employed on the subject in hand during the lecture hour, and the task is reduced to one of mere copying. Probably another hour or two is spent in re-writing or deciphering notes, and altogether as much time is spent in this manner as would have enabled the student to acquire a pretty thorough knowledge of the subject had—for instance—his notes been printed. There can surely be no good reason why lectures should not be given daily in printed form to the students to be followed on the succeeding day by a searching oral examination, and any explanations by the professor a discussion of the subject has rendered necessary. Some such method as this would, we think, not only relieve the student of a large amount of