

instruction ; it works with far greater zeal and pleasure, and makes more progress. A good share of these advantages the elective system procures for every class in every subject.

The third great improvement is wrought upon and through the teachers. Under an elective system the instructors are strongly stimulated in their work by the interest which their classes exhibit, by the desire to attract good students to their respective subjects, and by the demand constantly made upon them for instruction ever ampler, more advanced, and better adapted to the needs and desires of their most ardent pupils.

Finally, the elective system of studies brings with it gradually many ameliorations of the old-fashioned college discipline. Students who are found capable of selecting their own studies naturally come to be trusted in other respects. Greater confidence will be manifested in their discretion, good intentions, and uprightness, and the relations between officers and students get to be based upon mutual regards instead of upon mutual distrust. With freedom comes responsibility ; with the relaxation of external restraints come self-control and self-reliance.

The elective system has been in operation, with some approach to completeness, from five to fifteen years in several Northern and Western colleges and universities, and at the University of Virginia, a system similar, in that the student chooses his subjects of study, though different in other important respects, has been in use ever since the foundation of the university. Some effects of the system have therefore been demonstrated by actual trial. Some interesting results have already been arrived at. Thus, experience has shewn that the students make choice of their studies in the great majority of instances with a good degree of forethought and discretion on grounds

of intrinsic worth or of adaptation to individual needs, and not for trivial reasons or with the purpose of avoiding labour. The good student is sure to make an excellent selection ; the dull or lazy student arranges his work in those directions in which there is for him the best chance of willing and profitable study ; and the average student, with the help of his instructors and friends, makes for himself a selection of studies which is more judicious than the college faculty could make for him with such knowledge as they are likely to have of his tastes, capacities and purposes—a much better selection, moreover, than any prescribed curriculum would be. Again, experience has proved that the working of the elective system exhibits no tendency to the extinction of the traditional college studies. The natural result of throwing open to choice many new studies is that the older studies are not pursued by so large a proportion of the students as formerly, but then they are pursued with far greater vigour and better results. The enlarged resort to classes in German, French, political economy, history, and natural history inevitably causes a diminished resort to the classes in Latin, Greek, and mathematics ; but these venerable subjects are nevertheless better taught, and are pursued with more energy and profit and to greater lengths than ever before. It clearly appears, on the other hand, that the great majority of students, exercising a free and wide choice of studies, will prefer the languages, metaphysics, history, and political science to any of the branches ordinarily called scientific. The scientific turn of mind seems to be comparatively rare among young men, at least in the present condition of the primary and secondary education. At Harvard University it is the subjects of mathematics and physics which shew the most serious decline, notwithstanding