

LET US HAVE OUR CALCULUS EARLY.

The Calculus for Beginners. By J. W. MERCER. Cambridge (England), University Press, 1910. xiv + 440 pp.

THE decline of the Græco-Roman empire over our collegiate studies has been most marked and is apparently extending almost to extinction. Many reasons may be assigned for this fall. One is the widening range of knowledge and interest, another the passing of the professional and utilitarian aspects of Greek and Latin, another the failure of these subjects to make good.

We must not forget that our colleges were for the most part started by ministers of the gospel, and chiefly as divinity schools. In the early days, even if not to such an extent at present, Greek and Latin were just as utilitarian and necessary professional subjects for the young student of divinity as mathematics now is for the electrical engineer and the physicist. The talk of their value as cultural and disciplinary studies is probably of later and comparatively recent date, an invention of those vast vested interests who would delay, even though they cannot stay, the march of progress away from them. The percentage of our present undergraduate collegians for whom the ancient languages are utilitarian and professional is very small.

That culture and valuable intellectual discipline are best obtained by application to subjects which are neither useful nor interesting to the student, and over which he never obtains even a mediocre mastery, is an idea which is losing ground and must necessarily lose ground despite the extent and intrenchment of the aforesaid vested interests. The fact is that Greek and Latin do not make good. After studying them for six to eight years the student cannot read them with ease or profit; they form but a comparatively small part of his mental outfit, whether for pleasure or work.

If the classics were still of widespread professional necessity, or if the study of them throughout the preparatory course and for two or three years in college gave a pleasurable mastery over them, it is far from likely that they would occupy their present low estate even in the face of the widening range of knowledge, the transfer of executive interest in our colleges