

GERMAN UNIVERSITIES.

The historian Doellinger once said that there was no university in America equal to a third class German university. Although I was in a German university when I read that statement and appreciated fully all the advantages offered by the institution, I recall that I was exceedingly indignant, and declared that "the old man did not know what he was talking about." Since then I have given his remark many a sober second thought, and am now inclined to think that perhaps from one point of view he was right. If the German university be the standard we set before us, then there may be some truth in what Doellinger said.

But what is a German university and how does it differ from an American institution bearing the same name? To make the distinction clear to one who is familiar only with American universities, universities where *comparatively* little graduate work is done, is not an easy task. What I may say in these pages should make clear the fact that there is a great difference, even though that difference be not fully comprehended. The indiscriminate use of the term "university" increases the difficulties of a task otherwise difficult enough. Fine buildings, a large corps of instructors, and a large body of students do not constitute a university; although these things are to be found at every successful university. It is the knowledge of this fact that renders amusing the newspaper comparison sometimes instituted between the number of universities in this country and in Germany. The number of institutions in this country bearing the university title is very great; the number doing true university work is very small. Instructors who are specialists and graduate students who are specializing are the two things without which a German university would not be a university. With us a man is in the university when he is doing undergraduate work; in Germany he does not enter the university until he has completed what might be called his college course.

Should the University of Nebraska abolish its undergraduate departments and employ all its resources in giving graduate instruction to students who had B. A. degrees from colleges in good standing, it would be doing the work done by the German university. It will be many years before that thing will be possible, and meanwhile the university will continue to devote the most of its time and energy to work that is not university work simply because there is no one else to do it.

We hear much at the present time about the university being a place where one can study anything. That is comparatively true of the German university, but at the same time it should be noted that it is not a "Normal University" nor yet a so-called "Business College." Moreover it does not teach everything to everybody, but only to the select few who by years of careful training are prepared to do really advanced work. The confusion in the use of the term "university" in this country is doubtless due to the fact that emphasis has been laid upon what is taught, and not upon how it is taught and to whom it is taught.

The three or four thousand students found at each of the great German universities are men who have completed the courses in the gymnasias or realschulen and are devoting their whole time to special work. The break between the college and the university is very marked and often has a bad influence upon the students. In the gymnasium, or college, the boy is kept strictly under control both intellectually and morally; when he leaves the gymnasium for the university all restraints are removed. It is easy to foresee what the consequences would be in many cases, and in many cases these consequences actually follow, and more than one young man is ruined by his newly found freedom.

To enter the university and to take one's degree are difficult tasks; to remain in the institution after you are once there is an easy matter. To conform to the rules and