

**STUDENTS' LIFE AND  
WORK IN THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CAMBRIDGE: TWO  
LECTURES**

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Students' Life and Work in the University of Cambridge: Two Lectures by Karl Breul

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## Students' Life and Work

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IX

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**Two Lectures**

BY

**KARL BREUL, M.A., LITT.D., PH.D.,**

**CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY READER IN GERMANIC**

**Cambridge**

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## Preface.

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The short account of our Students' Life and Work was originally intended to serve as a first information for the students, British and foreign, who attended the University Extension Summer Meeting in July and August. The two lectures delivered to them have at their special request been printed in exactly the same form in which they were given. It was not my intention to deal this time with the origins and the development of the University. This interesting subject may perhaps at some future time be treated in another couple of lectures. A bibliography has been added which should prove useful to such readers as are anxious to study at greater length any of the questions touched upon in these lectures.

K. B.

*August, 1908.*

## Students' Life and Work



## PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Let me now tell you something of these—our students, of whom at this time of the year you see so little, because nearly all of them have left the University, have “gone down” as we call it in academic slang. You may well imagine what a difference to a country town such as this is made by the presence, during term time, of over 3,000 men and more than 300 women students who people the halls and courts of 18 Colleges for men and two (Girton and Newnham) for women. Some of you are now living in rooms which in October will be occupied again by our ordinary students—so you can see with your own eyes the general conditions under which their life is passed.

The technical University term for a student before he has taken his first degree is “undergraduate,” the B.A. and M.A. members of the University are called “graduates.” During the whole of his undergraduate time the student is *in statu pupillari*, as we call it, and is subject to a number of not very irksome regulations. I should like to take this opportunity of reminding foreign students that the English term “student” is very much wider than the German *student* or the French *étudiant*, and a similar remark holds good of the term “scholar.” These terms are often badly rendered or wrongly explained in the dictionaries.\* I shall be glad (at the end of each of my two lectures) to answer

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\* They are properly explained in Cassell's New German Dictionary, London, 1906.

in the Reception Room any question arising out of the matter discussed in them.

The first important point to remember is that our Cambridge undergraduates invariably remain at least three, and in many cases four years at the same University and at the same College. There is no migration from one University to another, from Cambridge to Oxford or to Liverpool or London such as obtains in some continental countries. A Cambridge student proudly calls himself for life "a Cambridge man," or even a "King's man," a "Trinity man," etc., as the case may be.

We have here different classes of students. The ordinary students are either "Poll men" (from the Greek *οἱ πολλοί* "the many") or "Honours men," two very different classes whose numbers are now, however, almost equal, while in former times, as is indicated by their name, the "Poll men" were in a large majority. The "Poll men" in many cases study very little, about 2 or 3 hours a day on an average, and take an easy examination once a year, in order, at the end of the third year, to pass what is called their "Special Examination" and to obtain the "Ordinary degree" of B.A. Not a few of our Poll students are sons of rich men. They are not obliged, nor expected by their parents, to work really hard, and they do not want to do much reading at the University. The chief object of such as these is to pass here a few enjoyable years between their school time and the beginning of their life's work; to make themselves proficient in sports and all manly exercises; to acquire a certain polish of manners and ease in social intercourse, but not to make

themselves proficient in any special branch of learning. They do not as a rule intend to enter any of the so-called "learned professions."

The second class, the "Honour men," after 3 or 4 years of more earnest application to study, or "reading for Honours" as we call it, go in for the higher University examinations, the so-called "Triposes," on the successful passing of which they obtain an "Honours degree." The first University degree is called in the case of Poll and Honour men alike the degree of Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). The "Honour man" is supposed to work on an average every day about 6 to 8 hours, lectures included.

Beside these two chief classes of students we have recently instituted the two classes of "Advanced" and "Research" students. The former, who must come to us from certain approved centres of learning and show that before coming up they have done a certain amount of work of a University type, are allowed to compete for their degree after only two years' residence. They read for their B.A. in the ordinary way by means of a Tripos. The "Research students," who also must possess certain qualifications, are allowed to take the degree of B.A. without going in for any written Tripos examination, merely on the strength of a dissertation which must be reported on by referees and approved by one of the "Faculties," or "Special Boards of Studies" as we call them. "Research students" carry on their researches under the supervision of a "Director of Studies" appointed for each individual student by the Special Board of Studies with which his work is immediately connected.