TUCENTS of some colleges have complained of the fact that a great majority of their instructors are from among their own alumni, and that this plan of taking back members of graduating classes, retaining them as assistants, and promoting them to be instructors, tends towards a non-progressive management of affairs, — a continuing in the methods of instruction adopted for former classes, without the infusion of such new ideas as would be gained by securing graduates of other institutions; for it is evident that by the association, in any college, of men who have studied under different systems of instruction, the relative merits of each system would be compared, and the best consistent principles of each selected as an improved standard for that college.

At the Institute this complaint is sometimes heard; it would seem at first to be well founded, for the last catalogue shows that three fourths of the officers of instruction, excepting the professors, are Institute graduates, and this proportion may be considered large for an institution whose first alumni were sent out less than twenty years ago. At some older colleges, practically all the officers of instruction are also alumni, and this may be the case with us before many years, as the Institute and its corps of instructors grow larger.

But there is a circumstance in regard to our graduate instructors which might escape notice; that is, that many of them, especially in the engineering courses, have spent some time after graduating in the practice of their professions, returning with much valuable experience from outside sources. Such experience may be continued, during their connection with the Institute, by outside professional work of construction or consultation, and can readily be applied in the methods of instruction of the Institute, — methods which have, in many cases, been improved through years, but which are still open to changes for the better. This combination of new ideas with old and tried customs, by men who understand both, is certainly a correct and an excellent arrangement for a scientific institution like our own. It is not so necessary in the case of mathematics or some literary or scientific studies considered alone, but in the application of these studies. The certificate or degree conferred by the Institute should show, and does show, not only a course of professional study, but a course adapted, as far as possible, to the professional problems of ordinary occurrence, by men whose experience has taught them what those problems are.