

COLLEGIANS vs. APPRENTICES.

A REPLY BY A BUSINESS MAN.

AN article from a mercantile paper headed "*Collegians vs. Apprentices*," which appeared in the last number of this journal, needs a passing notice. It was evidently written by one whose appreciation of the real wants of a large mercantile establishment was as limited as his experience of the effects of a college education on the mental grasp of young men.

To assume that young men having mercantile life in view do not need more than the merest common school education is unfair to the young men and to the career they have chosen. The business man undoubtedly requires a special training, equally with the professional man; but up to the point where the special work commences there is every reason why in each case the training should be the same.

There has been an idea prevalent that colleges were only intended for young men entering the professions; but the value of mental training as a help in the general battle of life is now being better appreciated. And what in the past has been the experience with the generality of youths who present themselves for business employment? Every merchant knows that when a young man of sixteen or seventeen enters his office, he is fit for little else than to turn the wheel of the copying press and to run messages, and that at that work he is always kept during his year of probation. Even afterwards, sometimes for two or three years, his work is of the simplest kind. In the larger cities there is always an abundance of young men to be had at a few dollars per month to do such work, but for all the business training that this gives these young men, they

would be much better at the High School or College acquiring a general mental discipline. Further, every merchant equally knows that too many of the young men in his office are quite incapable of writing an ordinary business letter without grave errors, and his daily correspondence received convinces him that there is throughout the country something lacking in the common and High School systems of education in this respect.

It is idle to talk of the pushing business man not being particularly impressed with the value of a college degree in forecasting the market or determining the value of job lots. He never allows his young clerks to interfere with that important part of his business. It is equally idle to take as an illustration the street Arab, or bootblack, or newsboy. His mental activity runs in but one groove and results from but one cause—the fight for bare existence—with too often little regard for the means employed. A true comparison would be in after years between him and youths of education.

The knowledge of accounts, of goods, and of markets is quickly acquired by the young man whose tastes lie in these directions, and whose mental training has made him quick in perception and able to think for himself. It is a long road between the positions of office-boy and partner, but it need not be so long if parents able to give their sons a higher education would realize that the business man judges his clerks by their capacity, and that a young man with a high mental training and strong common sense, desirous of a business life, will, as a rule, grasp the details of an office in far less time than he who has