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Quackery in Mining Education.

We are very pleased to give space to a letter from Prof. Edgar Kidwell, of the Michigan Mining School, which gives in greater detail than his original article in *The Engineering Magazine* his views upon the question of permitting professors in technical schools to conduct an outside practice. In our June issue we disagreed with Prof. Kidwell's expressed opinion, but we are bound to admit that in his amplified statement he occupies a much more tenable position, and we do not hesitate to heartily endorse his proposition that, "Until a school is able to command the services of a competent man to direct a course, it had better let that course alone, and confine itself to work which it can really do well."

The difficulty arising from this standpoint, however, would be that a strict enforcement would result in having no instruction given in mining at all (we speak, of course, of Canada), for we unhesitatingly say that none of the technical institutions in Canada, offering mining and metallurgical instruction, pay anything like a reasonable compensation for the services of a competent engineer; even the recent endowment of McGill's chair of mining and metallurgy with \$50,000 will, we are informed, yield a salary of only \$2,000 or \$2,500, which it is not proposed to supplement out of other funds.

What competent engineer will give the whole of his time and services for eight to nine months every year for such a sum? There are plenty of inferior men acting as superintendents for a much higher wage.

If, therefore, it be a question between procuring the partial services of a first-class man, or the entire services of an inferior man, we must adhere to our opinion that the former is better for the school than the latter. For we think the implied inference of Prof. Kidwell's letter that such a first-class man would neglect his duties as a professor and regard students "as a necessary evil" is unjust to the profession, and is not warranted by one or two cases which may have come under his observation.

That there is a superabundance of half fledged material, men whom Prof. Kidwell describes as "whose intentions go no further than to make out of the office every dollar they can," who have been failures in practice, whose experience has been limited, and who eagerly embrace such an opportunity for half a livelihood as a professorship offers, is but too true.

Were our educational institutions liberally endowed there might be no necessity to depend on such material, but facts exist, and small salaries are not tempting to the successful engineer.

From both the educational and moral points of view we cannot think the entire services of such men equal to the partial services of one who is an authority, who knows and has experience of that which he teaches, who is in touch with and is one with his fellow-engineers in the making of mining and metallurgical history.

Could Prof. Kidwell's ideal conditions of liberal endowment and reformed trustees or governing boards be realized we could unreservedly

endorse his propositions; until that time we believe that the interests of the schools would not be injured, as a whole, by permitting to the professor such outside professional work as did not interfere with the amount and quality of the instruction given to the student.

Until such time arrives we shall continue to see governing boards swayed by the prejudices or limitations of one or two dominant minds, and with the mistaken idea of economy offering penurious stipends to men whose experience lies in books and labelling specimens, and in the successful use of printers' ink to announce their compilations as marvels of originality and research, and who as teachers will teach far less than the man accustomed to deal with facts.

The following is Prof. Kidwell's letter:—

"In your June issue, under caption of 'Quackery in Mining Education,' you state: 'The last element of quackery mentioned is that no teacher should be permitted to continue his engineering practice outside of his college duties. In this we do not hesitate to entirely disagree with Prof. Kidwell. Not only is it true that the vast majority of schools cannot afford to pay for the exclusive right to a competent man's services, but it is equally true that a man who is not in touch with the latest work in his profession, is unfit to teach that profession.'

"The space at disposal in the original article was too limited to permit a full discussion of this question, but the following extract from the first draft of that paper will make clear my position in the matter:—

"Over and over again we hear the question, shall professors in technical schools be allowed to do outside work? I maintain that they not only should, but must, if they are to keep up with the times. A professor forbidden to do any such work loses interest, becomes fossilized, and after a few years he is no more fit to teach engineering than an old sea captain is fit to command a modern steamer. But it is highly important to distinguish between the *kind of work he ought to do, and what he must avoid*. My own experience and observation lead me to believe that no professor should be allowed to do any kind of outside work other than that which has for its object the improving of his teaching, either by enlarging his sphere of experience, or providing him means to illustrate, better than can be done in any other way, the work of his class-room. Any attempt to carry on a general outside practice to make money, or to advertise the school, or boom himself, should be promptly frustrated, since such work is entirely outside of the purpose for which a technical school is established. To allow it is to put in a professor's way a temptation to neglect his department; it also attracts as candidates for professorships a class of men whose intentions go no farther than to make out of the office every dollar they can, regardless of the injury they inflict upon others.

"Such men look upon students merely as a necessary evil,—beings who must be tolerated in order to hold a position, but who must not be permitted to interfere with their outside work, popular lectures for show purposes, making of tests of no scientific or educational value in order to earn money or impress the public, etc.

"There is but one way to prevent such evils. Men of sterling honesty must be put in charge of the work, and be paid what their services are worth. They can then devote all their time to producing educational results, instead of drumming up outside work to enable them to live in comfort and decency."

"I have yet to find any tenable argument against the position thus defined. All experience only tends to confirm it, and some schools are, rather reluctantly, beginning to realize it.

"If it is true that 'the vast majority of schools cannot afford to pay for the exclusive right to a competent man's services,' does not this very fact prove beyond controversy that such schools are attempting and pretending to do that which in point of fact they really cannot do, and the students in these schools are unfairly treated, since the work done cannot be of the proper grade? I see no other sound conclusion to draw. Were it proposed to let all drug clerks practice as physicians, on the ground