

COLLEGE PROFESSORS.

A most significant remark chanced to fall from one of our professors the other day, it was this, "We remember but few of the men we have met in the class room as *teachers*, the others we think of, as those who gave us some lessons." Having made inquiries of a number of students representing various colleges I find that their testimonies agree with that of the Professor. Some say that about one in five of the professors are master teachers, two are what might be called good teachers and two they will not attempt to classify as teachers at all. Some make the proportion of good men larger, others make them smaller. Perhaps the first is about an average, if so, and students affirm that it is, there is need of reform among college faculties. Perhaps it would not be out of place if this matter were sifted a little by those interested in the higher education. This is a day when all branches of public service is being inquired into, and why should this most important of all go unheeded.

Enquiry has elicited the following facts, from those who should be competent to judge, concerning the poor teachers.

First, they are not by any means ignorant men, they are usually men who have indulged in a wide range of reading; there is scarcely any subject about which they cannot give valuable information, some of them are veritable walking encyclopedias; they know a little of everything except methods of teaching, the one thing above all others expected of them.

Second,—they sacrifice depth for breadth, they are satisfied with a superficial knowledge of a great variety of subjects, and not sufficiently acquainted with that which they are expected to teach. A general knowledge is by no means a teacher's knowledge. A man cannot teach well until he has so thoroughly mastered his subject that it has literally become a part of himself, and he sees it in all its bearings. There is no objection to a professor having a broad range of knowledge, but his first duty is to make himself thoroughly familiar with his own subject. The professor, who will not sacrifice the personal pleasure of a broad range of knowledge for the sake of becoming master in the line he has taken upon himself to teach, does a great injustice, first, to the governing body which has elected him to the position, and expect him to use his time and energies in such a manner as will enable him to do the very best pos-

sible work; in the second place, he does a great injustice to the students who spend valuable time and hard earned money to receive an education, and obtain only fifth class instruction when they ought to have first if the professor had been true to his profession; third, he does himself great injury when he thinks to gain popularity in public by breadth, he loses the respect of students for himself as a teacher, his influence over them for good is diminished to the merest fraction, if indeed he does not do them positive injury, by getting them to follow his rambling habits.

Third—the third fact is they have no method in developing their subject, it is impossible to know what they are driving at, they wander everywhere, and when the class is over the student feels as though he never wanted to hear anything more in that line. The professor may have a working knowledge of his subject but lacking method he lacks the most essential thing in a teacher. Shooting at random seldom does effective work. During our college days we were accustomed to hear with considerable merriment stories concerning a certain class of clergy who used to make it their boast that they never prepared their sermons, but waited for the inspiration of the moment to give them a line of thought and method of development. These might fairly illustrate some of our college professors who seem to wait for inspiration to come to their aid, and when it does come it serves them after the manner of the unfortunate clergy.

If these men can do better than they are doing and refuse to make the effort should the public suffer on their account? And even if they are doing their best and prove a failure it is surely unjust that the interest of the many should be sacrificed for the interest of the few. Why should a state of affairs be permitted to exist in a college faculty that would not be tolerated in any other department of service. The railroad employee who is unable to discharge the duties of his office is at once displaced by a more capable man. The lawyer who does not understand his business soon loses his clients. The physician in whom the community has lost confidence will not be called into the sick room for mere courtesy sake, and for the sake of giving him something to do to earn a living. The clergyman who cannot meet the demands of the parish is asked to retire. If in all other employments men have to stand on their own merits, why not college professors? If after a fair trial they are unsuccessful ask them to retire, the rights of the public demand it. The law of demand and supply holds good in regard to the teaching profession. Hitherto there has been but little if any practical pressure brought to bear upon the teaching body by the governing body. Once a professor, always a professor, has been the motto in the past. Create a demand for better men and better men will be forthcoming.

H. Y. C., '91