

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LECTURES ON PEDAGOGY.

WE take the following from a report in the *New England Journal of Education* of Professor G. S. Hall's lectures on Pedagogy recently delivered at Harvard University:—

The great change which has been brought about in the modern systems of education has resulted from a better understanding of the nervous system. Formerly it was thought that the nervous system as related to the mind was that of passivity and receptiveness, but now it is seen that it is to the activity of the nervous system that the effects of the educative processes are due. The ideal system of marks and punishments which ought to be constantly in view, however we may fall short of attaining it, is to have them conformable to those rewards and those adverse or retributive influences which the pupil will inevitably encounter when he engages in the affairs of life. Thus the incidental service derivable from them in school administration would be attended by an abiding service to the pupil in the way of discipline for the contingencies of his future career. We are to remember that pedagogy is a large subject, larger than didactics, and the aim must be to teach the pupil how to take care of himself. Too many people have made the great mistake of looking at culture as an object of itself, and it has been thought that if the mind were crammed with knowledge the ends of education were attained. There are examples of not a few minds stored with multifarious knowledge, but which have been unable to react upon that knowledge and usefully apply it, and thus their possessors have disappeared from the stage of life leaving the world no better than they found it.

Moral suasion is a modern idea, and the lecturer said that he was not an unqualified believer in the theory. Corporal punishment is sometimes salutary and necessary. The modern effeminacy which would drive the rod from the school, savours too much of sentimentalism, born of idleness and luxury. Suffering is inevitable in this world, and it is wrong to foster in a child's mind a false idea of immunity therefrom. Punishment, although intended to be degrading, is at times salutary. There has been too much nonsense about this question; it has set the

theorists against the practical teachers, and surely the opinions of the latter class are entitled to much consideration. If this effeminate idea of abandoning corporal punishment were followed out, a child would never become educated; the treatment would be unheroic, and the child must learn that he has burdens to bear in common with the rest of mankind. Boys naturally object to regularity in work, and to bring them up to the reality of the situation, the machine must be employed. Everything that is regular is tiresome to the child-mind, but none the less it is good for him punishment should not be excessive, and should be held as a reserve power. In the public schools there is very little room for individuality, and a teacher cannot consult the whims of every pupil; the attempt would be hopeless. All must fall into line some time in life, and if the lesson is learned in youth so much the better; individuality must end at home with the parents, who have the time and patience to consult and gratify whims.

Knowledge is a medicine, and, like the alphabet, no child ever cares for it; school-life is not all fun, and it cannot be made so by the adoption of any theories. Some of the elements of discipline needed in a school-room are, personality of a teacher and good success. The eye and ear must be all right so as to see and hear everything going on in the school-room. The tones of the voice are very potent in dealing with children. Correct English must always be used by the teacher, and his health must be good. Special rules have to be made, and they must be kept, otherwise discipline fails; they must be definite, explicit, and apprehensible, otherwise they cannot be enforced. The road to self-control is by way of wholesome repression and restraint. Methods of punishment must be varied according to the nature of the offender and the character of the offence. When other remedies have failed flogging must be resorted to. When a scholar, perhaps petted and spoiled at home, commits some flagrant vicious misdemeanour, flogging is necessary; there is no other way to reach the case. The real object of discipline is to secure a reaction of the pupil's conscience after the commission of an error, and it should ever be remembered that the voice of conscience is like the music of the spheres, a something unseen, but not unfelt. It is on this that the teacher must work, and he must be the judge of the methods to be employed.