

tion not so much on its own account as on his. If he had been called upon to select out of the intelligent men of New York the hardest-headed, keenest-minded possessor of common sense, we very likely should have put our hand upon the shoulder of Henry Kiddle. He has occupied, we believe, for fifteen years the position of superintendent of public schools of the city of New York. He has done this with great acceptance through all administrations, showing enormous tact, decision and skill, and maintaining a most honorable name and fame. None but a first-class man could possibly do for the city and himself what he has done. When, therefore, it was announced that this man had not only become a devoted convert to Spiritualism, but had written and would publish a book upon the subject, it excited great astonishment, and awakened no little curiosity.

Well, the book has come, and, we may say, gone. It is a pitiful disappointment to all who expected anything of importance, basing their expectation on Mr. Kiddle's character for sound judgment and common sense. There is not one sentence in it, from beginning to end, to indicate a heavenly origin, but everything to show that it is the offspring of a very commonplace and immature mind. The literary quality of the book is simply and irredeemably wretched. There is not a page of it, not written by Mr. Kiddle himself, that would pass muster in a magazine office. Prince Albert, Jim Fisk, St. Paul, Queen Elizabeth, Henry J. Raymond, William Cullen Bryant, Edgar A. Poe, Shelley, Wm. M. Tweed, Pio Nino, Archbishop Hughes, Theodore Parker, Moses, Pontius Pilate,—all write exactly alike; all utter the same "hifalutin" pious slang, in the same wretched literary style. Byron condescends to "drop into poetry," and such poetry! Now the marvel to us is that such a man as Mr. Kiddle could fail to see that it would be quite impossible for Byron to write such doggerel as he is made responsible for in this book. How he can publish it without expecting to be hooted at and hooted down, we cannot comprehend. Why, it bears no more resemblance to Byron's style than a boot-black's jew's-harp bears to Wilhelmj's violin! It is simply impossible bosh, and Mr. Kiddle ought to know it. Nay, he does know it, and knowing it, how can he risk a good reputation in publishing it? It is true that other utterances attributed to other writers are just as absurd, but this happens to be in a form of art which is absolutely determinative. Byron simply could not have written these lines, and every literary man in the world knows it. Well, if Byron did not write these lines, what warrant has Mr. Kiddle that he has had communication with any other spirit whom he puts forward as the authors of these silly utterances? If one pillar in his cobble-house falls, the whole structure goes down.

Our opinion is that every one of these communications originated in the minds of Mr. Kiddle's children, who have acted as mediums. The children of the superintendent of the public schools ought to write better English, but the stuff they have uttered

must have come from young minds filled with certain religious ideas, and certain very crude ideas of heaven. We do not mean to say that they have been conscious of originating these communications, for many of the developments of trance and semi-trance show that this kind of work can be done without conscious effort. Certainly, if the work was done by a spirit, the spirit is an unconscionable liar, and is not to be believed for a moment. A spirit that would put into the mouth of Shakspeare such stuff as he is made to utter, is not only a prodigious liar, but a practical joker of the most cruel character. Why, Mr. Kiddle, did not Shakspeare answer the question when he was asked what he considered to be his purest play? Simply because the medium had no opinion on the subject, lacking the requisite knowledge.

College Instruction.

ONE would suppose that, after the discussions of educational processes with which the platform and the press have teemed during the last two decades, professional educators would be thoroughly furnished with sound ideas and excellent methods. At least, the college, which assumes the highest place among educational institutions, should present a system of instruction above reproach; yet it seems to us that the college is particularly lame in its methods, and unsatisfactory in its results. Nothing, for instance, can be more mechanical and unsatisfactory than the system of marking, as it is pursued, say, during the first year of college life. In the first place, the class is put almost entirely in the hands of young and comparatively inexperienced instructors. At a time when the pupil needs direction and inspiration, if he ever does, he is left almost entirely to himself, or to those whose experiences of life are so limited that they are not accepted as directors, and whose lack of character framed upon experience forbids the exercise of influence. The average tutor is very rarely an instructor. The pupil's business is to acquire from books the power to answer questions, and the tutor's business is to ask the questions and mark the results to the pupil in his answers. Automata could probably be built to do the work of the tutor, in all essential particulars, and in such a case the result to the pupil would be much the same that it is now,—a wretched grind, in which the chief interest attaches rather to the marks than to the studies.

Now if the power to answer questions is the chief end of man, or the chief end of education; if marks can be made, or are ever used, to measure manhood, or power to reason or to do, the present system is much nearer right than we suppose it to be. But the truth is that marks tell nothing about a student, except about his power to acquire from a book, and his power to recite glibly what he has acquired. For it must be remembered that many a young man has not the power to recite in a classroom, in the presence of his mates, what he has faithfully learned, and is thus made to suffer in

his marks, and, consequently, in his standing, for a fault of temperament for which he is not responsible. The matter of teaching is, as a rule, left out of the tutor's functions. His business is to hear recitations, in studies in which he gives neither direction nor assistance. He is a marker; that is his special business. If "no boy ever loved the man who taught him Latin," whose fault would it be likely to be? The truth is that when the tasks of college are irksome and hateful it is the teacher's fault, as a rule; for it is within the power of any competent teacher to make any study delightful. When students are properly introduced to an author, or a study, and are really directed or led by a sympathetic and competent mind, they are happy in their work, and it is the universal testimony of students that the young tutor is the hard man of the college. They much prefer to be in the hands of the older men. They are treated more like men by the elder teachers, and less like machines. They prefer to be in the hands of men who seem interested to find out what they know, and careless to learn what they don't know, and to trip them upon opportunity.

It seems to us that a great deal too much of college work is put upon young men, who may be very acute and very learned, but not very wise; and that the system of marking, as at present pursued, is very poorly calculated to nourish the self-respect of the young men subjected to it. It also forces into prominence a motive of study which is anything but the best. The great business of the student is, not to acquire knowledge and discipline and power, but to get marks. This motive is absolutely forced upon him, and it is a mean and childish one, and he knows and feels it too, very much at the expense of his self-respect. His standing in his class, the reports of his position to his parents, even his power to stay in the college at all, depend upon his marks. Marks are the ghosts that haunt him by night and the phantoms that track him by day. Now he knows, and everybody knows, that men cannot be ticketed off justly in this way, and he may know that he is ten times the man that another student is who may win better marks, through his facility in committing to memory, and reciting off-hand. We have said that the motive forced upon him is a childish one. We know many students who feel this keenly, and who believe with us that if students were treated more like men by professors interested in them and in their progress, any apparent need for treating them like children, that may at present exist, would pass away.

We have said also that the student's power to stay in college at all depends upon his marks. This is the most astounding thing connected with this whole matter. The only remedy that seems to have been devised for the treatment of a slow student, by these great public educational institutions whose real business is to educate him, is to drop him; and to drop him is, nine times in ten, to discourage him and ruin him. Can anything more lame and impotent in the way of a conclusion be imagined? The result is absolutely rascally and criminal. It is a natural outcome, however, of the mechanical system which we regard as essentially vicious. The college seems to be regarded by its faculty as a great mill, into which the boys are turned as a grist. Everything that will not go through the hopper is thrown away, no matter what personal powers and aspirations, or what family hopes may go with it.

Of course we understand the conveniences of the marking system. It throws the responsibility of the student's progress upon himself, and entirely relieves the faculty. That is a very great convenience—to the faculty,—but as the college is paid for educating him, it is hardly fair to the student himself, or his family. Then it is so much easier to judge a man by his power to recite a lesson than it is by his power to solve an intellectual problem, or do an intellectual piece of work of any kind! Then, still again, it is a kind of work that can be trusted to young men, who have just gone through the process and are accustomed to the machinery,—indeed, are products of it!

Gentlemen of the college, is there not some better way—a way that will make more and harder work for you, perhaps, but a way that will more thoroughly nourish the sense of manhood among your students, and give them a nobler motive for work than that which you force them to regard as the principal motive,—a nobler motive which will make study a joy, and invest them with a feeling of dignity and a sentiment of self-respect? To treat students like gentlemen, and less like children or machines, and to come more into contact with them as guides and teachers, and less as task-masters, would, in our opinion, make better students out of them and exceedingly better men. We cannot doubt, we may say, in closing, that too much college work is given to young men to do. Their work is drudgery, perhaps, which the older men would gladly escape, but no work done in college should be drudgery, if pursued with the right spirit and policy, and with adequate intelligence.