

Contributions.

SOME PHASES OF GERMAN UNIVERSITY LIFE.

If one would see to what extent academic life can rule in social affairs, a visit should be paid to some of the smaller German university towns. In most of them, the distinctions of class resolve themselves into a three fold differentiation—the academic, the civilian, and the military—and the greatest of these is the first.

It is true that to the officers of the German army, all due tributes of respect are presented, but without the accompaniment of an academic career, even the haughty "offizier" will often find it difficult to gain access to what is considered the most exclusive social set of the university town. There, intellect predominates, and while the greatest disregard is manifested for all other adjuncts of social life, all respect is demanded for the university professor.

Among the students there are equally severe distinctions, though here the social standard is entirely different—and it may truly be said that few countries exist whose university spirit socially is equally disintegrated. While in the States it is customary for those who aspire to pleasant social relations in their college career, to join one or other of the Greek letter fraternities, it is imperative for the German student to join some of the similar organizations there found, if he would make congenial friends of all in the university. In this way sets and cliques are found composing various elementary branches of the more comprehensive parent associations which exist throughout the country.

These divisions are indeed so marked that among the younger students it is rare to find members of one "Verbindung" or organization associating with those of another.

In the majority of universities 4 or 5 such main societies exist, each being again subdivided into 6 or more branches in the same town, and the whole being correlated with organizations of a similar name in other universities. Of all these the Corps is facile princeps, being at once

the most aristocratic and exclusive. To belong to it, wealth and social position are to some extent essentials, particularly the former, for the cost of "holding up one's end" in the mutual relations of corps life is by no means insignificant.

Each branch of this organization (of which too there are usually six in the small universities) has a domicile of its own or at all events luxurious and comfortable abode—while as a mutual means of recognition the members are adorned by colored caps (the mütze) and ribbons slashed across their waistcoats each branch having a distinctive tint.

The extravagance manifest in some of these corps houses would well rival that of any of the lavish American fraternities, and it is ever a surprise to the foreigner who is fortunate enough to gain access to these rooms to see the wealth of wood carvings which adorn the walls and furniture, the elegance of the heavy silver plate used by the few who take up their lodgings in some of these residences, and to observe with what a lavish hand the ornaments are distributed over the building. Such at least is the case in one of these corps houses in Gottingen which the writer had the opportunity of visiting from time to time. It was the Bremen branch to which formerly the King Wurttemberg and others of note had belonged in their student days, and it was more than delightful to observe the warmth of interest shown by these political lions in their annual donations to the active members of their branch.

While the number of voting members is comparatively small in each branch, the most being 40, and the average much less, yet the hosts of elders (the graduates) who maintain an interest in the corps is in itself sufficient to defray all expenses connected with the current taxes of the branch.

Ever since the earliest days of the society, photographs (and in the older days were daguerotypes) of the members have been preserved