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The Neuphilologische Verein of Leipzig

My First Visit to the Verein

"Ich will mein Leipzig loben."—Goethe.

The remarkable popularity with American students of post-graduate study in Germany has of late shown a slight tendency to reaction. This may be due in part to the growth of the native institutions and the enormous increase in their endowments, and in the opportunities they afford for advanced work. By the acquisition of the private libraries of deceased German professors and by the occasional capture of a live authority, such as Professor Von Holst of Chicago, the New World has attempted to secure attractions which may rival those of the German centres of learning. It speaks well for science and for German patriotism that sums which must appear almost fabulous to a professor in the Fatherland (Mk. 40,000) have proved unavailing to tempt them "to fresh fields and pastures new." But what may be lacking in quality is made up in quantity, and with from a dozen to thirty-five instructors in the department of English alone, one can understand how the American universities of the first class are able to carry out very extensive courses of post-graduate study.

Another cause for the reaction is seen in the increased attention paid to English universities as possible scenes of post-graduate work. While it is simply incomprehensible to a German scholar how this could be, for to him all English learning is derived at second-hand from German sources, yet the American and still less the Canadian, top-notch American though he be, can scarcely be expected to adopt this somewhat top-lofty attitude, and look down upon Oxford and Cambridge as the playgrounds of young barbarians and homes for mere Dons.

The argument is frequent nowadays that the English universities cultivate the liberal arts and give a social training that the hard-working Teutonic specialist never acquires. There is some truth in this contention for the simple reason that the average Oxford or Cambridge student comes from a wealthy and upper class environ-

ment, whereas the mass of the German students are sons of preachers, teachers, and civil servants, or other professional men, whose incomes in Germany are lamentably meagre, and whose self-denial in sending their children to the university is all the more to be commended. In this respect our own students resemble those of Germany, just as the students of Oxford and Cambridge resemble those of Harvard, Yale or Columbia. And as the Toronto student has his own measure of social life, which in these latter days is sometimes supposed to infringe on the hours of study, so the Modern Language student of Leipzig or Halle has his own mode of combining the social with the scientific. To readers of *The Varsity* it may be interesting to learn just how this is done.

Oddly enough the Neuphilologische Verein of Leipzig was founded only two or three years before the Modern Language Club of Toronto, in the year 1878.

In my first "Sommer Semester" at Leipzig I spent an evening at the Kneipe of the Neuphilologen, and was greatly interested in what seemed a most remarkable combination of learning and good fellowship. The meeting was held in the private room of a hotel, and to get there one had to pass through a kind of beer garden. My companion, another Toronto graduate, was a student of theology at the time and had previously introduced me to a theological club where I had met Professor Delitsch and had observed that his large glass was replenished more than once with *Baierisches*. Thus we were both prepared for the beer and, indeed, one cannot travel far into Germany without feeling that beer plays a very large part in the life of all classes. But what struck us much more than the beer-drinking was the matured style of criticism which characterized the paper of the evening, on the relation between Racine and Schiller. This we were able to follow fairly well, as we had both made German our favorite subject in University College, which in our undergraduate days offered unusual facilities for a conversational study of the language. But even more impressive than the paper was the argument that followed its conclusion. We had heard