

as widely representative as possible of the whole body of graduates and undergraduates of Toronto University. The composition of the staff and of the directorate is a sufficient guarantee that this intention will be fairly carried out. Our columns are always open to contributions or communications from our readers of whatever party they may be, so long as they have something to say and say it in a fairly readable manner. We assume neither responsibility nor censorship in relation thereto, but allow every man's word to speak for itself, and are therefore desirous that as often as possible our contributors and correspondents would allow their real names to be appended to their productions. Thus we seek to reflect University opinion as a whole, and not at all our own views concerning it, or the views of one party or another in the University. We are sure that whatever false views have existed in any minds as to our position in this regard would be entirely dissipated by an unprejudiced examination of THE VARSITY itself in the light of the above observations.

Whether students wear academical gowns or not is surely a small matter to all sensible people. But with that strange perversity which so often characterizes those who should know better, the faculty of Laval University attempted to force on their students a costume obnoxious to some of them, and the result was that the very existence of the institution has been imperilled by the organized resistance of the students. It is said that at length the faculty have yielded, and gowns will not be worn. The authorities at Queen's College also have issued a proclamation threatening certain pains and penalties to students not wearing gowns. The *Queens's College Journal* in a noticeably obsequious article endorses the action of the faculty and puts forth certain alleged reasons therefor. For ourselves we do not hesitate to assert that it is a ground of astonishment to us how men whose professed duty it is to develop the minds of others can occupy themselves in such a trifling business. We never heard of a thoroughly earnest and successful professor who paid the slightest attention to trivialities that are suited to the capacity of tailors' apprentices. (We beg their pardon!) Students should be allowed to use their own discretion in such matters. If there remains any longer any reason for wearing gowns, that reason will keep vitality in the custom. But nothing is more ludicrous or more surely destined to ignominious failure than any attempt to continue by arbitrary measures a custom from which the life has long since departed. We commend to Queen's and Laval the example of University College, where, although the regulation requiring gowns still remains on the calendar, the good sense of the president and most of the professors is seen in allowing the students to do as they please in this particular.

The question whether professors should sit upon University Examining Boards appears to be again coming up for discussion. The immense influence of examinations upon the intellectual life and progress of Ontario is not in general properly estimated. Under the present system the University examinations determine almost entirely the nature of the education imparted in our High Schools, and through these that of the Public Schools also. It is then a matter of infinite importance that the greatest care should be exercised in the selection of University examiners. Those whose duty it is to make this selection have two great difficulties to overcome. There are few persons eligible for the position who have the requisite ability to act as examiners, and the greater number of these are unwilling to accept an appointment probably because of the insufficient remuneration offered. And if the Senate are to be precluded from making some of the appointments from the College Faculty, the difficulty will be much increased. Moreover, there seems to be no reason why professors should not be eligible for the position. If a person have the qualities of a good professor, he will probably make a good examiner also. But, of course, the mere fact that he occupies a professor's chair is not a sufficient reason for supposing that he is a proper person to be chosen as an examiner. There are objections against con-

stituting the Examining Board entirely of professors, but these of course do not warrant their exclusion altogether. Such exclusion would lead immediately and directly to very serious evils. Examinations, then, instead of being instruments of education and supplementary to teaching, would usurp a position which does not belong to them and control the teaching. College professors would degenerate into mere "coaches," and instead of a system of liberal education we should have a system of cram, and a more disastrous intellectual calamity than this cannot be conceived as befalling any country.

#### MODERN LANGUAGES AND THEIR NARROWNESS.

The reader will recall our figure of the mosaics in last issue. The mosaics are works of literature; the blocks are words and individual expressions, and their form is the simple root-meaning of words; Grieb represents book assistance of all kinds; the light and atmosphere are that inexpressible, though emphatic *something* in German nature and modes of thought by virtue of which alone German forms are called a *language* as distinguished from all other languages, and receive a genius—a life and spirit of their own.

To those who give the matter any serious consideration it must be evident that a language is just as little independent of this mental light and atmosphere as ordinary colors are independent of light in the physical world. Appreciation of German language-forms implies the power of transferring oneself to this German light and atmosphere, and we can appreciate the forms only *in so far* as we are able to examine them in this creative and vivifying medium. Language is not a written thing simply. It is the merest accident that it should be such at all. The written forms serve only to call up the real language, which lies far deeper than any forms can reach. They are no more the language itself than a fossil skeleton is the live mastodon; they are the remains of what once was an existence in the mind of the writer—nothing more; and we, the readers, are required to clothe these "dead bones" afresh and breathe into them anew their breath of life; and each one of us for himself. If the dead forms are more expressive to you than to your neighbour, it is because you inspire more vitality into them than he: you have a larger fund of experiences and associations with which to clothe them. You may fancy that all the beauty of language lies in the forms themselves, because these are the immediate cause of the thoughts with which your mind is occupied; but a little consideration will shew that these depend entirely upon personal associations for their peculiar force. Our only possible conclusion, then, is that *the only language-forms which are language-forms—which we can in any sense be said to know—are those which are directly associated with our personal experience.*

This may be granted; but have we not our language experiences in English? Is it not a simple matter to give our experiences in German dress?

We have our store of English experiences, and in so far we know our English; but to those who have caught the force and truth of our figure of the mosaics it must appear absurd to speak of clothing English ideas in German dress, or of observing German forms in an English light. The sum total of German thoughts and feelings may equal the English sum total, but individual German thoughts and feelings do not coincide with English: else would their language forms coincide. As in the mosaic we find that nearly every block selected from one composition exhibits peculiar projections and curves, and especially tints, which no block—perhaps no number of blocks taken from the other composition can match, so do we find with words and expressions in language. Germans have their experiences and associations entirely different from ours; their language is and always must be the outcome of these, and our only way to their language is through *their* experience.

We all know that in commencing the study of a language we regard each word as a clearly marked equivalent of one or more English words, and that at our next meeting with that particular word the English form immediately rises in our mind and suggests the idea. The ghost of the English word haunts the