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In Charge of This Issue
G. F. Ashworth.....W. W. Dullely
Friday, January 26, 1923

CAPS AND GOWNS

SOME forty Seniors have met and expressed themselves as favoring a revision of the graduation ceremonies, and on Monday, the question will be discussed by the class as a whole. The farsightedness of the opinion of those forty men has been called into question by a recent alumnus in a communication appearing in this issue. Let us consider the situation.

In the early days of its existence, the Institute granted degrees in Mechanic Arts. In the time that has intervened a gradual development has taken place. Technology has changed from a polytechnic institution to an engineering school, but the cold business-like atmosphere which once pervaded the entire Institute and which is gradually disappearing has survived in the graduation ceremonies. However, with a change of times and an increase in the size of the classes, the methods of a former day detract from the impressiveness of a ceremony to which they once added.

Intimately connected with the question of solemn graduation ceremonies is that of caps and gowns. The proponents of the movement to introduce the wearing of caps and gowns have not in mind the aping of other colleges, but rather the adoption to Technology's needs of an institution the success of which has already been proved. That the discarding of an antiquated custom now almost revered as a tradition, but totally unsuited to present conditions, indicates a lack of individuality which leads to mediocrity is a far fetched charge. Caps and gowns, in making for uniformity, and in adding impressiveness to an important ceremony offer the solution to but one of the phases of the question of revamping a ceremony now unfitted to our needs.

PRIZES

MODERN business is not merely a condition developed by man for the sole purpose of exercising mathematical ability, or of manipulating chemical formulae. More and more the term "human equation" is employed when reference is made to personal relations in business. To satisfy this equation, it is essential that every man who ventures out into the field of business activity be the master of a fluent style of English, both in writing and conversation. Naturally anything which tends to further the attainment of such a style is an asset of practical value.

Sophomores, in particular, are favored in this respect in having offered to them prizes of monetary consideration. The sum of five thousand dollars was left to the Institute for the "furthering of good English," and the income on this sum is sufficient to permit the giving of three twenty-five dollar prizes to the writers of the three best themes turned into the English Department each term. These prizes should furnish some additional incentive for developing an accomplished style of writing, and it is hoped that they will help raise the standard of English characteristic of the average student.

It might be well to add that the Literary Supplement of this paper was originated to give undergraduates and others a chance to see their writings in printed form if they possessed the requisite merits. It is very likely that the prize-winning themes will be published in future Supplements. Under these favoring conditions good rhetoric should assume a more conspicuous place in the student mind than it now possesses.

DR. WIENER WILL SPEAK CONCERNING INFINITIES

The feature of the next regular meeting of the Math Club will be a talk by Dr. Nohert Wiener of the department of Mathematics on the subject, "Dealing With Infinities in Mathematics." Dr. Wiener will take up the different types and cases of infinities occurring in mathematics, and discuss some of their characteristics. He will give examples of the paradoxes and fallacies to which they lead, and explain the methods of handling them. The meeting will be held next Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock in the west lounge.

LITHOGRAPHIC LECTURE DELIVERED AT ROGERS

The entire process of making lithographs was the subject of a lecture given by Professor C. H. Walker last Tuesday before the student body of Rogers. The talk was in connection with the collection of lithographs now on exhibition in the Rogers building. This exhibition, which is open to the public, includes a large number of very fine examples of lithography by famous craftsmen. Students from the Institute interested in seeing these lithographs will find them in the exhibition hall of Rogers.

ARMY AIR CHIEF TALKS AT SMOKER (Continued from Page 1.)

of helicopters, and they well illustrated his statement that the chief fault was their lack of stability. Pictures of the latest type of helicopter which had been shown but once before were thrown on the screen. This machine holds the record with a flight lasting one minute and 42 seconds. General Patrick stated that the development of a practical helicopter would solve many problems in military and civil flying.

Professor Warner spoke on the equipment of commercial airplanes and air ports. He described some of the equipment used in Europe and explained the steps necessary before passenger lines can be successful in America. He also showed pictures of the Aero Society glider and its last flight, and of the French and German international contests.

ALUMNI NOTES

FORMER NIGHT EDITOR OF THE TECH ENGAGED

The engagement of John F. Pierce '21, to Miss Ruth Torrey Chubbuck was recently announced. Mr. Pierce graduated from Course I and was actively connected with many Institute activities. He was a member of the Civil Engineering Society, vice-president of the Masonic Club, and manager of the Rifle Team. He was night editor and associate editor of THE TECH in his senior year. Miss Chubbuck is a resident of South Weymouth, Mass.

In the early part of this week, Professor W. F. Jones '09, of the Geology Department, received an addition to his family, a fine baby boy. Already it has been decided to name the boy after his father.

NOTICES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

OFFICIAL SLIDE RULE COURSE

The first two general lectures on the Slide Rule will be given by Professor Lipka on Tuesday, January 30, and Thursday, February 1, in room 10-250 at 4 o'clock. Bring a polyphase rule to the lecture. No registration is necessary.

The twelfth meeting of Course 5.34 will be held in room 10-250 at 4 o'clock this afternoon. Professor E. P. Warner, of the Department of Physics, will speak on "Recent Developments in Aeronautics."

UNDERGRADUATE

The night editor in charge of the next issue of THE TECH is P. K. Bates '24, telephone University 7077. All matters concerning the issue should be referred to him.

A meeting of the Council of the Outing Club will be held at 5 o'clock, on Friday, January 26, in the west lounge of Walker.

Candidates for the 1923 Handbook who were not present at the meeting Monday, are to meet General Manager S. J. Helfman '24, tomorrow, in the T. C. A. office from 11 to 12 o'clock, or Monday from 1 to 2 o'clock.

Newly elected freshman section leaders will hold their first meeting in room 10-275 at 5 o'clock next Monday.

What is Happening? A Communication from a Recent Graduate

News items from Technology which have been appearing in the public press lately seem to indicate that the glorious Institute is undergoing some great change; that it is at present in a state of flux. The latest of these items tells that the Seniors have decided to wear caps and gowns at Graduation Day (not Commencement) and that they have voted to discontinue the reading of thesis abstracts. What has happened? Has the flapper craze, on its way out of the world, paused at Technology?

It seems as though one of the most successful propaganda machines in recent history is breaking down—the machine which sold to the public the idea that "Technology is a place for men to work, not for boys to play," and which is largely responsible for the awed respect in which the general public holds all Tech men. The machine that hammered home the idea that Tech men are of a different, a superior character; that they have no time for the ordinary frivolities of college life, and know most of what there is to be known.

Of course, we, as Tech men, know that our alumni are superior, but the great public is not qualified to judge the merits of engineers; the public must judge by hearsay, and by straws which show the way the wind blows. These straws, which now seem to be in danger of misplacement, were once carefully laid. The fathers that have gone before may not have known as many scientific facts as have now been established, but they were wise beyond their day and generation in their knowledge of men, whose ways do not change from year to year. They knew that to appear superior, one must first appear different.

Let us look at the facts. Where among the colleges can be found such a number of "different" institutions as these of Technology: The Stein Song, the "We are happy" yell, the lack of a football team, the lack of honorary scholarship societies, the lack of graduation honors in scholarship, the stern austerity of Graduation Day (note that it is officially not Commencement), the failure to give honorary degrees, the lack of interference by the faculty with the private lives of students, so long as they keep up in their studies. It used to be the Tech boast that "Tech students are men; if they get in trouble with the police that is their lookout, not ours; but they must keep up in their studies."

Note the way these straws point. They indicate that Tech men are of sterner stuff than others, that the Tech degree is more precious, that there is no distinction among Tech men.

The first step in the feminization of Tech came last year, with the assault on the Stein Song. We were told that the words are not apropos. What of it? What difference do words make? The important thing is that Tech men join in song and that they have in their hearts the love of Technology. Parroted words do not count. The words might as well be taken verbatim from paragraph 3, section 1, of the 18th amendment.

And indisputably, the Stein Song is different.

Then some one sneaked in and started an honorary society. The impression has been carefully cultivated that there are no distinctions among Tech men—that they are all in one class, a superior class. This has been done by a careful neglect to award scholarship distinctions, and failure to form Sigma Xi or Phi Beta Kappa, or whatever they happen to be. As a result Tech men were universally considered as ex-officio past grand masters of Sigma Xi, and any Tech man, without a key of any kind, would usually be chosen for a position in preference to another graduate with a flock of vest ornaments. But now it appears to be officially released for publication that some Tech men are not as good as others.

A further blow to the man who is described in the movies as the "old Boston Tech man" came when three students were expelled because they got drunk and noisy. Had they been allowed to remain, people might in after years have said, "Well, Tech made him a good engineer, but (possibly) he learned to drink there." Now they can merely say, "Well he learned to drink at Tech, and apparently didn't learn much else." Again the feminine influence was felt.

Then they wanted to put a ring on us—the Technology ring—so that old graduates who came face to face with one another in the jungles of the Belgian Congo would recognize one another as Tech men and pass a few remarks about the weather, instead of eyeing one another bashfully and passing onward with cool nods. Fortunately the alumni had a word to say and this was killed.

And now the old-time graduation must go. The boys are going to wear caps and gowns and omit the thesis abstracts. Graduation Day at Tech is to become Commencement. We Tech men haven't much that we can

boast of. It is useless to boast of the high character of the school or the way they work us, for people believe that already; we even hear Cornell men saying, "Well, outside of M. I. T., the Sibley College of Engineering is the best." There isn't much left to boast of, but we were able to say proudly, "You ought to see the graduation exercises. They just throw their degrees at you in bunches of a hundred. The fellows blow around in old clothes, and a whole lot of them have the degrees sent by mail—don't even wait for graduation." The subject would look thoroughly impressed and say, "Yes, it isn't the degree that counts at Tech, it's what you know." Oh, it used to be good stuff and now the flappers are going to spoil it on us.

Time was when the lovely lady who took in the exercises would say afterward to her circle of friends, "My Gawd, I didn't know what it was all about, but holy smoke, these Tech birds know things. They may not do up but they're there, Mable, they're there." And now, with our abstractless, cap-and-gown exercises, the thing will be dismissed by some bored deb with the yawned comment, "Conventional, and frightfully dull."

Can Tech, with its Coney Island Great Court and its ashcan campus put Harvard and Wellesley in the shade in the matter of beauty and ceremony on Graduation Day? Can we imitate, if we want to imitate, confetti filled stadiums, and exercises in leafy, green college yards? It has been shown that we can outdo them all in grim, impressive austerity. Such austerity is appropriate for an engineering school.

Shall Tech climb down from its lofty, if unadorned, pedestal, and mount a decorated soap box merely because others, with greater natural advantages, have placed glorified soap boxes in pinnacles of their own?

Shall Tech, which has been the leader in the ascent, turn and follow when others take a different way? Far better to continue straight up, an risk being the first to go down on the opposite side.

The only unpardonable sin is mediocrity. Individualism has made Tech the leader. To those who would threaten its leadership by attempting to make it mediocre, may only be said, "Thy sins are nor forgiven thee—but go and sin no more."
(Signed) J. S. WARD, JR., '22.



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