and also that the chances of a student having to exchange ideas with a real live Greek about 999 to 1 over the chances of doing ditto with a German; therefore it is more desirable that he should speak Greek fluently than German. Consequently a *viva voce* examination was held in Greek, but not in German; no doubt this is as it should be. There is one other matter to which I would seriously desire to direct the attention of all interested in competitive examinations, and I do so now without hesitation, because I have no suspicion or ground for suspicion that any abuse has been perpetrated here, although I believe it has been elsewhere. It is the fact that the papers for such examinations are printed. With the appliances now available for manifold writing and copying, I think it quite practicable that the papers containing the questions should not leave the examiner's hands until handed by him to the candidates at the time of examination.—I am, &c.,

JOHN A. NORTHMORE.

april 13th 1883 From the Advertiser

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—I am not a candidate for University honors and in no way interested in the subject. But I profess to have an ordinary business acquaintance with the common rules of arithmetic, and it seems to me that the problem Mr. Northmore views with such horror as too difficult is nearly as simple as the one he regards as altogether too easy. To put it in a clear form, suppose the examiner had been occupied ten times as long. He would then have examined 98 badly arranged and 392 well arranged papers. The time taken by the good relatively to the bad was as 7 to 12; therefore, as 7 is to 12 so is 98 to 168. So that he could have examined 560 good papers. Dividing by 10 we get, what I have no doubt is the correct answer, 56. It says little for the ability of the candidates or their champion if they are "stumped" by such a boys' sum as this.—I am, &c.,

'POSSUM.

From the Advertiser april 17th 1883

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—Your correspondent "'Possum," is pleased to regard me as the champion of candidates for University honors, and as a per-contra, I think I am justified in regarding him as the champion of the absurd and the nonsensical. It certainly indicates the possession of a "discretion" that savors more of cowardice than of valor, that he is unwilling to defend with the weapons at his command the cause he has espoused without further protecting himself behind the shield of anonymity, and the bungling way he wields his weapons fully justifies his caution. "'Possum" says he has an ordinary business acquaintance with the common rules of arithmetic, and that it appears to him there is not much difference in the case with which the two problems mentioned by me in my former letter could be solved, and then proceeds "to put it in a clear form, suppose," &c. But what does this "putting it in a clear form" amount to? Why simply utterly disregarding the expressed terms and conditions of the problem, and only corroborates my statement that "divested of its absurdity and its impossibility the problem was nearly as easy of solution as the other problems mentioned." If all the terms of the problem are to be ignored except the ratio of the facility of examination and percentage of papers examined, I cannot compliment

"'Possum" on his method of putting the problem in "a clear form"—as the respective ratios are as 7 to 12 and 80 to 20 or 40 to 10—a clearer way of putting it; less clumsy, and evincing a more "ordinary business acquaintance with the common rules of arithmetic" would be to say:—As 7 : 12 :: 10 : 17⅛ + 40 = 57⅛. Therefore as 50 : 57⅛ :: 49 : 56 answer. But what is more pertinent to the question, and what I want to know is this—Does "'Possum's" acquaintance with the rules of arithmetic enable him to frame the rule which justifies a candidate in thus ignoring the expressed conditions of a problem submitted to him for solution; or one that alters the meaning of the English language to the extent of rendering the numbers "forty-eight," "forty-nine," and "fifty," synonymous terms? Is it not arrant nonsense, and the height of absurdity to incorporate into the statement of a problem terms that must be left out of consideration, considered and disregarded, or considered and wilfully violated, or the problem left unanswered? If "'Possum" wishes it to be understood that having regard to all the terms and conditions contained in the two problems mentioned in any former letter, he does not see any material difference in the difficulty of solving the two and complying with the terms thereof, it is simply an indication of the crude and imperfectly-developed state of his perceptive faculties, otherwise his letter is simply a shirking of the subject under discussion. As, however, "'Possum" has so easily and satisfactorily (to himself) dealt with this problem, there are two or three others I would ask him to solve, the solution of which may emphasise his statement as to his knowledge of the common rules of arithmetic and his powers of solving problems thereby. The problems are—1. At an election where there were two candidates, A and B, 80 per cent. of the electors voted for A. When the ballot-box was opened it contained forty-nine papers. How many votes were given to each candidate? (Memo.—I don't suppose this question will "stump" "'Possum," because he has very clearly shown in his letter that suppose 490 electors had voted there would have been 92 votes for one candidate and 392 for the other, therefore there can be no difficulty in his finding a solution of this problem by one of the common rules of arithmetic, though I confess my own inability of doing so.) 2. How many papers does a set of papers consist of? 3. If, for the sake of argument, it be admitted that a professor by some occult power not possessed by ordinary mortals can out of forty-nine sets of papers of two descriptions (properly and improperly arranged) examine forty-nine sets in the proportion of 80 per cent. of one and 20 per cent. of the other, and the relative rapidity of their examination is as 12 to 7, in answer to the problem of how many sets of papers properly arranged could be examined in the same time as forty-nine sets, 20 per cent. of which were not properly arranged, I should be obliged if "'Possum" would inform me if the numbers in a set of papers varied from two papers in a set to fourteen papers how often the answers would differ. 4. How many times in these thirteen instances would fifty-six, the answer given by "'Possum," be correct? In conclusion, my feelings might possibly have been sorely wounded by "'Possum's" jeers about "stumping" and "boy's questions;" but, fortunately for my peace of mind, the same issue that contained "'Possum's" letter also contained the article from the *Saturday Review*, not only fully endorsing but emphasising the remarks in my former letter by the statement that "the refined ingenuity of examiners in torturing the examined is too often indulged in, not with the object of testing the proficiency of the candidate, but to baffle and bewilder him," and that such a course of examination is not calculated to bring to the front those with the greatest grasp of intellect or force of character. Fortified in my opinion by the statements of such authorities as those mentioned in the article referred to, as well as by the opinion of a writer whose abilities obtain for his articles admission into such a periodical as the *Saturday Review*, I could bear with equanimity the sneers of "'Possum," even if he were "a candidate for University honors," or even a University professor.—I am, &c.,

JOHN A. NORTHMORE.

Norwood, April 14, 1883.