

THE MODERN LANGUAGE CLUB.

The Modern Language Club held the third English meeting of the year on Monday, December 7. "American Poets" was the subject of the day, and the larger audience which the announcement of "an English meeting" does not fail to call out listened with interest and appreciation to the excellent essays read.

A good deal of business had first to be disposed of. The most important item was the consideration of Mr. Hellem's motion that, the Treasurer in future should be chosen from the second year instead of the first. The passing of this by the club was probably a wise measure, as it will be much easier for a man who has already spent one year in University corridors to collect the necessary fees, than for one who has practically no acquaintance with the Second, Third, and Fourth Years.

A solo by Mr. Edwards, with banjo accompaniment, opened the programme. The audience expressed their pleasure by an eager demand for an encore, but Mr. Edwards passed out, and was seen no more.

Mr. Beatty then followed with an essay on Whittier. An interesting description was given of the poet's Quaker home in New England, and the puritanical atmosphere in which his early years were spent. "Martin Smith's Diary" was mentioned as giving a very clear idea of what such a home would be. The legends of New England are the subjects of many of his poems, and he has painted with a gentle grace life among the hills and dales of these Eastern States. Mr. Beatty alluded to the interest Whittier took in the war, and quoted several from the many songs of war and slavery which show us the poet's feeling on this question. Many of his poems are addressed to persons for whom the poet felt a deep admiration; of these two were noted, those to Wm. Wordsworth and Burns, two poets in whose works Whittier took an especial delight. In concluding, the essayist pointed out the deep religious belief which we find speaking in all his poetry and voicing the faith and veneration in the soul of the poet.

The next essay, on William Cullen Bryant, was read by Miss Mackenzie, and showed a careful study of the author's life and work. Attention was drawn to the very arid condition of American poetry when Bryant commenced his work, and the deep impression which his early poems made on the reading public. Born of a poetic family, when still very young the boy began to display real poetic ability. Nature was his earliest inspiration. Of her beauties he sang when still a boy at home; and later, when a student at Williams College, he gave expression to his genuine admiration of the natural world about him in many exquisite poems. He was much given to that meditation which characterises those who drink in calmness and rest and new life from the fields and brooks and sky, but had not the slightest trace of the moroseness which often results from that very depression and disappointment of spirit which communion with nature is calculated to banish. "Thanatopsis," Bryant's first permanent work, in its simplicity and strength seems a type of the poet's own life. On this poem he had expended much thought, and its having been taken as a model by subsequent writers is sufficient proof of the excellence of the work. From the age of thirty-one to that of eighty-four he lived a life of success in New York. Much of his work here consisted in contributions to magazines, and his simplicity, his pure, genuine love of nature, his deep sympathy with the sorrows and woes of humanity won for him throughout the land an audience of enthusiastic admirers. From '54 to '57 he visited the Southern and Western States. While lingering in the prairie land of Illinois he received the inspiration for what is probably his best and certainly his best-known poem, "The Prairies."

Miss Mackenzie's essay was illustrated by many well-chosen quotations which lent to it an added interest. Miss Allan's reading of Bryant's "Thanatopsis" was the next number and was enthusiastically received.

The last essay was a very able one on Whitman, by Mr. Edgar. Whitman too is a poet of nature, but cast in a stronger mould than Whittier and Bryant, and the originality of his genius has given rise to most exaggerated admiration for him and prejudice against him. Through his poems there breathes a great personality, which seems often to become an intense egotism. But before judging the poet too harshly, we must look at the beautiful life he lived. His worship of nature from earliest years; his strong democracy of spirit and sympathy with mankind; his noble self-sacrifice, seen in his work in the hospital wards during the war; and that insight which showed him a divinity in most insignificant things, were traits of his character which made his whole life a true poem. The essayist considered Whitman's choice of new, strange forms for his poetry justified by the fact that conventional forms were ill adapted to the robustness of his genius. Unfortunately, owing to the lateness of the hour, Mr. Edgar felt it necessary to omit part of his essay.

The programme of meetings of the Modern Language Club for the Easter term is as follows:—

- I.—Jan. 11. A Public English Meeting at which Mr. D. R. Keys, M.A., will deliver a lecture entitled: "A Grammarian's Holiday."
- II.—Jan. 18. Subject of evening, Voltaire. Essays are Life; Candide; Henriade.
- III.—Jan. 25. Subject, Auerbach. Essays, Life; Baigne; Volks Bücher.
- IV.—Feb. 1. A Public English Meeting, a further announcement of which will be made early this term.
- V.—Feb. 8. Subject, Lamartine. Essays, Life; Jocelyn; Les Confidences.
- VI.—Feb. 15. Subject, Schiller. Essays, Life; Poetry.
- VII.—Feb. 22. Subject, English Lady Novelists. Essays on Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, and Miss Mulock.
- VIII.—Feb. 29. Subject, Mme. de Stael. Essays, Life; Corinne.
- IX.—Mar. 7. Subject, Contemporary in German Novel. Essays on the Lives of Storm and Scheffel, and Immensee.
- X.—Mar. 14. Subject, Cardinal Newman. Essays on Life; Novels; Other Literary Work.

HORACE, OD. III. 21.

O nata mecum consule Manlio.

TO A CASK OF WINE MADE IN THE YEAR IN WHICH HORACE WAS BORN.

My good contemporary cask, whatever thou dost keep
Stored up in thee—smiles, tears, wild loves, mad brawls
or easy sleep—
Whate'er thy grape was charged withal, thy hour is come;
descend;
Corvinus bids, my mellowest wine must greet my dearest
friend.
Sage and Socratic though he be, the juice he will not
spurn,
That many a time made glow, they say, old Cato's virtue
stern.
There's not a heart so hard but thou beneath its guard
canst steal,
There's not a soul so close but thou its secret canst
reveal.
There's no despair but thou canst cheer, no wretch's lot
so low
But thou canst raise, and bid him brave the tyrant and
the foe.
Please Bacchus and the Queen of Love, and the linked
Graces three,
Till lamps shall fail and stars grow pale, we'll make a
night with thee.

—From "Bay Leaves," by Goldwin Smith, D.C.L.