

sion of these papers was postponed owing to the lateness of the hour.

These meetings are well attended, the members taking an enthusiastic interest in the subject.

Messrs. Jones and Inglis will contribute papers at the next meeting.

MCGILL CLASSICAL CLUB.

The usual meeting of the McGill Classical Club was held last Wednesday evening, Mr. Ferguson Arts '96. presiding. Mr. A. C. P. Howard, '97. gave an enjoyable reading, after which an interesting and instructive essay on "*Pollice Verso*" ("Thumbs up and thumbs down") was read by Mr. Heine, Arts '98. After stating that there was a great diversity of opinion upon the subject, and that we could not fix upon any theory as absolutely correct, the writer referred to the various references in classical literature bearing upon the subject and the opinion manifestly upheld by these. Baumeister, Friedlander and Seyffert contend that the down thumb was the sign of death, while the waving of handkerchiefs was a signal of mercy.

On the other hand, Smith's Dictionary of Antiquities, besides many commentators, states that turning the thumb up was the death-signal, and that mercy was indicated by the downward thumb. The lexicographers were about equally divided, and many modern scholars tell us that the spectators turned their thumbs towards their own breasts or throats to indicate that the conqueror should plunge his sword into his victim. Two passages were cited, one from Juvenal and one from Pliny, which showed conclusively that *pollicemvertere* was used as a sign of disapprobation. These passages, however, did not prove what that sign was. *Vertere* meant, in its literal sense, to turn from a normal position. Then the natural or normal position of the thumb, in the case of the outstretched hand, would be upwards. So the abnormal, signified by the literal meaning of *pollicemvertere*, must mean to turn down the thumb.

The writer claimed that this interpretation of the *pollicemvertere* was strengthened by the study of the phrase *pollex infestus*, which is proven to refer to a hostile gesture. Just as in Virgil the *infesta hasta* denoted the "levelled spear," so the *pollex infestus* must signify hostility to the fallen gladiators, which would be indicated by the downward thumb, expressing "*ad inferos!*" "death to him."

The sign of favor or mercy was *pollicem premere* as is plainly told us by Pliny. But how could this phrase mean either "to turn the thumb up," or "to turn the thumb down"? It seemed more reasonable, he thought, to take *premere* in its radical meaning,

viz., to "press" or "squeeze". As the downward thumb signified death, so the squeezing and hiding of the thumb indicated the "missio" or discharge of the vanquished gladiator. Attention was called to the expressive symbolism in both cases: the enclosing of the thumb by the fingers signifying the sheathing of the sword, and the clenched fist and downward thumb, typical of the unsheathed sword—"there he is; finish him by plunging your sword into his breast."

EXCHANGES.

We beg to remind our College contemporaries, that exchanges should be sent to Editor-in-Chief, MCGILL FORTNIGHTLY, care McGill University Library. It is with regret that we omit to notice in this column several valued exchanges which, we are quite sure, have been sent us, but not to the foregoing address, and have therefore failed to reach us.

The *Owl*, as usual, presents a most creditable appearance, and contains well-written and thoughtful articles, relieved by others in a lighter vein.

We quote the following item from the October number, which is there credited to an *Exchange*:

"Tennyson could take a worthless sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and make it worth a fortune—that's genius. Vanderbilt can write a few words on a sheet of paper and make it worth \$5,000,000—that's capital. The United States can take an ounce and a quarter of gold and stamp upon it an 'eagle bird' and make it worth \$20—that's money. A mechanic can take material worth \$5 and make it into watch springs worth \$1000—that's skill. A merchant can take an article worth 75 cents and sell it for \$1—that's business. A lady can purchase a 75 cent hat, but she prefers one that costs \$27—that's foolishness. A ditch digger works ten hours a day and handles several tons of earth for \$3—that's labor. The editor of this paper could write a check for \$80,000, but it wouldn't be worth a dime—that's rough."—*Ex.*

The *Bowdoin Orient* in its last issue calls attention to what we should imagine to be a rather unusual regulation among Universities. "At Boston University," we are told, "the Faculty has voted to permit work on the College paper to count as work in the Course, allowing seven hours per week to the managing editor and two hours to each of his assistants."

With the month of November, the *Canadian Magazine* enters upon its fourth year, and maintains the standard established by previous issues. Several articles on topics connected with the early discovery