

## COMMUNICATIONS.

To the Editor of THE VARSITY:

DEAR SIR,—We cannot help regretting that "Nunquam Noscendus"—as a member of the Modern Language Club—should have felt it his duty to place the Club in the ridiculous light in which he has attempted to place it by his recent article. We feel quite assured that nothing but stern duty could have induced a member to the performance of so unpleasant a task—almost as if one were to expose to ridicule the foibles of an intimate friend. It must, then, have been with a worthy purpose; but we cannot help feeling that an *active* member, with the inventive genius which this member seems to possess, might have turned his talents to better use, in pursuing the course which one would have a right to expect of a member, in trying to inspire the society with new life. May we not conclude safely that none but a *nominal* member would feel it his duty to act in so unusual a way? And if this be so, we hold that this opinion should have no more weight than that of an outsider. Our regret is that there are so many Modern Language students who have never taken an interest in the Club, who have never attended more than the public meetings, and hence are not prepared to see the large element of humor in the description of the proceedings. One might almost fancy from the attitude of many of the students, that it is a Secret Society, open only to the officers and a few of their friends.

The Society has done good work in the past; it is possible even that some might be found who would acknowledge having obtained benefit from the meetings of the past year; but they will be those who have made it a matter of duty to attend regularly, and even to take some part in the proceedings. After all, is it not for such that the Society is maintained? And though it cannot benefit people who refuse to attend regularly and to do their share towards maintaining it—we need not take it as a sign of dissolution that the attendance has decreased. It may even be the more helpful to those who choose to stand by it.

We must congratulate this member, however, on his very unique argument. Among all the indifferent ones, we doubt if one could be found who would refuse to get what good may be obtained from the meetings, because of his absorbing desire to "search the depths of his own heart." By all means do so; it is a most praiseworthy proceeding; if it is in the state which the article indicates, it is certainly time it was looked after; but, we cannot see that this will do away with the advantage of knowing something more of Literature outside the range of our curriculum than the average student is apt to learn during his course. We wouldn't pretend to include this member among the "average students"; moreover, we are quite prepared to admit that it is beyond the power of the M.L.C. to benefit him. But there are others, who are still in a position to obtain benefit—even from a society such as this; and it is for these that we propose to maintain it.

ANOTHER MEMBER.

To the Editor of THE VARSITY:

DEAR SIR,—The writer of "Things Generally" thinks that some of the societies around the college should be served with writs *quo warranto*, and at once singles out the Modern Language Club as the one, to his thinking, most open to attack. "What good have ye done?" is the question he puts to all. Judging by this standard there is no fear but that the Modern Language Club will be abundantly able to answer the writ.

To demonstrate this, consider the amount of work done by the club during the past year. There have been seven English meetings, at which fourteen essays have been read; two of these were public meetings at which addresses were delivered by Dr. Rand, of McMaster University, and Prof. Alexander. There have been five French meetings,

with nine French essays, one English essay on a French subject and one address in French. There have been four German meetings, with five German essays and two English essays on German subjects. This gives a total of sixteen meetings with a total of thirty-one essays and three addresses. Now, aside from the question of whether those who have listened to these essays and addresses have been benefitted thereby, no one will deny that the writers of the essays received a direct and substantial benefit therefrom; inasmuch as none of these would have been written had there been no club, the credit of having done this much good can certainly be claimed with all justice by that organization. Now as to the other question, take the case of the English meetings. At these, it can be fairly concluded, the audience has received some benefit from the addresses and the essays. When "Nunquam Noscendus" attacks these meetings he is not attacking the Modern Language Club alone but the English seminaries, and in fact the whole system of English education in vogue here and elsewhere; it is not necessary for us to defend this. As far as the question at issue is concerned, most of what he has said on, or rather off, the subject is pure "twaddle"; in itself it is very fine, but as a contribution to the discussion of no consequence.

But every one will admit that the English meetings have done some good. The case of the French and German meetings is, of course, different. The difficulty of understanding the essays is, no doubt, a drawback. But this can to a great extent be overcome. Though inaccurate in many respects, the description of the position of the members at one of the Club's meetings is fair. Some sit back in the corner, where, of course, only stray sounds of what is being said reach their ears, while others, though nearer the front, apparently make no effort to understand. All this is, of course, disheartening to those who really want to, and who consequently do, get some good. Ask those who have taken no interest in the Club—of which number, from the tone of his letter, I am afraid "Nunquam Noscendus" must be considered—and doubtless the answer will be that the Club has done no good. But what weight can their opinion have? What right have they to be heard? Not having put themselves into a position to know, they are certainly not justified in condemning what they know nothing of. But ask the real, live members, the ones who ought to know, and I am certain that quite a different answer will be given. These are the ones who make an effort to understand the French and German essays, and who see their efforts crowned with success. The individual experience of these members alone can decide. As one who has taken a somewhat prominent part in the Club's proceedings during the past year, I can add my testimony to the worth of the Club.\* I would have no hesitation whatever in allowing the question of the existence or non-existence of the Club to depend on the vote of the active members; the answer, I am sure, would be unanimous in favor of its maintenance.

But, to conclude, I am free to confess that there are faults in the Club; and yet I am certain that these can easily be remedied. The system is all right, but some of the members are not equally so. "Nunquam Noscendus" sees some faults; wherefore let it die. There is the impractical dreamer; he is very ready to put out the hand to destroy but is impotent to construct. Instant death is the only end that he can suggest for the only *literary* society in the College; the only one to the meetings of which the friends of the University with the confidence that their enjoyment will not be spoiled by their being prevented from hearing the programme, the one farthest removed from anything technical, special or narrow. I differ. Success is the best goal, and one that can be attained. Let every Modern Language student resolve to make the Club a success, for its sake and their own, let them devote their energetic attention to its work, and success is assured.

Thanking you for the space, I am yours truly,

WALTER S. MCLAY,  
Ex-President M. L. C.