

The Advantages of The Literary Society

The one hundredth and fourth session of the University of South Carolina was ushered in on September twenty-third under the most auspicious circumstances. The Board of Trustees and the Faculty are hoping and striving to make this the banner year of this grand old institution—and this should also be the endeavor of each and every student within its walls. Already the various student organizations have begun afresh their work and affairs are rapidly assuming definite shape. The victories and successes of the past session have not been forgotten, but are serving to spur the students on to renewed vigor.

However, one department of student life is still somewhat deficient, and it is one of its most important and beneficial phases. This is the literary society, and it is truly on the decline—a deplorable condition, indeed.

It is quite easy to weave arguments about an old theme, but it may not be amiss to repeat these at a time when the decadence of the literary society is so evident.

We have here two of the grandest literary societies in the South—the Clariosophic and the Euphradian. A former Carolina student, who is deeply interested in their welfare and who has studied minutely their history, has recently discovered that "our societies are, with one exception, the oldest existing college literary societies." Their one-hundredth anniversary was fittingly celebrated in February, 1906.

These societies are weekly initiating into membership many new students, and they are to be congratulated on this fact. But what is the need of new members if the work is not properly done? The new men are, for the most part, timid and inexperienced, while the old are negligent.

Now, it may be asked: "What are the advantages of the literary society?" The answers are legion, and must necessarily be treated briefly.

A distinguished scholar and educator, President Henry N. Snyder, of

Wofford College, has thus expressed the main reasons:

"To train young men in simple, straightforward, natural, effective public speaking; to furnish a field for the practice of the rules governing deliberative bodies; to offer opportunity for a more or less extemporaneous discussion of current matters, however crude the discussion may be, may lead to acquirements not to be despised in the preparation of men who are to take their places as citizens in a democracy like ours. Indeed, all will agree that it is absolutely indispensable that at least a few shall be so trained. Even the trained thinker and man of wide knowledge may be so far hampered in the mere matter of expression as to bungle his thinking and darken his knowledge. It is highly important, therefore, that we should cultivate and foster whatever tends to make reasoned thought and enlightened knowledge effective in the free air of a democracy in which there are so many voices that deafen the reason and eclipse the light. This is the utilitarian view of the possible use of the literary society, and leaves out of all consideration those mere graces of public speech that used to make them things greatly desired for the delight they gave."

In the waging of the present National Democratic campaign there is a regularly organized "Speakers' Bureau," which procures able men to take the stump in the behalf of Democracy. This is but a mere illustration. There is no public movement for the benefit of State or nation where there is not a demand for men well-versed in the art of public speaking. You may be called on for a similar duty some day, and do you care to be found lacking?

Probably it is enough to say then that the literary society will train the dutiful member to speak freely and successfully. But there are many more reasons that will be hastily reviewed.

The literary society is the place where the students may freely mingle

in friendly intercourse; where the rights and privileges of each and every member are equal and the same; where those principles prevail that caused France to be shaken and almost torn asunder by a mighty revolution that sought to establish them, namely: liberty, equality and fraternity. The meetings do not occur frequently enough to convert this pleasure into tediousness, but rather serve to augment it. Cast aside the idea that a literary society is a bore and a nuisance, for such it is surely not.

Our societies have an illustrious past, as has already been remarked. They have prepared men for every calling, a majority of them peers in their chosen profession. It is an honor to be given the same opportunities as they had, and who is there that would not be pleased to be proclaimed as a worthy successor of them?

The excuse that students so frequently give that they have not the time to attend the meetings will not be treated here. It is absurd, to say the least.

And now, finally, let it be added that the advantages of a literary society cannot be measured in cold speech. The feelings of a member can never be adequately expressed. Do not neglect and despise these advantages, for then you will have turned a deaf ear to a golden opportunity that knocks only once at your door. If it is shunned, it may mean failure in after life. By the acceptance of it, you will pave well your path to ultimate success and victory in the cold world outside that pleasant one within college walls.

So, old members, do your duty in the literary society, as you see it, for the ethical conception of a "man of good character is one in whom the universe of duty habitually predominates."

And now, new men, let not another Saturday night pass before you affiliate yourself with the one or the other of our historic and efficient literary societies.

"LEGION."