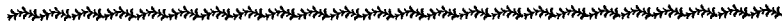




CHAPTER VII



BACK in Curtiss Hall, our Year of Horror over, we assembled on October 6, 1930, eighty-four members and eighteen guests, the largest initial meeting in several years, to hear Lessing Rosenthal's Inaugural address, *Milton's "Areopagitica"*, and *the Liberty of Licensed Printing*, received with great favor and applause. This greatest of Milton's prose works was carefully interpreted, and shown to have been one of the strongest factors, if not the strongest factor, in ultimately and permanently establishing that freedom of the Press now enjoyed by our English-speaking peoples. Lessing Rosenthal, a veteran of forty-seven years of the Club's numerous vicissitudes, down-sittings, uprisings, major agreements, minor disagreements, and attempts to promote good literature, is an eminent lawyer, conciliator, benefactor, bibliophile, a man of a thousand friends. A cordial word is always on his lips. His quiet philanthropy is widely known. He is a trustee of Johns Hopkins University and of the Brookins Institution. His interests are many, ranging from higher education and civic welfare to industry and commerce. He has supported generously this Club in all its projects and purposes, an ever dependable stand-by. And now we greet him as he calls the first meeting in the new rooms to order, and gazes upon a decorative transformation effected by architect Harry F. Robinson and Mrs. Green, "a veritable Victorian vision of simplicity, utility, harmony, and restfulness" (the words of an eye witness, a bit exuberant, but under the soft, ceiling-reflected lights, recently installed by Chairman King of the Rooms Committee and by Earle Shilton, the rooms did look wonderful). It was *home*, exclusively our own, until changeless Change should overtake us. Horace aptly described the situation in his *Carmen Saeculare*, when he said:

“And now good faith, peace, honor, erstwhile modesty, and virtue, long neglected, venture to return, and blessed plenty, with her full horn, is here again.”

Edwin L. Lobdell introduced the new rooms to literature, in the guise of history, with his *Recollections of Fifty-five Years in Chicago*. These *Recollections* of our aged and aging members, which from time to time are presented for our enlightenment, serve to show that the past, that is, history, ancient or modern, is something not to be put aside and forgotten, but something *human*, as much a part of us as is the present itself; that humanity is universal. We had an excellent “run of shad” (to use a piscatorial metaphor) all through this season, “choice to good,” and all edible. William L. Richardson’s *On Giving One’s Self Away*, read on the night of October 20, before a large audience, was a luminous and engaging essay by a master of English. That evening, before the meeting, Mrs. Green served the first of a series of sixty dinners for members in Curtiss Hall, an innovation that met with instant favor. Dr. Bowman C. Crowell, a specialist in tropical diseases, read his first paper before the Club on November 10, with general approbation: *The White Man in the Tropics*. That same evening President Rosenthal announced a gift to the Club of two plaster vignettes of two deceased ex-presidents of the Club, Edwin Burritt Smith (1901–1902) and Clarence A. Burley (1902–1903). The vignettes were made by the late Louis F. Post, a well-remembered former member, and were presented to the Club by Mrs. Post. Whither these *objets d’art* have disappeared, whether the friable plaster of their composition could not long endure time’s inexorable anatropsis, this deponent saith not. President Rosenthal, on the evening just mentioned also read a letter recently received by the Secretary from Alfred Bishop Mason, an octogenarian member residing then in Florence. The letter was a friendly reminiscence of his early days in the Club, a token of continuing interest in our welfare. We may remind ourselves at this point that there were two early

and prominent Masons in the Club, both of our founding year, 1874. Edward G. Mason, was in at the very birth of the Club in March, while Alfred B. Mason came in in the following November—when we were still in our swaddling-clothes era. Edward G. Mason was the *first* Secretary of the Club (1874-1876). He died twenty-seven years before the time when this present narrative begins. From Edward Mason's records, memoranda, and letters Mr. Gookin derived a considerable amount of material for his story of the Club. Alfred B. Mason lived until January, 1933.

On December first Edward S. Ames' paper, *Religious Humanism*, a major effort, so caught the fancy of those present that one hundred and five copies were immediately subscribed for in case the Publication Committee should decide to publish the paper. The Committee acted promptly, and the paper appeared the following February under the Club's imprint with its title shortened to *Humanism*, pure and simple. There is length, breadth, thickness, a uniform solidity, beauty, in the thought of Edward Ames as expressed in the papers he has read to the Club since 1915. Eight of these have been philosophical or religio-philosophical in character. They have stirred our dormant thought-processes and aroused us to think for ourselves on things that in our daily routines we are wont to ignore. He balances opposing arguments and different lines of thought, and leaves one to infer his conclusion, or, better, to draw one's own. He is eminently fair; his attitude is always unassuming, never dogmatic; philosophy is not a one-way street; traffic flows both ways. Dr. Ames combines dignity with charm and simplicity. His language is clear, unequivocal. He makes one feel (as another has expressed it) that the cosmic element is essential to religion; that we must learn to get along without using misleading terms; that we should go forward more quickly if men were less willing to stand for what they have really abandoned; that facing the facts is better than any anodyne and that when we manage even in small measure to see life steadily and see it whole, there is a kind of deep delight, too deep for words.

The record states that Mrs. Green was absent that evening, so could not serve us the customary collation of un-needed beer, sarsaparilla, white rock, and ginger ale (we were still in the anti-alcoholic period), and the delicatessen thereunto appertaining. At any rate we dispersed feeling quite euphoric and sublimated.

Casper W. Ooms proved himself rarely fine as both writer and reader with his first paper on January 19, 1931, which dealt with *D. H. Lawrence: Censored and Unsung*. Careful reading and research, and an ability to appraise values quickly, moulded this paper into a keen critique.

The much mooted question of Prohibition was in the air all over the country at this time; heated discussions pro and con were rife. The Club took its full share in the argument. It was therefore quite appropriate that we should listen to a disquisition on the subject from a legal and fairminded point of view. Temperate in thought, habit, and attitude Charles Megan was just the man to discuss the *Dry Law*. He settled nothing, of course, but we hearkened interestedly, though with our individual convictions unchanged. Announcement was made on the night of March 16, that Ladies' Night would be observed the following week, the 23rd, in order to accommodate the speaker, Dr. Preston Bradley, who could not be present on the 30th, the night set apart for the ladies. It was agreed by unanimous vote at this same meeting to set forward one day the March 30 meeting, that is, to March 31st, *Tuesday*, for the purpose of allowing our members to attend a lecture by the English novelist John Galsworthy in Orchestra Hall scheduled for the 30th. Dr. Bradley gave his audience of more than one hundred good listeners in Curtiss Hall his *Personal Impressions of Iceland*, which he had visited the summer before. Iceland was then one of the distant outposts of civilization, but World War II has given it a new significance. Preston Bradley came in to the Club in 1926. Probably no man in semi-public life in and around Chicago is a more familiar figure. Though a man of seemingly limitless physical and mental energy, one wonders

how he manages to keep going so successfully in his endless activities. Besides ministering to his huge popular church on the North Side, and its numerous ramifications, he must respond continually to calls to the lecture platform, to address civic, religious, secular, and various other gatherings, and to broadcast on the radio. His moral force has acquired a momentum that carries it far. His attendance at our meetings has been sporadic because of these endlessly diverting engagements; but he values his membership and maintains it faithfully.

Death deprived us of six members during this season. Three were of the very texture of the Club: Edwin A. Munger, Clement W. Andrews, and George Herbert Mead. The first named enjoyed life—in the fullest sense of those words; his disposition was buoyant and cheerful; he had a facetious fancy, a friendliness that invited friendliness. He was persistent in the accomplishment of the ends he had set for himself to attain, and with the final results of his life work he was content without vainglory. He was a diligent lawyer, and a faithful Master in Chancery for twenty years. His religious interest was Swedenborgian, the New Church, as it was called. With this sect he was actively connected until his death. He lived a good and blameless life. His memorialists said of him: "No blessing which men crave was denied him"—an exceptionally strong statement, but accepted by his friends without reserve. Edwin Munger could truly say with the Psalmist:

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;
yea, I have a goodly heritage."

His death occurred on September 18, 1930. Six months later his son, Royal F. Munger, Financial Editor of the *Daily News*, read his first and only paper, *Finance Since the World War*, a comprehensive survey made two years after the unforgettable deflation-sodden era had begun.

Clement Andrews was a New Englander from witch-haunted Salem, Massachusetts. Boston Latin School and Harvard gave him a thorough education. Having specialized in chemistry he became an instructor in that branch of

science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Appointed to supervise the Institute's library, he soon became so interested in library work that he decided to veer into librarianship as a career. About that time, 1895, John Crerar, a member of this Club, who left us a generous bequest in his will, was founding and endowing a free library here in Chicago, the John Crerar Library, now recognized as one of the great scientific libraries of the world. Andrews was called hither to organize and build up this famous institution. His skill and devotion brought great returns. He did the Club much durable service on Committees and as President (1917-1918), and had ten papers to his credit on the record. He was one of those whose loss may be accounted great. Andrews quickly adapted himself to the rapid pace of Chicago life, ate of our local lotus, and made no bones of the fact that Lake Michigan breezes were a relief from the notorious East Winds of the Hub. He died November 20, 1930. George Herbert Mead, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago at the time of his death, April 26, 1931, was a gifted and inspiring teacher, who offered a wide range of courses covering the entire history of philosophy. His general philosophical position was that of pragmatism. What better epitaph could he have than the words of his close friend John Dewey:

"His mind was deeply original—in my contacts and in my judgment, the most original mind in philosophy in the America of the last generation."

Here are three different types of men. This diversity of character in our Club membership is one of the structural rivets that have contributed to the integrity and soundness of our literary craft, and helped to keep it afloat for seventy-two years.

From time of old Monday nights have been sacred to the Literary Club, but, as stated above the meeting on March 31st, 1931, was held on a *Tuesday*, the previous evening having been given over as a sacrifice to a noted Englishman of letters. There was no indication that the sweet savor arising

from our altar ever reached his divine nostrils. Toward the end of this season there were three contributions of note added to our Club literature, all written by men whose useful careers have since been brought to an end by death. *Some Old Eye Doctors and Pseudo-Eye Doctors* was the title of Dr. Sanford R. Gifford's first paper, read April 6, 1931. It called our attention at once to the uncommon qualities of this skillful and popular ophthalmologist, famous son out of the West of another famous eye-specialist, whom the son delightfully memorialized in a later paper, *Garlic and Old Horse-blankets*, published by the Club in 1943. Dr. Gifford had a smooth narrative style, unexpected humor bubbling to the surface every now and then, that raised an appreciative laugh. His second paper, read in 1935, was purely literary and non-professional, *Arthur Symons. The Aetiology of a Literary Crush*. This paper was a striking proof of Dr. Gifford's wide cultural background. When he read his final paper on February 14, 1944 (a reminiscential valentine, as it were), *Nasturtiums and Stained Glass*, Tragedy was lurking behind him, though we saw it not, for only eleven days thereafter he was gone, a victim of devotion to his patients, who were also his friends, and to overwork. He had won from us our highest esteem and affection. Most untimely seemed his death to us who know not what mysterious hand guides the capricious shears of Atropos.

Henry Horner came into the Club in 1922. He read only three papers, all bearing the same title, *Restless Ashes*. The third installment was read on April 27, 1931. Judge Horner's memorialists have given us concisely the substance of these papers:

"All described the musings of the dead as from afar they observed how wondrously their wishes and best-laid plans were twisted and broken by relatives, lawyers, and even probate judges."

In November of the following year Judge Horner was elected Governor of Illinois. He then took on non-resident status for eight years. His gubernatorial career is so recent as

to be familiar to all of us now living. He was reelected to a second term in spite of his political enemies, but it was a stormy term. His personal attention to all the details of his office was too much for him. He succumbed to overstrain and died October 6, 1940. Though not with us he was of us until the end.

Dr. Irving S. Cutter, the third of the trio mentioned above, joined the Club in 1926. The subjects he chose for his four papers were strictly Western, the first dealing with an historical event, the *Yellowstone Expedition*, the second with a political event of considerable local interest, *The Case of the Lincoln, Nebraska, City Council* (May 11, 1931), and two character studies, *Edwin James, Explorer, Botanist, Physician*, and *Charles M. Russell, Cowboy Painter*, both read on later dates. On Mid-western and Western history Dr. Cutter was thoroughly well informed. He was Dean emeritus of Northwestern University Medical School, Medical Director of Passavant Hospital, a physician of importance and learning, popularly known in the city and countryside through his Health Column in a morning newspaper, from which he dispensed medical advice and comment to the multitude. Dr. Cutter died February 2, 1945.

Two men of early prominence in the Club died between seasons in the summer of 1931, William Mackintire Salter and Merritt Starr. The few of us who date our membership back forty odd years will recall Mr. Salter's personality, a man of winning exterior and scholarly mind. Trained for the ministry he released himself from the toils of dogmatic theology, and for many years was the Leader of the Chicago Ethical Society, a predecessor of Horace J. Bridges, whom our present membership knows more intimately, as he was with us until the autumn of 1945. Mr. Salter was also a trained philosopher. His books, of which he wrote quite a number, deal with the Ethical movement and with Philosophy, and were widely read. Mr. Salter added lustre to an already brilliant assemblage of highly educated and talented members.

Merritt Starr's personality stands out in this historian's memory like a church steeple in a rural etching. He was President of the Club during the season 1910-1911. He was not only a lawyer of great ability but a talented and finically scrupulous writer. The Secretary remembers sitting with him when he was correcting the proofs of his *Dante Six Hundred Years After*. He had rewritten those proofs two or three times. When gently reminded that that sort of thing ran up the expense of printing considerably, his curt reply regarding expense was the same as Farragut's regarding torpedoes. He was quick and easy in conversation. When he and Judge Brown and Walter Fisher, all equally facile of tongue, met at the post-exercises refreshment table and fell into an argument, there followed a logomachy that brought a crowd around to listen in amused amazement. We can remember several such occasions. Starr was forceful, thorough, practical. If any one move of his was impractical, it would seem to have been his sponsorship of Associate Membership, which he conceived, bore and nursed into a By-Law, which for twenty-five years has received no attention whatsoever from resident members. We have already in a previous chapter set forth briefly the story of the genesis and present status of Associate Membership. To the few of us who occasionally consult our antiquated By-Laws and give them a little thought, Associate Membership seems utterly superfluous, an "appendix" that could be excised without loss of "face," dignity, or prestige. Of course the three names of Associate Members, who have been on this static list for a quarter of a century, should remain as long as they live; but to select men, no matter how prominent or eminent, who have never lived in Chicago, who can contribute nothing to the Club (distinctly a Chicago institution), seems incongruous, and perhaps ridiculous. On our own front lawn awaiting the call are giants, knights-errant, literati, scholars, sufficient for maintaining a strong resident membership. All honor, however, to the memory of loyal and progressive Merritt Starr!