



## CHAPTER XI

ORANGE JUDD LAYLANDER, familiarly and best known as "O. J." to all of us, graced the Curule Chair for the season of 1937-1938. This genial and generous gentleman, endowed with a lively and non-caustic wit, had made arrangements some months before for holding our Annual Reunion and Dinner on October 11 at the Chicago Athletic Club's palatial quarters, 12 South Michigan Avenue. "O. J." was a man of ripe years and experience, devoted to the Club, and possessed of a youthful spirit and zest for life, undaunted by whatever might happen, a "contented man," as he liked to call himself. We met, one hundred and eleven of us, in the banquet hall of the Athletic Club. The flowers and liquid refreshment were furnished by the new President as a thank-offering to *Flora* and *Bacchus*. It was a sumptuous dinner, after which President Laylander, duly introduced by his predecessor, delivered his Inaugural *Random Shots*. These hit the mark with such frequency as to arouse no little merriment. Enthusiasm and good feeling were rampant.

In a world of flux, at a time when all things, domestic and foreign, economic and political, seemed to be at sixes and sevens (the second global war was in the making but not yet visible), the Club made its way unostentatiously, gracefully, profitably, creatively through its sixty-fourth season. We heard a series of papers of a high order of literary merit, papers intelligent, intelligible, entertaining, instructive, scholarly, such as we had learned to expect from our members. The President set a precedent in the matter of introducing the speakers. Being a "natural" in wit and raconteurship, he always had at his immediate command a pertinent *bon mot* (at times an unvarnished *mot de risque*), which put the audience in good humor, and gave the reader an oppor-

tunity for a "comeback," if he had one—which was not often. This habit enlivened many a meeting. On the eighth of November, 1937, Henri David read his eleventh paper before the Club, *Casanova*, a large audience, eighty-two, being present. M. David's papers always attract a crowd of eager listeners. His themes are almost wholly French, French writers, French historical events, French life, and are couched in flawless English, though he knew no English when he came to this country about the end of the last century. His achievement in the linguistic line has been most remarkable. He is thoroughly versed in French literature. He carries over into his English the Gallic charm of the best French writers. Until his retirement a few years ago he was a Professor of French at the University of Chicago. He joined us in 1915, and has contributed fourteen delightful papers. Mention has already been made of his *Motoring with Belphegor* and his presidential address at the beginning of that heart-sinking year in the Medical and Dental Arts Building. He bore up well under that ordeal, which must have been more difficult for him than for the rest of us. M. David is a lively and entertaining conversationalist, well informed on literary and political subjects. For over thirty years he has been an ornament to this Club. We are proud of him. Three of his best papers have been published by the Club: *Flaubert and George Sand in Their Correspondence* (No. XXXII), for which, for a long time after, there were frequent calls from booksellers; *Marcel Proust* (No. XL), and *La Douceur de Vivre*, on the Reign of Terror (No. XLIII).

Dr. Morris Fishbein, well known editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a member for nearly twenty-five years, expounded to us in November of this season the evil methods of quackery in a paper, *Modern Medical Charlatans*. Dr. Fishbein keeps himself informed on up-to-date illegal medical practice just as he does on legal.

Dr. Chauncey Maher's first paper, read in January, 1938, proved him to be an artist in depicting rural life. He told us

the story of a little town in Southwestern Illinois, where he had lived as a boy, and drew the picture with such simple lines and clear perspective that the memories of many of us who had had similar associations with country villages in the days of our youth were vividly stirred. Dr. Maher gave us two other papers later, the third, *Louie*, the simple story of a "village quean", told with delicate matter-of-fact-ness and verbal artistry.

Death came on December 6, 1937, and claimed John Maxcy Zane in California. He joined us in 1905, resigned later, and rejoined us in 1935. *Oratory is No More* was his swan song to the Club in April, 1937. This was a peculiarly fitting subject for Mr. Zane since he cherished a great fondness for the Roman and Greek orators and poets and read them constantly and familiarly in the original. His paper was a lament that such men were no longer to be found among us in these latter days. Mr. Zane had won for himself an enviable position in the practise of law, and was the author of a widely read legal treatise. He was also well versed in modern literature. He was an avid collector and 'connoisseur of fine and rare books, and for several years had been and was at the time of his death President of the Caxton Club, the unidentical twin of the Chicago Literary Club.

There was a goodly number of papers read during this season by members who had already proved themselves distinguished writers. At this point they need not be mentioned, for lo, are their names, titles and dates not duly inscribed, with comments here and there, in Volume X of the Records and Proceedings of this Club? Seven new members were taken into the Club during this season, among whom and still with us as active members, were Bertram J. Cahn, Nathan S. Blumberg, and David S. Oakes. Anticipating a little, we may remark that the paper, *One Sixth of a Dozen*, read by the last named, to the Club in 1944, was one of the wittiest papers we ever listened to; it kept us rocking in our seats with laughter. There were three resignations: men who

lacked the cranial fortitude to maintain their interest, and could not acclimate themselves to our rarefied atmosphere. Two good men were transferred to the non-resident list: Dr. Henry C. A. Mead (son of our Professor George H. Mead, named heretofore in these pages), who was called to the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, and Llewellyn Jones, journalist, bookman, and literary critic, who was quite suddenly called to Boston in April, 1938, to assume the chief editorship of the *Christian Register*, the official organ of the American Unitarian Association.

Furthermore, it must be recorded with regret, two members, whose qualifications for membership were of the best, dismembered themselves by permitting their economic interest in the Club to reach the zero level of their personal interest. At the business meeting held January 24, 1938, the following amendment to the By-Laws was proposed by Willard King, at that time Chairman of the Committee on Rooms and Finance, namely, that the figure "seventy-five" in section 6, Article III, be changed to "sixty-five" so that the latter part of section 6 shall read thus:

"... and provided further that in the case of members who have been enrolled for twenty years or more and are in good standing and have reached the age of sixty-five years, the payment of further dues by them shall be optional on their part."

Due notice of this proposed change was mailed to members and at the next business meeting on February 21 the amendment was adopted by more than a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

Rethumbing the pages of this season this historian repents his decision to omit further mention of papers in the upper bracket of excellence. Two are worthy of a word of special praise which can be given without prejudice or doing violence to the others. These two are Harry F. Robinson's *Precursors of Mark Twain* and the final paper of the year, *Collectivism*, by Billy E. Goetz. There were many requests that the former be published; it was a grand piece of laborious research,

a contribution to pre-Clemensiana of no inconsiderable value to literary historians. *Collectivism* was a well-equalized and dramatic presentation of two opposite points of view; the arguments were so well balanced that it was difficult to choose between them. It high-lighted the end of the season.

About this time the work of Lin Yutang, the popular Sinologue, was much in vogue and provoking much discussion. The attention of the Club was called to one of his books in which he had classified the present generation of mankind into the herbivorous and the carnivorous, the former being sweet-tempered, the doers of things, the creative artists, the latter being the opposite. Someone remarked incidentally in casual conversation that if that classification had a grain of truth in it, then the Literary Club must be wholly herbivorous, for were we not all creative artists, and did we not come hither hebdomadally to graze on choice literary herbage for a fumid and soporific hour? Yes, interposed another someone, but when yonder curtain is drawn at the end of a cud-chewing hour, does not grass-cropping then lose its attractiveness, do the fleshpots of the Nile not beguile us, and does not the dormant carnivorous instinct assert itself as we line up with drooling lips at the snack table? Whereupon the second someone recited in a tone of finality these unpremeditated lines:

Here live we well and scarcely know  
The wide world's constant ebb and flow;  
Here grass is green, the herbage lush,  
Strong waters gurgle, bottles gush;  
We feed our minds on chlorophyll,  
On chives and chard and pungent dill;  
We feed our maws on fowl and fin,  
On sugar, fats, and protein.  
We are the perfect syncretist,  
To whom both hay and flesh are grist.  
I think that Lin Yutang would say  
The golden mean is the natural way.

The first someone said he quite agreed.

Dour-faced Anxiety bestrode a world steadily becoming more threatening and certainly much smaller as George IX (*né* Linnaeus Marsh) assumed the crown and scepter on October 10, 1938. Adolf Schicklgruber, the miraculous upstart, was firmly seated in the German saddle; six months before our annual reunion he had annexed Austria, and as we foregathered was taking over the Sudetenland; universal hegemony was clearly his goal. Europe was aflame and the sparks were falling on the other nations of the earth, already dry as tinder. "Amid the confused voices of the world's ignorance and sadness," to which we listened for the next half dozen years, what do we, the Literary Club, do? We must find consolation somehow; compensation must be sought for our utter loss of confidence in what the late and much lamented "B. L. T.," a Chicago Columnist of renown, was wont to call "the w. k. human race." We resort to our Ivory Tower, leaving our sordid shoes of trouble at the door, don the robes of the human spirit blithe, and give ourselves over for a brief hour to meditation on the finest and greatest things of our inheritance. Our Committees on Exercises rarely fail to provide us with spiritual nourishment to meet our individual tastes, from the thick and heavy roast to the nuts and raisins. During this season of 1938-1939 our program ranged from President Marsh's gently flowing *This Other Eden, Demi-Paradise*, his felicitous Inaugural, to Ernest Zeisler's severe critique of the famous (in his own circle) French mathematician, Evariste Galois, read at the final meeting in May. We concluded that the writer of this brilliant paper was not in agreement with M. Galois in many respects, but not being at all familiar with higher mathematics, we hardly understood the grounds for disagreement. But a spicy argument, tinged with a soupçon of vitriol, and couched in the King's English was good to hear and helped us, as we faced a five-month vacuous vacation to forget that "der Fuehrer" was careering more madly than ever on his

wreckage-strewn, carnage-stained way, and about to undertake his nefarious invasion of Poland.

Irving K. Pond read his twenty-sixth and last paper before the Club in October, 1938, *Do Children Think?* It was autobiographical, a careful analysis of his own psychology and mental growth. At the time of his decease, which occurred within a year after reading this paper, the unbroken tenure of his resident membership was longer than that of any other surviving resident or non-resident member, with only one exception in each list. He wrote much, easily, clearly, entertainingly, precisely on architecture (his profession), art, and general topics of human interest. The literary and professional facets of his mind shone with equal brilliance. Acrobatics was his hobby, in which he had been proficient from his youth up, and of which he was a profound student until his death. He was personally acquainted with most of the "rhythmic" artists in all the large circuses and carefully studied their methods and movements. The results of this study, combined with his expertness as a draughtsman, enabled him to prepare a paper for the Club, *A Day Under the Big Top: A Study in Life and Art* (published by the Club in 1924 as Number XXXIII of our publications), that was a work of genius. It was a scientific analysis and study of the art and rhythms of acrobatic performance, signally illustrated with elaborate figures and designs by the author. Irving Pond was devoted to the Literary Club, and proved his devotion by constant and regular attendance year in and year out. For several seasons he never missed a meeting. He was a conversationalist of the first order. His opinions were strongly held, but we respected them though we could not always accept them. He joined the Club in 1888, and was our President for the season of 1922-1923. One of the strongest pillars of the Club broke and fell when Irving Pond answered the call of Death.

No novice at writing or in delivery but merely making his first appearance before the Club on October 31st, 1938, was

Dr. Ralph W. Gerard with his *The Shears of Atropos*, a story of personal experience, a remarkable escape from death by plague. It held us spell-bound. Two other papers of singular merit have come from his pen since then, *Unresting Cells*, and *Ola*, the latter a clear-cut delineation of a shrewd type of Vermont Yankee, now becoming scarce, with whom the author had had many dealings and conversational bouts—a tale of great charm. Another new member. Professor D. Roy Mathews, also made his initial appearance at our lectern, on February 27, 1939, with an historical paper, *French Exiles and English Relief*, that evidenced no little research and was received most favorably. His second paper, *Generals and Geographers*, was read in 1943; it dealt with geopolitics, a novel topic arising from the War.

Still another new member in his first appearance before us on March 6, 1939, gave us a wonderful evening of pleasure and instruction, Tappan Gregory with his *The Camera's Catch of North American Wild Animals* (illustrated), a running talk on his own photographs of animals from moose to mice taken by set cameras and flashlights. A year later we were favored with his *Eze, on the Corniche*, and two years later with his *The Black Sox*, the sinister story of corruption in professional base ball, and in 1943 with his *The Whisper of the Guns*.

Outstanding papers of this 1938-1939 season (every season has them for that matter) were many, done by the tried and true who are never found wanting—their experience guarantees an acceptable and often perfect product, but as most of these authors and their work have already received comment in these pages, we must turn to other matters, pausing, however, for a moment to say that Bernadotte Schmitt's resumé of the period *From Versailles to Munich, 1918-1938*, was another masterly historic document, for the publication of which there were many requests; and that Charles Megan's *Murder in the Tower*, the latest developments by research in the story of the two young princes,

was published by the Club in 1940 as number XLII of the Club publications.

Between May 1938 and May 1939 death removed from us three valued members, Samuel John Duncan-Clark (June 12, 1938), Homer Hunt Cooper (January 28, 1939), and John McRae Cameron (January 2, 1939). The loss of these members brought us acute sorrow. A Committee, with George Packard as Chairman, appointed by the President to prepare a suitable memorial to Mr. Cameron, read its report on February 6, 1939. This little summary is so appropriately done that we are fain to quote here some of its phraseology:

“John McRae Cameron was one of the finest characters and best loved men that ever graced our Club’s presidential chair. In his profession he attained most of the possible honors, and was President of the Chicago Bar Association in 1924. . . . He possessed an inflexible character, relieved by a trenchant humor, was an omnivorous reader, and his mind and intellectual sympathies were always on the alert. . . . This Club knows well the literary acumen shown by his many papers. He was well known as a writer and speaker on public affairs. A fine and loyal citizen, he could be counted on in any emergency. Mr. Cameron knew not how to compromise with any man or measure that did not conform to his very strict ideals of fair human conduct. His scorn for the trivial was intense and yet he liked to be and was one of the most companionable of men. We, who remember his graphic comments at our dinners and his dry wit and unusual wisdom displayed in all his Club relations, shall probably miss him most of any of the circles to which he belonged. He was a great lover of books and a most appreciative collector of rare editions. . . . We who are left are glad that he lived so long and so fully—that he was one of us—and so modestly and faithfully filled the niche in Nature’s economy to which his rare achievements entitled him. . . . To have known him as we knew him was indeed a privilege that makes more heavy our sense that he has left us. To realize that he loved us as much as we loved him is the one assuaging factor in our separation.”