CHAPTER VII

BESIDES the notable occurrences of the seasons of 1884–1885, and 1885–1886, when we occupied rooms on the fourth, then the top floor, of Portland Block, that were related in the last chapter, there are a few others that should be here chronicled. One of these is the striking effect of an impromptu speech made by Dr. Emil G. Hirsch who was called upon to say a few words after Dr. Charles Gilman Smith had delivered his inaugural address as president on October 6, 1884. The substance of the speech has not been recorded. No reporter was present to take it down. I distinctly recall the impression that it made upon the one hundred and three members who were present and who listened in spell-bound amazement and delight, to the clean-cut, polished sentences, each one of which, spoken without the slightest hesitation, was as perfect in form and diction as though it had been carefully thought out and put into shape by the expenditure of painstaking care in searching for just the right words to express the speaker's thoughts, and in selecting after many trials, the arrangement of the phrases best calculated to secure their effective presentation. Though Dr. Hirsch had been a member for nearly three years, had edited and read an "Informal"—the name used to designate a group of short papers by several contributors—and had taken part from time to time in "Conversations" on various subjects, this was the first occasion on which his fellow members were made

aware of his phenomenal gift of verbal expression. We knew that he was a man of uncommonly brilliant intellect and that he was in high repute as a speaker, but the extraordinary literary facility that he displayed came to most of us as a revelation. The favorable comments made at the time were very many. Greatly to our regret Dr. Hirsch resigned in March, 1913, having for some years prior thereto found it difficult to attend the meetings as his cares and responsibilities increased.

During the season of 1884–1885 two ladies' night meetings were held. Both of these are memorable. The first one was held on December 1, 1884, and was attended by ninety-eight members and about a hundred lady guests. Undeterred by the sequel to the reception and dinner given by the club to Matthew Arnold in the preceding January, Franklin MacVeagh read a paper on the distinguished English poet and essayist, which was not only an appreciative tribute to him as a man and as an author, but, by inevitable inference, though not by direct expression, was meant to remove any possible taint that might, however unjustly, be imputed to the club as a consequence of the famous hoax related in the last chapter. An amusing incident occurred when in this paper MacVeagh used the phrase: "Nature, ever abundant, is never superfluous." Edward Isham who was afflicted with a distressingly large and heavy paunch, and was standing and leaning on his chair as he listened, could not resist making the forcible comment: "A damned lie!" These words were uttered sotto voce but in such clear tones that they were plainly heard by all the assembled members and guests, much to their delight.

Presentation of Portraits

At the second ladies' night, which was held on Monday, March 23, 1885—when the club was just ten days more than eleven years old—a loan collection of paintings by noted artists and unknown amateurs was hung upon the walls of the club rooms. The exercises consisted of presentation speeches on behalf of the donors of portraits of two of our ex-presidents, Judge Charles Burrall Lawrence, and Edwin Channing Larned. Both were painted by Lawrence Carmichael Earle. The portrait of Judge Lawrence was given to us by the artist; that of Mr. Larned, by the members of his family. Mr. Earle was for many years the best-known painter resident in Chicago, and was one of the few artists whose names appear upon our membership rolls. He removed to New York about 1890 and lived there until about 1913. Thereafter until his death in 1921, at the age of about seventy-five, he made his home in Grand Rapids, Michigan. To the last he kept his interest in the club as frequent letters to the secretary attested.

The club rooms in Portland Block were excellently adapted to our needs and had only one marked disadvantage—the invasion of smoke from neighboring chimneys was so constant and in such volume that the struggle to keep the furniture, carpets and draperies decently clean, though never-ending, was quite hopeless. The location, however, was so ideal that despite this drawback, it was with regret that we faced the necessity of moving when the owner of the building announced his intention to add two stories to it, and declined to renew our lease. The Art Institute was then contemplating the erection of the building at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and

Van Buren Street that it occupied for six years, and which, since 1893, has been the home of the Chicago Club. As the plans designed by John Wellborn Root, who was one of our early and well-beloved members, were for a building somewhat larger than the immediate needs of the Art Institute required, the trustees made the club an offer to furnish us with quarters in the new building, if and when it should be erected, provided we would take a lease for ten years. At the meeting of the club held on March 30, 1885, General Alexander C. McClurg, the chairman of the committee on rooms and finance, presented a report in favor of accepting the offer, and was by the club authorized to do so. The arrangements for erecting the building were not completed until the following year, and not until March 15, 1886, did the committee of which Walter Cranston Larned was then the chairman, lay before the club alternative plans for dividing into rooms the space we were to occupy.

As our lease of the rooms in Portland Block ran only until the end of April and the new rooms would not be ready for our occupancy before the autumn of 1887, we were much pleased when the Union League Club offered us the hospitality of a room in its new building on Jackson Boulevard for our meetings scheduled for May and June, 1886. It was found, however, that the large banquet hall on the upper floor of Kinsley's restaurant on Adams Street between Dearborn and Clark Streets was better suited to our use than any room that the Union League Club could furnish us. Therefore, as we faced the prospect of being without a home, not merely for two months but also for the entire season of 1886–1887, it was decided to

hold the meetings at Kinsley's save on evenings when the banquet hall would not be available, and to take advantage of the kindness of the Union League Club on such occasions only.

An episode that occurred in the last year of our occupation of the Portland Block rooms is happily unique in the club's history. Although the reading room was supplied with an attractive lot of periodicals, and all the rooms were kept open to the members on week days from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the evening, extensive use of them was made by only one member, a lawyer whose fortunes were at a very low ebb. When complaints began to come in from other members that magazines they wished to read had been taken from the rooms and were not always returned and that some were mutilated by the abstraction of illustrations, suspicion naturally fell upon the member who made the most frequent use of the rooms. Although it was not proved that he ever carried any of them away, it *was* found that he was in the habit of using the rooms as an office for the transaction of business with non-members, and for this abuse of his privilege, the chairman on rooms and finance "after due investigation," so the record states, moved that his name be dropped from the rolls. When this motion came up for action on April 26, 1886, at the last meeting held in Portland Block, it was withdrawn by the proposer, and the resignation of the offending member was presented and promptly accepted, thus closing an incident that is regrettable from every point of view.

After this meeting our lease still had four days to run. This was ample for the orderly and careful removal of the

club's belongings, and arrangements to have them taken away on the following day had been duly made. As I was then an officer of the Northwestern National Bank and was not free during business hours, I dropped in at the club rooms about eight-thirty o'clock the next morning to give instructions to the janitor. My dismay as well as my surprise may well be imagined, when I found that, to oblige the owner of the building who wanted to complete the addition at the earliest moment possible, Walter Larned had given permission for the workmen to begin the work of demolition immediately after we had vacated our rooms the night before. It was a pretty sight that greeted my eyes when I arrived upon the scene of destruction. Not only were the rooms dismantled, but our property had been roughly handled; books, periodicals, table ware, and all small articles had been thrust into open barrels, carpets had been torn up, portieres and window draperies had been taken down, and all had been thrown in a pile on the floor without wrapping or other protection. The plastering was being torn from the walls and ceilings, the air was thick with lime dust and a deep coating of it lay over everything. With difficulty I managed to rescue the archives, the record books, and most of the other property that was in my especial charge. Some things, however, including the remaining copies of early club publications, could not be found and were doubtless thrown out with the rubbish.

My duties at the bank made it necessary for me to hurry away as soon as I could reclaim the effects of which I was the custodian. Later in the day the men sent by Mr. Larned to take away the furnishings and put them in

storage until we should again have use for them, extracted all but the large round table that stood in the reading room. That they overlooked. How they managed to do so is an unfathomable mystery. Of all our possessions it was the most imposing. And, though the mantle of dust in the fast disappearing rooms was very thick, it was not thick enough to hide an object so conspicuous. Nevertheless the bulky table was not carried away. Then, taking it for granted that the abandonment was intentional, the owner of the building placed it in the hands of a dealer in second-hand furniture, for sale. It remained in his shop until, by a happy chance, as we were fitting up the rooms in the Art Institute Building, one of our members happened to see it as he was passing by. Surprised and puzzled to find it there, he telephoned to Bryan Lathrop, then the chairman of the committee on rooms and finance, who made haste to retrieve it and had it conveyed to the club's new quarters. When we took possession of the rooms a month later, we found the table placed at the eastern end of the reading room, where, as it was a familiar belonging, it helped to impart a home-like aspect to the surroundings.

During the five years of our occupancy of the Portland Block quarters, the names of many good fellows were added to our membership roll. Of these thirteen were still with us when we rounded out our fiftieth year, seven on the resident and six on the non-resident list. In the order in which they were enrolled these are, Cyrus H. McCormick, December, 1881; Henry S. Boutell, March, 1882; Rev. George Batchelor, and John J. Glessner, May, 1883; Dr. Charles G. Fuller, December, 1883; Lyman

J. Gage, February, 1884; Paul Shorey, October, 1884; Charles Lawrence Hutchinson, November, 1884; Dr. Edward Parker Davis, January, 1885; William M. Salter, March, 1885; Edward P. Bailey, and Thomas Dent, March, 1886; and Rev. Dr. Charles Frederick Bradley, April, 1886. Of those who were enrolled during the five years and have since passed away, several were so closely identified with the club that we may fittingly interrupt our narrative at this point, and recall them to memory.

First on the list in time of election we find the names of the Rt. Rev. Samuel Fallows and Charles Davisson Hamill. During the ten years from 1881 to 1891 when Bishop Fallows remained in the club he was often at the meetings and was always ready with a contribution to the literary exercises when called upon. When he dropped out because the demands upon his time and strength prevented him from availing himself of the privileges of the club he did so with much regret. Mr. Hamill was a devoted member, constant in his attendance for many years until he was compelled by circumstances to resign. He was distinctly a clubable man and had many close friends among his fellow members. It is impossible to think of the club as it was during the twenty years when he was with us, without a vision of his cheery face and genial manner, which made him ever welcome at our gatherings.

Another of the old-timers who rarely missed a meeting so long as he was a resident of Chicago, was George Philip Welles. He was the principal of one of the city high schools, a man of marked individuality, a pleasant companion, and a clever writer who entertained and often

amused us by his gentle cynicism. Two others who should be mentioned are Porter P. Heywood who was elected in 1881, and Robert J. Hendricks who joined the club in the following year. Both of them formed the habit of coming to the meetings regularly, and during the next decade there were few of our gatherings when at least one of them was not present.

In January, 1882, Judge Henry W. Blodgett was made a member of the club. None of those who were privileged to know him well can ever forget the impression made by his sterling integrity of mind, by the penetrating clarity of his vision, by his judicial poise, and the extent of his learning. Even more impossible is it to forget the impression made by the breadth of his human sympathy, the depth of his understanding, and his capacity for enduring friendship. To have the friendship of such a man was indeed a high honor. Living in Waukegan he could not come to our meetings nearly as often as he wished and as we wished very much; but he was ever ready to take his part in the literary exercises, and it was always a gala night when he favored us with one of his thoughtful and well-written papers.

Another jurist who was elected a few months later in the same year (1882) was for thirty-four years one of our most devoted members. As he was with us until 1916, merely to mention the name of Judge Henry Varnum Freeman is enough to bring him to mind. His place in our affections must endure as long as memory lasts. Not only did we hold him in high esteem for his many manly qualities and for his unswerving uprightness in all the relations of life, but we were deeply attached to him as a

friend and comrade. In a very special sense he seems a part of the club, as we look back upon it; and we felt that as long ago as in 1898–1899 when we elected him as our president for that season.

A few of us will recall William LeBaron Jenney who was elected a member on January 27, 1882, but made the mistake of resigning on October 26, 1896. Why he dropped out we never knew. We liked him and apparently he liked to meet with us, for he came to the Monday evening gatherings with much regularity. As an architect his standing was very high. We were fond of him as a man and proud of his professional attainments. For nearly fifteen years we tried to let him see that we regarded him as "one of the elect." Doubtless he had a good reason for resigning, but we were sorry to lose him from our number. The name of James St. Clair Boal also brings to mind the pleasing personality of one of our members who was deeply attached to the club. He was elected in March, 1882, and was greatly missed by his fellow members when he died five years later.

Five members who were admitted on March 2, 1883, form a notable group. They were Charles Sumner Holt, Rev. Simon J. McPherson, D.D., Lorenzo M. Johnson, Rev. George Clement Noyes, and Judge Arba N. Waterman. All of them were among the club's staunch adherents and ardent supporters. Mr. Johnson was not as actively identified with the club as were the others, for the reason that his duties as president of the Mexican National Railway Company took him away from the city much of the time. Dr. McPherson also was not free to come to the meetings regularly. Mr. Holt, however,

always came when he could. As he lived until only six years ago, most of us knew him well and will long cherish his memory. He was one of the tried and true who ever gave freely of time and strength and means to help his fellow man and, if possible, to make the world a better place to live in. Would there were more of his kind. Judge Waterman, as nearly all of us know, was also a man of marked individuality, so marked that to convey an adequate impression of him in words for those who have come into the club since his time, would be a difficult undertaking. Suffice it here to say that we who knew him well do not think of him as he was in his last years, when, broken by senile decay, his faculties became clouded. Instead, we recall the former soldier who had distinguished himself in the Civil War, the high-minded judge, the keen student of human nature, nervously high-strung, alert, interested in many different things, always most companionable, whom we were glad to have as a fellow member and glad to choose our president for the season of 1903–1904.

What I have to say about Dr. Noyes, and also about Samuel S. Greeley, Rev. Clinton Locke, and Frederic W. Root, will appear in later chapters, so I merely mention their names and pass to that of Frederick Greeley who was elected on May 4, 1883, and for nearly thirty years thereafter was one of our best beloved members. Few of those who have been enrolled in all of the forty-nine years since the club was formed have done as much as he did to enliven our meetings. In a very special way he was the very embodiment of wholesome fun. Where serious things were concerned he could be serious, though not too

serious. But in playtime he declined to look upon us as a coterie of solemn seniors; and glad we were of the laughter that his clever sallies so often evoked. He was a good fellow, in all that the phrase connotes, big bodied and big hearted; and we were filled with sadness when he broke down in health and passed away at the early age of fifty-seven years.

Leslie Lewis and David Brainerd Lyman, who were elected on November 30, 1883, were among the men of solid worth whom we must always revere and honor. Henry Baldwin Stone, who was elected at the same meeting, and Henry Holmes Belfield and Joseph Lyman Silsbee who were admitted on February 29, 1884, were also devoted members who by their presence and active participation helped much to make our meetings enjoyable. Mr. Silsbee, to our regret, was obliged for financial reasons to give up his membership a few years before he died.

On November 29, 1884, three members were elected whose names should have a conspicuous place in the annals of the club. One of them, Charles L. Hutchinson, was still enrolled on our resident list when we rounded out our first fifty years. The other two were Franklin Harvey Head and Frank Seward Johnson. Of Mr. Head I shall have more to say in a later chapter. Dr. Frank Johnson's death is so recent that many of us can hardly realize that he has been taken away. It is not too much to say that every one of the regular attendants at our meetings during the thirty-five years that he was with us regarded him as a personal friend. His capacity for friendship was one of his most salient traits and was the outcome of kindly feeling for and sympathetic understanding of all with whom

he came in contact. We loved Dr. Frank and miss him sadly. And he missed us when failing health caused him to give up his practice and to make his home in California during the greater part of his last years. The club has never had a more loyal member. Walter M. Howland and the Rev. Louis S. Osborne, who were elected at the same meeting, also had many friends in the club. As long as they resided in Chicago they came to our meetings as often as they could, and both kept their interest in our organization undiminished to the end of their lives.

William Adam Montgomery who was elected in May, 1885, and Fletcher Stewart Bassett who was elected in November of that year will also be well remembered by some of our members, though both of them died in 1895. So too, will William H. Ray, a highly esteemed member who was elected in 1885 but lived only four years thereafter. There are on the roll the names of other men of note in the community who might be mentioned, but it is the history of the club that I am trying to tell, and it is only the more active members whose forms fill out the picture as the bygone days are brought to mind.

The banquet hall at Kinsley's was a very large room. What its dimensions were I do not know, but it cannot have been much less than fifty feet wide by sixty feet in length. The first meeting that we held in it is notable in the annals of the club. It was one never to be forgotten by any of the fifty-two members—six of whom are still living, though two of them are no longer members—who gathered there on the evening of May 6, 1886, to listen to a paper by Franklin Harvey Head. Mr. Head was then a comparatively new member, having been elected on

November 29, 1884. Though he had at once entered into the spirit of the club and had become a constant attendant at the meetings, and his attractive personal qualities had quickly gained for him popularity and had endeared him to his fellow members, his literary attainment was still an unknown quantity when he began to read his exposition of "Shakespeare's Insomnia and the Causes Thereof." The paper opened with the statement that "the lack of 'tired Nature's sweet restorer' is rapidly becoming the chronic terror of all men of active life who have passed the age of thirty-five or forty years." Asserting that it was the fashion to attribute this to the high pressure of modern life, he said, "As the maxim 'there is nothing new under the sun' is of general application, it may be of interest to investigate if an exception occurs in the case of sleeplessness; if it be true that among our ancestors, before the days of working steam and electricity the glorious sleep of youth was prolonged through all one's three or four score years." Finding no answer to this question in the medical books of three centuries ago, he turned to Shakespeare's dramas for light upon it, as, he remarked, "we would upon any other question" of the poet's time. Then, having cited Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes to prove that "no man writes other than his own experience; that consciously or otherwise an author describes himself in the characters he draws," he went on to say that, as Shakespeare's dramas are "the book of human life, . . . if insomnia had prevailed in or before his time, in his pages we shall find it duly set forth. If he had suffered, if the 'fringed curtains of his eyes were all the night withdrawn,' we shall find his dreary experiences—his hours of pathetic

misery, his nights of desolation—voiced by the tongues of his men and women." Following up this thought he proceeded to demonstrate by copious quotations that "no other author has written so feelingly, so appreciatingly as Shakespeare on the subject of sleep and its loss," or has made it more plain that broken rest comes more often from care and anxiety than from physical ailment. The conclusion Mr. Head drew from this was that Shakespeare wrote, "not 'as imagination bodies forth the formes of things unknown,' but as one who, in words burning with indestructible life, lays open to us the sombre record of what was experience before it was song."

In form this first third of the paper was that of a critical essay, not in any way suggesting that its import was other than serious, despite the introduction of an occasional fantastic phrase such as "words burning with indestructible life" which I have just quoted. Nor was the impression at once dispelled when the author gravely said it had occurred to him that the Southampton Manuscripts in the British Museum, a series of papers recently discovered and not yet published, might make it possible to determine the causes of Shakespeare's suffering from loss of sleep, notwithstanding the meagerness of the information respecting his life and habits that had come down to us. But, when he read what purported to be a letter from the chief curator of the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, stating that none of the papers in the Southampton Shakespeare Collection could be loaned, as to let them go out of their charge would be contrary to the regulations of the Museum, but copies of the papers which were "principally letters written to

Shakespeare by various people, and which after his death in some way came into the possession of the Earl of Southampton" could be had for £3-3s, exclusive of postage, the real character of the missive began to dawn upon his listeners. And, when the name of the signer, "John Barnacle, 10th Ass't Sub-Secretary," was read, they began to titter, and then broke into open laughter as it flashed upon their consciousness that they were being regaled with an exceptionally clever literary skit. The suddenness of the change from gravity to gayety was one of the most sensational transitions that I can recall. It made a deep impression upon every one present. From that moment Mr. Head's reputation as a writer was made so far as the club members were concerned. The first part of the paper had commanded interested attention. The remainder was received with abundant evidence of keen appreciation and enjoyment. The fictitious letters purporting to be from lawyers pressing the bard for the payment of an overdue bill; from a pawnbroker warning him that, unless certain pledged property were redeemed forthwith the town crier would notify the sale thereof; from a broker in regard to a loan against stock of the Globe Theater which was rapidly declining in market value; from one Mordecai Shylock notifying him that other shares of Globe Theater stock pledged to him as collateral had been sold but as the proceeds had not sufficed to discharge the debt, he made demand for the payment of the balance; from the business manager of the theater reciting dissensions among the actors and supes; from a clergyman from Stratford-upon-Avon; from Coke and Dogberry, solicitors for Mistress Anne

Page, threatening an action for breach of promise of marriage; and from Sir Walter Raleigh—all couched in the phraseology of the early seventeenth century—were highly relished and their fame was soon spread abroad.

Although the sequel had nothing to do with the club, the tale would not be complete without here recording that in response to many requests for copies of the paper, Mr. Head had it printed for private distribution. The recipients were so delighted with it that it soon became widely known, and thus it was brought to the attention of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., who persuaded Mr. Head to let them publish it, which they did in 1887, in association with the Chicago firm, S. A. Maxwell & Co, issuing an edition of 1000 copies which, to quote from the announcement circular, contained "an additional letter bearing on a very important controversy, being from Lord Bacon to Shakespeare, serving to throw light on the relationship between these two great contemporaries and the real author of the plays." Then the amazing thing happened. Not only one, but many reviewers took the little brochure to be a serious and important contribution to Shakespearean literature. Few of them, if any, suspected its true character; nor did literary men from all over the world, some of them scholars of eminence who were attracted to the book by the favorable reviews and by Dr. O. W. Nixon's glowing editorial printed in The Inter Ocean in which he expatiated on the strikes in the theater. Greatly excited by the discovery of such treasure-trove, many of them wrote Mr. Head most enthusiastic letters, congratulating him upon his remarkable find, his acumen in making the discovery, and his charming

presentation of it. Incidentally most of them pressed him for further information. In the course of time it is to be presumed that the truth began to dawn upon them. Yet such letters continued to reach Mr. Head for more than two years after the book was first published. Once, in the early nineties, when I called upon him at his office, he opened a large drawer in his desk and showed me some hundreds of them. The drawer was literally crammed full. "What do you suppose the writers of these letters think of me?" he asked. Answering the question himself, he then remarked: "I imagine they regard me as lacking in ordinary courtesy. And yet, how could I answer any of them?"

Besides the meeting when Mr. Head was the entertainer, six more were held at Kinsley's before the season of 1885–1886 came to an end. At its close the resident members numbered one hundred and ninety-eight. One of these, Lieut. General Philip H. Sheridan, was an honorary member, the others we then designated as "regulars."