CHAPTER III

AT the meeting held on October 4, 1875, the first of the third season, the committee on rooms and finance reported that rooms Nos. 38 and 39 on the fourth floor of the American Express Building, No. 74 Monroe street (now No. 23 West Monroe street) between State and Dearborn streets had been leased for the use of the club until May 1, 1877, at a yearly rental of five hundred dollars. These rooms, which were at the south end of the building, were of equal size, each about forty feet in length by about twenty-five feet in width, and were connected by a door near the north end of the partition that separated them. Each had a door at the north end opening upon the entrance corridor; and just within the doors each had a closet partitioned off, making the rooms slightly irregular in shape. In an address made by William M. R. French at the twenty-fifth anniversary meeting in 1899, he said, "The securing of the first permanent rooms, as I remember, was a great event in the history of the club. For the furnishing the committee spent all or nearly all the funds we had, before it reported to the club at all." From the report of the treasurer made at the end of the season, we discover that the cost of fitting up the rooms was $1,552.87, whereas the balance carried over from the preceding year was only $401.16, thus leaving $1,151.71 to come out of the dues for the current year. The annual dues were then only ten dollars and there was no entrance fee. It required careful figur-

ing, therefore, to avoid a deficit at the end of the season, but by postponing payment of three months' rent until October when the next semi-annual dues were payable, the other bills were paid and a balance of $65.97 was left in the treasury.

The rooms were ready for occupancy on Saturday, November 22, 1875, when fifty-one members gathered in them to celebrate their opening. In what way they celebrated does not appear of record, the minutes merely stating that "the meeting adjourned at 11:30 P. M." Formal literary exercises there were none; and there is no record that the committee provided refreshments of a material sort. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the evening was spent in mutual felicitation while inspecting the wall paper with which the rooms were bedecked and the chairs and tables in what has been called the Eastlake gothic style, which had been made to order by one Mr. Bates, a cabinet maker then in high repute in the city. Two of these tables we still retain, but their appearance has been transformed by staining them dark brown. The fitting up of one of the rooms—the east room, called by us the smoking room, which we used as a gathering place, while the other was the assembly room where the meetings were held—was in the especial charge of Mr. Mac Veagh. The writer's recollection is that it had a soft gray-green paper on the walls, and that the west room was done in blue. The east room had a fireplace in the middle of the east wall, and about this the members were wont to gather as they dropped in to the meetings. The city was then but a small town compared with what it is today, and all the members not only knew each other, but they knew each

other well. And in the words of Dr. James Nevins Hyde, "few ever enjoyed club rooms more than we did ours in those days." They were conveniently located, and until the increase in the membership made it necessary to have larger quarters, they answered all our needs.

The season opened auspiciously, and at the four meetings held at the Sherman House before the rooms of the club were ready, the papers were of marked brilliance and had stimulated the interest of the members to a high pitch. When the rooms were occupied, and at last the club had a home, the enthusiasm became very great. There was an immediate increase in the attendance at the meetings. At several of them nearly half of the resident members were present, and the average for the season was nearly thirty per cent. As the members were among the busiest men in the busy city and the meetings were held once a week from the first of October to the end of June—there were no golf clubs in the United States in those days—this is a remarkably high average.

The early meetings in the new rooms were somewhat protracted, as, after the papers had been read, there were long discussions of proposed changes in the constitution and by-laws, which led finally to the embodying of all the rules and regulations in a revised constitution that was adopted on March 6, 1876. This was an improvement on the old order, but it did not settle one moot question that was first raised by Edward G. Mason when, at the meeting on November 16, 1874, he proposed that the name of the club should be changed from The Chicago Literary Club to The Marquette Club. Nothing came of this at the time, although a number of the members disliked the name of

the club, feeling that it was too pretentious and not sufficiently distinctive. But no one was able to suggest a better one, all things considered. Mason and MacVeagh were the most insistent upon the desirability of a change, and both favored the imparting of what they characterized as local color, by naming the club after the famous Jesuit missionary and explorer, whom they claimed to have been the first literary man to make Chicago his dwelling place. But the members generally were not impressed by the notion that Marquette was a literary man, nor did they accept the fact that he was compelled to camp here during one winter, as constituting him a resident of Chicago. And there were those who insisted that The Marquette Club sounds too much like The Market Club to connote "literary and æsthetic culture."

Mason renewed the attack in a contribution to an "Informal" or group of short, anonymous papers read by Dr. John C. Burroughs at the meeting on June 3, 1876. This was followed by a discussion of the subject in the course of which Mason argued in favor of The Marquette Club, while others suggested the following names as preferable and equally or more appropriate: The Club; The Chicago Lyceum; The Kinzie Club; The LaSalle Club; The Sphinx Club; The Lawrence Club (in honor of Judge Lawrence, then the president); The Illinois Club; The Thackeray Club; The Monroe Club; The Garrick; The Lotos Club; The Irving Club; The Chicago Radical Club; The Open Ballot Club; The Great American Excelsior Club; The Miralac Club; The What's in a Name Club; The Club Which Is Too Modest To Say What It Is; The Mayor Colvin Club; The Belles Lettres Club; The Goodenough

Club; The Brown Club; The Amateur Club; The Indian Club; The Club for the Aggregation and Fostering of Old Citizens Regardless of Qualification; and, finally, The Marquette Eye and Ear Infirmary. Mason took this chaffing in good part, though he continued to protest that The Chicago Literary Club had a most unpleasantly boastful sound that jarred upon his sensitive ears.

Young though the club was, by this time it had reached a place in the regard of most of its active members that made the thought of a change in its name repugnant to them. While the name had not become so much a part of the club as it is now after the lapse of half a century, even then associations had attached to it. The name had not made the club; but it was plainly recognized that already the club had put its own impress upon the name. Gradually and without any heralding by the press, save the account of the first annual dinner and the printing of the paper on "Myths and Miracles" read by Dr. Kaufmann Kohler at the sixth regular meeting held on October 19, 1874, it became known among the men of intellectual taste in the city that the meetings of the club were no ordinary gatherings. Membership in an organization that included many of the most eminent men in the community was eagerly sought and was justly regarded as a high honor. But from the first it was perceived that it would be easier to maintain the standard that had been set, if candidates were not permitted to make application direct, but were proposed by the members; the theory being that so far as possible no one should be admitted who would not strengthen the club. This led to such rigid scrutiny of the character and qualifications of all whose

names were proposed and to the rejection of so many candidates, that men of unimpeachable fitness sometimes hesitated to let their names be presented, and the club acquired the reputation of being the most exclusive and difficult to gain access to of any in the city.

Such being the case one might suppose that all of those who were within the fold would have prized their membership privilege too highly to forfeit it; yet at the end of the second season, Secretary Mason was obliged to report that the names of twelve members had been dropped from the rolls for failure to pay their dues. The majority of these had not attended the meetings and therefore had never become really identified with the club. Some there were, however, who were perhaps entitled to more consideration than they received. That is certainly true in the case of Francis Fisher Browne to whose initiative more than that of any other man, as has been set forth in the preceding chapter, the founding of the club was due. As was most fitting, his name was placed upon the roll of members at the first preliminary meeting, but he was then seriously ill and unable to make any response. A short time after he was taken to the South to recuperate, and he was still absent from the city and in ignorance of what was done, when on October 1, 1875, his name was taken from the roll. Not until some time later did he return to Chicago and learn that he had been made a member and then dropped from the club. Then, feeling too deeply hurt to make complaint, he said nothing. A less sensitive person would have secured reinstatement at once, and it is greatly to be regretted that Mr. Browne did not make the effort, for there can be no doubt that the injustice done to

him was unwitting and without knowledge of his illness and absence. Not until many years afterward did the facts become known, and then to the credit of the club be it said that it honored itself by offering such reparation as lay in its power and making him an honorary member as of March 13, 1874.

From the men whose names were submitted during the second session, forty-four were elected and all of them accepted and qualified save one, a clergyman who declined because he could not be free on the evening when the club held its meetings. Among the forty-three who accepted were many whom we hold in warm regard, including four, Dr. Charles Adams, Joseph Adams, Owen F. Aldis, and Robert Todd Lincoln, who, happily, were still with us at the end of our first fifty years. To each one of the thirty-nine who are gone, I feel tempted to pay at least the passing tribute of the mention of his name. But some were more intimately connected with the club than were the others, and of these only shall I speak. The earliest elected was Charles True Adams, a brilliant young lawyer whose untimely death was deeply lamented when he passed away on February 28, 1877. George Clinton Clark, who was elected at the same meeting as Mr. Adams, was another member whose life was cut short before his time. It is thirty-seven years since he died, yet I have a vivid recollection of the grief we all felt when he was taken from us. Murry Nelson, Norman Williams, and General George W. Smith, who were elected on October 18, 1875, were deeply attached to the club and were among the regular attendants. Their names and the names of John Crerar, John G. Shortall, James A. Hunt,

Walter Cranston Larned, George L. Paddock, Bryan Lathrop Bronson, Peck, John W. Root, John J. Herrick, George E. Adams, and Benjamin D. Magruder call up faces and awaken precious memories of the days that were. Fewer of us, perhaps, recall George P. A. Healey, the eminent portrait painter, since much of his life was spent in Paris. And the Rev. Dr. Samuel S. Harris, though he was a devoted member, was soon called away to become the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Michigan. More perhaps will recall that most delightfully genial and always mentally alert Englishman, the Rev. Brooke Herford. He was with us for a few years only, but in those years he made a deep impression on his fellow members. And who among us that knew him can ever forget James Sager Norton? To those whose memories do not reach back to his day—his life came to an end in September, 1896—it is not easy to describe his rare personality. He was indeed sui generis, yet without any trace of eccentricity. It was his unfailing courtesy, his gracious manner, his inimitably quiet way of speaking, and his flashing wit free from the least trace of anything save pure fun, that marked him as different from other men. But Norton was not merely the member whom we were always eager to hear when we could persuade him to address us, or when something chanced to bring forth a sally that enraptured us at the time and would evoke joyous ripples of laughter as often as it was recalled: in all that goes to make a man, —character, serious aims, devotion to duty, professional standing, thoughtful kindness to his fellows, steadfastness, and capacity for friendship, he measured up to the highest standard. The membership rolls of the club

include the names of many who have shed lustre upon it but none who will be dearer to us than James Norton—our James, for somehow he seemed in a very special and intimate way to be an integral part of the club, and it can never again be quite the same as when he was with us, for there was only one James Norton, and there can never be another.

Notwithstanding the large number of members elected during the third season, at its close the resident membership, which stood at 108 at the end of the second season, had increased only to 128. Twelve members had been dropped, eight had removed from the city and were transferred to the non-resident, then designated as the honorary, list; five, four of whom were clergymen, had resigned because of inability to attend the meetings. Two had died, William E. Doggett and General Joseph Dana Webster. Both of these men were of engaging personality and of distinction in the community; they were devoted to the club and by their presence at its meetings had helped much to make them enjoyable. Their loss was keenly felt. The memorial of Mr. Doggett, made at the special meeting held at the time of his death, records that he was a gentleman whose courtly bearing, literary cultivation, catholicity of thought, refinement of feeling, and exquisite sensibility to art peculiarly fitted him for the companionship of a club "the object of which is not less to foster friendship than to encourage intellectual improvement." To this characterization I am unable to add anything as I did not become a member of the club until a year later and it was not my privilege to know Mr. Doggett. For the same reason I can give no personal impression of Gen-

eral Webster. I well remember the expressions of admiration by those who did know these men that the mention of their names was sure to evoke. And this seems a fitting place to insert a brief biographical sketch of General Webster that Horace White sent to the club a short time before his death. In the course of a long talk about the early days of the club which I had with him when he made his last visit to Chicago, I told him that it was my intention to write a history of our organization and he offered this account of the life of his old friend and business associate as his contribution to the work.

"General Webster was born in Old Hampton, New Hampshire, on August 25, 1811, a son of Josiah Webster who was pastor at Hampton from 1808 until his death in 1837. The son was graduated at Dartmouth in 1832, and read law in Newburyport, Massachusetts, but became a clerk in the engineer and war offices in Washington, was made a United States civil engineer in 1835, and on July 7, 1838, entered the army as a second lieutenant of topographical engineers. He served throughout the Mexican War, was promoted to first lieutenant on July 14, 1849, and captain on March 3, 1853, but resigned on April 7, 1854, and removed to Chicago, where he engaged in business. He was president of the commission that perfected the remarkable system of sewerage for the city, and also planned and executed the operations whereby the grade of a large part of the city was made from two to eight feet higher, whole blocks and buildings being raised by jack-screws while new foundations were inserted. At the opening of the Civil War, he entered the service of the state, taking charge of the construction of fortifications

at Cairo, Illinois, and Paducah, Kentucky, in April, and on June 1, 1861, was appointed an additional paymaster of volunteers with the rank of major. On February 1, 1862, he became colonel of the First Illinois Light Artillery. He was chief of General Grant's staff for several months, was present at the capture of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, and at Shiloh was also chief of artillery. At the close of the first day's fight at Shiloh he occupied with all the available artillery the ridge that covered Pittsburg Landing, thus checking the hitherto victorious Confederates. He received the highest commendation in General Grant's official report, and continued to be his chief of staff, until, in October, 1862, he was detailed by the War Department to make a survey of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. He was appointed a brigadier general of volunteers on November 29, 1862, and, after serving for some time as military governor of Memphis, Tennessee, and as superintendent of military railroads, was again General Grant's chief of staff in the Vicksburg campaign, and from 1864 until the close of hostilities he held the same post under General Sherman. He was with General George H. Thomas at the battle of Nashville. On March 13, 1865, he was given the brevet of major general of volunteers for faithful and meritorious service during the war. He resigned on November 6, 1865, and returned to Chicago, where he remained until his death on March 12, 1876.

"General Webster was assessor of internal revenue in Chicago from 1869 until 1872, and then assistant United States treasurer there until July, 1872, when he became the collector of internal revenue. He was also chairman

of the executive committee of the National Kansas Committee in 1856, of which George W. Dole was treasurer, H. B. Hurd, secretary, and Horace White, assistant secretary. This was an organization formed at a National Convention held in Buffalo, New York, in July 1856, to support the Free State movement in Kansas. Its headquarters were in Chicago. General Webster was a man of attractive presence, genial manners and sterling character. At the time when I came to Chicago to make it my place of residence, at the beginning of 1854, he was one of the foremost citizens."

The election of officers and committees for the fourth season was held on June 10, 1876. Dr. Hosmer A. Johnson was chosen as president; Edward G. Mason, Dr. William F. Poole, and Daniel L. Shorey were made vice-presidents; and William Eliot Furness, secretary and treasurer. As the season came to an end it was felt by all that it had been very successful and enjoyable. Several important innovations had been made. One of these, the serving of a collation on the evenings devoted to business has already been recounted. Another was the holding of a meeting every week instead of only once in a fortnight. Perhaps the most important of all was the change in the meeting night from Saturday to Monday. This was proposed at the April business meeting but action upon the constitutional amendment was postponed until the last meeting of the season, and a postal-card vote was taken to learn the individual preferences of the members. Although this showed a large majority in favor of Monday evenings, the change was opposed by a very insistent minority, and there was a prolonged discussion before the amendment

was adopted. The decision having at last been reached, the forty-seven members present sat down to a collation and then listened to Dr. Johnson's inaugural address. It is interesting to note that since that meeting no member has ever proposed the selection of another evening than Monday for our meetings. We recognize, of course, that some among us cannot always be free on that evening, yet no other seems at all likely to suit the most of us nearly so well.