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THE ATHENAEUM CLUB

A London Institution Numbering Many Great Men

THE Athenæum Club is peculiarly associated with the conception of eminence. It has been likened to a stage across which passes practically every distinguished figure in the higher walks of Church and State, art, science and literature. Bishops and judges, cabinet ministers and philosophers are its classical types, so that the club is in its way a synthesis of national intellect and responsibility. It is in popular tradition the common meeting-ground of the great, and, possibly—remembering what Lord Salisbury said about the fallibility of bishops at the umbrella-stand—the recreation-ground of their weaknesses.

Its illustrious record will be fitly celebrated, when its centenary comes in 1924, by a history now in preparation by Mr. Henry R. Tedder, until quite recently librarian and secretary of the club and the holder of those offices for a period of nearly half a century. This volume will not only deal fully with the foundation and development of the Athenæum and recall many picturesque details and anecdotes of its distinguished membership, but will be appropriately illustrated with reproduced prints relating to the history of its site and other relevant matters.

Some of the great Victorians who were members of the Anthenæum, as well as some of the changes which have taken place during the century of its existence, were recalled by Mr. Tedder (who was recently elected a life honorary member of the club) in an interview with a representative of the London Observer.

"The club was founded," he said, "in 1824, chiefly on the suggestion of John Wilson Croker, the famous antagonist of Macaulay. With him were associated Sir Walter Scott, Canning, Sir Thomas Lawrence, the president of the Royal Society at that time, and others, the idea being to unite persons of distinction in literature, science, the arts, and public service, so that they might have a common field of meeting.

"The first habitation of the club was in Waterloo place, where temporary rooms were taken until 1830, when the present house was built from the design of Decimus Burton. The site of the club was formerly occupied by Carlton House, the residence of George IV., both when regent and king.

"Carlton House extended right across the opening which now leads from Waterloo place to the Duke of York's Steps, and when it was pulled down the Athenæum was built on the site of one wing and the United Service Club on the other. The United Service was established for naval and military men after the great war with France, and is somewhat older than the Athenæum.

"Michael Faraday, the famous chemist, was the first secretary of the Athenæum, and occupied the post for about a year. He was followed by his cousin, Mr. Magrath, and next came Mr. J. C. Webster, who retired in 1889. I became librarian in 1874, and on Mr. Webster's retirement I took up the joint office of secretary and librarian.

"It is difficult to say who was not a member either at that time or at any time, for since the foundation of the club almost every person of eminence in science, literature, the arts and public service has been a member. The judges, bishops, Cabinet Ministers, and the Speaker of the House of Commons, are specially elected by the committee without a ballot by the club, and it would scarcely be possible to mention a judge or a bishop who has not been a member of the club during the last hundred years. Very many illustrious men have been specially elected to the club by the committee under the provisions of the well known Rule II.

"Most of the stories about the Athenæum and the bishops which are published occasionally as having their origin about a week ago were invented by that famous hoaxer Theodore Hook eighty or ninety years ago, and many other stories are equally apocryphal. Theodore Hook was not a teetotaller, and he had a favorite corner in the coffee-room which was afterwards known as Temperance Corner, from his frequent call for 'another glass of toast and water,' a beverage which resembled that drink only in color. It was in this corner that Theodore Hook told his stories.

"Wth the strange exception of Gladstone, nearly all the Cabinet Ministers of the past hundred years have been members of the club. Disraeli was a member, and so was his father. He used often to be seen, when he was Lord Beaconsfield, during the most exciting period of the Turkish War, coming to 'look at the newspapers.'

"Dickens and Thackeray were members, and one of the true club stories is that of their meeting accidentally in the hall shortly recollections. Of actors of an earlier period Young and Macready were members.

"Sir Frederick Leighton, whose bust is in the hall, was a conspicuous figure for many years, and used to dine here nearly every day. Millais was also a member, and most of the great artists. When the club was redecorated about thirty years ago, Sir L. Alma-Tadema generously devoted much of his time to superintending the work after his own designs. Under his instructions the marble on the grand staircase and in the hall was put up. Sir Edward Poynter at the same time presented designs for the decoration of the morning and coffee rooms.

"Smoking was first introduced into the club by Thackeray. Before his time such a thing as a cigar in the house was considered an outrage. A small room at the top of the house was first given up to smoking, and that had to suffice until 1868, when smoking and billiard rooms were built under the gardens. About twenty years ago a new story was put on the house, and that addition afforded the opportunity for a fine smoking-room to be built.

"Until quite recently there was no accommodation for guests at lunch and dinners, with the sole exception of the special dinner in the morning room, which have long been a feature of the club.

"We were the first club in the West End to introduce waitresses. That was during the early part of the war, when our men were volunteering for service. The experiment was at first looked upon with some suspicion, but ultimately it became very convenient, and we still retain some of the waitresses.

"The Athenaeum was one of the earliest clubs to install electric light, and for many years a couple of gas engines in one of the cellars furnished the current. In the hall may still be seen the identical ornamented pendants for the glass globes which at first contained oil lamps. Afterwards they were adapted to the use of gas, and later still to electric light. It was in front of Carlton House, a few feet away from the present entrance to the club, that in the year 1810 gas was first used for street lighting, as may be seen in an amusing caricature by Rowlandson which is preserved in the special gallery upstairs devoted to prints and drawings connected with the Athenaeum and the immediate neighborhood.

"With the exception of the new story the building today is the same outside as it was in 1830, and very little has been altered inside, the only change of importance being the introduction of a lift in one corner which involved a certain amount of rebuilding.

"The frieze which is a marked feature of the exterior of the building was copied from the marbles of the Parthenon. It was put up at the instance of John Wilson Croker, who, like John Forster, was 'a very harbitrary gent.' In those days, which were before the period when ice became easily obtainable by daily deliveries, the members wanted an ice house where ice could be stored during the winter for use in the summer. Croker, who had a fine artistic taste, insisted upon his proposal, whereupon Jekyll, the famous wit, wrote the lines:

I'm John Wilson Croker,
I do as I please;
They ask for an ice house,
I'll give 'em a frieze.

"For many years the committee have had the privilege of inviting a limited number of eminent Americans, foreigners and citizens from the overseas dominions to become honorary members of the club during their temporary residence in England. I can remember all the American ambassadors for nearly half a century, many of whom have been conspicuous figures at the club.

"A great feature of the Athenæum is its library, which contains about eighty thousand volumes. So great is its bulk that it overruns into nearly every part of the house. It is specially rich in books of reference, history, the fine arts, and large illustrated works. Many authors have contributed to it by gifts of their works, and it is much used as a library of reference and research."

AUTHORS' DEDICATIONS

Why do authors dedicate their works to certain people? In Shakspeare's time they did so because, of course, few books appeared which were not sponsored by some patron who, to the tune of sundry guineas, thought to build himself a niche in literary appreciation. In plain words he succumbed to his own vanity, and disguised it beneath an appearance of artistic discernment. Times have changed, however. The Dr. Johnson of today drives his motor car upon the receipts from motion picture and serial rights, and in dedicating a book confers rather than receives a

ly before Thackeray's death. One came down the staircase and the other out of the morning-room. As they met, one held out his hand to the other, and the long estrangement was at an end.

"Thackeray did some of his literary work in the library, where a corner is known as 'Macaulay's Corner,' that being his favorite seat. Almost all the great Victorians were members. Tennyson, like Gladstone, was an exception. Browning used to be a constant visitor, especially on ballot days. Herbert Spencer was a member and played billiards here. His trustees presented the club with his billiard cue. I remember Carlyle coming in, but, of course, I did not see him very often; and I also remember Darwin and Huxley being here. Ruskin, I think, I saw only once; he did not use the club very much. Sir Henry Irving was a member, and subsequently his son, H. B. Irving, of whom I have the warmest

favor. On looking over this season's novels it is amusing to speculate upon the reasons underlying the various dedications. Take the following:

Archibald Marshall dedicates "Pippin" to G. K. Chesterton; John Dos Passos dedicates "A Pushcart at the Curb" to "the memory of Wright McCormick who tumbled off a mountain in Mexico"; Meredith Nicholson dedicates "Broken Barriers" to Ray Long "in token of the old Hoosier fellowship of Montgomery and Boone"; Rebecca West and Tristram Tupper dedicate their books "The Judge" and "The House of Five Swords" to their respective mothers; Henry James Forman and Stephen Vincent Benét dedicate "The Man Who Lived in a Shoe" and "Young People's Pride" to their wives; Hugh Walpole dedicates "The Cathedral" to Joseph Conrad and his wife; Albert Payson Terhune dedicates "Black Caesar's Clan" to "my friend John E. Pickett, editor of 'The Country Gentleman,'" and John Cournos, whose novel "Babel" is written in four parts, dedicates part one to Olivia Shakspeare and part two to Edward J. O'Brien.

ENGLAND—AFTER THE WAR

C. F. G. Masterman's new book, "England—After the War," which Hodder and Stoughton will publish soon, is intended as a sequel to his "Condition of England," which appeared in 1909, when the author was a member of the Government. His aim is to show the real condition of post-war England—not only its social and material aspects, but also the present state of religious beliefs, the meaning of patriotism, and the things that can be prophesied in the immediate future.