

**CLUBANA, A COLLECTION OF
ESSAYS READ BEFORE THE
LITERARY AND SOCIAL CLUB OF
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, COLUMBUS, O.**

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Clubana, a Collection of Essays Read before the Literary and Social Club of the First Congregational Church, Columbus, O. by A. H. Smythe

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A. H. SMYTHE

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A. H. SMYTHE,
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THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY

Dedicated to

THE REV. ROBERT G. HUTCHINS, D. D.,

THE FOUNDER,

AND

THE REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN, LL. D.,

THE PROMOTER OF THE CLUB.

PRESIDER'S PROLOGUE

E. O. RANDALL.

NOW-A-DAYS, a literary club cannot be regarded as a novelty. The path of culture in every conventional community is made, in due time, more or less romantic and aromatic with the ruins of literary societies, promising and pretentious institutes for the promulgation of erudition—institutes that burst forth with the impetuosity and intensity of spontaneous combustion, and then, after a dazzling and dizzy flight, as suddenly sink into the "Lethe, the river of Oblivion"—lost to sight, and usually

"Unwept, unhonored and unsung."

These intellectual shoots, though they spring, like Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom, full armed into being, to conquer the complex conundrums of the past, present and future, seldom survive a season with vitality sufficient to venture upon a second. This excessive mortality among clubs is due to dread maladies incident to their infancy. Spontaneity and

spirit, inspiration and respiration itself is usually crushed out by the overwhelming weight of an elaborate but cumbersome constitution, and the unbearable burden of bulky by-laws—or the rivalries of ambitious aspirants for the presidency lead to internecine and annihilating conflicts. The club of which this volume is the modest and all too meagre memorial has, with that precocious prudence that has characterized its entire career, avoided both the Scylla and Charybdis of those dangers. Even at the mature age of four (going on five) the Club's natural vigor is unabated. Paradoxical as the statement appears, the Club's physical constitution remains unimpaired, because, like its illustrious example, the British Government, its constitution is not built on paper, and by-laws have been banished its domain—as unworthy its lofty aims and large attainments. The Club, too, has been spared the agonies and afflictions of presidential contests, the first chosen being perennially perpetuated in the "chair," in which he has grasped the gavel with less gravity than gravy, perhaps, but, deferring to the opinion that

" A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by the wisest men,"

He has strenuously struggled (and an intimate acquaintance with his intentions permits us to say this), with an eye

single to the great honor of his office and the good humor of his auditors.

Of clubs the name is legion, but each has in turn assumed phases and donned features in consonance with its social and intellectual environment. "THE LITERARY AND SOCIAL CLUB OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH" may lay claims to unique character and original conduct that entitles it to be the worthy theme of the pen of Clio. So the ingenuous intent of this tome is to fix for the Club in the rapid passage of teeming time "a local habitation and a name."

The Club came into being—in purpose not unlike many another—to occupy a gaping vacuum, "to fill a long felt want" in a church circle thirsting for knowledge and famishing for culture. It first felt the pulsation of life in the autumn of 1881, and, as the rhymster remarks,

"Now nothing could be finer or more beautiful to see,
Than the first six months' proceedings of that same society."

The freedom and freshness of its early youth was unfettered by rigid rules or parliamentary parleyings, and in the genial atmosphere of the hospitable parsonage, old and young, the grave and gay, gathered on Monday evenings to drink at times well nigh to intellectual intoxication, of the freely flowing Pierian fount. The relentless "tooth of

time" may mark this Club for its victim, but the remembrance of the pleasure and profit of those rompings in "fresh fields and pastures new" of thought and learning, will remain so long as memory shall hold its throne. Then the Club grew in strength and stature, and waxed in wisdom, and at the age of two put aside childish actions and took up its abode in the more public and pretentious parlors of the sanctuary, where it has ever since assumed academic airs, its attendants sitting semi-monthly in silent, solemn, staid rows, like the pupils of the Greek groves, all ear to listen to the discourses of only the exalted and the erudite, the learned and the wise. And so the Club has passed from lively to severe, and now with stern frowns bids the little stars hide their diminished heads while the mighty meteors flash their full lightnings by.

The Club was never one of "Idlers," the chief aim of which, we are told, was to destroy time by dallying with nothing. Nor has our Club ever worshipped at the shrine of the "Goddess of Dullness," in whose temple the ceremonies became ere long so stupid and uninteresting that they ceased altogether. Our symposia have never been "weary, stale, flat, or unprofitable."

Were all the productions, oral and written, of the Club preserved and compiled, the aggregate would be appalling