

**THE AUTHORS
CLUB: AN
HISTORICAL SKETCH**

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The Authors Club: An Historical Sketch by Duffield Osborne

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By Duffield Osborne

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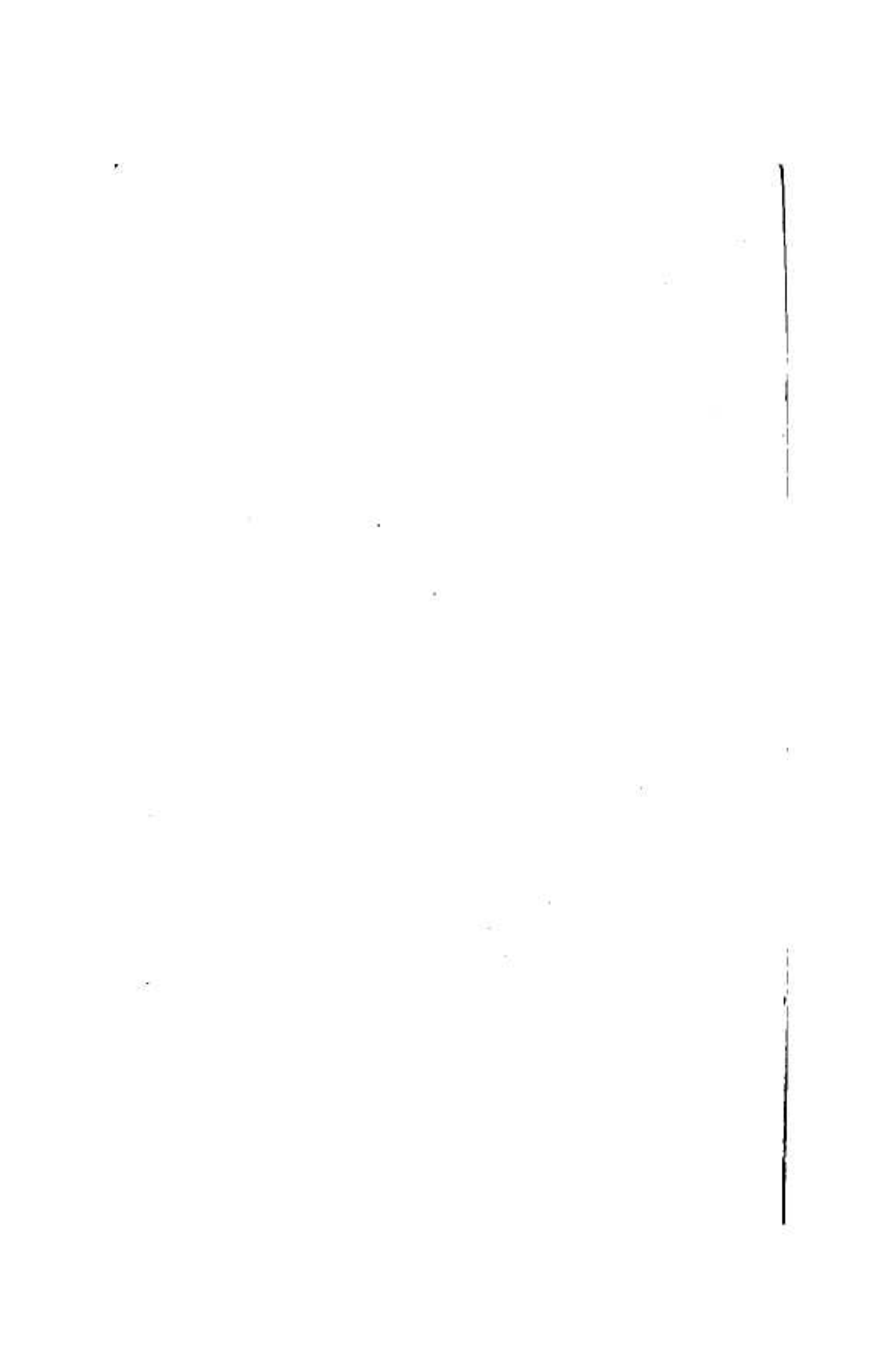
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PREFATORY NOTE

I have written this little historical sketch of The Authors Club at the request of the Chairman of the Executive Council, to whom are due the thanks of the Club for its publication. It does not pretend to be exhaustive nor does it claim any measure of literary form; it is merely a brief record of events, which cannot but be of deep interest to members of the Club, and, perhaps, to others, who know little of its meaning, purposes, and history.

D. O.

May 1, 1913.



THE AUTHORS CLUB

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

Prior to 1882, mutual acquaintance among New York's men of letters was largely a matter of chance, and, therefore, to a great extent, non-existent. To be sure, there was the historic Pfaff's, much of whose clientele was of the literary and journalistic castes; but Pfaff's appeal was limited and could not reach very far.

In Boston, the early capital of American literature, conditions were different. The Brook Farm had meant much, and other movements of a cognate character had supplemented its work of association, while Harvard University formed a concrete center of literary activity. Nearly all the names that had attained prominence were of Boston or its environs:—Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes,

Hawthorne, Prescott, Motley, Thoreau, Emerson, and Aldrich. Howells, editor of *The Atlantic* from 1871 to 1882, might be classed with them, and James, with his Harvard training, was more of Boston than of his birthplace. New York could claim only Cooper, Irving, and Bryant of the older order, and Bayard Taylor and Stedman of the younger.

Since then, literary Boston has given way to literary New York. All her great ones have gone, with the exception of Howells and James; the former now a New Yorker, the latter a resident of England; and Boston can show few, if any, potential successors to their pre-eminence. It is to New York that the eyes of all the younger men are turned, and, while it may not yet be said that we have those who can be classed with the fathers of our literature, there are many pens of promise and of, at least, respectable standing.

How far the organization of The Authors Club, in 1882, may be counted one of the influences that worked toward

this result, it is hard to estimate; but none will deny that friendly association has power for mutual inspiration, and is the hardly less potent spur to generous rivalry.

The idea of organizing a club of men of letters here must be credited to Charles de Kay, brother-in-law of the late Richard Watson Gilder, who gave it his hearty concurrence. Pursuant to Mr. de Kay's invitation, there met, on October 21, 1882, at Mr. Gilder's house, 103 East Fifteenth Street, Noah Brooks, Edward Eggleston, Laurence Hutton, Brander Matthews, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Charles de Kay, and Richard Watson Gilder.

This was the beginning of The Authors Club, and these were its founders, although no formal organization was attempted at this first meeting. An invitation was sent to a selected list of writers to meet with the original seven at Mr. Stedman's house, on October 28th, on which date were also present Samuel S. Conant, Hamilton Wright Mabie, Richard

Grant White, and Richard Henry Stoddard; while acceptances of membership were received from George William Curtis, Bronson Howard, and several others. The principles on which the Club was to be organized were formulated, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution. At the third preliminary meeting, held at the house of Mr. Hutton, on November 13th, The Authors Club was definitely launched, with the following list of organizing members: Henry Mills Alden, Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, Noah Brooks, Samuel Stillman Conant, George William Curtis, Henry Drisler, Edward Eggleston, George Cary Eggleston, Richard Watson Gilder, Edwin Laurence Godkin, Parke Godwin, John R. G. Hassard, Bronson Howard, Laurence Hutton, Charles de Kay, Charlton T. Lewis, Jonas M. Libbey, Hamilton W. Mabie, Brander Matthews, William S. Mayo, Raphael Pumpelly, Allen Thordike Rice, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Richard Grant White, and Edward L. Youmans; of whom are now living only