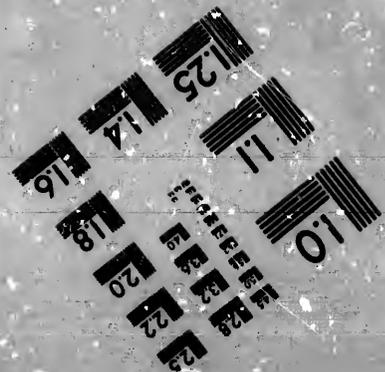
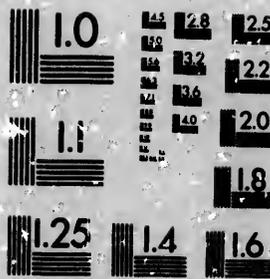


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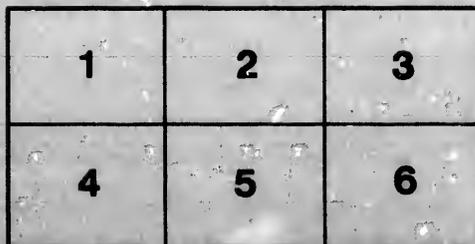
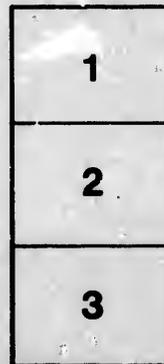
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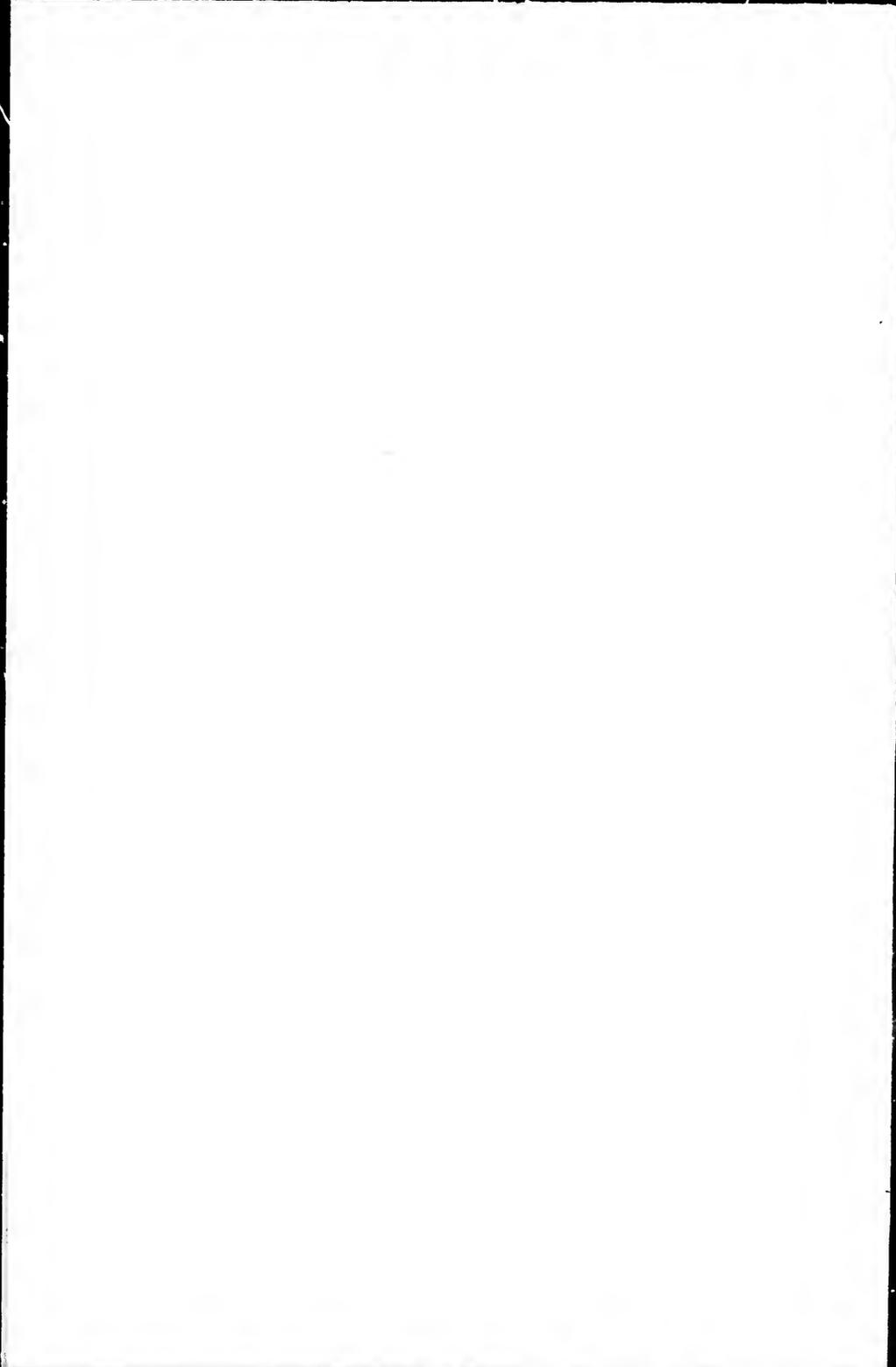
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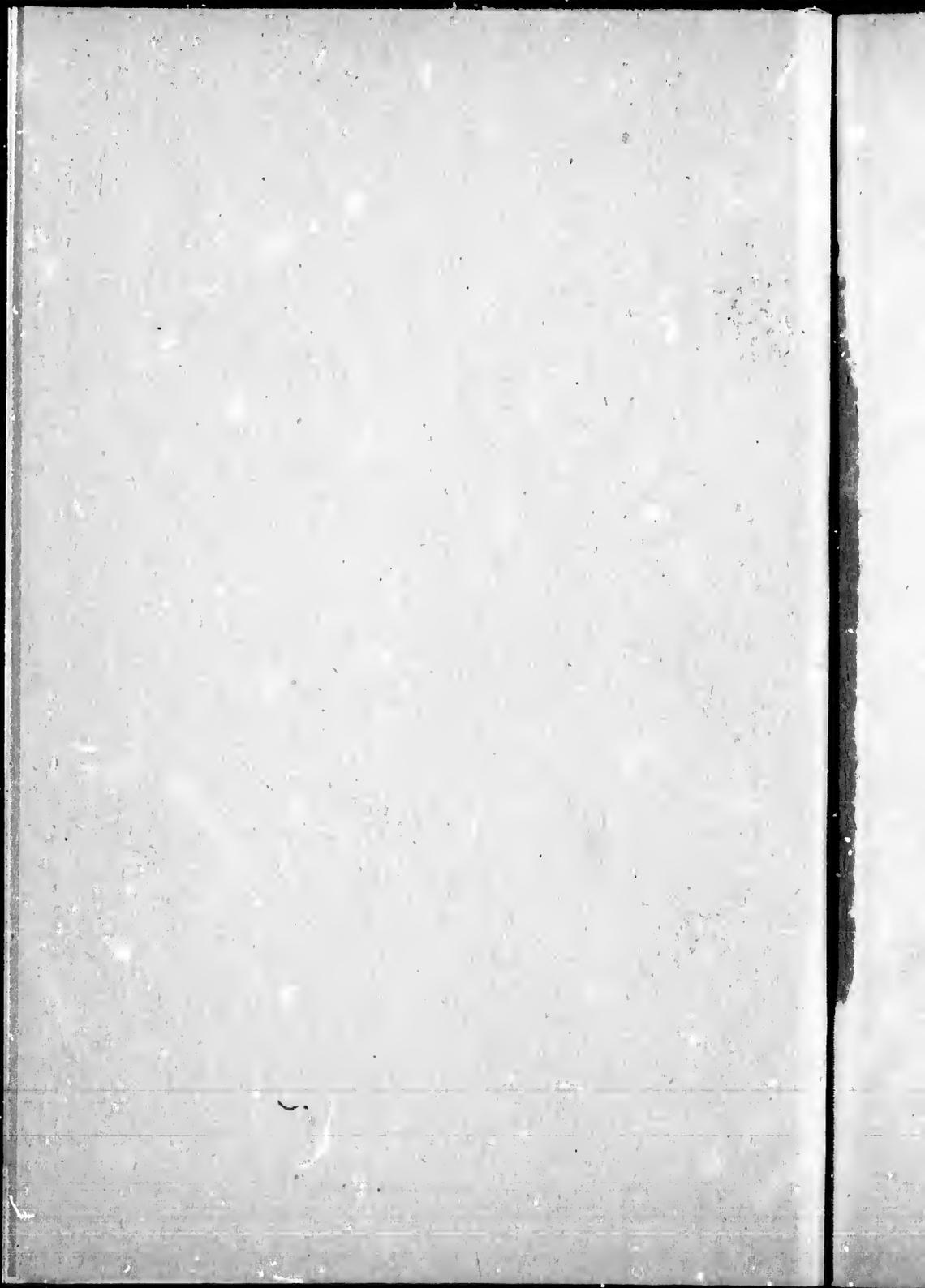
EDGAR M. ZAVITZ, B. A.

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# HISTORY

OF THE

OLIO,

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs extending from both ends.

BY

EDGAR M. ZAVITZ, B. A.

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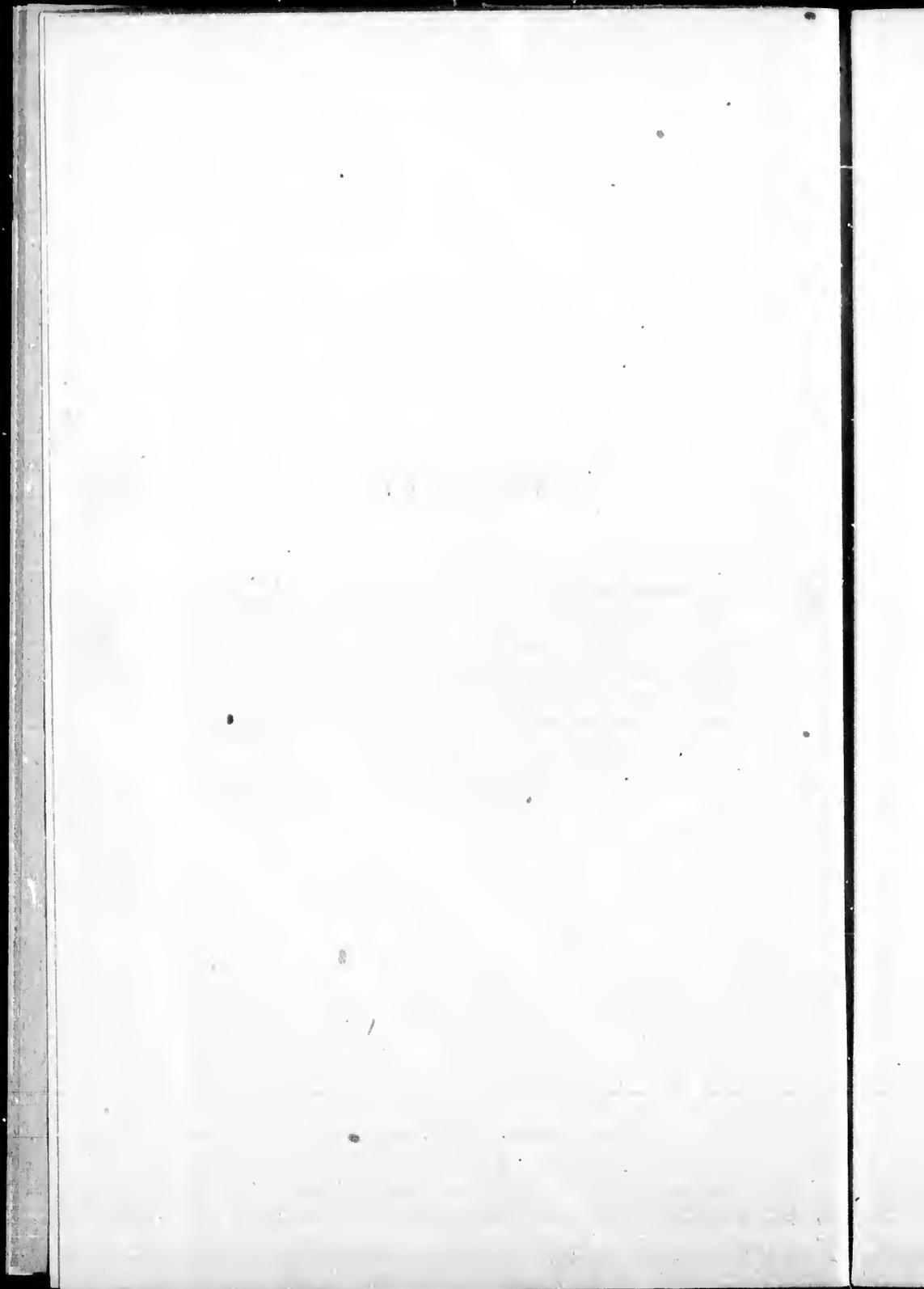
OLIO

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## INTRODUCTION.

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Unwritten history, depending on vocal means for its perpetuity, has a tendency to expand, to deviate from the truth and become shrouded in doubt and mystery ; while many things that would gladly be remembered are lost in oblivion entirely. To crystallize in its original and truthful form this protean knowledge of the Olio in its early years, and arrest from further defacements and changes, is the object of this history. In compiling these records I have endeavored to be attentive to the voice of truth and justice. I have added ornaments when ornaments could not disfigure but only brighten and beautify the original.



# HISTORY OF THE OLIO.

## CHAPTER I.

1875-76.

On an evening in the winter of 1875-6 a few conveyances were seen wending their way to the residence of James Zavitz, living then in the suburbs of Poplar Hill. The rural people who saw them pass were not overly curious. They thought it was only a party or neighborly visit. They little dreamed that they were in the dawn of a mighty revolution. They had not the prophetic eye to foresee the inflowing of intellectual light. The date of this primal Olio is somewhat shrouded in mist. Though all maintain that it was started a long while ago, none can place his finger upon the exact date with certainty. And were it not for the utterance of one single diary this chief pillar in the Olio's chronology would be tossed up and down a year or two in the sea of time by the shifting winds of fancy and doubt. Diary says that on the evening of Third Mo. 1st, 1876, some young people met at James Zavitz's and had a "reading club." Although friend Diary does not characterize it as the first of the Olios, we conclude that it is from three facts. 1st. That Diary and rumor agree in the place of holding it. 2nd. That it had a lady president, throwing it into a leap year as 1876 was. Lastly, that it was at that period too young to be christened yet by its now familiar name of Olio. Hence we settle on that date as the time of its birth—1876—the U. S. centennial year. Let us connect it with that nation in another way.

Diary says that there were about 13 present, this includes the children, household and all. Rumor puts the number of active members at thirteen. When you look at the flag of the American Union, your eye is attracted by the thirteen stars that shine upon it—symbolizing the thirteen original states that confederated for liberty and national rights. So when our neighbors across the line will celebrate their bicentennial, we can appropriate their ancient flag and let it wave above our heads, making the thirteen stars represent the thirteen members who founded this glorious institution. I have, kindly loaned me, a relic from the first Olio. It is the programme—the veritable parchment—in good preservation. You observe its appearance, in the form of a roll—representing its great antiquity—for all the documents of ancient Greece and Rome and Egypt are in that very form. If you wish

to examine the instrument, no doubt its only owner will be delighted to satisfy your antiquarian curiosity—providing you do not touch, it is very precious—destined to be an heir-loom and to insure intellectual power to succeeding generations. Mary E. Zavitz was chairman. It reads as follows :

Amelia S. Zavitz—Reading—a temperance piece. She struck the key note that has been played upon very frequently since.

Song,	..	..	..	..	..	Ninety and nine
Fernando Wilson,	..	..	..	..	..	Reading
James E. Gray,	..	..	..	..	..	Song
Ella Zavitz,	..	..	..	..	..	Reading
Martha A. Cutler,	..	..	..	..	..	Song
Hugh W. Zavitz,	..	..	..	..	..	Reading
Millie Zavitz,	..	..	..	..	..	Ditto
W. D. Campbell,	..	..	..	..	..	Song
Jonah D. Zavitz,	..	..	..	..	..	Speech
Isaac M. Gray,	..	..	..	..	..	Speech
Song,	..	..	..	..	..	Sweet By and By

We see by this there were two speeches, five readings and nine songs. The members remained seated when reading. I presume they considered it safer. The speech makers however arose, and supported their trembling frame against the wall. One young lady prepared a piece to read entitled the "Old Maid's Lament." But just before the ordeal her heart failed. She handed the paper to one of the sterner sex, and in his agitation he gave the title out the "Old Maid's Lemonade." I guess the Old Maid's Lament would take a deal of sugar now-a-days to make lemonade.

We need not wonder at these mistakes. It was a new thing—they were inexperienced—they were mere children—mostly in their teens yet. Children though they were, awkward though they seemed, they did a deed whose beneficent influence has come down the years shedding forth an increasing glory. From a tiny acorn grows the mighty oak, rising superior to all the other trees, and becoming the delight of the forest. From such a modest beginning sprang the Olio, rising superior to all parties, and plays, and becoming the delight of winter.

"They builded better than they knew."

During the first winter there were five gatherings. Let me quote from an eye witness, our friend Diary of 3 Mo., 15th, 1876—fourth day evening. "The Olio met at our place. The evening being favorable, ten came, and we had a pleasant time."\* The revolution, however, was not yet complete. Some of the barbarous customs lingered still from the dark ages. There were games after the literary programme was through. There were plays, "Copenhagen," "Jersey Boys," &c.

There was a regular supper, served on the table. This feature brought upon the members of the household a great deal of work, bustle

\* H. W. Zavitz's diary.

and unnecessary trouble. Unnecessary now, but custom—that despotic tyrant—induced them to think that hospitality demanded it. This was the nature of the Olios during the first winter.

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## CHAPTER II.

1876-77.

During the second season games and plays began to be discarded. Refreshments grew more simple and were passed around on plates. Literary desire naturally and necessarily antagonized the desire for feasting. That is the way it works the world over. It is a philosophic fact. Intellect and gluttony are mutually belligerent. They are like a man and wife eternally quarrelling. Let us see the stand that some of the world's greatest benefactors take on this question. When ascetic Buddha resolved to devote his life and his being in the search of peace for the souls of men, he left his father's sumptuous courts and wandered in strange lands, with only a beggar's bowl. But honor be to Buddha, who, through self-denial, found the eternal truth and taught his fellow-men "Nirvana and the law." When the time came for our own Jesus to become more acquainted with his Heavenly Father's plans, he wandered in the wilderness for 40 days fasting. It seems to me that those members who, a few years later, voted out victuals altogether from the Olio were philosophers, and wise ones too, in accepting Emerson's theory of "High thinking and low feeding."

There were seven Olios the second winter. The number of members averaged about 25, but increasing slowly and steadily as the years rolled by, until you see to-night the results. The greatest fault of the Olio is its success. If anything kills it, it is popularity.

There is a danger of becoming too popular. Cabbage heads burst sometimes by growing too large. You remember the only inducement a certain illiterate Athenian had to ostracize the upright Aristides was, that "he was tired of hearing him always called Aristides the Just." There is a satisfaction however in a bursted cabbage head, and a satisfaction in being banished for integrity. May the Olio rest under a like satisfaction in the remote future when it shall cease to be.

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## CHAPTER III.

1877-78.

We might very appropriately head this chapter "Criticisms," because they were the characteristic feature of the winter. They were established, in all good will and purpose, for mutual advancement. They went off pleasantly for a time from their novelty, but they soon begat ill-will. All were desirous to rise, but none seemed willing to

stoop that they might rise. They were too proud to learn of their equals. It is all right while the critic praises our virtues ; but when, ever so kindly, he censures our faults however egregious they may be, and mentions our idiosyncrasies however silly they are, let him beware; he treads among the stinging nettles of human nature. Falsehoods, clothed in flattery, are acceptable ; while truths in the garb of criticism are rejected. The fact was, the need of criticism was so great that they could not bear to be criticized. Consequently, after a short and stormy life, the critic, despised by all, died of sheer neglect, and was buried amid secret rejoicings.

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## CHAPTER IV.

1878-79.

The Olio continued with but little changes, excepting in numbers. The average for this winter was from 30 to 40. I will quote again from Diary.

"1st Mo. 3rd, 1879.—Storm continues, mercury 6 degrees below zero, and wind blowing a perfect gale. This evening our Literary Society was again re-organized at S. P. Zavitz's, there being 15 members present, and we had a splendid time."

Perhaps it will be interesting to inquire into the meaning of the word "Olio," and the cause of its application to our Literary Society. It originally meant in the Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese languages a dish of different kinds of vegetables cooked together. Hence it is come to be applied in English to a mixture, a medley, a miscellany. The programme of our society being a mixture of readings, recitations, speeches, discussions, dialogues, &c., it is specially designated as "The Olio," the world over. We are a peculiar society, we have a peculiar name, a peculiar method of carrying on our meetings. But what is most peculiar about us is, that in this age of failures and bankruptcies we remain steadfast in our onward course. There is something of stability in the Olio that reminds me of Cato's address to the eternal soul,—

"But Thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unharm'd amidst the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

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## CHAPTER V.

1879-80.

Nothing particular to note during this winter excepting the Olio's modest constancy. In voyaging down a river we remember all the cataracts and the whirlpools, but when we dropped down on the peaceful stream it is lost in oblivious enchantment. It is a sweet experience

that we feel but cannot impart. Time has pressed its signet seal upon the lips of history's muse, and I cannot bribe an utterance. So we will pass on.

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## CHAPTER VI.

1880-81.

Now, I have the pleasure of introducing a happy episode in the Olio's history. It is the one of all your generous acts that I look upon with the greatest pride. It shows your just appreciation of modest worth, your magnanimity of mind, your kind respects to the Olio's greatest benefactor. On 3rd Mo., 11th, 1881, Almira Zavitz was presented with two interesting books. I was abroad at the time, but I would that I had stock in those books. For I know they bear a yearly interest in blessings from One who takes cognizance of all grateful deeds.

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## CHAPTER VII.

1881-82.

The course of the Olio did not always flow as calm and tranquilly. All great rivers have their thundering Niagaras, and their boiling Lachines. In the winter of '81 and '82, the Olio passed over its almost fatal cataract and through its contentuous whirlpool. I have been advised to sail through the Welland canal, and avoid the conflicts and contentions of the Olio's Niagara. But I hold inviolable the confidence you have placed in me as the recorder of faithful history; and to omit is but to misrepresent. I admire as one of nature's most charming scenes the calm beauty of a tranquil lake, and often in my imagination stand for hours upon its verdant borders drinking in the inspiration of eternal repose. But you are aware that water at rest becomes impure. It must roll, and surge, and dash against the rocks, and be shattered into a thousand jets in order to become purified again. So is it in the affairs of men. The course of our lives, the progress of our institutions must needs be purified and chastened by contending with opposing forces. The first indication of any breakers ahead in the placid course of the Olio, was felt by the introduction and attempted sanctioning of some sweeping revolutionary changes in the character of the Olio. A number of the prominent members met together under dubious authority, proposed and brought forward the following code of articles:

No. 1. Resolved, that the members' names be enrolled and a certain number chosen to read, recite or sing, at the next Olio. Carried.

No. 2. That a secretary be appointed to take notes of the Olio and report at the next. Lost.

No. 3. That a subject be chosen for essays, and that two or more be appointed to write on the subject. Carried.

No. 4. That two or more gentlemen be chosen to deliver addresses on a given subject. Carried.

No. 5. That there be some half-dozen historical or geographical questions given out by the President to be answered the next Olio. The questions may be selected by any member. Carried.

No. 6. That there be no victuals provided for the Olio. Carried.

No. 7. That the titles of the pieces be named in connection with the names of the readers, reciters or singers. Lost.

Some of these resolutions, however, were killed in the bitter contentions of that single night, transfixed by the cruel arrows of sarcasm and wit. Some drug out the season and died a natural death. Some are alive to-night fulfilling a glorious mission in the Olio. Article No. 1. was not only carried but extended. The Olio was divided, and met weekly instead of bi-weekly. Hugh W. Zavitz and Jennie Marsh were the respective captains.

This course naturally created a spirit of rivalry, and contention. This feeling was rife when a foreign cause of disturbance made its appearance. The Philadelphic, a sister society of like nature, re-organized for its second winter, and held its meetings every two weeks on the same night as the Olio. Here they clashed. There was an element in the Olio in sympathy with the Philadelphic. This element, actuated by a laudable thirst for more opportunities for literary advancement, and wishing to reap the golden benefits of both societies, voted to have article 1 revoked. There was another element, enthused with a feeling of patriotic zeal that could not brook to see what it considered a foreign foe intruding upon the inalienable rights of its darling society. Then the conflict began. A civil war in a land of nominal peace. The forces advocating broader territory arrayed against those desiring higher utility of existing circumstances. At a subsequent meeting after a hot contest, article No. 1 was revoked, and the Olio's were to meet as in former years, bi-weekly. The victorious party gloried in the triumph, and thought the storm was over. In the wars between England and France, it is said of the British soldiers that they were too stubborn to know when they were beaten, but would fight on until they conquered the victors. Thus it was with the worsted party in the Olio. Beaten but not vanquished. Rallying again, it collected its scattered forces, and won a victory which was decisive and final. And during the rest of that winter the Olio met once every week. For some cause, however, it went back to the old regime and met fortnightly during the succeeding winters. And so no open rupture has occurred between the two societies since, and they jog along in as much peace and harmony now as did that old philosopher, Socrates, and Xantippe, his wife.

Article II. on the list of revolutionary changes asked for a preservation of the transactions in the Olio. It was lost. I have never heard

of an organization of like dimensions and pretensions that did not preserve a record of its proceedings. Had you passed this law you would have done a kind thing to your historian, and he could have returned the favor by being more faithful in his accounts. He would not then have to call upon his imagination for history, or trust in a treacherous memory for facts. We do not seem to care for custom or constitutional order in the Olio, and I sometimes think we partly owe our perpetuity to the spirit of independence. Though the inconvenience of the want of authentic record chiefly falls on me in this present, work I am inclined to shield the Olio in the words of the poet,—

“ And even its failings lean to virtue's side.”

The third motion was concerning essays. It was carried and is still one of the most pleasing and profitable features we have. The essayist has, added to all the advantages of the reader, the still greater advantages of the thinker and the author. The greatest educating power in the whole curriculum of the schools and colleges is that too often neglected one—composition. I feel thankful, members of the Olio, that you have established essay writing in our society. I only wish we were more faithful in fulfilling appointments in this line. Last year you did grandly and you deserve praise for it. Two were appointed each evening, and during the whole winter only a single essay was lacking. This winter we are more negligent. This ought not to be. Let only the inevitable cause a failure. Though our attempts may be inferior to Macaulay's, our faithful effort may be crowned with a greater glory. We cannot all be Miltons and Bacons, but we are all expected to do the best that is in us. Let no one make the plea that they never went to college, or had the advantages of some others. Remember the words of the poet,—

“ No man is great by any other power  
Than that which wrapped his genius at its birth.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

1882-83.

This winter was heralded in by a new feature. We hear of Thackeray clubs, and Shakespeare clubs, where complete novels and long poems are read. Why would it not be profitable to introduce some standard work from some of the great masters, and not listen always to isolated scraps from unknown authors? We might add another jewel to the Olio's diadem, by familiarizing ourselves with some of the world-honored, and world-famed poets, geniuses that have shed light, and joy and love into the homes of all lands. Would it not be a genuine feast to hear the melodious organ tones of Milton's "Paradise Lost," or to make acquaintance with some of Shakespeare's pure and perfect characters, or be charmed by Scott's "Lady of the Lake," or Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline"? Those and other inducements urged

us to make the trial. We read the charming poem of Hiawatha, painting in bright Indian colors the religion of that ancient race. Besides being a beautiful poem, it should excite our admiration as it was written in behalf of that much wronged people who have been almost annihilated by Christian civilization,

"O why does the white man follow my path  
Like the hound on the tiger's track."

"Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,  
Who have faith in God and Nature,  
Listen to this simple story,  
To this song of Hiawatha."

Did they listen? Yes, through courtesy, but upon the whole the scheme failed.

There are occasional episodes connected with the Olio. More than once this winter some of the members experienced the delightful sensations of an upset. One load got stuck away up north, and the occupants had to floander out as best they might through snow drifts four feet deep. The same load—what shall I call it? the ill-fated, or all favored Coldstream load—had the inconvenient pleasure of again rolling in the "beautiful snow."

There are often strangers happening in our midst, and they frequently take part in the programme. One Olio this winter was honored by the presence of two widely known elocutionists—Mittie Frairie and Aggie Knox.

The half-yearly meeting Olio of this winter was perhaps the largest one we have thus far had. The number was estimated at about 140. Members of the Yarmouth and Arkona societies assisted us in the programme, and the audience included strangers from hundreds of miles away.

At the last meeting of this season, we presented Jennie Woodward, known in the unwritten annals of the Olio as Jennie Marsh, with a Bible, as some tangible memento of those many cherished ties we were now about to sever, to be, in times of despondency in her distant home, a token of consolation, fraught with the assurance that she still possesses faithful friends and a loving God.

## CHAPTER IX.

1883-84.

Another serial poem is begun—Scott's "Lady of the Lake." Undaunted by the fate of "Hiawatha" the venture is again attempted. They agree with Fitz-James—the hero of their poem—that,

"If a way be dangerous known  
The danger's self is lure alone."

What was the result? We dare not charge it this time to the incompetency of the undertakers. But nevertheless it failed. The poem is yet unfinished, and is likely to be until the careless many will take

pains to follow the plot throughout, and to remember all the connections. The long intervals between the readings robs the serial poem of its oneness and symmetry.

There was also introduced at this time, discussions. A person is chosen by the society. He takes some subject—generally scientific—posts himself beforehand, makes a short lecture upon it, and is then open to questions any one wishes to ask. Thus we attempt to study the phenomenal of nature and keep abreast with the progress of scientific research. This not only gives forensic practice to those appointed, but sharpens the wits and gives thought and enlightenment to all present. Discussion is not only an ornament to the Olio, but an ornamental necessity.

We have had in the course of the Olio three pic nics connected with it. All were pleasantly passed at the beautiful Springbank of Byron. They were held in the summers of 1880 '82 and '84. The one of '80 went via London, and down the river Thames by water. The other two went via Komoka, in wagons. They were all enjoyed immensely. A play day does not necessarily imply a day lost. "The flowers of recreation do not all grow on the verge of a precipice."

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## CHAPTER X.

1884-85.

We have now come to modern times. This chapter may hardly be called history. The Olio commenced very auspiciously this winter, and has fully preserved the honors of former years. Whether we would continue the "impromptu speeches" or not, created quite a discussion. It was voted on and decided almost unanimously in the affirmative. A new committee was judiciously appointed to prepare subjects wherein they deemed the Olio needed enlightenment.

We managed to have one debate this winter. Our lady friends have always looked upon a debate as some wild animal, too ferocious to be introduced into modest society. But they have found that a debate is quite a tame thing after all.

Take it all-in-all this season showed no signs of dotage. There were nine meetings. The general average was about 60 or 70. At one meeting there were 180 or over. The last was in the 3rd Mo., at George O. Zavitz's. With the greeting and shaking hands, and the entertaining programme, and the beaming faces that vied with the beautiful flowers on the mantle for loveliness, and with bright hopes for the future, we bade farewell for another summer, and another decade, to our common friend the Olio—the Olio that has brought us together so often for social converse and intellectual culture.

It is a characteristic feature of the Greek and Latin languages that the verb, the most important part of the sentence, is always placed

last. And any change from the ordinary position of the words indicates emphasis. Thus for the sake of emphasis I have reserved, to close this history of the Olio, a tribute to its founder. Convinced that there was a better way of spending our winter evenings and social gatherings than in aimless chat and semi-barbarous plays, our female patron plead for the introduction of a literary nature in them. By so doing she has raised, and is still raising, the moral tone of this neighborhood, and, through our example, other neighborhoods. Though she has for many years been compelled to forego the pleasure of listening to what is said and done at the meetings, yet there must be in her mind a silent satisfaction purer and holier than the mere gratification of any of the outward senses—the assurance of being the means of leading youthful minds by pleasant water-courses and green pastures in the happy realms of literature. Young ladies, wherever you may settle in future life, follow her worthy example, and let the light of your genius be shed abroad. You have a mighty influence for good as well as a proverbial one for evil. They tell me that Adam and the human race were led astray by Eve, that the beauty of Helen “burned the topless towers of Ilium,” that the lovely Thais set fire to Persia’s gilded fane. Be this as it may, I am fully persuaded in my own mind that also in the hands of woman are placed the humanizing powers of the world.

The history of the Olio, during its first ten years, has been compiled and read, and will now be laid away in the archives for future generations to decipher.

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## THE OLIO.

I was sitting alone in my mansion,  
 In the evening’s twilight glow,  
 When a flood of fancies swept o’er me ;  
 The pictures of long ago.

In the days when youth was happy,  
 And life and love were free,  
 And the earnest mind was building  
 The hopes of things to be.

I saw the visions of beauty  
 Successively come and go ;  
 But the glory of greatest brightness  
 Surrounded the Olio.

When I think of the fruit that has ripened  
 From seeds that were planted then ;  
 The youth of the circle, growing  
 To virtuous women and men.

When I meet the familiar faces  
 In the various paths of life,  
 From the dreamy vales of the rustic  
 To political whirl and strife.

Whatever their occupation  
 In that busy workshop—earth,  
 They are known by the Olio badges—  
 Virtue, knowledge and worth.

There were some induced by fancy  
 In foreign lands to roam,  
 While some remained contented  
 In the old, old home.

And some have gone from our presence  
 Into eternity,  
 As the dew-drop slips in silence  
 Into the sunlit sea.

But now from a clearer picture  
 The Lethean waves abate,  
 And memory saves from oblivion  
 The circumstance I relate.

'Twas after the sun had sunken  
 Into the western wave ;  
 And the stars came out to rejoice  
 Over the tyrant's grave.

And the moon in her upward passage  
 Grew in beauty and light ;  
 And the deep cerulean canopy  
 Folded over the night.

And not a cloud was above us  
 To trouble the tranquil sky,  
 And all this I saw reflected  
 From the depths of a beaming eye.

And the sleigh-bells wrang, and we chatted,  
 And laughed as we rode along,  
 Till some one asked for music,  
 And some one gave a song.

Ah then were hushed our voices,  
 And the conscious moon swung low,  
 To hear the sweet voice singing  
 The Song of the Olio.

And oft as I muse in silence  
 The picture reappears,  
 And those musical notes of the maiden  
 Float over these 40 years.

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### THE SONG.\*

Remember, oh Olio members !  
 Those wanderers from above,  
 That come to enliven the snow-time—  
 Knowledge, Virtue and Love.

\* Music by "Violet."

They leave their home eternal  
 Beyond our low-roofed skies,  
 And though they come as strangers,  
 They are angels in disguise.

And high-browed knowledge whispers  
 Low in the ear of youth,  
 "Follow and I will lead thee  
 To the fount of eternal truth."

And pure souled Virtue beckons,  
 With arm and finger white,  
 To the beautiful home of the faithful,  
 Where the Lamb of God is the light.

And Love, the Queen of Heaven,  
 Rose-lipped, bright-eyed Love,  
 Descends with her golden chariot  
 To waft our souls above.

Receive them, Olio members !  
 These wanderers from the skies,  
 For though they come as strangers  
 They are angels in disguise.

\* \* \*

Ah, I fancy I live again  
 The joys of long ago,  
 And I hear the maiden singing  
 The song of the Olio.

And oh ! the deathless power,  
 Then scarcely understood,  
 That has come from the Olio's strivings  
 After the true and the good.

Oh, where is the nation's future ?  
 And where is the nation's hope ?  
 Will ever the cannon's booming  
 The bright millenium ope ?

'Tis not to know war tactics  
 That makes a nation great ;  
 For peace will conquer turmoil,  
 And love will conquer hate.

And the moral hero is greater  
 Than the one where slaughter abounds ;  
 The sieging of sin walled souls  
 Is nobler than sieging towns.

Then let not a vain ambition  
 Search for some grand emprise,  
 Let us humbly perform our duty,  
 For there all the "Well done" lies.

