

FOUNDING

IN THE MIDDLE SEVENTIES of the nineteenth century, with its pioneer days behind it, the bitter memories of the Civil War beginning to recede, its industries and its cities growing apace, the Middle West acquired some measure of substance and leisure and began to flex its cultural muscles. Says Arthur W. Shumaker in his *A History of Indiana Literature*: "The Golden age of Indiana literature, the fifty-year period from 1871 through 1921, was the era during which the most significant writing was produced, the writing for which Hoosier literature is best known and remembered." A little further on he remarks, "It was the age of famous men and their famous books. In it Indiana, and particularly Indianapolis, became a literary center which in many ways rivaled the East."

So, on January 10, 1877, all the omens were propitious for the six citizens of Indianapolis who met at the home of John D. Howland, clerk of the Federal District Court, to organize The Indianapolis Literary Club. They were in addition to Mr. Howland, the Rev. William Alvin Bartlett, clergyman; George H. Chapman, lawyer; Charles Evans, librarian; William P. Fishback, lawyer; Johnathan W. Gordon, lawyer - three lawyers, a librarian, a clergyman and the clerk of the Federal District Court. They appointed a committee to draw up a constitution and invited twelve others to join them as charter members. The eleven who accepted included one clergyman, Hanford A. Edson; four physicians, Albert E. Fletcher, William B. Fletcher, Theophilus Parvin and Luther D. Waterman; three lawyers, Walter Q. Gresham, Livingston Howland and Albert G. Porter; one teacher, J. Henry Kappes; one journalist,

John H. Holliday; and one banker, Ebenezer Sharpe. All names that spelled Indianapolis in all that represented sterling citizenship and enjoyment of the artistic and intellectual. It was a representative group, similar to the composition of the Club today. The educators, however, have grown in numbers and influence until with the lawyers they are very nearly the dominating occupations in the Club.