> avocations or their habits, or any other reason, would have been taking a solitary meal, it cannot be said that female society was much affected; nor is it more so at present. In those hours of the evening, which are peculiarly dedicated to society, I should think, on an average, twenty members could not be counted at any one time throughout the suite of rooms up stairs, the largest of which is one hundred and three feet long, and thirty wide; indeed, in general, when I have gone there in the evening, it has been as into a sort of desert.[6]

Walker's figure of twenty members in the evening anticipates Thackeray's 'score of grave gentlemen'; and his reference to the desert anticipates Kinglake's account of his encounter with a passing army officer in a 'wilderness'.[7] In 1831, Faraday had estimated the largest attendance figures at 'from 50 to 200': perhaps he had ballot days and AGMs in mind for the higher figure, and those who gathered after the arrival of the evening papers for the lower.[8] Morning, evening and foreign newspapers had been in great demand since the foundation of the club and, even after the abolition of stamp duty in 1855, signs had to be put up in the clubhouse informing members that newspapers were not be moved from room to room, and that 'No Member is to appropriate more than one Newspaper at one time. By Order of the Committee.'[9] Most readers of these newspapers had dropped into the clubhouse, as they lived or worked nearby. The architect William Butterfield, elected in 1858, would often take a break from work in the afternoon and stroll from the Adelphi, where he also lived, to the clubhouse, in a tall chimneypot hat, for a dish of tea, perhaps a conversation and occasionally a chance to write a letter on Church matters.[10] Throughout the club's history, the majority of habitués have had a first or second home in London. The number of 'visitors to town' was comparatively low in the early 1830s, but increased with the coming of the railways: by the end of the decade Sydney Smith was glorying in the fact that he could now 'beat a carrier pigeon or an eagle for a hundred miles'; in 1842 he announced that 'distance is abolished'; and by 1861 the results of a circular indicated that of the 794 Athenians who replied, 484 were 'Town' and 310 were 'Country' members.[11] Overnight accommodation was not available, but members could change for dinner in the dressing rooms.[12]

A contemporary comment on the 'legislation' of clubs is particularly apposite in the case of the Athenæum, the membership of which included several of the leading Utilitarians of the day: 'The greatest happiness, upon the fairest terms, for the greatest number, must be always a most important principle'.[13] For all its diversity of caste and mind, this high-minded 'literary' club shared an unwritten code of behaviour which was generally followed. Special occasions, however, did not always bring out the best in members. When elaborate preparations were made for members and their families to view the Coronation procession in 1838, for example, the 'first Supply for Luncheons was considered enough for 1000 Persons, and would have been ample had not members carried off whole dishes of Sandwiches, & Cakes (in spite of the orders of the Committee and remonstrances of the Servants) to different parts of the House'.[14] Afterwards, broken glasses and china were found 'in the Galleries, Balcony and Even on the Tops of the Water Closets'.

Individual breaches of the club's rules tended to be treated leniently by the General Committee. One Saturday night in 1858, Thomas Wrightson, a Carthusian and Oxonian, now in his fifties, arrived at the clubhouse 'in a state of inebriety'. In response to complaints from members, the secretary was ordered to write to him, saying that 'in the judgment of the Committee such conduct was calculated to cast obloquy upon the Club at large'.[15] The same magisterial tone was adopted the following year, when the Committee 'deeply regretted to learn' that the 'evil' had not diminished, and invited Wrightson to withdraw his name from the list of members, rather than move to 'more public proceedings'.[16] As he then stayed away from the clubhouse, it was decided to let the matter rest; but when he returned a month later and further complaints were received, a letter was delivered to his house by hand, saying that, if he presented himself again, the Committee would convene immediately to decide what action to take. A grovelling letter of apology came back, promising amendment of life, and no further action was taken.[17]

On at least one occasion, however, an order of the General Committee was carried out immediately, while the meeting was still in progress. Lord Nugent, the author and radical Whig reformer, was 'greatly respected for his honesty, consistency, and high principles, and one of the most polished and agreeable

men of his day'.[18] Busy in his county and reputedly of an 'amorous disposition', he was a lightweight in Westminster who tended towards 'corpulence and financial ineptitude'. When the Committee learned that his lordship had failed to reply to a letter asking for his annual subscription, and that he was 'at this time in the house', they directed the secretary to 'remind him personally that the Committee were then sitting'. The secretary returned with 'a cheque upon Messrs Coutts for Six Guineas which he was directed to pay in the usual course to Messrs Drummond Bankers of the Club'.[19]

References to complaints in the minutes often shed light on aspects of club life that otherwise would have been unrecorded. In 1833, for example, the Committee received a complaint from two honorary members who, having started a game of chess on a Sunday evening and then gone to dinner, returned to find that the pieces had been disturbed and the board had been 'locked up by one of the servants'.[20]The Committee sent a formal letter of profound regret. Feelings ran highest on ballot days, when members could be reported to the Committee for uttering 'offensive expressions' about a candidate.[21] More commonplace were complaints about feet on the furniture.[22]

Of all domestic complaints, none troubled the Committee more than those from the coffee room. Trenchant comments, scribbled on the back of bills, were often sent to the Committee via the secretary, most frequently on the subject of fish, beer (which was made on the premises) and coffee (a problem that was said to have been finally resolved in 2013).[23] The folk memory of the club is stocked with oft-told tales of Palmerston stealing the chef on his one recorded visit to the coffee room, and of Guizot's chef despairing of ever seeing his master again when he went to dine at the Athenæum, while only two doors away the Reform Club gloried in having a celebrity chef, Alexis Soyer, in their kitchen.[24] Yet forty-seven dinners a night were consumed, and not all of them by Henry Crabb Robinson, who fasted one day a week 'in order to enjoy better his feasts here on the remaining six'.[25] In Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*, the Bishop of Bullocksmithy is happy with the mutton chops that Captain Shindy considers to be inedible.[26]

When it was discovered that the food was making a loss, a year after the clubhouse opened, a new price list was approved, including the following for luncheon:

Joint with Bread & Table Beer	1/-
Plate of Cold Meat with Dº	6d
Mutton Chops each	6d
Rump Steaks	1/6
Soups the Bason	1/-
Two Eggs	6d
Bread & Cheese & Table Beer	6d
Bread & Butter & Dº	6d
Curry made with ½ a Chicken	4/-
Dº with ½ a Rabbit	2/-[27]

The Committee also ordered that 'no house Dinner be served, with Entrees under 10/- a head'. Members could now complain that the food was both poor and impoverishing. Bickering over the carving of joints went on for years and was behind the so-called 'Coffee Room revolt' of 1854, when the membership regained control of the carving knife that had been passed to an 'official carver', who had cut down on waste at a time when expenses were again far exceeding receipts.[28] It was some years before common sense prevailed, when staff members carved once again.

The club was afflicted with a number of staffing problems in the 1830s, when the butler died, the steward had to be dismissed, one of the hall porters was drunk on duty and a number of thefts were reported.[29] With so many complaints about the food being lodged, it is hardly surprising that the turnover of chefs was high.[30] (M. Tavenet, who had no English, and the translator with whom he shared a room, lasted less than three weeks in 1860.)[31] The kitchen and the coffee room were particularly troublesome sites. In 1835 a 'quarrel and fight' broke out behind the screen dividing the two spaces, attracting 'the notice of every one' in the coffee room: the men were severely reprimanded and warned.[32] Sometimes, however, it was the complaining member who was at fault, as on the occasion when Bulwer Lytton grumbled that the waiter would not set aside the remainder of a pint of Chateau Lafitte, of which he had taken only a glass or two: the Committee informed him that setting aside was against the regulations.[33]

At this early stage of the club's history, staff welfare tended to be addressed only when a particular case came to the attention of the Committee. Ross Mangles MP was a senior East India Company man, a Utilitarian Whig and a member of the Church Missionary Society. When the clerk of the kitchen died in 1845, Mangles wrote to the Committee pointing out that 'Mr Callcutt' had left a pregnant wife and three children in a destitute state.[34] Should a subscription should be opened for the family, he asked, and should the club insist that members of staff join a provident association? As usual in such cases, the Committee explained that neither action was allowed under the rules of the club, but that a single payment of £25 would be made in the light of William Calcutt's 'long and faithful service', and the staff would be encouraged to join an association. The retirement of Edward Magrath was handled quite differently, however. The secretary's 'unremitting assiduity and faithfulness for thirty-one years' had been recognised in the form of occasional salary increases.[35] When ill health forced him to resign in 1855, he was given a pension of £200 per annum. He died the following year, having been succeeded by (James) Claude Webster, who was to serve for thirty-four years: the Athenæum was and still is remarkable for its high staff retention rate.

Croker's death in 1857 marked the end of the beginning in the history of the Athenæum. A tradition of 'high thinking and plain living' had been firmly established in a club which prided itself on keeping its entrance fees and annual subscriptions well below the average in Clubland. As Thomas Walker commented, the 'mode of living' at the Athenæum was 'simple, rather than luxurious'; but it was even more economical in some of the other clubs, while at the Travellers, 'which is the most expensive, there is no approach, considering the class of which it is composed, and taking the average, to any thing like excessive luxury'.[36]

By the time that Walker wrote his rhapsodic description of Burton's 'palace' in 1835, two problems were posing a threat to the 'exactness and comfort' that he celebrated: shortage of shelf space for books and poor ventilation. Complaints about the quality of the air in the main rooms began soon after the opening of the clubhouse. This was a common problem in large new buildings of the period, when rooms were still ventilated by opening the windows, while stoking

up the open fires in winter. 'Less care and less science' had been bestowed on the subject of ventilation than on any other,[37] which meant that attempts to improve conditions in buildings in the 1830s and 1840s were based upon scientific theory rather than engineering practice. In the case of the Athenæum, it was logical to turn to its own scientists, rather than looking outside for assistance. Now that Sir Humphry Davy was no more, Michael Faraday was the obvious choice, seven years after his resignation as honorary secretary. Faraday's experiments on the clubhouse proved to be as protracted as Davy's had been on the copper sheathing attached to ships' hulls.

Magrath was instructed to write a formal letter to his friend on 12 February 1831, posing ten questions on the relative merits of oil and gas lighting. Of Faraday's answers, sent two days later, in a winter month, the ninth is the most significant. The first cause of 'the complaint of the oppressive feeling' was as follows:

> A house is built and every endeavour made to render floors, ceilings, windows, walls and doors tight & close. The rooms in it are well warmed during the day and then having brought them to such a temperature and state that the first person who enters says 'Aye this is comfortable' you put from 50 to 200 persons in and light a number of burners and when the injurious agency of these causes has been in action for 1, 2 or 3 hours complaints are made that the heat is oppressive and the odour unpleasant. You arrange things to be perfect in their effect under one set of circumstances and then changing the circumstances you expect the effect to remain the same – You make the large room & the Library quite warm enough by day light when there are only a few person there and then you light Lamps and put in many persons and must of course very soon expect an oppressive sensation.[38]

Faraday then comments on the subjective nature of complaints, before concluding that, in his opinion, 'the attempt has been to make the Athenæum house too perfect; for under the continual change of both Natural and Artificial circumstances it is I think impossible to obtain one constant effect'. A grateful Committee asked Faraday to collaborate with Burton in considering how best

to implement his proposals in the 'principal rooms'.[39] Various experiments were made in the mid-1830s, none of which was wholly successful.[40]

Meanwhile a planning process for the new Houses of Parliament followed the devastating fire at the old Palace of Westminster in October 1834. The *dramatis personæ* involved there included several prominent members of the Athenæum, and the ventilation problems shared by these two quite different 'palaces' shed light on both institutions' economies. A select committee on the best methods of 'Ventilating, and Warming the New Houses' called in six witnesses of 'high scientific reputation', of whom three had been elected to the Athenæum in 1824: Professor Faraday, formerly Davy's protégé; Professor William Brande, Faraday's steady but effective colleague at the Royal Institution and a member of Davy's team working on the copper sheathing attached to ships' hulls; and the architect Robert Smirke, who had been a member of the club's Building Committee which scrutinised Burton's plans for the club-house.[41] Dr David Reid, one of the other witnesses, was particularly influential, having impressed a group of members of both Houses with his experimental ventilating arrangements when they visited his lecture rooms the previous year, during the summer meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Edinburgh. Reid was engaged to ventilate the temporary Commons chamber, and in February 1836 Charles Barry was named as the winner of the architectural competition for the new Houses of Parliament, out of ninety-seven entries.

The Athenæum wasted little time in recruiting the recipient of the most prestigious commission of the decade, if not the century: Barry's name went into the Candidates Book on 21 March 1836 and he was elected under Rule II eight days later. On the same day the Committee also brought Brande back into the fold (he had resigned in 1833 for some reason),[42] using Rule II as a mechanism.[43] The club was strengthening its forces at an anxious time: Burton had just submitted a report on the 'state and condition of the premises',[44] which was to be examined by a special sub-committee, including Faraday, Chantrey and Hamilton; and Faraday's answers to the General Committee's questions of February 1831 were reprinted for the convenience of all the committees.[45]

In June 1836 the General Committee received the sub-committee's lengthy report. This was accompanied by a letter from the re-elected Brande which

would have made uncomfortable reading for Croker, who was in the chair, and for other colleagues who had been involved at the building's design stage. Brande pointed out that no system of warming or ventilation could now be introduced as effectively, or as cheaply, 'as it might have been had arrangements for the purpose been provided in the original building', incorporating flues 'for the admission of fresh air, and for the escape of foul air, and proper apertures for both those purposes, in the different rooms', as Burton had wished.[46] If the club were now to invest about £800 in major improvements, Brande suggested, the problem could be remedied. Once the rooms had been properly ventilated, they should be lit by gas rather than oil: this would assist ventilation without 'materially affecting the temperature of the rooms', each of which should be equipped with thermometers.

Although most elements of Brande's advice were followed, his comment on the club's original false economy did not prevent the Committee from imposing a cap of £600 on the works that ensued.[47] These involved adding a large 'Air Channel on the South side of the House', which required permission from the commissioners of Woods and Forests; the raising of chimneys on the Travellers' clubhouse, at the Athenæum's expense; and the installation of thermometers in the club's principal rooms, to be checked hourly by servants.[48] Meanwhile Faraday privately informed Magrath that his brother Robert and his nephew James were able gas fitters, but said that he was too nervous to put them forward officially.[49] Their appointment followed.

In September 1837, poor Burton was asked to present estimates of the cost of preventing smoke coming down the chimneys on the south and north sides of the clubhouse.[50] The health of members was one thing, but the condition of the books was quite another, and the deleterious effect of 'gaseous vapours' on the bindings was most alarming. As the precise cause of the defects was 'doubtful', and remained 'under investigation' for some time, expenditure on the library rose.[51] Reports were submitted on the state of the books and on the benefits of naphthalised gas.[52] Faraday, whose first profession had been bookbinding, was asked to attend the meeting, but sent his apologies from Brighton, where he was recovering after a nervous breakdown. He was able to report, however, that he had experimented on a variety of leather bindings in his laboratory, and could state that leather 'is by no means so Strong as it used to be in

former years'.[53] With characteristic prudence he did not commit himself on the specific source of the 'evil', but pointed to the 'constant heat and extreme dryness of the room', the library's position above the coffee room, and the effect of 'sulphurous acid and ammonial salts' on the bindings, as possible contributory factors. Faraday and Brande were thanked for their continued efforts, as was the chemist Arthur Aikin, also hastily imported under Rule II, in 1838.[54] By the summer of 1842, Faraday's 'discovery of a mode of carrying off the products of combustion to the suspended Lights in the Great Room & South Library' was welcomed by the Library and General Committees, at an estimated cost of £230.[55] So confident was Faraday of success that he read a short paper entitled 'Description of a mode of obtaining the perfect ventilation of lamp-burners' at a meeting of the Institute of Civil Engineers, in June 1843, having 'transferred his right to this invention to his brother, Mr. Robert Faraday', who had 'secured it by a patent'.[56] Following the installation of the 'apparatus for ventilating the Lamp Burners' in the Drawing Room,[57] the Annual Report of 1844 recorded its 'complete success'.[58]

Michael Faraday was far from confident, however, on the broader question of ventilation. The lesson to be drawn from the parallel stories of the new Palace of Westminster and Burton's 'palace' at Waterloo Place is encapsulated in Faraday's observation that ventilation was 'an excessively difficult subject'.[59] After two decades in Burton's clubhouse, problems caused by the heat and vapour generated by artificial lighting, combined with a failure to install a ventilation system *ab initio*, had proved to be extremely costly, both in time and money,[60] and had necessitated the election of the 'Forty Thieves' in 1838.[61] Barry clearly learned from mistakes made at the Athenæum, incorporating an elaborate system of ventilation in his clubhouse for the Reform, two doors away on Pall Mall, in the late 1830s.[62] Even when the design of a building included sophisticated ventilation arrangements, however, as at the new Houses of Parliament, the experimental nature of the system made the result uncertain.

The first permanent gas lamps in London had been installed in front of the screen to Carlton House on Pall Mall during the Regency,[63] and the parish of St James was the first to have mains gas. A reduction in its use at the Athenæum

during the 1850s, however, probably indicates a temporary loss of faith in interior gas lighting.[64] When a deputation of eight members, appointed by a General Meeting, discussed Burton's plans for 'alterating the House' in 1855, one of their recommendations was depressingly familiar: 'Improved Ventilation of the Rooms generally; but especially of the Coffee Room.'[65] Of all the questions put to the deputation, however, the most contentious related to the introduction of smoking and billiard rooms. The answer came in a report, signed by Lord Overstone as chairman,[66] which revealed not only divisions within the club, but also a subject on which there was high-minded unanimity:

> We place these last in our enumeration. Because there exists in our Deputation, and we believe in the Club at large, a serious difference of opinion as to the propriety of introducing either a Smoking or a Billiard Room; And further, Because we all think that those Arrangements which affect the general convenience of the whole Club, and upon the necessity of which there is no difference of opinion, are entitled to the first attention. And that next to these, a full and adequate provision for all the demands of the Library is the duty incumbent upon a Club which in its original constitution was more peculiarly intended for the convenience of Members distinguished in Literature or Science or connected therewith by taste or habits.[67]

By the early 1860s, Thackeray could smoke and play billiards in the basement of the clubhouse. His first love, however, the library, remained the club's 'chief object of solicitude';[68] and the most pressing problem for the 'grave gentlemen' of the Athenæum was a shortage of shelf space for their 40,000 books.

Although Burton had allocated plenty of space for 4,000 books in 1830, the rate of growth in the library led to his having to respond to frequent demands for more bookcases. Shortly after they moved in, the General Committee indicated its commitment to growth by announcing that, as some members did not know 'exactly what works may be acceptable to the Club' and may wish to give money, a subscription was to be opened and a notice to that effect 'affixed in the Library'.[69] The 'presents' continued to flow in, however, and in June 1830 a

sub-committee was formed 'for the management of the Library'.[70] It is significant that the three members of this Library Committee had a passion for travel, exploration and the history and topography of foreign countries that was widely shared in the Club.[71] First and foremost was Thomas Amyot, who was thanked for the 'great care and labour' that he had 'bestowed in the formation and arrangement of the Library': Amyot, a lawyer and antiquarian, worked in the Colonial Office, helped to found the Camden Society and amassed an excellent library of his own. William Richard Hamilton, diplomat and antiquarian, had served alongside Amyot on the General Committee since the foundation of the club. Colonel William Martin Leake was a military engineer and the most impressive topographer of ancient Greece and the Levant in the nineteenth century. These three were veterans of earlier shared projects. In 1802, Leake had been in Athens, and in September of that year sailed with Hamilton in the boat in which many of the Elgin Marbles were sunk off the shores of Cythera; and later it was Amyot who had arranged the transportation of the Marbles to London, along with Croker. Organising the Athenæum library later in life must have seemed light work in comparison.[72]

In 1835 the historian Henry Hallam, by now a member of the Library Committee, set out the principles upon which they operated. 'It has been their object,' he wrote, 'to form a collection of useful works in the different provinces of Literature and Science, without giving any other preference to particular subjects than popular taste, and what they conceived to be the inclination of the Members, appeared to prescribe.'[73] Although it was difficult, Hallam continued, to keep up with all fields for a membership such as the Athenæum's, that of English history was 'the most complete, and in the strict sense of the word contains almost every standard work of reference'. Much was wanting in Scottish and Irish history, he acknowledged, as well as in general biography, moral philosophy, 'miscellaneous polite literature' and certain areas of theology.

One of the most pleasant tasks for the Library Committee would have been dealing with donations. Several prominent early members of the club had attended the literary gatherings at 50 Albemarle Street, where John Murray II, himself an original member, had his publishing house; and many members published with him, or contributed to the *Quarterly Review*. In 1830 Amyot reported to the General Committee a 'most liberal and munificent offer from

Mr Murray of copies of all the Works comprised in his present publication List': this was passed back to the Library Committee for them to make their selection.[74] The letter of thanks to Murray was signed by every member of the General Committee, and the first list of volumes covers over three pages of the minute book. Captain Basil Hall donated an 'extensive and valuable collection of Publications relating to the United States of America' in 1831.[75] Further gifts from Hall followed, and a large donation from Captain Christopher Clarke, Royal Artillery.[76] In 1832 it was decided that these and other donors deserved recognition: a notice was put up in the hall on the first day of every month,[77] and Annual Reports began to include a list of the year's donations, which soon took up several pages of small type. The quality of some of the presents is as impressive as the quantity: indeed, the majority of the club's more valuable books were donations.[78]

A library does not grow at the pace of the Athenæum's – over eight hundred volumes per annum – on the basis of donations alone. Funding for acquisitions was formalised in January 1832, when the General Committee ordered that £250 be placed at the disposal of the Library Committee,[79] an order that was subsequently repeated twice a year. These grants were occasionally supplemented by ancillary income, such as receipts from the sale of waste paper.[80] Frequent adjustments were made to the interior of the clubhouse as the collection grew. As early as May 1831, Burton was instructed to create a gallery on one side of the south library, in response to the 'rapid increase of the Library of the Club'.[81] (Some members seem to have felt insecure on the gallery: an additional bar was added 'from Pillar to Pillar' in 1832 and, after twenty years' use, Burton had to strengthen its staircase, 'counteracting the Elasticity of the wrought Iron Carriage'.)[82] By 1834 several new bookcases had been installed in the drawing room, 'for the reception of recent acquisitions' (Plate 12), and in 1838 the Library Committee was congratulated 'on the advanced and improving state of the Library', the beneficial effects of which were 'evidenced by an increase in the number of readers'.[83] A proud General Committee concluded that 'the social enjoyments of a Club are here united with the means of intellectual gratification and improvement in a degree enjoyed, it is presumed by no similar Association'.

The library of one similar association, the Travellers Club next door, was neglected for many years;[84] but it was only through the courageous action of

one of its servants, who warned his colleagues at the Athenæum of a fire in 1850, that the destruction of the club's library was averted.[85] Three years later a fire broke out in the north library, a favourite haunt of the painter James Hall, who was a bachelor habitué of the clubhouse. James was as generous as his brother, Basil: he donated the autograph manuscript of Scott's *Waverley* to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh in 1850. He could also be careless, and his habit of creating makeshift shades for candles had previously led to a minor fire in the clubhouse. This time the conflagration damaged 262 books.[86] Hall narrowly escaped expulsion from the club in 1853, on the understanding that he would be vigilant and not read beyond 11.30 p.m. He died suddenly the following year after a short illness.

In the mid-1850s the main problem remained that of space. The situation was becoming critical, with limited access to about one-third of the books, distributed perforce around a number of 'private rooms'.[87] In 1853–54, Burton produced numerous alternative plans and elevations in response to the General Committee's request for 'greater accommodation' for the library and morning room.[88] Most of these involved 'an Upper Story or Attic being placed in the external walls, so as to provide additional accommodation for the Library and Servants' Sleeping Rooms' (Plate 15).[89] On the question of shelving, a range of suggestions came in from individual members, including Captain William Allen's proposal to house over five thousand volumes on either side of the grand staircase, where, 'in the place of the now useless ventilating aperture, there should be raised a large Doric column, (Grecian) forming a book-case'.[90] Burton criticised the club for its lack of clarity in this regard – no two suggestions coincided, he grumbled – and was frustrated when a proposed special General Meeting was postponed to the following year (1855).[91] This meeting elected its 'deputation' of eight members, including Sir Charles Barry, to consider various options and estimates, and the General Committee elected an advisory sub-committee of its own.[92] After further extensive discussion, two alternative plans were eventually put before the membership in March 1856 and promptly turned down.[93]

Back in the General Committee, Edward Bunbury, the author and classical scholar, insisted that the question of library provision had to be resolved.[94] Milman moved that the Library Committee 'be requested to Examine the Library and to ascertain what books being duplicated or of no value may be

eliminated without loss or disadvantage' – a process that has been repeated from time to time ever since, occasionally with disastrous results when precious items have been lost.[95] Then the chairman, Earl Stanhope, established yet another advisory sub-committee, which included Bunbury. Two months later a further Extraordinary General Meeting finally accepted an estimate of £6,942 for general repairs, to include £1,120 for 'A New Gallery, with Spiral Staircase, in the South Library, including additional Bookcases, continuing the present Gallery across the Folding Doors, altering the latter, removing the Door Architrave, Cornice, &c., and substituting Book-shelves'.[96] The result is an impressive three-tiered arrangement of galleried bookcases which in later years has enchanted visitors – they can view it from the drawing room through the glazed doors – and has terrified members who suffer from vertigo: the latter rely upon the intrepid library staff to fetch books from the galleries (Plate 16).

Staffing the library was a rather haphazard affair in the early days. In November 1830, however, the Library Committee recommended that Charles Daly be employed as house clerk and librarian.[97] Unfortunately Daly's gambling led to a deficit of £200 in library funds.[98] In January 1833 he was replaced by Spencer Hall, who served for many years, producing the first printed catalogues and retiring in 1874, by which time the library contained about forty thousand items. The General Committee was no doubt gratified when Hall celebrated his appointment by donating a couple of books to the library, the act of a gentleman.[99] Even the estimable Hall, however, found himself in trouble when he was absent without leave,[100] and later failed to persuade the committee to change his terms of employment on several occasions.[101]

When members decided to spend a whole day in the clubhouse it tended to be in order to work in the south library, where members kept the librarian and other staff busy at all hours. In July 1831, Captain Richard Cook, Royal Artillery, complained of 'a great deficiency in the attendance of the Library in the Evenings'.[102] If the librarian was not in the clubhouse, the drawing room butler was expected to bring books to members.[103] In 1843 there was sufficient demand in the evening for 'Mummy Pee' Pettigrew to recommend that 'such assistance should be afforded to John Weaver after Mr Hall the Librarian leaves at 8 o'clock as would enable him to give his whole attention to members frequenting the Library and also that a notice be affixed requesting silence in

the Library'.[104] (A few years later, having read the club's complaints book, Thackeray described Tiggs of the Sarcophagus ringing the bell and causing 'the library-waiter to walk about a quarter of a mile in order to give him Vol. II, which lies on the next table'.[105]) In June 1850, when the excitable Edward Bunbury complained that he rang the bell in vain at 11 p.m., the matter was carefully investigated.[106] Spencer Hall reported that this occurred on one of the two nights a week on which Wagstaffe, the 'Principal Servant on the floor', was allowed to leave at 9 p.m. rather than the usual 11 p.m. Robert Earle therefore took his place and gave Bunbury the books.[107]

The club also provided a servants' library and a subscription to a circulating library for the membership, an arrangement which caused frequent problems, as members forgot to return books, especially French novels.[108] Losses from the main library were regarded as an 'evil'.[109] A notebook recording losses 1830–41, mainly of illustrated books, contains an inscription in pencil: 'The Hand Book & Memorial of Literary Plagiary from 1830 to . . . Thou shalt not steal'.[110] In 1840 William Ballard, a Bow Street Runner, was informed, and reward notices printed, when it was discovered that a number of valuable books had disappeared, including Rogers's *Poems*, 'Illustrated, octavo, brown calf, gilt back, grained sides, marble leaves', and a 'Pictorial Shakspere, royal octavo, Vol. I, red cloth, gilt label'.[111] Being mainly association copies, such books were precious. Security was now improved and books were stamped.[112]

Looking back at the development of Clubland in his *Recollections of Past Life* (1870), Sir Henry Holland wrote this about clubs in general:

> The growth of the last forty years as regards the number and palatial magnificence of their buildings, they mark a particular phase of society, and one in which good and evil are doubtfully blended. Ephemeral reading, with frequent interludes of sleep on well-cushioned arm-chairs, and the *τί καινόν*? question ['what's new?'] and talk of the day, will probably be admitted by those conversant with Clubs as a fair general picture of their interior life, exclusively of what belongs to the business of the dining-rooms.[113]

Some of the reading at the Athenæum has always been ephemeral, and in the nineteenth century there were frequent requests for still more home and foreign

newspapers to be provided, morning and evening. But the question 'what's new?' was also answered by the transactions of the learned societies, where club members had influence. Amyot, for example, reported to the General Committee in February 1832, with Hamilton in the chair, that 'the Council of the Society of Antiquaries had acceded to his request by ordering that the Athenæum Library should be furnished with copies of all their publications not at present in that Library and with their future publications as soon as they are ready for delivery'.[114] Other transactions were donated by members, who also gave offprints from scholarly journals: Faraday, for example, and Whewell of Trinity College, Cambridge gave copies of their papers as they were published.

Only a club whose members needed to absorb the latest ideas and findings in a wide range of disciplines would have built up such a large collection of pamphlets, or 'Tracts' as they are called in Spencer Hall's first printed catalogue (1845), where they take up almost half the number of pages devoted to books.[115] The most telling adaptation to the south library was introduced as early as January 1831, when current periodicals and pamphlets were made more accessible by dividing the west end – the wall facing the glazed doors – into thirty sections of shelving for the purpose.[116] Members of a non-partisan club, who habitually exchanged ideas in 'the spirit of examination and questioning', could thus have immediate access to pamphlet wars of the kind discussed earlier – on longitude or on parliamentary Reform – in which their fellow Athenians were often the chief combatants.[117] Papers relating to particular themes were bound up together, as in the sixteen volumes on the 'Tractarian Controversy', for example, concerning the controversial *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41) by leading members of the Oxford Movement. These were shelved near pamphlets by Utilitarian economists and statisticians – anathema to the Tractarians – on subjects such as 'the Poor', population and prison reform.

A randomly selected volume of 'Miscellaneous pamphlets', bound in the 1830s, illustrates the wide range of subjects represented in the collection. Volume IV of the set includes a *Supplement to Captain Sir John Ross's Narrative of a Second Voyage in the* Victory*, in Search of a North-West passage, containing the Suppressed Facts necessary to a proper Understanding of the Causes of the Failure of the Steam Machinery of the* Victory *and a just Appreciation of Captain Sir John Ross's Character as an Officer and a Man of Science* (1835), by John Braithwaite, joint patentee of

the boiler used on board the *Victory* and, in his view, unfairly blamed by Ross.[118] Rear-Admiral Ross, who had been elected to the club the previous year, then presented his *Explanation and Answer to Mr Braithwaite's Supplement* to the club on 12 May 1835, saying that he published it 'to refute the numerous misrepresentations contained in a work entitled "Voyages of discovery and research within the Arctic Regions &c" by Sir John Barrow', himself a highly influential original member of the Club.[119] Ross asked Magrath to 'lay the same before the Committee' and to move that it be placed 'on the table'.

Also in volume IV are papers on the ancient Irish by Sir William Betham (elected in 1828), Ulster King of Arms; on the Kolisurra silk-worm of the Deccan ('Communicated by the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society'), by Lieutenant-Colonel William Henry Sykes (1837) of the East India Company; on hot springs and terrestrial magnetic intensity, by James Forbes (1833), physicist and glaciologist; on the tides, by the Revd William Whewell and Sir John William Lubbock, both original members; on Davy's paper on a volcano in the Mediterranean by Charles Daubeny (1824), who challenged Sir Humphry's conclusions; on Halley's comet by Captain (later Admiral) William Smyth (1835), hydrographer and astronomer; on a fabulous conquest of England by the Greeks and on the number of the lost books of Tacitus, by Lord Mahon (1827); on the genus *Chama*, on *Clavagella*, and on a new species of *Calyptræidæ*, by William John Broderip (1824), the lawyer and naturalist; and on the spikenard of the ancients, by Charles Hatchett (1824), who discovered niobium. Twenty of the twenty-seven pamphlets in volume IV are by members of the club, most of whom were also members of learned societies. It was at the Athenæum, however, with its well-stocked 'gentleman's' library, that experts in different disciplines met and interacted at their ease.

Most of these experts, amateur and professional, read outside their specialist fields, particularly in history, a subject of general interest. For Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Edward Bunbury, for example, an original member, 'English history, in all its branches, was the department to which he attached the greatest importance, and he sought particularly to make his collection as nearly complete, in all the important works on that subject, as circumstances would admit'.[120] Meanwhile his elder son, the naturalist Charles Bunbury, elected in 1852, recorded his response to Kinglake's *Invasion of the Crimea* and Froude's *History*

of England in as much detail as his reading of Lyell, Darwin and Huxley.[121] The Bunburys' club library provided excellent research facilities. Among the pamphlet collection, for example, were nineteen 'Tracts relative to the Pretender and Scotland' (1726–50), bound in two volumes, and a set of eleven tracts on the Revolution of 1688.[122] When Carlyle wrote to the General Committee in 1859, suggesting that the collection of tracts formed by George Morton Pitt in the eighteenth century should be catalogued, they immediately conferred with Spencer Hall and employed an additional assistant to produce a handsome manuscript catalogue that was 'much approved of' by members when it was 'laid on the table'.[123] Printed books, such as John Rushworth's *Historical Collections* (8 vols, 1721), John Thurloe's *Collection of State Papers* (7 vols, 1742) and an extensive collection of historical public records in nineteenth-century editions, were important sources.[124] The library of a club which included Macaulay, Milman, Carlyle and Froude among its members benefited from donations such as Sharon Turner's 'History of the Anglo Saxons – 3 Volumes', 'His History of the Middle Ages – 5 Volumes', 'His History of Henry the 8th – 2 Volumes' and 'His History of Mary Edward & Elizabeth 2 Vols', in 1831.[125] The following year he added 'His Sacred History of the World, 1 vol.', and Henry Hallam, a more significant historian, joined the Library Committee.[126] The acquisitions approved by successive Library Committees reflected the needs of at least three varieties of historical investigator – the antiquarian (who was in the majority), the archaeologist and the historian.[127] The influence of clergy and Royal Academicians also ensured that ecclesiastical and art history were not forgotten.[128]

The mainstays of the collection in the early years were theology and the Classics, along with history, reflecting both the education and the professional profile of the membership. Literature, science and the fine arts were represented, in a club explicitly created to provide a home for their practitioners. Political economy was a prominent and highly contested emergent field in the 1820s and 1830s, and again both the library catalogue and the membership list include the names of some of the leading figures. Following an appeal in 1830 for titles relating to overseas travel, and with a regular turnover of foreign honorary members elected for short periods, the collection acquired a striking number of foreign-language books, especially in French, as well as strong holdings in Americana. The word 'voyage' occurs frequently in the

library catalogues,[129] along with 'topography', 'exploration', 'travels', 'tours' and 'excursions': the Athenæum has a complete set of Hakluyt Society publications, for example, and a section of Spencer Hall's catalogue is devoted to 'Maps on rollers in the Morning Room'.

In May 1852, three months after his election to the club, Charles Bunbury (elder brother of Edward) wrote to Mrs Henry Lyell: 'Such a library! I spent my days studying and extracting from valuable foreign botanical works, known to me before only by name.'[130] This from a member of the Linnæan Society. Works in the collection by French men of science included Laplace's *Mécanique céleste* (5 vols, 1807) and *Exposition du système du monde* (2 vols, 1808), Lamarck's *Histoire naturelle des animaux sans vertèbre* (7 vols, 1815–22) and Baron Georges Cuvier's *Le Règne animal* (5 vols, 1829). In July 1859 Charles Bunbury met Hermann and Robert Schlagintweit in the clubhouse, describing them as 'those enterprising young men, Humboldt's protégés, who have penetrated further into Central Asia than anyone before them'.[131] Two months earlier they had published *Official Reports on the last Journeys and the Death of Adolphe Schlagintweit*, about their brother whose fate had recently come to light: having stayed on in 'High Asia' in 1857, when his brothers returned home, he was accused of being a Chinese spy and beheaded in Turkistan. *Official Reports* is in the Athenæum library, as is Adolphe's *Atlas zu den Neue Untersuchungen über die physicalische Geographie und der Geologie der Alpen* (1854). Narratives of scientific discovery and topographical exploration frequently merge in the nineteenth century, as in accounts of the long voyages of British biologists such as Charles Bunbury's friends, Darwin and Joseph Dalton Hooker, and the domestic journeys of those members engaged in the Geological Survey, all described in books in the club library which were mostly written by members. Meeting fellow members in the clubhouse and reading one another's work were elements of a continuing conversation.

Light relief was also available in books such as Richard Penn's *Maxims and Hints for an Angler, and Miseries of Fishing* (1833), illustrated by Chantrey, Abraham Hayward's *The Art of Dining* (1852) and the British novelists series, which included Walpole, Beckford, Sterne, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Barbauld, Ainsworth, Austen, Bulwer, Scott, Galt, Martineau, Radcliffe and Mary Shelley. Whereas English and Scottish poetry has always been taken

seriously, however, fiction has never been collected systematically at the Athenæum, even when the 'literary' novel achieved a higher status for the form, later in the nineteenth century. It was assumed that members would buy and read novels at home, or borrow them from the circulating library. In Spencer Hall's 1845 catalogue, for example, only the *Pickwick Papers* (1837) is listed under 'Dickens (Charles)'.

Dickens's elaborate notes for his later fiction are creative memoranda rather than detailed observations of, say, London labour and the London poor. Most of his fellow Athenians also had a notebook in their pockets, but usually for recording data, as in the geological notebooks of Ruskin and Sir Astley Paston Cooper.[132] Whereas exceptional figures such as Lyell and Darwin developed ground-breaking theories on the basis of patient observation and recording, many natural philosophers were more like Davy's friend, George Bellas Greenough, the first president of the Geological Society of London, whose *Geological Map of England and Wales* was in the morning room in 1845, and who was known as an accumulator of facts, recorded in numerous notebooks, rather than as an original thinker. Emerson, an honorary member who had great respect for the club, noted in 1856 that, for the most part, the 'natural science in England' is 'as void of imagination and free play of thought as conveyancing'.[133]

Statistics, published in government blue books and scholarly journals, provided the basis for technological development, social reform and the new social sciences of the nineteenth century, to which generations of Athenians were to make major contributions. Thomas Henry Lister, who became the first Registrar General for England and Wales in 1836, was elected in 1830. It was as an economist that the Revd Richard Jones also succeeded in the elections that year. His *Essay on the Distribution of Wealth and on the Sources of Taxation*, published the following year, offered a critique of Ricardian economics, and in 1833 he was appointed professor of political economy at King's College London. Having co-founded the Statistical Society of London in 1834, together with two original members of the club, Malthus and Whewell, and two non-members, Charles Babbage and Adolphe Quetelet, he succeeded Malthus, with whom he respectfully disagreed, in the Chair of Political Economy and History at the East India College (Haileybury). Jones's inductive methods, based upon the

accumulation of facts, were also embraced by other influential figures in the club, such as Colonel William Henry Sykes, elected in 1837. Sykes had held a commission from the East India Company, and had later been asked by Mountstuart Elphinstone to return to India as a statistical reporter to the Bombay government. Works such as *Statistical Illustrations of the British Empire* (1827), *Report on the Statistics of the Four Collectorates of Dukhun* (1832) and his *Description of the Wild Dog of the Western Ghāts* (1833) reflect a desire not only to name the species, like Adam, but also to number them. (He became president of the Royal Statistical Society in 1863.)

Among the club's other number crunchers was William O'Byrne, elected in 1857, who published his exhaustive *Naval Biographical Dictionary* (1849) in 1,400 closely printed royal octavo pages, and who applied his passion for statistics to his own club in his 'Analysis of Athenæum List corrected to 14 July 1884'.[134] When the 8th duke of Argyll became Postmaster General in 1855 he recorded that he could 'only stare and wonder at Rowland Hill's extraordinary powers of statistical analysis and of arithmetical calculations'.[135] The General Committee duly elected the 'able and ingenious' Hill, whose opinions were 'never arrived at hastily', under Rule II in 1860. In the clubhouse one day he met a friend, 'a man of superior education and varied knowledge, who had long held an important post in the Far East, almost on the shores of the Pacific':

> 'Why,' asked this friend, 'do you not establish an Australian mail by the Panama route?' 'Why should we?' was the counter-question. 'Because it is the shortest,' replied the friend. At once Rowland Hill proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, where stood a large globe; the test of measurement was applied, and thereupon was demonstrated the fallacy of the wide-spread popular belief, founded on ignorance of the enormous width of the Pacific Ocean – a belief, as this anecdote shows, shared even by some of those who have dwelt within reach of its waters.[136]

It is tempting to speculate that Dickens, the scourge of Utilitarianism and of the blue book in *Hard Times* (1854), a novel dedicated to Carlyle, felt uneasy in the clubhouse partly because the 'inclination of the Members', as Hallam phrased it, was more towards fact than fiction, and more towards the objective

than the subjective. The natural philosophers, however, the statisticians, politicians, clergy and literary gentlemen of the Athenæum, worked alongside each other in the south library, and became figures of legend in the nostalgic recollections of their successors. Here is an Edwardian example:

> Macaulay's corner, near the books on English history, is a well-known feature of this library, which the late Mark Pattison said he thought the most delightful place in the world, especially on a Sunday morning. At the table in the south-west corner Thackeray used constantly to work, whilst here also Theodore Hook dashed off much brilliant work. Lord Lytton, the novelist, Abraham Hayward, Samuel Wilberforce, and many other clever men were constant frequenters of this delightful room, the very atmosphere of which is replete with literary associations of the most distinguished kind.[137]

And here is Henry Tedder, secretary and librarian of the club, describing the room that for him was 'full of reminiscences', in a centenary essay for *The Times*:

> Many famous men of letters have worked here. Some portions of *Esmond* were dictated by Thackeray to Eyre Crowe at the central round table at which, in after years, Richard Burton doggedly sat through the day, snuff-box at his side, busy at his translation of *The Arabian Nights*; and after him, Andrew Lang, bending over the table, writing for long hours without notes or references. In a corner close to the English history section was the favourite chair of Macaulay, after him frequently used by Hallam, Sir Henry Maine, Matthew Arnold, Mark Pattison and Lord Acton. At the other corner, John Morley, when he edited the *Pall Mall Gazette*, came every day after he had 'put the paper to bed' and sought rest in a large armchair.[138]

Both accounts include Thackeray, with whom we began this chapter and with whom we should end, in a third description of his ardent sensibility: 'At the Athenæum Club he was often seen writing by the hour together in some quiet corner, evidently unconscious of his surroundings, at times enjoying a voiceless laugh, or again, perhaps when telling of Colonel Newcome's death, with "a moisture upon his cheek which was not dew".'[139]

6

LIBERAL HOSPITALITY

As club life was grounded in tolerance, open breaches between members of the Athenæum were deprecated. A row between Dickens and Thackeray, perhaps nineteenth-century Clubland's most famous quarrel, began at the Garrick and ended at the Athenæum. Thackeray believed that one of his rival's literary protégés, Edmund Yates, had attacked him in print at the behest of Dickens. So Thackeray asked the committee of the Garrick, where all three men were members, to expel Yates for conduct which was 'intolerable in a society of gentlemen'.[1] Dickens in turn resented Thackeray's having taken Catherine Dickens's side after the couple's widely publicised separation in 1858. Thackeray seems to have contributed, perhaps inadvertently, to the whispers about Dickens's mistress, Ellen Ternan, at the Garrick, where the membership voted for Thackeray and against Yates, leaving a furious Dickens with no choice but to resign from the committee.

For five years the rival novelists avoided each other in the clubs and other meeting places. Then, in 1863, Dickens recorded that he was just hanging up his hat in the hall of the Athenæum when he saw Thackeray looking old and ill: Dickens expressed concern, and the rift was healed. A neutral observer remembered the incident differently. Sir Theodore Martin was speaking to Thackeray when Dickens came into the clubhouse that day. Dickens passed close to his rival 'without making any sign of recognition', upon which Thackeray suddenly interrupted his conversation with Sir Theodore and reached Dickens just as the latter had his foot on the grand staircase: 'Dickens turned to him, and I saw Thackeray speak and presently hold out his hand to

Dickens. They shook hands, a few words were exchanged, and immediately Thackeray returned to me saying "I'm glad I have done this".' Peter Ackroyd finds this the more probable narrative, not least because Dickens was notoriously bad at reconciliation after a quarrel.[2]

Dickens was to be the last of a crowd of mourners to leave Thackeray's graveside in Kensal Green cemetery a few months later.[3] His own funeral, in 1870, was a strange affair, with Dean Stanley reading the burial service to a handful of mourners at Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, early in the morning. (Thousands visited the open grave on the days that followed.) Of the sixty-six other funerals for Athenians held in the Abbey between 1824 and 1897, one of the grandest was Lord Macaulay's, on 9 January 1860, when onlookers lined the streets to watch the cortège go by. All but one of the eleven pall-bearers (Evelyn Denison, Speaker of the Commons) were members of the club. Several were Liberal politicians and authors, like Macaulay himself: Sir George Cornewall Lewis, the duke of Argyll, Lord Campbell (the Lord Chancellor) and Lord John Russell. Whereas Russell wrote history on behalf of the Liberals, however, Lord Stanhope did the same for the Conservatives. Similarly, whereas Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, was a fierce critic of Darwin and Huxley in defence of orthodoxy, Henry Hart Milman, Dean of St Paul's, was a controversial liberal historian of Christianity.[4] At Macaulay's funeral, as at the Athenæum, differences could be accommodated.

Macaulay's death marked the end of an era, coming a year after the East India Company lost its administrative powers in India, and only a month after the 'earthquake shock' of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle of Life*, published on 24 November 1859.[5] Of the other eminent habitués of the south library who were listed in the reminiscences quoted at the end of the last chapter, two had already died: Hook in 1841 and Hallam in January 1859.[6] Another pair born before Waterloo – Bulwer Lytton (1803–73) and Samuel Wilberforce (1805–73) – died after the publication of *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), having contributed to the debates of the 1860s on the impact of Darwin's theories on the sciences and social sciences, and on theology and the arts. Abraham Hayward (1801–84) and Mark Pattison (1813–84), the other two older members, lived on to witness the full flowering of the arts and

sciences in Victorian Britain, when the Athenæum was 'the focus of the intellectual life of the nation'.[7] Richard Burton (1821–90), Matthew Arnold (1822–83) and Andrew Lang (1844–1912) were contemporaries of other famous literary members, such as Browning, Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Henry James, Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson and Kipling. Lord Acton (1834–1902), historian and politician, was said to have been the only man who could influence Gladstone, rather than be influenced by him. Gladstone's official biographer, John Morley (1838–1923), was one of several Athenians who edited highly influential reviews, while Henry Maine (1822–88) discussed with fellow members the application of Darwin's discoveries to the investigation of the role of law in the development of primitive societies.

In earlier chapters we have seen examples of the Athenæum's 'hospitality' towards a wide range of ideologies and social backgrounds among candidates and members. Lord Holland was described as being 'liberal' in valuing others 'more with reference to their general character, talents, and acquirements, than to their rank or station';[8] and the same could be said of the club. Non-partisan politically, it accommodated both sides in the Reform debates of the 1830s, with members engaging in pamphlet wars rather than calling for resignations, as happened at the political clubs. Similarly, the pattern of early Rule II elections indicates a willingness to introduce new members of outstanding ability in science, literature and the arts who were known to be the chief antagonists of equally prominent existing members. In the 1860s, the British intelligentsia debated the implications of new scientific discoveries and 'scientific' methods of biblical criticism with passion and a sense of urgency. Most of the influential figures in these debates were members of the Athenæum, where opposing factions now coalesced around liberal and conservative positions, and intellectual disagreements affected club life. (In contrast to the variegated group of pall-bearers at Macaulay's funeral in 1860, Darwin's were chosen as participants in a choreographed political act at the Abbey on 26 April 1882, devised and directed by Huxley and Dean Farrar at the Athenæum.)[9] This chapter examines some of the flashpoints in the club's history between 1860 and 1890, when liberal opinion in politics, religion and science assumed the ascendancy in Britain, and the Athenæum strove to maintain its tradition of tolerance and balance. It is at these flashpoints, and at times when conservative sexual mores

influenced public life, that the relationship between national developments and the life of the club, conducted on the margins between the private and the public, is most revealing.

The formal alliance between the Athenæum and the learned societies that had been forged when the founding Committee first met in 1824 remained in place for over fifty years.[10] The link was weakened, however, after the death of Lord Stanhope in 1875, when it was decided that the presidents of the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Academy should only be *ex officio* members of the General Committee, rather than trustees for life.[11] There would now be three trustees, all elected by the membership at large in a more democratic age. Joseph Dalton Hooker, however, the distinguished explorer, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and president of the Royal Society, regretted that 'the modified Rule overlooks the manifest intention of the Founders of the Club', which was to formalise the Athenæum's special interest in science, literature and the fine arts in its constitution.[12]

The notoriously irritable Hooker was wary of any move that might slow the march of science by disempowering its leading practitioners. Earlier in the 1870s he had defeated Richard Owen of the British Museum in a battle to defend the research collection at Kew. Whereas Owen had rejected Darwin's theory of natural selection, Hooker was Darwin's close friend and colleague, and the first to learn of and accept his theory of natural selection. During the 1860s the battles over the new biology and other developments in the sciences were fought out mainly in institutions and unofficial groups in London, such as the Royal Institution, the Government School of Mines and University College; the Royal Society, the Linnæan Society and the Geological Society; the X Club and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which moved its annual meetings around the country. Darwin, Hooker and Owen were all active members of the Athenæum, where the main combatants met informally and discussed the scientific issues of the day in private.

Cambridge science and social science were also represented in the club in the nineteenth century, from the days of William Whewell, an original member, to those of the founders and first directors of the Cavendish laboratory.[13] A more clearly definable Cambridge grouping, however, were the Apostles, members of

an elite secret society of undergraduates, most of them Trinity and Kings men, who held regular meetings at which a member would present a paper which was then discussed at some length. Of those who became Apostles between 1820 and 1887, a quarter later belonged to the Athenæum, which offered not only recognition and status but also wider opportunities for influence.[14] Apostles supported each other in elections, and fourteen of their number were elected under Rule II,[15] an honour so well known outside the club by the 1870s that it could be referred to by a biographer without explanation.[16] Canvassing for votes was a familiar feature of Clubland, epitomised in Browning's self-description as a 'great hungry spider', waiting at the head of the grand staircase at the Athenæum to entrap his prey on ballot days.[17] There was more to the Apostles' tactics, however, than the support of friends and colleagues: they were also part of a broader liberal campaign to which some leading members of the Athenæum also contributed.[18] Yet the club, founded by a high Tory of the old school, was regarded as the natural home of bishops and judges, the majority of whom held conservative views. Here was a potential source of conflict.

The most active pressure group in the liberal cause (lower-case 'l'), both inside and outside the clubhouse, were the nine members of the Athenæum who founded the X Club in 1864. Three of them – their leader Thomas Huxley, Sir John Lubbock and Herbert Spencer – were later to feature in *Ballot Day 1892* (see p. 6).[19] George Busk was a naval surgeon and naturalist,[20] Hooker an expert on the geographical distribution of plants and John Tyndall an outstanding physicist.[21] William Spottiswoode was a mathematician and physicist, Sir Edward Frankland a chemist, famous for his analysis of the public water supply,[22] and Thomas Hirst a mathematician, whose diaries provide unusually detailed accounts of attendance at the Athenæum.[23] All became FRSs apart from Spencer, who refused the offer in a sulk. That all but one of them (Spottiswoode) were elected to the club under Rule II also reflects their eminence; that all of them served on the General Committee, Lubbock as a trustee, indicates not only individual commitment but also a shared and overtly stated intent with regard to the shaping of the club.[24] Long before the formation of the X Club, its future members, the 'X network', were active in bringing liberal intellectuals into the Athenæum.

Their attention was first drawn to the candidature of Henry Thomas Buckle, whose *History of Civilization in England*, volume I, was published in 1857 to great acclaim. Buckle, a freethinker in religion and a radical in politics, was soon introduced to Darwin, Huxley and Spencer,[25] and the following year his name was due to come up for balloting at the Athenæum.[26] The clergy had 'not been lovingly treated' in Buckle's history, and his friends wanted to avoid a humiliating failure in the ballot by proposing him for election by the Committee under Rule II.[27] He insisted, however, on his name going forward for election by the club at large. Hooker was active in his support, encouraging the newly elected Huxley to pay his dues quickly and 'help to swamp the parsons & get Buckle in'.[28] Hooker need not have worried, as the membership was unwilling to be swayed by clerical opposition. Buckle's ballot card was so crammed with signatures that an extra sheet had to be pasted to it.[29] One member who was explicitly asked to vote against Buckle, 'because of his religious views', replied: 'If that is your reason, I shall certainly go and vote – for him.'[30] Indeed, the majority of the clergy voted for him and he was elected by 264 votes to 9 on 1 February.

Similar numbers of signatures were scrawled under the name of William Spottiswoode, elected in the ballot on 7 February 1859; and the campaign to bring in other liberal figures continued in 1860, when Tyndall seconded Henry Fawcett, duly elected on 30 March 1874 after a normal wait.[31] It was in March 1860 that another controversy led to a call to arms by the X network, when a group of Oxford-educated clergymen published *Essays and Reviews*. Instead of separating theology from science, the essayists argued, the concept of development should be applied to faith and to the documents of faith, applying new critical tools to old doctrines and ways of reading the Bible. The first essay in the collection, entitled 'The education of the world', was by Frederick Temple, headmaster of Rugby and an Oxford liberal. 'If geology proves to us that we must not interpret the first chapters of Genesis literally,' Temple wrote, 'if historical investigation shall show us that inspiration, however it may protect the doctrine, yet was not empowered to protect the narrative of the inspired writers from occasional inaccuracy; if careful criticism shall prove that there have been occasional interpolations and forgeries in that Book, as in many others; the results should still be welcome.'[32] Temple's appointment as Bishop

of Exeter, nine years later, was greeted with howls of protest. The positive public responses to his subsequent translations were signs of more liberal times: in *Ballot Day 1892* he is shown as Bishop of London[33] and in 1897 he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 1860, however, the battle lines were soon drawn up, as *Essays and Reviews* became a *cause célèbre* throughout the Anglophone world, even outselling the *Origin of Species*. Most of the bishops were also Oxonians and disapproved of their liberal brethren's publication; and the most energetic among them, Bishop Samuel ('Soapy Sam') Wilberforce, was a prominent member of the club.[34] Wilberforce had already been vilified in the popular press over what appeared to be his High Church leanings.[35] The story of his demolition by Huxley, 'Darwin's bulldog', at the British Association meeting in Oxford in June 1860 requires no retelling. Recent research suggests, however, that the story has assumed legendary proportions, and that the defeat of the bishop was in fact largely the result of his unpopularity in Oxford.[36] Wilberforce's shocked response to *Essays and Reviews*, three months earlier, was based less upon what was said than upon who said it; and many clergy agreed.[37] He made this point in an anonymous review in the *Quarterly*, where he stated that there was in truth nothing in the book that was 'really new', and that Temple and Jowett were less culpable than others among the essayists.[38] (Ironically, Temple was the preacher at the British Association meeting in Oxford.)

It was Wilberforce's review that started a panic-stricken 'agitation' against the essayists by thousands of troubled English clergymen. Canon Arthur Stanley, then Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, disapproved of *Essays and Reviews* and refused to contribute an essay himself.[39] Nevertheless, he was in favour of its liberal theology, and it fell to him to defend the essayists in the time-honoured manner, responding to the bishop's *Quarterly* piece in a long article in the *Edinburgh*. When the bishops' formal letter of censure against the essayists was published in *The Times*, in February 1861, their arguments were widely discussed in private correspondence between members of the Athenæum. Stanley expressed surprise that Tait, the Bishop of London, had subscribed to the letter, while Tait clearly believed that the essays of Temple, Pattison (a Rule II member from 1865) and Jowett (who was not a member) were not objectionable in themselves.[40] Others confided in their journals: the

naturalist Sir Charles Bunbury, for example, found himself to be 'at a loss to find anything shocking or offensive, irreligious or unchristian' in either Temple's or Charles Wycliffe Goodwin's essays.[41]

It was characteristic of Athenians to clarify their thinking by writing. Among dozens of references in Wilberforce's journal to his writing sermons, reviews, speeches and letters in the clubhouse itself, one is particularly telling: 'To Athenæum, to finish part of sermon and write letter *undisturbed*' (emphasis added).[42] Yet in using the south library as a haven when staying in London for meetings, Wilberforce was also observed: we are told, for example, that he would pile 'huge folios' on his table.[43] Similarly, when he dined in the coffee room with the Bishop of Salisbury, Walter Hamilton, after Convocation in 1860, he would have been observed by members sitting nearby, including some who disagreed with him.[44] Contemporary assessments of a complex personality such as Wilberforce's were formed not only in public, when he preached in the Abbey or spoke in the House of Lords, or in private, when walking in St James's Park or riding at Cuddesdon, but also at the Athenæum, which offered a third, neutral space to its members.[45] If club life, public life and private life were represented by three circles, the first would overlap with the second more than with the third. Tensions associated with conflicting positions in the public realm could be resolved, or at least tempered, through mutual trust in shared club values, including confidentiality, making for freer exchanges of views than was possible outside. Wilberforce and Stanley disagreed in public about *Essays and Reviews*, and yet in private both thought that it was a mistake to publish. It was said by somebody who knew both of them well that 'they had agreed to love each other in private, and to do each other as much mischief as possible in public'.[46] Yet both the worldly Wilberforce, dining with his brother bishops, and the unworldly Stanley, who was soon to preside over liberal tea-parties at the Westminster Deanery (also observed and described in memoirs), played leading roles in Church politics, and in opposing camps.[47]

A crisis in the Church of England that was related to the controversy over *Essays and Reviews* led to the X network taking direct action at the Athenæum. Bishop John Colenso of Natal's liberal attitude towards polygamy, particularly with respect to the sacrament of baptism in a colonial context, brought him a degree of notoriety in Britain in January 1858.[48] Having been defended

by F.D. Maurice, among others, Colenso lost his support later that year.[49] The publication of Colenso's essays on the Eucharist so disturbed his High Church metropolitan, Bishop Gray of Cape Town, that he consulted Wilberforce on the matter: the verdict was that Colenso was theologically vague but not heretical. In 1861, however, Colenso's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, which represented a challenge to traditional teaching on sin and the Atonement, attracted accusations of heresy from one of his colonial colleagues and an official appeal to the English bishops. In March 1862, Hooker invited the Lubbocks to Kew to discuss how best to support Colenso. When Sir Charles Lyell then consulted Lubbock, Hooker, Huxley and Dr William Carpenter – biologist and registrar at University College, Unitarian and a Rule II member of the Athenæum since 1857 – the latter suggested getting Colenso into the club as a colonial bishop and Huxley urged Lubbock, who was on the Committee, to help.[50]

When the English bishops met in May 1862, Wilberforce, his friend Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury and Bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester seem to have led the attack on Colenso, who was soon to arrive in England. In July, Hirst, Tyndall and the Lubbocks gathered at the Busks to meet 'the renowned Bishop Colenso', who was hastily preparing the first part of yet another highly controversial book for publication.[51] Colenso had long been persuaded by Lyell's work that there had been no universal deluge; and he had recently absorbed *Essays and Reviews*. Now he applied 'scientific' principles to the hyperbolic arithmetic of the Old Testament in his *Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, Critically Examined*. Setting aside the question of the book's crude methodology, the fact that a bishop wrote it was enough to cause a furore. This came to a head early in 1863 with the publication of the second part at about the same time as Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*, both books selling as fast as popular novels. Bishop Gray of Cape Town had been an honorary member of the Athenæum the previous year, and was re-elected for the usual period of a month on 13 January 1863, with renewal for a further month on 10 February.[52] A week later, Carpenter and Lyell proposed Colenso for honorary membership.[53] The General Committee was chaired that day by Lord Overstone, a trustee, phenomenally wealthy authority on currency and banking and friend and admirer of Wilberforce.[54] Members of the X network had canvassed support for each other and for

like-minded friends in elections to the Committee: at least four of the twelve other members present – Carpenter, Lubbock, Tyndall and the diplomat Frederick Chatfield – could be relied upon to support the proposal. Unusually, a debate arose when the question was put and a vote was taken: Colenso was elected for a month by a majority of six (9:3). The Committee had maintained a balance between ecclesiastical authority, represented by Gray, and free enquiry and scientific principles, represented by Colenso. From the X network's point of view, however, this was a clear victory.

Later that month Colenso's name was 'passed over' in the list of vice-presidents of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel,[55] and on 14 March 1863 the archbishops and bishops asked him to resign his vice-presidency: he refused. Three days later, with another trustee, Lord Stanhope, in the chair, the Committee of the Athenæum re-elected him for another month, continuing to provide access to a great library as he prepared his defence and to scientific allies whose lectures he attended in London.[56] One prominent member, Bishop Tait of London, was keen to resolve the clash between opposing forces in the Church, and had recently invited Colenso for a private talk: in his diary he recorded that the Bishop of Natal was 'very wild' and 'likely to go very far in discarding the old faith'.[57] A few weeks later Colenso commented in a letter to Lyell upon the attitude of the English bishops, led by Wilberforce, who 'cut [him] dead'.[58] Tait, whom he encountered near the Athenæum, was the sole exception:

> I met him in Pall Mall a few days ago, where he was walking arm in arm with another Bishop, and I was going to pass him with a salutation. But he made a point of shaking me heartily by the hand, and stopping to ask me some friendly question, the other standing mute all the while. I could not see who it was: perhaps he did not know me.

Between April and November 1863, X Club members on the Committee managed to get Colenso's honorary membership of the Athenæum renewed, in spite of opposition from the classical and biblical scholar Dr (later Sir) William Smith among others.[59] The list of 'Colonists' was then full, however, and Colenso lost his membership.[60]

The year 1864 was to be an important one in the history of Victorian science, with the award to Darwin of the Royal Society's Copley Medal (although General Sabine PRS, a trustee of the Athenæum, insisted that no reference to the *Origin* should appear in the citation); the circulation of Lyell's *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* and Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (both 1863); and the formation of the X Club. It was also a momentous year for the Victorian Church. Two years earlier, H.B. Wilson and Rowland Williams, two of the contributors to *Essays and Reviews*, had been brought before the ecclesiastical courts. When the Dean of Arches rejected most of the charges against Williams and merely suspended both men from their benefices for a year, they and their supporters hailed the judgment as a victory: Anglican clergy could now teach in the light of modern knowledge.[61] Nevertheless, Wilson and Williams appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the hope of acquittal from all charges, which they duly received on 8 February 1864. Four of the five members of the committee who voted to clear them – Lord Chancellor Westbury, Lord Chelmsford, Lord Kingsdown and Bishop Tait – were members of the Athenæum, as were the two archbishops who dissented from the judgment.[62] What scandalised High Churchmen, some of whom left the Church of England for Rome, was that lords temporal had ruled on matters spiritual. Wilberforce, encouraged by the storm of protest that followed the judgment, brought the book before the Upper House of Convocation, which resulted in a 'synodical condemnation' in June, from which Tait dissented.

Meanwhile, at the Athenæum, Wilberforce had failed to sabotage the X Club's manoeuvrings in support of Bishop Colenso, whose honorary membership of the club was renewed.[63] In March 1865 the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council found for Colenso, thirteen months after they had found for Wilson of *Essays and Reviews*. In December 1865 Spottiswoode informed his fellow X Club members that 'the liberal party at Oxford were about to try to utilise the present movement for University Extension originated by the Theological party. The former would be glad to receive support from the friends of science out of the University.' The nine members of the X Club, most of whom were present or future FRSs and members of the Committee at the

Athenæum, were operating as a pressure group with liberal ambitions for both societies, as well as for the Church of England and Oxford University; and during the 1870s they held their monthly meetings at the Athenæum.

For the club, the historical significance of both the Colenso affair, which dragged on for several more years,[64] and the controversy surrounding *Essays and Reviews* lies in the Committee's measured response to a liberalising trend in the Church, society and Athenæum membership, which included not only the X Club agitators but also a number of influential commentators on political and cultural developments. Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen and Sir Henry Maine were all habitués and all published in periodicals with large circulations, in many cases edited by present or future members of the club. Among the Athenian editors of established titles in the 1860s were George Cornewall Lewis and Henry Reeve of the quarterly *Edinburgh Review*, William Macpherson and Dr (later Sir) William Smith of Murray's *Quarterly Review* (formerly Croker's house journal) and James Anthony Froude of the monthly *Fraser's Magazine*. Two new monthlies that appeared at around the same time as the *Origin of Species* heralded a new era in magazine publishing. *Macmillan's Magazine*, founded in November 1859, was edited by a succession of Athenians: the biographer and literary scholar David Masson was elected under Rule II in 1868, the year in which he was succeeded by George Grove, the music editor (elected in 1871), who in 1883 handed over to John Morley (1874, Rule II), later Gladstone's biographer. *Macmillan's* published serious articles on politics and religion, as well as some lighter material, and competed with its more popular and amusing rival, the *Cornhill Magazine*, which sold 100,000 copies when it was launched in January 1860. The *Cornhill* was edited first by Thackeray and in the 1870s by Leslie Stephen (1877, Rule II), whose 'Hours in a Library' complemented the essays, fiction and poetry contributed by some of the leading writers of the day. Between 1860 and 1877 the weekly *Economist* was edited by Walter Bagehot (1875), whose study on *The English Constitution* was first published serially in the *Fortnightly Review* (1865–67). Richard Holt Hutton (1871, Rule II) edited the *Spectator* from 1861 to 1897. The launch of the *Contemporary Review* in 1866, with Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury (1856, Rule II), as editor, was in response to the secular *Fortnightly*,

edited by Morley from 1867 to 1882. It was largely through these periodicals that the steps of the Athenæum gave access to the 'public square'.

Matthew Arnold, whose Hellenic addresses to the nation were delivered in this way, knew all the editors: he seconded Hutton's candidacy at the club,[65] he was a friend of Morley's and he mentioned Sir William Smith, Masson, Bagehot and Froude in a single letter to his brother Thomas, when helping him to place an article.[66] On his election in 1856, Arnold, like Darwin before him, gloried in a drawing room 'covered with books', which led on to other rooms full of books.[67] Whenever he returned to London from wearying journeys around the country as an inspector of schools, he used the south library as a refuge from professional and family commitments, commenting in one of his regular letters to his mother, 'I write from this delightful place, the only place where I can get any real work done', and in another, 'I work here at my French Eton from about 11 to 3; then I write my letters; then I walk home and look over Grammar papers till dinner; then dinner and a game of cards with the boys'.[68] Like Wilberforce, Arnold made frequent use of the club's letterhead: of his letters from the Athenæum in 1864, for example, no fewer than forty have survived. When Arnold donated a copy of his *Poems* (1885) to the Athenæum he inscribed it to the librarian, Henry Tedder, 'with very kind regards, and cordial acknowledgements of much help'.[69] Once, when feeling unwell at the club, he asked Browning not to write an elegy of more than ten lines.[70]

The introduction and opening chapter of Arnold's best-known essay began life as the last of his lectures as professor of poetry at Oxford in May 1867. This appeared in the *Cornhill* two months later and was followed by five other articles under the title of 'Anarchy and Authority'. The final article, 'Our Liberal practitioners', published in July and September 1868, has been described as 'almost an electioneering pamphlet', in advance of the general election that brought Gladstone the premiership.[71] *Culture and Anarchy*, published by Smith, Elder in January 1869, contrasts the Greek ideal of 'sweetness and light', embodied in the 'best that has been thought and said in the world', with the ugly reality of the Hyde Park riots of 1866, which Arnold relates to 'an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes'.[72]

Disraeli's Reform Bill was passed in 1867. Prussia defeated Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. Arnold's analysis of national and international politics in *Culture and Anarchy* is based upon observations made not only on his many journeys across Britain and the Continent, but also closer to home, in Belgravia and at the Athenæum. In a reprise of events in 1831,[73] panes in the morning room and writing room windows of the club were smashed by the mob on the evening of 24 July 1866, a month after the resignation of Lord Russell's Liberal government, which had failed to bring in a Reform Bill. Pasted into the minute book of the General Committee is a cutting from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which is described a hearing at the Bow Street police court next morning. Some of the 'lowest of the London "roughs"' were led from Trafalgar Square to Waterloo Place, via Gladstone's house in Carlton Gardens, by a seventeen-year-old cabinet maker named Thomas Ferris, whose missile – a stone he picked up in Waterloo Place – was retrieved by club staff and exhibited as evidence at the hearing.[74] Sir Richard Mayne, the indecisive police commissioner and an original member of the Athenæum, was hounded by the press during this period of rioting. Arnold observed his neighbour's plight from his balcony when Mayne's own windows in Chester Square were smashed. In a letter to his mother, Arnold concluded that, 'whereas in France, since the Revolution, a man feels that the power which represses him is the *State*, is *himself*, here a man feels that the power which represses him is the Tories, the upper class, the aristocracy, and so on'.[75]

Arnold does not look to the aristocratic 'Barbarians' for answers in *Culture and Anarchy*. 'What we want,' he argues, is 'a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon our routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness, sweetness and light; and these are just what culture generates and fosters.'[76] A 'man's life', he suggests, 'depends for its solidity and value on whether he reads during that day, and, far more still, on what he reads during it'.[77] Arnold's Athenian reflections crystallise in a comparison between France, with its Academy, and Britain, with its 'Philistine' Nonconformist shopkeepers. He fosters support for his views by implicitly including the reader among 'every one' and 'one':

> Every one who knows the characteristics of our national life . . . knows exactly what an English Academy would be like. One can see the happy family in

> one's mind's eye as distinctly as if it were already constituted. Lord Stanhope, the Dean of St Paul's [Milman], the Bishop of Oxford [Wilberforce], Mr. Gladstone, the Dean of Westminster [Stanley], Mr. Froude, Mr. Henry Reeve, – everything which is influential, accomplished, and distinguished.[78]

It is as if he were casting his eye around the clubhouse: among Arnold's pantheon, only Gladstone, the club's *eminence grise*, was not a member; all the others served on the General Committee, Stanhope as a trustee. From the steps of his Athenæum, or Academy, Arnold could address the gentlemen and ladies who inhabited the public square. Harder to reach, however, was Thomas Ferris, a member of Arnold's 'Populace' and himself an orator, 'addressing the mob from the pedestal of the Nelson Monument'.[79]

In 1862, five years before Arnold's articles on 'Anarchy and Authority' appeared, the *Cornhill* had published an essay on liberalism by the Benthamite writer and future High Court judge, James Fitzjames Stephen, whose anti-democratic sentiments seem, from a twenty-first-century perspective, as illiberal as Arnold's comments on the 'Populace' and the dangers of Reform. Through the works of Dickens and other reformist novelists, Stephen argued, the 'working man' had been the subject of a 'sort of apotheosis'.[80] The danger of political liberalism, he suggested, was in 'deifying . . . slight and ineffectual public sentiments', when in reality the 'highest function which the great mass of mankind could ever be fitted to perform' would be 'that of recognizing the moral and intellectual superiority of the few who, in virtue of a happy combination of personal gifts with accidental advantages, ought to be regarded as their natural leaders'.[81]

Two years later, in 1864, Stephen defended Dr Williams of *Essays and Reviews*, thereby enhancing his reputation as a barrister.[82] He also appeared for Colenso in his successful appeal and was unhappy about Matthew Arnold's critical essay on his client,[83] publishing a riposte in the *Saturday Review*. Arnold commented on this 'long elaborate' attack on him at the time, adding that Stephen 'meant to be as civil as he could, consistent with attacking me au fond; and yesterday he sent his wife to call, as a proof, I suppose, that he wished amity'.[84] While behaving as perfectly civil gentlemen, the 'unpolemical' Arnold and Stephen the controversialist kept up 'continual trench warfare' in subsequent years.[85] In 1868 Arnold encouraged his fellow club member William Thomson, the Archbishop

of York, to be gentle with Colenso the man while correcting him on the line he had taken, and commented that 'the Liberal Party (as they call themselves)' were 'very angry' with him; that 'a certain section of Liberals were making capital out of Colenso'; and that this section was, in his opinion, 'able and disposed to damage the cause of true culture, which is the same as the cause of true religion'.[86] Fitzjames Stephen's liberalism, a revised version of Mill's, was closer in spirit to that of the bellicose X Club than to Arnold's.

In 1873 Fitzjames Stephen became a member under Rule II of the kind of elite that he described in 'Liberalism'. (In 1877 he was joined at the club by his brother Leslie, soon to be editor of that most Athenian and liberal of reference works, the *Dictionary of National Biography*.)[87] Fitzjames recorded that he and the jurist Sir Henry Maine, his Cambridge friend and fellow Apostle, had 'the queerest friendly battles on the subject of the proper method of theorizing about law'.[88] Maine, elected under Rule II in 1862, was devoted to the club, as was his friend Francis Galton (1855, Rule II), a cousin of Darwin's, who first publicised his theory of eugenics in *Macmillan's Magazine* (1865). In later life Galton spent many hours with Maine, discussing 'topics connected with primitive culture',[89] and with the polymath Herbert Spencer, whose books, including the ten volumes of his 'System of Synthetic Philosophy', made him the most famous British intellectual in Europe in the late nineteenth century. Spencer and Galton passed 'an hour or two of the afternoon, during many years, in the then smoking room of the Athenaeum Club, when quiet conversation was easy'.[90]

For Spencer, the club was 'more of a home than his own residence', providing him with a library, a billiard room in which he would beat all comers and a smoking room and drawing room in which he could talk.[91] In 'friendly battles' with his intellectual peers, Spencer was a notoriously bad loser, particularly when his grand theories came up against hard scientific evidence to the contrary. Galton recalled an occasion on which Spencer, Huxley and another member dined together at the club:

> Spencer said: 'You would little think when I was young I wrote a tragedy.' Huxley instantly flashed out with 'I know its plot.' Spencer indignantly denied the possibility of his knowing it, he having never shown the tragedy

> nor even spoken of its existence to any one, before then. Huxley persisted, and being challenged to tell, said that the plot lay in a beautiful deduction being killed by an ugly little fact.[92]

Spencer served on several committees from 1874 onwards, wrote frequent letters of complaint to the secretary on housekeeping matters and introduced many new members, including the artists Lawrence Alma-Tadema and John Brett, and the Japanese statesman and diplomat Kentaro Kaneko (as an honorary member).[93] He was assisted by Henry Tedder, the club's librarian, in the preparation of his *Principles of Sociology* (1877–96).[94] The complete clubman, he rarely missed either a committee meeting at the Athenæum or an X Club dinner. He was selective in his commitments, however, and declined an invitation to join the Metaphysical Society,[95] a prestigious discussion group limited to forty members and initially convened at Stanley's Deanery in 1869 by the architect James Knowles, editor first of the *Contemporary Review* and then of the *Nineteenth Century*, who failed to be elected at the Athenæum.[96]

Browning also declined, as did John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain (1875, Rule II), the inventor and engineer, and Matthew Arnold did not belong for some reason.[97] Forty-four of the sixty-two members in the short history of the Metaphysical Society (1869–80) were also members of the Athenæum, however; seven of the ten review editors in the Metaphysical Society were also Athenians, five of the seven were Rule II members and four of them members of the Committee. More than one-sixth of the Metaphysical Society's membership had come under the influence of the Apostles.[98] As in the clubhouse and the more highbrow reviews, discussion in the Metaphysical Society was among 'thinking men' rather than professional philosophers, to the extent that some younger members who joined later found it all rather amateurish.[99] A pattern of 'unity in diversity, of social homogeneity encouraging intellectual heterodoxy' in the meetings of the Metaphysical Society has been described as 'typical of the English mind'.[100]

Diversity and heterodoxy were certainly in evidence at the meeting in February 1873, when a number of prominent Athenians were present. The Bishop of Peterborough, Dr William Magee, who was famed for his oratory in the Lords, described the gathering in a letter to his wife:

> I went to dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel. The dinner was certainly a strangely interesting one. Had the dishes been as various we should have had severe dyspepsia, all of us. Archbishop Manning [1870, Rule II] in the chair was flanked by two Protestant bishops right and left – Gloucester and Bristol [Ellicott, 1863] and myself [1869] – on my right was Hutton [1871, Rule II] . . . an Arian; then came Father Dalgairns, a very able Roman Catholic priest; opposite him, Lord A. Russell [1858], a Deist; then two Scotch metaphysical writers – Freethinkers; then Knowles . . . then, dressed as a layman and looking like a country squire, was Ward . . . earliest of the perverts to Rome; then Greg [1868, Rule II], author of *The Creed of Christendom*, a Deist; then Froude [1859, Rule II], the historian, once a deacon in our church, now a Deist; then Roden Noel, an actual Atheist and red republican, and looking very like one! Lastly Ruskin [1849, Rule II], who read after dinner a paper on miracles! which we discussed for an hour and a half! Nothing could be calmer, fairer, or even, on the whole, more reverent than the discussion. Nothing flippant or scoffing or bitter was said on either side, and very great ability, both of speech and thought, was shown by most speakers. In my opinion, we, the Christians, had much the best of it. . . . We only wanted a Jew and a Mahometan to make our Religious Museum complete.[101]

The gentlemanly conventions of the Metaphysical Society were similar to those of the Athenæum, where Jews and Muslims were among the membership in the 1870s and where discussion also reflected the 'continued struggle of the liberal mind with a seemingly inevitable pluralism of values'.[102] A particular stumbling block for the liberal mind was the taboo subject of sex, which proved to be divisive at the club. Abraham Hayward QC (1835, Rule II) made the Athenæum his headquarters in a long career as an essayist and translator, writing for both the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh Review*, and as an advisor to some of the political and literary celebrities of the day.[103] Back in the 1820s, when establishing himself in London, he had made his name by being one of the few moderate Tories who could 'hold his own' against John Stuart Mill (1830) at the London Debating Society, which was dominated by philosophic radicals.[104] Half a century later, Hayward, by now a moderate Liberal, published

an obituary of Mill in *The Times* for Saturday 10 May 1873 in which he referred to Mill's 'recklessly offending the most respectable portion of [his] constituency' as a Member of Parliament.[105]

Next day the review was denounced from the pulpit of St James's, York Street, by the Revd Stopford Augustus Brooke, a liberal clergyman and fashionable preacher who was to secede to the Unitarian church in 1880, the year after his election to the Athenæum. In response, Hayward had the obituary privately printed, as well as an open letter to Brooke in which he referred to Mill's having fallen 'under the notice of the police by circulating copies of "Every Woman's Book, or What is Love?" and flinging down the areas of houses, for the edification of the maid-servants, printed papers or broadsheets containing practical directions for sexual intercourse without adding to the population'.[106] More recently, he added, Mill had fallen in love with 'the lady (a married woman) who afterwards became his wife' and had written 'a succession of papers in the *Examiner* against marriage as a lasting tie, and in favour of unlimited liberty of divorce'. To class Mill with Locke, Bentham, Adam Smith or Malthus was 'preposterous'.

These exchanges proved to be the opening shots in a long battle over Mill's reputation, not least in further obituaries.[107] Mill's relationship with Harriet Taylor had been the subject of speculation for years. At the Athenæum, his own club and also that of Harriet's husband, the matter was personal: when Mill had visited the Taylors' family home in Regent's Park, John Taylor had tactfully withdrawn to the clubhouse;[108] and Mill's visitors at the end of his life included fellow members Bain, Hare, Fawcett and Morley. Hayward sent a copy of his open letter to the diplomat and author William Dougal Christie, an admirer of Mill and a member of the club since 1846. Following a heated exchange of letters, Christie cut Hayward at the whist table, a 'convulsive' act.[109] Hayward circulated a further printed statement on this 'deliberate outrage on the proprieties of cultivated life', to which Christie replied in kind, saying that Hayward had not only denied Mill's 'intellectual greatness', unlike other obituarists, but had 'horribly' cast 'reflection on a deceased lady'.[110] Christie's reply was pointedly dedicated to 'the friend of [his] youth', Mill's deceased brother, James Bentham Mill, himself a former member of the club. When a memorial tribute to Mill was proposed, Hayward campaigned against it, persuading Gladstone to

withdraw his support on the basis of Mill's views on birth control.[111] The duke of Argyll, Lord Salisbury and Lord Derby, however, pillars of the Establishment and members of the club, sent in their subscriptions.

We have seen that the Athenæum extended liberal hospitality to certain members whose private lives were irregular: in the early years Richard Heber, a homosexual, was a trustee and the membership included J.M.W. Turner, Theodore Hook and Thomas Barnes, all of whom lived with common law wives, as did Wilkie Collins, elected in 1861 under Rule II. Marital difficulties that became the subject of public scandal seem not to have affected the club lives of Ruskin, whose marriage was annulled in 1854, Dickens, who separated from his wife in 1858, and the equally successful Bulwer Lytton, who in the same year committed his wife Rosina to a private asylum, following her frequent public denunciations of him.[112] Although Mill was not alone among the club's literati in suffering public scrutiny of his private life, the internal dispute over his posthumous reputation and that of his wife was unusual. Nevertheless, members of liberal mind could hold conservative views on sex and marriage. Matthew Arnold's opposition to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, for example, discussed in *Culture and Anarchy*, was based upon his strong sense that 'the sacredness of marriage, and the customs that regulate it, were triumphs of culture which had been won, painfully and with effort, from the unbridled promiscuity of primitive life'; and the earl of Rosebery, Gladstone's successor as Liberal premier, referred to Morley as unsuitable for the foreign secretaryship because he had 'anticipated the ceremony of marriage'.[113]

The year of Lord Rosebery's election to the Athenæum, 1885, also marked the death of the popular Tory politician and poet, Richard Monckton Milnes. What Emerson probably did not know when he became an admirer at the club in 1848 was that Milnes owned the finest collection of erotic literature in England.[114] Writers and publishers became alert to the danger of prosecution after the passing of the Obscene Publications Act in 1857: in the case of Thomas Hardy, who was elected under Rule II in 1891 but preferred the Savile Club, censorship of his work drove him to abandon fiction after publishing *Jude the Obscure* (1894–95). Lord Campbell, the Lord Chief Justice and the main sponsor of the act, joined the Athenæum in 1853. He was a Liberal politician, lawyer and man of letters who believed that morality depended upon

divine revelation, as in the story of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), and who considered pornography to be more poisonous than prussic acid. His successor, Sir Alexander Cockburn, modified the act in 1868, shifting its focus from intention to effect. A notorious womaniser and the father of two illegitimate children, Cockburn was refused a peerage by Queen Victoria, who commented upon the 'notoriously bad moral character of the Chief Justice'.[115]

Concealment was essential in such a society, as Richard Burton knew very well. To members of the general public Captain Burton of the Indian Army and the diplomatic corps was the manly adventurer of Frederic Leighton's portrait, with glittering eyes and a cheek deeply scarred by a javelin that had penetrated his mouth in Somaliland in 1855. To members of the Athenæum he was also the habitué of the south library described by Henry Tedder, doggedly working on his translation of *The Arabian Nights* in the 1880s, 'snuff-box at his side'.[116] (He petitioned, unsuccessfully, for smoking to be allowed in the hall.)[117] In 1861, the year of his marriage, election to the club and consular posting to Fernando Po, Burton had been embroiled in the famous dispute with his fellow traveller and explorer of the sources of the Nile, Captain John Speke, which fascinated the Victorian public and revived memories of Denham and Clapperton.[118] Burton's avid interest in sex was widely known in his own circle, which included both Leighton (elected in 1866) and Swinburne during his time as consul at Damascus (1869–71), and probably among fellow members of the Club. Later his wife Isabel lived in fear of his falling foul of the Obscene Publications Act, which he avoided by having his translations of *The Kama Sutra* (1883) and *The Perfumed Garden* (1886) published privately. It was in 1886 that this master of disguise, who had visited Mecca as a young man, was knighted.

Following his appointment to the consulship at Trieste, in 1872, Burton was frequently given leave and spent some of it in London. He endorsed the foreword to his unexpurgated translation of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (15 August 1885), not from the Athenæum but the Wanderers' Club, based at 9 Pall Mall and providing 'a place of resort for men of travel and other gentlemen who have associated in distant parts of the world'.[119] Burton's was an 'unembarrassed mind', and his translation includes passages of exuberant and athletic sexual activity that earlier translations, such as Edward William Lane's, had omitted.[120] The British reading public, however, lived under what he

described in the foreword as a 'despotism of the lower "middle-class" Philister, who can pardon anything but superiority'.[121] The ten privately printed volumes of the *Nights* sold much better than expected. Three years later, however, in the famous 'terminal essay' to the *Supplemental Nights*, he was still angry, bemoaning the fact that, in an age 'saturated with cant and hypocrisy, here and there a venal pen will mourn over the "Pornography" of The Nights, dwell upon the "Ethics of Dirt" and the "Garbage of the Brothel" '.[122] The bibliography in Lady's Burton's biography of her late husband includes no erotica.[123] On 5 January 1886 Robert Louis Stevenson published *Jekyll and Hyde*.[124]

Meanwhile the 'secret life' of the Victorian Establishment, the subject of 'Walter's' pornographic epic, had come under public scrutiny in July 1885 when W.T. Stead published his articles on 'The maiden tribute of modern Babylon' in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Although Josephine Butler 'hated' the now sensationalist evening paper, she had agreed to join Stead's 'special commission' among the brothels of London, following parliament's failure to raise the age of consent from thirteen years to fifteen or sixteen, and thus help to curb the national and international trafficking of young girls.[125] On Tuesday 7 July 1885, the day after graphic details of the horrors witnessed by the special commission first appeared in the *Gazette*, the club's General Committee discussed a letter received from Sir Frederick Bramwell, a distinguished mechanical engineer, calling attention to the paper's treatment of 'Horrible Revelations of London Vice' and 'Virgin Victims Sold, Drugged, Outraged and Exported'. A proposal from the Queen's librarian at Windsor, Richard Rivington Holmes, and seconded by Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, a Roman Catholic journalist and Liberal MP, that the *Gazette* 'be removed from the List of Newspapers taken in by the Club till further directions', was followed by an amendment moved by John Bridge, a police magistrate, and seconded by Arthur Lucas, a civil engineer, that the *Gazette* 'be discontinued for to-morrow and Thursday all copies of Monday's & Tuesday's issue save the copy reserved for filing being destroyed'.[126] The amendment was carried on a show of hands (5:3) and Bramwell was thanked. Outside the clubhouse Messrs W.H. Smith and Son tried to suppress sales[127] and the prince of Wales stopped his paper. The Athenæum was not the only club to discontinue theirs, as Stead himself made clear in his final article, addressed 'To our censors', on Monday 13 July: 'When Bishop Temple and Mr. Spurgeon, Dean Vaughan and the

Salvation Army, the Bishop of Rochester and Mr. Stopford Brooke, the Bishop of Ripon and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, combine to lift up their voices in aid and support of our protest against the secret crimes of London, we need not concern ourselves very much about the censure of the clubs and the invectives of the vicious.'[128] Temple, Vaughan, Thorold (Rochester) and Carpenter (Ripon) were all members of the club, as were Josephine Butler's clerical supporters, Manning, Ellicott and her husband George, a residentiary Canon of Winchester. When the General Committee met the next day, 14 July, the lawyer Sir Frederick Pollock proposed that, inasmuch as the *Gazette* 'continues the publication of objectionable matter', it be 'dropped till further notice': this was narrowly defeated (6:7).[129]

The motives behind the rapid passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in August 1885 were thought to have been mixed: along with shocked concern and a desire to stop the associated demonstrations across the country, there may have been a desire to protect some of those sitting on the Treasury benches. Similarly, it is impossible to say whether the General Committee's decision on 7 July to cancel the paper for two days (8 and 9 July) was related to Stead's offer in his article of the 6th to report names and addresses in strict confidence to a select group of individuals, some of whom were members of the club.[130] Any sensitivity in the Athenæum concerning the source of Stead's title – the myth of Athenians sending a tribute of seven youths and seven maidens to the labyrinth of Dædalus in Crete every nine years – would have been heightened by the public exhibition on 25 July of an arresting painting executed in anger by one of their own number: George Frederick Watts's *Minotaur* shows the beast crushing a small bird in its fist while looking out for the next shipment of victims.[131] It was another member, Richard Webster (1883), the recently appointed Attorney-General, who successfully prosecuted Stead in October 1885 for 'buying' Eliza Armstrong. Stead, the self-appointed Theseus of London's labyrinth, gloried in his comfortable three months in Holloway Prison; but he was never proposed as a member of the club.

Part III

‘RESERVE AND DIGNITY’

(1890–1939)

7

STRANGERS AND BROTHERS

The period from 1830 to 1890 was one of rapid industrial development and urbanisation in Britain, from the age of the coach to that of the railway, from the days of the old East India Company to those of the mightiest empire in history. But it was also the period of *Pax Britannica*, in which there was only one change of monarch. The period from 1890 to 1939, to which we now turn, saw five monarchs on the throne and an abdication crisis, the advent of the motor car and the aeroplane, universal suffrage and a world war. In the early twentieth century the Athenæum was regarded as a bulwark against the forces of change and modernity. Indeed, one explanation for the club's becoming a byword for a traditionalist society lies in the contrast between its slow rate of change and that of the world outside. In the early years of the period, from 1890 to 1914, the subject of this chapter, the club did change its system of governance and made modifications to the clubhouse. Strenuous efforts were also made, however, to resist proposed changes to the Athenæum's policy on the most controversial subject in Clubland: the admission of 'strangers'. During a period of prosperity for the club, it focused instead upon reaffirming its identity as the leading literary club in London and celebrating the success of its most eminent members.

J. Walter Wilson's *Ballot Day 1892*, discussed in the Prologue, was published on 11 March 1893 as a large double-page pull-out supplement to an article on the club by the Revd Francis Waugh in the *Illustrated London News*. The drawing conveys a sense of Olympian calm and assured continuity, as a large group of eminent men gather to elect a handful of new members. The decorative

scheme in their clubhouse was, however, undergoing such dramatic changes at the time that Henry Tedder, the club's vigilant secretary and librarian, called the artist back to amend his work.[1] The need for redecoration had become apparent in 1886, when the introduction of electric lighting made the walls of the hall in particular look cold and flat.[2] The desire to make a dramatic aesthetic statement in the process reflected a newfound confidence in the club's financial situation, which in turn resulted from changes in the way it governed itself.

In 1889 the recommendations of a special investigative committee were accepted by an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM): a manager was to be appointed and the office of secretary, as then constituted, abolished, with 'such of the duties connected with the Secretary's office as are purely literary or clerical' being carried out by the 'Secretary and Librarian' (Tedder).[3] To the 'great regret' of the General Committee this involved the retirement of Claude Webster, whose services as secretary were 'long and valued', but also coincided with thirty-five years of 'chronic indebtedness'.[4] Alan Sandilands, formerly manager of the Thatched House Club in St James's Street, was duly appointed as manager in July 1889 with a salary of £260 per annum, and within a year was congratulated for his 'zeal and capacity' in reforming the 'system of domestic management'.[5] By December 1890, the club had achieved a cash balance of £1,072, having had 'no balance at all' since the mid-1850s.[6] The post of manager existed for less than seven years, however: Sandilands, later described by a member as 'a very smooth-tongued and plausible person, who did very well until he began dipping his fingers into the till', left in 1896, when he was found to be 'short in his cash'.[7]

A further constitutional change proved to be of lasting significance: the establishment of a 'Committee of Management', consisting of nine members, to deal with the domestic financial affairs of the club. The special investigative committee was reconstituted as the Executive Committee, a group which would soon be meeting weekly (on Tuesdays at 4 p.m.) and reporting to the General Committee, which would now meet monthly.[8] At their first meeting, on 21 May 1889, members of the Executive Committee put Sir Frederick Abel, an ordnance chemist and trustee, in the chair. Financial control would always remain their priority: they approved the budgets of other committees, for example, and were

responsible for submitting accounts to the AGM. They also dealt with matters relating to the ballot, staffing, and everything from provisioning to boiler repairs, chimney sweeping, petty thefts and complaints. (It was not long before the first complaint against the Executive Committee itself arose.)[9] A new level of vigilance was now achieved: it was discovered, for example, that the number of ordinary members had crept up in error, necessitating a temporary reduction in the number of candidates who could be elected in order to reduce the main membership to the statutory 1,200.[10]

Sir Frederick had played a leading role in the electrification of the clubhouse. Now, as chairman of the Executive Committee, he created another subcommittee to make recommendations on the sensitive matter of redecoration.[11] Arthur Lucas, a civil engineer whose company was involved in developing London's underground railway system, had served on the electrification committee and now joined two other members of the new group, both of whom were distinguished artists. The 'inscrutably senatorial' Sir Edward Poynter was both president of the Royal Academy, and thus an *ex officio* member of the club's General Committee, and director of the National Gallery: he was the last practising artist to hold the post.[12] Like Poynter, his friend and colleague Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a genial and expansive Dutchman, was not only a painter, whose works included *Phidias Showing the Frieze of the Parthenon to his Friends* (1868), but also a decorative designer. Both men were prominent figures in the classical revival associated with late-Victorian Aestheticism, a movement led by Sir Frederic Leighton, one of the most influential members of the General Committee until his death in 1896.[13] Decimus Burton's restrained Greek Revival interior of 1830 had appealed to a generation of members who shared a background in the Classics and whose number included a few influential individuals who had visited Athens. Six decades later, Pompeii was as significant a source of inspiration as Athens for Poynter and Alma-Tadema as they prepared their Græco-Roman designs for a later and more widely travelled generation of members. Their archaeological approach was in tune with the times and their designs 'turned into reality' some of the paintings that had made them famous.[14]

Their most enduring innovation was the introduction of marble dadoes in the hall and on the grand staircase. According to William Gaunt, Alma-Tadema 'was wont to say that he first acquired his passion for marble in 1858

when he visited the handsome, marmoreal smoking-room of a club in Ghent, but this was only a faint, modern reflection of that ancient club – the public bath; and marble to be seen in its glory must be seen in Italy'.[15] There, Gaunt continues, as the artist 'looked on the tinted columns, framed in foliage and set against the wine-dark sea, he exclaimed, "And yet fools say that pale green and blue do not harmonize" '. In 1890 many of the sub-committee's bold proposals on paint colours were adopted, but the plan to replace scagliola columns with marble proved to be prohibitively expensive. The resulting scheme, though doomed to obsolescence within half a century, was a sea-change into something rich and strange.

The phasing of the work over three summer closures spread the costs and avoided disruption. First, in August 1891, the hall and grand staircase were redecorated in just four weeks, implementing designs by Alma-Tadema which took account of the Roman mosaic floor in the hall, the walls of which were described by Waugh as 'painted in primrose yellow of various tints' and dadoed with 'pavonazetto and other coloured marbles, the back with green cipolino'.[16] The art historian Bruce Boucher, who examines the whole decorative scheme in detail in *Armchair Athenians*, explains that part of the staircase was 'panelled with fine slabs of brecchia', but that Alma-Tadema's proposals for an entablature in beige and dark red, and columns to either side of the Apollo with green bases and shafts of brown and tawny yellow, were dropped.[17] The artist's floral stencilling in the wagon roof of the hall would be painted over at an unspecified date, but his pendant chandeliers, described by Waugh as 'very classical', are still admired today, as is his exotic lantern above the staircase, added in 1898 and described by Boucher as seeming 'closer in style to Venetian Renaissance than Burton's late neo-classical Hall' (Plate 17).[18]

In 1892 the principal rooms on the ground floor were 'adorned with beautiful and original designs after Mr. Poynter's sketches'.[19] Boucher argues that changes to the coffee room were, 'if anything, a more radical departure from Burton's original scheme' than Alma-Tadema's hall and staircase. Here the driving force was Poynter, 'who contrived to suggest a triclinium of a Pompeian villa'.[20] His elevations show 'a dado of black with decorative patterns in lilac, gold and off-white. Above this the walls were divided into panels framed in lilac with enrichments in red and white; the centres of the panels were in two tones

of yellow with black beading'. In 1898 Alfred Baldry recorded that the dominant colours were 'golden yellow and black for the walls, and greyish white, pale purple, and green for the ceiling'.[21] Whereas Poynter's interventions in the coffee room later disappeared under numerous coats of paint, his morning room represents a late-Victorian survival in the clubhouse today, although originally the ceiling was coloured a 'deep but vivid blue' rather than green and was lavishly gilded (Plate 18).[22] Baldry described the room, 'with its gorgeous ceiling, its walls of gold Japanese leather, and its woodwork of broken brown', as 'wonderfully sumptuous and daring'. Here and throughout the ground floor the old windows were replaced with plate glass in polished mahogany frames.

By 23 August 1892 the Executive Committee could express its 'gratification with the work so ably & so satisfactorily accomplished' by the sub-committee and voted Tedder an honorarium of £20 for the extra work involved.[23] Similar sentiments were expressed a year later, when the 're-decoration (from designs kindly presented by Mr. Alma-Tadema) of all the rooms on the First Floor, as well as of the Smoking and Billiard Rooms in the Basement', was achieved in five weeks.[24] Tedder was particularly excited by the drawing room, which he described to Waugh as 'a brilliant surprise'.[25] The dominant red colouring (Plate 12) was replaced by green, and aluminium leaf was applied to the ornamentation of the central dome and the cornice and ceiling beams (Plate 19).[26] The room that had enchanted Charles Darwin and Matthew Arnold when they first joined was now beautifully embellished. External work in 1894, which included the construction of a new stone parapet designed by Alma-Tadema, was supervised by the sub-committee, who continued to make proposals for the maintenance programme for some years to come.[27]

All this decorative work, internal and external, was carefully documented by Tedder, whose archival habits in his dual capacity proved to be of lasting benefit to the Club: bound volumes of designs and correspondence, estimates and receipts, and the minutes of three different committees provide the historian with a wealth of material on which to work. Having researched this material, Boucher places his reconstruction of the new decorative scheme 'in the context of late Victorian historicism in art and architecture, with its preoccupation with period style'.[28] Whereas the hall, coffee room and drawing room 'aimed at conveying a Graeco-Roman tone, more in keeping with the representational

functions of a society dedicated to the traditions embodied by the Athenæum's name', the morning and writing rooms were 'redecorated in the high aesthetic mode, in keeping with the best of current fashion'. Boucher considers this achievement to be all the more remarkable in light of the 'generally conservative tastes' of other London clubs.[29]

During the first six decades of its tenure at the southern end of Waterloo Place, the Athenæum had itself taken a conservative line with respect to its clubhouse, which was widely known and admired. The specific inclusion of artists in the club's foundation, combined with the fact that successive presidents of the Royal Academy had *ex officio* roles on the General Committee, meant that many leading painters and sculptors were members. By the 1890s a new generation of candidates who had been trained in the visual arts was being elected under Rule II, men who might be expected to understand Poynter's and Alma-Tadema's intentions: Marcus Stone (1889), Hubert von Herkomer (1889), Thomas Hardy (1891), who was an architect, George du Maurier (1891), Linley Sambourne (1895) and John Singer Sargent (1898).[30] How was it, then, that the clubhouse, imaginatively redecorated within, came to be spoiled without, later in the 1890s, by the addition of an unprepossessing attic storey?

Back in the 1850s the introduction of an extra gallery to the south library, reached by a precipitous spiral staircase, had been the cheapest solution to the problem of space for bookcases, in a club whose members refused to increase either the fees or the size of the membership, and whose General Committee found it impossible to change the situation as they had to achieve a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting. Little had changed four decades later, by which time a number of proposals for an extra storey had been turned down. Decimus Burton, who had been frustrated by the club's dilatoriness in the mid-1850s, finally resigned in 1864 after another proposal for an extra storey, this time with a 'Library Gallery, 75 feet long by 19 feet wide' and a billiard room, had come to nothing.[31] During Thomas Henry Wyatt's time as honorary architect (1865–80) the problem of space became more pressing: in 1874 a group of members even proposed that the club should buy the lease of number 9 Pall Mall, on the corner of Waterloo Place north, and dig a tunnel to reach it from the clubhouse.[32]

Wyatt's successor, Charles Barry (son of Sir Charles), prepared a complete set of plans and sections based on measurements in 1882, as 'no means of

dealing with any question as to the Building' was available.[33] This enabled him to submit fully worked up recommendations for the enhancement of the building five years later, when his drawings supplemented the most comprehensive review to date of the club's past expenditure and current needs by a 'Building Special Committee'.[34] Each year six or seven hundred volumes were being added to the fifty thousand already shelved in numerous rooms around the clubhouse. Barry proposed to build an additional library on a 'Second Floor', '57 feet by 30 feet, occupying the whole frontage to Carlton Gardens', and connected to the present south library by a 'new Circular Staircase'. He would raise the outer walls to accommodate the new top floor, create a new entrance on Pall Mall, in line with those of the Travellers and Reform Clubs designed by his father, turn the hall through 90 degrees and extend the coffee room. In 1888, when Barry's remodelling of the ground floor was rejected on grounds of cost (an estimated £40,000), he produced further drawings. His efforts were in vain, however, and the elegant view of the clubhouse from Carlton Gardens that he presented as a frontispiece to his 'proposed alterations & additions to the Club House' is left as a reminder of what might have been (Plate 20).

By now, however, it was clear that something had to be done about the club's 'chronic indebtedness' and its urgent need for space for up to twenty thousand volumes. Whereas the establishment of the Executive Committee as a response to the first problem proved to be of lasting benefit, the conversion of two rooms on the top floor to create a 'Store Library' was only a stopgap. (It cost just £127. 15s. 0d.)[35] By 1898 the General Committee had decided to looked outside for a permanent solution. Sir Frederick Abel was both secretary and director of the Imperial Institute in Kensington. Now the institute's architect, Thomas Collcutt, was asked to address 'the Question of Enlarging the Club House'. Collcutt claimed that his attic storey, 'treated as a component part of the building, would really enhance the architectural value of the latter': set back 'some six feet from the face of the main walls', it would add dignity.[36] His scheme provided for a card room, smoking room, billiard room, staff accommodation and a small book store. The General Committee liked the 'comparatively small cost of the proposals, being £13,267, as against £20,000, or even £40,000, on former occasions'.[37] Miraculously, the membership agreed

and by 12 May 1899 Abel and his Executive Committee could approve a tender from Messrs Mowlem, contractors to the Imperial Institute.

A week later Charles Barry, a member since 1872, resigned as honorary architect, stating that he had been treated with 'great injustice', and circulated a pamphlet to support his claim.[38] Tedder was instructed to reply, saying that no discourtesy had been intended and regretting Barry's resignation.[39] This was not enough for the architect's brother, Sir John Wolfe Barry, a prominent civil engineer and a member of the General Committee, who also resigned in protest.[40] As work began, superintended by Alma-Tadema, Arthur Lucas and other members of the Building Committee, the club leased the top floor of Messrs Gullick's premises at 24 Pall Mall for six months.[41] The temporary protective structure erected on the roof of the clubhouse quickly became the butt of jokes in the press: the *Star* likened it to a birdcage and the *Graphic* described it as a Swiss chalet.[42] An article on the scheme in the *Builder* was far from jocular in tone, however: its reviewer announced that it was 'impossible to approve, on architectural grounds, either in regard to the building itself or the general effect of Waterloo-place; and it may be added that in a structural sense also the scheme is very objectionable'.[43] 'We shall have the spectacle', the writer continued, 'of a large building, designed with classic regularity and dignity, carrying on its roof a structure of inferior character and which has no obvious means of support, being erected within the main walls'. The question of professional etiquette was then addressed, with lengthy quotations from Barry's pamphlet and from correspondence with both architects. Although the *Builder* was forced to withdraw its description of Collcutt as 'unprofessional', this was unwelcome publicity for the club. Perhaps the most painful aspect of the article, however, was the fact that its aesthetic judgments were unanswerable (Plate 21).

While the clubhouse may have looked different by the end of the nineteenth century, the reputation of the club as an elite institution was undimmed. The fact that 1,600 candidates were waiting for a decade and a half before coming up for election was regarded as a badge of honour. It was also a cause for concern, however: a generation of deserving middle-aged men had been 'blocked in their laudable desire of joining the Club by a mass of younger Candidates'.[44] Although

the Candidates Books of the late-Victorian period are littered with the names of sons and nephews of existing members who sought entry to 'the family club', the requirements remained exceptionally high, and many of the new members had no family connections with the Athenæum. Outsiders regarded the club as conservative and intellectually grand. A reviewer of Waugh's short history declared that, for 'men of letters and science the Athenæum is the Mecca of club-land. The pilgrimage is long and arduous.'[45] In the 1880s and 1890s the number of professors rose as the number of peers went down, and in 1902 Alfred Kinnear placed the Athenæum 'at the head of the erudite clubs of London', a 'magnificent temple dedicated in a sense to literature, the church, and the arts'.[46] It was Burton's temple that appeared on the cover of Joseph Hatton's *Clubland, London and Provincial* in 1890, and at the end of the period under review, after Collcutt had done his worst, Stanley Ramsey could still write, 'The intelligent stranger cannot fail to recognise at a glance that this is an institution associated in some way with the liberal arts; and the premier position that the club holds in the literary world is effectively characterised in its architectural presentment'.[47]

The Athenæum's 'premier position' had been confirmed at the turn of the twentieth century when some of its most gifted members were garlanded with newly established prizes and honours. Today's visitors to the clubhouse are often guided to the Nobel Book, a large volume that is proudly displayed on the main landing. Of the 835 prizewinners between 1901 and 2012, no fewer than 50 were members of the Athenæum. When Sir Alcon Copisarow, chairman of the General Committee (1989–92), showed the book to the Swedish Ambassador he could not resist saying, 'Before we elect a candidate to the club we make sure he has won the Nobel Prize'; to which Leif Leifland replied, 'And before we select a Prize winner, we always check that he is a member of the Athenæum.'[48] The malariologist Sir Ronald Ross was the first Athenian to receive the prize, in his case for medicine, in 1902, only seven years after Sir Frederick Abel and James Dewar had been successful in defending a legal action brought against them by Alfred Nobel.[49] The long delay in Ross's election to the Athenæum under Rule II in 1922 may have been for personal reasons: he was a belligerent and vain man, 'easier to admire than to love'.[50] Of the first eight recipients, however, four were elected to the club *after* their Nobel prizes had been awarded,[51] and of the total number, twenty-six prizewinners – just over half – were elected later, almost all

under Rule II. A club which prided itself on its elite status now ensured that it built up a fine collection of Nobelists.

Honours and awards were bestowed upon individual Athenians so frequently, by the monarch or by learned societies and universities at home and abroad, that the club did not celebrate their successes in any overt way. When Alma-Tadema was knighted in 1899, for example, a banquet was held, not at the Athenæum, but in the Whitehall Rooms of the Hotel Metropole.[52] In 1902, however, the club held the first banquet since its foundation, in order to mark a signal achievement by a number of members: nine of the twelve recipients of the Order of Merit, newly established by King Edward VII, were Athenians. The nine were Field-Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar, Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, Lord Rayleigh, Lord Kelvin, Lord Lister, the Right Honourable John Morley, the Right Honourable William Lecky, Sir William Huggins and George Frederick Watts.[53] All these men had been elected to the club between 1867 and 1881 under Rule II, which reflected well on the General Committee's record in choosing members 'of distinguished eminence in Science, Literature, or the Arts, or for Public Services'.[54] Having received representations from the membership, the General Committee, with Abel in the chair, decided to hold a dinner for 150 on 4 July.[55] The ballot for tickets available to club members at 35/-, to include wine, was heavily oversubscribed. Abel lent 'a number of screens, candelabra, knives & forks & other articles' for an occasion which was clearly beyond the Club's resources.[56] Financially, however, all was well: expenses were balanced by receipts.

With characteristic thoroughness, Tedder prepared a bound volume of papers to commemorate the event. This includes the announcement in the *London Gazette*, in which the Athenæum is mentioned, photographic portraits of the OMs, a table plan, a menu, transcripts of the speeches, based on shorthand notes taken by Thomas Hill, the assistant secretary, and miscellaneous notes. Inevitably there were diary clashes and other complications. Viscount Wolseley sent his regrets from the Admiralty yacht *Iolaire*, Skye. Watts, who had sorrowfully given up his membership in 1895 through ill health, could only manage the pre-dinner reception in the drawing room, as could Morley, who was due to be the chief guest at a political dinner for MPs at the Reform that night. Morley's absence was regretted by Lord Avebury (John Lubbock) when he toasted the guests as

chairman of the General Committee: 'If we cannot all share his political views', he commented in the spirit of a non-partisan Club, 'we recognise his consistency, his courage and courtesy, and offer him our hearty congratulations.'[57]

Each OM who was present responded in turn. The diminutive Earl Roberts, a national hero and a trustee of the club, endeared himself to the company in his closing remarks:

> Before he sat down he would like to refer to the fact that it was one of the proudest recollections of his life to remember that it was now 21 years ago since he was elected to membership of the Athenæum an honour which had been conferred by the Committee of the Club under the famous rule II and that in former times the same honour has also been conferred on Field-Marshals, Lord Clyde, Sir W. Gomm, Lord Napier of Magdala, Viscount Gough, Sir G. Pollock, Lord Strathnairn, and last but greatest of all the Duke of Wellington who was an original member of the Club.[58]

Lord Rayleigh and Lord Kelvin also registered their pride in the club, and the astronomer Sir William Huggins struck the keynote of the evening with a proverb from the Latin, 'that the highest praise was praise from the men who are praised', adding that 'when he looked round the room he felt that to be the guest of such a company was praise indeed and the honour of being a recipient of the Order of Merit was greatly enhanced by the compliment paid by the Athenæum'.[59] When Lord Lister concluded, however, 'that the King had been pleased to confer the Order of Merit upon him owing to his official connection with His Majesty's illness but he could assure them that he had very little to do with the actual treatment of the King', many of his medical colleagues in the coffee room would have agreed with him.[60]

The climax of the evening came when the prime minister rose to propose the vote of thanks. Arthur Balfour, a member since 1886 and a later recipient of the Order of Merit, had taken office less than two weeks earlier, following a Conservative victory in the general election. Having been greeted with 'hearty cheers' and made some self-deprecating remarks, he 'supposed that never in the history of the great metropolis, probably never in the history of this country had there been gathered in a room of that size such a body of undiluted

distinction'.[61] Lord Avebury responded and read a 'gracious reply from His Majesty the King' to the loyal telegram that had been sent to the Royal Yacht at Cowes earlier in the evening. In the days that followed, press coverage of the dinner was extensive and exuberant. 'It is both natural and fitting', suggested the *Westminster Review*, 'that "the club of the literati" – as the polite Baedeker has called the Athenæum – should desire to do special honour, in the customary English fashion of a dinner, to the first twelve members of the newly established Order of Merit, seeing that most of them are already within its own exclusive circle.'[62]

Such dinners were not only customary in 1902: they were also gargantuan. 'Those meals!' exclaims Sebastian in Vita Sackville-West's novel, *The Edwardians*: 'Those endless, extravagant meals, in which they all indulged all the year round! . . . How strange that eating should play so important a part in social life!'[63] The king's dinners, private as well as official, normally consisted of twelve courses. 'House dinners' at the Athenæum were generally limited to ten. On these occasions the Owls of Pall Mall really were 'gorging', as an unattributed ditty had put it:

> All ye who pass by, just stop and behold,
> And say – Don't you think it a sin
> That Minerva herself is left out in the cold
> While her *owls* are all gorging within?

Held in the morning room, house dinners were restricted to the club's 'exclusive circle' and were occasionally hosted by a group of members in honour of one of their number. A striking example is the dinner in April 1903 for Randall Davidson, who had been nominated by Balfour as Temple's successor at Canterbury and enthroned there in February. The Revd Henry Scott Holland, a Canon of St Paul's, who used his position as editor of *The Commonwealth* to promulgate his Christian Socialist views, had offered some advice to Davidson on his translation from Winchester to Canterbury:

> Bishop Davidson's point of danger is not the Court. He has survived its perils with a singular simplicity. Rather it is to be sought at the Athenæum.

> There dwell the sirens who are apt to beguile and bewitch him. They have ceased to be mermaids with harps and have adopted the disguise of elderly and excellent gentlemen of reputation, who lead you aside into corners and, in impressive whispers, inform you what will not do and what the intelligent British public will not stand. The Bishop has a deep veneration for the judgement and the wisdom of important laity of this type. Yet the Athenæum is not the shrine of infallibility. Its elderly common sense has no prophetic *afflatus*.[64]

Scott Holland had been entered in the club's Candidates Book in 1875 but was not elected.[65] Davidson, proposed the previous year, had been delighted by his election in 1890, by which time he had been resident chaplain at Lambeth Palace to Archbishop Tait – a prominent member of the club since the time of the Colenso affair – and then Dean of Windsor, where he was in effect the main advisor on ecclesiastical matters to both the queen and Archbishop Benson, the central figure in *Ballot Day 1892* (see p. 3). Davidson soon became 'one of the best known and most esteemed members of the Club', where bishops were often to be seen (Plate 22),[66] and went on to serve as a member of the General Committee (1901–4) and as a trustee (1914–30).[67] His biographer, Bishop George Bell, records that some of his lay friends in the club took Scott Holland's comments as a challenge and 'determined to show by entertaining him at dinner how highly they appreciated his frequent presence among them'.[68] Bell's account of the dinner is worth quoting in full, as the hosts, most of whom attended the OM dinner the previous year, epitomised the club's 'undiluted distinction' in the Edwardian era:

> As the available room in the Athenæum could only seat about a couple of dozen, there was a difficulty in selecting the hosts from among so many who would wish to do him honour. The guest, on being sounded, would not go further than to hint that perhaps, on such an occasion, his 'brethren' would hardly be in place. Accordingly there were no bishops present at the dinner on 24th April 1903; and the only two hosts in Holy Orders were men who held positions necessarily in close touch with lay opinion, the Dean of Westminster, Dr. Armitage Robinson, and the Master of the Temple, Canon Ainger.

> The then Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, was in the Chair, with the guest of the evening on his right. The American Ambassador, Mr. Choate, was there among the hosts; so were Lord Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief; the Speaker of the House of Commons, Mr. Gully; and the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Edward Poynter. Four statesmen, two Liberal, two Conservative, attended – Mr. Asquith, Lord Goschen, Lord Knutsford (Sir Henry Holland), and Mr. John Morley, the latter, with Mr. Birrell, representing literature as well. For the law came the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Alverstone), the Master of the Rolls (Sir Richard Henn Collins), and Lord Robertson (Lord of Appeal). Oxford and Cambridge were well represented by Sir William Anson and Sir Richard Jebb. Science had an exponent in Lord Avebury, the principal Trustee of the Club; and the party was completed by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Sir Henry Craik, Sir Charles Dalrymple, and the then Editor of *The Times*, Mr. G.E. Buckle. One of the hosts, a man of caustic wit, after looking round the big circular dinner-table, said to his neighbour, 'I suppose we here are the kind of folk whom the historian of the future will describe as *alors célèbres*'. At least they were a brilliant representation of the Club at the time; and the Archbishop, in replying to the toast of his health proposed by Mr. Balfour, showed how deeply he felt the compliment, and how highly he valued his intimate association with the Athenæum.

Several of the *dramatis personae* listed by Bell reassembled a month later for a 'dinner to Mr. Chamberlain by personal friends in the Athenæum', when the prime minister again took the chair. Writing in 2001, Roy Jenkins considered that 'men of fairly quiet learning' had been the core of the club since the nineteenth century, and had 'provided the incentive for politicians, often off-shore members, none the less to feel that they were privileged to be admitted to an academy of letters'.[69] Jenkins might have taken Joseph Chamberlain as an example, judging by the friendships, including with political opponents, that he had made since his election to the club in 1882. The Chamberlain dynasty had a more turbulent time at the political clubs. Henry Lucy recorded that when Richard Chamberlain became a Liberal MP in 1885, Joseph put his younger brother up at the Reform Club.[70] Animosity against 'Joe', Lucy continued, 'which that strong personality has in all the varied circumstance of public life

succeeded in evoking, found expression in more than sufficient black balls to keep the new M.P. out'. Chamberlain, 'incensed at this rebuff, forthwith resigned his membership, and has never since entered the stately hall of the Reform'. Lucy would see Chamberlain's son Austen at the Reform occasionally, but only during the annual cleaning of the Devonshire Club in St James's Street. Later, in 1911, Austen was to join the Carlton Club, along with other prominent Liberal Unionists, and in 1922 was to lose the Conservative leadership there, at the famous 'Carlton Club Meeting'.[71] On 29 May 1903, however, having been elected to the Athenæum eight months earlier and more recently become Balfour's Postmaster General, he attended the house dinner in honour of his father, no doubt monocled and looking remarkably like him.

Winston Churchill's description of Joseph Chamberlain as 'the man who made the weather' was never more pertinent than in the spring of 1903, when the Colonial Secretary's ideas on tariff reform dominated the political agenda. Only fourteen days before the dinner was held, and presumably after it had been arranged, Chamberlain had delivered his momentous speech in Birmingham, where he argued that a 'Federal Union' of Britain and the self-governing white settler colonies would 'make the British Empire powerful and influential for good beyond the dreams of any one now living'.[72] Seated on his left at the dinner was Balfour, 'Uncle Bob' Salisbury's successor as prime minister, who sought a middle way on tariff reform for his coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. In an act of precise social geometry, Herbert Henry Asquith the Liberal Imperialist was seated directly opposite Chamberlain the Liberal Unionist. Later that year, in September, when Chamberlain resigned in order to run a platform campaign, his message would be countered by Asquith in dogged pursuit around the country. Halfway between these political antagonists sat Sir Robert Herbert, for twenty-one years permanent secretary to the Colonial Office, who was to become chairman of the Tariff Commission at Chamberlain's invitation in December. Next to Herbert was Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, president of Queen's College Cork, and, next to Asquith, John Morley, another former Liberal colleague of Chamberlain's who had cultivated him in the 1870s and seconded his nomination at the club in 1882. Morley opposed Imperial Preference, not least in defence of India's interests. Rudyard Kipling, seated on Austen's right, was a great admirer of his father, with whom he had dined twice at the club during the Boer War.[73]

On Kipling's right was Sir George Goldie, who had clashed with Chamberlain in the 1890s when defending the interests of the Royal Niger Company, which he had founded. Yet here they all were, allies and opponents of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain at Westminster, but 'personal friends' of Joe's at the Athenæum, celebrating the man who, like Gladstone, Viscount Goschen (on Asquith's right) and Churchill, changed parties in mid-career, but who, unlike them, also split both parties.

Several of the other hosts were pillars of the Establishment who also attended the archbishop's dinner and whose attendance on this occasion would have been expected: Viscount Alverstone, the Lord Chief Justice; William Gully, the Speaker; George Earle Buckle, editor of *The Times*, who had seconded Austen Chamberlain; Sir Henry Craik, Secretary at the Scottish Office; and Earl Roberts, seated next to Balfour.[74] Allied to this group was Henry White, first secretary at the American Embassy and a leading socialite, beloved of the Souls, who was elected in 1903. Other friends ranged from Mr Justice Bigham, formerly a Liberal Unionist MP, and his neighbour Major General Sterling, Commander of the Coldstream Guards, to Henry James, who had shaved off his beard to greet the twentieth century and, like the close-shaven Chamberlain, looked like a modern man. James's bearded friend Sidney Colvin, keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum, looked venerable. It was in 1903 that Chamberlain was painted by Hubert von Herkomer, whose sitters included many members of the club, among them Sir George Goldie, John Morley and Lord Kelvin, all present that evening. The oldest member at the dinner was the genial Sir Frederick Bramwell, active as an engineer at the birth of the railway and of the motor car, and who, like Blennerhassett, had deplored W.S. Stead's exposés in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[75] One of Stead's supporters was also present, however: Boyd Carpenter, the liberal Bishop of Ripon, whose brother was a Unitarian minister in America and would have been more acceptable to the Unitarian Chamberlain than some other bishops who frequented the club; he would also have said grace.

The banquet for the OMs and the two house dinners for the archbishop and the Colonial Secretary were inward-looking affairs at which members celebrated the achievements of their brethren. Strangers fared less well, and while

the club was often saluted for the eminence of its membership, it was also criticised for its attitude towards outsiders. In 1888 the *Society Herald* reported that 'an inexpressible something filters through one's being in entering the Athenæum as if the champions of letters and science were holding a solemn conclave upon the destruction of an intruder'.[76] The tiny space off the hall that was allotted to strangers had been the subject of adverse comments since 1830, and around 1914 a writer could comment: 'I have always thought that the Athenæum is a little inclined to treat visitors as though they were pickpockets. If a great man asks you to see him there, and you are both hurriedly concealed in a sort of telephone-box, you will perhaps think the same.'[77]

The status quo did not go unchallenged, however. In 1892 an EGM considered a proposal that 'the Executive Committee be instructed to appoint forthwith a special Committee to consider the conditions on which Strangers may be admitted to the Clubhouse': the motion was lost.[78] A proposal to admit strangers to the coffee room was defeated (125:132) after a division at the 1901 AGM. The following year a similar proposal received from two non-members, Sir William Lee-Warner and Sir Henry Stewart Cunningham, was more heavily defeated (110:140) at the AGM, which also had before it a printed circular to which forty-five members had put their names, including Waugh, Abel, Poynter and Frederic Harrison.[79] First and foremost, the circular proclaimed, 'the Club is used for literary purposes in the evening by members, to whom quietude is of great value, and as all the rooms on the first floor, and also the upper Smoking Room contain books, the only apartment to which guests could, without inconvenience, be admitted before or after dinner is the Billiard Room, so that members themselves would be deprived of any chance of playing after dinner'.[80] This highly significant statement gives substance to what might otherwise be dismissed as a cliché – that the Athenæum was once a library with a club attached, for example – or as merely a *bon mot*, such as Kipling's remark that the drawing room in the afternoon was like a cathedral between services.[81] The furniture in the drawing room, which Decimus Burton labelled as the 'Library' in 1829, was in fact still arranged as in the library of a great house, for 'literary purposes', in the 1920s (Plate 23).[82]

The circular went on to assert that 'the reserve and dignity of the Athenæum cannot but be materially affected by the introduction of restaurant facilities

quite foreign to the objects of the Club', and that 'our Club from the sense of quiet which pervades it, is, and always has been . . . valued by men in every walk of public life as a safe retreat'. The second point encapsulates one of the defining features of the Athenæum as an institution in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, when so many of its members served on public bodies and turned to the club's collection of books and pamphlets for information or refreshment, as in the cases of the duke of Newcastle, Samuel Wilberforce, Matthew Arnold and H.H. Asquith. Outside what Ralph Nevill called the 'foremost modern literary club',[83] however, its 'reserve and dignity' were often interpreted as frostiness and pomposity, as in Harry Graham's 'Club Cameo':

Dignified, austere, infestive,
  Stands the stately Athenæum,
With an atmosphere suggestive
  Of a mausoleum.
Freezing silence reigns within
(You can hear the falling pin!)
And the punster points with pride
To the *frieze* you get outside![84]

Indeed, so quiet was the Athenæum that *Punch* reported on the club's addiction to dancing, singing, boxing and late-night debauchery in the only full-page article on Clubland in the history of the magazine to that date (Plate 24).[85]

In 1907, the year after George Morrow's cartoon appeared in *Punch*, the Executive Committee received letters from Sir Edwin Durning Lawrence expressing his concerns about the future of the Athenæum and of London clubs in general. In an article on 'The Slump in Club-land', published in the *Observer* on 14 July, Sir Edwin lamented the length of waiting lists and the 'old-fashioned' views of committees.[86] 'It must not be forgotten', he argued, 'that whereas the fundamental idea of club life is rest and routine, the guiding principle of modern life is restlessness and constant change.' Although the article was 'received' by the Executive Committee, no discussion was minuted. Humphry Ward's comment that 'few periods in the history of the Athenæum have been so lacking in events, and perhaps for that very reason so happy, as the

twelve years which intervened between the Banquet of 1902 and the Declaration of War' indicates that 'rest and routine' were highly valued in the club.[87] Far from being 'quietly progressive' in this period, as Ward goes on to suggest, the club was slow to respond to pressure for change in its policy on strangers. In 1908 the Executive Committee made the absurd suggestion that the west end of the coffee room, 'near the serving door shall be screened off and five tables set apart' for members entertaining guests, with limited access to the clubhouse after dinner.[88] When a motion to this effect was put to the vote at an EGM in November, it was defeated (148:155).[89] Six years passed before the General Committee decided that the matter had to be reopened, 'in view of the changing tendencies in Club life'.[90] Of the estimated 347 members who attended the AGM in May 1914 – a huge turnout – about 23 dissented on a show of hands.[91] Only the morning room and the billiard room were to be accessible to members with guests after dinner, which was to be served early, between 6.30 p.m. and 8.15 p.m., at five tables 'set apart' at the west end of the coffee room: the idea of screens seems to have been dropped.[92] Although hedged about with restrictions, the change in policy was significant enough to attract the attention of the press. One unidentified newspaper reported that strangers were now permitted to dine at the Club 'without being hidden in a private room', adding: 'The Athenæum has for many years represented all that is stiffest, most conservative, and most exclusive in club life, and it is only within recent times that members could smoke except in the basement'.[93]

The private room referred to here was the morning room, where small numbers of strangers had been admitted as guests at private 'members' dinners' since 1887, when a motion from the General Committee to allow this was passed at the AGM (111:62).[94] Although strangers were intended to be kept behind closed doors on these occasions, opinion remained divided among the membership. The regulations were therefore reviewed by the Executive Committee three years later and printed for the attention of members: 'I. House Dinners, for Members of the Club exclusively, may be served, as heretofore, in the Morning Room. II. Members' Dinner. – A Member or Members may invite Members of the Club and Strangers to a private Dinner in the Morning Room; provided always that when Strangers are entertained the proportion of Members dining shall never be less than one in four.'[95] Elsewhere in Clubland, regulations on the

proportion of members to strangers at special dinners led to abuses, such as the loan of an absent member's name in order to accommodate more guests.[96] Henry Lucy, a non-member, recalled in his diary that, following a 'long agitation' by younger members of the Athenæum, a compromise had been reached whereby one member might invite to dinner a single guest.[97] 'On this concession', he added, 'an ingenious system was built up whereby four, six, or more members clubbed together, each inviting a stranger, and so making up a dinner party'. Lucy continued with an anecdote concerning Herbert Spencer, the club's most outspoken habitué, who 'regarded this innovation with horror':

> He fought against it tooth and nail while it was discussed, and absented himself from the club for a long time after the custom had been established. One evening he chanced to look in at a time when a well-known author was entertaining a small party of equally eminent men at dinner. Spencer, passing the ante-room, saw the strangers gathered, and furiously cross-examined a waiter as to what they did there. A few moments after the circumstances had been explained to him the strangers, their host, and the other members of the club who completed the party, were startled by the appearance of an irate elderly gentleman bursting into the room, trundling an arm-chair behind him. This he propelled in the middle of the ground surrounding the host, and producing a copy of the *Standard*, opened it to the widest extent of its sheet, and proceeded to read the news of the day.

Like many of the best stories about the club, this one was later 'contradicted'.[98] Nevertheless, the very sight of strangers does seem to have upset many members: hence the tiny strangers' room like a telephone box, the proposed screen in the coffee room and the use of the morning room as an 'ante-room'.

Members' dinners were generally of ten courses, with saddle of mutton virtually a fixture as the main meat course. Copies of the menus, printed in French on stiff card, are retained in the club's archive, and many of them have a handwritten list of those who attended on the reverse. Whereas the house dinners for Davidson and Chamberlain tell us something about those individuals' friendships in the club, the inscribed menus for members' dinners provide evidence of external as well as internal relationships and of a wide range of

motives for holding a dinner. Factors, however, such as the convention of reciprocity in an age of 'endless, extravagant meals', and the inevitable mixing of business (in a general sense) with pleasure at such events, make those motives difficult to determine, as a glance at a selection of members' dinners held in the early 1900s will demonstrate.

First, however, a dinner hosted on 17 April 1893 by Sir Reginald Welby, permanent secretary to the Treasury since 1885 and a member of the club since 1866.[99] His principal guest was Gladstone, a non-member, who was accompanied by his principal private secretary, Sir Algernon West, also a non-member. The eighty-three-year-old premier, now halfway through his fourth and final ministry, noted in his diary that he had seen both West and Welby during the day and then 'dined with Sir R. Welby' and 'sat till 11.30'.[100] Also present was Gladstone's Home Secretary, Asquith, a recently elected member of the club, who on the previous Friday had led for the government with a long speech, on the seventh night of the second reading of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. He was later to describe his host as one of the 'past masters in all the arcana of Gladstonian finance'.[101] Welby had contributed to Gladstone's current difficulties, however, by making some uncharacteristic errors when working on the troublesome subject of the financial settlement for Ireland.[102] Another of Welby's guests was Lord Acton, a member of the club since 1860, who considered himself, rather than Morley, to be the main author of Gladstone's home rule policy, and who was considered by Gladstone to be the best-read man in Europe.[103] So this gathering in the morning room of the Athenæum, held on the eighth day of the debate, when both Gladstone and Asquith had briefly intervened during an opposition speech by George Goschen, would appear to have been a political dinner. Yet Gladstone himself regarded dining out as a source of refreshment in the midst of political struggles,[104] and the table talk was probably as wide-ranging as his many interests and affiliations. The presence, for example, of Sir Henry Acland, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford since 1858 and a member of the club since 1844, who had spent time with Gladstone when the latter stayed at All Souls in 1890, would surely have brought the arcana of Oxford into the discussion.[105]

Of the sixteen Athenians depicted in *Ballot Day 1892* who had served as Liberal parliamentarians, seven broke with Gladstone over home rule.[106]

John Morley, then Gladstone's Chief Secretary for Ireland, made over 360 interventions during the 80 sittings of the Home Rule Bill in 1893.[107] Whereas Gladstone was a politician who also wrote books, drawing upon his huge library at Hawarden Castle, Morley was a 'man of two trades', politics and literature.[108] Well known as the author of books such as *On Compromise* (1874), his monographs on Voltaire (1872) and Rousseau (1873), and his two studies on Burke (1867, 1879), Morley was also a reader for Macmillan and an influential editor, first of the *Fortnightly Review* and then of *Macmillan's Magazine*. As general editor of Macmillan's highly successful English Men of Letters series between 1878 and 1892, he chose Athenians to write thirty of its thirty-nine volumes. In the early 1900s, when working on his monumental *Life of Gladstone*, Morley hosted a number of members' dinners at the Athenæum which reflect the interweaving of official duties with 'literary purposes' that characterised his own life, as both a political and a literary patron, and the life of the club.

Among his ten guests on 11 December 1901, for example, was Viscount Goschen, seated in front of him in *Ballot Day 1892*.[109] Goschen, author of works on the theory of foreign exchange and on local taxation, was 'one of the very *cleverest* men' Morley knew, as well as one of his most able political opponents.[110] Four other members on the guest list illustrate a characteristic form of continuity in the club with respect to high office: Sir John Scott Burdon-Sanderson succeeded Acland as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford; Sir Francis Mowatt was one of Welby's successors as permanent secretary to the Treasury; George Buckle was the fourth editor of *The Times* in an unbroken line since 1830; and Sir Richard Henn Collins was the most recent Athenian to become Master of the Rolls, who on his death in 1911 was replaced as a trustee by his successor as Master of the Rolls, Sir Herbert Cozens-Hardy. Among the non-members was the twenty-seven-year-old Winston Churchill, who had given his maiden speech as a Unionist MP earlier in the year and had already published four books. When Churchill the politician and author was subsequently elected under Rule XII in 1908, as President of the Board of Trade in Asquith's Liberal government, he was proposed by Lord Morley of Blackburn and approved by the General Committee, whose chairman was Sir Richard Henn Collins, by then also a trustee.[111]

Like the Murray and Longman families, the directors of Morley's publisher, Macmillan, were active members of the club, where the boundaries between literary conversation and business could be blurred with gentlemanly aplomb.[112] George Augustin Macmillan, Alexander's second son, was elected in 1894 and later served on the General Committee (1912–15). Specialising in Greek literature, archaeology and music in the firm, he entertained his cousin Maurice and a selection of their authors at a members' dinner in February 1901.[113] George liked to 'hobnob with bishops' at the Club, where he spent most of his time,[114] and on this occasion he included two bishops who were Macmillan authors – Exeter (Herbert Edward Ryle) and Winchester (Randall Davidson) – as well as the Bishop of Wakefield (George Eden) and William Cecil Spring Rice, diplomat and author of 'I vow to thee my country', who were not. The writer and historian George Walter Prothero, also a member, was editor of Murray's *Quarterly Review* and published with Macmillan, whereas Sir Charles Bruce, governor of Mauritius and a Macmillan author, was a non-member. Frederick Macmillan, Daniel's eldest son, who worked harder than George and only read the evening papers at the club, hosted a similar members' dinner only three weeks later, which suggests that these events were not only 'paternalistic' in spirit but also part of the firm's business strategy.[115] An impressive group of present and future members who attended as Macmillan authors indicates that Murray's dominance in the club was over: John Morley, Henry James, Sidney Lee, James Bryce, Professor Ray Lankester, Sir Norman Lockyer, Orby Shipley, Gilbert Parker and Alfred William Pollard.[116]

Members' dinners also provided opportunities to bring together fellow professionals from inside and outside the club. Chemists dined together, as did engineers (always a significant presence in the club), Royal Academicians and fellows of the Royal Society; judges met at the beginning of each legal year, on or near 24 October; and looser affiliations, such as professional connections with Ireland or India, shaped other guest lists.[117] Individual members such as Buckle, so often a guest, reciprocated by holding large dinners to which colleagues and friends were invited.[118] Arthur Conan Doyle celebrated his arrival in the club by hosting a members' dinner in April 1901, soon after his election under Rule II.[119] Among the strangers were Edmund Gosse and J.M. Barrie, who was to be elected the following year. Most of the guests were

members, however, including Buckle, who was Doyle's proposer, and two writers – Anthony Hope and Major Arthur Griffiths, inspector of prisons and the author of sixty books, who had been providing Doyle with information on crime in London for some years.[120] Other literary dinners included one hosted by the poet Lord de Tabley in June 1894, to which he invited five strangers, including Edmund Gosse and George Saintsbury, and only two fellow members, Austin Dobson and Thomas Hardy. Hardy was better suited to the Savile Club than to the Athenæum: although he was happy to accept this dinner invitation he seldom visited the clubhouse and referred in a letter of 1906 to the 'regulation Athenæum fogies', by which he probably meant the kind of habitués who disapproved of members' dinners.[121]

The grandest of the dinners under review was held on 11 May 1904, when several of the nation's leading scientists gathered in the presence of HRH the prince of Wales, one of only two strangers that evening.[122] Arthur Balfour, prime minister and philosopher, was present, together with three scientific peers, Lords Avebury, Kelvin and Rayleigh (John William Strutt); eight knights, Crookes, Evans, Foster, Geikie, Huggins, Lockyer, Roscoe and Rücker; two professors, Darwin and Dewar; and Dr Lockyer (probably William James Stewart Lockyer). Prince George was taking on public and representative duties at this time, and would have been encouraged to support British science by his father, King Edward VII, who had attended Faraday's lectures at the Royal Institution as a boy and presided at Strutt's lectures during the centenary celebrations for Faraday in 1891 and for the Royal Institution itself in 1899. This lecture focused upon Thomas Young, perhaps the most brilliant of the club's original members.[123]

The year 1904 was an *annus mirabilis* in the history of British science, concluding with the award of the Nobel prize to Lord Rayleigh and Sir William Ramsay (elected to the club under Rule II in 1905). It was also the year in which Professor James Dewar was knighted. Dewar had been elected to the club under Rule II in 1884, having liquefied oxygen in bulk for the first time in Britain. He was also known at the Royal Institution as a man of 'quarrelsome disposition and ungovernable temper'.[124] His lecture there on 25 March 1904, less than two months before the royal members' dinner, was immortalised in a painting by Henry Jamyn Brooks (Plate 25), although in fact, like

Ballot Day 1892, it presents to the viewer a combination of individuals who had never been simultaneously in the same place together: the picture was a 'speculative enterprise' of the artist's, based upon photographic *cartes de visite* solicited from prominent members of the Royal Institution.[125] Nevertheless, the painting and its key confirm not only the continuing strong ties between the Athenæum and the Royal Institution, but also the number of Athenians who contributed to or took an interest in the flowering of British science in the early twentieth century. Half the male figures in Brooks's painting are present or future Athenians, and eight of those figures, including the prime minister in the front row on the left, were later present at the members' dinner in the morning room on 11 May 1904.[126]

8

CULTURE WARS

Three of the largest group portraits in British art history were commissioned after the Allied victory of November 1918 and donated to the nation. Sir Abe Bailey, a financier and politician in South Africa, wished to honour the senior British and colonial admirals, generals and statesmen who had served during the war, but left the choice of names to Viscount Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Viscount Dillon, chairman of trustees at the National Portrait Gallery. Both peers were members of the Athenæum, as were the three selected artists, but only one of the twenty-two naval officers portrayed by Sir Arthur Cope – Admiral Wemyss, elected in 1918 – and three of John Singer Sargent's twenty-two army officers – Generals French (1904), Haig (1917) and Byng (1918) – were Athenians.[1] The third, more sensitive commission was declined by both Cope and Sargent but eventually accepted by Sir James Guthrie, who had to raise the height of his studio to accommodate the enormous canvas. The six statesmen most prominently displayed in his group portrait were all Athenians: Arthur Balfour (elected in 1886), H.H. Asquith (1892), Alfred Milner himself (1897), Edward Grey (1903), Winston Churchill (1908) and David Lloyd George (1908).[2]

The years 1914–18 proved to be a watershed in the political and social history of Britain. Although the same could not be said of the country's more conservative institutions, including the West End clubs, these were nevertheless extremely difficult times in Clubland. For the historian, the defining values and characteristics of the Athenæum are thrown into sharper relief during the First World War than in the previous ninety years. As Lord Macmillan recorded,

the club 'proved of inestimable value to its many members whose duties kept them in London in these trying times',[3] as a bolthole for those who carried the heaviest responsibilities and as a place where members could hear the latest news from the Front or exchange views and develop ideas with their colleagues. Like other clubs and institutions, the Athenæum suffered losses and contributed to the war effort as best it could, through corporate donations and by adhering to wartime regulations. More unusually, and possibly uniquely, its long-established tradition of attracting members who combined creative ability with a readiness to engage in some kind of administration or public service now bore fruit at a time of rapid development in many fields, not only through the work of its leaders and officials of Church and state, senior military men, armaments directors, engineers and scientists, but also its intelligence officers and those writers and artists who worked in the penumbra of propaganda. Members of Britain's leading literary club not only helped to run the war, they also wrote it, often drawing upon a tradition of Hellenism and Arnoldian 'culture' in their opposition to German *Kultur*. In this chapter we consider how the history of the Athenæum relates to that of the nation over a short period of four tumultuous years.

In the summer of 1914, following months of tension and anxiety, the outbreak of hostilities came suddenly and unexpectedly. Years later Josiah Wedgwood DSO, MP, a member of the club, recalled the Saturday before war was declared:

> Four children and I were to bicycle home from Bedales School to Moddershall. It was a two days' trip, and we were off by 5 a.m. on the lovely morning of 1 August 1914. As we rode through Farnborough, on those old dusty roads we found a khaki battery in full kit on the move – then another, and another. I had not believed war possible – international finance would not allow it! Still this was something beyond the ordinary; we got a morning paper. So at Sonning by the Thames I left them to pedal on alone, and took train to Town. At the Athenæum Club I sought to cash a cheque for five pounds. 'Very sorry, sir,' said the porter, 'the bishops have cleared me out.' The Athenæum Club was famous for its silence and its ecclesiastical dignities. But this looked more serious still; and the first business in the House

> on Black Monday, 3rd, was to suspend payments of obligations, and to extend by three days the bank holiday. All questions were postponed. Grey's famous speech followed.[4]

Like cash, information was now at a premium.[5] The architect Edwin Lutyens frequented the clubhouse in the early days of August 'to get the news'.[6] 'So war was declared last night', he wrote to his wife on the 5th: 'I heard it at the Athenæum, too late to telegraph you. Crowds singing outside – an offshoot from the Buckingham Palace crowd. Walked home.'

The Executive Committee postponed its Tuesday meeting to the Wednesday, when the first reference to the war in the club records appears in the minutes: 'Members of the staff embodied: (a) A.H. Brown. Junior Clerk. Territorial (b) G. Weeks. Sculleryman. Army reservist.'[7] Five years earlier the General Committee had approved a donation of £10 to the West End Club Servants Rifle Association.[8] In the first month of the war the Executive Committee assumed that the membership at large would be pleased to know that members of staff were volunteering. The notice that appeared in the public rooms on 8 September, however, also betrays a wariness of the notorious grumblers among the habitués:

> The Committee are assured that the Members of the Club will be glad to be informed that all the unmarried Male Servants of the enlisting age have offered to serve in the Army.
>
> Ten of these have passed the medical examination and have joined His Majesty's forces.
>
> The waiters who have enlisted are now being replaced by older men. The Committee do not anticipate that any inconvenience will be caused to Members but should any slight inconvenience arise, they trust that Members generally will realise the special circumstances.[9]

(Six months later the Athenæum was to be the first West End club to introduce waitresses.[10]) The names of thirteen members of staff were inscribed in gilt letters on a framed wooden board under the heading 'Athenæum Roll of Honour of those who have joined His Majesty's Army, 1914'.[11] An announcement by

Sir Henry Trueman Wood, chairman of the Executive Committee and long-serving secretary of the Royal Society of Arts, was also displayed in the servants' hall: 'Any Servant of the Athenæum who enlists now and is accepted for service in the BRITISH ARMY will receive two months' wages in advance from the Committee. The interests of such Servant will not be forgotten by the Committee after the War.'[12] These pledges were duly honoured.[13]

Over the ensuing four years the club struggled with shortages and rising prices while complying with increasingly onerous wartime regulations. When the secretary, Henry Tedder, was nominated as the official 'enumerator', he helped some of the resident servants to complete the registration forms.[14] A club that was notorious for its frostiness became chillier in the autumn of 1917, when coal restrictions led to the fires being 'regulated' in the public rooms during quieter periods.[15] Other economies were voluntary, as in the case of the Library Committee's self-imposed reduction of its annual expenditure by a quarter: they saved on books, binding and even the eagerly sought-after newspapers.[16] Restrictions on lighting in London, imposed in December 1914, became matters of security after the first air raids.[17] In June 1915 Tedder reported to the Executive Committee on 'precautions in case of fire & alarm at night', which included a reference to the long-established escape route to the Travellers Club from the roof.[18] By the following March new lighting orders required 'all buff blinds to be obscured';[19] in November 1917 the club insured the contents of the building, valued at £18,300, against air attack;[20] and an air-raid shelter was provided in the basement. Stoic resistance to the inconveniences associated with enemy action was epitomised in one of the 'old Peers' with whom the American ambassador dined at the Athenæum in March 1918, described by Walter Page in a letter to President Wilson:

> 'Here, steward, what's that noise?'
> 'A hair raid, milord.'
> 'How long has it been going on?'
> 'Forty minutes, milord.'
> 'I must be deaf,' said the old fellow, with an inquiring look at the company . . .
> 'Well, there's nothing we can do to protect His Excellency. Damn the air raid. Pass the port.'[21]

Port was in short supply by the end of the war, the most unwelcome restrictions having been those relating to food and drink. The regulations on the consumption of alcohol that were issued to Clubland from New Scotland Yard limited the hours at which liquor could be served: in November 1915 these were 12.00–14.30 and 18.30–21.30 on weekdays, 13.00–15.00 and 18.00–21.00 on Sundays.[22] Spirits were to be diluted. In April 1915, when Lloyd George was concerned that drunkenness was adversely affecting the war effort, he persuaded King George V to set an example by eschewing alcohol in the royal household. Thomas Buxton suggested that the Executive Committee should follow suit and 'suspend sale of intoxicating liquors in the club during the war'.[23] Their reply was the familiar one: the Committee had 'no power to take this action'.[24] Six months later the *Daily Sketch* printed a photograph of a brewer's dray outside the clubhouse, unloading 'barrel after barrel of *beer*!': 'Beer in the Athenæum – the place where Bishops go to before they die!'[25] In November 1917 the government's Food Controller issued a 'strong appeal' to the members of clubs to drink 'light wine, and to refrain from drinking Beer in order that there may be more Beer for the working classes'.[26] The club's response is not recorded.

Among the members with a sweet tooth was Major Stephen Norris, author of *The South African War*. In February 1917, when the steward reported that 'on more than one occasion' the major had 'asked for additional sugar which might have been allotted to a particular member not using sugar', the Executive Committee ruled that it could not sanction his behaviour.[27] They also had to remind him that the servants' quarters were 'not open to the visits of members', when they heard that he had gone into the still room in the basement in search of sugar. The steward's life was made easier when the Food Controller imposed further restrictions a year later and a notice went up in the coffee room stating that no sugar could be served.[28] While gently reprimanding miscreants, the Executive Committee also encouraged exemplary behaviour: in February 1917, for example, it announced that, for the convenience of members who wished to 'adopt the practice of one or more meatless days each week, there will be provided both at luncheon & dinner a large choice of special dishes of fish or vegetables every Tuesday and Friday'.[29] The Revd Carew Hervey St John Mildmay, however, perhaps the most troublesome member in his day, behaved as badly during the

war as he did in peacetime. Inserted in the minutes of the long-suffering Executive Committee is a précis of the forty-two letters exchanged between him and the club in 1916/17, in which he complains about everything and has recourse to law over a disputed bill for two shillings, and of further letters between 1917 and 1920 in which his fellow members complain about him, especially his habit of lying full length on the sofas and snoring loudly.[30] Marmaduke Tudsbery was to tell the story at the 1965 AGM, on retiring as chairman of the General Committee, adding that Mildmay (whom he did not name) remained a member for sixteen years before inheriting a public house, drinking the entire stock and dying of his intemperance.[31]

'The War' ran like a dark thread through the fabric of club life. The rise, for example, in the total number of meals served in the clubhouse, from 27,320 in 1915 to 35,761 in 1919,[32] is only partly attributable to the fact that guests could now dine in the coffee room: it also reflects wartime conditions, including food shortages and the closure of some private houses, and a desire for camaraderie and news at the club. Ever ready to review the rules, the committee turned its attention to the definition of a 'cabinet minister' in Rule XII, when governments with war cabinets were in office.[33] Long before the outbreak, arguments for and against war with Germany had been ventilated in the club, as they had been throughout the country. Once war was declared, however, an appeal to support medical services at the Front was uncontentious. On 20 October 1914 Humphry Ward's proposal that members subscribe for a 'Motor Ambulance to be presented to the British Red Cross Society at a cost of £400' was taken up with alacrity: donations were to be limited to £1 and sent to Tedder.[34] Two weeks later George Darroch offered his own car as a motor ambulance and himself as chauffeur.[35] By 23 November, Tedder could announce that £583. 19s. 6d. had been subscribed by 583 members, and that Darroch, 'who had been driving his own motor in France during the early months of the war, in connexion with the Intelligence Department', had been informed that the Red Cross had enough ambulances, but that his offer was gratefully accepted for another purpose and he and his car were now 'doing good work in France for the Society'.[36] In March 1915, further funds were raised for an ambulance for the French Red Cross.[37] The suppliers of this powerful vehicle, designed for 'rough usage over French roads', had an elegant local address: Bianchi Motors Ltd, 26 St James's Street.

Meanwhile the club had received news of several casualties. The first members of staff to join up – Lance Corporal Alfred Holdsworth Brown, junior clerk, and Private George Weeks, sculleryman – were also the first to be killed in action, at Messines on 1 November 1914, a 'fateful day' that was later described in detail by Conan Doyle in *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*.[38] Whereas little is known about the lowly Weeks, whose age is unrecorded, the club's archive contains a cache of correspondence relating to the thirty-year-old Brown, who had accepted a new post at the University of London on 5 August, just as the war began.

Brown's first letter to T.W. Hill, the deputy secretary of the Athenæum, is dated 7 September, when the 14th Battalion, London Scottish (the 'London Regiment'), was still in England. It reveals a friendly relationship between an aspiring clerk and his former superiors: 'The cards Mr Tedder sent are awfully appreciated and Colours told me he had written formally to Mr Tedder to acknowledge them. My Mater was here yesterday & said how very much she hoped to meet you and Mrs Hill again shortly. We are about 3 miles from Watford, I wonder if you would care to come over say next Saturday.'[39] By 2 October Brown was writing from an undisclosed location in France, using small perforated sheets from a notebook. It was cold, but both he and his brother were well and had 'nothing to grumble at', as there was 'plenty of grub' and tobacco, and they were sleeping on straw and under blankets in a railway shed. A form had arrived from the university relating to army pay, which he hoped to receive soon, and he closed with kind regards to Mrs Hill and a request to be remembered to 'all at the Athenæum'. On 25 October he sent Hill a postcard, thanking him for a letter and saying that their chance was coming: he hoped to 'see something of the fighting soon'. 'Don't pass this news home', he added and, in the margin, 'Bless you'. Tedder took up Brown's case in a letter to Sir Henry Miers, principal of the University of London and a member of the club, on 8 November, a week after Brown was killed and three weeks before he was listed among the wounded and missing in the press.[40] In December, Mrs Brown sent news that her son had been wounded in the leg and was thought to have been taken prisoner. In February 1915 she wrote again with a cutting from the *Morning Post*, announcing that he was still listed among the wounded and missing, and in April she wrote to Hill saying that

there was no news of Alfred: 'It is very despairing.' Brown's name is inscribed on the Menin Gate in Ypres and on the war memorial at Richmond, Surrey.

At the other extreme of social, military and club hierarchies, the first of twelve members of the club who were casualties of war was buried in St Paul's Cathedral on 19 November 1914. Earl Roberts had died of pneumonia while visiting Indian troops in France at the age of eighty-two, less than a fortnight after Brown and Weeks were killed. Among the troops escorting the gun carriage through the London streets on a dark, wet morning were members of Brown's 14th Battalion of the London Scottish.[41] Among the congregation were King George V, Prime Minister Asquith, and representatives of the Athenæum, who had lost a trustee.[42] Countess Roberts and her daughters sent a printed mourning card in response to a letter of condolence from the club, followed by a private letter of thanks two months later.[43] *Punch* published an obituary of Lord Roberts VC, KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCIE, KStJ, VD, PC by its editor, Owen Seaman, a Rule II member of the club, and a 'big cut' entitled 'A Pattern of Chivalry' by its principal cartoonist, Bernard Partridge, who was to be elected under Rule II five months later.[44]

Lord Roberts's gun carriage was the one that his son had tried to save at Colenso, Natal, when he was killed in 1899 and awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. During the First World War, Lord Curzon spent many hours writing letters of condolence to friends whose sons had died in action: as early as November 1914 it seemed to him like 'the obliteration of a whole generation'.[45] Most members of the Athenæum were too old to fight, but many lost sons. Among the Davids lamenting over their Absaloms were Asquith, Conan Doyle, Kipling and Lutyens; George du Maurier, illustrator, cartoonist and novelist; Sir William Flower, the first director of the Natural History Museum; Sir Alfred Gould, vice-chancellor of London University; Sir Oliver Lodge, physicist and principal of Birmingham University; John Horner, barrister; Sir Charles Parsons, inventor of the steam turbine; Rowland Prothero, author and politician; Lord (Hallam) Tennyson; Sir Aston Webb PRIBA; Lord Shuttleworth, Liberal politician, who lost two sons; and Lord William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter, who lost three. (Another son was wounded twice, but survived.) Forty-seven of the men, mostly younger men, whose names were in the Candidates Book during the war are listed as 'killed in action': many of them had been proposed

by their fathers. Kipling had asked his friend Lord Roberts for a commission for his son John, and 'Bobs' had obliged.[46] Much later, Kipling and his wife discovered that John was using his revolver when he was shot with the Irish Guards during action associated with the Battle of Loos. At the time it was believed that his body was not found, as in the case of Alfred Brown and tens of thousands of other casualties.[47] After the war, Rudyard Kipling was among the originators of the plan to inter the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey.

For some, spiritualism provided more immediate comfort. William Butler Yeats, later a Nobelist and Rule II member of the club, wrote in memory of Lady Gregory's son Robert, 'What made us dream that he could comb grey hair?'[48] In 1911 the poet's interest in 'faery' and the occult had taken him into the Ghost Club, members of which were convinced believers in the paranormal. Among a number of Athenians in the club were Conan Doyle, who published a clutch of books on spiritualism after his son Kingsley died of influenza aggravated by war wounds in 1918, and Sir Oliver Lodge, a past president of the Society for Psychical Research. Lodge's son Raymond, killed in action on 14 September 1915, inspired a book that went through numerous reprints and helped thousands of mourners. *Raymond* offers as evidence several descriptions of séances, a number of messages from the dear departed and a group photograph of officers in which a hand rests on Raymond Lodge's shoulder. The book concludes with a passage that echoes Tennyson's *In Memoriam*: 'Let us learn . . . that those who have been, still are; that they care for us and help us; that they, too, are progressing and learning and working and hoping; that there are grades of existence, stretching upward and upward to all eternity.'[49]

When another Raymond, Asquith's son, was killed on 15 September 1916 at the age of thirty-seven he was mourned by many outside the family, for he represented the best of his generation. John Buchan recorded that he had never met anyone 'so endowed with diverse talents', Churchill described him as 'my brilliant hero-friend' in a letter to his widow, and a private soldier described him as 'one of the finest men who ever wore the King's uniform' in a letter home.[50] Proposed by his father and seconded by Augustine Birrell, Raymond Asquith had been elected in May 1915 and was the youngest of the Athenian casualties, whose average age (setting aside Lord Roberts) was forty-five. The

range of talents lost is striking. Asquith was a barrister, whose letters from the Front are brilliantly crafted and unnervingly incisive;[51] Lieutenant Rowan Hamilton, elected in 1913 and killed in October 1915 at the age of thirty-eight, was a composer; and Colonel Victor Flower, elected the same year and killed in August 1917 at forty-one, an architect.

Others died in khaki while serving abroad in their peacetime professional capacities. Dr George Almond joined the Royal Army Medical Corps at the outbreak and became a pathologist at a base hospital in France. In 1918 he was sent to serve at the Front with the 4th Dragoon Guards and was killed on 9 August aged forty-one, four months after his election to the club. The eminent physiologist and surgeon Colonel Sir Victor Horsley FRS had been a member since 1895, was already commissioned in the Territorial Army when war broke out, and served with the Royal Army Medical Corps in France, Egypt and Mesopotamia, where he died from heatstroke in July 1916.[52]

Medicine was one of several fields in which current and future members of the Athenæum made significant contributions to technical developments that were expedited by the war. When Sir Arbuthnot Lane was the chief consultant at the hospital in Aldershot, the wards overflowed with facial injuries after the Battle of the Somme. He subsequently opened Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup, where reconstructive surgery was pioneered.[53] Sir George Makins served in France as a consulting surgeon from September 1914. Having supervised the newly established hospital centres at Camiers and Étaples, and made frequent trips up the line to the Front, he established a research centre where new methods of wound treatment were developed.[54] Makins shared a cottage on the River Test with his old friend, Sir George Savage, who served as a consultant psychiatrist at Knutsford and addressed the Medico-Psychological Association on wartime mental disabilities.[55] Lane and Makins were in their sixties during the war, and Savage in his seventies. In contrast, Charles Myers, who had established the first laboratory in England especially designed for psychological experiments at Cambridge, was only in his early forties when he used the soldiers' own term, 'shell shock', in a 1915 *Lancet* article. Appointed consultant psychologist to the British armies in France in 1916, he was elected to the Club in 1919. Several of the younger doctors who treated the victims of

shell shock – William Brown (who treated Wilfred Owen), Gordon Holmes, Arthur Hurst and William Rivers ('perhaps the most famous of the Great War psychologists')[56] – were to be elected to the club in the 1920s.

After fourteen months of conflict a leading electrical engineer had no doubt that this was 'a war of engineers and chemists quite as much as of soldiers'.[57] Judging by the contribution of Athenians, he might have added the physicists. On 12 November 1914 the president of the Royal Society, Sir William Crookes, chaired a meeting of selected fellows at which they decided to establish a War Committee.[58] Crookes was a chemist and a science journalist who had been a member of the club since 1882, when the Royal Society was rejecting his papers on the authenticity of mediums. Also present were the physicist Lord Rayleigh, by now chancellor of Cambridge University, who focused upon aeronautics during the war and who shared Crookes's interest in the paranormal; Sir Ernest Rutherford, who worked on submarine warfare and underwater acoustics and was elected to the club in 1917; and the brilliant young physicist and crystallographer Lawrence Bragg, joint winner with his father of the 1915 Nobel prize in physics, who developed new techniques for locating enemy guns from the sounds of their firing and was to be elected to the club in 1932.[59]

Bragg's father William, also a future member, was among the leading scientists recruited by the Admiralty to form the Board of Invention and Research in June 1915, when H.G. Wells caused a furore by arguing that Britain was falling behind Germany in technical achievements.[60] Other Athenians on the board included Rutherford, the legendary Sir J.J. Thomson – Rutherford's predecessor and Lord Rayleigh's successor as Cavendish Professor at Cambridge – Sir Charles Parsons and Sir Oliver Lodge. Again, when Lloyd George responded to a further crisis in August 1915 by establishing a Munitions Inventions Department, Thomson was drawn in and was joined by Horace Darwin (the ninth child of Charles Darwin), a civil engineer and manufacturer of aircraft instruments, who was knighted in 1918; Richard (later Sir Richard) Glazebrook, director of the National Physical Laboratory, where fundamental research was undertaken on the production of optical glass, on aeronautical problems and on radio communications; and Sir Alexander Kennedy, professor of mechanical engineering at Imperial College London.

In June 1916 Lloyd George was succeeded at the Ministry of Munitions by a fellow Athenian, Edwin Montagu of the Treasury, who secured an agreement with J.P. Morgan & Co. which saved the Allies millions of pounds in their American purchases.[61] (John Pierpont Morgan was elected to the club under Rule II in 1920.[62]) By the end of the war, with Churchill in charge of 12,000 officials at Munitions, 2.5 million British workers were engaged in the production of guns and shells, and of 1,000 tons of high explosives per day. Since the outbreak another Athenian, the judge and politician Lord Moulton, had headed the explosives supply department: he controlled the nation's gasworks, coke ovens and suppliers of fat and oil, and took responsibility for the production of poison gas, to be used only if the enemy released it first.

That this was indeed 'a war of engineers' is illustrated by the development of armaments, an area in which a remarkable Athenian dynasty, both familial and professional, played a leading role. In 1859, the year of his election to the club, Sir William Armstrong had separated his Elswick Ordnance Company (EOC) from the rest of his engineering operation on Tyneside, reuniting the companies five years later when he left government service. Sir Andrew Noble, a gunnery expert who was elected in 1873, rose from being Armstrong's assistant to the chairmanship of Armstrong Whitworth in 1900, the year of his son Saxton's election to the club: Sir Saxton became the company's managing director. Through his father James Meadows Rendel, a successful hydraulics engineer and a friend of Armstrong's, Stuart, later Lord Rendel, became London manager of Armstrong Whitworth and by 1913 was vice-chairman of the company. Father and son were both members, as was Sir Joseph Whitworth (elected in 1862), whose company was to merge with Armstrong's in 1897, ten years after Sir Joseph's death. The inventor and designer of armaments Josiah Vavasseur CB merged his business with Armstrong's, whose board he joined in 1883, and was elected to the club in 1903 with Sir Andrew Noble as his proposer.[63] John Meade Falkner, elected five years later, had been tutor to Sir Andrew Noble's sons in Newcastle before becoming secretary to the board at Elswick, a role that he combined with his writing: among other publications were two of Murray's handbooks and three successful romances.[64] He became a director in 1901 and chairman in 1915, at the height of the munitions crisis. Future Athenians who worked for Armstrong Whitworth during the war

included the ballistics engineer Sir George Hadcock, formerly Sir Andrew Noble's personal assistant and later managing director of the company, and Falkner's son-in-law Alfred Cochrane, cricketer and company secretary.[65] Much of the ordnance and ammunition commissioned by the British government in huge quantities during the First World War was stamped 'EOC'.

In 1913 Armstrong Whitworth also became involved in aeronautics, the most eye-catching aspect of engineering at the time. It had been Richard Haldane at the War Office who not only saw the need to develop a Territorial Army and to plan an expeditionary force, but also to test the potential of aircraft in warfare scientifically. The joint advisory committee on aeronautics, chaired by Lord Rayleigh, a fellow member of the club, was created in May 1909. Haldane, himself an intellectual polymath, recognised in Mervyn O'Gorman an electrical and aircraft engineer whose blend of scientific and administrative skills would enable him to develop a research and manufacturing centre at Farnborough, where most of the aircraft that were flown to Amiens in August 1914 were designed. Lieutenant-Colonel O'Gorman was elected to the club in 1917, as increasing numbers of aircraft played a crucial role in reconnoitring and bombing enemy trenches, and in defending Britain during the dreaded Zeppelin raids. Meanwhile Colonel Bertram Hopkinson, formerly a youthful professor of applied mechanics at Cambridge, had established an experimental station for the Royal Flying Corps at Orford Ness, where he supervised the testing of aircraft. Elected to the club in February 1916, he was killed on one of many solo flights in August 1918 at the age of forty-four, a 'knight-errant of the air'.[66]

When Churchill announced that Britain was leading the race to develop the seaplane, in March 1914, *Punch* celebrated with a cartoon that set the standard for Bernard Partridge's famous wartime work.[67] In October 1916 *Punch* carried an piece of doggerel by Charles Larcom Graves of the kind that was popular on the Home Front: it celebrates British tanks and ends:

> They deserve a metric tribute from the LAUREATE at least,
> Though perhaps his classic Muse would shy at such a comic beast,
> But I'm sure that RUDYARD KIPLING would appreciate the pranks
> Of the Tanks.

Then here's to their inventor, though I know not if he's Manx,
Or Cambrian or Scotsman, or hails from Yorks or Lancs,
But anyhow he's earned the admiration of all ranks
With his Tanks.[68]

The joke about Robert Bridges, who was not a member, and Kipling, who was, would have been appreciated at the Athenæum, where both the originator of the tank and his political master were also members. It was in February 1915, the year in which many of the official scientific advisory committees were established, that Churchill formed a Landship Committee at the Admiralty, under the chairmanship of Eustace Tennyson d'Eyncourt, the naval architect who was to design the battle cruiser *Hood*.[69] Initially surprised to be involved, Tennyson d'Eyncourt set to work and kept the project alive, in spite of opposition from the army, when Churchill was forced out of the Admiralty in May 1915. Nine months later, when a prototype was demonstrated to Balfour, First Lord of the Admiralty, Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, and Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, only Kitchener remained unconvinced.

With an abrupt end to the import of specialist glass from Germany and France at the outbreak of war, British industrialists needed home-grown chemists to fill the gap. In October 1914, the year of his election to the club, Herbert Jackson headed an advisory committee to define formulae for these glasses, and, working with his team at King's College London and in his private laboratory, produced over fifty formulae himself.[70] He was knighted in 1917 and was active in club affairs after the war, as were Makins and O'Gorman. Another urgent need arose in April 1915, when the Germans first used large quantities of chlorine gas on the Ypres salient. Kitchener summoned Richard Haldane's brother, the Oxford physiologist John Haldane, to the War Office.[71] As an expert on gas poisoning in mines, Haldane was able to design a simple respirator as a temporary measure and later, after a more effective gas hood had been introduced, to advise on the use of oxygen in the treatment of victims of poison gases, exposure to which damaged his own health. John Haldane was elected to the club in 1917, a year before Arthur Smithells, professor of chemistry at the University of Leeds. Smithells served as chief chemical advisor on anti-gas

training between 1916 and 1919, devoting much of his time to alerting the public to its dangers.[72]

The shock felt by the British public when Germany first used poison gas intensified the demonisation of all things German and the witch-hunt for pro-German sympathisers. Lieutenant-Colonel Smithells, when vice-president of the Royal Society, strongly resisted efforts to remove from office the German-born British physicist, Arthur Schuster, secretary of the Royal Society and a member of the club. (Schuster was knighted in 1920.) Richard Haldane, who had studied in Göttingen and spoke fluent German, was subjected to sustained xenophobic attack. Asquith twice refused to accept his offers of resignation, but did not include him in the coalition government in May 1915, a month after the first gas attack, thus jettisoning the man who had done much to prepare the country for war.[73]

Objectors to the war also came under increasing pressure, as in the case of Bertrand Russell in 1916. Russell was a Cambridge Apostle and one of the most highly respected fellows of Trinity College when he was elected to the club under Rule II in 1909. Five years later he argued that wars were justifiable under certain circumstances, but that this war resulted from a misguided foreign policy, as Germany was a highly civilised country. (Viscount Morley resigned from the cabinet on similar grounds in August 1914.) In May 1916, when Russell was an active member of the No-Conscription Fellowship, he was found guilty of breaking the Defence of the Realm Act and was sacked from his Trinity fellowship. On 10 June Major General John Sterling, retired, wrote to the Executive Committee of the Athenæum saying that 'the conduct of Mr B. Russell as certified by a Court of Justice does not justify his remaining a member of this club', and adding that he had 'personal evidence' that Kipling, Chisholm and Stanford agreed with his views.[74] Sir Steuart Bayley, an old India hand in his eightieth year, was in the chair when the Committee discussed the letter on 4 July and passed the responsibility to the General Committee, adding that they were 'by no means unanimous as to the desirability of taking action or not'. When the General Committee discussed the matter at a specially convened meeting, Bayley moved and Bishop Ryle, Dean of Westminster, seconded the question, which was put to the vote and declared to be carried by the chairman, Lord Cozens-Hardy, Master of the Rolls.[75]

Herbert Ryle was a Cambridge man himself, formerly a fellow of King's College and president of Queens', a respected liberal Broad Churchman and a member of the club since 1901, who led the midday intercessions in the Abbey personally and was responsible for many special services during the war.[76] At crucial points in Ryle's career he discussed appointments that he had been offered by the prime minister with Randall Davidson, his predecessor as Bishop of Winchester, at the clubhouse.[77] Whereas Ryle played a leading role in applying German critical methods to his biblical criticism, Davidson had been untouched by the theological controversies that raged in Oxford when he was an undergraduate, and had risen in the Church through his mastery of Anglican affairs and as a courtier. Archbishop Davidson, however, valued his contact with Germans such as Adolf von Harnack, a liberal Lutheran theologian and director of the Royal Library at Berlin. Having always considered war between two great Protestant powers to be 'unthinkable', Davidson resisted the narrow chauvinism of many of the clergy and was criticised for omitting a direct prayer for victory from intercessions prepared for the first Sunday of the war.[78] But he was soon caught up in the spy mania that swept the country and in 1915, following the publication of Lord Bryce's report on German atrocities, declared that Britain was 'fighting against what is veritably the work of the devil'.[79] Two years later, when frost delayed ploughing and the need to sow was urgent, Rowland Prothero, president of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, wrote to Davidson for his opinion on Sunday labour on the farms. 'We make a temporary departure from our rule', the archbishop replied, while taking care not to force those who could not work in all conscience.[80]

Randall Davidson, the pragmatist, emphasised the steadying influence of the Church in wartime and considered it his duty to avoid embarrassing the government of the day. As Primate he was frequently in touch with ministers of state – men such as Prothero – both in the Houses of Parliament and at the Athenæum, where Lord Bryce, Liberal MP, historian of the Holy Roman Empire and ambassador to Washington (1907–13), was also a member. What George Bell described as Davidson's 'intimate association' with the club was closest during his long trusteeship, from 1913 until his death in 1930. He regularly attended and sometimes chaired meetings of the General Committee during the war, when other members of the Committee included Sir Edward

Poynter, Sir William Crookes, Arthur Balfour, George Buckle, John Murray IV, Sir Henry Trueman Wood, Sir Owen Seaman, Sir Archibald Geikie, Humphry Ward and Sir J.J. Thomson.

In a club where bishops went before they died, according to the *Daily Sketch*, clerical controversy was heightened during the war when liberals clashed with High Churchmen over ethical questions, as well as the usual liturgical and doctrinal matters. When Lloyd George, the first nonconformist to be prime minister, was determined to nominate Dean Hensley Henson, a liberal friend of nonconformity, to the see of Hereford in 1917, against Davidson's advice, Bishop Charles Gore led an agitation against the consecration and Lord Halifax wrote to the press deploring the proposed appointment. All five protagonists were members of the Athenæum, where Henson encountered 'friends and enemies alike'.[81] Sir Henry Newbolt visited his table in the coffee room to assure him of his goodwill, but there were 'divers Bishops who looked away, or cast down their eyes' when they saw him coming. In the coalition government he was warmly supported by Prothero, son of a clergyman, who said that the bishops had behaved abominably, and another Tory member of the club, Walter Long. Henson was duly consecrated as Bishop of Exeter in 1917 and translated to Durham in 1920, again on Lloyd George's recommendation.

Henson recorded that Asquith was 'quite kind' when they met at the club during the Hereford furore. Before the war, *Punch* had been amused by the Liberal leader's being 'hunted' by suffragettes from Downing Street to 'sanctuary at Athenæum Club', and his old friend Augustine Birrell being assaulted by them on his way there from the Commons.[82] According to Margot Asquith, nine days before the Chief Secretary for Ireland resigned over his handling of the Easter Rising of 1916, she asked her husband what Birrell was doing: 'Reading the memoirs of Boufflers in the Athenæum!'[83] Asquith too used the clubhouse as a bolthole, particularly in the early years of the war when he was under enormous pressure as prime minister.[84] On 10 October 1914 he was pleased to learn that his beloved confidante, Venetia Stanley, had received the previous day's letter 'before the day was out': he had posted it with his own hand 'at the Athenæum *before* 6 p.m. (for I looked at the clock)'.[85] In subsequent letters written in 1914–15 he told her that he had left a long meeting on the War Loan for a 'short respite to the Athenæum', where he read ' "The

Double Mr. Burton", not at all a bad novel',[86] that he had read a 'not bad Russian Nihilist novel by Leroux' in the clubhouse[87] and had tried to read a new book by Maurice Hewlett, a member, entitled *A Lover's Tale*, but had made little progress with it, as his thoughts were with her.[88] Emotional support and mental rest were to be found in his friendship with Venetia and his membership of the club, described in these letters as a place of 'respite', 'refuge', 'the only place where I am free' and 'one of the few places where one is secure from interruption'. No Athenian would dream of interrupting a fellow member when reading, even if the member in question was the wartime premier and the book was a work of fiction chosen from the circulating library.[89] The shock that Asquith received in May 1915, when Venetia announced her engagement to his colleague Edwin Montagu, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, was compounded by the fact that Montagu was elected to the club that year.

Asquith's cabinet included eight Athenians.[90] When America entered the war on 6 April 1917, two of the four ministers in Lloyd George's war cabinet were members of the club: Lords Curzon and Milner. The Century Association in New York expressed its commitment to the war in a cable to its sister club in London. The president of the Century was Joseph Choate, a former American ambassador and honorary member of the Athenæum. He and Henry Osborn Taylor, the Century's secretary, wrote:

> The Century Association assembled in monthly meeting after pledging to President Wilson its heartiest support in the present war for humanity sends fraternal greetings to the Athenæum Club and through it to the great nation whose refusal to compromise the interests of honor and freedom oppose the malign objects of the Hohenzollern dynasty. We regard it as a national honor to fight beside England and France and their Allies for the security of representative government and the liberty of mankind.[91]

Choate regarded a message to the club as a message to the British nation.

While a handful of Athenian politicians helped to run the war from Whitehall, other members of Britain's leading literary club took up the challenge of writing it. Thirteen of the forty authors who signed a declaration in defence of a

'righteous war', published in *The Times* on 18 September 1914, were members and four others were future members.[92] The declaration, entitled 'Britain's destiny and duty', originated in meetings held at Wellington House in Buckingham Gate, London, where the writer and Liberal cabinet minister Charles Masterman had established the secret War Propaganda Bureau.[93] The authors met in circumstances similar to those surrounding the formation of the scientific advisory groups described earlier, in response to a national crisis. Thomas Hardy recalled that 'the yellow September sun shone in from the dusty street with a tragic cast upon them as they sat round the large blue table, full of misgivings, yet unforeseeing in all their completeness the tremendous events that were to follow'.[94] Several of them agreed to write books and pamphlets, of which over a thousand were to be published, in support of the government, which early on was particularly concerned about losing the propaganda war with Germany in America.

'Many of us regard German culture with the highest respect and gratitude', the authors stated in their declaration, 'but we cannot admit that any nation has the right by brute force to impose its culture upon other nations'. Definitions of 'culture' were already the subject of anti-German satire in *Punch*, edited by Seaman. A cartoon published on 26 August and entitled 'The Triumph of "Culture"', in which the Kaiser stands over the corpses of a Belgian family, holding a smoking gun, was by Partridge.[95] British propaganda focused upon a secondary meaning of the German word *Kultur*: 'culture emphasizing practical efficiency and individual subordination to the state'.[96] In a *Punch* cartoon by Leonard Raven Hill, published soon after the Germans first used poison gas in April 1915, the Kaiser is represented as a demonic alchemist producing 'The Elixir of Hate': *Kultur* is represented as a snake at his feet.[97]

Punch sold well at home during the war, as Seaman, who came from a humble background, was careful to reflect public opinion in the magazine and understood the cathartic value of laughter for an increasingly despondent civilian population. Two national characteristics, the stiff upper lip and the recourse to humour in the face of adversity, were exploited and gently mocked in *Punch*, as they were in a popular book on the vermin that tormented soldiers in the trenches by the Master of Christ's College Cambridge and Reader in Zoology in the university. Dr Arthur Shipley, a member of the club, playfully entitled his book *The Minor Horrors of War* (1915), and confessed in the preface

that the articles in the *British Medical Journal* upon which the book was based were 'written in a certain spirit of gaiety', the 'reflex of the spirit of those who have gone to the Front and of my fellow countrymen in general', and that British civilians could also be a torment in wartime:

> The contents of this little book hardly justify its title. There are whole ranges of 'Minor Horrors of War' left untouched in the following chapters. The minor poets, the pamphlets of the professors, the people who write to the papers about 'Kultur' and think that this is the German for Matthew Arnold's over-worked word 'Culture,' the half-hysterical ladies who offer white feathers to youths whose hearts are breaking because medical officer after medical officer has refused them the desire of their young lives to serve their country. Surely, as Carlyle taught us, '*There is no animal so strange as man!*'[98]

Punch's reviewer commented that Shipley's 'unexpected quips' had kept him 'in chuckles'.[99] The propaganda war over 'culture' arrived at the Athenæum's door at the end of 1915, in a *Punch* cartoon depicting the Kaiser mounting the steps from which Matthew Arnold had, in symbolic terms, addressed his Victorian readers in the 'public square' on the subject of culture and anarchy (Plate 26).[100] The artist Frederick Henry Townsend, was not a member, but the nuanced references to the club in the accompanying anonymous verses suggest that Seaman, by now a member of the Executive Committee, was the author:

> When William comes with all his might
> And sets the river Thames alight,
> I shouldn't be at all surprised
> If London Town were Teutonised.
>
> Bidding his bands to play *Te Deum*
> He'll occupy the Athenæum,
> And Pallas' Owl become a vulture
> Under the new *régime* of culture.[101]

Some of the Owls who were lunching, but not gorging within the clubhouse in 1915 were writing two kinds of material that were more widely read than the work of what we now call the 'war poets': documentary accounts of the war itself and prose fiction. Conan Doyle produced examples of both. As an historian of the war from a Wellington House perspective he published six volumes of *The British Campaign in France and Flanders* (1916–20). As a writer of fiction he published an admonitory story near the end of the war entitled 'Danger!', on the threat of German submarines, which he had drafted before the outbreak. 'It is a matter of history', he boasted in the preface, 'how fully this warning has been justified and how, even down to the smallest details, the prediction has been fulfilled.'[102]

A year earlier Conan Doyle had brought the famous private investigator of Baker Street into direct contact with the enemy in 'His last Bow: the war service of Sherlock Holmes', published in the *Strand Magazine* in September 1917. Having chronicled much carnage by this date, Conan Doyle invested the story's setting in the week before the outbreak with a sense of foreboding that is reminiscent of descriptions of the end of the world and the Last Judgment in Victorian verse: 'It was nine o'clock at night upon the second of August – the most terrible August in the history of the world. One might have thought already that God's curse hung heavy over a degenerate earth, for there was an awesome hush and a feeling of vague expectancy in the sultry and stagnant air. The sun had long set, but one blood-red gash, like an open wound, lay low in the distant west.'[103] As the *Strand* announces on the cover, 'Sherlock Holmes Outwits a German Spy'. Von Bork, who is about to return to Germany with stolen secrets, is visited by his associate Baron Von Herling in an English country house. A later visitor is Von Bork's Irish-American agent, Altamont, in fact the disguised Holmes who has been working in counter-espionage for two years and who now arrests the German spy, ably assisted by Watson and the housekeeper Martha, who has been in the pay of Holmes all along. What separates the antagonists is obvious: our British heroes are gentlemen, whereas the Germans are not.

When Von Bork mocks the docile Englanders' 'good form' and 'playing the game' and 'that sort of thing',[104] Conan Doyle echoes an influential book by Sir Charles Waldstein (later Walston), a fellow Athenian, published just two

months earlier. Waldstein, an eminent classical archaeologist at Cambridge, had been educated in New York and Heidelberg, and was suspected of pro-German sympathies. *What Germany Is Fighting For* offers a critique of the ideology of *Kultur*, whereby the people are 'persuaded that, in establishing and furthering their own Kultur, they are directly benefiting humanity at large and all other nations'.[105] Waldstein believed that, in contrast to the cult of the Superman and 'the apparently complete absence of any impulse which makes for fair-play or manifests the possession of altruistic imagination, sympathy, the sense of proportion and of humour', the English ideal of the gentleman is 'really the Hellenic ideal of life, in which all faculties of man, physical, mental, social, were to be harmoniously blended and to produce as well the most efficient patriot as the most perfect social being'.[106]

The Hellenic ideal of the Athenæum, expressed as Arnoldian sweetness and light, was embodied in that urbane Edwardian gentlemen, Sir Henry Newbolt, one of the signatories to the declaration on 'Britain's destiny and duty', and described by John Buchan, a fellow member, as one of the most interesting people he had ever met.[107] The poem for which Newbolt was best known, 'Vitaï Lampada' ('The Torch of Life', 1896) – 'Play up! play up! and play the game!' – influenced later critics of *Kultur* and became the poet's 'Frankenstein's Monster' of his own creation.[108] Earl Roberts was in the chair when the General Committee elected the author of *Admirals All* (1897) and other works under Rule II in 1912.[109] During the war Newbolt divided his time between writing and service at the Admiralty and the Foreign Office, culminating in his becoming controller of wireless and cables. *Punch* printed favourable reviews of *The Book of the Blue Sea* (1914), *The Thin Red Line* (1915), *Tales of the Great War* (1916) and *Submarine and Anti-submarine* (1918), emphasising the timeliness of his books for boys, books which 'stir the pulses';[110] and *Punch* celebrated Newbolt's knighthood in 1915 in verse, 'Because he bids us play the game / And not the super-egotist'.[111]

Newbolt not only epitomised the Athenian combination of creativity with public service, but also moved easily between the writers and the statesmen in the clubhouse, as an habitué.[112] One of his closest friends was the poet and art historian Laurence Binyon, an assistant keeper at the British Museum, who was elected to the club under Rule II in 1914. (His proposer was Archbishop Davidson.)[113] Binyon felt little of the euphoria experienced by other writers at

the outbreak of war and did not attend the secret meeting at Wellington House described by Hardy.[114] He signed the declaration, however, and his 'requiem-verses', 'For the Fallen', were printed in *The Times* less than seven weeks after the outbreak:

> They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
> At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
> We will remember them.

Sidney Colvin suggested to Elgar, a fellow member of the club, that he might set 'For the Fallen' and two other poems from Binyon's *The Winnowing Fan* (1914) to music. The London première of Elgar's *The Spirit of England* at the Queen's Hall in May 1916, described as 'one of the most extraordinary musical events of the war', featured the soprano Clara Butt, who sang in five further performances in aid of the Red Cross, one of which was attended by King George V.[115]

Binyon served as a Red Cross ambulancier and orderly in a French military hospital for periods in 1915–16 and was then sent to report on the British volunteers who supported French victims of the war. *For Dauntless France* (1918) combines detailed documentary reports on that work with vivid accounts of conditions at the Front:

> The two vast tides clash in a conflict that never ends, that never sleeps; that dies down to intervals of seeming quiet, but wakes again to double and triple fury. And all along that line the earth is blotched, pounded, pitted, scorched. The trees are splintered stumps. It is a landscape that is to the natural green and brown like the face of an idiot among the healthy and bright-eyed. An insane landscape, smelling of evil. It resounds with all the noises of chaos. By night it alternates thick gloom with sudden and sinister illumination. Yet the larks go up in the dawns and sing above the cannonade.[116]

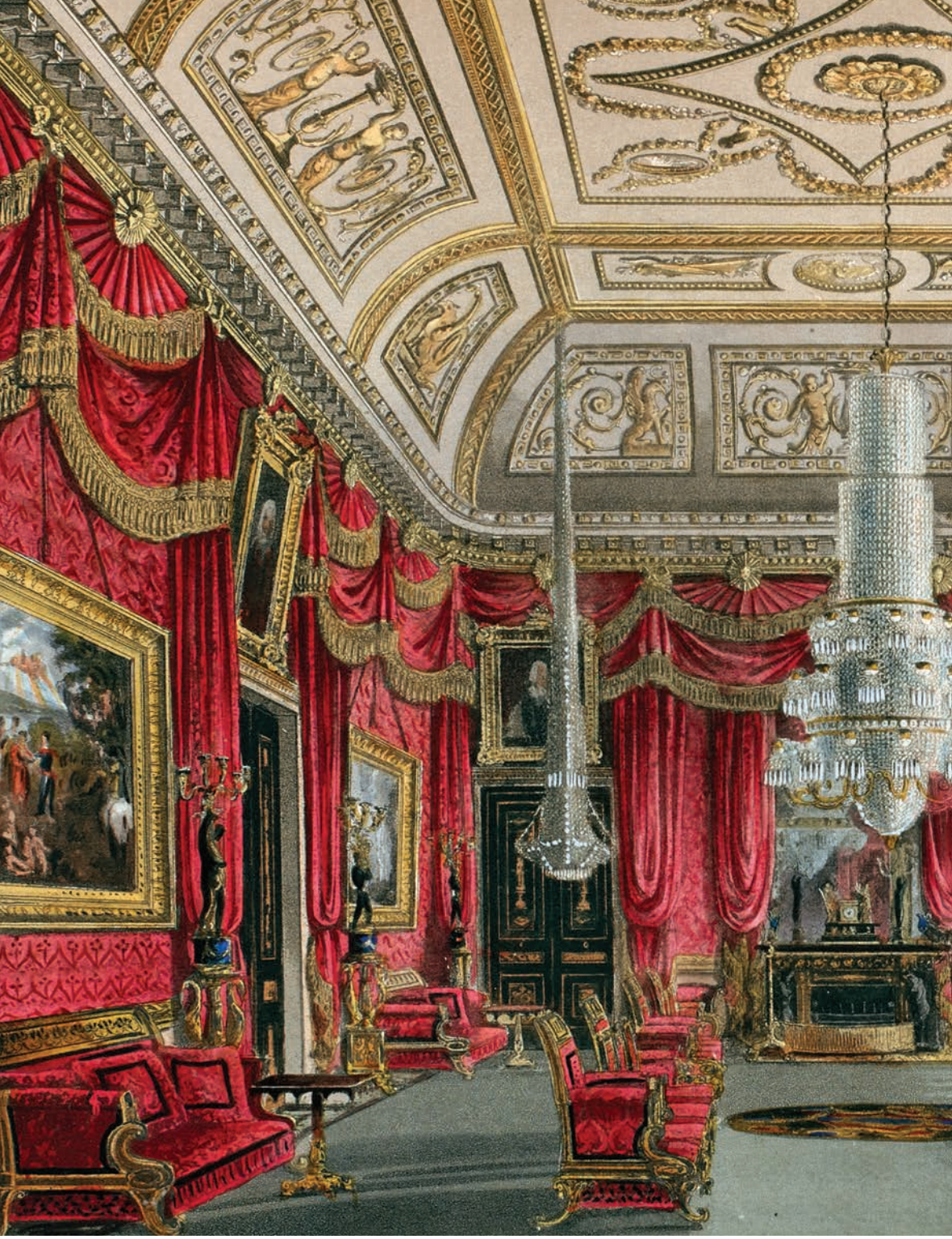
For Dauntless France opens with a reference to *The Dynasts* (1904–8), which Thomas Hardy himself described as an 'epic-drama of the war with Napoleon'.

1. The founder of the Athenæum, John Wilson Croker, was a true blue Tory who ensured that a majority of Whigs served on the inaugural committee, and that members of this new kind of non-partisan club were elected on the basis of achievements rather than birth.

2. 12 Waterloo Place, shown here on the left, facing the viewer, was the temporary home of the Athenæum between 31 May 1824 and 8 February 1830. When the building was demolished in 1912 the club rescued a shattered volute (Roman cement painted black) as a keepsake.

3. Athena/Minerva's association with owls, like the one at the Temple of Minerva, is honoured in some of the club's silverware and in stuffed specimens on display in the clubhouse. It also explains the sobriquet attached to the club's members: bookish 'Owls'.

4. William Wyon's seal for the Athenæum was based upon this design for Athena's helmeted head by Sir Thomas Lawrence, the fourth president of the Royal Academy, a portraitist and an original member. Athena was the goddess of wisdom in ancient Greece. Her Roman counterpart was Minerva.



5. Having been lavishly refurbished by the prince regent, Carlton House was demolished in 1826, thus creating the space for the southern continuation of Waterloo Place on which the new Athenæum clubhouse was to be built. Among the sumptuous rooms that Croker knew was the crimson drawing room.