

Documents

The Minutes of the Edgeworthalean Society, 1840-1844

*Edited by Lawrence Wheeler**

In the winter of 1840-1841, thirty-three women of Monroe County joined together in the organization of a club which met weekly so that the members might ponder the argumentative questions of the day. The original minute book is in the archives of Indiana University. The final entry is dated June 14, 1844.

The organization adopted a constitution and by-laws and carried on its business under the rules of order as they existed in the early nineteenth century. In the words of the first president, Mrs. M. E. Hughs (Hughes), similar organizations had been limited to the "other sex." At least three such organizations for men had existed in Indiana Seminary; Henodelphisterian, prior to 1828; Athenian, 1830; and Philomathean, 1831.

At their meeting on January 22, 1841, the women adopted the name "Edgeworthalean" in honor of Maria Edgeworth, English author, whose works had been issued in many editions. She had been born in 1767 and died eight years after the Bloomington club was organized.

The Minerva club, which was organized on September 20, 1859, at New Harmony, Indiana, has long claimed to be the first women's club in America to have a written constitution and by-laws. Miss Constance Owen Fauntleroy and eleven other women were the charter members of Minerva. As with the Edgeworthalean Society, the constitution and by-laws of the Minerva Society have been preserved.

Many of the activities of the Edgeworthalean Society were similar to those of the Athenian and Philomathean societies. The men met on Friday evenings; so did the Edgeworthaleans. The officers who criticized the literary activi-

* Lawrence Wheeler, Professor of Journalism and Director of Communications at Indiana University, prepared the material concerning the Edgeworthalean Society. His attention was called to the Minute Book in the Archives by Mrs. Mary B. Craig, Archivist in the office of President Herman B. Wells. Dr. William Lowe Bryan, president emeritus of Indiana University, could not add additional material toward the identification of the members of the Society.

ties were similar in title and duties. Fines for absence and for being unprepared to take part in the programs of the clubs were alike.

Numbered among the Edgeworthalean members were young ladies and women from the Monroe County families whose names appear frequently in the history of early Indiana. A list of the members follows:

Miss Mary Maxwell Alexander, charter member, born December 10, 1822; died September 26, 1866.

Mrs. M. W. Barnes, charter member.

Miss Margaret Anderson Batterton, born October 7, 1821; died December 7, 1915; became member, May 21, 1841; became honorary member, May 16, 1844; married Samuel Forbes Dunn, March 30, 1848.

Miss E. Baugh.

Miss M. L. Bollman.

Miss C. Bowland, or Borland or P. Borland, became member August 13, 1841; honorable dismissal, December 13, 1842.

Miss Mary A. Buskirk.

Miss V. V. Buskirk, or V. Buskirk.

Miss Elizabeth Deming, became honorary member June 14, 1844.

Miss S. Jane Dunning, charter member.

Mrs. M. Forbes, became honorary member December 23, 1842, "When she removed North."

Mrs. M. L. Hinkson, or Hinkston or Hinson, charter member.

Miss Louisa Jane Howe, born May 23, 1819; died July 20, 1907; married James Darwin Maxwell, July 6, 1843.

Mrs. M. Elizabeth Hughes, or Hughes, charter member. Died January 6, 1842. Mother of Miss L. Hughes and the Reverend Levi Hughes.

Miss J. F. Hughes, charter member, honorably dismissed, September 3, 1841. Became Mrs. J. F. Ringgold.

Miss L. Hughes, or Hughes, charter member.

Miss E. J. Kirk.

Miss E. Livingston, or A. E. Livingston, became member on August 13, 1841, and honorary member on March 25, 1842.

Miss M. E. Lowe.

Miss A. McDonald.

Mrs. McGee, became honorary member, May 16, 1844.

Mrs. Mary A. Martineau, became member on August 26, 1842, disowned on December 30, 1842, "having missed 4 meetings, being warned, still neglects her duty."

Miss J. L. May, charter member.

Miss Amanda Maxwell, charter member, born August 9, 1822; died December 20, 1914. Married the Reverend Levi Hughes, October 11, 1848. Together they established the First Presbyterian Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Miss Margaret Anderson Maxwell, charter member, born January 1, 1820 (the first white child to be born in Bloomington, Indiana); died June 29, 1888. Married the Reverend W. Y. Allen. Together

they founded the first Presbyterian churches in Houston and Austin, Texas.

Mrs. C. Morrison, charter member.

Miss H. E. Parks.

Miss R. L. Rogers, or R. Lu. Rogers, charter member.

Miss J. Severs.

Miss M. Sleeper, became member on August 12, 1842.

Miss C. Swearingen, became member on June 2, 1842. Died July 29, 1843.

Miss M. Venable.

Miss S. Williams.

CONSTITUTION

Article 1st. This society shall be called Edgeworthalean.

Art. 2 The officers of this society shall be a President, Vice President Secretary Treasuress, two Critics, a librarian, and a Censoress all of whom shall be chosen by the voice of the whole society and hold their offices 3 months.

Art. 3rd It shall be the duty of the President upon entering the duties of her office to deliver an inaugural address which shall be recorded unless objected to by two-thirds of the whole society, to preside in all regular meetings, to decide all questions of order, to appoint committees, to impose all fines not otherwise provided for and require of each member a strict observance of the provisions of this constitution.

Art. 4th. It shall be the duty of the Vice President in the absence of the Pres. to discharge all the duties pertaining to that office.

Art. 5th It shall be the duty of the Secretary to record all the proceedings of the society and furnish the treasuress with a list of the fines imposed during her term of office.

Article 6th. It shall be the duty of the treasuress to receive all moneys paid to the society, collect all debts & report the state of the funds at the expiration of her term of office.

Art. 7th. It shall be the duty of the two critics to inspect compositions, write criticisms on them pointing out the beauties and defects, and correcting the errors which shall be read before the society and delivered to the members on whose compositions they were written.

Art. 8th. It shall be the duty of the Censoress to supervise the general moral character of the society, admonish all offenders, and see that the character of this institution be not injured by the disorderly conduct of any of its members.

Art 9th. The exercises of the society shall consist of recitations, compositions argumentations, Reading writing diction, analysing sentences or any such exercises as may be found to be conducive to the improvement of its members.

Article 10th. It shall be the duty of the officers to divide the members into classes and assign to each class its respective duties.

Article 11th. No person shall be entitled to membership without paying a fee of [] cts but inability to comply with this requisition shall not debar the worthy.

Art. 12th. Any person desiring membership shall make application in writing accompanied by the names of 2 members who can state that they believe the applicant is influenced by a desire for improvement and that her admittance would be beneficial to herself and the society.

Art. 13 One negative vote shall be sufficient to debar membership, provided objector can give good grounds for her opposition to a select committee appointed by the officers.

Art. 14 A library of select books shall be procured as soon as circumstances will permit, and all moneys not otherwise appropriated shall be expended for this purpose

Art. 15th. Should this society ever be dissolved its library and other effects shall descend to any other society of ladies of this town that will adopt the leading features of this constitution.

Art 16th. This constitution shall be subject to amendment or alteration, but no amendment or alteration shall take place without a concurrence of two thirds of all the members in regular attendance.

BYE LAWS

Article 1st The President shall take the chair precisely at the hour to which the society shall adjourn and call the house to order

Art 2n. The secretary shall make out a roll of the names of the members which shall be called at the opening of every meeting, and every member who is absent shall pay a fine of 6¼ cts unless a sufficient excuse be rendered, or leave of absence be granted by the President.

Art 3rd. Every member who shall fail to discharge any of the duties required by the constitution shall be fined 6¼ cts.

Article 4th. Every officer who shall fail to discharge any of the duties *required* by the constitution and these Buy Laws shall be fined 12½ cts.

Art. 5th. No member shall be permitted to speak longer than 10 minutes or oftener than twice on the same subject unless permitted by the President.

Art. 6th. The President may permit any member to participate in the debate provided those whose duty it is to debate shall not object.

Art. 7th. Every member shall have the privilege to make critical remarks on any of the exercises of the society.

Art. 8th. It shall be the duty of the President to decide the question debated, on the strength of argument offered by the affirmative & negative and take the vote of the society on the merits of the question.

Arti. 9th. The classes in their exercises shall rotate that is the 2nd shall take the place of the 1st, the 3rd of the 2nd; the 4th of the 3rd, & Art. 10th. If any member shall absent herself voluntarily from 4 regular meetings or refuse to conform to the rules & regulations of the society it shall be deemed sufficient cause to disown her

Art. 12th. No member shall be allowed to leave her seat during the exercises of the society without permission from the President; and permission should not be requested when any member is on the floor.

Art. 13th. The President may call any person to her chair and participate in debates, or motions and resolutions.

Art. 14th The Librarian shall take charge of the library and loan the books to the members.

Article 15th. No member shall be allowed to keep a book longer than two weeks and any member abusing a book shall be fined at the discretion of the Librarian

Article 16th. The President is at liberty to grant optional attendance to those members living at a distance from town

Article 17th Any member of leaving the society shall be entitled to a certificate signed by the President, Secretary, and Governess; provided such a member shall have sustained a respectable standing, paid all debts & fines, and provided also that she shall have been a regular member for at least 6 months.

The Articles 18 and 19 are added, each in a different hand.

Art. 18th No person shall attend any meeting of this society as a spectator, unless the consent of its members be obtained before-hand.

Article 19th. Leave of absence may be granted to any member so requesting either by voice or letter, provided a majority of the Society deem the reason stated sufficient.

Once the Constitution and By-Laws had been set down in the Minute Book the record of the meetings of the Society start abruptly with Friday, January 8, 1841. There had evidently been an earlier meeting for the unidentified secretary notes "the society met pursuant to adjournment, Miss H. not being present, Mrs. Hughs was called to preside pro-tem. The composition class performed with credit to its members and the criticism was both appropriate and encouraging. The meeting then adjourned to meet the following Friday afternoon."

Miss L. Hughs was again absent on January 15. Mrs. M. E. Hughs (Hughes) was elected president unanimously. The secretary noted the fact and said "it is expected she will deliver an inaugural address accordingly. The several classes performed their duties with much credit to themselves and to the young ladies of the county. It is to be hoped that the embarrassment which is still consequent on our exercises may soon be done away or exchanged for that modest freedom which is necessary to the proper criticism of all the exercises and to the right improvement of the members."

A week later the inaugural address was given. It set the tone of the work of the Edgeworthaleans and emphasized the pioneer character of the Society. Mrs. Hughs said:

Address

Ladies, Fellow-members of the Edgeworthalean Society,

I appear before you on the present occasion with mingled feelings of gratitude for the honor which you have been pleased to confer upon me, and a conviction of my own inability to discharge properly the duties assigned me. For the confidence manifested in electing me to preside over your meetings, you will please accept my *accept my* sincere thanks. Permit me likewise to bespeak what I shall certainly need—your kind indulgence towards the many errors which must necessarily grow out of my entire ignorance of the rules and regulations pertaining to the office.

Although societies similar to *character* to the one which we are now engaged in forming have long existed in places not very distant, yet, in our own immediate community they have hitherto been confined exclusively to the other sex. As we may therefore be considered in some degree *innavators* in the established order of things it may be necessary and proper to state our intentions in forming this *organsociation*.

Our object is the cultivation and improvement of the mind; and to effect this we have adopted such exercises and regulations as other societies of the same nature have found most conducive to the same end.

In the progress of society the belief has been gradually gaining ground that the station assigned to women in the social scheme is one of much greater importance than it has hitherto been considered and that her position in the various relations of daughter wife mother mistress of a family and the acknowledged arbitress of the rules which regulate social intercourse, gives her an influence which may be powerfully wielded either for good or for evil. To enable her therefore to fulfil her destiny with credit and happiness to herself, advantage to others philanthropists now deem it necessary to give her the aids of a solid and useful education. We gather from history that in the earlier ages of the world when all else was made to yield to physical superiority, the lot of woman was hard and her state degraded: she was esteemed sufficiently honoured in being made the household drudge and slave of man. At a later period when the wild and romantic spirit of chivalry pervaded nearly all the nations of the Earth, the caprice of her masters wrought an astonishing change in her condition, and she found herself elevated to the rank of an earthly divinity — a goddess worthy the adoration of the other sex: since that time the benign influence of Christianity has been silently working out yet another [illegible] in her destiny; and it has now grown quite customary to view her as a rational being, intended by her Creator to perform a useful and respectable part, and endowed by Him with the faculties necessary to enable her to fulfil the end of her being. The two former theories however are not entirely exploded and while some contend sturdily for the puppet system, others are to be found, who would fain set her down in their list of chattels. But to return to the subject more immediately before us.

When discussing the propriety of our present undertakings it has been objected by many that a part at least of the exercises customary in such societies was too masculine to be proper for females and was

calculated to dim the lustre of that modest reserve which is justly considered the *sexes* best ornament

However much I may prize the jewel in question or respect the honest prejudices of those who think thus, I do not participate in their fears as to the result as this would to me wear the appearance of making a woman's modesty, and propriety of deportment dependent on her ignorance for their preservation. There may indeed be a false modesty which is placed in the above predicament; and perhaps the true and false (like the sublime & the ridiculous) may be but a single step assunder, but if it be so, is it not an additional reason for strengthening all her powers of mind, that she may the more readily discriminate between the two?

With the notice of one more objection, I will now conclude. It is agreed by many that mental culture unfits a woman for the performance of these domestic employments which make a part of her daily duties. That this pursuit like every thing good under the sun, may be abused perverted cannot be denied; but surely when properly directed it has no such tendency and I trust I do not misrepresent the sentiments of my fellowmembers when I assert that we advocate it because we believe it to be eminently calculated to strengthen and perfect the sex in the discharge of their duties, thereby rendering home the seat of happiness.

On January 29, the first subject for debate was raised: "Is there more pleasure in pursuit or in possession?" Two weeks later a special assignment was given to Mrs. Barnes and Miss Howe to write a dialogue, if possible. And, on February 26, the members agreed on a method whereby the members would serve in rotation in the various classes: Reading, Composition, Recitations and Debating. A week later the debate subject was: "Is wealth productive generally of the most happiness or misery to mankind?" When the decision was made on March 12 it was agreed that wealth had brought more misery than happiness. That decision having been made, the Society buckled down to the question: "Is it important that ladies study the dead languages?" The secretary never did record the answer.

On May 21 the Society discussed "whether Observation or Reading most improved the Mind" and agreed that Observation was most important. It then turned to another question: "Which is the Most Important, Male or Female Education?" On the 28th, when the arguments were given the club voted that, for strength of argument, Male Education won but that, on the merits of the case, Female Education was overwhelmingly important.

June 4 came and J.F. Hughs was "unpunctual" but on

roll call she gave a sufficient reason and was excused. Miss V. Buskirk was not prepared for her part in the program and was fined. Columbus came out ahead in the debate which contested whether he, for discovering, or Washington, for defending America, was the most important.

Mrs. M. W. Barnes became president on June 11, 1842. Her address was long and included the suggestion that Phrenology might hold the solution of the superiority of the male or female brain. She said:

Ladies of the Edgeworthalian Society:

Accept my thanks for the implied preference which has chosen me to preside at your meetings and let me hope that to the brief address which (in compliance with our established regulations) I offer you — you will extend your indulgence, attributing its defects, or insipidity, not to any want of interest in the subject which would seem appropriate for the occasion but to inability perhaps to treat them as I would wish; and indeed to entire ignorance as to the usual mode adopted and considered proper in similar cases; — the field for discussion (however) must necessarily be extensive; nor can the subject be deficient in number or barren in interest if even limited to those connected with or arising from our immediate situation as a society, yet in its infancy: — But which has for its great object and aim the intellectual culture and improvement of our sex. And if (as we believe) institutions of a like nature have heretofore been found profitable in the many instances where they have been established for the benefit of the other sex— as well as in the more limited trials that have been given by our own — have we not every reason to expect that (with due perseverance and energy) results equally happy will crown our exertions (in a cause which must strike each one of us as being the most desirable of any that could possibly claim our attention) — nor need we, I think— fear that at any future period of life we shall be disposed to regret or deem misapplied whatever portion of time or thought we now withdraw from our other occupations and devote in the manner here prescribed;— and indeed does not our actual experience even thusfar go to favor such a belief? For to most of us (I must think) our mutual relations and exercises have already been productive of much pleasure — with regard to myself I confess so far has the experiment exceeded my expectations that it would now be with great regret I should be compelled to forego its advantages — nor should we, I think, feel discouraged that our numbers are not greatly augmented;— prospects being decidedly more favorable with a few *energetic* spirits than if our number were greater and the interest more languidly sustained.

Most happily for women that dark season in the world's history which deemed her *incapable of sustaining* the general character of a rational being, well as the more confined one of her own peculiar sphere — is rapidly passing away — and she is now called upon to come forward and herself assist in the great work of emancipating the spirit from

the thraldon and degradation in which the ignorance of past ages have held her bound — for though the sentiment which prevailed some years since of the inferiority of females intellect seems exploded in this age of universal refinement and a woman of cultivated understanding is no longer a *phaenomena* though the portals of science are thrown open even to her and the paths of knowledge rendered accessible — what matters it if she herself is not actuated by the proper spirit! — is not alive and on the alert to seize and appropriate the rich and invented advantages that are now offered to her acceptance for that we *have* good advantages compared to the females of the olden time imperfect and mechanical as it is even yet our system of education all must admit and that also the superiority of the modern to the ancient civilized world is in a marked manner displayed in this particular for though we do hear of one or two gifted women in Greece and Rome of Sappho, of Asphasia, and of Porcia — yet were the majority consigned to the distaff, — and scarcely thought of in connexion with any more elevated employment — but opinion is now more than ever in favor of the *general* diffusion of knowledge— and it is only to be expected that women must profit by this enlargement of feeling — men of learning have stooped from the elevations of science to accelerate her improvement — they now abridge, complete, explain for her assistance and advancement in literature — Shall we then be less active or shall we not rather gratefully unite our efforts with theirs for the promotion of an object so desirable to each one of us and to our sex generally? — convinced as we are that the cultivation of the mind ever opens exhaustless sources of amusement and delight of which the ignorant can form no estimate and in woman equally with man is the beneficial effect of a proper system of culture made manifest rendering her superior in all respects from being accustomed to think and be discriminate her opinion is no longer a mere momentary impulse, her sphere is enlarged and she is as much actuated by selfish motives or so likely to receive critical and consequently errorneous impressions— she is generally more correct in her own sentiments and liberal to those of others for tis mediocrity or ignorance that is intolerant and *opionative* but that knowledge is a treasure most heartily to be desired by all and equally proper for all,— few now will question nor does the belief entertained by some (that of this possession men are more tenacious than of any other and less willing to share it with us) seems altogether probable — may it not rather be that in many instances females are but superficially taught and when satisfied with that imperfect teaching do sometimes make it the plea for undue assumption from which real information would shrink— and there are, too, instances of female pretenders in learning who seem to think it absolutely necessary to remove as far as possible from feminine grace, in order to approach manly vigor of intellect; we cannot in such cases wonder that men should prefer proficient to *smatters* in science— yet, there is no reason why female acquirements should be identified with such folly or as is sometimes the case with slovenly attire, an ill arranged table or an ill conducted household — on the contrary the tendency of real knowledge is to make her sensible as well as humble — nor will accomplishments

in any degree indispose her for active domestic duties, "order is the *symptom* of a well regulated mind and she who has felt the importance of interior arrangement will scarcely be indifferent to a well directed household and if *experience* has ever seemed to militate against this opinion it must proceed from constitutional defect which mental discipline may have in some degree amended but which it has not been *wholly* able to correct" — is it then natural that man, when superior himself, should wish to encounter even in a female companion the contractedness of ignorance or inaptitude of folly— would he not rather wish to meet in the domestic circle a friend who could sympathise if not participate in his higher pursuits— who could appreciate literary excellence and taste intellectual pleasures — to whom knowledge had given elevation and refinement? Let us then bear in mind that it rests in a great degree with ourselves— whether we sink again in the social scale —maintain merely our present position or rise still higher, to be indeed the fit companion for man — his equal and his friend! that such a state of things is practicable as well as desirable, I must believe until at least it shall be proven by fair opportunities of trial— by Phrenology or other incontrovertable evidence that our minds are actually incapable of the high degree of attainment which constitutes the glory of man— but, if (as I must believe) we *are* equally endowed by nature how can we, nay how dare we, suppose the divine attribute of intellect yielded us but to remain inactive or unemployed indeed I must think there is more than mere matter of pleasure or inclination involved in this question for should we not rather consider it an imperative duty to exercise and encourage whatever portion of talent we may possess; if nothing was made in vain, surely this richest, *choicest* gift of God to man, was not designed to remain idle or unappreciated; — then though many of our necessary occupations may seem in compatible with mental culture let us be the more careful to devote even a portion of what we are wont to misterm our spare moments to some profitable attainment and we shall be astonished at the close of a year at the advantage we may derive from even the small payment of time that otherwise would have been but useless blanks in each days history— We may doubtless affect much in this way if we will but apply ourselves diligently to the task — much too independent of the information gained at school where (even under the most favorable circumstances) the whole business of obtaining an education (as it is termed) is confined to a few brief years of perhaps the most thoughtless portion of life — instead of constituting (as it should) and often does with men a part, at least, of the daily work of a lifetime, for it is most generally after that season has gone by that we learn to think (if we ever do) to apply the facts with which the mind may then have been stored and which will but lie upon the memory as in the books from which they were taken unless by the exercise of our own understanding we make them our own— it is then by self directed study and reflection principally that we must prove what we have heard and read extract from what we have learned from others all its *nutrecious* juice, strengthen and enrich the soil of our own intellect which unless the reasoning faculties are properly exercised, can no more be effected than can a limb or

muscle be strong or vigorous without a constant and healthy application of it, to its use— Neither must we forget that there is nothing truly valuable to be obtained without some pain or exertion — then surely with us the sacrifice of a little present comfort might well be endured, for the sake of the rich reward that must undoubtedly follow; and the young lady who would not shrink from an occasional vigil in her untiring search mid learning's treasured hordes though she might peril the blooming freshness of her cheek would be more than compensated by the additional lustre and beauty thrown around her life and character.

It is to be regretted that the good sense and industry of the women of former days is not *oftner* imitated in this particular for (though literature) was indeed a rare accomplishment among them (as they had great difficulties to encounter) yet, when they did attempt it they were satisfied with no ordinary proficiency —“Parnassus itself was a craggy rock but the muses dwell upon its top.”

It has been remarked that many a bright and shining talent may lie hid in a napkin for very want of activity to unfold it — and I must think it impossible to be greatly under the influence of indolence, when actually unaware of the fact, in ourselves. this, then is one among the many reasons that render it desirable to form and encourage a society such as we now constitute for (unless there is some portion of him set apart and devoted exclusively to intellectual improvement) we are too likely to neglect it altogether— still quieting conscience and the spirits yearnings for light with the assurance that we cannot possibly do otherwise;— tis not indeed unusual to hear persons habitually complain of the want of time, ever in a hurry, and so perplexed with business as to be unable to enjoy themselves or the society of a friend — when with these very persons an habitual diligence and methodical arrangement would so dispose the affairs of life that none would be found to intrude upon another; see (for instance the dispatch with which some in public stations manage a multiplicity of the most important concerns) to contemplate them we would almost conclude nothing (is) too extensive for the human mind to compass yet diligence and methods are the charms that effect it all: — let us then check every intimation which may occasionally urge that we have no time to attend to the duties prescribed by our institution.—I will not believe as some have predicted that we are destined to be shortlived and *proffittless* in our career — some opposition we have had (and where too we might have expected more liberal and enlightened views) — yet such will affect us but little if we but maintain the proper spirit within ourselves — remembering— that those who too easily influenced by every adviser or intimidated at the appearance of difficulty must necessarily be desultory and unsettled and effect nothing of consequence because unable to persevere in any undertaking.

Let us then not doubt that we shall— as the name we have chosen indicates— continue to prosper in this undertaking that, as we progress in years, and increase in numbers, we shall be more and more convinced of the substantial benefits derived through our mutual *connexion* and those of us who have supported the measure in the season of its

greatest need shall in future years consider it no mean gratification to be numbers among the founders of the first female Literary Society of Bloomington.

As the summer moved along June 18 found the members debating the wisdom of mature years as against the happiness peculiar to youth. Again there was a split decision. The members liked the arguments for Wisdom but they chose Happiness. From that the Society a week later considered whether a murderer or a slanderer exerted the most pernicious influence. Those who argued for the murderer won. On July 2 the question of manual labor was debated—whether it was a curse or a blessing. It turned out to be a curse; as far as debating ability went. A foretaste of many another argument these hundred years was given on July 9 when the Society discussed who had the greatest reason to complain of their treatment: the Whites, the Indians or the Negroes. "The debate was carried on with spirit and is now one of the most pleasant and useful exercises of the Society," noted the secretary. The Edgeworthaleans decided for the Negro.

During the remainder of 1841 the Society met regularly and received acclaim for its work from the secretary. The questions for debate continued to hold the interest of the members. They were:

July 15. Which profession affords the best opportunities to benefit mankind—Law or Physic? Law won. (The defender of Physic failed to attend.)

July 22. Which has caused the most bloodshed—Love or Anger? Love won. (Miss May — to speak for Anger, failed to attend. She was fined 6¼ cts.)

July 30. Is a young person of the lower ranks happier with a good education and a well informed mind or with an education just equal to those around him? The decision went to the debators favoring equal education but all members agreed they would prefer a superior education.

August 6. Is Conscience an innate principle? It is.

August 13. Which is the greatest crime, slandering or stealing? Slandering.

August 20. Which would be the most conducive to our happiness, to be at once created with all the knowledge to be acquired or to obtain it by slow degree? The question was not answered. Neither of the debaters was present.

August 27. Did Napoleon exert a good or evil influence over Europe? The vote of the Society decided that the argument was strongest against Napoleon but the president held that the good he had done in Europe outweighed the evil.

September 3. Which was the most blameworthy in the original transgression, Adam or Eve? The president held for Eve and the Society voted that "Adam was less guilty."

September 11. Which is the most honorable passion, Ambition or Love? As argued, Love.

September 18. Is there more happiness found in the married or single state? And the vote of the Society was for the single state!

September 25. Should novels be abolished? A positive "No" was registered.

By mutual agreement there were no meetings until November 12 when it was decided that parties were not injurious to society.

November 19. Should capital punishment be inflicted or not? The Society thought it should be abolished.

November 26. Is happiness more dependent on the mind or on surroundings? The mind won.

December 3. Was Elizabeth justified in her conduct toward Mary Queen of Scots? That question of British history was never answered — the secretary copied the minutes of a week before and repeated that those in favor of "the mind" won.

December 10. None of the officers came to the meeting. The few members present adjourned.

December 17. A similar situation developed.

December 24. Is there such a thing as disinterested benevolence? The date being Christmas Eve, the vote was unanimous in favor of disinterested benevolence.

On January 9, 1842, the secretary wrote: "It was proposed during a meeting of the Society, a few weeks previous to the Anniversary of the Edgeworthalean Society that Judge McDowall should be requested or invited to deliver an address on that occasion— it was unanimously agreed to— and "Mrs. Barnes, L. Howe & M. Maxwell were appointed a committee to inform the gentleman of the arrangement—and obtain his answer."

"The invitation was accepted and at the appointed time, New Year's Evening, 2 o'clock, an appropriate and very

beautiful address was made—claiming our highest admiration and entire satisfaction. On the evening of the same day, the members of the Edgeworthalean society together with the young Ladies of the Academy, and as a further celebration of the anniversary, adjourned to the Seminary, where they had previously prepared and arranged an abundant repast.

“Each individual had the liberty of inviting a certain number of their friends and when all were assembled there were upwards of a hundred and twenty persons. The evening was pleasant and passed off to the general satisfaction of both entertained and entertainers.

“There were some small expenses, for *spermaceta* candles & & that were defrayed by the funds of the Society; everything else necessary for the occasion was contributed by the different individuals.”

A week after the party, on January 6, 1842, death took Mrs. Hughs, the first president, from the ranks of the Society. Suitable resolutions were drawn at a special meeting on January 8 including “That we truly sympathize with her afflicted family especially with her youthful daughter who was formerly a member of our Association and whom we would earnestly commend to the ‘Father of the Fatherless’ trusting that she may inherit the virtues of her deceased parent, And, That in token of our regret at this irreparable loss we wear a badge of mourning for 20 days, And, That a copy of this resolution be presented to the family and also that they be published in the *Bloomington Post*.”

Mrs. M.L. Hinkson became president on January 28, 1842. She found “the star of women rising” and hurled defiance at those who would injure her cause. In her inaugural address she said:

Ladies

It is with fear and trembling I enter upon the duties you have assigned me; knowing that much depends on the President to excite and maintain an interest in the exercises. But your united zeal for the prosperity and permanance of this institution, I trust will amply compensate for deficiency and inability on my part. Associated together for the laudable purpose of training the higher faculties of our nature in accordance with the laws of science and art — of striking out thought by the *colision* of intellect, of strengthening *memery*, invigorating mind and facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, we have much to hope and but little to fear. The short period of our existence as a body has not passed without many advantages. Every member, no doubt, is

already sensible of having received much benefit. In the brief space of a year, a name, a character is established of which you may well feel proud; and I trust that you will sufficiently appreciate the responsibilities resting upon you to sustain and increase your present reputation by unremitting industry. True the society has met with some disappointment—the collection of a library has not commenced, but then access to the County & other libraries is so easy that but little anxiety need be felt on that account. One seat has been vacated in our little assembly which will long remain a *memento mori*: and should also remind us of the zeal and punctuality of the highly prized member whose loss we deplore.

Fairly equipped and started on an expedition to the promised land of improvement with every necessary advantage, there is no looking back to the smooth plains of indolence without bringing contempt upon the Society and upon the sex, so far as its influence extends; and that extends much farther on account of such societies still being rare. Indefatigable & energetic exertions are, therefore, imperiously required. Not only would a failure bring obloquy and sarcasm on the *abandoners* of so noble a cause, but rising genius would be damped—woman's energies suppressed—the friends of humankind disappointed—and the narrow minded envious part of (the) community would feel gratified that their croakings of woman's lack of perseverance were no nearly confirmed.

Under the favorable auspices of the present age, if woman fail to improve the increasing means, which the Arts and Sciences present, and which the wise and generous of the opposite sex so nobly accord she tacitly acknowledges her indolence and proves her unfitness for anything but the blind worship, abuse and scorn of him *whome* she should sedulously emulate. But this cannot be her destiny. The star of woman is rising, and though its beams have hitherto only glittered on our intellectual mountains, yet a ray has reached the Edgeworthalean phalanx to illumine its onward upward march. Then let its members beware how they yield to the impulse of sloth and the suggestions of contracted minds lest they fall behind the rapid strides of female improvement in various parts of the world. Persevere. Be among the pioneers into woman's future sphere. The real philanthropist is looking to such women and such institutions to prove to the world that woman *will* become what he has asserted she can—the reasoning counterpart of man. The gate to the temple of science is now unbarred & many secret wishes and approving voices are urging woman up the laborious but invigorating steep. Shall she *fault* because the sneers and scoffs of the idle, vain, and thoughtless are heaped upon her? Will she linger on the threshold of knowledge because fools assert she has not energy enough to grasp its blessings? Nay let her fearlessly enter confounding her enemies and proving to friends that she has zeal and industry enough to overcome obstacles, at least.

She who superficially skims over the surface of useful studies and merely strives to *excell* in ornamental will ere long be viewed in the same light with a student who should spend his college course in experimenting on fiddle strings. What though she may flutter in the

assembly with all the graces of Venus, yet man must acknowledge that Minerva is a more interesting character — that mind makes the woman as well as the man. The time will arrive— nay it is almost here — when those only who are distinguished for intellectual and moral worth shall be considered the truly accomplished.

The stability and prosperity of our Government must materially depend upon the proper direction of the female mind. For a government to be truly republican woman must be free— not from the laws of social life— but from ignorance and superstition— from pride and vanity the spontaneous productions of an uncultivated mind.

That women exert a vast influence in republican government has been acknowledge(d) in different ages of the world, and for that reason the wise have repeatedly urged their claims to a higher degree of mental discipline. But the great amount of domestic duties rendered such a course generally impracticable. Only consider in addition to our domestic duties that of spinning, weaving, and embroidery occupying two thirds perhaps of the time and because fashionable as well as necessary it must be done. How much our condition is bettered. We have leisure for reading and thanks to Dame Fashion for taking that under her protection so that it will generally be practised. The manual labor of woman is reduced nearly one half. Indeed it seems that man by his numerous inventions is determined to strip her of the only plausible excuse she has had for not improving her mind equally with his. Of the earliest advocates of female education Pythagoras is the most prominent. It is said that many females ranked among the brightest ornaments of his philosophical school. But the world was then unable to appreciate strength of mind without corresponding physical strength. Therefore the effort was premature, the mass of womankind was not sufficiently prepared for so great a change.

But the way has been gradually prepared by the inventions and discoveries of ages. Man no longer believes that the greatest mind necessarily dwells in the most athletic frame. And now woman must show that she has kept pace with the changes of the times — that she is ready to partake of the proffered tree of knowledge — to sacrifice ease, in order to become the companion of man in his advanced state of civilization. What though she never rival Bacon, Locke, or Newton yet need she despair? May she not aspire after knowledge and seek for wisdom as for hid treasures? Though the richest ores and deepest veins may perhaps be beyond her grasp, yet many a sparkling gem and priceless treasure will be hers. Though the records of the past do not furnish many examples of surpassing talent, still there are enough for ample testimony, that sex is no demarkation of capacity.

United together for the cultivation of mind— of the immortal past. How important the duty— How glorious the privilege. What *intrest* should characterise our meetings and stimulate our exertions. But it should be borne in mind that to realize the greatest amount of good from such an association several things are requisite. In the first instance; Every member should set an example of cheerful obedience to the laws framed for the good of the whole. Regularity and punctuality in attendance are almost indispensable to the interests and prosperity

of the Society; especially while its numbers remain so small. Attention to the discussions, compositions recitations and reading should be carefully bestowed. In the selections read, the truth or falsity of the subject—the beauty or defects of the author — might properly be criticised.

Above all things, order should characterize every part of the exercises. An observance of the rules of punctuality, order and attention will tend to promote valuable mental habits, and in conjunction with due preparation for the performance of the duties of the class, will ensure those beneficial results which we anticipate in becoming members of the Edgeworthalean Society.

No sooner was Mrs. Hinkson comfortably seated in office than the club debated the question: "Is there sufficient evidence to prove the truth of Phrenology?" and found that there wasn't. Likewise the question of slavery arose in a debate on "Is it right to hold slaves?" That, too, was answered in the negative. In February a most vital question was asked: "Which has the most extended influence, Riches or Women?" The young ladies of 1842 answered "Women." But a week later when the question was asked: "Which is the more desirable in a young lady, Riches or Beauty?", "Riches" won. One of the most strongly contested debates was over "imprisonment for debt." The Society was against it.

On June 3 the Society met but immediately adjourned so that the members could attend "the Temperance Meeting." The Society had obtained its own quarters and dated its minutes "Edgeworthalean Hall." In late June the Society discussed a topic that was to echo in other halls for three quarters of a century: "Is it desirable that females should take an active part in the great political questions of the day?" The president refused to decide the issue.

When Mrs. C. Morrison delivered her inaugural address on July 29, it proved to be one of the most unusual in the annals of the Society but was, perhaps, more typical of popular addresses of the day. It follows:

Ladies

Bad health and business of a peculiar kind have this week prevented me from preparing *my-self* to appear before you in a manner suitable either to the calling or the occasion. I hope therefore to receive your indulgence while I in an imperfect and bungling manner address you.

I cannot, dear ladies, thank you for your unanimous voice in conferring on me the most arduous office of this society which I am well aware you all know that I would in *no-wise* willingly accept, on account of my utter incapacity to rightly discharge its responsible duties. But

I am highly gratified by the honor thus conferred on me and therefore thank you and also for your partiality, for *there by* you have shown that you do believe me to be as competent, and able as is *requisite* under present circumstances to do some little, or at least to preside while you show forth to the utmost of your minds your power to do what should be done by our mutual co-operation, and let me tell you, that we can do nothing without co-operation, some may not see nor appreciate the value of it but do you keep in mind its indispensibility, I would never again take this chair let the consequences be what it might did I not believe I should have your assistance,— the assistance of each one of you in conducting this body a short distance along the road of preparation for heavenly enjoyment. But, believing that you do sympathise with me on account of the great weight that is now pressing my puny hand, that no reprimand will ever be required, that each one is fully able to govern *her-self*, that what you may see in me, that you can fully approve you will not with-standing admit is right in me, considering my high station as your president, and in fine believing that you will, on account of this my standing, consider me incapable of error, during my presidential career. I feel strong in your help as it is in Jesus our mutual master, who will crown us with *reward's* according to our works, for his own righteousness sake, what if it should be to enjoy uninterruptedly His own lofty, pure, incomparable mind, but oh! it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive the blessings that are in store for those that serve God. To serve him in a society capacity is now our high privilege, and how to do it our study. A very few years hence say half a century and the place that now knows us, will know us no more; it will not then be even supposed that each of you or I ever stood here. This thought excites in us an awful, holy humility: fifty years hence and probably not one of us will be living to witness the change, if any that one will be looking forward for her dissolution as soon to take place. Will any say that this is a melancholy picture, I do not consider it as such, unless we dwell upon it and say painful reality, instead of looking to the promise and saying, bright, glorious realities.

Is not one dear one already gone. Oh! how soon — in the twinkling of an eye as it were she was snatched away. Oh! Why so soon? but may be not too soon, who can say —but we did need one tried spirit; tried in our very midst to stand up before our Lord and influence our track thither. The loss at first appeared to us irreparable surely she is not lost to us, for have we retrograded since her change? No, we have increased in strength and energy. We appear doubly attached to each other, harmony and goodwill prevail among us to a greater degree and though our meetings sometimes small and sometimes we are pained at the loss of a member, still our ardour faileth not, and we are frequently encouraged by the admission of a new and valuable member, and if our aim is still high, our object noble and our motto T R U T H we will advance upward and onward in spite of bitter scorn, cruel oppression and indeed in spite of every opposition.

To some of us the attendance here with the duties require much self-denial, but in their accomplishment confer much pleasure, while to

others there is very little self-denial and still much happiness enjoyed, in proportion as we deny lazy self, take the cross and follow the line and precept of duty, we will derive unalloyed pleasurenot withstanding to prepare for these meetings requires self-denial of some and labor of others while it affords a continual stream of delight to others, it is with mingled feelings of delightful satisfaction, *intrest* and pleasure that we cooperate in its duties, witnessing its operations upon its members, the improvement of some, the renewing of mental abilities in others, and the bringing to light and flame talent sparks in a third class while the members of a fourth if not doing so much themselves are the happy spectators of the society's advancement and elevating exertions, in spite of obstacles which it is wonderful so small a body so lightly armed could have conquered. Is there any desire more enobling than that of cultivating and improving the mind that thing immortal and co-eval with the great Creator of the universe, let us then set our standard high, even to prepare ourselves to be companions with the perfect, an approximate according as He gives us strength to proceed.

Perhaps reflecting some of the religious fervor of Mrs. Morrison's remarks the debate question on August 5 concerned the question: "Should the Roman Catholic religion be tolerated in the United States?" The president decided it should but the secretary was careful to record in the minutes that the vote was six to six.

Then a question arose that apparently stirred the town—"Should the literary societies of Bloomington unite in encouraging and supporting a good literary paper, for their own pleasure and as a credit to the place?" The Society voted not to join in such an ambitious enterprise but did vote to subscribe to two copies of "The Western World." (Mrs. Morrison agreed to pay for one.)

In August the question of Phrenology appeared again. This time the Society debated "Would it be advisable for the young ladies and gentlemen of Bloomington to have charts taken of their heads and sent to Fowler to see which would make suitable companions for life?" And the Society decided it would! Whether the members ever did is not an item in the minutes.

Miss M. Maxwell became president November 11, 1842. Her address gives more of an insight into the weekly meetings of the Society than the Minutes do. Her remarks would indicate that some problems of presiding officers have not changed a great deal. She said:

Fellow Edgeworthaleans—

We are met again, after the lapse of a month, to resume the usual

duties of our Society, either with active and energetic spirits, or to give it an impulse, merely sufficient to keep it in existence during the winter, without interest or improvement.

I know how much depends upon the President in this case, and truth forbids me to express any great gratification at the position in which I find myself placed. There may be honor or even partiality attached to the bestowal of the office, yet the responsibility so far exceeds it, that the pleasure it might otherwise afford, is lost sight of. It is but right and just that the office should be held in rotation: yet I can but wish that your choice had fallen elsewhere, or falling upon me, that I was more worthy to accept it, more fully competent to perform the duties, and to enforce all the regulations and laws of our Constitution. — And permit me ladies, while “dressed in the little brief authority” which you, yourselves have given, to say, that, we have of late been somewhat wanting in due deference to the smaller matters of order, matters (however trifling in themselves) upon which depend, in a great measure, the success of our Society. It were better far to have too much formality and punctuality in our Association than too little. If we wish to make it a sociable affair, a place equal for amusement and enjoyment, with literary improvements, we should make laws to that effect; but while we acknowledge ourselves governed by a particular constitution, we should strictly and uniformly act up to its requisitions. Our By-Laws expressly forbid any member to speak upon the same subject oftener than twice, or longer than ten minutes, or even leave her seat without permission;—but methinks it will not prove a very severe tax upon any of our memories to recall instances in which we have acted independantly of these regulations, long before the usual duties of the evening were brought to a close; neither would it have always taken the most observant eye to detect three four and sometimes more speaking at once and as often as we *chose* — This is not a very heinous offence in itself but it creates confusion and makes the exercises tedious to those who are disposed to join the remarks and who are thus prevented from hearing the arrangements made for the ensuing meeting.

I entreat your pardon ladies, for thus wearying your patience with such minute details; but it were at least safe to bear in mind that a slight departure from the *right* may end in serious evil — It had been better, perhaps, to have dispensed with such regulations altogether, at least better, than having, not to abide by them: Or it might be construed into a want of confidence in ourselves, implying a doubt as to the falsity of the universal accusation against our sex, that woman’s tongue is never still— Or perchance it may be that impulse within us, the surest legacy left us by our Mother Eve, that ever tells us “forbidden pleasures are sweet.” Thus without restrictions or temptation our good sense would have taught us the way to preserve order and insure success.

But do not understand me to say that I would have our Association to consist in a mere mechanical routine of duties — we should ever be familiar and cheerful in our intercourse and yet perform the exercises simply as they are required to be done. Indeed such an Association as ours is calculated to form and perpetuate friendships which else had

never existed. We can drink of the Pierian Spring and yet gather the sweet flowers of friendship which bloom upon its margin. And should a bitter draught mingle with the clear crystal of the fount their loveliness and fragrance alone will change it into the waters of oblivion.

Our intercourse has not been marked merely with literary improvement but it has opened to many of us, perhaps to all, new friendships, new thoughts, and new desires — We who met as strangers, now meet as friends,— and often we find something to admire in those from whom we least expected it and which, but for our association as a society, would have remained (to us at least) unknown and unappreciated. We may not know until the casket is opened (though rough and unseemly it be) what priceless jewels are concealed within.

"True friendship" says a lady Authoress, "is a liberal and expansive nature and seldom flourishes so well as when extended through a circle." The same writer says "That woman's sympathy and friendship for a few will extend to the whole sisterhood of her sex until she becomes what woman ever must be — in her noblest, purest, holiest character — the friend of woman."

If we are prosperous as a society, the pleasure and advantages are alike to all; if opposition crosses our path, we meet it together and this unity in action and thought creates a bond which may not be severed by light and thoughtless words. And have we met with opposition! and from whence! From the other sex, as we possibly might expect? Nay! but from our own. If I have at all feared ridicule it is from this source — but with a Mark Anthony generosity we will say — We will not stir your hearts and minds to do them wrong, for they are all *sensible women*. This however is but one kind of opposition and the least dangerous— There is another kind more fatal to our progress and success than this from our neighbors—it is opposition from ourselves, against ourselves— Every member who is irregular in the performance of her duties, who wants punctuality and perseverance, who yields to the disinclination she has for mental exercise, and omits or slights the performances, is opposing her own interest and the advancement of the society.

What matters it, if we do make sacrifices of personal comfort and the pleasures of society— or what matters it, if we are compelled to make preparation by the waning lamp of the midnight hour if it but serve to make brighter the light within us. At such a time are there not moments when the longing for wisdom and knowledge— when that yearning to know, and still to know, would tempt us to sacrifice all, yea, that which we would almost startle to mention, and in such feelings is there not a warning, a voice that tells us we have an unquenchable spirit within which seeks and must have food.

It is said the *moral* reformation of the world depends upon women. Are we capable of undertaking the task? I fear not, until our mental reformation has at least progressed further if not perfected. But upon this subject I need make no remark. The emancipation of woman from the thralldom of ignorance and servitude has been portrayed by those who have preceded me in true and beautiful colors. Indeed I am almost compelled, in self justification (however improper the time may

be for passing a compliment) to say that my predecessors have said everything that can well be said on the occasion of inaugural addresses. For this reason I have in some measure had to carve out for myself a new path and like most other new paths it has no doubt been somewhat rugged and barren of interest. And if in the *farther* discharge of the duties pertaining to the office I should meet with difficulties or inadvertently pursue a wrong course I must solicit your kind assistance to extricate me and point out the true way. I cannot flatter myself, as I am the first single lady whom you have honored with authority, that I shall preside with as much dignity and ability as those whose maturer wisdom and years so well fitted for the station.

In conclusion I would say that to carry on pleasantly and smoothly the good work we have so *prossperously* begun we must bear and *forbear* with each other — rejoice when we are successful, persevere when we meet with difficulties and we may ultimately present that anomaly in the records of *men*, a body of intelligent yet rational women — with minds well cultivated yet possessing a taste for the domestic duties of life.

Bloomington weather began to take a hand in the affairs of the Society early in 1843 and several meetings were abandoned. On March 3 an ever present question was debated — “Should women be allowed to vote?” A. D. Maxwell, E. Baugh and M.A. Batterton took part. The decision was unanimous. Women should not be given the ballot. The Society made a similar decision concerning dueling.

On June 23, the secretary had difficulty. After the regular meeting a question for debate was offered and the secretary put it in the Minutes: “Is *jeneous hereditary* or not?” This didn’t look quite right so another member wrote in the book: “Is *jenious* hereditary or not?” On June 30 the Society decided genius was a heritage. This out of the way, the debaters turned to “Does Sir Walter *Raileigh* deserve more *censure* for the introduction of tobacco or praise for the introduction of potatoes into England?” The vote was taken and tobacco was tolerated, at least, although “Mr. Raileigh” was censured.

Death entered the ranks of the Society again on July 27 when Miss C. Swearingen died. Suitable resolutions were passed.

Miss M.E. Lowe became president on September 1, 1843. Her inaugural address is the last of those preserved. It reads as follows:

Ladies

The task both of writing this address and presiding over such an intelligent association would be delightful if it were not for my inability

to perform either creditably. You have heard every effort of mine at original composition: therefore I know you will not expect much from me in the way of an address. My talent for governing remains to be tried. Dignity, self-possession, impartiality and insight into human actions and passions are qualities that should belong to your president. I am fearful that I have but a slight claim to any of these, much less to the whole of them. A want of these attributes will make me depend on your discrimination in my official decisions: which let me hope you will not withhold. It is not to be expected that we should be equally endowed with genius or filled with important suggestions or aided by an equal amount of practical wisdom yet all those contribute largely to the prosperity of society, either particular or universal. Diversified minds blending and diffusing their different powers and dispositions combining all the happy influences and promptings of their nature is what constitutes the perfection, wisdom and happiness of all society. The varieties of female character are as numerous as education and nature can make them and if it should be the destiny of any of us not to be excessively refined or intelligent we are able at least to make truth and nature our guides. If our style is but simple and chaste, we in all probability may appear as well to a correct taste as if we should attempt some *superfluos* or foreign decorations. "Valuable thoughts when unadorned are admired the most." If it is but little that we are now able to accomplish; yet our feeble exertions and limited sphere of action may become unbounded in its extension and influence. We should be encouraged by the recollection that it is the plan of Providence to accomplish mighty results by the use of very simple means. Every achievement has a beginning. Even our own dear bought freedom was kindled from a spark that remained unextinguished in the bosoms of the few patriotic fathers of our liberty. It was the unkindling of this very spark that leaves us this day in possession of privileges and attainments which far surpass those possessed by women of other nations of the earth: who were comparatively mere beasts of burden. But woman is no longer the slave of degraded man. The excellencies and accomplishments which should have been hers, she has at last assumed. Man's nature which in every age was not human nature now feels that she has her undoubted rights, capacities and powers: and that she should freely exercise all (of) them in support of her highest dignity and happiness. A steadiness of purpose in a well directed plan of intellectual, moral and social culture is only necessary to the highest development in woman as well as in man. These are highly necessary to her usefulness in society, both in and out of the domestic circle. That woman is very useful without education is no argument against her being far more so with it. If it is the business of education to cultivate the powers and virtues of the mind why should it be denied the companion of self-exalted man, or how can it be expected that the exalted sympathies and excellencies of woman's nature could be exhibited without its aid. When it takes years of mental labor to develop the powers of the minds of man. It is the favorite theory of tyrants that the education of the governed makes them disorderly. But it has been found from experience that mental cultivation instead of raising women above her duties tends to give her a deeper

sense of her responsibility and enables her to discharge them more faithfully.

Since this is proven true by so many living examples the world is compelled to feel and acknowledge the importance of female education: and exert their noblest efforts to raise them to that station which nature and reason show they should attain. The temple of science like the paradise of Mohamed was formerly considered a place too sacred for the intrusion of woman and although its jealous barriers are broken down and they are permitted to enter yet the effects of this repulsion exert an influence sufficiently strong to keep the greater number from making the attempt.

Every individual of this society is endowed with a rational and immortal soul, therefore we are all important beings: whether rich or poor, learned or illiterate, we are held responsible by our Creator for the talent given us. We should then in view of our present usefulness and future happiness assert ourselves. If we but make the necessary exertion and are influenced by correct motives we shall not be found wanting nor our talent hidden at the general *reckoning*. Let us remember that the source of all improvements depends upon the improvement of the human mind and this again upon the state of literature and science. I might say that literature has almost become incorporated with the life and constant employments of the more favored of us. No fashionable amusement— none of the seductive arts of the age are necessary to recommend it to our pursuit; but when presented in its purity we are willing to grasp it and love it for itself alone.

In January, 1844, there were indications of difficulties in the affairs of the Society. The Minutes read: "Society convened as usual. The roll being called several members were absent, upon which those present (being a quorum) resolved upon an adjournment. On the following Saturday, Jan 20th, the members met and disposed of the business affairs of the Society; after which M.L. Bollman was appointed to keep the records and during the last week in April to notify the members individually and further to solicit of the Trustees the privilege of again occupying the County Seminary as a place of meeting one evening every week. After which there was a regular adjournment to the first Friday in May."

Meetings were recorded for May 3, May 16, May 31, and June 14 but thereafter the record is a blank. At the final meeting noted, a subject was entered for debate: "Which has done the most harm in the world, fashion or fire-arms?" Assignments were recorded as usual but "the Society adjourned."