

CLUBS AND CLUB LIFE.

THE social organization known as a club had its origin way back in the days of Elizabeth, when the Mermaid tavern in Fleet street, London, enlivened by Shakespeare, Raleigh, Ben Johnson, Beaumont and Fletcher, became the rendezvous of a sort of club. These meetings were informal social affairs, to which all were welcome who could bring humor or wit. Johnson afterwards founded a club at the Devil's tavern, Fleet street, which became famous. This was the origin, pure and simple, of clubs which, according to Johnson's definition, is "an assembly of good fellows meeting under certain conditions," these conditions being suited to the character of the organization. In the early part of the eighteenth century clubs became very numerous and popular. The Brothers Club, of which Bolinbroke, Hawley and Swift were members; the Hanoverian Club; the Beefsteak Club presided over by Peg Woffington, the actress, and the Kit Cat Club flourished in this era. The King's Head Club was a famous political association during the reign of Charles II. The second Beefsteak Club was established in 1735, and embraced among its members some of the most famous men of the day. The Literary Club, established in 1764, by Johnston, Boswell, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke and others, is still flourishing. From England the political club spread to France and other countries. They became such a source of power and disquiet in Germany that in 1793 they were prohibited. In France they became the focus of the Revolution, the first society taking the name of club being the Club Politique, established at Paris in 1782.
