# LITERARY CULTURE IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY GREENVILLE

By Alfred S. Reid

Prior to the last few decades, the most lively period of literature in Greenville took place in the middle of the nineteenth century. In relation to the size and wealth of the town, the number of persons engaged in writing was surprisingly large. Judged by professional standards, the quality of achievement was not very high, but there were unmistakable signs of gradual improvement from the 1820's to the 1870's. As with most periods of literary activity, this one in mid-nineteenth century Greenville was supported and encouraged by schools, bookstores, clubs, lyceums, newspapers, and libraries; and a survey of these basic cultural institutions will provide a helpful commentary on the town as well as on the character of the literature produced.[1]

In contrast to the cultural history of Charleston before 1860, which is fairly well-known, only a few facts about up-country South Carolina have been considered worthy of inclusion in general histories. These facts concern John Caldwell Calhoun and Andrew Jackson and the "famous" Academy of Moses Waddell, where Calhoun and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, among others, went to school. Greenville comes into the main stream of literary culture only obliquely through Charleston figures like William Gilmore Simms and Joel R. Poinsett and through the writings of John William DeForest, who spent two years here as agent for the

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[1] To provide connecting links and to make the picture complete, I have adapted some material from my earlier "Literature," *The Arts In Greenville* (1960), but most of the information in this article is new, especially that about bookstores, libraries, and reading habits; about the Greenville Literary Club of the late 1860's; about the editorial policies of *The Southern Enterprise;* and about the poets Laura Gwin and Lardoner Gibbon. Some of the earlier parts of this paper were presented in Charleston in 1960 before a joint meeting of the Southeastern American Studies Association and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association under the title "Ante-Bellum Literary Culture in the Up-Country South Carolina Town of Greenville." A special summer research grant-in-aid from the Southern Fellowships Fund enabled me to examine Greenville newspapers filed in the Charleston Library Society, Duke University Library, and the University of North Carolina Library.

Editor's note: Dr. Reid's "Recent Literary Developments in Greenville: 1959-1963," *Furman Studies* (Furman University, Greenville, S. C., November, 1964), N. S. XII, 16-36, this article, and his "Literature," *Arts in Greenville* (Furman University, Greenville, S. C., 1960) are a trilogy forming a study of literary effort in Greenville from its founding to the present.

Freedmen's Bureau.[2] Charleston was 127 years old when Greenville was incorporated in 1797. Already Charleston had an established culture dominated by the planter aristocracy. The Charleston Library Society had burned down once but still had acquired a holding of 1,200 volumes by the time Greenville established its first library society in 1826.[3]

In 1825 Greenville had a population of about 500. Its principal activities were farming, law, tourism, and trade with drovers.[4] Because of its many low-country tourists, Greenville was partly a social and intellectual extension of Charleston. But as was typical of the Southern backwoods, Greenville's smaller farms, fewer slaves, less wealth, more diversified farming, its provincial mountaineer independence, and its indignation toward the coast for discriminatory use of tax moneys had bred in these backwoods people a more actual democratic life than Charleston had and possibly a great deal more respect for the national union. Thus in one sense Greenville culture was in opposition to that of the low-country.[5]

By the 1820's this society began to acquire the rudiments of literary culture. Evidence appears first in the establishment of schools in 1819, a newspaper in 1826, and bookstores in 1827 and 1828.[6] E. R. Stokes opened a third bookshop in 1837 and frequently announced his titles in *The Greenville Mountaineer*.[7] Books of history and biography, such as Gibbons' *Rome*, Gillie's *History of Greece*, Hinton's *United States*, and Plutarch's *Lives*, head the lists. Standard English authors constantly appear, especially the poetical works of Shakespeare, Pope, and Goldsmith; the Romantic poets, Campbell, Scott, Moore, Burns, and Byron; and the English novelists, Fielding, Austen, Scott, and Dickens. *Poets of America* is listed in 1840. Quite a few obscure novels appear, but Irving, Cooper, and Simms are the only noted Americans listed. Books on religion and textbooks in oratory, the

[2] See Robert E. Spiller, *et al.*, ed., *Literary History of the United States*, 3 vols. (1948), I, 882, and Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature: 1670-1900* (1954), pp. 264-267, 268, 413.

[3] Hubbel, pp. 74, 183; *The Greenville Mountaineer*, April 25, 1829.

[4] Lillian A. Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (1946), pp. 39-44.

[5] See the *Southern Patriot*, Aug. 1, 1851.

[6] S. S. Crittenden, *The Greenville Century Book*, p. 29; *Greenville Republican*, March 24, 1827, February 23, 1828.

[7] *Mountaineer*, September 29, 1837, March 2, 1838, September 27, 1838, January 4, 1839, July 19, 1839, December 11, 1840.

classics, agriculture, geography, and bookkeeping round out most of the lists. In the 1840's Stokes sold out to B. Dunham, who sold out to G. E. Elford in 1854, who in turn sold out to P. C. Jeter in 1857. Jeter advertised works by Simms, Poe, Whittier, Longfellow, and John Pendleton Kennedy, and put in a fifty-cent line of fiction.[8]

Much current periodical literature, including *DeBow's Review*, *Southern Review*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The New York Mirror*, was accessible through the local newspaper offices. James B. D. DeBow, a native Charlestonian, had visited Poinsett in Greenville to get Poinsett's advice on founding the *Review* in New Orleans.[9]

As to libraries, Benjamin Franklin Perry, a distinguished local citizen, says that "In 1823 I do not think there was a citizen in the village who had more than 15 or 20 volumes of books in his house."[10] A few years later, at least one lawyer, Baylis Earle, had about 500 volumes, about half in law and half on miscellaneous subjects. Other lawyers—Waddy Thompson in particular, who succeeded Poinsett as minister to Mexico—must have had a fairly good collection of law books. Poinsett, a regular summer visitor from Charleston in the 1820's and 1830's, had a sizable library and B. F. Perry himself "was an eager buyer and reader of books" and is said to have had a collection of 1700 volumes in 1849.[11]

In 1826, the Ladies Library Society was founded; three years later it had twenty members and four hundred volumes. O. H. Wells, editor of the *Greenville Mountaineer*, urged patronage and encouraged wide reading as necessary to a free people. By December, 1838, and probably earlier, a men's group had organized a "Greenville Literary Society" and a reading room.[12]

At least some of these books and periodicals were probably

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[8]*Mountaineer*, December 4, 1846; *Southern Enterprise*, December 15, 1854, December 18, 1856, January 8, 1857.

[9]J. Fred Rippy, *Joel R. Poinsett: Versatile American* (1935), pp. 179, 214n; *Southern Patriot*, June 27, 1851.

[10]*Southern Enterprise*, August 30, 1871.

[11]Kibler, pp. 44, 203; Rippy, p. 221; Henry T. Thompson, *Waddy Thompson, Jr.* (1929), pp. 32-33. An unverified report estimates that Thompson's library contained 3,500 volumes. His biographer gives no figures but says that the library was housed in a separate building from Thompson's home, built in 1852, on Paris Mountain: "His library was one of the wonders of the day and attracted men like Bancroft, the great historian, who frequently visited Paris Mountain to consult it. In the library was a portrait gallery, which contained oil paintings of many distinguished Americans and a museum of curios which Thompson had collected . . . in Mexico."

[12]*Mountaineer*, April 25, 1829; December 28, 1838.

and B. F. Perry says that in 1824 there was much card playing and horse racing but very little reading.[13] Yet Perry read a great deal; his references to classical authors, to European history, and to English and American writers demonstrate a wide range. And we know that Poinsett, Waddy Thompson, Baylis Earle, and a few other persons in the area read and discussed books. But most likely this passion for books and learning was not very pervasive or wide-spread among the yeoman farmer population: Perry once wrote to Simms on learning of the latter's intention to come to Greenville to deliver a series of lectures that "we had very little literary taste in Greenville, and I did not think that he would meet with that success which his lectures merited. But that if he would bring with him a show of any kind, a circus, or a number of monkeys, I could insure him success."[14] Certainly popular taste then, as it is now, was against reading. Taste was, moreover, colored by a typical American Puritanism. Perry himself advised mainly the reading of "history, biography, travels, standard poetry and religious books" and discouraged novel reading.[15] The local newspaper stressed the same point of view in 1826 when it advised its readers: "Cultivate your mind by the perusal of those books which instruct while they amuse. Do not devote much of your time to novels; [they] vitiate the taste . . . . Most plays are of the same cast . . . ."[16]

Creative effort began in Greenville about 1824 with the organization of an informal debating club and a formal oratorical group called the Franklin Polemic Society.[17] Both groups encouraged reading and discussion. After the demise of these groups, a Lyceum, organized about 1840, stressed informal debates and invited outside speakers. Discussion topics between 1840 and 1850 included the moral influence of fiction, women's education, the compatibility of married life and literary pursuits, censorship, liberty of the press, the abolition of military schools in South Carolina, the wisdom of the executions of the mutineers aboard the *Somers*, advantages of an international copyright law, and the moral value of theatrical amusements. Lectures on topics in literature, religion, history,

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[13]Kibler, p. 41.
[14]B. F. Perry, *Reminicences* (1889), p. 156.
[15]B. F. Perry, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen. With Speeches, Addresses, and Letters* (1887), p. 355.
[16]*Republican*, September 23, 1826.
[17]Kibler, pp. 46-47.

philosophy, and politics were standard but irregular occurrences.[18] In May, 1838, the town turned out to hear a lecture at fifty cents a head, the proceeds of which went as charity to the Charleston victims of a devastating fire. Charles W. D'Oyley, local citizen and classical scholar, spoke appropriately on the fires that burned Troy and Moscow.[19]

These lectures and clubs for debate reflect vigorous intellectual life for a small backwoods town but not one of outstanding achievements. Meanwhile literary activity had begun. About 1824, John H. Hewitt of New York, a poet, song-writer, and amateur actor, came to Greenville to study law and started a short-lived literary magazine called *Ladies Literary Portfolio*. Hewitt and Perry and others contributed poems, stories, essays, and reviews. Hewitt's poem "The Rival Harps," published in three parts, received praise from a local reviewer who compared its style to that of Thomas Moore. The reviewer regretted that the *Portfolio* had to close after only a few numbers: "It was a little work that pleased our community, more from its *light* nature than from its solidity."[20] In 1826, Young and Timme founded the *Greenville Republican*, a weekly newspaper, but Hewitt was one of the leading contributers. He composed the "Jubilee Song" which was sung at Cowpens at the Jubilee Celebration of American Independence on July 4, 1826, and which was reprinted in the first number of the *Republican*; and he was the author of several other poems and possibly stories. After helping to get literature started in Greenville, Hewitt left town sometime in the spring of 1827 and moved to Baltimore where, among other activities, including musical composition, he became involved in a literary controversy with Edgar Allan Poe.[21]

After a year and a half, the *Republican* was superseded by the *Mountaineer*, founded by O. H. Wells in 1829. Both the *Republican* and the *Mountaineer* served as journals of opinion and as outlets for local essayists, short story writers, and poets. All the early editors stressed the "literary" quality of the paper by including extracts and poems from various popular journals,

[18]*Mountaineer*, June 24, 1842; July 8, 1842; October 21, 1842; October 28, 1842; December 9, 1842; December 16, 1842; February 10, 1843; March 1, 1844; February 7, 1845; July 6, 1849; June 10, 1837.

[19]*Ibid.*, May 11, 1838.

[20]*Enterprise and Mountaineer*, August 30, 1871; July 28, 1875; Kibler, pp. 49, 78-79; *Republican*, January 6, 1827.

[21]John H. Hewitt, *Shadows on the Wall* (1877), pp. 41, 43.

and each showed an eagerness to print essays on subjects like states rights, anti-feminism, medicine, the evils of slave trading, literature, law, and agriculture. For a few years in the 1820's and 1830's stories by local authors appeared anonymously. Usually sentimental or else satirical of manners, these stories are not very effectively developed. Their main value is their description of a small mountain town with a thriving social season of balls, courting, and passing tourists. As a group, the stories are generally inferior to the essays and poems and after the early years gradually disappear.[22]

Short poems take up much less space than news, essays, and stories, but except for the prose of B. F. Perry, these poems show more skillful craftsmanship, more individuality, and more of the playful interactions of personalities that we associate with a literary movement. Most of the poems are love poems or nature poems in the style of Moore, Campbell, and Byron; others are on conviviality or temperance, on religion, on literary or poetic themes, and on patriotism. Some are humorous.

A few poems capture faithfully the local scene. Several extol farming as the good life. Several picture the political conflict between the up-country and the low-country; one of them, "The Devil Getting His Breakfast Before Visiting Charleston," makes fun of the mullification frenzy affecting Charleston;[23] and a poem by "Bald Rock" boasts of the strength of the mountain people who would have to fight for the coastal men if war should come:

> The low country people, who live at their ease,
> Stuffed with turtle and wine, with porter and cheese,
> To climb a hillside would find it no fun,
> Where a lad of the mountains would skip with his gun.[24]

The poet thus chides Charlestonians for their war-mongering over the "test oath" and for their citified luxury. O. H. Well's first "New Year's Address" poem states proudly this up-country unionism in which "all for Union remain./ The patrons of the Mountaineer/ Inhale the purest atmosphere."[25]

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[22] See *The Arts in Greenville*, pp. 98-99.
[23] *Mountaineer*, May 21, 1830.
[24] *Ibid.*, March 8, 1834.
[25] *Ibid.*, December 29, 1833.

A poem by "TFS," "The Coquette," recalls the social gaiety of the village; "Go, Gentle Stranger, to the Mountains" and "The Mockingbird" describe the natural setting of the county.[26] At least four poems make use of one of the most spectacular phenomena of Nature in Greenville, Reedy River Water Falls, which editor William Yancy, who later became a "fire eater," pointed out was the spot in the community most frequently "resorted to" by lovers. In these four poems Reedy Falls comes close to generating a legendary poetic subject, a legend of youth and beauty presided over by a friendly angel of love.[27]

We know the names of a few of the early poets: John H. Hewitt, Thomas F. Smith, Warren R. Davis, Charles W. D'Oyley, and James M. Cureton; but chiefly we know only initials or pseudonyms. Smith, who signed his work "TFS", contributed about a dozen poems on various themes.[28] Warren Ransom Davis, a United States congressman, contributed at least five poems, chiefly on love.[29] Most of Hewitt's poems, signed "H," have merit and were included in his *Miscellaneous Poems* published in Baltimore in 1839[30] "JDC" 's "Go Gentle Stranger to the Mountains" is the best of three works by this poet and one of the finest poems of the period.[31] The most voluminous early contributor was "JMC," fourteen of whose forty poems appeared in 1838.

Of these early poets Warren R. Davis, the congressman from the district, was apparently the most outstanding and talented public figure, if not the most gifted poet. Besides his contributions in law, public service, and poetry, he was noted for his conversational ability and social graces. In the *History of Old Pendleton District* (1913) R. W. Simpson calls Davis "the most noted wit, and the most popular man in Pendleton" (144). B. F. Perry, who succeeded Davis as state representative for his region, agreed with this verdict. And after Davis' death Perry reports that as editor of *The Mountaineer* he published some of Davis' poetry and "collected . . . a great deal" more . . . "from the Sheriff of Pendleton District,

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[26]Ibid., March 18, 1835, February 14, 1835, July 25, 1829.
[27]*Republican*, April 14, 1827; *Mountaineer*, November 19, 1830, May 16, 1835, August 3, 1834.
[28]*Mountaineer*, March 28, 1835, August 12, 1835, July 11, 1835.
[29]*Ibid.*, May 4, 1833, May 9, 1835, May 15, 1835, May 25, 1835, June 13, 1835.
[30]*Republican*, March 10, 1827, March 17, 1827, March 12, 1827.
[31]*Mountaineer*, February 14, 1835.

Winchester Foster, "who was a very intimate friend of the Poet. Whilst lying on his sick bed . . . [Davis had] dictated to Mr. Foster . . . most of his fugitive pieces." Foster "wrote them down, and gave [Perry] . . . the manuscript." Perry later searched for this collection but "could not find it."[32] We therefore have only a few of these Davis poems, and they are not very good. We may hopefully believe that some of those that were lost were better than those that have survived.

This vigorous poetic activity included much fun and several playful conflicts. One argument in verse involved the Town Council and some inebriated citizens who had fallen into a hole in the courthouse square. "Marmion" and "Stanley" quarrelled over the quality of "Marmion" 's verse and 'Stanley" 's qualifications as a critic. A "teetotaler" berated "TFS" for a poem on drowning his grief in wine, and "TFS" obliged by writing a temperance poem. A poem by "JMC" on the deceit of woman brought a stern protest from "Nora" that all women are not deceitful and that perhaps one day "JMC" will meet one of these true women. "JMC" gallantly apologized and hoped that "Nora" would also be spared from falling in love with a "false youth."[33]

A local Thespian Society flourished from 1836 to 1838, and among the plays put on were two works written by local playwrights. The citizenry took pride in these original productions, but neither the authors' names nor the plays have been preserved.[34]

During the secession controversy of the 1850's, two new weekly newspapers were founded, and literature in this village of about 1500 people took a more serious turn. Editorials and correspondence in B. F. Perry's *Southern Patriot*, founded in 1851, adopted a polemic tone. Poetry consistently furthered the Union cause and satirized the secessionists. "Peter Pleasant" 's "The Beasts—The Birds —The Bats," for instance, describes the "simpering smile and lowly brow" of the reformed secessionists and urges people not to trust these "treacherous men" again. And discarding names like "puppies, pigs, and rats,/ Let's know them henceforth as—The bats."[35]

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[32]Quoted from an unpublished paper by Susan Smith in possession of the author: "Warren R. Davis."

[33]*Republican*, November 11, 1826, August 8, 22, 1829; *Mountaineer*, March 2, 16, 1838.

[34]*Mountaineer*, March 5, 1836, June 4, 1836, January 2, 1837. See also Dorothy Richey, "Theater Arts," *The Arts in Greenville*, pp. 75-76.

[35]*Southern Patriot*, August 30, 1852.

In 1854 William P. Price founded the *Southern Enterprise* as an "acceptable family newspaper" to appeal to the ladies and the "mechanics." His editorial policy was sentimental in its stress on home and motherhood, on all that is "chaste and elegant," in urging women's rights but in denouncing tight corsets, and in avoiding all "revolutionary and destructive principles." Price put in a ladies' column, encouraged female poets to contribute, and tried in all ways to "blend the useful with the beautiful and the good." In upholding Southern rights, the *Enterprise* became a foe of Perry's *Southern Patriot*, regarded slavery as "right and proper," and gradually moved from Unionism to Secessionism.[36]

Three of the lady poets of the Enterprise were Laura Gwin, a ministers wife; "Ola Sta," a young girl; and "C. de Flori," whose "pen name" when turned around probably stands for Floride Calhoun; for B. F. Perry describes her, on the publication of some of her verses, as a "descendant of South Carolina's great statesman, John C. Calhoun."[37] The best and most prolific of these lady poets was Laura Gwin. In 1860 Mrs. Gwin collected her poems as *Miscellaneous Poems*, printed by G. E. Elford; and both John A Broadus of the Furman Theological Seminary and James Orr paid public tributes.[38] Mrs. Gwin's work, with its preoccupation with morbid and sentimental themes about the death of young girls, shows the influence of Edgar Allan Poe, but her emphasis is far more moralistic than Poe would have approved of. Nevertheless Mrs. Gwin is probably the most polished of nineteenth century Greenville poets.

One person, above all the others, Benjamin Franklin Perry, stands out as the leading spirit of Greenville antebellum culture and the fulfillment of its potentialities. Perry had one of the best libraries and was one of the most avid readers in the community. He was also the most prolific and substantial writer. He contributed stories and sketches to Hewitt's *Ladies Literary Portfolio* and to other magazines in the state. He contributed essays on political and moral subjects to the *Republican* and *Mountaineer*.[39] A year after Wells founded the *Mountaineer* in 1829, Perry took over as editor and

[36]*Southern Enterprise*, May 19, 1854, June 15, 1854, December 1, 1854, March 30, 1855, January 10, 1867, January 1, 1857.
[37]*Southern Enterprise*, June 9, 1869.
[38]*Southern Enterprise*, May 31, 1860.
[39]Kibler, pp. 49, 54-55, 78.

vigorously opposed nullification. In 1834 while a state senator he wrote a series of sketches of revolutionary incidents in the Greenville and Spartanburg area. In February, 1851, Perry and C. J. Elford formed the *Southern Patriot*, a weekly newspaper dedicated to "Agriculture, Arts, Commerce, Literature, Manufactures, Science, and Politics," but especially advocating unionism over states rights and nullification. Perry wrote longer editorials than he had written twenty years earlier in the *Mountaineer* and in them carefully developed his thoughts on political issues. He reviewed books, wrote sketches of state politicians, and described the founding of various mills in the community. Among his book reviews is an enthusiastic endorsement of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and an equally strong repudiation of Calhoun's theory of concurrent majority as "impractical," "utterly fallacious," and as leading to anarchy.[46]

His letters to his wife, his diary or journal, his editorials and speeches, and his sketches of public men have much literary merit and show a sensitive and noble person with a keen mind. His *Reminiscences of Public Men* (1883) reveal clearly his political ideas. He was a liberal in advocating legal, penal, and educational reforms and internal improvements; he was a rationalist in appealing to common sense, moderation, and sanity in public affairs; he was Unionist in opposing nullification and secession as "madness and folly." Thus the book shows partiality to Unionists like James L. Pettigru, Joel R. Poinsett, Daniel E. Huger, Thomas S. Grimke, and William J. Grayson. Yet Perry was a Southerner in standing by the South even when he knew the South was wrong and in his refusal to cooperate with the Radicals during Reconstruction. He told Governor John H. Means just after South Carolina seceded in 1860—in what is perhaps the most famous remark ever made by a Greenvillian—that for thirty years he had been "trying to keep the state from committing so dreadful and suicidal a folly; but all my life-long efforts had proved unavailing, and 'they were now all going to the devil and I would go with them'" (p. 163).

Of Perry's miscellaneous papers and speeches, the most notable are a speech in Greenville in 1865 and one in 1882 at Reidsville Female Academy. The Greenville speech was occasioned by a meeting of Greenvillians to draw up resolutions to present to President Andrew Johnson asking for honorable return of the State

[46] *Southern Patriot*, June 2, 1851, November 20, 1951, December 11, 1851.

into the Union; in it Perry strongly indicts Southern politicians for their false leadership. He charges that secession was totally unjustifiable, a position which he had held all his life; and he berates Greenvillians for their wild extravagance in voting for secession, an act of "madness and folly": "Abandon at once," he says, "all notions of Secession, Nullification and Disunion, determined to live, and to teach your children to live, as true American citizens" (p. 239). The speech at Reidsville urges Southerners to educate the masses, develop industry, and practice habits of hard work to overcome the harsh effects of Reconstruction.

The moving of Furman University to Greenville in the 1850's brought new minds to town and augmented the native trend toward a more serious atmosphere with stress on ethics, scholarship, and literary productivity. Perry welcomed the arrival of Furman University in an editorial on January 27, 1853, for its bringing to Greenville students and men of learning and piety from other states and for its introducing a "liberalizing" influence into the area. The college and town enjoyed a close relation. The Adelphian Society of Furman students invited outside speakers; and Perry and Richard Furman III, a grandson of the "godfather" of Furman University, member of the board of trustees, and pastor for a while of the Baptist Church, seem to have attended several times. Once Perry heard Furman read a poem, "The Pleasures of Piety," and make an address: and Perry published in the *Patriot* at least one of Furman's poems, "Lines Written at the Base of Table Rock."[41] In 1859 Furman published *Poems*, a volume containing about twenty poems, of which "The Pleasures of Piety" is the longest and "Table Rock" is perhaps the best. Another poem, "The Death of Calhoun," praises Calhoun as one who loved the Union but who loved his state even more. Compared with the poets who had preceded him, and with his contemporary, Laura Gwin, Furman achieves a grander rhetorical style in imitation of Milton, displays wider learning, and shows a closer reading of English eighteenth century didactic poetry, but he has less humor and less lyric sprightliness than the others and is less graceful than Mrs. Gwin.

The arrival of three new faculty members of the newly organized Furman Theological Seminary in 1859–John A. Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and William Williams–to join President James

[41] *Southern Patriot*, June 20, 1851, July, 1851.

P. Boyce, brought still more learning, trained intelligence, and productive writing ability to Greenville.[42] Besides their youth, energy, zeal, and cosmopolitan refinements, these men brought a large fund of literary experience into the community and assisted Perry and other local men of culture in setting the intellectual tone and dominating the literary life of Greenville for eighteen years. Boyce and Manly had both edited religious journals and had contributed articles themselves. Manly had collaborated with his father in compiling a hymn book in 1850. Broadus already had published several articles and had shown an urge to write. Besides sermons, tracts, and editorial work, the so-called "Big Four" of the Seminary produced or began much substantial scholarship in Greenville, including Boyce's *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (1872) and Broadus' famous *A Harmony of the Gospels*. After launching the press of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which they helped organize in Greenville in 1863—and which today in Nashville still bears portions of their names as the Broadman Press—Broadus and Manly hoped to found an independent adult religious "Review," but their plans fell through for lack of funds. Boyce, Manly, and Williams were also interested in verse. Boyce translated French poems, Williams composed hymns, and Manly wrote the commencement hymn for the seminary, "Soldiers of Christ, in Truth Arrayed," in addition to doing other poems and humorous verse.

The interest of these men in literature and ideas and in making Greenville a lively intellectual forum is especially apparent in their participation in "The Greenville Literary Club," which they helped start in 1867. The only available records of this club, heretofore known only through casual references, are *The Southern Enterprise*, which was edited during the years of the club by George F. Townes, a club member who regularly announced and reported on the meetings, and a small book containing four years of the club "minutes," from 1871 to 1874, as kept by D. Townsend Smith, who was secretary during these years.[43]

In addition to the Seminary men, the club was composed of ministers, lawyers, business and professional persons, and other

[42]This paragraph is condensed from *The Arts in Greenville*, pp. 108-111.

[43]This valuable book of "The Literary Club of Greenville, South Carolina, 1871-1874," including the revised "Constitution" of 1873 and the "Roll of Members," is in the possession of Smith's daughter, Mrs. George A. Adams, 38 Mount Vista Avenue, Greenville.

faculty members of Furman University and the Greenville Female College. At least two of the members, C. J. Elford and William King Easley, had been members of the earlier "literary society" and "Lyceum" of the 1840's, which had had a similar plan of organization. John A. Broadus, seminary professor of homiletics and New Testament, was president in 1867; and G. G. Wells, lawyer, was secretary. James P. Boyce, seminary president and professor of Systematic Theology, was president of the club in 1869, and J. Birnie was vice-president. Basil Manly, Jr., seminary hymnologist and professor of Old Testament, was president in 1870. Ellison Capers, pastor of Christ Church, was president in 1871; Julius C. Smith was vice-president; and D. T. Smith, Furman professor of Greek and Hebrew, was secretary. Broadus was again president in 1872, Hamlin Beattie was vice-president, D. T. Smith was secretary, and J. C. Smith was treasurer. In 1873 C. H. Toy, professor at the Theological Seminary, was president, T. U. Cox was vice-president, and the two Smiths were secretary and treasurer. Charles Hallett Judson was president in 1874, Ellison Capers was vice-president, and the two Smiths were again secretary and treasurer.

Under the leadership of Broadus, one of the most productive of Greenville citizens, next to Perry, the club was founded early in 1867 and held monthly meetings in the homes of members. Each month a member read a paper and led in a discussion. The first meeting was held on March 21, 1867, in the home of John B. Patrick, teacher in the Furman Preparatory School and later principal of Greenville High School; E. T. Buist, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, read a paper on "The Press." On April 11, the second meeting was held at the home of William Thomas, pastor of the Baptist Church; and G. F. Townes read a paper on "Suffrage." A week later Townes printed an editorial praising the club for its "easy, familiar, conversational way" and for its attracting to its midst some of the most "able minds in the District." The May meeting was held at the home of Julius C. Smith, where J. W. Huncker, pastor of the Methodist Church, read a paper, the title of which is not recorded. In June the club held a special meeting to mourn the death of C. J. Elford, printer, publisher, operator of a bookstore, and Superintendent of the Sunday School at the Baptist Church. Club-president Broadus in a brief testimonial regretted that while the "dew of early youth"

was still on the "young Society" it was "already compelled to pause at the grave of a loved . . . member," . . . it's "first dead son." The "Minutes" show that honoring deceased members was a standard practice and involved setting aside a special "memorial" page in the "Minutes" book.

In June the club also inaugurated a program of seven weekly "Summer Lectures" at the Court House, and tickets went on sale at Elford's Bookstore. The lecturers for this first summer were A. M. Shipp, president of Wofford College, who spoke on "The Philosophy of History"; E. T. Buist, who spoke on "Education"; Broadus, on "The Poetry of Mrs. Browning"; Joseph LeCompte of the University of South Carolina faculty, on the "Flora of the Coal Period"; William Hans Campbell, lawyer and judge, on "Macbeth." James Clement Furman, president of Furman University, and J. H. Carlisle appeared on this series, but their lecture topics are not recorded. The scientific lecture by Joseph LeCompte was so well received that by "popular request" he remained a second night and lectured to a large crowd on "Petroleum." Broadus' lecture on Mrs. Browning's poetry was also well attended; Townes thought that it was a "scholarly coverage" of the topic.

Meanwhile the club continued its monthly meetings. Despite a preponderance of theologians, ministers, and active church laymen in the group, the range of topics was wide. Science and technology were, strangely enough, the favorite subjects. Besides LeCompte's two scientific discussions, T. Q. Donaldson, lawyer, led a discussion in September, 1867, on "India Rubber" and "Gutta Percha" at the home of Mrs. Hoke, who, besides Mrs. F. F. Beattie, was, as far as we know, one of the only two women who entertained the group. In October, the subject was "Machinery" at the home of T. Cox. In July, 1868, the Rev. Mr. Potter spoke on "Volcanoes," and in August, 1868, John L. Lanneau, professor of mathematics at Furman, spoke on "Astronomy"; Townes reports that Manly, Broadus, G. S. Bryan, and C. H. Judson, president of Greenville Female College, kept this discussion going far into the evening. In January, 1849, William Williams of the seminary, spoke on "Homeopathy," or the treatment of diseases by drugs; and in May, 1869, J. M. Harris discussed "Tobacco: Its Use and Abuse." In the lecture series in 1868, C. H. Judson spoke on "The Evidences of a Pre-Adamite Race," and Townes reports that "Without committing himself," Judson "conceded that late discoveries give many

facts sustaining the probabilities of pre-Adamite races of men of a vast antiquity." Townes thought that Judson's lecture was in "fine style" and showed "high reasoning." Judson spoke on "Correlation of Forces" in January, 1872.

Next to scientific subjects, topics on politics, social studies, and ethics appealed to the group, such as "Suffrage," "Social Intercourse," "Divorce," "National Banks," "Requisites of Success," "Human Perfectibility," and "Inequalities of Life." Education, language, and oratory were also discussed. Broadus gave a speech on "Language: Its Origin" in March, 1868, and one on "The Art of Oratory" in September, 1870; C. H. Toy, new member of the seminary, spoke on "The English Language in Reference to Schools and Colleges" in April, 1869, and in February, 1871, he spoke on "The Bible in the Public Schools"; W. D. Thomas spoke on "Teaching and Teachers" in July, 1868; and D. T. Smith read an essay on January 23, 1872, on "Some Considerations Which Render the Study of Classics a *Desideratum*." Historical subjects came up for discussion several times. W. K. Easley, lawyer in partnership with G. G. Wells, spoke in November, 1868, on "Arabic Civilization"; Ellison Capers, later to become Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina, spoke on "Maximilian" in July, 1867. The Christian religion was not usually treated directly but was more often discussed in relation to other topics, such as in G. F. Townes' "The Influence of Religion on Civil Government," which produced considerable disagreement; in Toy's "The Koran" and Boyce's "Mormonism," the latter of which Boyce worked up into a lecture for the 1869 series; and in Judson's lecture on the geological implications of the antiquity of man mentioned earlier.

Besides Judson, the summer lectures for 1868 included J. L. Reynolds of the University of South Carolina; J. P. Thomas, editor of the *Columbia Phoenix*, who spoke on "The Past and Future of South Carolina"; and N. R. Middleton of Charleston, who spoke on "Social Intercourse." In 1869 the lecturers were Boyce, Toy, J. L. Burrows of Richmond, Professor Rivers of the University of South Carolina, and Hicks of Charleston. Toy spoke on "The Koran," Boyce on "Mormonism," and Hicks on a "Plea for the Bible"; other topics are not recorded.

In December, 1868, the club set annual dues at $15.00 and made plans for opening a reading room, at the dedication of which

in February, 1869, at the Court House, J. P. Boyce read a paper on "Perfect Womanhood as Seen in Ideal Portraitures of Eve." The reading room was at first ostentatiously called the "Excelsior Reading Society," but was later spoken of as merely "The Greenville Reading Room." The "Minutes" show that one of the major items of business each month was the concern with keeping up with periodicals and books. A special "Committee on Periodicals" usually reported on acquisitions, losses, fines, and means of getting members to return borrowed items. Townes wrote in August, 1871, that the *Columbia Union* had praised the room as the best of its kind "this side of Baltimore."

After the lecture series in 1869, meetings began to grow irregular, and after March, 1870, meetings were temporarily suspended. In December, 1871, the group revived, and president-elect Broadus invited new members, spoke on the advantages to the community of the Reading Room, and announced that "The great lack of interest has been a . . . source of much concern to some of the friends of literature in our midst." The last meeting took place on December 23, 1874, at Whitsett's house, and the discussion topic was "Josh Billings' Reputation Fifty Years From Now." The demise of the club was perhaps due to changes in interest and leadership. One of its leaders, Manly, had left Greenville in 1870 to become president of Georgetown University. Broadus had spent a good part of 1870 and 1871 in Palestine. And other members, like Boyce, Capers, Easley, and Wells, were equally busy in civic, business, religious, and cultural activities. The town was too small to sustain a club of this sort for very long.[44]

Looking back on the days when this literary club was at the height of its influence, John William DeForest, local agent for the Freedman's Bureau, called this little Southern city the "Athens" of the up-country and the "envy" of neighboring towns. It had two colleges and a seminary, it had an active literary club, and it had a well-stocked reading room, to which, he says, he "was made welcome and allowed to draw as a member."[45] B. F. Perry was unusually proud of his town in these days. Even though he was

[44] In the notes of Smith's "Minutes," probably dating back to 1871 or 1872, appears a "List of those willing to make essays or read selections": Capers, J. F. Reynolds, D. D. J. Smith, D. T. Smith, Sam Mauldin, Rev. J. C. Hiden, W. M. Wheeler (photographer), Rev. J. F. Webster, Wells, and Rev. W. J. Dargan.

[45] *A Union Officer in Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 47.

apparently not a member of the literary club, he contributed frequent letters to the newspapers, made speeches, wrote sketches, collected his private papers, and often reminisced. In September, 1871, he wrote in the *Enterprise* that Greenville is "quite a literary city, with its university, Theological Seminary, Female College, Academies, Schools, and learned professors. There are Literary Clubs, Public Libraries, and almost every one has a fine private library. Some of these private libraries contain three or four thousand volumes of well selected standard works. . . ."

By January, 1870, the *Enterprise* reported that another Greenville Female Library Society, something probably like a book study club, had been organized, and had 40 members and 250 volumes. Five years later under the name of the Ladies Circulating Library, this organization, if it is the same, had 400 volumes. Mrs. Perry was president in 1875, and the March meeting was held at Luther McBee's house and the May meeting at Mrs. Gwin's. In October 1876 a Ladies Series of Lectures, "intended to amuse," was inaugurated and had a short existence.

A new young poet named Lardoner Gibbon appeared on the scene in the 1860's and 1870's and introduced a more realistic style of writing than that of any of his predecessors or his contemporary lady poets. The *Enterprise* describes Gibbon on February 1, 1871, as a gentleman farmer who settled on the Saluda River in January, 1864, and as something of a "connoisseur" of the arts, not only a poet but a drawer of sketches and a horticultural experimenter. Most of Gibbon's surviving poetry is on agricultural topics and expresses much of the concern of the area about rebuilding after the losses of the Civil War. In a poem called "Internal Improvements" on January 20, 1869, Gibbon wrote:

> Now is the time to build . . . .
> We must progress with the age . . . .

And the age, he says, is building railroads, roads, and ships. The age is engaging in world-wide commerce. He urges the South, and Greenvillians especially, to seize the economic opportunities before them to bring a new South back into the main economic stream of the nation, and gain some of the wealth in the world by stressing transportation, trade, and industry:

> The gold has been transported from America to other nations—
> To handle the money here, would produce pleasant sensations.

European kingdoms manufacture our cotton—
This is as good as gold, it should not be forgotten.
The agriculturists of the country, must have their money—
Cash payments to the workmen, is to them milk and honey.

He thus calls for quick action in directing trade through Greenville County. An efficient railroad line from Georgia to Charlotte northeastward, he says,

. . . will not detract from Charleston, as some suppose—
It will make the mountain country blossom like a rose.

And farmers must see to it that they keep pace by improving their products.

In "A Voice from the Old Field" a few months later, April 7, 1869, he argues for "scientific cultivation" of farm lands, for improved fertilizing techniques like crop rotation, plowing more deeply under rich grasses so as to bring about a better yield without destroying the land. He urges use of animal manure and compost piles. Says the land in this poem:

Cast me not off, like an old shoe,
Patch and repair, and I am better than new.

Certainly, Gibbon says, with smart procedures there is a prosperous future in agriculture. And almost in contradiction to the preceding poem he advocates "thrifty farming" as most "conducive to health" and "wealth", as having "no grasping spirit for continental booty"; farming is the main support of the nation:

This beautiful world does not belong to governments or man,
It is a loan, and was so when it was first began.
To make the field a garden, is assisting creation,
To beautify the land is a moral obligation.

On July 7, 1869, in "Wheat" Gibbon addressed the "Commissioner of Agriculture" in Washington in an open verse epistle to boast that:

The wheat crop of Greenville County is good today.

Climate, hard work, and scientific methods, he says, have achieved this success; he himself, he adds, has cultivated "four kinds of wheat"—the non-bearded Tappahanock, the Red-Bearded Mediterranean, the Western North Carolina, and the South Carolina. The latter, he says, is by far the best because it will not sour when

transported. He thus urges the Commission to export this commodity rather than other strains from the North; otherwise, like Carthage, American civilization will one day suffer:

> This liberty I beg, the Department will pardon,
> I desire to assist in making Greenville a garden.

A later letter in verse, December 21, 1870, extols Southern "fruit culture" and urges the Agriculture Commission to take notice of the highly successful culture of such Southern fruit as peaches, apples, grapes, plums, figs, cherries, whortleberries, strawberries, pears, cantalopes, and watermelons and suggests exporting them. He concedes that our railroads are not now adequate but are becoming so. Certainly, he concludes, the world should recognize "Greenville Enterprise." He describes the soil, the farms, the climate, the water supply, and the hard-working people. He describes the rivers as potential power for mills and manufacturing and as navigable for transporting lumber, stone, and iron. All in all, he says, the Greenville area is an ideal site for farming and industry and deserves the attention of the government.

Not very successful as poetry, these verse epistles are yet in the realistic vein of such post-war poets as Sidney Lanier and show a wholesome outlook without rancor or self-pity about military defeat.

And this vigorous activity and wholesome outlook apparently continued in Greenville for still a short while longer. By 1877, however, times had begun to change. The departure of the Seminary to Louisville was a severe blow to the intellectual life of the community. *The Enterprise and Mountaineer* editorialized that it had learned "with sincere regret" of this move. The departure of the Seminary will "deprive our place in the wintertime of quite a number of [important] residents . . . . The Seminary created an atmosphere for good in the city and surrounding country, that no other institution can produce." The editorial conceded that it could "not adequately describe its feelings of loss in giving up those giants in Theology, Christian practice and Amplification of Bible teaching . . . Broadus, Toy and Whitsett."[46]

The loss of a high moral and religious tone, however, is less obvious than the loss of a high-minded and vigorous literary and intellectual leadership. James C. Furman, head of Furman Uni-

[46] *Enterprise and Mountaineer*, June 20, 1877.

versity, was not the equal of Boyce, Broadus, Manly, Williams, and Whitsett, nor of the aging Perry. Nor were the late-century newspaper editors, except perhaps S. S. Crittenden and A. B. Williams, up to the standards of O. H. Wells, B. F. Perry, and G. F. Townes of the preceding decades. Some poems appeared infrequently in the newspapers, some clubs existed, and lectures took place, but no new persons emerged to continue literary leadership above the minimum levels of literacy and social refinement, such as the commonplace book study club of today. Political problems, racism, economic growth, and an increasing withdrawal into self-pity and rancor, as indicated in editorials, prevented any new or exciting literary activity in the 1880's. Two new clubs—one for women and one for men, "The Thursday Club" and the "39 Club"—were organized in 1889 and 1897 and still continue, but meetings were, and apparently still are, secret and more social and bookish than literary. Lardoner Gibbon apparently lived to a ripe old age, but never developed as a poet when the atmosphere changed. A. L. Pickens, now of Charlotte, remembers that Gibbon "used to live outside the city, was remembered for his white suits, his tandem team, his 'dem-Yankee'-isms" and remembers that he wrote a readable "journal of an Amazon expedition."[47] But without the intellectual tone or leadership of the earlier years, he remained poetically silent.

In 1903 when S. S. Crittendon wrote *The Century Book*, he still thought of Greenville as in its "golden age," the cultural hey-day, of his youth in the mid-century. But evidence is clear that there had been a falling off. No doubt the war and ensuing poverty had something indirectly to do with the changes, but the departure of the Seminary and the failure of the town to produce a native successor to Perry or to attract and hold at Furman any gifted and productive men like Broadus and Manly seems a more responsible answer. An incipient "Athens" thus turned into "Sparta"; responsible cultural leadership turned its energies to industry and commerce; hope and faith in letters turned to hatred and bitterness. A start toward literary maturity, as revealed in the mid-century newspapers, clubs, books, libraries, poems, essays—a start which under more favorable conditions might have produced an equal of Simms or Timrod—was snuffed out and forgotten in the "New South" urgency of industrial growth.

[47] Letter in possession of the author.