

GREENWOOD LITERARY SOCIETY

In the later Nineteenth Century, many areas had "literary societies" which met to read poems and stories aloud, to debate moral and political topics, and to share book reviews. Such groups are known from Bloomsburg, Catawissa, Danville, Millville, Rohrsburg, and many other localities. Following is a letter, written in an "improved" compositional style, about a meeting of the Greenwood Literary Society at Greenwood Seminary during the Civil War. It was printed in the Columbia Democrat issue of April 19, 1862. The writer refers to an earlier letter published on March 29th that related the happenings at a meeting of The Literary Union of Columbia, Montour, and adjacent Counties on the previous December 28th; that letter sarcastically summarized the meeting and observed that it marked the end of the multi-county Union.

The newspaper's editor, Col. John G. Freeze, later authored the History of Columbia County, 1883. Col. Levi L. Tate, referred to in the final paragraph, edited various Democratic newspapers in Berwick, Wilkes-Barre, Bloomsburg and Williamsport from 1839 until his death in 1883; in 1861 he was elected to represent a four-county district in the state legislature.

Thanks to long-time CCHGS President George Turner for providing this article.

MILLVILLE, PA. April 14, 1862.

Col. John G. Freeze:

I take my seat to improve in the art of composition and at the same time to give some information, which, with your permission may be published in the COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, and which will undoubtedly be perused with interest by many of your readers. You are well aware that in your issue of the COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, March 29th 1852, was published a communication from "Observer" giving an account of the meeting and death at Bloomsburg, December 29th 1861, of the once existing Society called, "The Literary Union of Columbia, Montour, and adjacent counties." Now it appears that from the above mentioned communication (which was certainly misunderstood,) the idea originated and has since spread to some extent that the "Greenwood Literary Society" has, like some other Societies which helped to compose the "Literary Union," failed or adjourned *sine die*. I beg leave to inform those of your readers who are ignorant of the fact, that this is absolutely a mistaken idea; the "Greenwood Literary Society" continues as usual to meet every Saturday at 7 o'clock, p. m., in the Hall of the Greenwood Seminary, and there is plenty of talent connected with the school, and the surrounding neighborhood to make it attractive, interesting and beneficial.

Fortunately for me, I had the extreme pleasure of attending one of its meetings on last Saturday night, and endeavored to obtain a seat in the back part of the Hall among my equals in literary attainments but as that part of the house was densely filled I was obliged to take a seat in front among the more celebrated class of individuals. An effect was soon produced on me similar to that on the Apostles who were taken up to the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter said, "it is good for us to be here."

I felt cheered at the limited discussion of the following question: "That women are equally entitled with men to the elective franchise." Some members who are particularly favored with talented wives, and others who expect to be, appeared to be deeply impressed with the conviction that the rising generation should be instructed to grant women the privilege of voting, while others who were more patriarchal, contended that women had not the natural ability to enforce the laws as General McClellan and his brave army is now doing, and therefore should have no hand in making them. Their synopsis of the rights and mission of woman is to "get married" to acquire a "finished education" to "remain at home" or to go when and where "her

husband goes.” As are our country’s institutions so are the people, and vice versa, as are the people, so are the institutions; they reciprocally effect each others character and development, action, and re-action, are inevitable. I can but deplore the structure or education of that mind which can contemptuously and arrogantly pronounce woman as only the fit companion of children, yet this is one of her respective duties and she generally performs it well, but it is unjust and ignoble to confine her to the narrow inclosures known as the kitchen, the bedchamber, and the nursery.

There are higher and wider circles of usefulness in which woman is capable of moving, the perpetual perplexities and unbroken monotony of these departments are too depressing and fatiguing to be endured. But I’ll dwell no longer on this important subject—perhaps express myself more fully in future.

Col. L. L. Tate’s constituency, as far as my reign of knowledge extends, is very highly gratified with his course in the State Legislature. His speech in the House of Representatives on the 13th of March, his sublime Eulogy on General Jackson, and many other equally important transactions elicited a great deal attention and will cause all good men who know him, men whose hearts are ever open to kindness, to greet him home with a social shake of the hand, and a hearty welcome, “good and faithful servant.” Good Union men, true and honest patriots, feel and know that they are adding to their dignity and patriotism by associating with and overwhelming him with their welcomes as the faithful representative of the gallant Democracy of Columbia county. God speed such men smoothly over the changing rivers of life. The affliction of our sick and wounded soldiers touches the profoundest depths of my sympathy, and wishing them a speedy and sound restoration, and a universal victory over the rebels—I close.

VERUS.

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