

A SUMMER CLUB.

THE OLYMPIC'S JOLLY RETREAT AT THURBER'S NECK.

The oldest Summer club is the Olympic. For 30 years the members have found a Summer retreat on Thurber's Neck on the Great South Bay, a little off the post road between Islip and Babylon. Away back in the forties the club was founded by a coterie who were frequenters of Mitchell's old Olympic Theatre, and tents were pitched on Barren Island and then on the sands at Shrewsbury. But the boats on Sundays brought the little Summer colony so many visitors to overcrowd the accommodations and deplete the limited supply of provisions that along in 1850 it was decided to find some pleasant spot on the southern shore of Long Island not so convenient to uninvited visitors. The southern shore of the island was then quite a barren waste between the thriving waterside villages, and the spot selected by the club was then almost isolated. The nearest station on the main line of the railroad, running the length of the island, about the centre, was four miles away, and the members on alighting walked the distance through the waste of scruboaks. In a few years, satisfied that the spot was a good permanent location, a tract of 17 acres was purchased and a clubhouse erected among the oaks that still stand. The old clubhouse was some years ago relegated to culinary purposes and another erected. The dormitory on the second floor of the clubhouse proving inadequate in time, an extension was built enlarging the sleeping accommodations, and later three separate buildings, consisting entirely of chambers, were erected by subscriptions of those who occupy them, and who consequently enjoy proprietary rights therein. The old dining hall also proving inadequate to the demands, another building was erected specially for the purpose, with an upper story as a retreat for those who wish to play cards, billiards, shuffleboard, &c. For a number of years the membership was limited to 50; it is now 70, and the list is completed, and in order to increase the accommodation the Casino was erected on a pleasant slope near the Prout House, which is given over to the devotees of cards, billiards, and shuffleboard, and the bar with a spacious veranda affording a noble view of the expanse of the bay and Fire Island diametrically opposite. There is nothing now to suggest the primitive beginning over a quarter of a century since, excepting that the members still don their old clothes, and the big straw hats of the bay men immediately on landing, and generally lounge about in admirable *dolce far niente* in keeping with the tent life on the meadows of the days of yore. The well kept grounds and drives are much visited during the season by driving parties from the fashionable hotels at Islip and Babylon, the gates always being open. Only two of the original members survive, Commodore T. B. Asten and Mr. John P. Smith, and they never tire of telling amusing stories of the early days, when they had to tramp through the bushes from the railroad station. Now a stage conveys the members and their guests to and from the station of Bayshore on the South Side branch of the Long Island Railroad. Under Mr. Thomas L. Sharp's administration of the affairs of the railroad a station, Olympia, was founded, and the members had a short walk to the club; but for some reason Mr. Austin Corbin has abolished the stopping place. The special postal station of Olympia, situated at the club, was created on application by the Postmaster-General, and no less distinguished a personage than Col. Thomas W. Knox, the author and traveler, is the Postmaster. Col. Knox accepted the position of Postmaster because during the Summer he passes his time at the club, being one of the proprietary lodgers, that is the owner of a chamber in one of the buildings erected by subscription. The annual dues of the club entitle the members to board and lodgings the three or four months that the club is open, generally from Decoration Day to the 1st of October. Few of the members avail themselves of the privilege of the season's sojourn, and the majority only run down for a day or two, or to stay from Saturday to Monday. The raids made by visiting friends on the club in the early days on Barren Island and the Shrewsbury caused a rule to be adopted on locating on Thurber's Neck that guests could be introduced by members on payment of daily boarding and lodging, which is now \$2 50 per diem, and the increased facilities of the past few years now afford accommodation for all. Along the drive leading from the main road to the club, and apparently throughout a portion of the grounds, are the Summer residences of Commodore T. B. Asten and Daniel B. Conover, both active members. The club owns the sloop yacht T. B. Asten, the cat-boat Olympia, and a Barnegat sharpie boat, and the chief pastime during the day is sailing or fishing. A little group of old time friends and "fire laddies" who make the club their principal resort includes ex-Chief James J. Wenman, Commodore Asten, R. P. Moore, "Tommy" Houghton, Lon Sloc, John Boyd, J. M. Jennings, J. R. Platt, J. Murray, Dan Conover, Dan Stansbury, E. Brown, Commissioner Gerald Smith, R. M. C. Graham, T. J. M. Coe. Others who attend regularly are L. P. Chambers, R. G. Ralston, Elijah Smith, Charles Place, W. H. Hollister, J. M. Murray, J. Romaine Brown, J. A. Waller, J. H. Abbott, J. M. Vallentine, W. S. Welby, N. G. Hart, Dr. W. M. Fleming, Prof. W. M. Habirshaw, Prof. J. N. Risbetts, Col. Coe, J. Adriance Bush, George Arms, and M. H. Higby.

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