

Did you know?

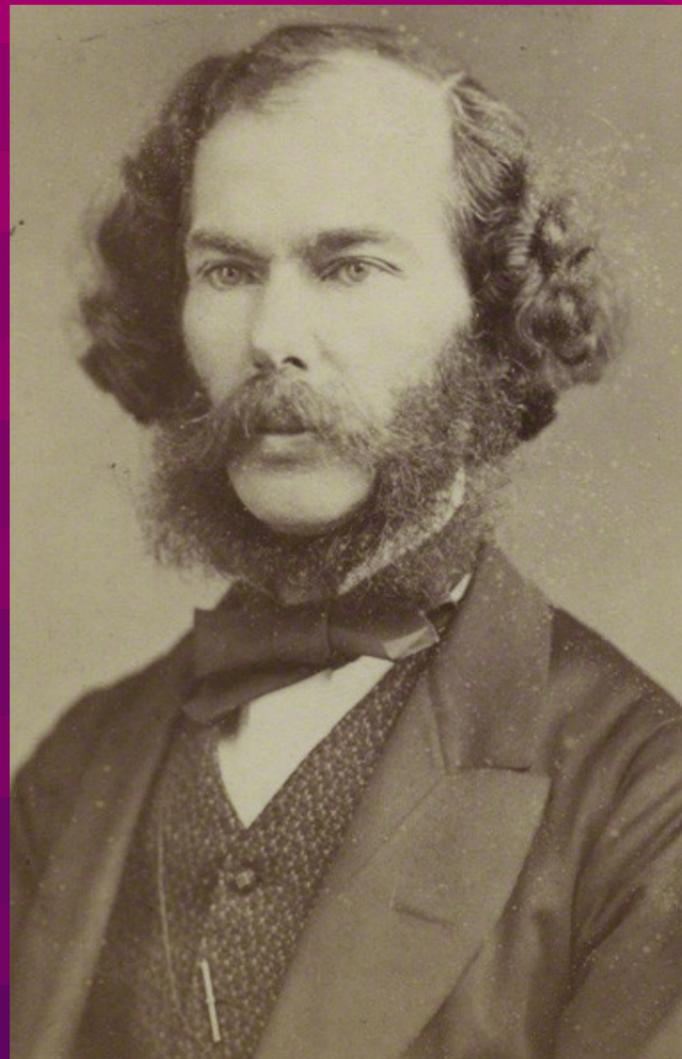
George H. Lewes, the companion of the novelist 'George Eliot', was one of the founders of The Physiological Society

George Lewes was a successful author of books and magazine articles who first met the magazine editor and contributor Mary Ann Evans in 1851. He was married with children, but in 1854 the pair eloped to Weimar, where he gathered material for his biography of Goethe. They returned to London the following year and would spend the rest of their lives living together, ostracized by society. Lewes took to populist writing on marine life and physiology, while in 1857 Evans began writing fiction under the name of George Eliot. *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* soon established her, avidly read by the very people who refused to meet her socially. By the time of the foundation of The Physiological Society, Dickens and Thackeray were dead and Eliot was the country's greatest living novelist.

Middlemarch was published in eight instalments over a year from December 1871 and features a young country doctor by the name of Mr Lydgate, inspired by Clifford Allbutt, a doctor in Leeds. Lewes had embarked on a vast physiological book, *Problems of Life and Mind*, unfinished at his death, and in the novel Mr Casaubon similarly labours endlessly on his *Key to all Mythologies*.

Lewes was one of the 19 men who gathered on 31 March 1876 to found The Physiological Society, and there he seconded the motion put forward by Michael Foster 'that an association be formed under the name of "The Physiological Society"'. Lewes presided at the third preliminary meeting on 5 May, attended the inaugural dinner on 26 May, and chaired the first ordinary meeting of 9 November. He died on 30 November 1878, and at The Physiological Society's meeting of 12 December a resolution was passed to enter a minute 'to record the regret of the meeting at the death of one of the Society's original members, Mr. G. H. Lewes.'

Evans received help from Michael Foster in getting Lewes's manuscript into publishable form and decided to fund a studentship, set up in 1879 with five physiologists as trustees and Foster as the director. Three of the holders of the George Henry Lewes Studentship went on to win the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine: Henry Dale, A. V. Hill and Charles Sherrington.

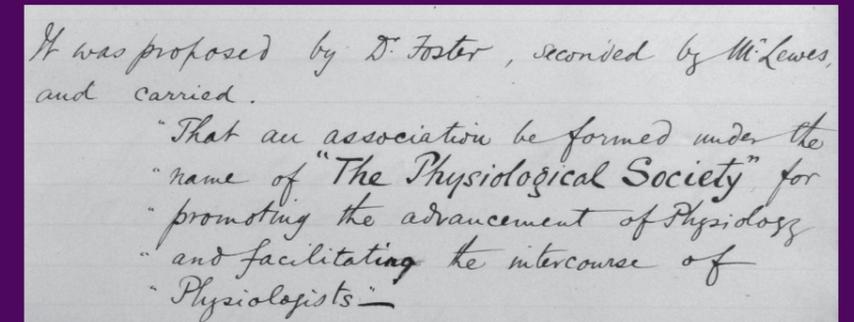


G. H. Lewes, courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

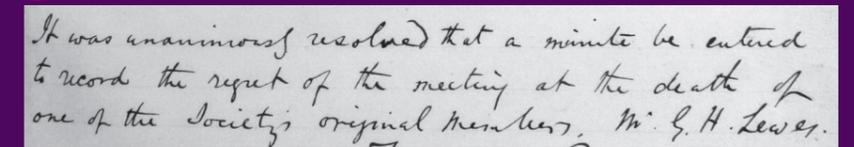
History & Archives Committee

Preserving The Society's records
Managing The Society's historical collections
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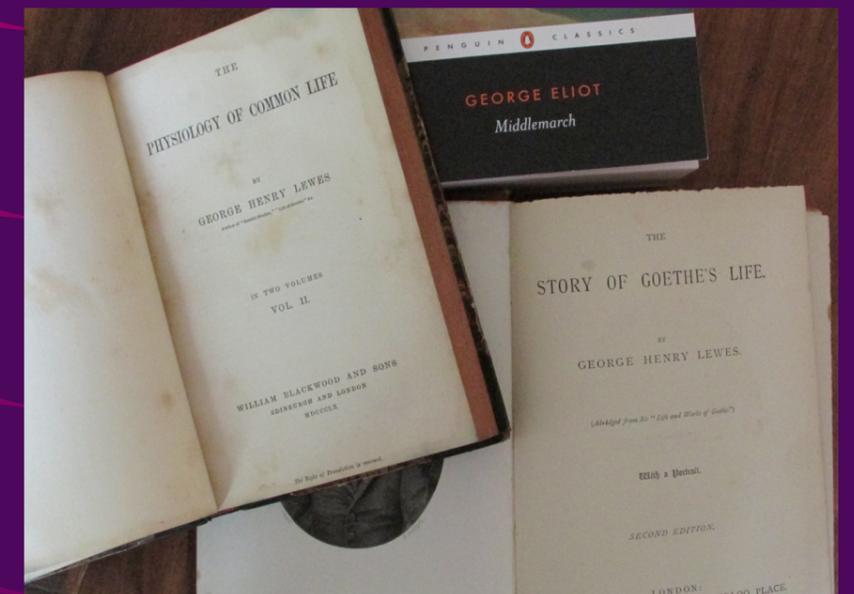
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Extract from the Minute Book recording the foundation of The Physiological Society.



Extract from the Minute Book from 12 December 1878 recording the death of G. H. Lewes.



Two of Lewes's popular books and one of his companion George Eliot's best loved novels.