

DEAR SIR,

On the evening of the 7th of October last, as you are doubtless aware, a motion, having for its object the election of Professor Goldwin Smith as an honorary life member of the St. George's Society of Toronto, was brought before the Society at its regular monthly meeting. After some discussion a vote was taken, and the motion was defeated by a majority of two.

The supporters of the motion were dissatisfied with such a result, more especially as they were and are of opinion that the vote did not accurately represent the views of a majority of the members of the Society. It is believed that the defeat of the motion was due partly to the absence of members who, had they been present, would have given it a cordial support; and partly to a misapprehension of the true state of the case on the part of some of those who voted against it. The vote and preliminary discussion, moreover, having been reported in the local newspapers, have since formed the topics of extended comment throughout the Dominion; and

#### THE ALL BUT UNIVERSAL VERDICT OF THE PRESS

has been that the action of the Society has rather tended to discredit it than otherwise. The only noteworthy exception to this verdict is furnished by a local journal whose hostility to Mr. Smith is matter of common notoriety.

Entertaining these views, and believing that a great injustice has been done to Mr. Smith by the misrepresentations of some of those who spoke against the motion, certain members determined to bring the matter once more before the Society. At the last monthly meeting, held on the 2nd inst., notice was given by Mr. Piddington that at the meeting of the Society to be held on the third Friday in January next he would move "that Professor Goldwin Smith be elected an honorary member."

As the matter will thus claim the Society's attention at the forthcoming annual meeting, it is considered desirable that there should be a full attendance of members, and that all should come prepared to vote upon the motion according to its merits. It is confidently believed that an intelligent appreciation of the facts, and an honest exercise of the franchise, unbiassed by personal or political prejudices, would result in

#### THE UNANIMOUS ELECTION

of Mr. Smith by the Society.

Mr. Smith's qualifications for honorary membership are in every respect unexceptionable. His contributions to the Society's funds have been most liberal; his personal character is of the highest; and his place as a scholar and a man of letters is in the very foremost rank among living Englishmen. His learning is deep and comprehensive, and his power of expression is unrivalled among his contemporaries. His services to his country as a writer and thinker have extended over a period of more than thirty years, during which he has also taken a prominent part in philanthropic and benevolent movements for the relief of human suffering, as well as in educational and other efforts for the progress and elevation of the people. He enjoys the

confidence and respect of all that is brightest and best in the British statesmanship of his time. His advice on colonial and educational questions is sought after by statesmen of the most diverse shades of political opinion, and with an eagerness which proves how highly that advice is rated. His present visit to England has assumed the form of

#### AN ALMOST CONTINUOUS OVATION.

He has been the courted and honoured guest of reverend prelates, of Cabinet Ministers, of learned Societies—in a word, of the highest and noblest in the kingdom. His splendid and stainless reputation is not a thing of yesterday. Seventeen years ago, Richard Cobden—a statesman whose opinions Englishmen have not yet ceased to respect—said of him: "I am a great advocate of culture of every kind, and I say that when I find men like Professor Goldwin Smith and Professor Thorold Rogers, who, in addition to profound classical learning, have a vast knowledge of modern affairs, and who are not only scholars but profound thinkers—these are men whom I know to have a vast superiority over me, and I bow to them with reverence." Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright have borne equally strong testimony to the splendour of his attainments, and to the value attached by them to his opinions. The learned Societies of his native land, as well as those of continental Europe, have been proud to enrol his name on the list of their honorary members, and have felt that in so doing they were conferring honour upon themselves rather than upon the nominal recipient. In Canada, the land of his adoption, and in Canada alone, has an Association composed of his native countrymen been found unwilling to award to him what all the rest of the world has been eager to lay at his feet.

The alleged grounds upon which the Society proceeded in refusing to elect Mr. Smith an honorary life member have no foundation in fact. He was rejected for having advocated the

#### ANNEXATION OF CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES.

and because his cherished doctrines tend to

#### THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE EMPIRE.

If honours are to be refused to a man by the St. George's Society in consequence of his political or religious opinions, that Society ceases to be a national one. We boast ourselves citizens of a country wherein any form of honest and decorous thought is accorded the fullest freedom of expression. So far as to the abstract question. But as simple matter of fact, there is not a syllable in any of Mr. Smith's published writings to justify such accusations as those referred to, nor has he any sympathy with such projects as annexation or dismemberment. He has repeatedly pointed out what his wide reading and close reflection have led him to regard as the probable future of our country if certain lines of policy are persisted in; but at no time or place has he ever either advocated annexation or referred to it as a contingency which he himself would desire to see brought about. So far from endeavouring to effect a dismemberment of the Empire, the whole tone of his writings shews how highly he values his glorious inheritance as an Englishman.

#### "I AM PROUD OF MY COUNTRY,"

said he, in the course of a speech made in this city just before his departure for England; "No Canadian, I venture to say, has a stronger interest in England, or loves her more in his heart,

than I do. Yet I will not say that I am going home, because I think a man's home is where his lot is cast, where he intends to spend his life, where his duties and his interests are."

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales on a recent occasion referred to the subject of these remarks as

"MY OLD FRIEND GOLDWIN SMITH."

Such language, from the mouth of the prospective ruler of the British Empire, would seem to afford sufficient proof that Mr. Smith and his writings are not regarded as subversive of that Empire, by those who are most deeply interested in its preservation.

You are respectfully requested to give these matters your earnest consideration, and to record your vote upon the impending motion according to your honest convictions. By its former vote upon the question the St. George's Society inaugurated a course of action which, if persisted in, may, by the mere accident of a majority, narrow its title to membership down to members of one church and one political party. But surely we may not unreasonably look forward to better things. It is devoutly to be hoped that our Society may not be further stultified by the action of a few prejudiced members, and that it may not cover itself with disgrace in the eyes of the world by a second time refusing to inscribe upon the list of its honorary and honoured members the name of

PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH.

This circular is the outcome of a meeting of a number of members of the St. George's Society held on the 17th of December inst., at which meeting it was resolved to take concerted action with a view to reversing a decision which has neither conduced to the popularity of the Society, nor increased the respect in which it is held by the Canadian public at large.

Signed on behalf of the meeting,

JAS. E. DAY,  
*Chairman.*

ALFRED PIDDINGTON,  
*Secretary.*

TORONTO, December 17th, 1881.

