

MR. GOLDWIN SMITH, M.A.

THE complimentary dinner given to Mr. Goldwin Smith, on the eve of his departure for England, has many claims to a permanent record in these pages. It is but seldom, in Canada, at any rate, that a company of gentlemen assemble to do honour to literary ability and scholarly attainments. Its novelty, therefore, would entitle this demonstration to notice in the *CANADIAN MONTHLY*, even if there were not special reasons why it should receive exceptional treatment at our hands. It was assuredly no ordinary feeling which prompted the gathering together, during a political crisis, of men of both parties, to offer a tribute of respect possessing no political significance. It was, in the strictest sense, a literary demonstration, and as such, an additional proof, if that were needed, that the literary spirit, untrammelled by the ties of party, and undisturbed by its animosities, has come to be a power in the Dominion. Of those present at the dinner there were doubtless many who would be found to dissent from some of the opinions held by their guest, and from others it has been the fashion to attribute to him.

It is no insignificant item in the debt which modern society owes to culture, that differences of opinion are no longer incompatible with generous appreciation of sterling merit and unquestioned integrity in an opponent. Nor is it indifference to truth which underlies the tolerant temper of the time—it is rather the growing conviction that discordance of view is the inevitable result of thorough inquiry. Discussion is the only highway which leads to knowledge in the best sense of the word; and discussion can only be conducted with profit when it is conducted with fairness and good temper. So far as the judicial spirit enters into the arguments even of a partisan, he will cheerfully concede to his opponent the honesty of motive and confidence in the truth of his opinions he claims for himself. It is to the literary culture of the time we owe that charity which weighs the evidence *against* us as well as *for* us, and has thus gone far to remove the personal element from modern disputation.

Hence the enthusiasm with which a mixed company, composed of legislators, lawyers, professors, bankers, and merchants, representing diverse pursuits and varied phases of opinion, testified their admiration of great talents, eminent scholarship, and undoubted purity of motive in the person of Prof. Goldwin Smith. During a two years' residence in Toronto, the guest of the evening had approved himself to the people of Canada, not only a man of

learning or a mere master of language, but one determined to use his gifts for the noblest purpose—the advancement and elevation of his adopted land. On the lecture platform, at the annual gatherings of the Universities, or through the columns of the press, the same earnest aim has ever been set before him, and pursued with an unselfish and unobtrusive earnestness. If we may borrow from the *Fortnightly Review* a phrase used in another connection, he has given us an eminent example of such “lovers of truth and honesty as we usually find a great scholar or man of science to be in our own day.” Added to this was a generous endeavour to encourage and stimulate nascent ability wherever he found it, which attached to him all with whom he came in contact. For all these reasons he has surrounded himself with a host of friends, without striving for or desiring popular applause.

It is not our purpose to give in detail the proceedings at the dinner of the 7th ultimo, for they have already appeared at sufficient length in the daily press. Dr. Wilson's extremely valuable services in the chair did not, however, receive that prominence in the reports which they deserve. Nothing could have been more felicitous than the remarks made preliminary to the toasts. His introduction of the guest was especially happy both in manner and matter. The audience, we are sure, shared his conviction that whilst we had enjoyed, during the Professor's residence, the services of one of the most eminent of England's scholars, so during his sojourn in his native land we should have a faithful representative of Canada there, who appreciates, because he thoroughly understands, the resources of the country, and entertains rational and well-founded hopes in the greatness of its future.

We touch lightly upon a subject personal, in a sense, to ourselves. Incidentally, the *CANADIAN MONTHLY* received many complimentary notices on the occasion. It would be affectation to deny that these evidences of public favour were grateful and encouraging to us. The efforts we have made, in the interests of national literature, have resulted in substantial and assured success; still, to the literary public we must look for continued and increased support. Apart, however, from considerations of the future, we are pleased to find that what has been effected in these columns is thoroughly approved.

Mr. Goldwin Smith referred to the enterprise with which his name has been closely associated. Perhaps we may venture to supplement his remarks with one or two of our own. The playful title of “literary