

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled Literary Club Papers 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

Mr. Editor:

Will you pardon a short sermon from an old member? Those of us who were so fortunate as to hear the paper of last Saturday night, may perhaps learn from it a lesson other than the one of History which the essayist intended. It forced one to appreciate how seldom it is that we have a paper so carefully prepared and so well read, and my own failing leads me to surmise that many of us are prone to put off writing until the last moment, and hastily preparing our papers we bring them here perhaps without any attention to the elocutionary part of our duty. We have in our usual attendance a discriminating and appreciative as well as a charitable audience, and we are disposed to rely too much upon this latter quality. We have good papers frequently and sometimes excellent ones, but judging from what hasty preparation we will do we should have with more time and care on the part of our essayists, more frequent nights of which, as a club, we can be proud. I am very fond of this Institution. I never miss a meeting without afterwards regretting it on hearing what I have missed; and I never attended a meeting that did not amply repay me for going two or three miles away from my fireside. The membership of the club has changed considerably in the last few years. Many new members have joined us and many old standbys have dropped out of our list. Now and then we hear it said by an ex-member, that the club has run down. The same thing has been said by retired members now and then for forty years, and the remark never in my opinion, contained less of truth than at the present time. Those who have been compelled by force of circumstances, change of residence, or other engagements to leave the club, like to think that the club enjoyed its palmiest days when it enjoyed their membership. We recently have had a loss of membership from a cause hitherto unknown in this club, and it is very likely that those who have lately left the club in a huff will entertain and maybe express the opinion that the club is not what it was when they were part of it. This indeed must necessarily be their opinion if they are consistent. But in spite of all this, as I look about the meetings, upon our regular attendants, and look at the roll of the names of some of our irregular attendants, whose faces I wish would more frequently shine about our board, it seems to me the club was never in better literary condition than now. The spirit of liberal toleration of every man's opinions, that spirit which has given the club its long life, is still as dominant as when I first knew the club 20 years ago. But these things alone will not keep up the club record: we should feel pride in our work and make it worthy recording. For this, let the paper referred to be an example. Some of the material of that paper could be found in but one library on this side of the Atlantic. The only complete set of the North Briton is in the Boston Public Library, and there your essayist went to get it for you. His material when gathered, was carefully shaped into a beautiful pyramid and upon its top at last stood out clearly those truths of history which he

emphasized. And the reading was as good as the matter; no hitches, no baulks, no constant reiteration and evidently no doubtful chirography. There is not a man in this club who does not know, or cannot learn more than any other Fellow-members know on some subject. This information, carefully put together will always command interest and attention. It need only be read clearly and distinctly, no oratorical powers are necessary. Only that care is required for the reading, which is due to the preparation which should have been expended on it, as well as those who have left their homes to come to hear it. We have now fifteen vacancies in our membership. More than for a long time. Let us fill them with care and deliberation – for if we like our new members, they will like us and will come to stay.

C. B. Wilby

Budget  
Wald Editor  
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