

(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*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

### Autopanegyric

We are often called upon to give reasons explanatory of the long life and continued good health of this club, so unusual in organizations of this kind, hundreds of which all over the country have been born and fallen by the wayside, while we are still standing on in sturdy manhood.

The toleration which the members of this Club have always shown to each other, of their opinions on all sorts of questions, has much to do with our healthy condition. We sometimes boast that everyone is sure to find here a place where he can express any opinion and be received courteously.

If any of our members by reason of a too limited study of physical geography or because of a sentimental unwillingness to depart from this dogma of the ancients should still insist that the earth is flat and should read a paper here maintaining this belief, he would be accorded a most respectful hearing. So too would any gentleman find here a civil audience, who by reason of a similar lack of study or observation might be led to affirm that the people of the Yankee nation are such poor traders, that in self-defense, they must check their trading propensities by law.

I admit that these two illustrations are extreme cases; let us return to the region of possibilities. We number among our members, some who still believe that a protective tariff is not a tax, and more, who are convinced that free trade under the alias of reciprocity, is a good thing if on a small scale with a few South American Republics, but that under any other name or in a larger quantity, it would not be at all desirable. In short, there are some of our members who

believe or vote as if they believed, that if an industry cannot stand on its own legs, all other industries ought to be taxed to keep it going, and yet they are among our most valued members. We would miss them if they staid away - we meet them with the greatest pleasure and sit around the tables every Saturday night with them enjoying their intelligent conversation on all other subjects.

This is an illustration of how thoroughly tolerant we are here of all shades of opinion, and [in] no other respect has this Club a better reason for its long life than in its toleration of the opinions of its members in reference to the qualifications of candidates for membership.

Here is the rock upon which many a good Club has foundered. No organization can be as strong as ours is, in which there is not shown that mutual forbearance and consideration by all members to each other which is always shown here in this respect.

Because one is very fond of Mr. John Doe and very much desires his election, he does not permit himself to get into a state of mind because he discovers, when the ballots are counted, that some of his fellow members do not share this desire with him. We try to overlook this mere difference of opinion just as we do a difference on the tariff or the silver question. Whenever a member of a social Club makes the defeat of a friend or the election of an enemy, a personal grievance he temporarily loses sight of his duty as such member; and it is because of this duty that we are still in our prime.

Our constitution provides that elections shall be by ballot which means that each member may record his vote without publicly proclaiming his feelings. The good reason for this privacy is self evident, and this provision is consequently found in the regulations of every social organization. Ancillary to entering the provision that every person proposed for membership shall be recommended by a certain number of members, In our constitution any number not less

than two may propose a member. There is no restriction of the number over two, who may join in the proposal. Under this provision a practice has grown up of adding names to the proposal until sometimes when the President announces the name of a candidate, he reads the names of a dozen or so who recommended him. Generally, these names are added voluntarily by those who see the name posted of one, whose election they desire.

A little reflection in the line suggested by this thought will perhaps lead the Club to agree to limit the number of those who may propose a candidate for membership, and to this end an amendment to the constitution has been proposed, which will be submitted to the Club at the first business meeting after the vacation.

Char. B. Wilby

June 27, 1891