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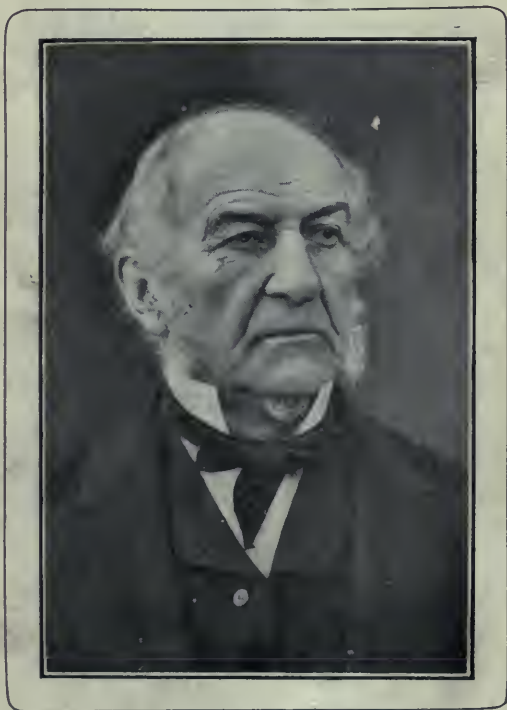


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The LIFE and WORK OF GLADSTONE.

By JAMES RENWICK.



WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

LONDON:
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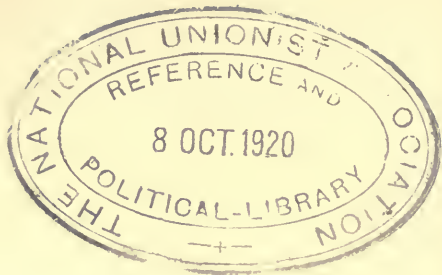
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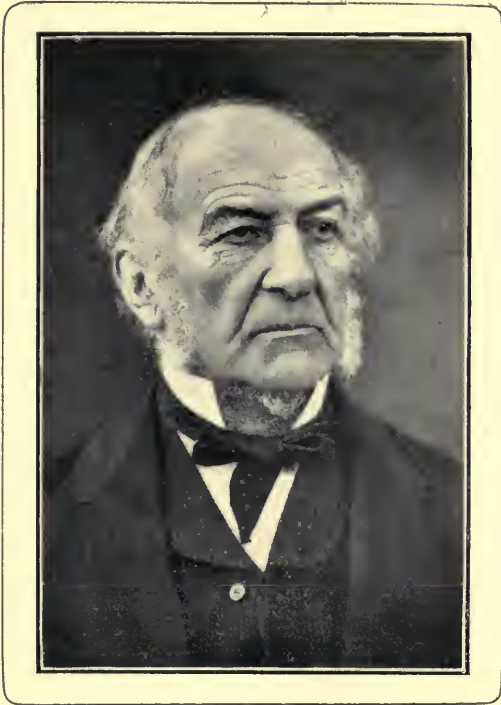


THE LIFE AND WORK
OF GLADSTONE.



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WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

29 December, 1809—19 May, 1898.

THE LIFE AND WORK
OF
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BY
JAMES RENWICK.

WITH PORTRAIT.

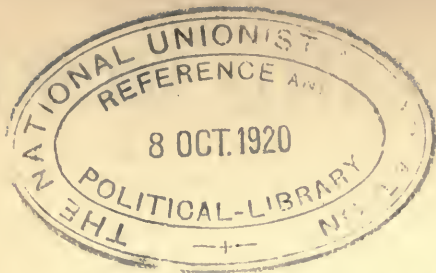
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"A meteor wert thou in a darksome night ;
Yet shall thy name conspicuous and sublime,
Stand in the spacious firmament of time,
Fixed as a star : such glory is thy right."

Wordsworth.

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PREFACE.

THE story of Mr. Gladstone's life has been told by Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. G. W. E. Russell, Mr. H. W. Paul, Mr. Barnett Smith and others. These writers have produced admirable books, and their labours have been crowned by Mr. Morley, whose great work is already recognised as an English classic, and one of the few biographies which will endure through the ages.

One cannot wonder that so much distinguished labour has been spent in portraying the career of Mr. Gladstone. He is one of our national heroes, and his life is a great national asset. It cannot be expected that all the details of his policy should meet with universal acceptance, but all parties must recognise the brilliance of his genius, the purity of his life, the tireless industry which seemed to utilise every moment of existence, the elevation and beauty of his ideals, the rare breadth of his sympathies, the charm of his social qualities, the beneficence of his example as son, husband, father, citizen, and friend.

Some of those who have been deeply impressed by this very remarkable life have naturally been anxious to impress the story upon the minds and hearts of others, and if this work is to be thoroughly accomplished, different books must be written for different types of readers. There exists a great thirst for knowledge, but we live in a time when there is much to do, and we cannot make minute investigations on every subject for ourselves. The task must be undertaken for us by others who will undertake the necessary research, and present the result in a compact form. If information as to Mr. Gladstone's career is only to be obtained from lengthy works it will, in numerous cases, never be obtained at all. The age demands compressed knowledge.

It is to meet this demand that the present volume has been prepared. While the book, to serve its purpose, is necessarily short, it is the result of long study. The facts have been

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gathered from many directions—from biographies, personal recollections, files of old newspapers, memoirs and other sources. These facts have been carefully pondered, so that the really essential and enduring features of Mr. Gladstone's work might be correctly selected, and woven into an accurate and trustworthy narrative.

It is hoped that the book will meet the requirements of many readers, and no one will be more pleased than the writer if, in some cases, it should inspire an ambition to make a closer and more prolonged study of one of Britain's greatest sons.

J. R.

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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE was descended from a family once great and powerful on the Scottish Border. In the sixteenth century the Gladstones held property in three counties, and were famed far and wide for their high courage and dauntless daring. Their raids and conflicts as recorded in local history attested the splendid vitality of the race, and were evidently leading to the formation of one of those great landed families which strike deep roots in their native soil, and endure through the centuries. For some unexplained reason, however, there was a break in the long line of success. The Gladstones lost their property bit by bit, and after the last field was sold, one of the family began business as a maltster in the Lanarkshire town of Biggar.

The fortunes of the family were on the ebb, and for some time it appeared as if they had receded for ever. But the tide soon turned, and in due time was destined to reach a height of which the early Gladstones never dreamt.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century the grandson of the Biggar maltster went to Leith, and built up a successful business as a corn merchant. One of his sons, John, was sent on a business mission to Liverpool, and the visit led to wonderful results. A leading merchant in that city was struck by the verve and commercial ability of the young Scotchman, and advised him to settle in Liverpool, where many chances were open to a business genius. The advice was followed, and was more than justified by events. John Gladstone attained a splendid success. By judgment, forethought and energy, he amassed a large fortune, and became one of the most influential men of the city of his adoption. Politics

as well as business engaged his attention. In due time he was elected a member of Parliament, and in recognition of his services to the community was honoured with a baronetcy.

Marriage crowned his career with happiness. His wife was Anne Robertson, the daughter of a Scottish provost, who resided in Stornoway, the principal town of one of the Outer Hebrides, and a woman remarkable for beauty and intellect. The Robertsons were pure Celts, and therefore, as Mr. G. W. E. Russell has said, the marriage was a happy union of the robust and businesslike qualities of the Lowlander with the poetic imagination, the sensibility, and the fire of the Gael.

William Ewart, the third child of the marriage, was born at 62 Rodney Street, Liverpool, on 29th December, 1809. The family name from 1296, when it first appears in history, to this date had undergone various changes. It appears as Gledstane, Gledstanes, Gledstaines, Gladstanes, and latterly as Gladstones. In 1835 the royal licence was obtained to drop the letter "s," and make the name "Gladstone;" the famous name that was, in future days, to sound through all the world.

EDUCATION.

Mr. Gladstone's education began at home. Sir John Gladstone taught his children to argue and reason from their early years. Discussions on any subject were encouraged. "Will it rain this afternoon?" was good enough for a topic. The important thing was to give reasons for the position taken up. "If so, why; if not, why not?" was an essential feature of all these discussions, and laid the foundation of that thoroughness which made the future Premier so formidable in debate. On leaving home for a larger sphere, he was well equipped, and at the vicarage of Seaford, he became an industrious pupil. He was not marked, however, by any rare precocity, and especially he could not be made to understand arithmetic. "He is now our greatest financier," said

his teacher in after days, "but at school he was incapable of addition and subtraction!"

On leaving the vicarage he was sent to the great public school of Eton. The whole spirit of Eton suited him, and acted upon his mind as the sun acts upon the flower. His varied powers began to expand. He became an excellent classical scholar, edited the school magazine, "The Eton Miscellany," took a leading part in the debating society, where he displayed some of that subtlety in reasoning which in after-life gave his opponents so much trouble. Physical recreation was not neglected. Boating and walking moulded his body into "pliant steel," and made him overflow with bright animal spirits. He was already a Christian of the muscular type, and if any of his fellow-pupils jeered at the expression of his religious opinions, his physique enabled him to threaten them with a "reply in good round hand upon their faces!"

From Eton he passed to Oxford University in October, 1828. The same systematic method of life was continued. No part of the day ran to waste. If he decided to get up at six he allowed himself no indulgence, though his whole soul might long for five minutes more. The hours were all planned out. Four hours were set apart for study in the morning. Walking and boating exercises were taken every day. Classes and lectures were regularly attended. The evening was devoted to reading. Theology, classical literature, and oratory were the departments in which he gained his greatest triumphs. His very first speech at the Oxford Union Debating Society created a sensation. Bishop Wordsworth, who was one of the listeners, remarked that he was no less sure of his own existence than that the maker of that speech would rise to be Prime Minister of England. Mr. Gladstone left the University in 1831 as a student of brilliant promise, and for once in this world of chances, changes, and chequered incidents, promise was abundantly fulfilled.

VOCATION.

Some difficulty arose as to the choice of a vocation. In Scotland the great desire of ambitious parents is to see their sons enter the ministry. The sons frequently want to do something else. In the case of Mr. Gladstone the position was reversed. His passion was theology, and he eagerly desired to enter the Church. His father, however, held a very strong view that a political career was preferable. Mr. Gladstone wrote a letter as long as a pamphlet in support of his views, but his pleading was in vain. He gave way to his father in the end, and agreed to substitute Parliament for the Church. No one, however, ever started on a path of glory with less willing step, and Sir John Gladstone should have the fullest credit for realising the powers of the future statesman, and for the high and elevated influence, which he brought by his decision into the field of British politics.

CHAPTER II.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

ON Sunday morning, 23rd September, 1832, Sir John Gladstone came into his son's bedroom, and announced that his presence was urgently required at Newark. "I rose," said Mr. Gladstone, "with infinite disgust!"

The object of the mission to Newark was to fight for a seat in Parliament. The Duke of Newcastle, who looked upon the constituency "as his own," had invited the distinguished orator of the Oxford Union to win back a seat which the Liberals had filched at the last election. When Mr. Gladstone reached his destination on Monday morning he found the place seething with excitement, and soon overcame that feeling of "disgust," which had arisen when his father broke his slumbers. The youthful candidate, nurtured in Conservatism at home and school and college, and breathing out slaughterings against Liberalism and all its ways, threw himself into the contest with fiery vigour. His beautiful voice, his bright glancing eyes, his fluent oratory, and his whole personal appearance won the admiration of friend and foe. Even Mr. Wilde, one of the opposing candidates, said, "There is a great future before this young man." The ladies of the borough, to whom the young candidate was highly acceptable, presented him with a banner of red silk, and in his reply he declared, in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, that "it was no trivial banner of a party club; it was the red flag of England that he saw before him, the symbol of national moderation and national power, under which, when every throne on the Continent had crumbled into dust, mankind found sure refuge and triumphant hope."

Mr. Gladstone justified the faith placed in his powers

by the Duke. The seat was wrested from the Liberals. The Duke got "his own" back, and a local opposition journal summed up the result as the bowing down of sixteen hundred people "to a lord, as the people used to do to their beasts, to their reptiles, and their ropes of onions!"

MAIDEN SPEECH.

Mr. Gladstone took his seat in Parliament on the 29th January, 1833. It was the first Parliament after the passing of the great Reform Bill, and some doughty chieftains led the various political groups. The Prime Minister was Earl Grey, who had successfully steered the Reform Bill over the shoals, and whose character and abilities had won for him a warm place in the affections of the people. The Duke of Wellington, surrounded with the halo of Waterloo, was a striking figure in the House of Lords. Sir Robert Peel led the Tories in the Commons. Magnificent Daniel O'Connell marched at the head of the fiery little band of Irish Nationalists. The House knew no grander fighter, but Mr. Stanley (afterwards famous as Lord Derby) frequently stood up to the giant, and their combats yielded many glorious nights to the spectators.

A number of members had heard of the promising young man from Oxford, and looked forward with curiosity to his first appearance as a speaker. It was on the 21st February, 1833, that he first opened his lips in the House, where he was fated to play such a mighty part. He spoke in reference to an allegation of undue influence at the Liverpool election, and the words were so indistinctly heard, that the reporters put it, "Mr. W. Gladstone was understood to protest against the statement made by the petitioners." A Mr. Warburton seems to have heard well enough. At least he criticised the remarks, and thus gained the honour of standing first in the long line of Mr. Gladstone's Parliamentary critics. Mr. Warburton declared that the young member's observations were "simply absurd," reminding one of the reply of O'Connell

to Mr. Gladstone on another occasion, "I have much contempt for the argument of the honourable gentleman."

It was on the 3rd June, 1833, that he ventured on the effort which should be regarded as his "maiden speech." It is strange that one who became in after years the foremost champion of liberty should have devoted his first important effort in Parliament to a partial defence of slavery. Sir John Gladstone, like many men of the time, whose characters were above reproach, was the owner of slaves in the West Indies, and, in the course of a debate on the proposed abolition of slavery, a special attack was made by Lord Howick against the treatment of the slaves on the Gladstone plantation. Mr. Gladstone rose to defend his father, and produced a letter dated the 20th April, showing that the number of punishments inflicted on slaves from the 1st January to that date amounted exactly to *one*. Warming to his work, as he proceeded, he declared that he did not object to *ultimate* emancipation, and that what he contended for was a period of preparation prior to liberation. As broad a distinction as possible should be made between the industrious, and the indolent slave. No mechanism could be too swift in the case of the former, but he feared that the very prospect of instant emancipation would prove an obstacle to the qualification of the indolent for the boon. But if a satisfactory plan were devised it would be delightful to all the parties concerned, and especially to the West Indian planters, who felt that to deal in the labour and persons of their fellow-men, though it did not involve a sin, involved a serious responsibility.

It will be seen that these views are not so extreme as they have been represented to be, but Mr. Gladstone did better when one day he summed up his changed creed in the words, "I abhor slavery." Apart from the opinions expressed, the speech was a success, and gave rise to many hearty congratulations. One of these encouraging messages came from King William IV., who wrote in his homely way, expressing the pleasure at "the promising manner in which the young speaker had come forward."

From this time forward, Mr. Gladstone spoke on a variety of subjects, and always succeeded in winning the ear of the House. There was nothing sensational or theatrical in his manner. Mr. Disraeli, who was to become his great opponent, sought to attract attention by high wrought rhetorical displays, and marred the first efforts of a marvellous genius by over-elaboration. Mr. Gladstone was careful to master every creek and crevice of his subjects, and to direct his utterances to the point. Fluency, an animated manner, and a beautiful voice, assisted in pleasing the House, and it soon became plain to Sir Robert Peel and other leaders, who kept an anxious watch on the political sky, that a new star was rising above the horizon.

IN OFFICE.

The impression made by Mr. Gladstone was so favourable that, in two short years, he had made his appointment to political office a certainty, as soon as the Conservative party came into power. The day for advancement came sooner than expected. Brusque, bluff, wrongheaded, yet not altogether unpopular, William IV. summarily dismissed his Liberal ministers in November, 1834. On looking up the newspapers of the time, we find much excited discussion as to the true inwardness of the event, and an important body of opinion in favour of the idea, that Lord Brougham was more than any person the cause of the disaster. "Respecting him," cried *The Times*, in a passage which illustrates the vigorous polemical style of the period, "the King makes no scruple of speaking out as an itinerant mountebank, who has not only disgraced the Cabinet of which he formed part, but has degraded, by his antics, the highest office of the law and state in England." It is probable that none of the ministers was acceptable to His Majesty, and, being aware that their popularity in the country was not excessive, he took the first opportunity of dismissing "these people," as Greville the diarist calls them, and surrounding himself with more congenial advisers.

Sir Robert Peel became Prime Minister, and he being on the alert for rising talent, made Mr. Gladstone a Junior Lord of the Treasury, the youngest lad, as Sir Robert Inglis said, who was ever placed at the Treasury, on his own account, and not because he was his father's son. A few days later (26th January, 1835), he was offered and accepted the office of Under-Secretary for the Colonies, than which, according to Sir Robert Peel, there were not six offices of greater importance at the time.

This was not the mere language of compliment. The appointment really required special discretion and skill. Deeply important questions as to our possessions abroad, and especially with regard to the position of Canada, were looming on the horizon, and principles were involved which might make or mar the Empire. The Under-Secretary for the Colonies, being the representative of that department in the Commons, was the target at which the Whig and Radical enemy loved to blaze, and the position was by no means a sinecure for one with only two years' experience of Parliamentary life.

Sir Henry Taylor, who was in the Colonial Office at this time, said that Gladstone had more of the devil in him than appeared. We may take this as a compliment as it referred to the healthy determination and self-will which he exhibited in tackling his new duties, and if his term had been prolonged, he might have done signal service to the Colonies and to England. The state of parties in the House was too undecided to make this probable. Sir Robert Peel, in the hope that the country would give him a stable majority, dissolved. He came back with his position unimproved. It was plain that the sword of Damocles might descend at any moment, and terminate the existence of the Ministry. After a few warnings the end came over a question as to the surplus revenues of the Irish Church. In April, 1835, Lord Melbourne was at the head of a Liberal ministry, to the great displeasure of King William, who was, however, solaced by the fact that Lord Brougham did not return as Lord Chancellor.

CHAPTER III.

HAPPY LEISURE.

FOR some time Mr. Gladstone refrained from much interference in the debates. He defended the Irish Church, insisting upon the elements of religion playing an all-important part in public as in private affairs; opposed attacks on the House of Lords, which rattled in profusion from the Radical benches; and continued to defend the planters against the attacks of the Anti-Slavery Society. These were, however, only occasional exercises. At this time Mr. Gladstone was enjoying what other people might call hard work, but to him was a holiday of the spirit. He was never a politician pure and simple. Such a rôle was all too narrow for his many-sided nature. It was always a delight for him to escape for a season from the forum to the solitude of the study, and drink deep draughts from the streams of literature and theology. Homer, Dante, and the Fathers were exhaustless fountains which never failed to refresh him after lengthened travels along the dusty lanes of politics. It was such a period that he was now enjoying, and, even in the divine moments of his grandest triumphs, there were not perhaps so many elements of pure unalloyed joy. In hours of leisure he went freely into society, and delighted his friends with gay, animated, versatile conversation, sunny buoyant spirits, and the music of an exquisite voice. Clearly it was not a politician of the ordinary type, who shone with such lustre in the highest and choicest intellectual society, but a man dowered with the resplendent thing called genius, and genius, too, accompanied with ample means, an unclouded faith, abounding health, a love of labour, a pure heart, and alluring visions of a great career in the future. It

is seldom indeed that Nature provides for her children with such lavish grace.

CHURCH AND STATE.

The passion for theology, which lay at the very root of his nature, was responsible for Mr. Gladstone's first book, "The State in its Relations with the Church." To-day only a few ardent disciples of the master can boast of a journey through the pages of this striking volume, but the central idea of the work and its main conclusions may be stated in a few sentences. The whole book justifies the description by Lord Macaulay of the author as the "rising hope of the stern and unbending Tories," and is a window through which we may watch the inner workings of his mind at this important period in his history.

The great position which he sought to establish was that the State had a conscience, and should profess a religion. One of the main purposes of a State, in fact, was the discernment and the maintenance of religious truth. The religion of the English people was Christianity, and the national organ, through which this religion was expressed, was the Church of England. The Reformation in England "did not destroy, but successfully maintained, the unity and succession of the Church in her apostolical ministry. We have, therefore, still among us the ordained hereditary witnesses of the truth, conveying it to us through an unbroken series from our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles. This is to us the ordinary voice of authority; of authority equally reasonable and equally true, whether we will bear, or whether we will forbear."

From these doctrines, that the State should profess a religion, and that the English State should recognise the Church of England as the national organ of religion, and that the Church of England was a chosen means by which the truth was conveyed by the apostolical succession, there followed certain highly important results. The Nonconformists in England were schismatics. The Presbyterian Established Church of Scotland was a

gross error, and should never have been recognised by the State. The Church of Ireland, although it represented an insignificant minority, was a just institution on the ground that it embodied the truth, and "to remove this priceless treasure from the view and the reach of the Irish people would be meanly to purchase their momentary favour at the expense of their permanent interests, and would be a high offence against our own sacred obligations."

NONCONFORMIST AND OTHER CRITICISMS.

Nonconformists could not, of course, admit the accuracy of these conclusions, and Mr. Gladstone himself was one day to live under wider and more ample skies. The right of private judgment, which was asserted and established by Protestantism, has led inevitably to widely different views on the question of religion and church government. Not more than one half, if so many, of the people of England are to be found within the folds of the Church, and under such conditions it is a misuse of terms to regard one set of believers as the State Church, and vest in that section superior civil privileges. How is it possible that the State can decide the question as to whether the truth lies with members of the Church of England, or with Presbyterians, or Congregationalists, or Baptists, or Methodists, or Unitarians, or any of the other numerous sects into which the people are divided? The only logical method of dealing with the problem is to treat temporal affairs as the proper objects of government, and to leave forms of religion free from the trammels of the State. No man who believes in religion can be blind to the majestic history of the Church of England, or feel anything but the deepest gratitude for her spiritual services to the nation, and it is not owing to any narrow spirit that Nonconformity contends for all the sects being placed on an equal basis. It is a simple act of justice which will unite, under differences on non-essentials, all believers in religion in the bonds of a common faith.

The criticisms on the book were of the usual confusing variety. Lord Macaulay praised the author's ability and character, and went on to explain that he hardly agreed with one of the author's conclusions. The pill was coated so wisely and sweetly, and any notice from this great power in the world of letters was such a compliment that Mr. Gladstone was greatly pleased with Lord Macaulay's trouncing. Carlyle thought there was too much of the shovel hat in the "Oxford crack scholar, Tory M.P., and devout Churchman," but credited him with "talent and hope." Alas! the critic did not look in his old age upon the "hope" as realised. A snort of contempt and a stream of picturesque abuse always greeted the name of Gladstone when mentioned to the Chelsea sage in later years. Baron Bunsen may be taken as the type of the whole-hearted admirer without qualifications. On reading "Church and State," he plumped for the author as, in intellectual power, the first man in England, and as one who had "heard higher tones than anyone else in this land."

There was a wonderful agreement on the question as to the genuine abilities of the writer. "Nothing," said Mr. Disraeli on one occasion, "that Mr. Gladstone writes is literature." The remark was not made in an unkindly fashion, and contained a measure of truth. We do not look in Mr. Gladstone's writings for the "mould of form" which gives immortality to the world's literary classics. But there are great qualities of another kind, and these were warmly recognised by friend and foe. The book exhibited wonderful learning, deep reflection, and a mind of most extensive grasp. It was marked by copious expression, freshness, and subtlety of thought, and we are conscious throughout of a sweeping intellectual force resembling the rush of a mighty river. It could only have been written by a man possessed of extraordinary mental endowments, exalted spiritual ideals, and earnest desires for the highest welfare of humanity.

An English statesman of whom such things could be

said was a *rara avis* indeed, and, although some of his friends dreaded the effect of subtle theological studies on his political career, his parliamentary genius was certain to triumph over every obstacle.

MARRIAGE.

In the winter of 1838, Mr. Gladstone visited Rome for the benefit of his health, which had become somewhat impaired owing to his political, literary, and theological labours. Among other visitors to the city at that time there were the widow and two daughters of Sir R. Glynne, of Hawarden Castle, known in society as the "two pretty Miss Glynnes." Mr. Gladstone saw them frequently, and became engaged to the elder daughter—Miss Catherine Glynne. The marriage took place at Hawarden on the 25th July, 1839, the younger sister being married at the same time and place to George William, fourth Lord Lyttelton.

The married life of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone extended to the extraordinary period of fifty-nine years. A happier union never took place. All through those long years they continued to be lovers, and their home was a happy example of pure and elevated domestic felicity. Even when they were over eighty years of age, theirs was described as the most youthful home in England.

The value of the gifts conferred upon him through his wife were warmly acknowledged by Mr. Gladstone, and his devotion to Mrs. Gladstone was known to all the world. It was always delightful to see them together on a public platform. The attentions of Mr. Gladstone and the watchful care of Mrs. Gladstone made an attractive picture, and touched politics with something of a domestic charm. A union attended with so many felicities was nothing less than a national asset. It was a great example to the age of the happy results of pure affection; and it brought into the tempestuous life of the statesman an element of peace which recruited his energies, nerved him anew for the battle, and prolonged the days so valuable to the nation.

The Glynnes are an ancient Welsh family, and more than one member of the race have played an important part in history as warriors, politicians, and lawyers. Sir John Glynne was a distinguished pleader in the time of Charles I., under the Protectorate of Cromwell, and in the days of Charles II. Sir John endeavoured to please all these varied masters, and seems in adroitness to have resembled the French Minister, who served with equal acceptance the Bourbons, Napoleon, and the Republic as they successively triumphed in France. It was in 1651 that the now famous Hawarden Castle came into the hands of the family. The estates belonged to the Earl of Derby who was executed in that year, and Sir John Glynne obtained the property. The beautiful castle which now stands amid most lovely scenery was built in 1752. Sir Stephen Glynne, to whom we have alluded, died in 1874. He was unmarried and was the last baronet of the name. On his death the estate came into the hands of the Gladstone family, and Hawarden is now universally known through its associations with the great statesman.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER ELECTION.

ON the 20th June, 1837, King William IV. died, and in accordance with the custom in those days Parliament was dissolved. When Queen Victoria died the custom was not followed, and it will in all probability never be revived. It was an unnecessary course, and its abolition may well be taken as a precedent to be followed with regard to many usages which survive from age to age, although their meaning and utility have passed away.

Mr. Gladstone stood again for the constituency of Newark, and was triumphantly returned. The high position to which he had risen was shown by his nomination at this election for Manchester. It was the action of some admirers, who discerned the coming greatness of the man, and desired to see him the representative of a great constituency. Mr. Gladstone himself did not wish to desert Newark, and did nothing to help his chances at Manchester. His friends persevered all the same, and, although his opponents secured the victory, his supporters ran into thousands, and the defeated candidate might well be proud of such a striking mark of public favour.

VERSATILITY.

When he looked over the book on Church and State, Sir Robert Peel did not greatly sympathise with the literary labours of his brilliant young lieutenant. The young man, according to Sir Robert, would ruin his fine political career if he persisted in writing "trash!" The marvellous versatility of his genius was not so clearly understood in those days. There was really no danger

of literature or any other of his varied interests injuring or terminating his political career. It is true he often grew weary of Parliamentary life, and talked frequently of retirement. He was never one of those men whose single passion is politics, and who feel the air of Parliament to be the very breath of life. At times he turned away from the strife to satisfy other longings, took deep draughts of Dante, plunged into Homer, did battle for the Church; but the moment soon came when these things did not satisfy, when the study became too narrow for his energies, and the call to action summoned him from seclusion to the fray. Political action was a necessity of his nature, and he could no more resist the tendency to guide the political destinies of the nation than he could crush his instincts for literature and theology.

At the point now reached in our story Mr. Gladstone was strongly under the theological spell, as we may gather from the notes in his diary. "Finished Palmer on the Articles, deep, earnest, and generally trustworthy. Worked upon a notion of private eucharistical devotions to be chiefly compiled; and attended a meeting about colonial bishoprics."

GERM OF FOREIGN POLICY.

This is an example of his notes of the period, but Dante, Homer, the Fathers, colonial bishoprics, etc., had to give place occasionally to the debates in Parliament when the bugle call sounded in his ears. One of the most important of these debates took place in 1840 in connection with the opium war with China. His speech in the debate was remarkable, not only for its power and eloquence, but as containing the germ of those principles of foreign policy, which were later in life so often proclaimed, and so strongly opposed.

The Emperor of China was determined to stop the smuggling trade in opium, and issued an edict to that effect. The trade was going on all the same, and Lin, the Chinese commissioner, proceeded to enforce the Emperor's edict. He seized some opium belonging to

British merchants in Canton, and surrounded the factories with a force. The occupants of the factories were released by Captain Elliot, our special commissioner and naval commander, and reprisals were adopted by the Chinese. The Emperor put forth another edict—one prohibiting trade between his country and England, and war followed.

In the Session of 1840 a great and stirring debate took place in the House of Commons on these events. Sir James Graham moved a resolution against the Government for their conduct, which, in his opinion, was characterised by want of foresight, and was opposed to common principles of justice. All the giants took part in the debate, and Lord Macaulay made a specially eloquent speech in defence of the Government. Mr. Gladstone made a reply which is an admirable example of his style at this point in his career, and powerfully expresses his principle, that a fearless love of justice should form the basis of our foreign policy.

“The right honourable gentleman opposite,” he said, “spoke in eloquent terms of the British flag waving in glory at Canton, and of the animating effects which have been produced on the minds of British subjects on many critical occasions when the flag has been unfurled on the battlefield. But how comes it to pass that the sight of that flag always raises the spirit of Englishmen? It is because it has always been associated with the cause of justice, with opposition to oppression, and respect for national rights, with honourable commercial enterprise; but now, under the auspices of the noble lord, that flag is hoisted to protect an infamous contraband traffic; and if it were never to be hoisted except as it is now hoisted on the coast of China, we should recoil from its sight with horror, and should never again feel our hearts thrill, as they now thrill with emotion, when it floats proudly and magnificently on the breeze.”

The Government were not defeated, but this earnest endeavour to compel the consideration of the question

as to whether England was right or wrong in discussions on foreign policy, was not lost on the House. Mr. Gladstone never became Foreign Minister, and did not make a close enough study of our relations with other countries to constitute himself a great authority on the minutiae of foreign policy. But his continued insistence on the moral factor in our dealings with the nations has been of inestimable importance. No statesman ever saw more clearly, or could enforce the truth more powerfully, that the neglect of morality must be as disastrous to nations as to individuals.

IN THE CABINET.

Matters were going badly at this time with the Whig Government, and went on from bad to worse. On the 27th May, 1841, Sir Robert Peel moved a resolution of want of confidence, and, after an exciting debate, the resolution was carried on 4th June by a majority of *one*. The Government appealed to the country and were defeated, the Conservatives coming in with a handsome majority. Sir Robert Peel was entrusted with the task of forming an administration. The chances of different politicians were warmly debated, and the prospects of Mr. Gladstone excited eager interest. The hopes of his friends ran high, and Greville in his diary wrote: "Gladstone has already displayed a capacity which makes his admission into the Cabinet indispensable." Mr. Gladstone's own expectations were not devoid of ambition. Although destitute of offensive "braggadocio," he was perfectly aware of his talents, and expected them to be recognised. The appointment he desired at this time was that of Irish Secretary, and as he had been admitted to the inner council of the party on some important occasions, it was natural to suppose he would advance to Cabinet rank. It was, therefore, something of a disappointment to receive only the offer of the Vice-Presidentship of the Board of Trade. Mr. Gladstone did not desire the office, and its duties filled him with misgivings. "I really am not

fit for it," he said to Sir Robert Peel. "I have no general knowledge of trade whatever." Sir Robert however pressed, and the office was accepted. At first the work was thoroughly distasteful, but he consoled himself with the reflection that it might be all the better for not being according to his own bent and leaning. It sometimes happened that other people understood Mr. Gladstone's capacities better than he understood them himself. It is certain that Sir Robert Peel made no mistake on this occasion. Characteristically the new Vice-President put his heart and soul into the work, and was not long in showing that his talent for dealing with commercial affairs amounted to genius. The House was not only impressed with his grasp of these questions, but delighted by the brilliance with which they were presented. Nothing as a rule is duller than figures, but the Vice-President made the dry bones live, and by a fascinating style invested the most prosaic facts with the interest of a romance.

CHAPTER V.

REFORMING THE TARIFF.

ALTHOUGH his shining qualities came out in all he did and said, the work done as Vice-President was solid and substantial as the most plodding hack could make it. His most important duty was the reform of the then existing tariff, which affected no less than 1,200 articles. Mr. Gladstone made it his business to thoroughly comprehend all the ramifications of these duties, and the colossal labour entailed may be understood if we bear in mind that he entered upon his duties totally ignorant of political economy, and of the commerce of the country. The result of this gigantic toil was the reform of the duties on 750 articles, and, in conducting the operations requiring so many varied qualities, Mr. Gladstone won the admiration of all competent observers. "At no time in the annals of Parliament," wrote Sir Robert Peel, "has there been exhibited a more admirable combination of ability, extensive knowledge, temper, and discretion."

It was plain that so distinguished an ornament of the ministry must realise before long the expectations of his friends and reach Cabinet rank. It was on 19th May, 1843, that this important point was gained. The office of President of the Board of Trade became vacant, and Mr. Gladstone was appointed to the office with a seat in the Cabinet. He was now only thirty-three, and the honour, conferred upon him at this early age, was enhanced by the fact that it was not through influence but by ability and hard intellectual toil combined, as Sir Robert Peel said, with "purity of heart and integrity of conduct."

MAYNOOTH RESIGNATION.

This great achievement, due to hard and incessant work as well as brilliant natural gifts, was evidently the forerunner of a career which could suffer no check. It was, therefore, with intense surprise that the public heard on 28th January, 1845, the announcement of Mr. Gladstone's retirement from the post, which placed such opportunities within his reach, and which he had won by such laborious exertion. The resignation really formed a very important turning-point in his political life, and was the first important sign to the public that a change was coming over his strictly Tory attitude towards the questions of the time.

In 1845 the Government proposed to conciliate the Roman Catholic Irish members by establishing non-sectarian colleges in Ireland, and increasing the grant to Maynooth College from £8,928 to £26,000 a year. Mr. Gladstone had previously expressed in his book on Church and State opinions to the effect that the State should support the Established Church only, and thought that, if he now supported a contrary policy while in office the proceeding might be attributed to motives of personal interest. No doubt could exist on this point if he resigned office before the introduction of the measure, and, after much reflection and consultation with friends, he resolved to resign. The House of Commons was the last assembly in the world to understand such subtle conscientiousness, and a characteristic speech in which he explained minutely his reasons for resigning did not improve matters. The impression made on the House may be gathered from the criticism of Cobden, one of his wondering listeners. "What a wonderful faculty is this," said the great Free Trade leader, "Mr. Gladstone has been speaking all this time, and I no more understand why he resigned than I did before!" As it turned out, Mr. Gladstone supported the proposals when introduced, and friends as well as foes were heard on every side to remark that he had struck a blow at his reputa-

tion for common sense from which he would never recover. Not a very happy prophecy !

FREE TRADE.

The question has often been discussed as to when Mr. Gladstone began to exhibit tendencies towards Liberalism. The period may be taken as coincident with the distinct change in his views which his support of the Maynooth grant manifested, and another important step on the onward march was reached when he embraced the doctrine of Free Trade.

In 1845 the Anti-Corn Law agitation, led by that noble trinity, Bright, Cobden and Villiers, came to a head. The sufferings of the people from poverty and costly food were appalling. Eye-witnesses have told us that many towns bore the appearance of beleaguered cities. "People," one observer says, "walked the streets like gaunt shadows, and not like human beings. There were bread riots in almost every town." For such a terrible disease some remedy must be found, and many things pointed with unmistakable force to that remedy being found in the doctrines of the Free Traders.

With a courage which has earned him the admiration of succeeding generations, Sir Robert Peel declared for Free Trade. He was aware of the storm that would break over his head ; and that his policy would cause a disruption in the Conservative Party. He was, however, sure of his course, and, with the fortitude of the Briton who knows how to answer the call of duty, proceeded to carry out the greatest revolution in the commercial policy of our country.

One of the most enthusiastic supporters of Sir Robert Peel, and one who inspired to a great extent the master himself, was Mr. Gladstone. As Vice-President of the Board of Trade his great work was the reform of the tariff. As President the same policy was followed, and followed so thoroughly that the duties on 450 further articles were abolished. All this was in the direction of

Free Trade, but it was not until a later period that Mr. Gladstone reached the final goal. In fact Mr. Gladstone was a reluctant convert to the principles of Free Trade, and his conviction of their truth was only brought about by a laborious and profound study of the facts. "For the first six years or so of my Parliamentary life," he wrote, "Free Trade was in no way a party question, and it only became strictly such in 1841, at and somewhat before the General Election when the Whig Government *in extremis* proposed a fixed duty on corn. My mind in regard to it was a sheet of white paper." It was when he became Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and began to grasp the facts connected with the commercial structure of the country, that "the stones of which his Protectionism was built up began to get uncomfortably loose." The story of his experience was told by him at this time in a pamphlet entitled, "Remarks on Recent Commercial Legislation," in which he traced the success of the course pursued at the Board of Trade, and how that course fitted in with the more radical measures necessary to meet the existing critical situation.

On the 27th of January, 1846, Sir Robert Peel introduced his memorable resolution to abolish the duties on numerous articles, and for the modification of the Corn Laws and their final abolition as from the 1st February, 1849. There ensued an exciting and a bitter struggle. For twelve nights all the leading men in the House of Commons used their utmost eloquence in defence of their views, and Mr. Disraeli especially distinguished himself by hurling bitter taunts at the late leader of the Conservative Party. It was a battle of the giants, but in the end Sir Robert won a glorious triumph. The resolution was carried by a majority of ninety-seven.

The history of England from that time till now proves the wisdom and the foresight of the policy endorsed on that historic night.

CHAPTER VI.

COLONIAL SECRETARY.

ONE of the opponents of Free Trade was Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and he, being unable to support the policy of his chief, resigned his position in the Cabinet. Mr. Gladstone was offered, and accepted, the office, and thereby vacated his seat at Newark.

In the ordinary course, Mr. Gladstone would have sought re-election.

The Duke of Newcastle, however, who looked upon the constituency of Newark as "his own," was incensed by "his" member's support of Free Trade, and instructed his tenants to vote for another candidate. On hearing this, Mr. Gladstone, who was grateful for what the Duke had done in the past, retired from the contest, and therefore held the office of Colonial Secretary without a seat in the House.

It was on the 25th June, 1846, that the Corn Law Bill passed the final stage in the House of Lords, and, singularly enough, the day of this the greatest triumph of the Peel ministry was also the day of its defeat. A Bill seeking for further powers to repress outrages in Ireland had been introduced by the Government. It was one of those frequent Bills in the history of our relations with Ireland known as Coercion Bills, and was keenly opposed. The division on the motion for the second reading came on on the 25th June, and the Government was defeated by what Wellington called "a blackguard combination between the Whigs and the Protectionists." Sir Robert Peel at once resigned, and thus Mr. Gladstone's tenure of the Colonial Secretaryship came abruptly to a close.

COLONIAL POLICY.

On no point has Mr. Gladstone been more bitterly opposed than in reference to his supposed ideas on Colonial policy. It is therefore desirable to see what these ideas really were. At this stage he was in favour of the policy which, in place of disintegrating the Empire, has really led more than anything else to its consolidation—that is to say, local independence, and the treatment of the Colonies in accordance with the expressed wishes of the inhabitants. In the eighteenth century we lost America by an attempt to impose the rule of Downing Street, and Mr. Gladstone was against the repetition of that experiment. He supported the principle that the expense of the local government of the Colonies should not be borne by the Mother Country, but that the cost of defence from aggression by foreign powers should be an exception to this rule. In a speech at Chester on 12th November, 1855, he set out the principles of Colonial policy from which he never departed. Experience, he contended, proved that the surest way to loosen the Colonial connection would be to associate with British law and British institutions the hated name of force and coercion, exercised by us at a distance over the rising fortunes of the Colonies. "Govern them upon a principle of freedom. Defend them against aggression from without. Regulate their foreign relations. These things belong to the Colonial connection. But of the duration of that connection let them be the judges, and I predict that if you leave freedom of judgment, it is hard to say when the day will come when they will wish to separate from the great name of England. Depend upon it they covet a share in that great name. You will find in that feeling of theirs the greatest security for the connection."

It would be difficult to put in clearer language the feeling predominant in the mind of the majority of British statesmen at the present day. It is to Mr. Gladstone's credit that he saw so clearly in the middle of the

nineteenth century the basis on which our magnificent Commonwealth must be built up, if it was to stand firm and erect through the storms of coming generations. Mr. Gladstone was, of course, not infallible, and it may be that he sometimes erred on the side of caution in his estimate of the extent to which Britain could absorb new territory, and prove equal to new responsibilities. However that might be, it was necessary that some restraining force should be put forth to moderate the raptures of the extreme forward school, who evidently thought that Britain could safely defy morality and a world in arms. We must all heartily admire the courage and boldness of our fellow-countrymen who have by legitimate means acquired and maintained our Colonial possessions; but it is also just to recognise the work of Gladstone in proclaiming the principles on which they should be governed. It is by following these principles that we are able to rejoice to-day in an attached and a united Empire.

MEMBER FOR OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

The General Election took place in 1847. After his retirement from Newark, Mr. Gladstone took no steps to obtain another seat in Parliament, and accordingly it was now necessary to find a new constituency. There was one seat which, in his own words, he desired with a "passionate fondness"—that of Oxford University. One of his characteristics was a deep attachment to Oxford, and it was natural that a politician with his tastes and acquirements should ardently desire to represent her in Parliament. It was, therefore, with peculiar delight that he received the invitation to become a candidate for the seat vacated by the junior Member for the University, Mr. Estcourt. The difficulties in the way of Mr. Gladstone's success were very considerable, but he did not shrink from the contest. The combat was even fiercer and more complicated than was at first anticipated.

Since the publication of "The State in its Relations with the Church," the author had voted in support of

the increased grant to Maynooth, and in other ways had travelled far, and was now in the eyes of many "a dark horse."

Suspicion was excited by his every action, and the most ludicrous rumours were circulated to horrify the electors. Mr. Gladstone had supported the increased grant to Maynooth, and was, therefore, a secret friend of the Pope. He had supported the Dissenters' Chapel Bill, and was, therefore, a friend of dissent. One of his sisters had exchanged Anglicanism for Roman Catholicism, and this must have been done under the direct inspiration of her distinguished brother. He was in deep sympathy with the conspirators who were promoting the Oxford Movement. In a word, he was no longer a true son of the Church of England, but an apostate, a traitor, and a dissembler.

This lively electioneering was not, of course, without a slight basis of truth. In detail and in insinuation and in deduction the friends of Mr. Round were indeed ludicrously wide of the mark. But the smoke was not without some fire beneath it. The supporters of privilege and exclusiveness had the best reason to dread the course on which Mr. Gladstone was setting out. It was not true that he was travelling on the road to Rome, or inducing anybody else to do so. It was not true that he was in sympathy with the creed of dissent. It was not true that he was unfaithful to the Church of England. But it *was* true that an all-important change was taking place in his views of the rights of those who stood outside the Church of England. He was ceasing to dread, and learning to trust, liberty. The slanders on his integrity were repelled in sentences of stately and dignified eloquence. He was devoted, and devoted heartily, he said, to the doctrine and constitution of the Reformed Church, but he would never "*consent to adopt as a test of such devotion a disposition to identify the great and noble cause of the Church of England with the repression of the civil rights of those who differ from her.*"

It was this that formed the real difference between

Mr. Gladstone and his opponents, and which accounted for the wide-spreading signs and symptoms of an ardent political battle. Men travelled from far and near to record their votes, and it was evident that the largest poll ever recorded in the history of the University would be surpassed. Day after day as the voting proceeded the chances of Gladstone and Round caused intense interest throughout the country, and when the last vote was given, and the poll closed, the figures were announced as follows :—

Sir Robert Inglis	-	-	-	1,700
Mr. Gladstone	-	-	-	997
Mr. Round	-	-	-	824

Mr. Gladstone had triumphed over a bitter opposition, and realised one of the great ambitions of his life. He was one of the Members for Oxford University.

A BELIEVER IN LIBERTY.

The scathing fire through which Mr. Gladstone passed, left him hardened and unrepentant. The result of the General Election was to confirm the Liberals in power, and in the first session of the new Parliament Lord John Russell took steps to secure the removal of the civil and political disabilities of the Jews. The proposal was vehemently opposed by the senior Member for Oxford University, and with equal vehemence supported by the junior Member. The removal of the disabilities of the Jews was in Mr. Gladstone's view an act of justice, and could involve no disparagement to the religion we profess, could never lower Christianity in public estimation, but must, on the contrary, tend to elevate the conception of Christianity in all considerate minds.

These views found further expression in support of the relief of the disabilities of Dissenters generally, and formed the basis of his future action on all questions where the great principle of religious liberty was involved.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DON PACIFICO DEBATE.

THE result of the General Election, as a whole, was in favour of the Liberals, and, therefore, Mr. Gladstone remained for a considerable period out of office. From 1847 to 1852 his political life may be described on the whole as in a state of suspended animation. The affairs in connection with the Hawarden estate were in a complicated state, and the burden of their conduct fell upon him. For five years, he said, these matters constituted his daily and continuing care. "It supplied, in fact," he added, "my education for the office of Finance Minister."

During this period, however, there were some debates in which he took an active part. The greatest of these was in June 1850, in connection with what is known as the Don Pacifico affair. Don Pacifico was a British subject who lived in Athens, and one night his house was wrecked by a Greek mob. He claimed compensation from the Greek Government amounting to £30,000. His house was a modest one, and this extraordinary sum was made up by claiming £150 for a bedstead, £10 for a pillow-case, £30 for sheets, and for other humble articles on the same liberal scale. The claim was resisted. He appealed to the British Government. Lord Palmerston took the matter up, and pressed Greece. Greece still resisted, and our fleet was ordered to the Piræus.

On these proceedings a great debate took place. Lord Palmerston made a great speech; the greatest, perhaps, that he ever made. There was a roar of enthusiasm when he quoted the proud phrase of ancient Rome—*Civis Romanus sum*—"I am a citizen of Rome." Under his administration, he exclaimed, an Englishman should

be throughout all the world what the citizen of Rome had been—wherever he was or whoever he might be, the strong arm of England would protect him.

To this great speech Mr. Gladstone made a great reply, and special importance is to be attached to it, because it throws important light on the general principles of his foreign policy.

FOREIGN POLICY.

“Let us,” he said, in sentences which contain the sincere milk of the Gladstonian word on foreign policy, “recognise the equality of the weak with the strong; the principles of brotherhood among nations, and of their sacred independence. I for my part am of opinion that England will stand shorn of a chief part of her glory and her pride if she shall be found to have separated herself, through the policy she pursues abroad, from the moral supports which the general and fixed convictions of mankind afford, if the day shall come in which she may continue to excite the wonder and fear of other nations, but in which she shall have no part in their affection or regard.”

Mr. Gladstone's speech did not defeat Lord Palmerston, but it greatly advanced his growing reputation, and is indeed one of the great outstanding features of his career. The guiding principles of Mr. Gladstone's foreign policy, the tendencies which were one day to lead him from Conservatism to Liberalism, the artistic adornments of his oratory, the copious eloquence, the melodious periods, the sweep and movement of his powerful intellect are all vividly displayed in this memorable utterance.

DEATH OF SIR ROBERT PEEL.

“On the day following the close of the Don Pacifico debate—29th June, 1850—a profoundly sad event occurred. Sir Robert Peel when riding up Constitution Hill fell from his horse, and the injuries sustained proved fatal. Mr. Gladstone felt keenly the loss of the great

man to whom he owed so much for personal kindness, and for wise training in the art of statesmanship. When allusion was made to the death in Parliament, Mr. Gladstone paid to his chief a tribute full of beauty and touching affection. "I will only," he concluded, "quote those most touching and feeling lines which were applied by one of the greatest poets of this country to the memory of a man great indeed, but yet not greater than Sir Robert Peel :

" ' Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon's light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver voice is still,
The warder silent on the hill.' "

The death of Sir Robert Peel had its effect on Mr. Gladstone's political history. The Peelites were from that time in an ambiguous position, and Mr. Gladstone was thrown out of that party connection which in Britain is indispensable to the greatest political usefulness. For ten years there ensued on the part of both parties a struggle for the possession of Mr. Gladstone. Sometimes he leant to one side, sometimes to the other. His convictions were on the side of Liberalism, his affections on the side of Conservatism. He was on the way to a new political city, but the bells of the old kept ringing in his ears, and at times he could not resist their invitation to return.

NEAPOLITAN ATROCITIES.

The first important public action of Mr. Gladstone, after the death of Sir Robert Peel, was the issue, in July 1851, of a letter to Lord Aberdeen which passed through Europe like a flame of fire. The winter had been spent in Naples, where he ascertained that a large number of citizens and deputies had been imprisoned for purely political reasons by the King of Naples, familiarly known as King Bomba. Mr. Gladstone visited the prisons, saw with his own eyes the cruelties to which they were subjected, and he found no rest until he exposed these atrocities to the world. It was, he said, the violation of every law, human and divine, by a government bitter and cruel, acting in

hostility to whatever in the nation really lived and moved, and formed the mainspring of practical progress and improvement. It was the negation of God erected into a system of government.

These revelations, expressed with such terrible force, and infused with the deepest human feeling, stirred the whole civilized world. On Naples there beat a fierce white light, and a loud call arose to put an end to the abominations. As the result, some of the prisoners were liberated, the repetition of the atrocities in that land was made impossible, and a new, if an indirect impetus was given to the great movement for the liberation of Italy. It was perhaps the greatest blow ever struck for freedom by an individual in a private capacity.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

IT was not only at Naples that freedom was in danger. Mr. Gladstone was soon called upon, on his return to England, in February, 1851, to champion the same cause in the British House of Commons.

A Papal edict was issued, by which England was divided into sees, and Archbishops and Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church were designated after the places in which they exercised their duties. For example, Dr. Wiseman was called Archbishop of Westminster, and Dr. Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham.

Protestant England rose as one man. "No Popery," was the cry of the day, and crowded and excited meetings were held in every town. The nation fell into one of those moods when as if by a flood reason and common-sense are swept away, and all men, save a few, are driven along the quickly flowing stream. The popular torrent was even strong enough to carry along Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, a friend of liberty who, in supporting the Maynooth grant, mocked at the fears of those who cried that the priests of Rome would become a danger to the British Constitution. He issued an excited pronouncement in which he condemned the edict, and called upon the people of England to support him in a crusade against Roman pretensions. "I have little doubt," wrote the Prime Minister, "that the preparers and framers of this invention will desist from their insidious course; but I rely on the people of England, and I will not bate a jot of heart or life so long as the glorious principles and the immortal martyrs of the Reformation shall be held in reverence by the great mass of a nation which looks with contempt on

the mummeries of superstition ; and with scorn at the laborious endeavours which are now making to confine the intellect and enslave the soul."

Lord John followed up this trumpet call by introducing the Ecclesiastical Titles Assumption Bill, in which it was provided that no such titles as Archbishop or Bishop of any place in this country should be allowed except to those permitted under the existing law.

Mr. Gladstone had now discovered the "great and noble secret of constitutional freedom," and with clear vision saw through the mists and confusions of the hour. In a magnificent speech on the second reading of the Bill he pleaded for the fearless application of that principle of religious liberty, which was not adopted by England in haste, but triumphed after half a century of agonising struggle. "Recollect that Europe," he cried in a transport of passion for the high name of his country, "and the whole of the civilised world look to England at this moment, more than they ever looked before, as the mistress and guide of nations, in regard to the great work of civil legislation. And what is it they chiefly admire in England? . . . They know that when you make a step forward you keep it. They know that there is reality and honesty about your proceedings. . . . They know that you are free from the vicissitudes that have marked the career of the greatest and noblest among the neighbouring nations. Your fathers and yourselves have earned this brilliant character for England. Do not forfeit it. Do not allow it to be tarnished or impaired. Show . . . that when she has done this slowly, and done it deliberately, she has done it once for all ; and that she will then no more retrace her steps than the river that bathes this giant city can flow back upon its source."

The excitement was too high to allow even such eloquent pleading to succeed. The Bill passed. It never, however, really came into operation. The Roman Catholic prelates did not obey it. They called themselves by the new names, and no action was taken to prevent

their so doing. The passing of the Bill had acted as a lightning conductor. The popular feeling passed into the ground, and the Bill was formally repealed by Mr. Gladstone in 1871.

HIS GREAT RIVAL.

On 20th February, 1852, the administration of Lord John Russell fell, and Lord Derby became Premier. At this point the great political antagonist of Mr. Gladstone comes on the scene for the first time as a Cabinet Minister. Mr. Disraeli became Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons.

Mr. Disraeli is perhaps the most picturesque figure in all our Parliamentary annals. A Jew, who entered life in no very favourable circumstances, with no aristocratic lineage, and no wealth to open the doors of advancement, he had risen step by step through the sheer force of his abilities, and had now reached a foremost position in the ranks of one of the proudest and most zealous parties in political history. The relations between this extraordinary man and Mr. Gladstone made up one of the most important chapters of their lives, and formed the centre of interest in the House of Commons for over thirty years. There were some things on which they were agreed, and there were intervals when they cordially shook hands, wrote kindly letters, and indulged in friendly conversation. In 1857 they were described as "twin champions of reduced expenditure." In 1866 Mr. Gladstone wrote, "Disraeli and I were affectionate at the Mansion House last night." In 1867 Mrs. Disraeli was lying seriously ill, and Mr. Gladstone deeply affected his great rival when he gave public expression in the House to the sympathy of all parties. "The scene," said Lord Houghton, "in the House of Commons was very striking; Dizzy quite unable to restrain his tears." Mr. Disraeli wrote to Mr. Gladstone, "I was incapable, yesterday, of expressing to you how much I appreciate your considerate sympathy. My wife had always a strong personal regard for you, and being a

vivid and original character, she could comprehend and value your great gifts and qualities. There is a ray of hope under this roof since the last four and twenty hours ; round your hearth, I trust, health and happiness will be ever present."

It is pleasant to think of these interchanges of kindly feeling on the part of two great political antagonists whose exciting conflicts stirred the passions of the House for a generation. It must not, however, be supposed that it was a sham fight in which these two giants indulged. There is a story that Lady Derby was horrified one day when, during a call from Mr. Gladstone, a servant announced Mr. Disraeli (then Lord Beaconsfield). She shook lest a fight should ensue! What was the source of the difference between these two men? Mr. Gladstone was certainly not indifferent to Mr. Disraeli's abilities. Over and over again he acknowledged the splendour of his rival's genius, his brilliant imagination, his marvellous wit, the powerful invective which pierced and cut to the quick, his tact, his resource, his unflinching courage. The source of Mr. Gladstone's antipathy arose from what he regarded as Mr. Disraeli's low moral sense, and the results of that deficiency in lowering the tone of the House of Commons, in making Parliamentary life a series of unprincipled tricks, and in degrading politics to a mere scramble for personal power and private ambition. It was this lack of principle which in Mr. Gladstone's eyes made Mr. Disraeli's influence an evil one in British politics, and one which he was bound to oppose with all his strength.

Mr. Disraeli, on the other hand, regarded such a view as mere idle sentiment, insisted that his policy was consistent with morality, and made counter charges against the policy of the Liberal leader as fatal to the true interests of Britain in the world. It was a genuine difference of opinion, and the sincerity of the battle between the two giants gave it a zest which the sham combats now so common in politics can never excite.

KILLING A BUDGET.

It was in 1853, when Mr. Disraeli introduced his second Budget, that the real fighting began. It was of the essence of the long Gladstone-Disraelian duel that sometimes victory lay with one side and sometimes with the other.

On this occasion a long debate took place on Mr. Disraeli's proposals, and tremendous interest was excited when it was arranged that the closing scene should be an oratorical duel between Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone. The great night at length arrived. An intensely excited crowd thronged the benches and the galleries. As the debate proceeded a thunderstorm crashed from above, and the House was thus privileged to witness the struggle between two gods of the under-world to the accompaniment of heavenly artillery !

Mr. Disraeli rose at twenty minutes past ten, and proceeded at once to cut and mangle the opponents of his cherished measure. For three hours he poured forth a mingled stream of invective, sarcasm, lambent wit, closely reasoned argument, and some brilliantly violent abuse and rough humour. It was all so dazzling that the House was enthralled, and his followers jubilant. Never had Mr. Disraeli been in more magnificent form.

Mr. Gladstone, knowing that he had to reply, sat on tenterhooks as the great oration went on, "except when his superlative acting and brilliant oratory from time to time absorbed me and made me quite forget that I had to follow him."

But if, as a member told him, he had his work cut out for him, it soon became evident that Mr. Gladstone too was in splendid form. The personalities of Mr. Disraeli stirred him to passion, and he began by a vigorous protest against these, and other elements in his speech. Whatever the right honourable gentleman had learnt, he had not learnt the limit of discussion that ought to restrain every member of the House, the disregard of which would be an offence in the meanest amongst them, but which was an offence of tenfold weight in the

leader of the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone then took up Mr. Disraeli's scheme point by point, exposed the manner in which it was sought to hoodwink and bewilder the party, and shivered the whole into fragments. The Budget was the most subversive in its tendencies of any that he had ever known submitted to the House, and the most regardless of those general rules of prudence which it was absolutely necessary to preserve. "You are now asked," he concluded, in tones that thrilled the House, "to vote for a Budget which consecrates, as it were, the principle of a deficiency, which endangers the public credit of the country, and which may peril our safety. . . . I feel it my duty to use that freedom of speech which, I am sure as Englishmen you will tolerate, when I tell you that, if you give your assent and your high authority to this most unsound and destructive principle on which the financial scheme of the Government is based—you may refuse my appeal now, you may accompany the right honourable gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer into the lobby, but my belief is that the day will come when you will look back upon this vote, as its consequences, sooner or later, unfold themselves, with bitter, but with late and ineffectual regret."

It was about four o'clock in the morning when Mr. Gladstone sat down amid deafening applause. The vote was at once taken, and a great roar went up when the figures were announced. The Government was defeated by nineteen. In the first round with Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone had won a splendid victory.

The Government resigned, and their place was taken by a coalition of Whigs and followers of Sir Robert Peel. The Prime Minister was Lord Aberdeen, and Mr. Gladstone, in view of the success of his magnificent attack, was made Chancellor of the Exchequer.

CHAPTER IX.

MAKING A BUDGET.

MR. GLADSTONE had astonished the House by a wonderful destructive effort. It was his duty now to show that if he could destroy a Budget he could also make one. He was more than equal to the occasion. His first Budget was one of his greatest achievements. It was a most intricate scheme, and Mr. Gladstone occupied five hours in explaining it to a densely packed House.

Hour after hour he went on through a long array of facts and figures, making it all as entrancing as a Persian tale. Never before had a Budget been made to glow with such eloquence or been marked by greater intellectual force. "The display of power," wrote Lord Aberdeen to Prince Albert, "was wonderful." Lord John Russell told the Queen that the speech was "one of the ablest ever made in the House of Commons." Lord Aberdeen admitted that the speech had saved his Ministry from destruction. "If," he wrote to Mr. Gladstone, "the existence of my Government shall be prolonged, it will be your work," and he remarked to Madame de Lieven that his brilliant colleague had given a strength and lustre to the administration which it could not have derived from anything else.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

Nothing could have been brighter than the promise of the Budget. England was waiting for a man who could deal with the new financial position created by the adoption of the policy of Free Trade. The man was now discovered. But soon the happy prospect was clouded by a great calamity. That calamity was the

Crimean War. Russia and Turkey quarrelled in connection with a dispute between the Roman and Greek Churches as to the custody of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and war resulted between the two countries. England and France became suspicious of the designs of Russia and after many negotiations declared war against Russia on 28th March, 1854. Mr. Gladstone never disclaimed his share of the responsibility for the war, his view being that "the absorption of power by a great potentate in the East of Europe which would follow the conquest of the Ottoman Empire would be so dangerous to the world that it was the duty of Europe at whatever cost to set herself against the possibility of it."

Whatever opinions may be held as to the necessity for the war there could be only one opinion as to its conduct. It was grossly mismanaged. The blundering was almost incredible, and little in harmony with the great military traditions of our country. A strong feeling arose against the Government, and on an adverse motion by Mr. Roebuck, whose polemical powers were so vigorous that he was known in the House as "Tear 'em," the Government were defeated by an overwhelming majority. So ended the Coalition Ministry.

Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister. He invited the Peelites to join him, and Mr. Gladstone agreed to resume the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the first time he was a member of a Ministry led by a Whig. It was not, however, for long. A misunderstanding with Lord Palmerston arose, and after three weeks' service the Peelites resigned.

DEFEATING A MINISTRY.

Mr. Gladstone became a keen critic of the Ministry, and succeeded in defeating the Government on a question relating to a dispute with China. Lord Palmerston appealed to the country, and was triumphant. He came back with a majority of thirty-three. The next great attack on the Government was more successful. Europe was startled by a daring attempt on the life of

Napoleon III. on the evening of 14th January, 1858. The plot was planned principally by an Italian named Orsini in this country, and consequently a great outcry against England arose in France. The Government accordingly brought in a Conspiracy Bill to make a conspiracy to murder a felony punishable with penal servitude, which seemed to Mr. Gladstone to encroach on the great principle of liberty, of which he was now one of the foremost champions. "I say that a measure," he exclaimed, "passed by this House of Commons—the chief hope of freedom—which attempts to establish a moral complicity between us and those who seek safety in repressive measures will be a blow, and a discouragement to that sacred cause in every country in the world."

The Bill was lost, and on 22nd February, 1858, Lord Palmerston resigned. Lord Derby became Prime Minister and Mr. Disraeli Chancellor of the Exchequer. The usual effort was made to secure Mr. Gladstone as a member of the Ministry and he was offered the position of Colonial Secretary. He declined, however, to accept the office.

MISSION TO THE IONIAN ISLES.

On the contrary, he became a keen critic of the Government, and it was perhaps a relief to the party when he was got out of the way for a season on a mission to the Ionian Isles.

The Ionian Isles had been under the protection of England since 1815, but for some time had been agitating for union with Greece. On the suggestion of Sir Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Gladstone agreed to go on a mission to ascertain the exact position. It was one of the most picturesque incidents in his marvellously diversified career. The scenes as he moved amid the natives were of an animated description—bell-ringing, presentation of petitions, excited crowds round his carriage wherever he went. On the 3rd December, 1858, he addressed at Corfu the Senate of the Ionian Islands. He spoke in Italian with a fluency and with such mastery that his

pronunciation could scarcely be distinguished from that of a native. "Never," said a spectator, "did I hear his beautiful voice ring out more beautifully or more thrilling than when he said 'Ecco l'inganno.' It was a scene not to be forgotten." The Ionians could not, however, be induced to give up their longing for union with Greece, and their demand was granted in 1864.

CHAPTER X.

LIBERAL CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

MR. GLADSTONE returned from the Ionian Islands (covered with abuse rather than with glory) in the spring of 1859, and on the eve of important political developments. The Government were attempting to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform, and were in imminent danger of shipwreck. In March, 1859, an amendment to the Government's Franchise Bill was put forward by the Opposition, and carried. Lord Derby did not resign, but ventured on an appeal to the country. He came back in a very doubtful condition, and three days after the meeting of the new Parliament an amendment to the address expressing want of confidence in the Government was carried by a small majority.

An interesting situation arose. Who was to be Prime Minister? The claims of Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston were equal, and Queen Victoria had an unwelcome task to perform in making the selection. Some surprise was caused when she sent for neither the one nor the other, but for Lord Granville. Lord Palmerston was highly displeased, and attributed the action of the Queen to German sympathies. There was, however, no necessity for alarm on his part. Lord Granville did not succeed, and the Queen then entrusted Lord Palmerston with the work.

The question of the Premiership was settled but an equally interesting question remained. Who was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer? Of course the usual struggle to secure Mr. Gladstone, made by Conservative and Liberal Leaders alike, was certain to take place. But Mr. Gladstone had opposed the Liberal party, and supported the Conservative Government, in the recent

divisions that led to the defeat of Lord Derby. He voted against the amendment on the Franchise Bill, and against the vote of want of confidence. How was it possible for him to take office in an Administration which he had attempted to prevent coming into existence, desert the party he had supported, and take office at the hands of the party he had opposed?

Mr. Gladstone did accept, and was duly subjected to a tornado of abuse. At Oxford, where he sought re-election, he was compelled to fight for his life. He fought valiantly and won. On this occasion, as on all similar occasions when the Parliamentary waves rose high and the tempest raged, Mr. Gladstone's courage was superb. He shrank from no obstacle, dreaded no storm and feared no foe. *oh!*

REASONS FOR ACCEPTANCE.

Mr. Gladstone made no secret of his reasons for accepting office under Lord Palmerston. For thirteen years—the middle span of life, when great things can be done and great things were to do—he had been cast out of party connection, and the means of doing his proper work in England cut off. Mr. Gladstone never concealed his desire to be in office when the power of a politician for doing positive work is multiplied twentyfold, and everything assists him in realising his ideals. At this time he was eager to assist in securing Parliamentary Reform. Lord Palmerston, he thought, could do something in that direction, while Lord Derby had been unable to do anything. On the question of foreign policy he believed himself to be in harmony with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. There were great things to be done in finance. In all these and other ways he could play no effective part if he continued to remain in an isolated position, and outside the regular party organisation of Parliament.

The event was in reality only the outward embodiment of a process accomplished long ago. It marked his definite incorporation in the Liberal party,—the party

with whose ideals he was in the fullest sympathy, and whose main doctrines he had advocated for twenty years. It was perfectly natural that a man of his temperament should cast lingering looks at the party with which his early associations were bound up, and with which he retained through life a few points of contact. Now that a definite step was taken there was no turning back. His mind widened and progressed with the years, and the older he grew the more intense became his faith in Liberty, the pole star of Liberalism.

THE 1860 BUDGET.

It was on 10th February, 1860, that Mr. Gladstone produced his first Budget as a Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer. The event excited tremendous excitement, and is to be regarded as definitely placing him in the foremost ranks of our financial statesmen. Mr. Gladstone spoke for four hours in explaining his proposals, and exhibited to the full his mastery in grasping and making clear to his charmed hearers not only the principles on which his scheme was based, but all the intricate details by which these principles were to be carried out. Mr. Gladstone's speech was like a magnificent building, broad and secure in its foundations, and every detail to the dome fashioned by the skill of the artist.

The great aim of Mr. Gladstone was to arrange his financial scheme so that it should bear on the increase of the productive power of the nation, and diffuse prosperity through all classes in the country. Towards this end he proceeded with the work begun when he was President of the Board of Trade and continued when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, in abolishing or reducing the duties on articles in the tariff. When he began this work there were 1,163 articles on the tariff, and it was now proposed to reduce the number to forty-eight. In his Budget of 1853 his proposal was to abolish the income tax in 1860, but the Crimean War and other events had interfered with such happy anticipations. He now proposed to fix the

tax at 10d. per £ on incomes above £150, and at 7d. per £ on incomes under £150. As the result of all his complicated arrangements he estimated the total income at £70,564,000, and the expenditure at £70,100,000, leaving a surplus of £464,000.

It was the object of Mr. Gladstone not only to produce by his Budget the greatest material prosperity of which the nation was capable, and to relieve the great machine, so that all the springs of industry might work unimpeded, but also to produce moral results on which our welfare and power as a nation depended. There were times, he said, when Sovereigns made progress through the land, and when, at the proclamation of their heralds, they scattered gold among the people who thronged upon their steps. That might have been a goodly spectacle, but it was also a goodly spectacle for a Sovereign to scatter blessings among her subjects by means of wise and prudent laws; of laws which did not sap the foundations of manhood; but which struck away the shackles from the arm of industry, which gave new incentive and new reward to toil, and which won more and more for the Throne, and for the institutions of the country, the gratitude, the confidence, and the love of a united people.

The impression produced by Mr. Gladstone was never greater than when he sat down at the close of his exposition. Style, voice, intellectual power, moral elevation, financial dexterity, the ingenuity in adopting means to ends, were all wonderful and entrancing. "Gladstone," says Greville, "achieved one of the greatest triumphs that the House of Commons ever witnessed."

It was not to be expected, however, that a plan affecting so many interests, and with Mr. Disraeli as the watchful Leader of the Opposition, would escape criticism. The interests soon began to swarm to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the opposition in the Commons to become vocal after the effects of the first sense of wonderment had worn off. There were two great points especially which formed an important part of Mr. Gladstone's

scheme on which the Opposition concentrated their strength.

THE COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Gladstone's financial scheme was bound up to a great extent with the famous commercial treaty with France of 1860, and Mr. Disraeli opened the battle by moving that the Treaty should be approved by the House of Commons before going further into the Budget. The treaty was negotiated by Mr. Cobden, and the Emperor of the French, Napoleon III., and provided for mutual facilities being given for Britain obtaining wines and brandy, silks, etc., from France, and for France obtaining manufactured goods from Britain. The reduction made on the wine duties meant a loss to the revenue of over £500,000 per annum, and just under £250,000 per annum would be lost by the reduction of the duty on brandy. On the other hand, our French friends agreed to make various concessions and reductions in our favour, and when all the results of this celebrated bargain were totalled it was seen that the revenue would be decreased by over £1,000,000 per annum, but, on the other hand, this sum would come back to the consumer in the shape of reduced prices of French silks, brandies, and wines. It was not, however, in the view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a mere matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. The relations between the two countries would be renovated, and a new position would arise out of the abolition of the old system of prohibitory duties. It was Mr. Gladstone's opinion that the choice lay between the treaty, and the high probability of a war with France. The old way was for the two nations to increase and embitter their political enmity by imposing systems of prohibition, but the process must now be reversed if it was desired to knit together in amity those two great nations whose conflicts had often shaken the world.

"Sir," continued Mr. Gladstone, "there was a time when close relations of amity were established between

the Governments of England and France. It was in the reign of the later Stuarts ; and it marks a dark spot in our annals, because it was an union formed in a spirit of domineering ambition on the one hand, and of base and vile subserviency on the other. But that, sir, was not an union of the nations ; it was an union of the Governments. This is not to be an union of the Governments, it is to be an union of the nations, and I confidently say again, as I have already ventured to say in this House, that there never can be any union between the nations of England and France except an union beneficial to the world, because directly either the one or the other began to harbour schemes of selfish aggrandisement, that moment the jealousy of its neighbour would powerfully react, and the very fact of being in harmony will itself be at all times the most conclusive proof that neither of them can meditate anything that is dangerous to Europe.”

The two negotiators were warmly commended by Mr. Gladstone in felicitous words :—“ I cannot,” he said, “ pass from the subject of the French treaty without paying a tribute of respect to two persons at least, who have been the main authors of it. I am bound to bear this witness, at any rate with regard to the Emperor of the French, that he has given the most unequivocal proof of sincerity and earnestness in the progress of this great work, a work which he has prosecuted with clear-sighted resolution, not, doubtless, for British purposes, but in a spirit of enlightened patriotism, with a view to commercial reforms at home, and to the advantage and happiness of his own people. With regard to Mr. Cobden, speaking, as I do, at a time when every angry passion has passed away, I cannot help expressing our obligations to him for the labour he has, at no small personal sacrifice, bestowed upon a measure which he, not the least among the apostles of Free Trade, believes to be one of the greatest triumphs Free Trade has ever achieved. Rare is the privilege of any man who, having fourteen years ago rendered to his country one signal and splendid service, now again, within the same brief span of life, decorated

neither by rank nor title, bearing no mark to distinguish him from the people whom he serves, has been permitted to perform a great and memorable service to his Sovereign and to his country."

The objections raised to the treaty were manifold, and to a great extent mutually destructive. It meant the abandonment of Free Trade. It meant the abandonment of the principle of Protection. It was entirely on the side of France. We received only trifles from our neighbours, they received from us things of priceless importance. The appointment of Mr. Cobden as the secret agent was a most unwise act. There was, in fact, no end to the ingenuity of Mr. Disraeli and his supporters, but their assault was unsuccessful. The House was satisfied that the Treaty was a wise piece of statesmanship, and on the division gave the Government the handsome majority of 89.

ABOLITION OF THE PAPER DUTY.

There was, however, a stiff fight in store over the second great centre of opposition. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to abolish the paper duties, and so make way through the medium of cheap books and cheap newspapers for the diffusion of knowledge among the masses of the people. The proposal met with the bitterest opposition of the vested interests, but all the efforts to defeat it were unsuccessful in the Commons. The Lords, however, were more pliant, and actually threw out the measure when it came before them. Strangely enough Lord Palmerston himself was opposed to his own Chancellor, and thought if the Upper House threw out the measure "it would be a very good thing." Mr. Gladstone was in a white heat of passion, and expressed to the Prime Minister his indignation with the Lords. "Of course," replied Lord Palmerston, "you are mortified and disappointed; but your disappointment is nothing to mine, who had a horse with whom I hoped to win the Derby, and he went amiss at the last moment."

Failing to get any assistance from the Prime Minister,

Mr. Gladstone stood up alone to the Lords, and was determined to defeat what, in his opinion, was a "gigantic innovation" upon the control of the Commons over taxation. In the following year, therefore, he included all the main features of his Budget in one Bill in place of dividing them in accordance with the usual practice. One of these proposals was the repeal of the paper duty. The Lords were thus cleverly put on the horns of a dilemma. They must either pass the abolition of the paper duty, or take the most serious responsibility of rejecting the whole financial scheme of the Government. The choice of the latter alternative would have brought confusion and chaos, and the Lords, wise in their generation, passed the Bill and the obnoxious duty was repealed. None of the anticipated dangers arose from the cheapening of publications. On the contrary, the measure has to be classed among the most beneficent of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XI.

A FAMOUS MISTAKE.

THE Budget of 1860, if it excited the hatred of the Peers and of a certain section of society, broadened its author's popularity in the country. The first great public sign of this fact was the reception accorded to him at Newcastle and other northern towns in 1862. Mr. Gladstone was by this time accustomed to ovations, but the enthusiasm at Newcastle exceeded by far any previous demonstration. It really resembled one of the tributes paid to Royalty rather than to statesmen. The progress along the river to the accompaniment of booming guns, gaily bedecked ships, clanging bells, shouts of the multitudes, indicated the position that Gladstone was winning in the hearts of the people, and foreshadowed the power he was to wield for a quarter of a century over the destinies of Britain.

The excitement may have been partly responsible for the commission of his most celebrated mistake. At a meeting at Newcastle on 7th October he referred to the Civil War then raging between the Northern and Southern States of America. "We may have," he said, "our own opinions about slavery, we may be for or against the South, but there is no doubt, I think, about this—Jefferson Davies and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is even of more importance, they have made a nation. We may anticipate with certainty the success of the Southern States so far as regards their separation from the North. I, for my own part, cannot but believe that that event is as certain as any event yet future and contingent can be."

The statement, coming from a Cabinet Minister, and

one occupying so distinguished a place as Mr. Gladstone, produced a great sensation all over the world. It was held to mean that the sympathies of the British Government were with the South, and that the independence of the South would be recognised. We all know that the prediction was erroneous, and Mr. Gladstone himself was in after life full of contrition. "It was," he said, "an undoubted error, the more singular and palpable . . . especially since it was committed so late as in the year 1862, when I had outlived half a century. . . Strange to say, this declaration, most unwarrantable to be made by a Minister of the Crown with no authority other than his own, was not due to any feeling of partizanship for the South or hostility to the North."

If one looks to the circumstances of the time, not after but before the event, the error may not appear so gross or inexplicable as the severer critics, and even Mr. Gladstone himself, imagined. The great body of opinion in this country was solid with Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Disraeli and the great majority of statesmen and organs of public opinion were on the same side. There were good reasons for such an opinion. In the first place, it was not clear to many in this country that the abolition of slavery was seriously meant by the leaders of the North. As a matter of fact the anti-slavery party in the North were not themselves sure on this point, and were continually insisting on a clear and explicit declaration that it was the principal issue. In the second place, it was generally understood in Britain that the North would be unable to repress the South, and that to prolong hostilities would be to cause unnecessary loss of life and suffering. There was, in fact, no reliable data on which to found a sure judgment as to the position of affairs in the States. Mr. Gladstone shared the error of the nation as a whole (although there was a minority in this country who saw clearly and surely the issue of the contest) and while we do not claim that Mr. Gladstone on this occasion showed prudence or prescience it cannot be said that his famous mistake was inexcusable or difficult to understand.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Mr. Gladstone continued to produce a series of brilliant Budgets and to give to the Palmerston Administration a glory which it could not otherwise have possessed. In debates he manifested the strongest sympathy with the great movement for the liberation of Italy, and no one rejoiced more than he at the success of the great statesmen and soldiers who won her freedom. In all directions his mind was broadening, and widening, in a way that gave no little alarm even to the Liberal Prime Minister, and on May 11th, 1864, he produced a great sensation in a speech on a Franchise Bill, introduced by Mr. Baines. "I venture to say," he said, "that every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness, or of political danger, is morally fitted to come within the pale of the constitution."

This was indeed a daring note for a Chancellor of the Exchequer to strike, and it led to an interesting remonstrance from Lord Palmerston. Mr. Gladstone did something to calm the ruffles excited by his audacious sentence, but as we shall see, it represented a genuine feeling for Parliamentary Reform, and his convictions were not to be suppressed by any interference.

The dissolution came in July, 1865. Mr. Gladstone knew very well that his seat at Oxford University was in danger. One could hardly expect that a member who was becoming such a tremendous force in promoting the extension of liberty, the removal of the disabilities of dissenters, the abolition of tests, the admission of the masses to a share in the election of representatives to Parliament, and other reforms, could expect to win much longer the support of one of the most Conservative constituencies in England. It was with deep regret, but not with surprise, that Mr. Gladstone learnt his fate at the election. He was defeated, and he felt that one of the dearest dreams of his life was dispelled. There were, however, some redeeming features. Mr. Gladstone expressed his sorrow at the severance of the tie with his beloved university, but was not unaware of the

advantages accruing in other ways. The hospitality denied him at Oxford was found in South Lancashire. Lord Palmerston had said, "He is a dangerous man. Keep him in Oxford, and he is partially muzzled ; but send him elsewhere, and he will run wild." It was with some elation that Mr. Gladstone announced to the electors of South Lancashire that he appeared before them "unmuzzled," and, secure of sympathy in a great commercial constituency, he proceeded to speak out his mind with refreshing frankness. On Parliamentary Reform he declared that the time had gone past for successive Governments to trifle with the question, to use it for catching votes, and to lay it aside as soon as they could escape from their pledges. Conduct such as that was attended with "loss of credit, loss of dignity, loss of confidence in the powers and institutions of the country in relation to the mind of the nation at large."

Mr. Gladstone was elected for South Lancashire and returned to the House of Commons strengthened as the representative of a great popular constituency for the work that lay before him.

A REFORM BILL.

In October, 1865, Lord Palmerston died, and Earl Russell became Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone became Leader of the House of Commons, and on the 12th March, 1866, brought in a Reform Bill. It was not a bold and sweeping measure, but, if carried, would have brought 400,000 new voters within the pale of the constitution. It led to keen opposition, and the debates on the measure were of surpassing brilliance. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright on the one side, and Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Robert Lowe on the other, conducted the battle, and night after night delighted the House with their contentions. Mr. Lowe was a Liberal but greatly dreaded the admission of the workers to the franchise, and the sparkling speeches in which he elaborated his view that his party was laying on the grave of Palmerston as a mortuary contribution all their moderation, all their prudence, and

all their statesmanship, made him shine as a new risen star in the political firmament.

The opposition was so strong that it was evident a close struggle would ensue when the division took place, and the excitement and animation seem to come to us across the years in the peroration to Mr. Gladstone's great speech on the second reading. "You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side. The great social forces which move onward in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb, those great social forces are against you; they are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry in the fight, though perhaps at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy but to a certain and to a not distant victory."

The second reading was passed by only a majority of five. There was a talk of the resignation of the Government on the part of those to whom the wish was father to the thought. Mr. Gladstone, however, announced that as the Bill still stood, so did the Government, and that they would proceed with the extension of the Franchise Bill in conjunction with a Redistribution of Seats Bill. This course was accordingly pursued, and proved fatal to the Government. On the 18th June, amid the wildest excitement, an amendment to the measure was carried and the Ministry at once resigned.

The feeling outside was in singular contrast to this decision of the Commons. Excited meetings were held all over the country. A crowd numbering 10,000, gathered in Trafalgar Square, proclaimed Mr. Gladstone as their champion, and marched to his house in Carlton Gardens singing laudatory songs and shouting, "Gladstone for ever." It was the greatest popular ovation he had yet received in the Metropolis.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. DISRAELI'S VOLTE FACE.

THE Liberals resigned. Lord Derby became Prime Minister, and Mr. Disraeli Leader of the House of Commons.

The great topic of the time was that of Parliamentary Reform. Many attempts had been made to settle the question, but a combination of Conservatives and halting Liberals had been able to defeat them. Mr. Disraeli was numbered amongst the most bitter opponents of any large extension of the franchise, and was a leading spirit in effecting the defeat of the measure of the Liberal Government in the recent session. The country, therefore, learnt with astonishment that he now proposed to bring in a more sweeping measure than the one he had opposed. The story was received in some quarters with incredulity, but the session of 1867 was not far advanced when the rumour was confirmed by Mr. Disraeli himself. The House listened with open-eyed wonder to the magician as he coolly unfolded his plans and revealed one of the strangest schemes that ever came from a Leader of the Conservative party.

DISHING THE WHIGS.

Mr. Disraeli put forward his measure as one of household suffrage for the towns. He proposed to give the vote to the occupiers of houses in boroughs who paid rates on a £6 rating, the occupiers of houses in counties who paid rates on a £20 rating, the holders of £50 in the funds, depositors of £30 in the Savings Bank for a year, payers of £1 of direct taxes, members of the learned professions, holders of a university degree, certificated

schoolmasters, and so on. Mr. Disraeli trusted that such an audacious move would both satisfy the country and "dish the Whigs."

Mr. Gladstone was anxious to see a good moderate measure of reform passed, and examined the scheme with a desire to find it worthy of support. He came to the conclusion that it was tortuous, illusory, and altogether unsatisfactory. The same conclusion was reached by Mr. Bright and others, including some members of the Conservative party, and a vigorous opposition was immediately opened. Pressed by foes within and without, Mr. Disraeli set about a series of quick changes to meet the changing situation, and save his measure. It was said of Saint Simon, the celebrated French philosopher, that he produced every morning a new plan for the regeneration of society. At this time it might be said that Mr. Disraeli produced every day a new plan for the confusion of his enemies. Change succeeded change with puzzling velocity, and at the end of it all the position was hit off by the Duke of Buccleuch, who declared that only one word of the original Bill remained—the word, "Whereas."

The debates were long and violent, and were conducted by Mr. Disraeli with so much skill and dexterity that he managed to avoid defeat and to win some notable victories at the expense of Mr. Gladstone. It was of the essence of the Gladstone-Disraelian combat that victory did not always rest with one of the duellists, and it must be admitted that the reform debates of 1867 showed Mr. Disraeli's craft at the height of its perfection. The triumphs, however, were won to a great extent by throwing prey to the wolves. He sacrificed the educational and the Savings Bank franchises, and effected a vital change by accepting an amendment as to the rating of occupiers. It was necessary under the Bill as originally drawn that occupiers should pay rates to entitle them to the franchise. This condition kept out the "compound householder," *i.e.*, the occupier whose landlord paid the rates incident to occupation, and "compound house-

holders" were so numerous that their exclusion meant about 600,000 fewer voters on the register. It was no doubt this limitation which took the sting out of the so-called Household Suffrage Bill, and induced some of the timid Conservatives to support it. It was the great object of Mr. Gladstone and other members of the Opposition to remedy this defect, and after being defeated on a direct amendment the question was raised in another form by Mr. Hodgkinson, who proposed as an amendment that no person other than the occupier should, after the passing of the Act, be rated for parochial rates in respect of premises occupied by him within the limits of a parliamentary borough. The landlord under such a provision could not be rated for occupancy, and if agreed to the gates would be thrown open to 600,000 voters whose landlords had previously paid their rates, and were therefore kept shivering outside the polling booth under the original plan. Everybody therefore assumed that the amendment would be rejected. To the intense surprise of the House, Mr. Disraeli accepted it on his own responsibility. At a stroke the number of voters under the Bill rose from 400,000 to 1,000,000. No wonder that Mr. Gladstone declared that the acceptance of the amendment surpassed all previous efforts of the "mystery man."

TRIUMPHS FOR DISRAELI.

Mr. Disraeli's tactics were the subject of strong comment by some members of his own party. Lord Cranborne (afterwards Lord Salisbury) especially gave vigorous expression to his views:—

"I desire to protest in the most earnest language I am capable of using, against the political morality on which the manœuvres of this year have been based. If you borrow your political ethics from the ethics of the political adventurer, you may depend upon it the whole of your representative institutions will crumble beneath your feet."

Mr. Gladstone in public and private did not conceal his

opinion of the proceedings. "I met Gladstone at breakfast," wrote Lord Houghton. "He seemed quite awed with the diabolical cleverness of Dizzy, who, he says, is gradually driving all ideas of political honour out of the House, and accustoming it to the most revolting cynicism."

Mr. Disraeli himself was proud of his triumph. He had succeeded where many had failed, and the means did not greatly trouble him. He had overcome the assaults of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, Mr. Lowe, and Lord Cranborne, and carried the Bill, although his party was in a minority in the House. He was specially delighted with his victory over Gladstone, and declared that he would now hold his rival down for twenty years. There was still a greater piece of good fortune in store for "Vivian Grey." The Earl of Derby, owing to failing health, resigned on 26th February, 1868, and Mr. Disraeli became Prime Minister, and thus attained the great object for which he had striven through years of toil. It was a dramatic fulfilment of the wild visions of youth, and brought a breath of the ideal into the world of modern politics. Reality had borrowed a page from fiction and converted into fact the empurpled dreams of romance.

His term was but a brief one. The dissolution took place in November, 1868, and the ensuing general election brought nothing but disaster to the Conservative party. But Mr. Disraeli was well pleased when he reflected that whatever might happen in the future nothing could reverse the fact that he had been Prime Minister of England.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELECTION OF 1868.

AT the general election of 1868 Mr. Gladstone stood for South-West Lancashire, and entered upon one of the fiercest of his many campaigns.

Mr. Disraeli's *volte face* on the question of reform was the subject of his unsparing criticism, and the Conservative party generally as it now existed under the sway of the "mystery man" was subjected to a raking fire.

But it was not a time for mere criticism, and indeed Mr. Gladstone never rested content with destructive criticism at any time. His passion was for positive work, and if he found it necessary to destroy, it was only that he might build something nobler on the ruins of the old. For many years arrears in legislation had accumulated through the active designs of the Conservatives, and through the laxity and the indifference of sleeping and slumbering Liberals. The efforts of Mr. Gladstone to overtake these arrears had, to a large extent, been frustrated by Lord Palmerston, who was not in sympathy with a forward policy, but now a great opportunity would arise if only the country would listen to his message, and entrust him with a powerful majority.

In the forefront of all the questions of the day Mr. Gladstone placed the Irish problem. In his opinion the state of Ireland, and the temper of no small portion of its people towards the Throne and Government of the United Kingdom, imperatively demanded the care of all public men, and of all good citizens who would seek not merely to live by expedients from day to day, but, looking onwards, would make provision for the strength, the concord, and the stability of the Empire.

The first part of the problem with which he proposed to deal was the disestablishment of the Irish Church. In speech after speech of great power he put forward the measure as the discharge of a debt of civil justice to Ireland, and a condition indispensable to the success of every effort to secure the contentment of the country. Mr. Disraeli, on the other hand, contended that the movement for Irish disestablishment was only the prelude to a great attack on the Church of England, and that amid the discordant activity of many factions there moved through all the agitation the supreme purpose of the Church of Rome. The same view was impressed on the electors of South-West Lancashire by a bitter, unrestrained, and unscrupulous opposition. Mr. Gladstone was depicted in lurid oratory as an agent of the Church of Rome, and one whose real designs was to substitute for the authority of Queen Victoria the supremacy of the Pope. Other charges were made to add variety to the picture of this political monster. He was a ritualist, a traitor, a dissenter, an apostate, and everything else which the electioneering imagination could invent to gain a vote.

The attack was pressed with tremendous force and there was no gainsaying the fact that the opposition was of a most formidable character. The issue on which the election was being fought was one which stirred the deepest feelings of men, and calumny is a great force in fanning the flames of passion and prejudice.

The result of a careful canvass was, however, reassuring, and justified Mr. Gladstone in saying, "I tell you upon a minute and careful examination of the promises of the men in South-West Lancashire, that if there is truth in man . . . and apart from any strange and unforeseen accidents, this day week, please God, I shall be member for South-West Lancashire."

Unfortunately truth was not in some of the men of South-West Lancashire. Mr. Gladstone was defeated, and was compelled to find a more hospitable and discerning constituency. Such a constituency was found

in Greenwich. In fact the electors of Greenwich, taking time by the forelock, had placed him at the head of the poll prior to his defeat in Lancashire. In view of his position in the near future it was a highly suitable constituency. In the 1868-74 Parliament a Tory member once urged against a Bill that it was not the right time to introduce it. Mr. Bernal Osborne exclaimed, "Not the right time, sir? We take our time from Greenwich!"

Although, personally, Mr. Gladstone had suffered defeat in one of the constituencies, the result of the elections throughout the country was a great triumph for the party. The Liberal majority was 112.

PRIME MINISTER.

Shortly after the election of 1868 the Queen entrusted Mr. Gladstone with the task of forming an Administration. On receiving the message that the mandate was on the way he did not think so much of the personal triumph as of the great causes which he would now be able to advance. He characteristically exclaimed, "My mission is to pacify Ireland."

It was at the age of fifty-nine that Mr. Gladstone thus became Prime Minister, and reached the highest position in the British Empire. Surprise has often been expressed that with his supreme powers he did not attain to this eminence before. Only three of the Prime Ministers of Queen Victoria reached the goal at a later age than Mr. Gladstone. Sir Robert Peel became Prime Minister at forty-six, Mr. Disraeli at sixty-four, Lord John Russell at fifty-four, Lord Aberdeen at sixty-eight, Lord Melbourne at fifty-five, Lord Derby at fifty-three, Lord Salisbury at fifty-five, Lord Palmerston at seventy-one, Lord Rosebery at forty-six, Mr. Balfour at fifty-four.

Mr. Gladstone was hindered in attaining his true position by the extraordinary circumstances which haunted his career after the dawn of the forties. The Free Trade controversy and his adoption of the principle of religious and civil liberty, threw him out of touch with a large branch of the Church, and the Conservative party, while

his devotion to the Church of England and certain Conservative elements in his temperament, prevented his complete fusion with Dissent and the Liberal party.

It was after 1860, when he made up his mind to come within the four walls of the party connection, and to give free rein to his democratic sympathies, that he attained his true position. His Budgets, planned with infinite financial skill, and advocated with unequalled force and eloquence, produced a tremendous impression on the country, and satisfied the great masses of the people that a true sympathiser with their needs and aspirations had arisen. His persistent efforts in supporting the movement for the extension of the franchise strengthened and deepened the impression, and swelled all those wonderful receptions and ovations which marked his political pilgrimages throughout the country.

It has sometimes been represented that Mr. Gladstone won his place in the esteem of his countrymen by the arts of the mere demagogue. But the position attained by him in the House was a sufficient answer to that contention. Mr. Gladstone's eloquence and large sympathies were accompanied by intellectual strength, and an unsurpassed debating power; and it was this combination of great mental qualities with popular sympathies—the respect of the House of Commons with the widespread devotion of the people—that made him the inevitable Prime Minister in 1868.

Many doubted if he would be successful as a Prime Minister and Leader of a party. Lord Palmerston once said, "When I am gone Gladstone will in two years turn our majority of seventy into a minority, and in four be himself in a lunatic asylum." This doleful prophecy was heartily endorsed by numerous critics. "I am much better off for a Leader than you are," said a member of the Carlton Club to a member of the Reform Club. "My Leader is only an unscrupulous intriguer, yours is a dangerous lunatic." Some one said that "Gladstone was more dangerous to the side he supported than to the side he opposed," and others alleged that he wanted

caution, that he was irritable, that he did not understand the average parliamentary man, that he was too insistent on his own way, too fond of literature, and other luxuries suspected of the politician. Mr. Gladstone himself, while too eager to get some work done to bother much about reflections on his real or imaginary defects, was not unconscious of his difficulties. "Gladstone is the great triumph," wrote Lord Houghton, "but as he owns that he has to drive a four-in-hand consisting of English Liberals, English Dissenters, Scotch Presbyterians, and Irish Catholics he requires all his courage to look his difficulties in the face, and trust to surmount."

His courage did not fail him. He went to his work "breast forward," and nothing more wonderful in the way of legislative energy has ever been done than that accomplished in the years 1868 to 1874.

It was indeed, in the phrase of Lord Houghton, a contrast to "Palmerston's Ha, Ha! and *laissez faire*."

CHAPTER XIV.

DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRISH CHURCH.

MR. GLADSTONE, in accordance with his speeches in the country, immediately took measures to secure the disestablishment of the Irish Church. It is comparatively easy to get up an agitation, and to set in motion a certain amount of enthusiasm in the country as compared with the task of getting a highly contentious measure through the Houses of Parliament. The disestablishment of the Irish Church was the most difficult task yet undertaken by him, and it was one which might well tax the qualities of the most courageous and skilful statesmen. It was well known that the opposition in the Commons would be of a most powerful character, and that the House of Lords would prove antagonistic, and only succumb if Mr. Gladstone's courage, dexterity and strength of will, proved equal to the occasion.

Mr. Gladstone went forth to battle well aware of the dangers and the difficulties, but nerved and made dauntless by an overwhelming sense of the justice of his cause. The Church of Ireland, he declared, was the Church of a minority insignificant in numbers, although great in property, in education, and power. The wealth, and the education and the power did not mend but only aggravated the case ; for if a national Church be not the Church of the nation it should at least be the Church of the poor. Every argument which could be used in favour of civil establishments of religion was a satire on the existence of the Irish Church. It was negative for good, and misapplied the funds meant for the advantage of the nation at large. It remained the memorial of every past mischief and oppression ; it embittered religious contro-

versy by infusing into it the sense or the spirit of political injustice ; and it carried polemical temper into the sphere of social life and public affairs.

A GREAT SPEECH.

It was on 1st March, 1869, that Mr. Gladstone explained to the House the provisions of the Bill to be introduced. It was a speech of three hours' duration, and dealt with the history of the question, the principles on which the Bill was to be based, and the thousand complex details with a force, a grasp, and a clearness that astonished the House. After finishing his exposition he closed with a peroration of moving eloquence which revealed the noble spirit in which his great measure was conceived, and the all-important objects which it was designed to realise.

“ This assembly,” he exclaimed, “ which has inherited through many ages the accumulated honours of brilliant triumphs, of peaceful but courageous legislation, is now called upon to address itself to a task which would, indeed, have demanded all the best energies of the very best among your fathers and your ancestors. I believe it will prove to be worthy of the task. . . . I think the day has certainly come when an end is finally to be put to that union, not between the Church and religious association, but between the Establishment and the State, which was commenced under circumstances little auspicious, and has endured to be a source of unhappiness to Ireland, and of discredit and scandal to England. For my part, I am deeply convinced that when the final consummation shall arrive, and when the words are spoken that shall give the force of law to the work embodied in this measure—the work of peace and justice—those words will be echoed upon every shore where the name of Ireland or the name of Great Britain has been heard, and the answer to them will come back in the approving verdict of civilised mankind.”

“ Well, what did you think of the speech ? ” asked a member of Mr. Disraeli as they passed out. “ Oh, perfectly wonderful ! ” exclaimed Mr. Disraeli with admiration.

“Nobody but himself could have gone through such a mass of statistics, history and computations.”

THE OPPOSITION.

This was generous criticism, but his admiration did not lead to any geniality in his opposition to the Bill. The whole Conservative criticism of the measure was remorseless, unsparing and persistent, and was only overcome by Mr. Gladstone's dexterity in piloting the Bill through Committee. In addition to eloquence and his mental force in many directions, he possessed one of the most difficult of all arts—the art of steering through the most critical assembly in the world Bills of infinite complexity and which were exposed to numerous points of attack. The question has often been raised as to whether Mr. Gladstone was a good Parliamentary tactician. The best answer to that question is to point to the numerous highly contentious measures which he engineered to their place on the Statute Book. The task could not have been accomplished by a poor tactician.

The Bill for the disestablishment of the Irish Church was safe in the House of Commons, where the author of the Bill was present on the spot to deal with the wiles of the enemy. The case was different in the Upper House, where the Lords played havoc with the measure and sent it back to the Commons mangled beyond recognition. *Punch*, with its usual felicity, hit off the situation in a cartoon representing the Archbishop of Canterbury as a Nurse handing over a changeling in place of the child to Mrs. the Prime Minister, “Which we've took the greatest care of, Ma'm,” said the nurse. “This is not *my* child,” replied the mother indignantly, “not in the least like it.”

Mr. Gladstone was not a whit less indignant than his prototype in *Punch*. The Lords, he declared, had shown themselves to be men who were as ignorant of the feelings of the country as if they had been living “in a balloon,” and called upon the House of Commons to reject the “preposterous” amendments. The Peers were lashed

into fury by Mr. Gladstone's fierce rejoinder, and a dangerous conflict between the two Houses appeared imminent.

In the end the Queen used her influence to prevent the fray from assuming dangerous proportions. We have made the "best terms we could," wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury, "and, thanks to the Queen, a collision between the Houses has been averted."

It was not only a triumph for justice, but a great triumph for Mr. Gladstone, who had passed through a crucial ordeal with the most striking success.

THE IRISH LAND SYSTEM.

Mr. Gladstone compared the Irish question to the upas tree, and said there were three branches that must be cut down. One branch—the Irish Established Church—was gone, and he set about without delay, and with the like energy, to lop off the second. The branch now to be attacked was the Irish land system, which affected so deeply the welfare of the cultivators of the soil.

The hardships entailed on the tenant were in many cases outrageous. A man would take a farm on which weeds only grew, and, by dint of hard unceasing toil, transform it into a valuable property. No sooner would this be done than the landlord raised the rent, and if the tenant refused to pay, the result was a heartless notice to quit. A new tenant came in, paid the increased rental, and enriched the man who did nothing in the matter except to reap from the land the proceeds of other men's toil. It was a case of palpable injustice, but it was easier to see the evil than find a remedy. The system of land tenure in Ireland was complex beyond belief, and even Mr. Gladstone found it hard work to make himself acquainted with the question in all its bearings and ramifications. In the end, he completely mastered the details, and was probably the only Englishman of that time who had done so. After careful deliberation and prolonged discussion in the Cabinet, he was able to write in his diary on 25th January, 1870—"The great difficulties of the Irish Land

Bill *there* (*i.e.*, the Cabinet) are now over, thank God ! ” It must indeed have been colossal toil to wring from Gladstone that sigh of relief.

The Bill was brought before the House of Commons on the 15th February, 1870, in a speech which again displayed Mr. Gladstone's powers of exposition at their highest, and was conceived in a tone which earned for the proposals an excellent reception from the House. The measure, Mr. Gladstone declared, had reference to evils which had been long at work,—their roots struck far back into bygone centuries. It was not his desire to make the Bill a triumph of party over party, or class over class ; not as the lifting up of an ensign to record the downfall of that which had been once great and powerful, but as a work of love and goodwill to the good of our common country.

OBJECT OF THE BILL.

The object of the Bill was to provide compensation for improvements by tenants, and facilities for the purchase of the land by the occupiers ; or, as Mr. Gladstone put it, to prevent the landlord from using the terrible weapon of undue and unjust eviction, by so framing the handle that it should cut his hands with the sharp edge of pecuniary damages. The man who paid his rent and did nothing to justify eviction, and who suffered loss by eviction, would receive whatever the custom of the country gave, and where there was no custom according to a scale. He would also be entitled to make a claim for permanent buildings or reclamation of land. Wanton eviction would, in Mr. Gladstone's opinion, be extinguished by provisions like these. “ And if,” he added, “ they extinguish wanton eviction they will also extinguish those demands for unjust augmentations of rent, which are only formidable to the occupier because the power of wanton or arbitrary eviction is behind them.”

The Bill did not escape criticism, but, as in the case of the Disestablishment Bill, all difficulties were overcome

by Mr. Gladstone, and the measure received the Royal Assent on 1st August, 1870.

The Act did not finally settle the Irish land question, but it was the pioneer of other measures by which that happy end will yet be secured. To-day the Irish tenants are acquiring their lands under an Act passed by a Conservative Government, which has grown out of the Act of 1870, and other Acts by the same author. It is the logical development of the policy of Mr. Gladstone that is settling the Irish agrarian problem, and to him must be accorded the honour of opening that new day when the Irish tenant ceased to be the sport of exorbitant landlords, and became the owner of the soil which he cultivates and loves.

CHAPTER XV.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION.

Two important questions were now ripe for decision with which Mr. Gladstone's wonderful administration proceeded to deal. They were both highly contentious measures, and involved a skilful adjustment and reconciliation of diverse interests. The one referred to the great question of the education of the people, and the other to the freedom of the voter in Parliamentary elections.

✓ The Elementary Education Act, 1870, is one of the great landmarks on the way towards the establishment of a sound system of national education. At the beginning of the nineteenth century popular education in England was practically non-existent. The poorer classes in London could not read or write, and in agricultural districts the position of affairs was equally appalling. A special Committee which sat in 1833 found that, on an average, in seventeen large towns in the provinces only one child in twelve was under instruction. In Leeds the number was one in forty, in Birmingham one in thirty-eight, in Manchester one in thirty-five. In 1870 the situation was very little better, and it was left to Mr. Gladstone and his administration to devise a remedy for such a blot on our boasted civilisation. The problem was not a simple one. Members of the Church of England had their opinions on the system which should be adopted. The Nonconformists had equally strong, but, in many respects, totally different opinions. Anglicans, who had established schools of their own, did not wish their ideas as to the religious character of education in these schools disturbed. Nonconformists naturally objected to the principles of the Church of England being taught at their expense in State schools,

A body of men opposed the Bible being introduced at all in the public schools, and insisted on education being entirely secular. It was impossible to please all these varied parties, but it was a great step forward to establish the principle that it was the duty of the State and not of private irresponsible parties to look after the education of the people. State schools were set up throughout the country, attendance at school was made compulsory, and we are now beginning to see the beneficent results to the nation. There was no little grumbling on the part of some people who did not get all they wanted and could not conceal their disappointment.

NONCONFORMISTS AND MR. GLADSTONE.

For example, Mr. Miall, the leader of the Nonconformists, complained that he and his friends had been treated with contumely and made to pass through the valley of humiliation. Mr. Gladstone was for once downright angry with a Nonconformist! "For God's sake, sir," he cried, "let my hon. friend withdraw his support of the Government the moment he thinks it better for the cause that he has at heart that he should do so. So long as my hon. friend thinks fit to give us his support, we will co-operate with him for every purpose we have in common; but when we think he looks too much to the section of the community which he adorns, and too little to the interests of the people at large, we must then recollect that we are the Government of the Queen, and that those who have assumed the high responsibility of administering the affairs of this Empire must endeavour to forget the parts in the whole, and must, in the great measures they introduce to the House, propose to themselves no meaner or narrower object—no other object than the welfare of the Empire at large."

Poor Mr. Miall was scarified by such an outburst, but, as someone said at the time, it was only a lovers' quarrel. The Nonconformists recognised in Mr. Gladstone a man, who, although not one of their body and indeed holding

very strong views in the opposite direction, had defended their civil rights, and agreeing with him on many points of domestic and foreign policy, did not carry objection to his policy to untoward lengths. They were, above all, in hearty sympathy with Mr. Gladstone in his continual efforts to write the moral sense deep into British politics, and Mr. Gladstone derived from Dissent that support which, in many days of storm, was to him a tower of strength.

BALLOT BILL.

In the following year the Ballot Bill was passed. Open voting gave rise to great abuses, and now that the franchise had been extended to classes specially subject to pressure from those upon whom their employment depended, it was more than ever necessary to protect them from the application of force. The Bill was keenly resisted, and was thrown out by the Lords.

Mr. Gladstone was now, however, accustomed to deal with the Upper House, and did not for a moment dream of accepting their decision. The Bill was again introduced, and became law in 1872.

FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

In 1870 Mr. Gladstone's attention was distracted for a time from domestic policy by the approach of the lamentable struggle between France and Germany.

The immediate incident that led to the conflict was the choice of Leopold of Hohenzollern as the sovereign of Spain. This was a direct blow at the susceptibilities of France, and Napoleon III. sent through Baron Rothschild a message to Mr. Gladstone explaining that the choice of a Hohenzollern for the crown of Spain was intolerable to France, and requesting his assistance in securing its withdrawal. Mr. Gladstone eagerly acceded to this request. He loved France, and was intensely interested in the career of Napoleon the Great as the manifestation of the most powerful intellect of modern days. Between Mr. Gladstone and Napoleon III. there had been some

friendly intercourse. He had been a guest of the Emperor at the Tuileries—the gorgeous palace that once stood on the Seine—and, on the conclusion of the important treaty with France in 1860, had expressed in felicitous language his sense of the friendly conduct of the Emperor of the French. Mr. Morley, in one of the most interesting chapters of his great biography, has related Mr. Gladstone's unsparing efforts to avert the threatened conflict, and if his advice had been followed there would have been no Franco-German War. The candidature of Leopold was withdrawn. France, in place of being satisfied, was elated with success, and insisted (with a folly rare in the history of diplomacy) that Prussia should undertake never to allow in the future a Hohenzollern to be proposed for the crown of Spain. Mr. Gladstone saw the danger, and instructed the British Ambassador in Paris to represent to the Government the immense responsibility which would rest upon France if she did not accept at once as satisfactory the withdrawal of the candidature of Prince Leopold. The message was sent by special messenger to a Council at St. Cloud and was placed in the hands of the Foreign Minister as he sat with the Emperor and Empress and the other Ministers weaving the destiny of France. Mr. Gladstone's advice was disregarded, and all his efforts frustrated. On 15th July war was declared against Prussia. The result is best told in Mr. Gladstone's own graphic words: "In twenty-eight days ten battles were fought; 300,000 men were sent to the hospital, to captivity or the grave. . . . The Emperor was a prisoner and had been deposed. . . . his family wandering none knew where, the embryo, at least, of a Republic, born of the hour, had risen on the ruins of the Empire, while proud and gorgeous Paris was awaiting with divided mind the approach of the conquering monarch and his countless host."

CHAPTER XVI.

ARBITRATION IN PLACE OF WAR.

AT the time when the Civil War was raging in America a vessel called the "Alabama" and other cruisers were secretly built in this country for the South. Before the "Alabama" sailed, information was given to our Foreign Office that the vessel was intended for service in the war against the Northern States, and a request made for its detention. Inquiries were being made by the Foreign Secretary, when the ship set sail, and successfully escaped. The information supplied to the Foreign Office was perfectly correct. The vessel was used in the war, and did a large amount of damage to the American marine. America contended that the vessel ought to have been detained, and claimed compensation from the British Government. Our Government refused to admit any responsibility, and the negotiations dragged on year after year. A vast amount of feeling was generated as time went on, and about 1870 the matter began to assume serious dimensions. The question threatened to involve a war with America, but Mr. Gladstone decided that, in place of adopting that barbarous method of settling disputes, the claims should be referred to Arbitration.

The course Mr. Gladstone decided upon was a happy method of adjusting a difference, which in other days and under other statesmen would probably have resulted in war. The method did not please everybody and when the award was made in September, 1872, the dissentients gained a large measure of support. It was decided by the arbitrators that Britain should pay to America £3,250,000, in respect of the damages caused by the "Alabama," and two other vessels. This amount was

looked upon by nearly everyone in this country as outrageously excessive, and it goes without saying that the decision did not assist the Minister who was responsible for the treaty.

It was, nevertheless, one of the grandest things ever done by a statesman. Arbitration is to-day one of the great objects for which the nations are striving as a means for banishing from the earth the hateful scourge of war. It is inevitable that mankind should advance beyond a physical means of settling their disputes, and that war should come to be regarded in the future as an impossible element in the relations between the civilised States of the world.

Mr. Gladstone admitted himself that the damages cast against Britain were excessive, but he was able to look far beyond the paltry question of pounds, shillings, and pence. The fine imposed on this country he said was "but as dust in the balance compared with the moral value of the example set. The world must be impressed when these two great nations of England and America, the most fiery and the most zealous in the world with regard to anything that touches national honour, went in peace and concord before a judicial tribunal rather than resort to the arbitrament of the sword."

ABOLITION OF PURCHASE OF ARMY COMMISSIONS.

The reforms undertaken by Mr. Gladstone were all inspired by the aim to uplift the masses of the people, to broaden the scope of all classes for advancement, and to secure for the Empire the fruits of the highest talent, and the finest character, within its borders. The system of purchasing commissions in the Army was plainly opposed to these great objects. The private who worked hard, and gave evidence of exceptional ability, had little chance against the man with inferior powers who possessed ample means. Industry and talent did not benefit the individual, and were lost to the nation. Mr. Gladstone therefore introduced a Bill in 1871 to bring about the abolition of commissions by purchase, and had little difficulty in

presenting a formidable case. But the men interested in upholding the system were powerful and influential, and opposed the measure with all the embittered enmity of vested interests. So great was the difficulty in making headway with the Bill that Mr. Gladstone was impelled to declare that he had never known in his parliamentary life "a case where the modes of operation adopted by the professional champions were calculated to leave such a painful impression on the mind." The Bill, in spite of all difficulty, survived the assaults in the Commons, but, as everyone foresaw, it was only to encounter a fatal attack in the Lords. To all appearance the measure was dead, but Mr. Gladstone was now a specialist in dealing with the Upper House. Some people who understood the Prime Minister were confident that he would find a way out, and they were not disappointed.

OUTWITTING THE LORDS.

Purchase of commissions was authorised by Royal Warrant, and this warrant could be abolished by a new warrant putting an end to purchase. It would not be necessary, therefore, to trouble Parliament further, as the whole thing could be done by the Queen signing the new warrant.

Mr. Gladstone was bold enough to take this effective course. The Queen signed the warrant and purchase was at an end.

It was a reply to the Lords on Cromwellian lines, and the Conservatives were staggered by such an audacious stroke. *Blackwood's Magazine*, a powerful representative of the party, called for Mr. Gladstone's impeachment, and screamed that Parliamentary Government had not received such a blow since the days of Strafford and Laud. It was once alleged against Mr. Gladstone that he was "an old man in a hurry." Mr. Gladstone, old or young, was always in a hurry,—in a hurry to do the largest amount of good in the shortest possible time. If on this occasion the blow was hasty, there was no doubt that it was a blow struck for right and justice.

Was the action unjustifiable? It was certainly not unconstitutional. The power of the Sovereign to make an end of purchase had been conferred by Parliament. Purchase was grossly unjust and worked injuriously to the nation, and as Mr. Gladstone had failed to carry his measure through Parliament, there was open another course authorised by Parliament. That course Mr. Gladstone adopted, and so found a remedy which was the only alternative to the continuance of the injustice. "Did not," wrote Mr. Gladstone, in a series of conundrums, "the vote of the House of Lords stop us in the best manner of proceeding? Did it absolve us from the duty of putting an end to the illegality." (This was a reference to the fact that purchases were a matter of traffic, and were dealt in at prices in excess of that authorised by Royal Warrant.) "What method of putting an end to it remained to us except that which we have adopted?"

THE IRISH UNIVERSITY BILL.

Elementary education in England was a thorny subject, and gave a vast amount of trouble to Mr. Gladstone and his Government. A still more prickly subject was the question of higher education in Ireland. The existing universities were unsatisfactory to the Roman Catholics, who of course formed the vast bulk of the population. They claimed to be entitled to a State-supported university, which would be established on the basis of the Catholic religion, and carry out Catholic educational ideals.

The problem was therefore as complicated as the most intricate puzzle. The Irish Protestant, the British taxpayer, the Roman Catholic, the British Protestant were all to be considered, and all to be pleased! The problem was perhaps unsolvable, as the elements to be harmonised were so contradictory, but Mr. Gladstone was never deterred by difficulties, and resolved to cut the Gordian knot if he could.

After great deliberation he produced on 13th February, 1873, his Bill embodying his solution of the riddle. In

introducing the measure he admitted that the exclusion of Roman Catholics from university education in Ireland was a real grievance, but contended that denominational endowment would be an unsound principle to adopt. The University of Dublin was the ancient historical university of Ireland, and therefore within its precincts should be enacted the academical reform which was needed. A new central university was to be formed. It was to be a teaching as well as an examining body, and there were to be affiliated to this university Trinity College, Dublin, the Queen's Colleges of Cork and Belfast, the privately supported Catholic university, Magee College, and probably other institutions. The estimated annual amount required to support the university was £50,000, and £12,000 of this amount was to come from the revenues of Trinity College, £10,000 from the Consolidated Fund, £5,000 from students' fees, and the remainder from the surplus of Irish ecclesiastical property.

THE RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTY.

So far so good. But what about the great crux of the problem. What about the religious difficulty? Mr. Gladstone's plan was to make the central university entirely neutral on the point of religion, and to secure that end by dispensing with all religious tests; flinging open the doors of academic honours to Catholic and Protestant alike; and excluding from the curriculum theology, modern history, and moral philosophy. The affiliated colleges were to be allowed to arrange their own government, and act for themselves as they saw fit on the subjects excluded from the central university. It was an honest and a fair attempt to solve a perplexing difficulty, and Mr. Gladstone rightly claimed that on a question relating to Ireland the House should extend consideration in view of the fact that to mete out justice to Ireland had been the sacred work of the Government. To his party he made an impressive appeal. Having put their hand to the plough he called upon his followers not to turn back, and to efface from the law

and the practice of the country the last of the religious and social questions of Ireland. To the representatives of Ireland he appealed for support on the ground that, if passed, the measure would enable Irishmen to raise their country to a height in the sphere of human culture worthy of the genius of the people, and of the oldest and best traditions of Irish history, upon which the country still fondly dwelt.

Mr. Gladstone's labour and eloquence were all thrown away. Irish Protestants, Roman Catholics, and British taxpayers were all dissatisfied,—the first section because the scheme disturbed the existing system, the second because a separate Catholic university was not set up, and the third because it was proposed to pay for Roman Catholic teaching out of public funds.

"The Prime Minister," said Mr. Disraeli in the course of a speech in the debate "is no ordinary man." [Ministerial cheers.] "I am glad," continued Mr. Disraeli, "that my sincere compliment has obtained for the right hon. gentleman the only cheer which his party has conferred upon him during this discussion."

There was truth in the repartee. It was evident that there would be large defections in the Liberal party, and when the division was taken amid intense excitement, the number of desertions proved fatal to the measure. The majority against the Government was three. Mr. Gladstone resigned, and Mr. Disraeli was sent for by the Queen. That astute leader, however, declined to take office, knowing well that brighter days would dawn. Mr. Gladstone, therefore, while he resigned on Thursday was back in office on Monday, and, setting aside disappointed hopes, applied himself once more to the task of government.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SENSATIONAL DISSOLUTION.

MR. GLADSTONE did not recover strength by renewed acceptance of office. Beneath the surface many things were proceeding which aided Mr. Disraeli in his attacks on the Ministry. The work of the Tory Leader indeed was done to a great extent by Mr. Gladstone's supposed followers. Colleagues and old friends were not supporting him with that devotion which can alone give strength to a leader, and the many interests affected by the work of the most vigorous Premier of the nineteenth century, were clamouring for revenge. The country, however, as a whole did not realise the full extent of the difficulties, and even many of those who were supposed to have some acquaintance with the inner life of politics, were amazed when Mr. Gladstone, on the 24th January, 1874, announced the dissolution of Parliament. On nearly every Tory platform the suddenness of the dissolution was denounced and even Liberals complained that this thunderbolt from the political sky meant death to their ambitions at the coming election. Why did Mr. Gladstone dissolve so suddenly and so unexpectedly? The story went that the object was to get rid of an illegality. He had accepted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer when First Lord of the Treasury without seeking re-election. The law was that if a Minister exchanged one office for another it was unnecessary to be re-elected, but it had never been decided whether this rule should hold where a Minister accepted a new office without giving up the other. A Liberal legal luminary, so said the gossips, had advised that in the latter event re-election was necessary, and therefore Mr. Gladstone felt himself in a serious dilemma. The only way out was by dis-

solution, and it was said that this revealed the true inwardness of the startling announcement on 24th January, 1874. The statement, however, by Mr. Gladstone that the position made it impossible for him to carry on the business of government with the necessary efficiency, was quite sufficient to account for an immediate dissolution. Liberals who grumbled because their seats were endangered by the seeming want of consideration for their position, ought to have blamed the members of the party who mutinied in the hour of battle, and not the leader, who, if loyally followed, would have led them on to victory.

PROPOSED ABOLITION OF THE INCOME TAX.

Mr. Gladstone entered on the election with his customary vigour and courage. The work of six crowded years furnished ample grounds for asking a renewal of the confidence of the country, and, in addition, he was able to make a dazzling proposal to the electorate on the question of finance. So far back as 1853 he had expressed his sympathy with the desire for the abolition of the income tax, and his plan was to bring this about in 1860. The Crimean War made the attempt impossible, but now he saw his way to carry out his long-deferred design. Under his administration the business of the country had gone up by leaps and bounds and he was happy, as the head of the Administration, to be in a position to promise the repeal of the tax if the country returned him to power. Strangely enough the offer brought down upon his head nothing but denunciation. How strange a thing is human nature! The declaration, cried many, was a bribe, and, like all bribes, an insult to those to whom it was offered. And even when all the passions of a general election were stilled Mr. Lecky calmly wrote in his philosophical "History of England in the Eighteenth Century": "We have seen a Minister going to the country on the promise that if he was returned to office he would abolish the principal direct tax paid by the class which was then predominant in the constituencies." Mr. Gladstone

had no difficulty in disposing of these and other equally absurd criticisms of a straightforward announcement of policy. It was not true, as he pointed out, that the payers of income tax were then the predominant class in the constituencies. Both in England and Scotland the vast majority of voters resided in the towns and were quite independent of the wealthy classes. In Ireland, after the passage of the Ballot Act, the payers of income tax did not rule elections. It was not a bribe to the electors, but a policy which he was bound to carry out if he had the power, and was no more censurable than any other policy which politicians believe will promote the welfare of the nation.

Mr. Gladstone conducted the whole campaign with boundless vigour and his lieutenants did some splendid work, but the tide was flowing dead against the Ministry. The country was exhausted by and displeased with its amazingly energetic Premier who allowed no abuse to slumber, and who attacked wholesale the sacredness of vested interests. The Tory party came back with a majority of sixty, and on 17th February, 1874, we find Mr. Gladstone characteristically entering in his diary: "Went to Windsor, and on behalf of the Cabinet resigned. Took with me 'Merchant of Venice' and 'Thomas à Kempis,' each how admirable in its way!"

RESIGNATION OF LEADERSHIP.

The general election of 1874 was a deep disappointment to the Liberals, and was followed by an event which led to something like despair in the ranks of the party. Mr. Gladstone retained his seat at Greenwich, and it was assumed that he would also retain his position as leader, and by brilliant attack make light the shades of opposition. But before Parliament met he made in a letter to Lord Granville a portentous announcement:—

"For a variety of reasons personal to myself," he said, "I could not contemplate any unlimited extension of active political service; and I am anxious that it

should be clearly understood by those friends with whom I have acted in the direction of affairs, that at my age I must reserve my entire freedom to divest myself of all the responsibilities of leadership at no distant date."

Many speculations were rife as to the secret causes of this unsuspected step, and some shrewd guesses were made. We think the real reasons have now been made sufficiently clear.

REASONS FOR RESIGNATION.

In the first place Mr. Gladstone was dissatisfied with the internal dissensions in the 1868-74 Administration. He always looked back with satisfaction to the working of that Cabinet as a whole, but there were times when difficulties arose, and some colleagues were painfully obstinate. He felt that he was not followed with sufficient loyalty, and that his withdrawal would not be injurious to the interests of the party. In the second place he never liked the barren work of opposition. It usually meant a vast expenditure of labour with no practical result to justify the necessary energy. He was not indifferent to the delights of Parliamentary strategy, and enjoyed his tactical triumphs, but it was not the mere playing of the game which gave him pleasure. His real delight lay in the fact that these victories advanced some great and beneficent cause. It was not in opposition that he found the opportunity of doing the greatest amount of good, and he never thought it necessary to conceal his preference for office. "The desire for office," he said, "is the desire of ardent minds for a larger space and scope from which to serve the country, and for access to the command of that powerful machinery for information and practice which the public departments supply. He must be a very bad Minister indeed who does not do ten times the good to the country that he would do when out of office, because he has helps and opportunities which multiply twentyfold, as by a system of wheels and pulleys, his power for doing it." In the third place he believed that under Mr. Disraeli as Prime Minister

the country was doomed to a sleepy period and that the Opposition would not be called upon for any important effort. The country had declared for rest, and did not require his services for the time. In the fourth place, Mr. Gladstone thought there was some valuable work for him to do in the region of literature and theology. It was impossible for him to repress this side of his nature, and it always asserted itself when there were quiet times in politics and the nation had confided the positive work of government to other hands. "There is much to be done with the pen," he wrote, "all bearing much on high and sacred ends, for even Homeric study as I view it, is in this very sense of high importance." In the fifth place, Mr. Gladstone believed that his more active life was nearing a termination, and his earnest desire was to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity, and in freedom from political strife.

Despite all appeals, protestations, and criticisms, Mr. Gladstone adhered to his resolution to retire, and for two years took only a small part in public affairs. For the most part he betook himself to his beloved library. One of the fruits of his new labour was a pamphlet on Vatican decrees in their bearing on civil allegiance, which excited tremendous interest at the time and reached an enormous sale. Filled and crowded with study, it was to Mr. Gladstone an altogether delightful time, but as in the case of all such previous periods these happy days were only a temporary respite from the conflict. It was in 1876 that news of exciting events in the Near East came to Mr. Gladstone in his study at Hawarden, and sounded once more the call to arms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EASTERN QUESTION.

TWENTY years had passed away since the Crimean War, and the reforms in Turkish Government arranged at the close of the war were still unfulfilled. The rule of the Turk had not grown more humane, but if anything more cruel and merciless, and in 1876 insurrections against intolerable oppression blazed up in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Bulgaria. In attempting to suppress the rebellion in Bulgaria, Turkey committed a series of massacres which sent a thrill of horror through Europe, and made it impossible for Mr. Gladstone to rest in his "Temple of Peace."

Mr. Gladstone waited awhile to understand clearly the attitude of the Conservative Government. The course of their policy was made plain when Mr. Disraeli (now Lord Beaconsfield) began to talk of the massacres as "coffee-house babble," and when he refused to join with the other great Powers of Europe in putting pressure on Turkey to reform her system of government. Mr. Gladstone then knew that the time had come for him to buckle on his armour, and enter once more the political arena.

ROUSING THE NATION.

An arduous task lay before him. The country, including a large portion of the Liberal party, did not realise the full seriousness of the situation, or see how it was possible for this country without injuring her own interests to help the Eastern Christians in their terrible time of need. It lay with Mr. Gladstone almost single-handed to burn the real meaning of the massacres into the heart of Britain, and to devise the means by which we could on ce

more deliver the oppressed, and become the champions of Freedom. In pamphlets and speeches he exposed Turkey as the great anti-human specimen of humanity, and denounced the atrocities committed by her as among the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the century, if not within the memory of man. The policy of Lord Beaconsfield, he urged, was based on a narrow conception of British material interests, by a mistaken fear of the designs of Russia, and by a callous indifference to the fate of the Christian subjects of Turkey. A policy of this character was mean and ignoble, and utterly unworthy of the British people. "There were other days," he cried in one of those outbursts which set all Britain ablaze, "when England was the hope of freedom. Wherever in the world a high aspiration was entertained, or a noble blow was struck, it was to England that the eyes of the oppressed were always turned—to this favourite, this darling home of so much privilege and so much happiness, where the people that had built up a noble edifice for themselves would, it was well known, be ready to do what in them lay to secure the benefit of the same inestimable boon for others. You talk to me of the established tradition and policy in regard to Turkey. I appeal to an established tradition older, wider, nobler far—a tradition not which disregards British interests, but which teaches you to seek the promotion of these interests in obeying the dictates of honour and justice . . . There is now before the world a glorious prize. A portion of those unhappy people . . . are making an effort to retrieve what they have lost so long. I speak of those in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another portion—a band of heroes such as the world has rarely seen—stand on the rocks of Montenegro, and are ready now, as they have ever been during the 400 years of their exile from their fertile plains, to sweep down from their fortresses and meet the Turks at any odds for the re-establishment of justice and of peace in those countries. Another portion still, the five millions of Bulgarians, cowed and beaten down to the ground, hardly venturing to look

upwards, even to their Father in heaven, have extended their hands to you ; they have sent you their petition, they have prayed for your help and protection. . . . The removal of that load of woe and shame is a great and noble prize. . . . It is not yet too late to try to win it. . . . But be assured that whether you mean to claim for yourselves even a single leaf in that immortal chaplet of renown, . . . or whether you turn your backs upon that cause and upon your own duty, I believe, for one, that the knell of Turkish tyranny in these provinces has sounded."

THE RESULT.

The question underwent many changing developments. In April, 1877, Russia declared war against Turkey, and the progress of the struggle was keenly followed in this country. Suspicions of the designs of Russia to seize Constantinople gave extensive support to the policy of Lord Beaconsfield, but Mr. Gladstone never fell a prey to these fears, and maintained with marvellous vigour the campaign on behalf of humanity. When the war was closed a Conference of the great Powers took place at Berlin, and the result of the Conference was the best evidence of the wisdom and sagacity of Mr. Gladstone's policy. Local independence was granted to Montenegro, Servia and Roumania ; Bulgaria was divided into two parts which later on were joined together, and the country was granted local autonomy. Mr. Gladstone was greatly gratified by these happy results. "Taking," he said, "the whole of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin together, I most thankfully and joyfully acknowledge that great results have been achieved in the diminution of human misery, and towards the establishment of human happiness, and prosperity in the East."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN.

WHEN the general election drew near Mr. Gladstone received an invitation to contest the Conservative stronghold of Midlothian. He accepted the invitation and started on the most famous of his political campaigns on 24th November, 1879. The scenes on the way were of the most extraordinary character. From Liverpool to Edinburgh it was one long triumphal procession. His exertions to awaken the people to the call of humanity had been strikingly successful, and the railway stations were filled with enthusiastic crowds. Men and women came long distances to get a glimpse of the train as it dashed past; and cheered wildly to speed their hero on his way. A dense throng gathered in the streets of Edinburgh, and as Mr. Gladstone drove past in the carriage on the way to Dalmeny, the ovation was like that accorded to some mighty conqueror. "I have never," said Mr. Gladstone, "gone through a more extraordinary day."

Mr. Gladstone was the guest of Lord Rosebery, who had been mainly instrumental in bringing him to Midlothian. From Dalmeny Mr. Gladstone would issue early in the day, drive round a part of the constituency, accompanied wherever he went by the cheers of the residents or passers by, and would address three meetings in an afternoon, delivering at each a speech of an hour's duration, full of eloquence, reasoning and persuasiveness. His marvellous physique carried him triumphantly through every exertion. "What is most remarkable about Mr. Gladstone," said one observer, "is his quantity. I remember thinking that his first Midlothian campaign

was not like a torrent coming down, but like the sea coming up. It was after the 1880 campaign, which was only second to the other, that I said to him, 'You must have gone through a tremendous strain!' 'Oh, no,' he replied, 'it was chiefly driving about in open carriages, and that is very healthy.' "

No one ever surpassed Mr. Gladstone in the art of making politics interesting, and the Midlothian campaign was his supreme achievement in that respect. Men, women, and even children were all palpitating with the excitement of the time. Old men of seventy or eighty were known to come twenty miles to hear him talk for ten minutes at a railway station.

A TYPICAL SPEECH.

When the dissolution took place, and Mr. Gladstone hastened to Midlothian for the second time, there was another welcome of frantic enthusiasm awaiting him. His meetings were revelations of what a political genius can do, and were widely different from the most exciting gatherings in our own day. One day—the 17th March, 1880—in the Music Hall at Edinburgh stands out especially in the memory of the writer. Two hours before the proceedings commenced the hall began to fill, and when every seat was occupied by a motley assemblage of professors, merchants, lawyers, clergymen, doctors, farmers, shepherds, artisans, clerks, and all the varied elements of a typical Midlothian audience, there was wanting no element to thrill with delight, and to inspire with enthusiasm. Mrs. Gladstone sat on the platform, and with her homely womanly presence added a touch of domestic life to the scene. A telegram came in, was handed to Mr. Gladstone, and as he read a look of pleasure lit up his wonderfully expressive eyes. He handed it to his wife. It must have been good news. She looked up and exchanged glances, which were a revelation to the audience of that love which made Hawarden one of the happiest homes in England. After this pleasant prelude Mr. Gladstone started on his speech

in light and bantering vein, but shortly his voice swelled into indignation as he called to mind the manifold evils wrought by the Government—the resources of Britain wasted, the international law of Europe and the law of the country broken, the good name of our land tarnished and defaced, existing evils aggravated by mischievous measures, legislation neglected, the strength of the Empire sapped, the honour of the Empire sacrificed. People charged him with being a peace-at-any-price man, and being a member of the Manchester school. The Manchester school had never ruled the foreign policy of this country. Abhorring all selfishness, friendly to freedom all over the world, the Manchester school had sprung prematurely to the conclusion that wars might be considered as having closed their melancholy and miserable history. It was a noble error. No Government in this country could accede to the management and control of affairs without finding that the dream of a Paradise upon earth was rudely dispelled by the shock of experience. However much we might detest war, and we could not detest it too much, there were times when justice and the welfare of mankind required a man not to shrink from the responsibility of undertaking it. His opponents charged him with a want of love for his native country, and lack of a sense of the greatness of the Empire. It was an unfounded charge. “I believe,” he cried, “we are all united in a fond attachment to the great country to which we belong, to the great Empire which has committed to it a trust and a function from Providence as special and remarkable as was ever entrusted to any portion of the family of man. When I speak of that trust and that function I feel that words fail me. I cannot tell you what I think of the nobleness of the inheritance which has descended upon us, of the sacredness of the duty of maintaining it. I will not condescend to make it a part of controversial politics. It is a part of my being, of my flesh and blood, of my heart and soul. For these ends I have laboured through my youth and manhood, and more than that, till my hairs

are grey. In that faith and practice I have lived, and in that faith and practice I shall die."

Through all the oration Mrs. Gladstone sat proud and watchful, whispering to him now and then in the intervals of applause, and imparting a family feeling to the changing impressions made by the orator as he swayed the audience by the light and fire of his eloquence, moved to laughter by light humorous sallies, persuaded by sound reasoning, and allured by pictures of nations living in concord under the banner of freedom.

It was typical of all his Midlothian addresses. Never was a great case presented with more power, skill, and fascination. Not only did the Tory stronghold of Midlothian go down before the onslaught, but throughout the country victory was piled on victory, and an overwhelming majority returned to supplant the Government. "A nation had found its interests mismanaged, its honour tarnished, its strength burdened and weakened by needless, mischievous, unauthorised, and unprofitable engagements, and it had resolved that this state of things should cease, and that right and justice should be done."

CHAPTER XX.

AGAIN PRIME MINISTER.

THE Queen sent for Lord Hartington as Leader of the Opposition and charged him with the duty of forming an administration. The task was declined and Lord Granville was then sent for, with the same result. Mr. Gladstone was the only man who was capable of meeting the desires of the nation, and for the second time he became Prime Minister.

Mr. Gladstone was overcome with emotion when he was welcomed by dense and excited throngs outside and inside the House, and he thought "by what deep and hidden agencies he had been brought back into the midst of the vortex of political action and contention." But he could not have dreamt of the extent of the contention which made the years from 1880-85 "a wild romance of politics." The policy of the Government during those years has been freely criticised, and not without some justice. But in any estimate of the work done by Mr. Gladstone and his Government at this period there are some special elements to be taken into account.

POINTS TO BE REMEMBERED.

In the first place, it was not Mr. Gladstone's desire or intention to remain for any lengthy period at the head of the Government, and he did not feel called upon as he did in 1868 to undertake a long series of domestic reforms. The foreign policy pursued by Lord Beaconsfield was responsible for his return, and as soon as the purposes for which he had entered upon the Midlothian campaign were secured he would regard his work as closed. In 1881 the question of retirement was seriously discussed by him with his intimate friends, and it was only after great

difficulty that he was induced to continue in office. It was not to be expected, therefore, that a striking programme of far-reaching changes would be proceeded with. For the most part Mr. Gladstone would be fully occupied in setting to rights the affairs which in his view had been grossly mismanaged by his predecessor.

The next point to be remembered is the friction which resulted, and was bound to result, from the strong and widely varied personalities of the members of the Cabinet. Lord Hartington pulling back, and Mr. Chamberlain pushing forward, and other Ministers of all shades of opinion between these two extremes pressing their views, did not constitute the material out of which a flawlessly working political machine could be constructed. The desire of Mr. Gladstone to reconcile the varied elements did more to hinder than help the formation of a harmonious policy. He was the most considerate of Premiers to his colleagues, and the vigorous exercise of his own will would have improved affairs between 1880 and 1885. Lord Randolph Churchill on one occasion attempted to prove that in the matter of Egypt the Government had followed twenty-two different policies. This was no doubt an exaggeration, but there was just enough truth in the assertion to make it pointed. The Cabinet of 1880-85 contained some of the ablest men who played a part in politics in the nineteenth century, and to the rarity of its talent and the strength of its personalities, may be attributed many of the difficulties in which it became involved.

The third point to be borne in mind is the depth of the resentment occasioned by the victory of Mr. Gladstone over the Conservative party in 1880. Their principles were flouted, their leader, in the last duel with his great adversary, was vanquished, and their majority, so strong and compact in 1874, was now converted into a weak and despised minority. These considerations weighed deeply on the minds of the young and ardent members of the party, and stirred the passion for revenge to an incredible degree. The party

spirit was carried to excess and passed far beyond the bounds of the fair and the scrupulous. "The duty of the Opposition is to oppose," was the dictum of Randolph Churchill, the dashing leader of a few Conservative rebels, and he acted up to the very letter of that soulless and cynical creed. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of the determination to pull down the hero from the eminence to which he had been elevated by the nation.

The fourth point was the opposition on all occasions of the Irish party. It was Mr. Gladstone's fate to come into power at a time when the Irish party had found a powerful leader in Mr. Parnell, and when a tremendous effort was organised by that party to wrest from the British Parliament by a policy of obstruction the grant of Home Rule to Ireland. We say nothing as to whether it was a just or a necessary policy. Our only intention at the present moment is to draw attention to this as one of the elements necessary to explain the history of the 1880 administration.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS.

It was prophesied more than once during the nineteenth century that Egypt would one day be dominated by Great Britain, but we have been unable to discover any prediction that such a consummation would be the result of the policy of Mr. Gladstone.

Mr. Gladstone's foreign policy, rightly or wrongly, did not aim at the acquisition of new territory, and the consequent increase of responsibilities. The way in which he brought Egypt practically within the confines of the British Empire is, therefore, one of the strange true stories of our imperial history.

It was in 1881 that distinct appearances of revolt in the Egyptian army, and a general feeling in the country against the existing Government began to be noted by close observers. It was difficult at first to tell whether these manifestations were temporary and superficial, or were an indication of deep-seated passions, and the beginning of one of those movements that stir the heart of nations. It soon became evident, however, that the rebels against the Khedive were in dead earnest, and when they accepted Arabi, an Egyptian and a man of the people, as a leader, the revolt began to take on the appearance of a revolution. It was plain that a movement so serious could not be regarded as affecting Egypt alone. Turkey could not remain indifferent to a crusade against the Khedive, and the Government of a country which formed part of her dominions; nor could Great Britain and France look on passively at a disturbance which would place the Suez Canal in danger, and produce confusion in a country in which many of their interests had long been centred.

Negotiations were entered into between France and England with a view to joint action for the restoration of peace, but the Parliamentary situation in France did not make an arrangement easy.

While France and England were fiddling Egypt was burning, and Mr. Gladstone was face to face with events which called for prompt decision. On 11th June, 1882, a massacre of Europeans took place. Arabi was at the head of an army and was rapidly undermining the power of the Khedive and his Government. His action began to place in danger the British Fleet at Alexandria. Egypt was on the verge of anarchy.

BOMBARDMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

The all-important question was whether England should interfere or stand idly by and do nothing. Mr. Gladstone was never a mere doctrinaire, but essentially a man of action, and he now decided that the moment to move had arrived. If France could not make up her mind to join, then England must proceed alone, and instructions were accordingly given to the British Fleet to stop the work of Arabi at Alexandria. On the 11th July, 1882, the British Admiral fired the first shot in the struggle that in the end has given us control of Egypt. It would have been well if all the future engagements had matched the first in rapidity and success. The guns of Arabi were silenced in a few hours.

Mr. Gladstone lost no time in making the position of the Government clear. If France would not join, Britain would go on with the work, but if France would join then Britain was willing to act with her jointly. As France refused, there was no alternative but to proceed alone, and Sir Garnet Wolseley was despatched at the head of a British force, and, with that celerity which marked the work of that able soldier, smashed the power of Arabi at the famous battle of Tel-el-Kebir on 13th September.

We had got into Egypt. It was Mr. Gladstone's intention to get out at the first opportunity. But although the insurrection had been suppressed by a

masterly stroke the work was far from finished. The rebellion had been driven beneath the surface, but it was ready to spring up if the strong hand was withdrawn, and it was plain Britain could not retire until order was set upon more solid foundations.

INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS.

France was not long in realising her mistake in refusing to take conjoint action, and thus endangering the position hitherto occupied along with us in connection with Egyptian affairs. When the truth dawned upon France she made many attempts to rectify the error, but Britain had acted alone, and was resolved to perform alone the duty which arose from that action. The result was to alienate the sympathies of France and some of the other Powers of Europe, who looked upon our interference in the land of the Pharaohs with suspicion, and, therefore, our action was bound to affect not only our position in Egypt itself, but also our international relations. Our action was like a stone thrown into the water which causes endless circles, and the situation, complicated enough already, became vastly more difficult by events which no one foresaw at the time of our bombardment of Alexandria.

THE MAHDI.

Egypt for sixty years had been in possession of the adjoining territory called the Soudan, and had not governed it with justice or humanity. The Soudanese wanted a leader who would organise a crusade against their oppressors. The man when wanted comes sooner or later, and in the Soudan he appeared in a striking and impressive form. A native of Dongola, an able man, with a deep insight into human nature, spread it abroad that he was inspired by God to undertake a great mission. He was the Mahdi, a prophet sent to lead the people against the unbeliever, and to make known to his countrymen the one true God. The southern Soudan responded to this picturesque figure, and the movement,

originally religious, assumed in addition a political aspect. The revolt was not merely against the unbeliever in general but against the Egyptian Government in particular, and in 1883 the power of the Mahdi was creating the most serious alarm at Cairo. Without the authority or concurrence of the British Government the Egyptian Minister ordered General Hicks to proceed against the Mahdi from Khartoum and crush the insurrection. It was a foolish move. General Hicks's army was quite unequal to the task, and on the 5th November, 1883, was annihilated by the fierce and fanatical followers of the Mahdi. The triumph inspired them with fresh and aggressive courage, and placed northern Egypt in danger of invasion.

A new and startling problem was opened up for solution by Mr. Gladstone and his Government. At various points in the Soudan the Egyptian Government had placed garrisons, and these garrisons were now in deadly peril. Were they to be left to their fate or should an attempt be made to deliver them? The Government, after anxious consideration, advised Egypt to give up the Soudan south of Assouan or Wady-Halfa, and to proceed with the evacuation at once, and promised that we should send troops to Suakin with a view to the deliverance of the garrisons. Mr. Gladstone did not approve the latter decision, but the feeling in this country, excited by the piteous position of the Egyptian soldiers, made any other decision extremely difficult. The expedition, however, was useless for the purpose aimed at. The garrisons of Sinkat and Tokar fell, and the country was thrilled with excitement as day by day the story of their terrible fate was unfolded.

GENERAL GORDON.

Meanwhile the extraordinary suggestion had been made to the Government, that General Gordon, who knew the Soudanese well, should be dispatched to Egypt to report to the Government on the military situation in the Soudan, and by pacific means to secure the relief of the

garrisons, and the safety of the European population in Khartoum. It was supposed that he would possess great influence over the revolting tribes, and be hailed as a deliverer from the thralldom of the Mahdi. There was really no basis of fact for such a supposition, but, unfortunately, he agreed to undertake the fantastic mission. Gordon was, as Mr. Gladstone called him, a hero of heroes, but he could not perform miracles. When he arrived at Khartoum the situation differed widely from the pictures drawn by romantic imaginations. Gordon could not compete with the Mahdi, and although he was sent on a "peaceful mission," he was soon appealing for assistance to "smash" the prophet of the Soudan. So many varied messages came from the General that as time went on it was difficult to tell the exact position of affairs, or to decide the course which he desired to be followed. In the end it was decided that an expedition should be despatched for his deliverance. Lord Wolseley undertook the command. The progress of the force was followed with anxious eyes, and the news of its heroic victory at Abu Klea and other triumphs excited the nation with the brightest hopes of success. On 28th January, 1885, Khartoum and apparent victory were in sight. But as the steamer proceeded a voice was heard from the banks calling out that Khartoum had fallen. It was only too true, Khartoum had fallen and General Gordon was dead. The expedition was two days late.

It is impossible to describe the sensation throughout the country or the bitterness with which the Government, and especially Mr. Gladstone, were assailed.

It was said that Mr. Gladstone was indifferent to the fate of Gordon, but the charge was so base that it is hardly worth consideration. The best friends of Gordon were not those who used him as a medium for defaming Gladstone. The death of General Gordon gave him the most poignant regret, and he has left on record his admiration for the character of that heroic man. At the same time he did not hesitate to admit that a great

mistake had been made in sending Gordon out, and in attempting such a method of solving the Soudan difficulty.

History will no doubt do justice to Gladstone in his Egyptian policy as a whole. More than one serious mistake was undoubtedly made in working out the details. The policy wanted firmness and consistency, and there was a lack of resource in obtaining accurate information. The errors, however, were not the important part of his Egyptian policy. Mr. Gladstone's interference in the first instance and his resolution in going on with the work has been nothing less than the salvation of Egypt, and has brought a striking accession of strength to the British Empire. Britain is bringing back to Egypt a greater prosperity than marked her in the greatest days of the Pharaohs, and by a series of striking reforms is proving once more the beneficent influence exercised by our country on the history of the world.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. BRADLAUGH AND THE OATH.

AMONG the new members elected as representatives to the House of Commons in 1880 was Charles Bradlaugh, who had made a great stir throughout the country as an audacious advocate of Atheism, Republicanism, and other isms which excite the hatred of the vast body of the English people. Mr. Bradlaugh had attacked nearly everything that the majority of his countrymen hold dear, and had succeeded thereby in attaining a position of quite unique unpopularity. With all his peculiarities Mr. Bradlaugh was a man of very great ability, and in fact there would have been few limits to his advancement, if he had confined himself to the lines of convention and orthodoxy. His moral qualities were, it is now well known, of a high order. He certainly was a bitter opponent, but he was also a staunch friend, a genuine lover of the poor, and a disinterested worker. He was, however, regarded generally as little better than a moral monster, and was likely to receive at first little consideration in the House of Commons.

Quakers and Jews who objected to take the usual oath on their admission to Parliament were allowed to affirm. Mr. Bradlaugh, as a "Freethinker," desired to take advantage of the same privilege, and when he presented himself at the Table claimed it as a right. The Speaker declined to take the responsibility of making such a concession, and referred the question to the House. A Select Committee was appointed to report on the matter, and by a majority of one the Committee decided against the right to affirm.

POLITICAL INCENDIARIES.

The decision was the beginning of serious trouble for Mr. Gladstone. Sir Stafford Northcote, as Leader of the Opposition, did not appear desirous of seizing the opportunity to make mischief, but the small body of Conservative rebels known as the Fourth Party, and led by Lord Randolph Churchill, were on the alert for any possible chance of embarrassing Mr. Gladstone, and were ready to strike at him through Bradlaugh, or anybody else. A great opportunity was now disclosed to them. They knew well the feeling of hatred against Mr. Bradlaugh, not only on the part of members of the Conservative Party, but also on the part of some sincere and undiscerning Liberals. The trouble might have been checked at the beginning by Mr. Gladstone, but as Mr. H. W. Lucy has pointed out, he was absent during the first stages of the proceedings in connection with his re-election on his acceptance of office. On his return he found that the Fourth Party incendiaries had been very busy, and that the flames of passion and prejudice were mounting beyond control. An interminable series of debates and manœuvres followed which consumed precious time and led to many disgraceful scenes. The foolish controversy, owing to the inexplicable support of followers of Mr. Gladstone, was allowed to drag on for years.

MR. GLADSTONE'S ATTITUDE.

Through all the discussion the line taken by Mr. Gladstone was marked by breadth, the true spirit of Christian charity, and a rare insight into the real issues. For forty years he had championed liberty of opinion and the admission of all men into Parliament independently of their religious opinions. Although no man was further removed from sympathy with Mr. Bradlaugh's theology or rather anti-theology, his voice was raised in defence of freedom, and some of his finest speeches were made in the course of the debates. An Affirmation Bill was introduced in 1883 with a view to settling the

question, and Mr. Gladstone's speech in support was one of the grandest examples of his oratory. The Bill was lost by a majority of three, but it bore good fruit. When the new Parliament was elected in 1885 Mr. Bradlaugh was allowed to take the oath, and became one of the hardest and ablest workers at St. Stephens. The feeling with regard to him completely changed, and he was successful in getting an Affirmation Bill passed in 1888. In 1891 the House rescinded the resolution excluding him from taking his seat in 1881. Unfortunately the subject of this kindly attention never heard the good news. Mr. Bradlaugh, who before the struggle was a giant in physique, emerged from the ordeal an altered man. At one step he had passed from manhood to old age. When the House passed the rescinding resolution he was dying, and never recovered consciousness to understand the message of goodwill. On the day following the burial Mr. Gladstone summed up in words of grace and wisdom the general feeling with regard to the man and the moral of the controversy. "A distinguished man," he said, "and admirable member of this House was laid yesterday in his mother earth. He was the subject of a long controversy in this House, a controversy the beginning and the ending of which we recollect. But does anybody who hears me believe that that controversy, so prosecuted and so abandoned, was beneficial to the Christian religion?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRANSVAAL.

ONE of the earliest and most formidable difficulties to be faced by Mr. Gladstone was the question of South Africa. It was one of the great problems to be solved in connection with our Colonial Empire, and was complicated by troubles with native races, the strength of the Dutch population, and the eager ambition of the British colonists.

The particular question to be dealt with when Mr. Gladstone came into power was the position of the Boers in the Transvaal. That portion of the Dutch race had always cherished the ambition to find a spot on earth which they would call their own, and fondly hoped they had now succeeded in their search. There were still, however, some difficulties to be encountered. They were menaced by hostile native tribes on their borders, and were unable to cope with them satisfactorily. They possessed few military resources, and were continually harassed by a depleted exchequer. The attacks of the native tribes began to grow more frequent and attracted the attention of this country, as we could not look with indifference upon the unsettlement of any part of civilised South Africa by the forays of savage tribes. As the best method of averting such a danger to the Transvaal it was resolved by Mr. Disraeli's Administration in 1877 to place the country under the British flag; and a proclamation was made accordingly. The Boers lost no time in making known their opposition to this step, but annexation was insisted on, and after some negotiations, the Boers lost patience and rebelled, and on 16th December, 1880, declared the South African Republic. The task before Mr. Gladstone was to decide

whether annexation should be asserted by force, or whether the country should be handed back to the Boers on certain conditions.

Mr. Gladstone's sympathies in such a case were perfectly known. A cardinal point in his policy was the promotion of local independence, and as a general rule, opposition to annexation of any country against the will of its inhabitants.

The question, however, could not be settled by abstract principles, as it required to be considered in its bearings on our whole colonial interests in South Africa, and especially with regard to the scheme for the Confederation of South Africa. Mr. Gladstone hesitated to rescind the annexation, but ultimately came to the conclusion that a policy of conciliation was the only just course to pursue, and one which would work out better than any other for the Empire. The Government accordingly gave instructions for a message to be sent to the Boers offering the appointment of a Commission to investigate and report on the whole position.

MAJUBA AND AFTER.

Before an answer to this message was received, General Colley, who was in command of the British forces, was with a small force at Majuba Hill on 27th February, 1881. The Boers observing this, and seeing a great opportunity to inflict a defeat, crept stealthily towards the crest of the hill, and burst on the General, and his little army, before the situation was realised. The General himself was killed, and the British force was scattered, and driven from the position.

The Boer victory burnt itself deep into the heart of the British people, and increased enormously the difficulty of the task before Mr. Gladstone. The question was now complicated with the passion for revenge, which blinds the vision of nations as of individuals, and renders them incapable of deliberate judgment. It does not require a strong statesman to follow that passion, but it requires a very courageous one to oppose it. In courage Mr.

Gladstone was always supreme, and he did not hesitate to exercise it on this occasion. A telegram came from Sir Evelyn Wood, who was now in charge of the British force, to the effect that he held the Boers in the hollow of his hand, and that it would be an easy task to crush the victors of Majuba. The temptation was resisted. No one foresaw more clearly than Mr. Gladstone the storm that must arise in England if he decided to discontinue hostilities. But Majuba, he argued, was an accident, and if it was right before Majuba, to adopt a policy of conciliation, it was right afterwards. The negotiations were therefore continued, and the war was stopped. In August, 1881, a Convention was concluded with the Boers conferring a large measure of independence on the Transvaal, but reserving the suzerainty of the British Sovereign. It was accepted by the Boers, but was found to be an unsatisfactory settlement in some respects, and in 1884 President Kruger came to London and arranged another Convention.

The new instrument reduced our right of interference with the affairs of the Transvaal to a minimum. Power was reserved to this country to veto any treaties between the Transvaal and foreign Powers, but otherwise the Boers were granted almost entire independence.

So ended for a time our difficulties with the Transvaal.

The policy of Mr. Gladstone was animated by the idea that conciliation was the only policy consistent with justice, and if the policy had been steadily pursued it is probable that even after the discovery of gold and the consequent complications it would have been entirely successful, and that by peaceful processes the Transvaal would have ended as a friendly independent State in a great South African Confederation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IRELAND.

MR. GLADSTONE looked upon the solution of the Irish problem as one of the great missions of his life. It was, therefore, a curious irony of fate that Ireland became for a time the ally of the men who did more than any of her enemies in modern times to thwart her aspirations, and proved a stumbling-block to her greatest English friend, in the Parliament of 1880-85.

Ireland had found in Mr. Parnell one of the ablest leaders of her cause in all her chequered history. Devoid of eloquence, and all the arts of speech which so highly distinguish the Celtic race, he possessed qualities of more importance in securing practical results. His aim was to extort from England an Irish Parliament, and in order to compass that end he made himself minutely acquainted with all the rules of Parliament, and framed a scheme of obstruction which in design and execution exhibited the clearness of his vision, the iron strength of his will, and a complete knowledge of all the forces arrayed against him.

OBSTRUCTION.

It was not generally foreseen that such a policy was to be pursued, and it was an entire surprise when the scheme began to dawn on Parliament and the country. One of the first questions to be dealt with in the new Parliament was that of continuing or discontinuing exceptional powers to preserve peace in Ireland. In the end the Government resolved to depend upon the ordinary law, and to bring in a Bill providing compensation to evicted tenants. It was a wise decision, but, unfortunately, the Bill, passed by the Commons, was thrown

out by the Lords. At once the situation underwent a dramatic change. Outrages in the country districts began to develop, and in the opinion of the Government the ordinary law was now insufficient to deal with crime. The policy of conciliation for the moment was dropped. Mr. Forster, the Irish Secretary, put forward the view that all the agrarian crimes were the work of "village ruffians," and that the suppression of the village ruffian would solve that part of the problem. In order to meet his view a strong Coercion Bill was introduced, and was passed through Parliament amid the most exciting scenes. Mr. Parnell dealt with the situation by obstructing business on all and every occasion, and the policy was carried out by twenty-four members who were ready to talk at any length on any subject at any hour of the day or night. The obstructionists were named and suspended, but returned smilingly to their work after the term of suspension was over. Nothing could daunt these sons of Erin, and Parliament, as the Speaker put it, was dominated by Mr. Parnell with his minority of twenty-four.

THE GREAT LAND BILL.

Coercion was not left to stand alone. Conciliation was at the same time decided upon, and to carry out this policy a Land Bill was introduced by Mr. Gladstone on 7th April, 1881—a masterly piece of work which must be regarded as a milestone on the way to the ultimate settlement of the Irish question. The pith of the Act lay in the embodiment of what is known as the "three F's," that is to say :—

1. Fair rents, to be settled by a special tribunal.
2. Fixity of tenure, so long as the rent was paid by the tenant.
3. Free sales, or the right of the tenant to dispose of his interest.

These were great boons, but the Bill did nothing to conciliate the Irish Party. Obstruction went on undiminished, and crimes continued to increase to such an

extent that parts of Ireland were in the position of a barbarous country.

In October, 1881, Mr. Gladstone went on a visit to Leeds, where a splendid welcome was extended to him. He delivered a great and stirring speech on the Irish question. Every word was full of the stress and strain of the moment. The conduct of the Irish leaders came in for severe castigation, and special criticism was passed on their efforts to nullify the beneficial effects of the Land Bill which had been passed in August. "The resources of civilisation," he said in a memorable phrase, "are not exhausted," and it was not long before this significant hint was followed by vigorous action. Mr. Parnell and other prominent Nationalists were arrested and imprisoned in Kilmainham. Mr. Gladstone took the opportunity of announcing the event in a speech at the Guildhall, and the deafening cheers which rose from the audience left no doubt as to the popularity of the Government's action.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES.

It must have been with the greatest reluctance that Mr. Gladstone agreed to such a drastic change in his policy of conciliation—the policy at which he was always aiming, and which was always by some mischance being thwarted. The arrest of the Nationalist leaders was designed as a temporary measure to meet a grave crisis, but it had no effect in lessening the prestige of the party in Ireland nor in checking the terrible flow of agrarian crime. It was indeed a time of stress and storm, and no way out appeared until the welcome news arrived that Mr. Parnell was disposed to accept a truce. Arrangements were made under which he was released from prison, and it was hoped that a new era would dawn in the troubled history of Ireland. "The Kilmainham Treaty," as this arrangement with Mr. Parnell was called, was widely denounced, and was accompanied by important changes. Lord Cowley resigned the office of Viceroy, and Mr. Forster resigned the office of Irish Secretary. Lord

Spencer took the place of Lord Cowley, and Lord Frederick Cavendish accepted the position vacated by Mr. Forster. They crossed St. George's Channel cherishing, along with all the true friends of Ireland, high anticipations for the restoration of peace and concord. But there was in store for such hopes a tragic disappointment. While walking through Phoenix Park the new Irish Secretary and Mr. Burke, the Under Secretary, were brutally murdered by a gang of desperadoes. The Nationalists felt it as a crushing blow to their cause. Mr. Gladstone when he received the news felt as "if felled to the ground." A stringent Coercion Bill was introduced, and passed in the face of a bitter opposition by the Nationalists. At the same time a conciliatory measure entitled the Arrears Act to relieve tenants of farms under a rental of £30 per annum was passed. But the double dose of coercion and conciliation did not prove a success and Mr. Trevelyan, who became Irish Secretary, and Lord Spencer had the hardest task ever set to the hand of British statesmen in their dealings with Ireland.

Mr. Gladstone's hopes for Ireland were once more eclipsed. But in the darkest day he did not despair, and he never looked upon coercion as the last word of wisdom in Irish policy. He never saw the full realisation of his vision, but the day came when he did Ireland another signal service, and took a permanent place in her regard as a true friend, and ardent worker for her welfare.

CHAPTER XXV.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS.

THE years from 1880 to 1885 were troublous enough in front of the House and country, and there were rumours of other harassing incidents, which are confirmed by correspondence given in Mr. Morley's biography.

Much irritation and worry were caused by the pressing and clamant claims of pushing candidates for office. It is impossible for a Prime Minister to find a place for each politician who thinks he is entitled to recognition, and those who are left out can make themselves extremely unpleasant. Mr. Gladstone never quailed before the most formidable opponent, but where his decisions involved the personal displeasure of a friend his sensitiveness was extreme. "I am sorry to say," he wrote to Lord Granville at the beginning of 1883, "that the incessant strain and pressure of work, and especially the multiplication of these personal questions is overdoing me, and for the first time my power of sleep is seriously giving way."

It was not only the disappointed men who gave so much trouble, but also the men for whom he found, or tried to find, a place in his Administration.

RELATIONS WITH QUEEN VICTORIA.

Mr. Gladstone would place before the Queen some names for advancement, and these would not meet with the approval of Her Majesty. Difficulties in this direction especially began after the Midlothian Campaign, and the triumph of 1880, and nothing gave more pain to Mr. Gladstone than the interviews and correspondence with the Queen in connection with these differences of opinion. Special difficulties arose when Mr. Gladstone found it

necessary to reconstruct his Government in 1882. The names submitted gave rise to great objection, and he found the audiences with Her Majesty "most difficult ground."

It was not only the appointment of Ministers for which Mr. Gladstone suffered and contended. Their speeches were often the subject of criticism at Windsor. Queen Victoria held strong views as to the responsibility of Ministers in their public utterances, and made strong protests against the expression of private opinions by Ministers on serious matters of policy. When a colleague transgressed, as Mr. Chamberlain sometimes did in his days of ardent Radicalism, Mr. Gladstone's tact was severely strained to find a means of reconciliation between the Queen and the Minister.

Not only the utterances of his colleagues, but his own speeches were a source of continual discussion with Her Majesty. The habit which Mr. Gladstone developed of acceding to demands for speeches outside his own constituency was the subject of complaint by the Queen, and Mr. Gladstone was compelled to defend himself by pointing out that the Conservative leaders had shown him the example. These curtain lectures and the ingenious defences, as given in Mr. Morley's "Life," have a decidedly comic side, but the continual recurrences of sources of friction between two personalities so innately noble, and at one in their ardent desire for the highest good of their common country, had also a tragic side. The differences were all the more disagreeable to Mr. Gladstone because in early days he was the subject of many marks of regard from the Queen, and no statesman of her reign was a more devoted admirer of the great and beautiful traits in her character.

It was said that Lord Beaconsfield was a favourite with the Queen because he never forgot she was a woman, whereas Mr. Gladstone addressed her as if she were a public meeting. Mr. Goldwin Smith said, humorously, that in a competition of flattery Mr. Gladstone had no chance with Lord Beaconsfield! The probability is, however,

that it was not chiefly a personal matter, but a difference of opinion on public policy. Mr. Gladstone was not the man to yield a principle in which he believed for the sake of any personage, however exalted ; and on the other hand, the Queen could not sympathise in latter years with the opinions of her great Minister. Naturally she did all she could to oppose the political tendencies which she dreaded, and naturally Mr. Gladstone did all he could to promote the political principles in which he believed. The whole matter was summed up in his own words : " It is rather melancholy. But on neither side, given the conditions, could it well be helped."

EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE.

The reader is aware of the interest taken by Mr. Gladstone in the extension of the franchise at different periods. The time was now ripe in his opinion for another advance, and accordingly, in 1884, a Bill was introduced for applying to householders in the counties the same principles as had been applied to borough householders in 1867. The Bill proposed to enfranchise new voters to the number of 1,600,000 in Great Britain and 400,000 in Ireland. One of the results of the Bill, if passed, would be to add greatly to the strength of the Nationalist party in Parliament, and probably cause the Home Rule movement to enter upon a new phase. This and other aspects of the measure led to keen opposition in the Commons, but all obstacles were successfully overcome, and the third reading was allowed to pass *nemine contradicente*, as Mr. Gladstone triumphantly put it. The House of Lords, the shadow that haunts the Liberal legislator, had still to be reckoned with, and any hopes of a peaceful settlement in that assembly were dissipated. The Lords hung up the measure on the ground that no extension of the franchise could be satisfactory unless accompanied by a scheme for the re-distribution of seats.

The excitement caused by this action was intense. Throughout the country great meetings were held,

monster processions marched through towns, and scenes of violence took place in halls and streets. Lord Salisbury himself was the subject of an attack. A stone was thrown at his carriage at Dumfries in the course of a tour in defence of the opposition to the Bill, and is still kept at Hatfield as a memento of that stormy time. Through it all the Conservatives stood firm. The object of the Liberals in their view was to gerrymander the constituencies, and nothing would satisfy them short of an equitable re-distribution of seats. There seemed imminent one of those combats between Lords and Commons with which Mr. Gladstone was so familiar, and from which he had on more than one occasion triumphantly emerged. It would have been easy on such an exciting question to have engineered an agitation against the Lords, but Mr. Gladstone used his influence and authority to still the passions of the hour. He did not think that any drastic measures were required, and made up his mind to settle the differences amicably if possible. He made a communication to the Queen in which he stated that he would gladly do anything consistent with personal honour to close the controversy. The Queen arranged a meeting between the parties, and politicians witnessed an interesting spectacle. Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone after their combat sat around a table to arrange the terms of a plan for the re-distribution of seats, and Mr. Gladstone was able in a short time to congratulate the Queen on the happy issue of her exertions, and the consequent avoidance of a serious crisis of affairs. It was a method of settling a political dispute that should perhaps be more frequently followed.

The Franchise Bill was passed, and Mr. Gladstone was gratified to see the completion of his long labours to bring the great body of the people within the pale of the constitution.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1885.

THE end of the franchise controversy did not end the troubles of the Ministry. Difficulties arose with Russia in connection with the frontier of Afghanistan. A "scuffle" took place between Russians and Afghans, and Russia occupied Penjdeh. At once Mr. Gladstone came down to the House and asked for a grant of £11,000,000 to provide for contingencies. Surprise was expressed at the action of Mr. Gladstone, who was known to be free of hostility to Russia, and of unjust suspicions of her designs. But any such surprise could only be felt by those who made the mistake of regarding Mr. Gladstone as a mere doctrinaire. One of those occasions had arisen when Mr. Gladstone believed Russia was pursuing towards this country an aggressive policy, and he took steps accordingly to stop it. As a result of his firmness the matter was amicably adjusted, and a useful lesson given to those who were unaware of the fact, that Mr. Gladstone was ready to defend the interests of Britain when a real call for action arose.

In 1885 there were various signs that the popularity of the Ministry was on the wane.

The troubles in Egypt and Ireland had alienated many old supporters in the country, and led to serious division in the councils of the Cabinet. The reader will understand the position from a remark made by Mr. Gladstone to one of the members of his Ministry. "A very fair Cabinet to-day, only three resignations." On another occasion he wrote, "As to all the later history of this Ministry, which is now entering on its sixth year, it has been a wild romance of politics, with a continual succession of hairbreadth escapes, and strange accidents pressing upon one another."

It was plain that the end could not be far off, and on 8th June, 1885, the Government was defeated on a Budget question. Mr. Gladstone resigned, and after some negotiations Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister for the first time.

The Queen offered a peerage to Mr. Gladstone, but to the gratification of all those who revered the name of Gladstone and desired him to remain the great modern "Commoner," the proposal was declined.

MR. GLADSTONE'S POSITION.

The general election took place in November and December. Important consultations took place between Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues and friends, as to the position of the party and the line to be followed. To Mr. Gladstone, personally, the great question was his continuance in, or retirement from, political life. His own desire was, as he expressed it, to "cut out." He felt that a new time was at hand. Mr. Chamberlain, the rising star of Liberalism, was preaching new doctrines, and winning wide popularity by the attractiveness of his gospel. He delivered eloquent addresses in favour of a graduated income tax, free education, the cutting up of great estates, the creation of a peasant proprietary, payment of members, manhood suffrage, and other reforms. *Punch* hit off the situation happily by representing Mr. Chamberlain as a daring duckling sailing confidently off, while the Whig fowls called out in alarm, "Come back, come back!" Mr. Gladstone was not altogether averse to the new ideas, but thought some of them were open to grave objection. At the same time he did not feel in accord with the Whig position of which the chief representative was Lord Hartington. He belonged to the new as much as to the old, and therefore really occupied a middle position. What would happen to the Liberal party if the internecine war went on and he ceased to be leader? There was an imminent danger of its break up, and Lord Acton (a very sagacious friend) was right when he pointed out to him the dangers of

retirement at such a critical time. "Nobody stands," wrote Lord Acton, "as you do between the old order of things and the new."

THE IRISH QUESTION.

Mr. Gladstone did not accept the view that he was essential to the Party, but there was another inducement to continue in politics. While others were discussing the question of land reform, and other matters of deep interest to the young Liberals, Mr. Gladstone's mind was filled with the Irish question. There was a probability that he might be able to aid in the noble work of settling that problem, and it was this possibility that decided his course. He would continue in politics and take office in the hope of fulfilling his mission to settle the Irish question.

He issued a lengthy address to the electors of Midlothian, which dealt with all the pressing questions of contemporary politics, and was admirably designed to keep Liberals and Radicals under one roof. In his speeches he defended the policy of his Government with regard to Egypt, Afghanistan, and South Africa, and dealt with the question of disestablishment which created so much interest in Scotland. On the Irish question his references so far as regarded future policy were extremely guarded. He appealed for a majority independently of the Irish vote, as he thought that such a position would provide the most favourable conditions for the solution of the problem. It has been made a matter of complaint that he did not at this time disclose the particulars of his Home Rule policy, and take the nation into his confidence. But his policy was dependent upon future contingencies, and could not be formulated at that time. The elections might upset all calculations, and until the result was before him he had not the data on which to found his policy. The proper time would come when he was responsible for the Government of the country, and when that event arrived the matured scheme would be presented.

One can imagine the eagerness with which he scanned the results as the elections went on. At first they were extremely disappointing, and in the end were not more than moderately gratifying. The boroughs, as a rule, decided against the Government. The newly enfranchised voters in the English counties, who worshipped the very name of Gladstone, did some valiant service in counteracting the defection of the towns, but could not do enough to bring about a Liberal majority over Conservatives and Irish Nationalists combined. The total result was as follows :—

Liberals	-	-	-	333
Conservatives	-	-	-	251
Irish Nationalists			-	86

HOME RULE FOR IRELAND.

The great outstanding feature of the general election was that the Nationalists held the balance between the two great British parties. As an Irishman put it, this placed in the hands of Mr. Parnell a very big stick indeed. It was certain that the stick would be wielded with skill, and without mercy against any party opposed to Home Rule.

It was a position which Mr. Gladstone deeply regretted. Nothing lay nearer his heart than to create a contented Ireland. With this view he had dealt with the land question in successive Land Bills, with the religious question in his measure for the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and with the education difficulty in the ill-starred University Bill. A great deal had been accomplished, but no one knew better or realised with profounder regret that the work was not done. Ireland would never be contented until she was able to deal with matters distinctively Irish in accordance with Irish ideas. It was the possibility that he might be able to give Ireland the boon which she so passionately desired that thrilled Mr. Gladstone in his old age with a new enthusiasm. Tremendous forces would be arrayed against him in any such attempt, and violent passions

would be aroused by the proposal to set up an Irish Parliament. He saw clearly that the most favourable conditions for a solution of the question would arise from a clear Liberal majority over Conservatives and Nationalists combined, and now that this condition was unfulfilled, the whole case, already prejudiced, would be surrounded with additional prejudices, and any concession to the desires of the Irish people would be attributed to the basest motives.

A short time after the general election a paragraph appeared in the papers announcing that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to support Home Rule if called back to power. The rumour gave rise to frantic excitement. Consternation reigned among Liberals and Conservatives alike, and letters and telegrams poured into Hawarden entreating him to confirm or deny the accuracy of the statement. Mr. Gladstone, however, would not be drawn into an answer "Yes" or "No," and the lack of a definite explanation of his views was severely criticised. As a matter of fact Mr. Gladstone was convinced that a Parliament should be granted to Ireland upon terms which would be consistent with the unity of the Empire, and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. But the conditions under which such a policy could be attempted were not clear to him before the election or immediately after. The conviction at which he arrived, after careful reflection, was that the best course would be for the Conservative party to bring forward a measure and settle the question in conjunction with the Liberal party. The language of Lord Salisbury, and the negotiations carried on by Lord Carnarvon with Mr. Parnell, and many other incidents led him to believe that such a method was perfectly feasible, and he made his view known to the party. It appeared, however, that no such action was likely on the part of the Conservative party. The announcement of a Coercion Bill for Ireland set any doubt on the point at rest, and Mr. Gladstone then determined that the Liberal party should design a measure in combination with the Nationalists, if such an arrangement could be effected.

As anticipated, the critics were ready with the cry that Mr. Gladstone was taking up the policy of Home Rule from the lowest motives, and sacrificing the interests of England to his love of power. The impartial student of his previous policy towards Ireland, and of his whole career, can have no difficulty in dismissing the charge as one of the grossest absurdities in political history.

HIS GREATEST HOUR.

Lord Salisbury was defeated shortly after the assembling of Parliament, and Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister for the third time. He immediately set about the gigantic task of preparing a Bill embodying his proposals for setting up an Irish Parliament, and settling the agrarian question by a Bill for the purchase of the land by the tenants.

On 8th April, 1886, he stood up in Parliament to unfold his scheme amid a scene which has seldom been paralleled in the House of Commons. The galleries were full to overflowing with an audience composed of the greatest and most influential men in the land. There were members who sat up through the whole preceding night to be certain of a seat. Men who were accustomed to find a place reserved for them on other occasions were glad to fight for a little room to hear the man with such a marvellous history behind him, and with such a momentous message for the future. It is no exaggeration to say that never in the whole history of England has any single politician excited a more intense interest, or received a more splendid welcome from the representatives of Great Britain and Ireland. All shades of opinion were represented in his audience, but not one in that assembly could fail to admire the man who undertook his greatest task at the age of seventy-seven, and displayed a vigour not excelled in the noon of his days. It was the greatest hour of his life.

The note that rang through the speech was that of conciliation as the wisest of all policies. He dealt with the history of the unhappy relations between Ireland and

England, the reasons for the long-subsisting estrangement, the failure of coercion, the true remedy for the ills of the past, and the means by which the two countries could be bound in the indissoluble bonds of friendship. From beginning to end the oration displayed Mr. Gladstone's qualities at their supremest height,—the glowing eloquence, the fine feeling for all that is noblest in humanity, the practical sagacity which could build up with such perfection the structure of a complicated Bill, strength of intellect mingling with pity, sympathy, and all the best emotions of the human heart, the comprehensive grasp of thousands of minute details combined with the clearest perception of great principles. At seventy-seven the orator was still in the plenitude of his powers. The audience listened with amazement. As Sir George Trevelyan put it, the oration "numbed" the House.

No one was more entitled to speak in such a cause. An absolutely unique experience, a larger outlook over the whole land of politics than was possessed by any living man, as sincere a patriotism as ever thrilled the heart of any of his countrymen, the keenest desire for the true welfare and the true greatness of England, and a determined opponent of those who would do her an injury, an ardent upholder of the greatness and dignity of the Imperial Parliament, and a devoted supporter of our ancient monarchy. Mr. Gladstone could have claimed all these, and other qualities, to recommend his solution of the eternal and perplexing difficulty of Ireland to the people of Great Britain.

DEFEATED.

But it cannot be gainsaid that to many it was a novel gospel, this panacea of Home Rule. A thousand forcible, if also fanciful, things could be said against it, and Mr. Gladstone's opponents did not fail to say them. It would hand over Ireland to the tender mercies of that part of the population who were supposed to be the enemies of England, and crush the faithful remnant who always remained loyal to our rule. It was wholesale surrender

to a band of rebels. It would entail continual friction between the Parliament at Dublin and the Parliament at Westminster. It would lead to entire separation. It would create an independent country close to our shores which would be placed at the disposal of our enemies, and lead to our ultimate downfall.

These fears proved to be stronger than the high hopes which Mr. Gladstone's wide experience taught him to cherish. When the voting on the second reading of the Bill was taken Mr. Gladstone was defeated by thirty votes. In the majority were to be found the names of many who had fought under his banner at the recent election, but who now felt bound to desert their old chief. Lord Hartington, Lord Derby, Sir Henry James, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Chamberlain were to be found in the ranks of his opponents. The defection of Mr. Chamberlain caused the greatest astonishment. It was understood by the public that he was one of the greatest friends of the movement of the Nationalists in the ranks of the Liberal party. He was in close touch with Mr. Parnell and the other leaders, and was certainly looked upon by them as friendly to their cause. His desertion remains to this day one of the unexplained mysteries, and one of the most regrettable incidents, in modern politics.

Mr. Gladstone, on the defeat of his Bill, appealed to the country. The result was adverse. The Conservatives came back with a formidable majority over Liberals and Irish Nationalists combined, and Lord Salisbury again became Prime Minister.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER THE 1886 ELECTION.

MR. GLADSTONE expected a better result at the polls. He had fought a magnificent battle. His activity had been marvellous, and it was with admiring astonishment that the nation looked upon the endurance of the grand old man through long excited meetings, the noise and turmoil of vast processions, and endless scenes of personal triumph. The enemy, however, was powerful and the British people are averse to sudden change. Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain split the forces on which Mr. Gladstone mainly depended in his bold crusade, and the cautious Liberal as personified in Lord Hartington, the steady old Conservative headed by Lord Salisbury, and the Tory democrat inspired by the dashing leadership of Lord Randolph Churchill proved too strong for the divided hosts of Liberalism.

The great majority of men at the age now reached by Mr. Gladstone have sunk into lethargy, and retired from any active part in public life, but "the grand old man," as he was affectionately called, took his defeat cheerily, and continued with fresh vigour, to fight his battle with voice and pen. His days were spent as if he had not yet reached the meridian of life. Speeches were delivered with no lack of verve and abounded in passages of freshness and beauty, which recalled the work of men in the full flush of oratorical success.

It was not only in politics that this energy was manifested. He proceeded on a visit to Bavaria to meet the great Catholic divine, Dr. Döllinger, and spent glorious days in the discussion of theology. He went to Florence in 1887, visited Naples in 1888, and felt that the land of Dante had lost none of its fascination. He read the "Iliad" "for the twenty-fifth or thirtieth

time," and found it "every time richer and more glorious than before." He wrote books and articles on many subjects—on Tennyson's second "Locksley Hall," on Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Robert Elsmere," on "The Greater Gods of Olympus," "Lecky's History of England in the Eighteenth Century," "The Great Olympian Sedition," "Queen Elizabeth and the Church of England," "Books and the Housing of them," "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," "Landmarks of Homeric Study," together with an essay on the "Points of Contact between the Assyrian Tablets and the Homeric Text." He read books innumerable—books old and new—and when a new book pleased him he was delighted to send the writer a letter of thanks and appreciation. Many a struggling author was nerved to continue the fight for recognition, and succeeded in winning it through his encouragement and appreciation of their powers.

One wonders how it was possible for him to do all this great and shining work. Part of the secret lay in his continuance of the habit of employing every bit of time. One day he came into luncheon. The food was too hot, and in place of sitting down while it cooled he left the table, changed his clothes, and got ready for a drive. He then came back to finish luncheon, and found he had saved ten minutes! While divisions were taken in the House he might be seen pulling a book from his pocket, and reading while waiting to record his vote. At a picnic he would rest on the mountain side while preparations were made for amusements and study some favourite author. All the parts of the day were mapped out, and, inclined or disinclined, Mr. Gladstone did the allotted task. Always to be doing something was the rule which Mr. Gladstone followed in old age as in youth—a rule which led to one of the most fruitful lives ever lived on our planet. . . . Oh!

VICISSITUDES OF THE CAMPAIGN.

One of the great secrets of Mr. Gladstone's success in realising so many political projects was the concentra-

tion of all his energies on one great measure at a time. It is impossible for the nation to think of more than one important reform at once, and the politician who desires to carry his ideas into practical action cannot afford to divide attention over a number of measures.

Mr. Gladstone now devoted his political life to the advocacy of Home Rule. The decision at the polls in 1886 had been so adverse that a tremendous effort was required to reverse the verdict. Many people doubted the possibility of the feat, but Mr. Gladstone felt the fullest confidence in the result. There was reason for confidence. He addressed throughout the country huge audiences with extraordinary power, and evoked the highest enthusiasm at every meeting.

His own exertions were aided by the policy of the Government, and by the conduct of many of their supporters in the Press, and on the platform. The old policy of coercion was resorted to, and a new stringent Crimes Act displayed the hateful alternative to a policy of conciliation. *The Times* produced a series of articles making charges against the members of the Nationalist party, and caused a great sensation by the publication of several letters alleged to have been written by Mr. Parnell. These letters, if genuine, would have proved beyond a doubt the connection of Mr. Parnell with criminals of the worst type, and his direct sympathy with projects of assassination. A commission was appointed at the instance of the Government to examine the charges, and the result was a complete triumph for Mr. Parnell. The letters were proved to be forgeries, and the name and fame of Parnell never stood higher than at the time of this exposure. The tactics of *The Times* and its supporters had recoiled on themselves, and had really become a powerful aid to the movement for Home Rule. The by-elections showed how the tide was flowing. Seat after seat was wrested from the Government, and all the symptoms of advance were easily discerned by the experienced politician. The country was coming round to Mr. Gladstone's view.

THE FALL OF PARNELL.

But Mr. Parnell's enemies were not yet done with him. In an action for divorce brought by Captain O'Shea Mr. Parnell was co-respondent. Mr. Parnell indicated that the case would end in his favour, but when the trial came on he did not appear to answer the charges made, and decree was pronounced against him on 17th November, 1890.

A situation was opened up that dealt a reeling blow to Mr. Gladstone. On first impressions he was inclined to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the Nationalist party, but leading Nonconformists made it plain that if Mr. Parnell remained leader of the Nationalist party they would no longer support such a party. It was soon made evident beyond a doubt that this feeling was not confined to a mere section. Letters, the newspapers, and speeches at great meetings, showed the width and depth of the determination to desert any cause headed by Mr. Parnell. In other words, Home Rule was a lost cause unless the Nationalists selected a new leader.

It was hoped that Mr. Parnell would recognise the facts of the situation and resign. He refused to do so, and although Mr. Gladstone felt no inclination to take up the position of censor, and realised the delicacy of interfering in the affairs of the Nationalist party, he was left without an alternative, and made a communication to the effect that if Mr. Parnell remained as leader his position as head of the Liberal party would be reduced to a nullity.

A meeting of the Irish party was convened to consider this momentous message. Mr. Parnell was deaf to entreaty and remonstrance. He declined to resign, and after the stormiest scenes there was a party split, a few members adhering to Mr. Parnell, and the great majority deciding to elect Mr. Justin McCarthy as their leader. Mr. Parnell's career came to a tragic close by his death at Brighton within a year, but his followers continued as a separate

party for some time with Mr. John Redmond at their head.

The events of this period were a heavy blow to Mr. Gladstone. Since 1885 his whole political life had been governed by a supreme regard to the Irish question. "For every day of these five years," he wrote, "we have been engaged in laboriously rolling up hill the stone of Sisyphus. Mr. Parnell's decision of yesterday means that the stone is to break away from us and roll down again to the bottom of the hill."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LAST FIGHT.

MR. GLADSTONE in one of his most eloquent speeches referred to the story of the two Lacedæmonian heroes known as Castor and Pollux. A star was called after them, and upon that star the fond imagination of the people fastened lively conceptions. When a ship was caught in a storm, when dread began to possess the minds of the crew, and alarm was giving place to despair, there was one sign in the heavens for which they looked. If the star named after the two heroes appeared then gradually the clouds dispersed, the winds abated, the towering billows fell to the surface of the deep, calm came where there had been uproar, and under the beneficent influence of this heavenly body the crew came safely to port.

This old fable might be applied to Mr. Gladstone himself. In his varied career the storm often rose high, and perils were around on every side. There were times when he felt almost overwhelmed with despair, but the star never failed to appear in the heavens. The troubles with Mr. Parnell caused deep depression, but speedily depression gave place to hope, and he continued his work for Ireland with exaltation, and in confident expectation of triumph. There was much to give the ordinary electioneerer pause. There was a lack of the old enthusiasm, and there were other evidences of the demoralisation of the forces. Mr. Gladstone, however, did not allow himself to be depressed, and never fought with more passionate fervour or finer dash than in his last great battle.

When the dissolution came in 1892 he was eighty-three, but as ready as ever to meet the enemy. He was

sustained by visions of victory and wildly enthusiastic receptions. A great majority was anticipated, but when the election returns came in it was plain that enthusiastic meetings did not mean votes, or personal admiration support at the polls. The division in the Irish ranks had done its work. Mr. Gladstone's majority in Midlothian was reduced to 690, and after the whole results in the country had been totalled up the majority in favour of Home Rule, including some eighty Nationalists, was a modest forty.

It was far short of the anticipated result. At the same time it served to oust the Conservatives from office, and Mr. Gladstone became for the fourth time Prime Minister.

THE SECOND HOME RULE BILL.

The extraordinary spectacle was therefore witnessed of a man of eighty-four producing a great Bill for the creation of an Irish Parliament, engineering it with unflinching skill, and advocating it with all the freshness and brilliance of youth. The debates in committee excited the astonishment of every man in the House. It was perhaps the most wonderful exhibition of power at the age of eighty-four in the history of the British Parliament. Even opponents were heard to express unstinted admiration. The most experienced Parliamentarians and keenest observers admitted that his genius had never shone with greater lustre; that his readiness in debate had never been more marked, his intellect clearer, or his will and determination stronger. The last fight was the greatest, and most remarkable, of all.

It was amid resounding cheers that the Bill passed the third reading in the House of Commons by a majority of thirty-four.

It was a great triumph to win such a battle, but, as every one knew, the victory was not complete. The House of Lords loomed behind, and when the time came for the non-representative chamber to deal with the measure the majority against was 419 to 41.

Mr. Gladstone felt bitterly when he was thus robbed of the fruits of victory, and was eagerly in favour of an appeal to the country against the Lords. A majority of the Cabinet, however, was against him on this point, and Home Rule accordingly still remains an unrealised ideal.

But who can doubt that the final triumph has only been postponed? Mr. Gladstone abolished coercion, and conciliation is now the policy of both parties. Mr. Gladstone desired to bring about at one stroke that which is being done gradually in accordance with our British caution. He showed the way, and although the lines on which Ireland is to be made a contented part of our mighty Empire may be altered in detail, the spirit of his policy must survive, and his object be attained. His mission to create a contented Ireland will yet be fulfilled.

LAST SPEECH IN THE COMMONS.

At the time of the Parnell crisis Mr. Gladstone declared that anything which made hopeless the prosecution of the Home Rule Bill would reduce his leadership of the Liberal party to a nullity. The defeat of the Bill in the Lords, and the resolution of the Cabinet not to appeal to the country against that assembly, made it plain that the passage of the Bill in his day was an impossibility. There was therefore no reason why he should longer remain as head of the party. It was the keen desire of his colleagues, however, that he should not retire, and he fell in with their views for some months. There were various reasons why the period should not be prolonged. His eyes and ears were giving trouble, and made the proper performance of his duties irksome and difficult. A proposal to spend large sums on the Navy did not meet with his approval, and other questions were coming up which he felt were for the new generations to settle. Early in the year 1894 he went to Biarritz for change of scene. While he was abroad the *Pall Mall Gazette* created a sensation by announcing his intention to resign.

The idea was ridiculed at the time, but in a few weeks the resignation duly took place. On 1st March, 1894—sixty-one years after he had entered Parliament—he held his last Cabinet Council amid, to use his own words, “a really moving scene.” On the same day he made his last speech in the House of Commons. It was on a theme which had often given him cause for serious reflection, and profound regret. The House of Lords had delayed and thwarted many of the best measures of the Liberal party, and his last words in the Chamber where he had played such a mighty part were devoted to the serious question raised by such a defect in the constitution.

“Differences, not of a temporary or casual nature merely, but differences of conviction, differences of prepossession, differences of mental habit, and differences of fundamental tendency between the House of Lords, and the House of Commons, appear to have reached a development in the present year such as to create a state of things of which we are compelled to say that, in our judgment, it cannot continue. . . . The issue which is raised between a deliberative assembly, elected by the votes of more than six millions of people, and a deliberative assembly occupied by many men of virtue, by many men of talent, of course with considerable diversities and varieties, is a controversy which, when once raised, must go forward to an issue.”

It is recorded by Mr. T. P. O'Connor that after this striking and solemnly delivered speech Mr. Gladstone got up to leave the bench, where he was never to sit any more, stood for a moment on the step of the Speaker's chair, and, putting his hand up to his forehead, gazed round on the familiar scene. “It was his unspoken farewell.”

ACTIVE RETIREMENT.

Retirement even now did not mean cessation from work. One of the daughters of a prominent Liberal statesman once remarked as a peculiarity of the human mind that it could never “sit down.” Whether or

not this is true of all minds, it was certainly a correct description of the mind of Mr. Gladstone. On the day succeeding his "retirement" he was busy on a translation of Horace. He wrote on the Olympian Religion. He came to London, went to Cannes, and was always in high spirits in society. He brought out an edition of "Bishop Butler." He made various speeches, and especially a great speech against the rule of the Turk in Armenia. The years 1894, 1895, 1896, and part of 1897, passed away full of quiet happiness, pleasant labour, and all the blessings of family life. Friends looked on, and wondered at, the continuance of his vivacity, and intellectual strength.

LAST SCENE OF ALL.

It was in the fall of 1897 that symptoms of the last struggle appeared. The illness was of a neuralgic order, and was attended with acute pain in the head. As time went on no improvement took place, and a change of scene was tried. He went to Cannes in November, 1897, and it was from Cannes that the alarming news as to his state of health was sent to England at the beginning of 1898. It was received in many quarters with wonderment and incredulity. It seemed impossible to believe that the frame of steel was at last giving way—that age was at last reaching "the man of immortal youth." The news was only too true. The doctors decided upon a change from Cannes to Bournemouth. No benefit resulted. In a short time the announcement was made that he was to go home to Hawarden. And it was known that he was to go home to die.

When leaving Bournemouth he made his last address to the public. A deeply sympathetic crowd assembled at the station, and turning round to the people he said, "God bless you all, this place, and the land you love."

At Hawarden it was plain that darkness was now closing in the long resplendent day. The sufferer knew his fate, and he did not shrink from the end of his chequered and strenuous journey, but the physical pain

from which he suffered through the last months was terribly trying. He was consoled by the sympathy of a world whose eyes were directed to Hawarden, by the devotion of the friends who surrounded him, and by his religious faith, "the master light of all his seeing." On the morning of the 19th May, 1898—"Ascension Day"—the end came. Those who knelt around as the last breath was drawn could not but weep. Outside the sun bathed the world in light as if to cheer the mourner, to sympathise with one of the most radiant lives ever lived, and to symbolise the beginning of a still grander day.

Beautiful and noble tributes flowed in from all corners of the world on the death of Mr. Gladstone. The Queen, forgetful of all differences, expressed to Mrs. Gladstone her sympathy and her appreciation of one whose character and intellectual abilities marked him as one of the most distinguished statesmen of her reign. "I shall ever gratefully remember his devotion and zeal in all that concerned my personal welfare and that of my family." Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour, Sir William Harcourt, Lord Rosebery, uttered memorable farewells in Parliament. Tributes came from the Colonies, the President of the United States of America, the President of the Republic of France, the Czar of Russia, the Italian Parliament, the King of Greece, from Roumania, Macedonia, Norway, Denmark, expressing sincere sorrow and appreciation of one who had filled and thrilled the world with new hopes and exalted ideals.

On the 28th May, 1898, he was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, and no one who sleeps in that home of the mighty dead ever toiled more sincerely and more strenuously for the true greatness and glory of their country.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SUMMING UP.

THE life traced in these pages was undoubtedly one of the most distinguished in the history of England. Estimates as to the precise value of Mr. Gladstone's labours to his country are, of course, very varied, but there cannot be two opinions as to the immense part played by him in the long course of his political career, and the height and depth of the intellectual and moral qualities which made such a career possible.

The physical qualities of Mr. Gladstone alone were of a remarkable character, and gave rise to constant wonderment in his contemporaries. It seemed a miracle to the ordinary man how the bodily frame could withstand the wear and tear of continual conflict, ceaseless toil, and all-important responsibilities. The earnestness which he put into every task, the concentration of every faculty at the intensest, and the strain of exciting debates, were fitted to sap the strength of the strongest man, but, with very occasional intervals, Mr. Gladstone's "frame of steel" surmounted every trial, and stood every test.

His intellectual force was tremendous, and was exhibited in all that he wrote and said. His writings are not to be put in the same category as those of the greatest lights of literature. They are not of the same type as the work of the greatest literary artists. But in his writings we are conscious of the grandeur of his intellectual power. Nothing that he wrote was without this force, and in his speeches it was manifested to its fullest extent. It was astonishing to mark his grasp of principles and the most complicated details, and his complete mastery of every cranny of a subject. The vast variety of his knowledge, and his presentation of it with unflagging

energy, hour after hour, impressed every hearer as one is impressed by the sustained and ceaseless flow of a mighty river.

But neither strength of physique nor mere strength of intellect will place a man in the position occupied by Mr. Gladstone. Both were necessary to make possible his marvellous achievements, but the use to which body and brain were put was the factor that determined the position of their possessor.

From his early years Mr. Gladstone was happily moved by conscientious scruples as to the use of the powers entrusted to man, and the responsibility attached to the gift of faculty. He was a believer in God. He was convinced of the truth of Christianity. Religion was at the root of all his actions, and determined the purposes to which he put every power he possessed.

To this must be ascribed a great part of the trust reposed in him by the British people. They might or might not agree with all his doctrines, or the medium through which his faith was expressed. But all party or denominational matters apart, they recognised the depth and the sincerity of this great man's spiritual life, and found in him a powerful exponent of their own deepest emotions. They recognised in him a man of character, of pure and high principle, an embodiment and an exemplar of his own view of life as "a great and noble calling; not a mean and grovelling thing, but an elevated and lofty destiny."

Mr. Gladstone lived in, and drew his strength from, the unseen world. He was in the highest sense of the word a "mystic," but he was a mystic who also lived in the seen world, and who sought to translate the principles of religion into the transactions of earth. He was not a mere dreamer of noble dreams, but essentially a doer of noble deeds—a great man of action.

Liberty and justice formed the keynote of his policy in domestic and foreign affairs alike. "It is," he said, "a great and noble secret, that of constitutional freedom, which has given to us the largest liberties, with the

steadiest throne and the most vigorous executive in Christendom. I confess to my strong faith in this principle. . . . All systems, whether religious or political, which rest on a principle of absolutism, must of necessity be, not indeed tyrannical, but feeble and ineffective systems; and . . . methodically to enable the members of a community, with due regard to their several capacities, in the performance of its public duties, is the way to make that community powerful and healthful, to give a firm seat to its rulers, and to engender a warm and intelligent devotion in those beneath their sway."

It was his belief in liberty and justice that inspired the great things he did or supported in politics—the extension of the franchise to the great body of the people; the removal of the civil disabilities of Dissenters; the exposure of Neapolitan atrocities; promotion of the liberation of Italy; the advancement of the interests of Greece; the great crusade for the grant of self-government to Bulgaria, Servia, Armenia, Roumania, Montenegro, and all the oppressed provinces of Turkey; the disestablishment of the Irish Church; successive Land Acts for Ireland; the ill-starred but meritorious Irish University Bill; the Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1892; the Elementary Education Act of 1870; the extinction of the purchase of commissions in the army; the abolition of Protection, and the establishment of Free Trade.

As a true patriot he was a tireless guardian of the highest interests of his country. He demanded that justice should be done *to* Britain, as he contended that justice should be done *by* Britain, in her dealings with the nations. He stopped the advance of Russia when she occupied Penjdeh. When European difficulties arose in connection with Egypt he said, "Some of them appear to take the view of me that Russia was supposed to take of Lord Aberdeen. But I am not inclined to knuckle down to any of them in this business." When he was charged with indifference to the fate of Britain and the greatness of her destiny he exclaimed, "I cannot tell you what I think of the nobleness of the inheritance

which has descended upon us, of the sacredness of the duty of maintaining it. . . . It is a part of my being, of my flesh and blood, of my heart and soul. For these ends I have laboured through my youth and manhood, and more than that, till my hairs are grey. In that faith and practice I have lived, and in that faith and practice I shall die."

He was one of the greatest—possibly the very greatest—of our financial statesmen. His Budgets were marvels of ingenuity in the device of methods by which moral ends were served, burdens were equitably adjusted, trade was expanded, and the commercial position of Great Britain raised to the highest point of prosperity. When Mr. Gladstone stood at the helm of finance we knew that the ship would catch every breeze, steer clear of every shoal, and come safely to port.

In courage Mr. Gladstone was supreme. No man has ever excited more bitter hatred or grosser calumny. But hate or calumny could never make him quail. He never knew fear. Parliament has known no more courageous or determined fighter. "What," said Huxley, "could keep a man like that back?" Nothing could keep him back when there was great work to do. He bore down the opposition of powers and principalities, and cared nothing for the insensate hate which followed the triumphs of his career.

No statesman ever excited intenser love. Not only his achievements for the welfare of the race, but the personal characteristics of Gladstone were those which draw out affection and admiration. He was a happy example of all the domestic virtues, a lover of wife and children and all humanity. He was devoted to all that was great in human history, to literature, to art, to music, and to all things that were lovely and of good report. He was the friend of the poor, the distressed, and the unfortunate. There was never statesman nor man possessed of more to evoke enthusiasm. "The very soul rushes out towards Gladstone and embraces him as a dearest friend."

During a trip at Kirkwall, in company with Tennyson, Mr. Gladstone said in a graceful speech, " Mr. Tennyson's life and labour correspond in point of time as nearly as possible to my own ; but he has worked in a higher field, and his work will be more durable. We public men play a part which places us much in view of our countrymen, but the words which we speak have wings, and fly away and disappear." This may be true of the public men who are only great enough to stir their own little day of time. But it is otherwise with the race to which Mr. Gladstone belongs. The statesman, like the poet, is immortal. His words may no longer sound in the ears of men, for the vibrating voice is hushed, and the orator is no longer seen. But the deeds are imperishable. The achievements of Gladstone have written his name in indelible characters on the pages of history. His fame cannot be dimmed by time. On the contrary, the exalted character of his work for humanity must be more and more highly esteemed as nations escape from sordid and selfish ambitions, and become animated by pure and lofty ideals.

THE END.



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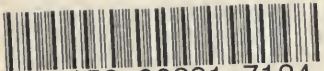
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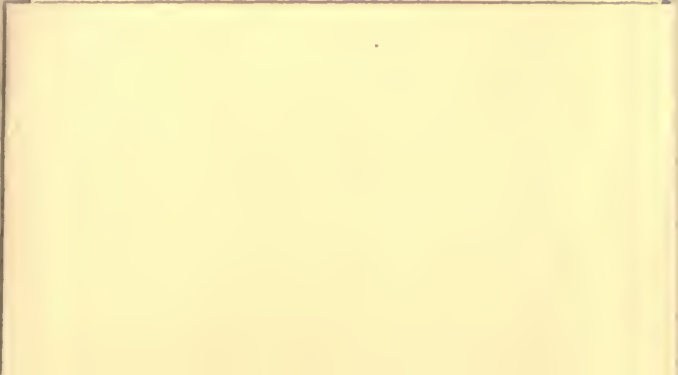


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