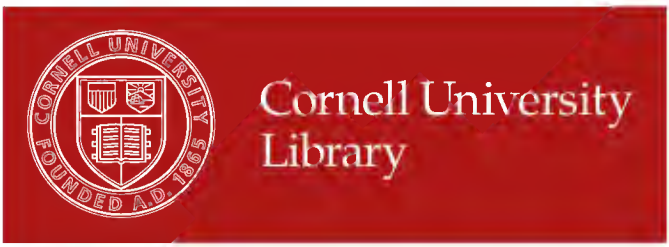
Mr. Gladstone
A Monograph by
Sir Edward W. Hamilton



MR. GLADSTONE

S. Morgan Emma.
Pr. Valentine's Day. 1899

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A MONOGRAPH

BY

SIR EDWARD W. HAMILTON
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THESE PAGES ARE

DEDICATED

TO

MRS. GLADSTONE

Preface

MUCH has lately been said of Mr. Gladstone, the statesman who sat in Parliament for a nearly unbroken term of sixty-two years, who held office under the Crown for twenty-seven years, and who served four times as the Queen's Prime Minister during an aggregate period of twelve years and a half. Much more remains to be said. In fact, the task of recording fully and faithfully his public career will tax the power of a biographer of consummate industry as well as skill, if indeed it will not need to be intrusted to a group of biog-

raphers. It is not only that the materials which will have to be digested are so extensive, and that much of them cannot with propriety be turned to immediate account, but, in the same way as the artist who has to depict a mountainous height must withdraw to an appreciable distance from it in order to represent the proportions truly, so must the biographer who desires to write with fidelity the life of a great public man allow an interval of time to elapse before a just retrospect can be formed of the subject of his pen.

It is otherwise with the personality of the man as distinguished from his public career. The more closely one has stood by him, and the fresher are one's impressions, the more faithfully and promptly ought the likeness to admit of being drawn. It may, therefore,

be permissible, at the risk of presumptuousness, for one who was privileged to know Mr. Gladstone for nearly forty years, and still more privileged to have been brought in the closest contact with him for a considerable time, to attempt to give a just notion of the *man*, by describing, however imperfectly, some of his intellectual powers, characteristics, and accomplishments, some of his ways, aims, and objects, his likes and dislikes, and the general disposition of his mind. Character-drawing is always difficult; but the difficulties are specially great in the present case. For, not only is the subject one who, whatever may be the opinions now and hereafter formed of his statesmanship, will be admitted to be one of the most extraordinary men that England has ever produced, but I feel that, however much I may strive to

observe strict impartiality, I may, from having long been under the glamour of Mr. Gladstone, unconsciously lapse into undue eulogy. Accordingly, I approach my task with much diffidence and many misgivings.

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MR. GLADSTONE'S ORATORICAL AND DEBATING POWERS

THE talent for which Mr. Gladstone will always be most renowned is that of the orator and debater. In the first place, nature had endowed him in a preëminent degree with every requisite for the display of that talent. His attitude while he was speaking was strikingly dignified and commanding. There was not a gesture that was awkward; there was not a movement of the body

that did not give emphasis to the idea which he was expressing. The play of his countenance greatly varied; and each variation had its significance. There were looks which were reproachful, sympathetic, and impassioned. Each told its own tale. There were smiles which were at times playful, and at other times almost sardonic. His hawk-like eye was replete with fire. There was great animation and energy in his manner. But most impressive of all was his voice. It was pitched in a middle key. There was a melodiousness about it which hardly could be excelled, if indeed it was ever equalled; and it was used with great dramatic effect. He had an extraordinary power of modulating it. It was always clear when it was subdued; it was never harsh or grating when it was raised to its full power. He could

regulate it with as much ease as the organist, skilled in the manipulation of keyboards and stops, can regulate the instrument at which he is sitting. His elocution was extraordinarily clear; while a somewhat peculiar pronunciation of certain words, far from marring his speaking, lent attractiveness to it.

In the second place, his choice of language was unbounded. It has been said of Lord Holland and his illustrious son, Charles James Fox, that from the very wealth of their vocabulary there arose a tendency to hesitation.[1] But the wealth of vocabulary which was at Mr. Gladstone's command never produced that effect. His flow of words was not that of the mountain stream, which comes tumbling down helter-skelter; it was that of the river with

[1] See Macaulay's "Essays," ninth edition, vol. iii. p. 213.

an immense volume of water, whose downward course is as regular as it is stately. He never gabbled. He never drawled. The pace at which he spoke was a very even one. He could have spoken to a metronome, though he had one pace for the House of Commons and another pace for the platform. There was never a pause for want of an expression, and there were never any inarticulate interpolations. Out of his wonderful verbal armory he could always draw, not only the right word, but a string of words equally apposite. He was a living thesaurus or "Gradus," containing synonym after synonym; and it was this extraordinary wealth of words which laid him open to the charge, not without reason, of being verbose. Diffuseness at times led to discursiveness; and in this connection I am reminded

of a remark made once by Mr. Bright on Mr. Gladstone's style of speaking. "I sail," said Mr. Bright, "or endeavor to sail, from headland to headland. Gladstone, making for the same point, sails round the coast, and whenever he comes to a navigable river, he cannot resist the temptation of tracing it to its source." Mr. Gladstone's sentences were often very long, and one sometimes wondered how he would ever extricate himself from the maze of words. But there was nothing faulty in the construction of a sentence. There were parentheses, and occasionally even parentheses within parentheses; but no sentence was ever ungrammatical or unfinished.

One might have expected that, though he succeeded in emerging from his long sentences without offence to grammar, he would at times have lost the thread

of his discourse. But continuity of argument never seemed to fail him. One single exception in this respect is on record, when he was speaking in the House of Commons some years ago. He was fulminating against the Opposition, and he came to a dead halt. He turned round to one of his colleagues,[1] seated beside him, and asked, "Where am I?" Mr. Disraeli, who was leading the Opposition, overheard the remark, and, leaning across the table, came to the rescue. "The last word of the right honorable gentleman was 'satellites.'" Of Mr. Gladstone's losing his presence of mind while he was speaking there is no instance. Not only was he never thrown off his balance by interruptions, however frequent and unseemly they might be, but he was generally ready

[1] I believe I am right in saying that the colleague was Mr. Goschen.

to turn ejaculations to some telling account.

Like Mr. Pitt,[1] Mr. Gladstone combined, in a very marked manner, the power of being perspicuous and the power of being obscure. No one could explain with greater lucidity the provisions of a complicated measure. No one could marshal in clearer array the most minute details. No one could handle in a more luminous fashion figures and statistics, in which he so greatly revelled. And yet, when he wished not to be explicit, and desired to avoid committing himself definitely, no one could be more dexterous in guarding himself, or in wrapping up his meaning in obscure language. Many were the occasions when opponents thought that they could convict Mr. Gladstone of contra-

[1] See Macaulay's "Biographies," twenty-fifth edition, p. 179.

dicting himself. He would at once take up the challenge, demanding chapter and verse. The volume of Hansard was sent for, and it was almost certain to be found that his previous statement had been so worded as to bear a construction not inconsistent with his later utterances. It used, indeed, to be said that it was all "ifs" and "ans" with Mr. Gladstone. So far from resenting the charge of being given to "hedge," he regarded it more as a compliment than anything else. For he considered it to be essential for a politician who was in a position of great responsibility to have the faculty of qualifying his statements. Such a man was at times, he thought, as much bound as a diplomatist to avoid being too precise.

The way in which Mr. Gladstone set to work to prepare his speeches was very

different to that which is in modern vogue. He was known occasionally to commit to paper a peroration; but he never wrote out a speech in his life, and still less did he ever rehearse a speech to a shorthand-writer. The matter to which, when preparing a speech, he gave most attention was the construction or arrangement of it; and it was in this respect more than any other that he showed consummate skill as an oratorical artist. When he had settled the outline of his speech, his thoughts were concentrated on the order of materials and the sequence of argument. This process of incubation was undergone, more often than not, when he was taking his accustomed solitary walks. He then proceeded to jot down on note-paper the heads of that which he intended to say, or a certain number of

catch-words which were rather enigmatical to any one but himself. The actual clothing of his thoughts in words he left to the inspiration of the moment, knowing full well that his inexhaustible store of language would never fail him. When he had arranged in his mind what he intended to say, he could time himself with such a nicety that he not only knew how long it would take him to deliver the speech as a whole, but he knew the exact time which each section of it would occupy.

However fine were some of his carefully prepared speeches, it is probable that the unpremeditated ones were those which produced the greatest effect. He shone conspicuously as a debater, being quick to seize on every weak argument of his adversary, sometimes retorting with fire and passion, sometimes with

sarcasm and contempt, and at other times with playfulness and banter, which well contrasted with the earnestness of his character. In spite of his pacific nature, he was eminently contentious, even militant, in debate. He was like Mr. Fox, who, when asked why he disputed so vehemently about some trifle or other, replied, "I must do so; I can't live without discussion."[1] But what was most astounding about Mr. Gladstone's speaking powers was that, by drawing partly on his endless stock of knowledge, and partly on his vivid imagination, he could make a most ingenious speech on any subject, no matter how suddenly the subject was sprung upon him, or how slightly it had been studied by him.

I have sometimes heard it questioned

[1] See Bagehot's "Biographical Studies," p. 101.

whether he was uniformly fair in stating his opponent's arguments. Nothing probably is more difficult than to restate in one's own language the exact gist of the argument of another; and anxious as he may have been to give a faithful reproduction, he may not always have succeeded in surmounting this difficulty. But, however that may be, there can be no doubt that his participation in a parliamentary debate seemed to raise the whole tone of it; and the feeling that ran through the House when he was speaking was that he was the sole surviving representative of a school of oratory which had died out and was not likely to revive — that, in short, he was the last link that connected the oratorical present with the oratorical past.

It must be remembered that his great predecessors in the art of oratory, like

Lord Chatham, Pitt, Fox, and Canning, had mainly to adapt their style of speaking to a parliamentary audience. But, living in an age when a public man has to speak on the platform as often as in the Senate, Mr. Gladstone had to suit himself to two very different audiences; and he was as much at his ease with one as with the other. What gave so much force to his speaking was the conviction which he brought to his listeners that he believed every word that he uttered. There was no speaking "with his tongue in his cheek." He spoke straight from the heart. He was sure that, if his audience knew what he knew, they would feel as he felt, and believe as he believed.[1] Equally if not still more telling was the ardor which he threw into his subject, and the earnestness with which he pleaded

[1] See Bagehot's "Biographical Studies," p. 98.

his cause. The effect was to kindle extraordinary enthusiasm among those to whom he was addressing himself, to thrill them with emotion, and to hold them spellbound. There may have been greater orators, and even greater debaters; but it is probably not too much to say that no man ever combined in a greater degree than did Mr. Gladstone the art of the orator[1] with that of the debater. Moreover, the high standard which, with rare exception, he maintained in his speeches, was one of the most remarkable of his oratorical feats;

[1] Mr. Gladstone's own definition of oratory is curious and characteristic. "The work of the orator, from its very inception," he says, "is inextricably mixed up with practice. It is cast in the mould offered to him by the mind of his hearers. It is an influence principally received from his audience (so to speak) in vapor, which he pours back upon them in a flood. The sympathy and concurrence of his time is (*sic*), with his own mind, joint parent of his work. He cannot follow nor frame ideals: his choice is to be what his age will have him, what it requires in order to be moved by him, or else not to be at all."—*Homer*, vol. iii. p. 107.

for it can be stated without fear of contradiction that no one ever spoke so often or so much.

He lived in an age when speech-reporting was carried to a high perfection, and to a degree of accuracy of which no one in the last century would have dreamed. He did not, therefore, like orators of a hundred years ago, lie under the disadvantage of having his speeches mutilated, the sense of them misrepresented, or his sentences distorted. But, no matter how well his speeches were reported, he was essentially one of those speakers who required to be heard, and indeed seen, in order to be properly appreciated.

II

HIS COURAGE — PHYSICAL, POLITICAL, AND MORAL

IN a country like England, where government is carried on so much by speaking, the power of ready speech is undoubtedly the most essential of all qualities for a politician. But to however great a degree that power may be admitted to belong to Mr. Gladstone, it would not by itself have given him the commanding influence which he exercised over his fellow-countrymen. He had many other high and lovable qualities; and probably no one of them more

conduced to make him what he was than his indomitable courage—a quality which perhaps appeals to the imagination with greater force than any other high quality. As Cominius, in the words of Shakespeare, says of Coriolanus:

> "It is held
> That valor is the chiefest virtue, and
> Most dignifies the haver; if it be,
> The man that I speak of cannot in the world
> Be singly counterpois'd."[1]

Notwithstanding that he was nervous by nature, Mr. Gladstone never showed any sign of personal fear. When the dynamite scare was at its height, the question of danger to himself never seemed to occupy his mind. In those days it was deemed necessary that he should be "followed"; but the greatest difficulty was experienced in inducing him to conform to the measures which the precau-

[1] See *Coriolanus*, Act ii., Scene 2.

tion of the police dictated. Indeed, it needed special alertness on the part of those who were commissioned to attend him to prevent his escaping from being "shadowed"; and he would constantly appeal to be relieved of (what he called) the "dragon system." The only occasion on which his natural nervousness showed itself—and that only during the last two decades of his life—was when he was crossing a crowded thoroughfare. He then behaved like the proverbially timid nursery-maid, who commences her transit with a run half-way across the street, suddenly stops short, and beats an equally hasty retreat. Owing to such nervous vacillation, partly attributable to the vast development of street traffic in his old age, he would have met with more frequent accidents during his walks in London, had it not been

that cabmen and omnibus-drivers, quick to recognize him, would pull up to let him pass by; and to this consideration on their part he constantly alluded with gratitude.

His political pluck never failed him. He did not know what it was to turn tail; and though the boldest often become timid as age advances, yet with him, the older he grew, the greater intrepidity did he display. The greater the difficulties in which he found himself involved, the greater was the courageous height to which he would rise. The tighter the corner into which he might be driven, the more redoubtable were the fighting powers which he would display. The more certain it was that he was playing a losing game, the more coolly would he keep his head. I happened once to be with him when

he knew that a ministerial defeat in the House of Commons was more than probable. He was discussing what course should be pursued in that event — whether he should resign or recommend the Queen to dissolve Parliament. Resignation seemed to commend itself most on purely tactical grounds. But he preferred boldness to prudence. "It will not do," he said, "to show the white feather." It was this constant exhibition of pluck that tended so much to make his name a word with which to conjure. It inspired his brother officers with confidence, and infused enthusiasm among the rank and file.

Great though his political courage was, he possessed a courage of a still higher quality — the courage of his convictions. With him right was might. If he had once convinced himself of the

rectitude and justice of a particular course, his intrepidity knew no bounds. He became recklessly regardless of consequences, and would make great sacrifices in order to secure the object which, for the moment, he had at heart. No more striking instance of this courageous strength of mind can be found than in his attitude toward Home Rule for Ireland. It has often been alleged that he took up that cause in order to secure for himself a majority in Parliament, and that he sacrificed principle to the love of power. The allegation has, I am convinced, no foundation. He became a convert to Home Rule because he had persuaded himself — whether rightly or wrongly is not to the point here — that Ireland could not be permanently governed on constitutional lines except through her authorized representatives,

and unless a sense of responsibility was brought home to them. He knew well enough that in proposing such a measure so suddenly he ran the greatest risk of forfeiting the confidence of his personal friends, as well as of effecting a disruption among his colleagues and followers. Nevertheless, he was prepared to incur that risk, and the risk of banishing his party from power for years to come, sooner than be deterred from doing that which his conscience and belief dictated to him. "I have," he once said to me, "made mistakes enough in my political career, God knows. But I can honestly assert that I have never said or done anything in politics in which I did not sincerely believe." So it was with Home Rule. It was not a question of sacrificing principle to power: it was a question of sacrificing personal convenience,

personal popularity, and personal friendship to principle — to what he had persuaded himself to be right. "There is," to use his own words, "no greater honor to a man than to suffer for the sake of what he thinks to be righteous." Nay, further, having once brought his resolution into harmony with his conscience, he never paused to consider how far his action would be liable to be misunderstood, whether his good repute was likely to suffer, whether it would involve the boycott of society or the ban of the Church. When he had once put his hand to the plough, he never looked back.

This resolute determination proceeded in great part from implicit confidence in himself. Even those who possess in a high degree the invaluable faculty of decision are not unfrequently liable to

subsequent qualms of doubt. With Mr. Gladstone there was never any afterthought. When he had once made up his mind after due deliberation, he was convinced that he had made it up in the right way. This strength of conviction, amounting almost to a sense of infallibility, carried with it conviction in others, and constituted one of the principal reasons why he had so great a hold over his fellow-creatures.

III

MR. GLADSTONE AS PARTY LEADER, PARLIAMENTARY LEADER, AND POLITICAL COLLEAGUE

CURIOUSLY enough, it was the splendid quality of courage when carried to excess — that is, when turned into daring — that was the cause, more than any other, of bringing about the downfall of his party. Adept though he was at skating over the thinnest of ice, he nevertheless at times immersed himself and his followers in deep water, because he declined to remain on the ice which bore well, or to heed the

finger-post of danger. It has been said that, had he been content to pursue a course fashioned on the lines of Lord Palmerston's policy, he might have held undisputed possession of the proudest of all positions — that of the Queen's Prime Minister — for an unbroken period of twenty years. But he was not a man to be content with a line of conduct which made things easy for himself.

There was another respect in which as a party leader he at times rather failed. He was apt to disregard or to set too little value upon small amenities toward his followers. He was not inhospitably inclined: on the contrary, he enjoyed dispensing hospitality; and when he invited members of the House of Commons to his house, he received them with cordiality and courtesy. But the trouble and irksomeness inseparable from

entertaining told upon him as he grew older, and he fought more and more shy of showing civility to his supporters, preferring to come home to a small family dinner on parliamentary nights, while on other nights he would rather dine at the houses of friends in order to secure a more complete change of scene and thought. Similarly, he would rarely of his own accord notice in the lobbies of the House of Commons members of his party. It was not only that he was not by nature "hail-fellow-well-met" with everybody, but a want of quick physical perception, due to visual defect, was a failing of which he was himself fully conscious, and of which he often complained. He used to say that he hesitated about going up to speak to people, for fear of making mistakes about their identity. This hesitation

produced on others an impression of hauteur on his part. Many a vote has been maintained or won by a casual word of civility or a nod of friendly recognition; and these were "tricks of the trade" in which, as in the art of finessing, he was no proficient.

But, notwithstanding these defects, it is probable that no public man of England in the present century has held to so high a degree undisputed sway over his followers as did Mr. Gladstone. Those members of his party who were most given to "run riot" would "come to heel" when he chose to call them —so magnetic and irresistible was the effect of his call. He was always reluctant to hold a meeting of his party, regarding it as a perilous experiment, and as one to which resort should not be had except on rare occasions. But it was

only necessary to attend such a meeting, presided over by himself, in order to be convinced of the wonderful power which he had of rallying falterers and malcontents. As soon as he had raised his voice to expound his intentions, explain his tactics, and call for support, the laggards and stragglers at once fell into line. Indeed, whenever it pleased him to give a word of command in some specially emphatic manner, the ranks were immediately closed. For a while, at any rate, murmurs and grumbles were no longer heard. It is true that his party fell to pieces more than once in his hands; but every leader, however adroit he may be, has to reckon with causes beyond his control — the automatic wasting of majorities, the natural swing of the pendulum, the sudden transitions of public opinion, which, if not peculiar to the

present popular franchise, are perhaps more frequent and more marked in our own times than formerly. Accordingly, it would not be fair to attribute to defects of leadership all the several defeats which the Liberal party sustained while Mr. Gladstone was at the head of it. At the same time, the shattering of that party in consequence of his espousing the cause of Home Rule, and springing it upon his followers with little or no warning, may not improbably be set down by the historians of the future as no small blot on his character as a party leader.

But, however that may be, his supremacy as a parliamentary leader can hardly be questioned by his most outspoken critics. Indeed, he was — to quote Mr. Balfour's words — "the greatest member of the greatest de-

liberative assembly which, so far, the world has seen."[1] It was in the House of Commons where he showed himself to the highest advantage. It was there that his powers of readiness, adroitness, and patience were most conspicuously displayed. The worse the parliamentary case with which he had to deal, the better and more skilfully would he defend it; while the stronger the position of his opponents, the greater was the mastery which he displayed in parliamentary attack. And yet, standing though he did head and shoulders above all other members of the House of Commons, there was no display of conscious superiority on his part. He possessed in an unusual degree what he himself considered to be the first quality of a leader in a deliberative assembly — "quick per-

[1] See Hansard, 4th series, vol. lviii. p. 121.

ception": the ability to "feel the pulse of the House" promptly and accurately, and to read its temper. Even in the last years of his parliamentary career, when his physical powers were somewhat impaired, the "old parliamentary hand" never lost its cunning. No man ever strove more manfully to sustain the honor and dignity of the House of Commons, of which he was so jealous. His love for that House, in which he seemed to breathe his native air, was only equalled by his belief in parliamentary government. He generally declined to admit that there was any real decadence in the composition of the representative assembly. In his view, what it had lost in some respects it had gained in others. Concerned though he was at the development of obstruction during the later years of his life, he knew that it was no

new growth. It was a weed that had reared its head before, and he believed that it would die down again.

His parliamentary talent was never displayed more conspicuously than in the skill which he showed in piloting through committee a complicated measure. He was the greatest of parliamentary engineers. What stood him in such good stead was not only a lightning-like quickness in perceiving what amendments might with propriety be accepted, and what amendments must be rejected, but his complete mastery of the subject under discussion in every detail. He knew his lesson better than any one else knew it. This intimate knowledge of bills which he was himself conducting was due to his having studied so carefully the framing of them. A parliamentary counsel of great

experience once told me that Mr. Gladstone was the one minister, to his knowledge, who not only could, or at any rate did, furnish the general lines of the measure, but who would put actual provisions into parliamentary phraseology.

Both in and out of Parliament Mr. Gladstone showed great kindness toward his political colleagues. If one of them happened to get into difficulties about a bill, a helping hand would be immediately extended to him. If, owing to some administrative blunder, another had become the subject of attack or ridicule, he would be able to count confidently on being wisely advised and, indeed, ably defended. A third might be confronted with specially anxious times; and he would be sure to receive from his political chief words of sympathy and

encouragement, spoken or written in the most tactful manner.

It has, however, often been assumed that, kindly though his disposition was, Mr. Gladstone was masterful and domineering — that he dictated to his colleagues in the Cabinet, and declined to listen to what they had to say. This assumption is ill-founded. They may have had reason at times to complain that he showed them a want of consideration by "springing a mine" upon them, or by not taking them into his confidence early enough; but so far from riding rough-shod over them, he was eminently deferential, in the sense of being always ready to listen to the doubts and scruples of those who disagreed with him, and to appreciate their difficulties. It is true that, presumably impressed with his immeasurable superiority, his

colleagues were apt to be timid in his presence, and to lose their argumentative powers with him. They seemed to have feelings akin to those of boys at school who find themselves confronted with the head-master. I have known more than one colleague enter his room with a fixed determination of resigning. The interview would take place, and it would probably be lengthy. In the end, the colleague, more often than not, would leave the room a wiser and a sadder man — wiser because in the interview so much fresh light had been shed and so many fresh arguments had been adduced, sadder because he had been deterred from executing his threat, and had thus been placed in a position which no one likes, involving as it did not only the abandonment of a fixed resolve, but likewise a confession of being worsted

in a discussion. The fact was, Mr. Gladstone's power of persuasive reasoning, taken in conjunction with his sympathizing demeanor, his lengthened experience, and his weight of authority, proved too much for the waverer. Mr. Gladstone had probably made some small concession which had removed in part the difficulties; for, recognizing that "the art of a politician is" (as Mr. Lecky puts it) "in a great measure that of skilful compromise," he was ever ready with the offer of a golden bridge, or *via media*, in order to reconcile effectually differences of opinion — in other (and his own) words, "to carry on the business of the government as a going concern." While, however, so willing — indeed, perhaps too willing — to defer to others, yet there were limits beyond which he would not yield, preferring

bankruptcy to discreditable solvency. On these occasions he would disregard everybody and everything; and when he had once got the bit in his teeth, his head was not to be turned. He would dash straight onward, regardless of the obstacles ahead, however formidable they were. When in such a mood, sooner than swerve to the right or to the left, he would ride for a fall.

IV

HOW HE WAS ABUSED, AND HOW HE BORE ABUSE

SO fresh in our recollection are the noble and magnanimous speeches delivered on the morrow of Mr. Gladstone's death by the leaders of both Houses of Parliament, opposed though they had been to him throughout their political lives, and so impressive was the ceremony within Westminster Abbey, which was attended by as many political foes as political friends,[1] that we are apt

[1] Of the members of Parliament who notified their intention to attend the funeral, there were 241 Unionists, 166 Liberals, and 50 Irish Nationalists.

to forget that few public men, if any, were ever the object of such virulent abuse, such bitter invective, and such rooted distrust as was Mr. Gladstone in numerous circles up to the very day of his retirement from the field of politics, four years before his death. It was not merely that his policy was violently assailed, and his actions severely criticised, but every kind of wrong intent and ulterior motive was attributed to him. Even his private character was aspersed and his private acts misconstrued. It would serve no useful purpose to recall any of the opprobrious epithets which were prefixed and affixed to his name, or of the insinuations which were so constantly levelled at his head. But it is difficult to overrate the intensity of hatred which the mere mention of the word "Gladstone" excited in many

quarters, not only in England, but even in distant parts of the empire, especially during the last ten years of his public life; or to exaggerate the feeling of repugnance entertained, not only by those who encountered him in parliamentary strife, but also by those whose connection with him was purely social. By way of illustration, two instances which occur to me may be cited. A friend of mine was travelling in India a few years ago. He desired to send Mr. Gladstone a telegraphic greeting on the anniversary of his birthday. The officer in command of the military wire by which the telegram had to be transmitted declined to send the message, "God bless you," on the ground that he could not be party to such words. Indeed, the only message for which he would make himself responsible was one

substituting an imprecation for a blessing. On another occasion, a lady who had known Mr. Gladstone for many years found herself, one Sunday, kneeling next to him at the communion-rail in the Chapel Royal. The moment she discovered his close proximity, she rose and left the steps of the altar without taking the sacrament.

Incidents like these typical ones were unknown to him, but he was fully aware that his conduct was constantly being impugned, and that the hardest of things were said of him. Nor did he flinch from knowing the worst. Indeed, he would himself give orders for the purchase of a specially offensive caricature, or a peculiarly venomous magazine article, to which he had seen or heard some allusion.

It is, moreover, a mistake to suppose

that he did not read the public press, and that everything written by way of disparagement was concealed from him. With his many absorbing occupations, he did not spend or waste much time over newspapers. Much less did he look at them for the purpose of seeing what was said of himself. Indeed, had he done so, he would have had little time for anything else. But until his eyesight failed him, he looked at the organs of the press with great regularity; and it is interesting to inquire how he received the many attacks made upon him.

In the first place, he was not sensitive. In these days, when not only the searchlight of the press and platform is turned on to public men with such force, but when their interior lives are laid so bare by the Röntgen rays of free criticism, it

is most necessary that they should steel themselves against exposure to attack. Mr. Gladstone held that nothing interfered more seriously with the usefulness of a politician than oversensitiveness. Partly by force of character and partly by inurement, he was himself the reverse of being thin-skinned. He seldom winced under written or spoken castigation, however scathing it might be. It was not that he was insensible to what was said about him; but he recognized that, living as he did under the full glare of public opinion, he could not escape being made the object of opprobrium; and he knew that, while blame was freely meted out to him in many quarters, yet in others he had, in equally unstinted measure, a large share of praise and encouragement accorded to him. He used to say that, on the whole, he

thought that he had no cause to complain of the manner in which he had been handled. He had, no doubt, on the one hand, been abused in unmeasured terms; on the other hand, he felt that he had been appreciated and lauded far beyond his deserts. "On balance, I consider that the plaudits have exceeded, and indeed drowned, the hisses within my hearing." Indeed, he firmly believed that public men, with rare exceptions, got their due in England. The people, he would say, might be trusted to do justice to their leaders and recognize their motives.

In the second place, the natural bent of his own mind was inclined to generosity toward those who attacked him — not only those who had been his lifelong opponents, but also those who, having once stood by him, had subsequently

parted company with him. This generous disposition was mainly due to his readiness "to give everybody credit for presumptive integrity and purity of motive" — a credit which, at any rate, during his fighting days, was rarely reciprocated. He judged others as he would be judged, but seldom, until quite recently, was judged by them. In a word, he always behaved as a great gentleman. He would not allow harsh things to be said in his presence about his political opponents of long or short standing. He may have been slow to forget, but he generally forgave. He rarely complained of the attacks made upon him by the public press. Of late years, the "Times" newspaper persistently not only assailed him but attributed to him sinister motives. He once said to me, when that great organ had

delivered some more than usually violent diatribe against him, "I bear no malice against the 'Times.' It has become a party organ, so it is legitimate for it to act as such." But though he seldom spoke depreciatingly about former colleagues and supporters, he would often refer, with a slight touch of sarcasm, to the "greater activity and enthusiasm assumed in their new rôle by politicians who had changed their views and had left their party." In connection with this rather favorite theme of his, he was wont to say, "Nowhere does one meet with such strange bed-fellows as in politics."

When people had exhausted their powers of abusing Mr. Gladstone, they occasionally were unscrupulous enough to attribute mania to him, and in confirmation of their assertions they were wont

to ascribe to him freaks which were akin to insanity. Such assertions are almost beneath contempt; but the groundlessness of one may be cited, by way of example. It was commonly alleged that he would walk into a hatter's shop and order several dozen hats for himself. It may be difficult to trace the proverbial connection between madness and the seller of hats; but, in this case, the conduct of the purchaser of that useful article is capable of easy explanation. The story came round to his own ears; and he was not only highly amused by it, but thought it a most pardonable mistake to have been made by his detractors, because it was founded on fact. Some years ago he was walking at Brighton with Mrs. Gladstone, and noticed in a shop-window some straw hats marked at a singularly low price. He

suggested that his wife should avail herself of the opportunity offered, and purchase some of the hats for the inmates of her orphanage. Thereupon, they entered the shop together, and ordered for despatch to Hawarden two dozen and a half of these articles of apparel, which were to be obtained at so reasonable an outlay.

Being himself generous and kind, he greatly appreciated generosity and kindness in others. To kindly acts he was most susceptible. When any marked attention or thoughtfulness was shown toward him, when any special facilities were accorded to him, as, for instance, by railway companies, or when any unusually warm demonstration was made in his favor, his constant remark to those about him was, "What have I done to deserve all this kindness?"

V

WHY HE LAID HIMSELF OPEN TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD

THE provocation which Mr. Gladstone not unfrequently excited among his political opponents may be in part ascribed to his inability or, at any rate, reluctance to admit that he had been in the wrong, or had changed his opinions. Admissions of fallibility might often have stood him in good stead; and so might admissions that what he once thought right, he at another time thought wrong. But it seems to be a traditional point of honor with public men to for-

swear such admissions, though they would readily appeal to the common sense of Englishmen; and Mr. Gladstone was no exception to the rule. He was always taking pains to prove that it was a growth, not a change of opinion; that he had foreshadowed this policy or indicated that measure. He attached too much importance to establishing consistency. He would not admit, like Mr. Pitt, that "that man who talks of his consistency merely because he holds the same opinion for ten or fifteen years, when the circumstances under which it was originally formed are totally changed, is a slave to the most idle vanity."[1]

The frequent attempts on the part of Mr. Gladstone to explain away apparently inconsistent statements, and to reconcile new beliefs with old ones, ren-

[1] See Lord Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," vol. iii. p. 228.

dered him liable to be misunderstood. But he had other characteristics which had the same tendency. Among them may be numbered certain contrarieties of impulse. Recognition of facts was undoubtedly one of the greatest motive powers with him. "The immediate instincts and sense of the people" were, in his view and in his own words, "generally right." No man was, as a rule, given to approach the consideration of political problems or affairs of state from a more practical point of view than was Mr. Gladstone. Indeed, he was apt to take such an accurate measure of "the range of practical politics" that he laid himself open to the charge of being an opportunist, in the sense of going with the times or floating with the tide. He would, it was said, never take up a cause till it was "ripe." And yet at

times he showed himself to be conspicuously the reverse of an opportunist. For he was almost as often behind or in advance of the times as he was abreast of them. He would constantly disregard expediency when he was minded to make an effort on behalf of ends which he deemed to be righteous, and of truths which he thought to be vital.

The unusual receptiveness of his mind constituted another source of misunderstanding. Because he changed his opinions and tactics, he was wont to be charged by his critics with having no fixed principles and no settled policy in view. Indeed, an ably written article, which recently appeared in one of the monthly magazines,[1] is mainly devoted to prove that Mr. Gladstone was wanting in "long-sighted persistency of purpose,"

[1] See "Blackwood's Magazine," No. dcccxciii.

on which he himself had avowedly set high store.[1] By "persistency of purpose" I understand to be meant a fixed resolve to exhaust every expedient in order to attain a particular end; and surely even those who may consider his judgment to have been most mistaken can hardly decline to credit him with indomitable resolution when, regardless of the consequences to himself and his party, he could be found to devote more than sixty years to what in his conception would promote the better government of his fellow-creatures, and nearly thirty years to the single purpose of making Ireland, as he fondly hoped, more orderly, more prosperous, more contented with her lot? The writer of the article presumably confuses means with ends.

[1] See Hansard, 3d series, vol. cclxi. p. 43, speech on Lord Beaconsfield, May 9, 1881.

For it is as inappropriate to say, at any rate as regards the Irish question, that Mr. Gladstone was lacking in "persistency of purpose" as to attribute that deficiency to the physician who, bent on doing his utmost to restore his patient to health, tries first one prescription and then another in the belief as well as hope that he will eventually find the right remedy.

Again, though few people could more plainly "call a spade a spade," if he liked, yet Mr. Gladstone seemed sometimes to delight in mystification by refining and drawing subtle distinctions. He could distinguish between two propositions which the plain man would regard as identical. This proneness to "split hairs" and balance words was due in part to his seeing distinctly both sides of a question, to his quickness to seize

upon the smallest point telling in favor of his own argument, and to the pride which he took in guarding himself. But it was calculated to give people cause for ascribing to him dishonesty of intention and want of straightforwardness, which were really altogether alien to the intrinsic simplicity and guilelessness of his nature.

To whatever extent Mr. Gladstone may have laid himself open to be misunderstood, he was not peculiar in this respect. Most men occupying positions similar to that which he occupied have shared a similar fate. He himself went so far as to say that unintelligibility was a characteristic common to all men of political mark. Indeed, of all the many colleagues who had sat with him in the Cabinet, he was wont to declare that he himself never really understood but one,

and that was Lord Aberdeen. In this connection he was fond of repeating a saying attributed to Pope Pius the Ninth. It happened once that Mr. Gladstone and three of his colleagues — Lord Clarendon, Mr. Cardwell, and —— — foregathered at Rome, and presumably all had audiences of his Holiness. Being asked his opinion of these four distinguished British statesmen, the pope said, "Lord Clarendon I both liked and understood; Mr. Gladstone I liked, but did not understand; Mr. Cardwell I understood, but did not like; —— I neither understood nor liked."

VI

HIS NATURAL CONSERVATISM AS ILLUSTRATED BY HIS REVERENCE FOR THE THRONE AND DEVOTION TO THE SOVEREIGN

IN no respect was Mr. Gladstone, perhaps, more misunderstood than in the innate bent of his mind. In the eyes of some people he was a conspirator against the Constitution, determined to undermine its pillars — "the unscrupulous and destructive demagogue," the advocate of disruption, especially in connection with his Irish policy. This belief had in reality no foundation. What was said

of him many years ago was not more true then than it was at the end of his political days: "Gladstone is not radical in the sense of desiring to subvert institutions. It is a singularly conserving spirit, but he is far-seeing enough to see that democracy was inevitable; and instead of fruitlessly endeavoring to stem that tide, he saw he must go with it in order to moderate its force." The fact is, Mr. Gladstone's mind was essentially constructive, not destructive — conservative, not radical. He had in time what Mr. John Morley attributes to Burke — "a reasoned and philosophic veneration for all old and settled order."[1] He was an absolute slave to precedent and tradition, to recognized forms and established procedure. He had no disposition toward, much less love for, change for the sake

[1] See Mr. John Morley's "Burke," p. 191.

of change, and he would only recommend change when he had convinced himself that it was calculated to assist in maintaining the institutions of the country. Those institutions he regarded not only with respect, but with affection and pride. He looked upon them much as the owner of a fine ancestral hall looks upon his possession. In the interests of conserving the fabric, Mr. Gladstone recognized the necessity for so repairing it as to meet the inroads of age, and for introducing such modern conveniences as would adapt it to changed circumstances; but to touch it where in his judgment it was not necessary to touch it, was sacrilege. He tolerated and indeed often advocated change, because he regarded it as a lesser evil than persistence in a course which was known to be wrong; but there was no "radicalism."

in the ordinary acceptation of the term, in his nature. He was a great moderating and controlling force. Extreme people would listen to him when they would hear no one else. He was the ballast in the political ship. Indeed, if his tendency to add stability to the new democratic order of things had been more fully appreciated, and if his conservatism and "constitutionalism" had been more widely comprehended, it is quite possible that he would have been regarded with less suspicion by those who desired to avert all change, and with less trustfulness by those who had very advanced views.

Closely connected with the conservative instincts with which he was imbued was his marked reverence for and attachment to the Throne. It may be doubted whether any of the Queen's

prime ministers more greatly admired, or did more to support, constitutional monarchy in England — the monarchy to which he used to refer as "the most illustrious in the world." The substitution of influence for direct power had, he was convinced, not only not impaired, but in fact increased, the dignity and authority of the Sovereign. In the first place, the social influence of the Sovereign, even if it stood alone, was (to quote Mr. Gladstone's own words) "an enormous attribute." "The English people," he has remarked, "are not believers in equality. . . . Their natural tendency, from the very base of British society, and through all its strongly built gradations, is to look upwards. . . . The Sovereign is the highest height of the system — is, in that system, like Jupiter among the Roman gods, first

without a second; . . . not, like Mont Blanc, with rivals in his neighborhood, but, like Ararat or Etna, towering alone and unapproachable. The step downward from the King (or Queen) to the second person in the realm is not like that from the second to the third; it is more even than a stride, for it traverses a gulf. It is the wisdom of the British Constitution to lodge the personality of its chief so high that none shall, under any circumstances, be tempted to vie, no, nor dream of vieing, with it."[1]

But the Sovereign was, in Mr. Gladstone's view, not only a social power. Though the actual amount of influence which the Sovereign might exercise in public affairs would always depend on the "character, capacity, and experience of the occupant of the Throne," yet the

[1] See "Gleanings of Past Years," vol. i. pp. 234, 235.

part sustained by the Monarch in this respect still was, and would, as he hoped, continue to be, "a great matter." The Sovereign (to quote Mr. Gladstone again) "is entitled, on all subjects coming before the ministry, to knowledge and opportunities of discussion, unlimited save by the iron necessities of business. Though decisions must alternately conform to the sense of those who are to be responsible for them, yet their business is to inform and persuade the Sovereign, not to overrule him. Were it possible for him, within the limits of human time and strength, to enter actively into all public transactions, he would be fully entitled to do so. What is actually submitted is supposed to be the most fruitful and important part, the cream of affairs. In the discussion of them, the Monarch has

more than one advantage over his advisers. He is permanent, they are fugitive; he speaks from the vantage-ground of a station unapproachably higher; he takes a calm and leisurely survey, while they are worried with the preparatory stages, and their force is often impaired by the pressure of countless detail. He may be, therefore, a weighty factor in all deliberations of state. Every discovery of a blot, that the studies of the Sovereign in the domain of business enable him to make, strengthens his hands and enhances his authority. It is plain, then, that there is abundant scope for mental activity to be at work under the gorgeous robes of Royalty."[1] It was, Mr. Gladstone thought, difficult to overrate the extent to which the Sovereign of England

[1] See "Gleanings of Past Years," vol. i. pp. 232, 233.

contributed to "permanence and solidity of action." Accordingly, the Crown with him was far from being a mere figurehead or symbol. It was a great power, wisely concealed in part from view, by reason of its enjoying in regard to all its functions an absolute immunity from consequences — an absolute inability to be called to account.

He had, moreover, a great idea of keeping up the dignity and splendor of the Court. The Court was, he considered, bound to be properly provided for, in order that the Sovereign might maintain his "high and inestimable position in the eyes of his subjects." The existing Civil List of her Majesty and the allowances to members of her family were, he believed, conceived in a judiciously moderate spirit, "when we consider the nature of this country and

the standard of wealth and enjoyment which prevails."[1] Mr. Gladstone's last public utterances on this subject were made in the debate preceding the consideration of the motion for establishing an annual grant of £36,000, during the reign of the Queen, for the benefit of the Prince of Wales' children. In that speech, delivered on July 25, 1889, which produced such an impression on his hearers, he reminded the Commons that they were "servants of the Crown as well as servants of the people," and wound up with the memorable words, "I am not ashamed to say that in my old age I rejoice in any opportunity which enables me to testify that, whatever may be thought of my opinions, whatever may be thought of my pro-

[1] Speech on the motion for providing an additional grant to the Duke of Albany on his marriage. See Hansard, 3d series, vol. cclxvii. p. 1673.

posals in general politics, I do not forget the service which I have borne for so many years to the illustrious representative of the British monarchy."[1]

The great outburst of loyalty and enthusiasm in 1887, in connection with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne, had conclusively proved to him that monarchy was perfectly compatible with democracy, great though were the strides which democracy had made during the last half of the nineteenth century. But further than this, he specially rejoiced in the demonstrations of 1887; for he not unfrequently felt that inasmuch as the Queen's work was so much withdrawn from the view of the people, while they were always being reminded of public men, there was a tendency to "some

[1] See Hansard, 3d series, vol. cccxxxviii. pp. 1323, 1324.

dislocation of the natural and just balance of popular interest"; and this tendency the Jubilee was calculated to counteract.

Not only did he venerate monarchical institutions and believe them to be the most perfect form of government, but he also felt profound devotion to the person of the Sovereign. He was not a courtier. Anything like obsequiousness or flattery was foreign to his nature. But, though he would never deviate one yard from the path which public duty had seemingly marked out for him in order to curry favor with the Crown, yet he was scrupulously assiduous in his duties toward his Sovereign. No amount of fatigue or pressure of work would deter him, when Prime Minister, from inditing with the greatest regularity a report of the proceedings of every Cabinet meet-

ing, and of each sitting of the House of Commons, for the promptest dispatch to Windsor, Osborne, or Balmoral. In making these reports, he was, in his judgment, bound "not to counterwork the Cabinet; not to divide it; not to undermine the position of any of his colleagues in the royal favor."[1] Indeed, any departure from strict adherence to these rules was committing "an act of treachery and baseness."[1] He considered that it was as unjustifiable to impair the solidarity of the Cabinet in the eyes of the Sovereign as in the eyes of the public. He held, too, in high regard, and sought to treat with the greatest deference, all members of the Royal Family, who had, in his opinion,—to use his own words—"a right to command the *best* from any present or past public servant."

[1] See "Gleanings of Past Years," vol. i. p. 243.

VII

OTHER CONSERVATIVE TENDENCIES — HIS SANGUINE TEMPERAMENT

THERE were many other ways in which his conservative instincts showed themselves. In writing to me not long ago, he alluded to having the choice of an old-fashioned and a new-fashioned method of medical treatment; and in announcing his decision, he said: "As is usual with me, conservatism wins the day." He would constantly refer, with regretful comparisons, to bygone times, especially to "good old Peel days." He resented departures from official eti-

quette, and the tendency which he saw in the modern politician to pander to the press, leading to indiscreet disclosures. He fancied that he detected a decided deterioration of manners in society, which specially manifested itself in a changed demeanor of men toward women, in increased familiarity, and in a lack of show of respect, which he would illustrate by the disuse of the reverential tone formerly observed in addressing one's superiors by "sir" — a term which, in his younger days, children habitually adopted toward their fathers. He disliked changes of fashion; and one of his pet aversions was the introduction of smoking after dinner. He would recall a social dictum of the Lord Castlereagh,[1] who was a magnate in

[1] The fourth Marquis of Londonderry, who was born in 1805, succeeded to the Marquisate in 1854, and died in 1872 — half-uncle to the present Lord Londonderry.

fashionable society in the heyday of Mr. Gladstone's life, that no man ought to enter the society of ladies until four hours had elapsed after he had smoked a cigar. Mr. Gladstone equally disliked departures from established custom. He objected, for instance, to the assembling of the principal members of the Opposition at dinner on the night before the opening of Parliament. He used to declare that such dinners were "not a custom at all"; that he had never attended one in his life, except at Devonshire House, during Lord Hartington's leadership; and that no more inconvenient mode of deliberating on the Queen's speech could possibly be devised. Newfangled doctrines appeared to Mr. Gladstone to be still more objectionable than changes of customs. He had no patience with persons whom he regarded as fad-

dists and crotchet-mongers. In the category of fads and crotchets he would place, with some emphasis, such proposals as those relating to bimetallism and proportional representation, which he considered to be "puerile" or "crazy." It was enough for him to know that, in England, on a gold monometallic basis there had been reared, and there rested, a solid and commanding fabric of commercial and financial prosperity, surpassing all the dreams and aspirations of his youth. It was enough for him to know that, with all its defects and anomalies, the existing system of political representation produced, in a rough-and-ready manner, a tolerably faithful reflection of public opinion. He was all for "leaving well alone." It was with apprehension as well as dislike that he viewed the increasing predominance of plutocracy

over hereditary aristocracy. I have heard him exclaim, "I am a worshipper of the hereditary principle — hereditary title, and hereditary possessions. Would that it were not so often abused as it is in certain hands!" He would inveigh strongly against the luxury prevalent during the last years of his life, and against the extravagance of the style of modern living.

These leanings toward conservatism and the past not unfrequently put him out of sympathy with the times. This was specially noticeable in the attitude which he assumed toward the fashionable so-called "imperialism" of the day. He deplored what he considered to be undue expenditure of public money on armaments. He declined to believe that great military establishments would stave off fits of panic. In his belief it was a

question of "the more you have the more you want." Analogously he had a deep-rooted aversion to annexations of territory. It was not because he wished to see his country belittled, or failed to have national greatness at heart, but he felt that there was a limit to the responsibilities which a government could prudently undertake — that there was a point at which the strength of administration would be overtaxed. Another minor instance of his disregard of public opinion is afforded by his advocacy of the Channel Tunnel scheme, the opposition to which, real and genuine as it was and is likely to be, he treated as childish and chimerical.

Notwithstanding, however, his lingering love for the past, he had unbounded faith in the future, and in the destiny of his own country. Only two consider-

ations seemed to cause him apprehension. I remember his addressing to me some solemn words one day, about eleven years ago, after he had been talking in his usually hopeful strain. "There is," he said, "one danger ahead which I foresee, and which I fear for the sake of the country. It is not Ireland; it is not the character of the measures which may be advocated and introduced — the good sense of the people will take care of that. What I fear is the want of principle which I fancy I see in some of the men who are likely to occupy conspicuous positions in the future." The other tendency which caused him concern was the change of attitude which the two principal parties of the state appeared to be assuming, and to be likely to assume, toward one another. He was afraid that one party would be

given to bid too much against the other, with the result that the pace would be unnecessarily forced. Apart from these considerations, he utterly disbelieved the scares of the timid. He uniformly declined to heed the cry of "Wolf!" He scouted the idea of national retrogression, and placed continued progress among the primary articles of his political creed. He was an optimist of optimists.

Addington said of Mr. Pitt, "He was the most sanguine man I ever knew." Had Addington lived twice the number of years allotted to the span of life, he would probably have had to qualify this saying by excepting Mr. Gladstone. To this sanguine temperament may be, in great part, attributed a habit of shutting his eyes to disagreeable facts, especially when such facts conflicted with his own thoughts, which were at times

the offspring of his wishes. He would often take insufficient account of difficulties, because they would, as he at least flattered himself, solve themselves. But he might well have exclaimed, as did Sir Robert Walpole, "I never heard that it is a crime to hope for the best";[1] and if Mr. Gladstone's habitual frame of mind at times misled him, it was more often a great stay and help to him. It would, more than anything else, maintain his spirits in times of great trouble and anxiety. "He was"—to use an expressive phrase attributed to Sydney Smith—"like a barometer; the more you pressed him, the higher he rose."[2] He could always see a rift in the clouds; he could always detect in the most depressing outlook some cause for comfort;

[1] See Mr. John Morley's "Walpole," p. 229.

[2] See "Life and Times of Sydney Smith," by Stuart J. Reid, p. 330 (4th edition).

he could always spy in the densest fog land ahead. With him bad news was always exaggerated. He declined to believe that anything which he considered a great calamity would happen till it actually occurred. Though defeat might stare him in the face, he would rest assured up to the last moment that a means of averting it would be found. It was owing to this temperament that no untoward circumstance, no tragic event, no temporary rebuff or failure, disconcerted him. He hardly knew what despondency was. He had the hopefulness and cheerfulness which are usually associated only with the fervor of youth.

Equally fervent was the extraordinary enthusiasm with which he took up questions and advocated causes. When he had once convinced himself of the jus-

tice of a cause, he would throw his whole heart and soul into the furtherance of it; so much so, indeed, that his enthusiasm may at times have almost amounted to fanaticism. But enthusiasm, being as it is a great power in human affairs, was one of the principal causes of his potent influence. No more marked instance of this characteristic of Mr. Gladstone can be found than the manner in which he pleaded the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. In fact, during the last decade of his public life, when he was conscious that time with him was short, he was apt to be less scrupulous than he usually was about the means to which he had resort, if the particular end in view seemed to him to be thereby better promoted.

VIII

HIS ALLEGED LOVE OF POWER AND HIS MANY-SIDEDNESS

INSATIABLE love of power and "greed of office" have constantly been ascribed to Mr. Gladstone; and his actions, lying under this suspicion, have often been misconstrued. The fact is, there were two Mr. Gladstones. There was Mr. Gladstone the student, the man of letters, the lover of a quiet life in his peaceful house in Wales. There was also Mr. Gladstone the political gladiator, the statesman, the lover of Downing Street and the House of Commons.

The two Mr. Gladstones were often, if not constantly, in conflict with one another, resulting in part from the restlessness which is inherent in impulsive natures. Sometimes one got the upper hand; at other times, the other. When the love of power or passion for the work of government seized him, it was not vulgar ambition to acquire notoriety, display, or social standing; for he was essentially unworldly. It was a consciousness of abilities superior to those around him. It was the self-esteem of the man who, according to Aristotle, "thinks himself worthy of great things, being in truth worthy." It was ambition in the highest sense of the word — ambition to turn to public account those talents with which nature had endowed him; and he felt he could not turn them to such account unless he were placed in

a position of responsibility and authority, and had the opportunity of being in command. Indeed, he was only ready to emerge from his peaceful abode at Hawarden and return to the fray when it appeared to him that he had a distinct mission to perform, and when he thought that he saw his way to do something which ought to be done, and which he believed that others could not do. When he conceived that he had completed the task which he had set himself to accomplish, or felt that he could no longer serve with advantage his Sovereign and his country, he was equally anxious — and far oftener so than the public knew — to retire again into private life. Confidential contact with him would have soon satisfied any one how genuinely and frequently tenure of office was a *gene* to him. It was not that he failed

to take interest in his ministerial work. Far from it. He was more than scrupulous and assiduous in his attentions to the affairs of state. It was not only that the sense of public duty was strongly ingrained in him. He was also proud of the honor, and most conscious of the high trust and responsibility which the position of being first minister of the Crown imposed upon him.

But politics were far from being the all in all with Mr. Gladstone. He had many other and greater loves — his theological studies, his antiquarian researches, his general reading, the application of his pen to literary purposes. There were, indeed, no limits to the versatility of his mind.

First and foremost came his passion for reading. He read slowly and most conscientiously. He never skipped a

page or a line. But the number of books through which he plodded every year was astounding. The passages with which he was struck he marked in the margin with a pencil-line or with N. B., or with both; and when he saw reason to demur, he made use of the Italian conjunction — *ma.* By dint of unremitting application, aided by a strikingly retentive memory and well-ordered mind, he acquired a stock of knowledge on a vast variety of subjects, which would have been extraordinary even for a man whose whole life had been that of a student.

It was Homer whom Mr. Gladstone most delighted in reading and studying. To him the Iliad and the Odyssey were, with the exception of the Bible, "the greatest works ever composed." Homer, he used to say, was "poetry-making,

religion-making, and nation-making all combined"; and of all the "extraordinary characteristics" of the ancient poet, the one which most impressed Mr. Gladstone was "the use and choice which Homer made of epithets." Horace was another of his classical loves; and the translation of the Odes afforded a great resource to Mr. Gladstone when his eyesight failed him. Theological study was a still greater attraction to him; and the works of this nature on which he set most store were those of Bishop Butler, whom he regarded as "the greatest and most profound writer among the divines and prelates of the Church of England."

Poetry of varied kinds appealed to him. He believed that the supremacy among poets could not be questioned. Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare were superior to any others. The difficulty

with him was to whom the fourth place should be assigned. For that place he considered that there were four competitors — Æschylus, Virgil, Milton, and Goethe; and, on the whole, he was inclined to give the preference himself to Goethe.

There was probably no modern British author whom Mr. Gladstone admired so much as Walter Scott. The re-reading of the Waverley Novels was a constant source of delight to him through life; and, notwithstanding that they have gone rather out of fashion during the last half of the nineteenth century, he felt sure that they were works that would be "immortal." In his judgment the two *chefs d'œuvre* of the series were "The Bride of Lammermoor" and "Kenilworth." He believed that Æschylus was the only other man who could have

written the first; and that the second could have been produced by no one else but Shakespeare. It is worth noting in connection with his admiration for Walter Scott that he ranked Lockhart's life of the great novelist "the first of all biographies."

Cognate to his literary studies was the pleasure with which he perused catalogues of old books. He welcomed the receipt of lists of second-hand books from booksellers all over the kingdom; and it was a special interest to him, when he went through the catalogues, to see if any of his own works were included among the lots, and at what price they were marked. By constant and continuous purchases during many years, he succeeded in putting together a library of about 28,000 volumes; and when he recently came to rearrange his books, for

transfer to a building in the village of Hawarden, he was rather distressed to find that duplicates amounted to nearly three per cent.; but as he had no catalogue, and had to trust entirely to his memory, the wonder was that the percentage of duplicates was not higher.

Borrowing the phraseology of political economy, and substituting mind for matter, he would liken reading to "imports," and writing to "exports." In his own case, vast and manifold though the "imports" were, they were nearly balanced by the "exports," both in amount and diversity. A good illustration of this readiness of pen, combined with versatility of mind, is to be found in a recent magazine article.[1] A list is there given of the contributions which Mr. Gladstone made to that magazine from time to

[1] See "Nineteenth Century," June, 1898.

time. It appears that in the space of nineteen and a half years the number of his contributions amounted to no less than sixty-seven, and they included such heterogeneous subjects as Homer and Sheridan, the Olympian System and Free Trade, the "Slicing of Hector" and "Robert Elsmere," Bishop Butler and Professor Huxley, the Dawn of Creation and the Queen's Jubilee, Queen Elizabeth and Daniel O'Connell, the "Color Sense" and "Electoral Facts," the Solar Theory and Oppressed Nationalities.

The rapidity with which he wrote somewhat militated against neatness and polish of style. But his prose compositions have, I think, been generally underrated. Though the oratorical style ran through them, yet in his volumes of "Gleanings," for instance, there are often

to be found passages containing great beauty of diction, and rising to a considerable height of literary excellence. However that may be, he was decidedly critical about the style of others, and most exacting about grammatical correctness.

A grammatical error, to which he had a rooted objection in spite of its being countenanced by many authors of acknowledged standing, was the use of the "false genitive."[1] I remember once receiving quite a homily from him on his having detected, in a letter which I had written by his instructions, the introduction of this misuse of the genitive. He

[1] To give an illustration of the false genitive: "I object to my *friend being abused.*" In order to be correct one should say: "I object to my *friend's* being abused," which is awkward; or, "I object to the abusing *of* my friend." If it were a case of using the pronoun the grammatical offence would be at once apparent. No one would say: "I object to *him* being abused"; but "I object to *his* being abused."

was always on the lookout for it when he was reading, and had, he said, traced the "vulgarism" back to the time of Charles II. He believed that it was nowhere to be found in Shakespeare, or in such pure writers of English as Addison, Swift, and Johnson, and he defied any one to discover its occurrence in the Bible or in Macaulay's works. The two men of recent days whom he regarded as the greatest masters of English writing were Cardinal Newman and Mr. Ruskin.

Perhaps Mr. Gladstone's own pen showed to greatest advantage in inditing letters and notes, and in no respect more than in the wealth of expression. He might have to write a dozen or more letters in rapid succession, offering appointments or announcing the Queen's pleasure about dignities and honors. Each note would not only be quite

differently worded, but in the structure of no two of them would there be anything in common. Nobody had a happier knack of saying the right thing when it was a question of tendering congratulations, paying somebody a compliment, expressing sympathy, or offering encouragement to those situated in difficult circumstances.

His own handwriting was neat; but, owing to the curious formation of some of the letters of the alphabet, it was not easy to read, at least in later days, unless one had acquired great familiarity with it. He highly appreciated clear handwriting of others. Nothing tried his patience more than letters written in niggling or scrawling hands. He liked a bold and large character, of the kind of which old Etonians are apt fondly to claim a monopoly; but he himself

awarded the palm to the handwriting of one of the most distinguished of Harrovians, Lord Palmerston, — a handwriting which Mr. Gladstone regarded as "truly noble."

His reading and writing, however, versatile though it was, by no means exhausted his many-sidedness. He was a decidedly good linguist. The French language came very easily to him, and he not only read and talked it freely, but he could make a public speech in it. He was equally at home with Italian, and he used to deplore the neglect of the study of that language, to which our language "owes so much." Though he did not speak German, he read it with facility. While he neither was, nor claimed to be, a connoisseur of art, yet he took great delight in it. He was a regular visitor of picture-galleries, and

often frequented shops containing *objets d'art.* In the course of his life, he made several collections. At one time it was china, at another time ivories, and at another time (so-called) Italian jewels. There was no pretension about his collections. The attraction to him was not intrinsic value, but love for the beautiful, and the interest which the exercise of his own judgment and taste furnished. To him throughout life, variety of interest, taken up with genuine zest, was a necessary concomitant of activity of mind; while to variety of employment he attributed the secret of his being able to throw off so easily the cares of state, and thus of retaining abnormal powers of vitality to such an advanced age.

IX

HIS ENERGY AND POWERS OF CONCENTRATION — HIS INDUSTRY — METHOD — SYSTEM OF WORK

NOT less remarkable than Mr. Gladstone's multiplicity of interests was his energy, of which his mind could call to its aid an apparently unlimited amount. By dint of that energy which welled up from the depths of his being, he was able to take heroic resolves, and to overcome obstacles which to others seemed insurmountable.

Still more extraordinary than his energy was the way in which he would, in

the most dogged manner, concentrate his whole mind on the particular subject with which at the moment he was occupied. With him it was one thing at a time. Whatever he might happen to be doing, he did it with all his might and main, with a determination which it was necessary to witness in order to appreciate to the full. It occurred to one who was a close witness shrewdly to liken Mr. Gladstone's mind to a ship constructed on the latest and most approved principles, in that it consisted of water-tight compartments. Though no man had a wider range of thought, yet when at the bidding of his will the partition doors were shut down, nothing that might happen elsewhere in the vessel would have any disturbing effect on the particular compartment in which for the moment his mind was concentrated. Nor was

there any limit to the pains which he would bestow on any work on which his heart was really bent.

It was the same with his amusements as with his more serious occupations. When engaged in tree-felling, he thought of nothing but his axe, and how best to wield it. When at the theatre, he threw his heart and soul into the piece; he was keen to follow every incident of the plot, and every sentence of the actors. To music he would listen appreciatively and attentively, and in his last days music seemed more than anything else to distract his thoughts and allay his sufferings. One of the few games which he was wont to play after dinner was backgammon, and no child could have played the game with greater zest. He was as pleased by winning as he was disappointed by losing. He rarely, if

ever, touched cards; he considered that they conduced too much to gambling, of which he had a horror. He once said to me that he regarded gambling as "nothing short of damnable. What can be the fun of winning other people's money?" He considered that one was as much accountable to God for the expenditure of one's money as for the use of one's talents. And "How could this be so," he would say, "when one's money disappeared of its own accord?"

Anything like impurity of thought or language was as abhorrent to him as gambling. In this, as in many other respects, the boy was father of the man. A characteristic story is told of him by more than one of his contemporaries at Eton. There was given at the "Christopher" an annual dinner, which was attended by the leading boys of the school.

It was customary on the occasion to give an improper toast. "Gladstone was present once, and on the proposal of the toast he turned his glass downward." One must cast one's self back to the days of boyhood to appreciate adequately the strength of character which such independence of action necessitated.

Unceasing industry, to which he owed so much in life, was a habit which he also acquired in boyhood. At Eton he had, according to his own admission, attained a fair amount of dogged diligence with his school-work. He ascribed this diligence to the influence of Dr. Hawtrey. But Mr. Gladstone did not consider that he knew what real work was till he commenced his university career. At Oxford, for which, till the end of his days, he cherished such filial

affection, he aimed at devoting twelve hours a day to study, and he owned to keeping up that average for a considerable while. But the time upon which, while an undergraduate, he looked back with the greatest satisfaction, was spent in one of the long vacations at Cuddesdon in company with Mr. Anstice[1] and my father,[2] both of whom were Mr. Gladstone's seniors by one year. To those weeks of assiduous reading he believed that he mostly owed his success in the final schools, resulting in the attainment of a "double first," which he regarded as a much better test of a man's worth in 1831 than now, because in those days the attainment of a "double first" involved working up at one and the same time subjects for "mathe-

[1] Joseph Anstice, a distinguished scholar (1808–36).
[2] Walter Kerr Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury (1808–69).

matics" as well as "greats," and being examined simultaneously in both schools.

This faculty for industry, which was matured at Oxford, stood by him throughout his long career, and, extraordinary as were his powers of work till within a few months of his death, it is probable that persons who were only associated with him during the last twenty years of his life can form but an adequate idea of the prodigiousness of these powers when he was in the prime of life.

His industry was greatly furthered by economy of time, which he exercised in the most rigid manner. He never wasted a single moment; every chink in the day was filled up; and he consequently always seemed able to get through anything and everything, thus constituting a good illustration of the paradox that

the more busy a man is the more leisure does he apparently possess. This habit of economizing time was aided by a kindred habit of punctuality; he never failed to keep an appointment to the moment. His daily life was as regular as clockwork. Order and method, to which he attached the greatest importance "as a means of increasing power and efficiency for good," he carried to great perfection. He was a pattern of tidiness. No book was out of its place in his room. There was never any litter on his table; and every drawer in it was arranged most nattily. He would resort to ingenious reconstructions of a sentence in order to avoid an erasure; and no blot was ever allowed to soil a page of his own letters. His papers were stowed away with unsurpassed neatness, and the muniment room, con-

sisting of the fire-proof annex which he built a few years ago to his "sanctum" at Hawarden, will be the wonder and admiration of those who may some day have access to it. In that octagon chamber there will be found all the letters which he thought worth preserving out of his vast and varied correspondence, and also many memoranda and other papers of interest. The aggregate contents of the chamber must be enormous; indeed, he made a computation that the letters alone amounted more nearly to 100,000 than 50,000.

His orderliness greatly helped him to keep pace with his correspondence and other work; but a still greater assistance to him was his capacity for using other men's brains, and for reducing to a minimum his own manual labor — in a word, the power which he had trained

himself to acquire of "devolving" work on others. "No man," he once wrote to me, "could dream, until by experience he knew, to what extent *devolution* can be carried — how it strengthens the feeble knees, and thus sustains the fainting heart." By lengthened experience he had reduced devolution to a highly perfected system. Between himself and his principal private secretaries there were no secrets. It was, he held, essential that they should see everything and know everything; otherwise their usefulness might be materially impaired. Accordingly, in the absence of specific directions to the contrary, they were at liberty to open all his letters, no heed being taken of pleas for privacy, however emphatic they might be, unless, indeed, resort had been had to two envelopes. The letters when opened had

to be so folded as to present as far as possible a uniform size, and the size which, with certain exceptions, was required to be observed, was the size given by notepaper which, when both sides of it are laid out, folds into three — a size to which the folding of larger paper conveniently adapts itself. The letters when folded had to be docketed. The docket was made either on the letter itself, if space permitted, or on a wrapper consisting of a half-sheet of square or foolscap paper, in which the letter was enveloped. The docket was headed with the date — the day, month, and year. Under the date came the name of the correspondent, and then followed the important part of the docket. If it was a letter which was extremely brief, or which seemed to require to be read by Mr. Gladstone in full, a cross (+) in the

left-hand corner of the docket served to indicate this to him, and the notation of the bare subject or subjects then sufficed. If it were a letter which apparently did not need to be personally perused by him, or were one written in a diffuse or illegible style, there had to be made a concise précis of its contents clearly written. Below the précis there might, at the discretion of the private secretary, be drafted the terms or heads of a reply, for Mr. Gladstone's approval.

When his correspondence reached him in this advanced condition, he proceeded to dispose of each letter in one of three ways, in the choice of which he was mainly influenced by the importance of the writer and of the subject-matter. Either he would write the answer himself, or, after settling the gist of the reply, he would himself prefix the address and affix his

signature, writing (as he called it) the "head" and the "tail," or he would leave the correspondent to be answered by the private secretary. Every letter which he wrote with his own hand, except on really trivial matters, had to be copied. Whether the copy was entered in a large letter-book, or made on a separate sheet, depended on his having made one "tick" (✓) or two "ticks" (✓✓) at the bottom of the first page. His usual direction was that recourse should be had to the first alternative; the second one, as a rule, being adopted when the letter was one of supreme importance, or one to which he was likely to have to refer immediately. It was left to the private secretary to keep and to arrange all letters when answered, and all papers when dealt with, except some chosen few, which Mr. Gladstone had

some reason or other for having in his own custody; and the indication for such separate treatment was that he refolded them himself more narrowly.

It was only his important correspondence of which he disposed regularly day by day. With the rest of it, which was unceremoniously labelled "rubbish," he dealt once a week after it had been carefully sorted and classified; and by this means he secured a cursory survey of the whole of his correspondence at an extraordinarily small expenditure of labor and time. To him the nature of the "rubbish" was not without significance; for he regarded it as an indication of the drift of public opinion, and of the questions on which the attention of the country was principally fixed, at the moment. To all the writers, individual and corporate (except to those who were

well-established lunatics), he required acknowledgments or answers to be sent, though some of the replies might be couched in stereotyped phraseology, and others embodied on a lithographed form.

A clearly defined system of devolution was more important and necessary to Mr. Gladstone than to most modern statesmen; for he would never take advantage of the facilities of shorthand; and consequently all other "short cuts" had in his case to be turned to the fullest account, in order to economize time, which he had such a horror of wasting.

Equally abhorrent to him was every other waste — whether of stationery, food, or money. The administration of his private affairs was essentially careful. A dignified frugality characterized his household arrangements. But, while there was no ostentation, there was no-

thing mean or stingy about him. He was always ready to subscribe to charitable objects, and to afford relief where relief was really wanted. He, indeed, not unfrequently did most liberal acts. He was careful to know exactly how his affairs "stood"; and even in time of the greatest pressure he did not fail to keep his own personal accounts. He paid frequent visits to his London bankers, "Sir S. Scott and Co.," which firm had, to his regret, lost its individuality by having latterly amalgamated with a joint stock company. He watched with regularity the movement of stocks in which he had an interest, perusing with care the lists of securities perodically sent to him by his brokers at Glasgow, Messrs. Watson and Smith. But the item which afforded him most satisfaction was any receipt which he might

derive from his literary labors. Such earnings he entered separately in a little book kept for the purpose; and the entries were made with that pride which is characteristic of amateur authors.

There was another small book which with equal regularity he entered up almost daily, and that was the diary which he kept throughout life. It was a ledger-like-looking volume in miniature. In it there were, I believe, no commentaries made or opinions expressed. The entries were strictly limited to recording in the most succinct manner the things which he had done, and the persons to whom he had written. During a few months preceding his last illness, he did write down some notes which may be of use to his biographer. But he was never to be persuaded to undertake an autobiographical work — not even by an

astounding offer which was once made to him by a respectable firm of publishers in the United States, though the offer had, he admitted, temptations for him for the sake of those who would succeed him. He used at times to complain that by the free use made of his correspondence in the Lives of some of his contemporaries, his own biography was being written piecemeal with consequent disadvantages; and latterly he exercised much greater caution about permitting the publication of his own letters.

X

HIS ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY AND COMMAND OF TEMPER — A DAY'S WORK

ONLY those who had official intercourse with Mr. Gladstone could adequately gauge the administrative capacity which he showed while holding high office under the Crown. Indeed, his capacity for transacting public business, to which for so many years he applied himself with such assiduity and zest, could not be surpassed. It is decision combined with sound judgment which perhaps more than anything else constitutes the root of good administra-

tion. A man who sees too clearly both sides of a question, and thus wavers between different opinions, will never properly cope with the work that devolves upon a minister. It is better for him to make up his mind wrongly than not at all. He should, of course, weigh maturely all the considerations that bear on the subject which is before him; and in doing so he will do well to think of the morrow as well as of the day; but there must be no timidity about the consequences of his acts. He must be prepared to take upon himself an unlimited amount of responsibility. He must be willing to master details, however dry and technical they may be; for the knowledge which he has of the business in hand must be thorough. He should be resourceful and suggestive. If one solution of a knotty point is not success-

ful, he must be ready with a second. The confidence between himself and the heads of his department should be mutual. He is right to be critical, but he should not be hypercritical. Let him amend freely a draft memorandum or dispatch in passages which incorrectly represent his views or which are glaringly faulty. But let him accept the draft if, on the whole, it carries out his ideas, though perhaps not exactly in the form in which he would have written it himself. The substance is that which is material, not the form. A minister, moreover, must have the faculty of discharging public business with promptitude. He should always be up to time with his work. The wheels of the ministerial coach should never be clogged with arrears. He must be scrupulous about keeping his appointments with

punctuality, so that he may waste neither his own time, nor that of those around him. He must be easily accessible to others. Though he cannot be too businesslike, yet he must not be "too busy" to attend to this or that matter. He is right to be a strict disciplinarian; but he should not be wanting in consideration for others, or unmindful of their convenience. As in domestic circles, so in ministerial circles — the master to a great extent makes the servant. All these qualifications for success as an administrator were possessed in a marked degree by Mr. Gladstone, who, moreover, combined with them a high sense of honor and duty; and thus not only did he gain the confidence of all those who served under him or worked for him, but inspired them with zeal, loyalty, and enthusiasm. One of the secrets

of this inspiration was that, while he was more than ordinarily exacting, or (to use his own words) "a ferocious master," he was ever ready to mete out, perhaps too lavishly, praise to those who had done what he considered to be meritorious work. He was free with his criticism. But it was not all criticism, and no approval. He never hesitated to award praise where praise was due, any more than he hesitated to resort to censure when in his judgment there had been negligence or want of intelligence.

Another attraction of the man to those who were privileged to be brought in close contact with him was that he was rarely, if ever, cross. He had by nature a certain amount of temper, but he had the faculty of keeping it under wonderful control. His highly strung nervous temperament, particularly when any ex-

citing incident was impending, such as the delivery of an important speech, might at times produce a certain fretfulness and fussiness, which the presence of any one not quite in touch with him would convert into slight irritability. But notwithstanding all the many worries and trials which necessarily beset a minister, and which probably beset Mr. Gladstone to an unusual degree, he was seldom heard to say a hasty word, and never heard to use coarse language. Occasionally, it is true, he showed considerable impatience. He was somewhat unreasonable about waiting for a reply to a note, or for a decision from an individual to whom he had perhaps made an offer, or put a question requiring much consideration and deliberation. Such impatience, however, did not proceed from loss of temper. It was the

result of an impetuous nature, and an inability to brook what appeared to him to be undue delay.

What harassed him most and seemed to place the severest strain upon him was anything in the nature of personal questions, such as dissension in the Cabinet, a threat of resignation from a colleague, an application from a friend which he thought unreasonable, a decision which involved the balancing of the claims of one individual against those of another for political preferment. He was also apt to be specially worried when he had under his consideration appointments to high places in the Church, feeling as he did that they entailed unusual responsibility upon him. Apart from these occasions, he was singularly calm, collected, and self-possessed, no matter how seriously "out of joint"

times with him might be. I remember seeing him on the morning after his Home Rule Bill had been rejected by the House of Commons in 1886. The prevalent impression out of doors, no doubt, was that any one venturing to intrude upon him that morning would have found him vexed, if not angered, and mortified, if not morose. He was, however, on the contrary, perfectly self-composed, quietly reading a novel, which seemed to interest him more than the result of the division of the previous night. He put his book down with quite an effort, and did not exhibit the smallest symptom of rancor or resentment. He admitted the gravity of the catastrophe, but declared that his only concern was the unhappy portion of the United Kingdom whose lot he had hoped to make happier.

During the years in which, as private secretary, I was brought in closest contact with him (1880–85), he was well advanced in age, and had to nurse his strength to the utmost. Accordingly, a day's work to him at that time assumed a proportion very different to that which it assumed when he was younger and more vigorous. But during his second administration, his powers of work were still considerable. No matter how late he had been detained over-night at the House of Commons, he seldom rose later than nine o'clock. After breakfast, he would peruse the morning's newspapers, and then, till about eleven o'clock generally, devote the remainder of the time to the book that he happened to have in hand. If public business was specially heavy or urgent, he would resist the temptation of his

book, and busy himself with drawing up a memorandum or writing some letter. But he disliked being disturbed before the recognized hour at which his official day began. At eleven o'clock, or a little later, he appeared in his official room; and between that hour and luncheon-time he would interview the government "whip," and dispose of his correspondence and other papers, which had by that time been reduced to a manageable form, and were brought to him by his private secretary. He would also see any colleague or other person with whom he had made an appointment; but he resented the intrusion of unexpected visitors, however urgent might be their business, and however good their claims were to be admitted to his presence. Indeed, if one who was not a *persona grata* presented himself without

due warning, Mr. Gladstone's face would assume a very black look. After luncheon, he would take either a short drive or a short walk, and then present himself at the House of Commons, being careful to arrange his arrival there at the nick of time.[1] Unless his continued presence in the House was necessary, he would leave it for his accustomed cup of tea at five o'clock. He preferred retracing his steps to Downing Street for this purpose; but, if that were not possible, tea was served to him in his room behind the Speaker's chair. Reëntering the House, he would rarely leave his seat on the Treasury bench till eight o'clock, when he again returned to his official residence

[1] One of the means which Mr. Gladstone devised for saving his time in the House of Commons was an arrangement, which he made in the Parliament of 1880–85 with the authorities of the House, that all questions addressed to the Leader should be placed at the end of the list on the notice-paper — an arrangement from which his successors have derived material advantage.

for dinner. The sense of public duty was so strong upon him that he could seldom be persuaded to remain at home in the evening, however fagged he might be; and immediately after he had dined, he drove back to the House. There he would stay till the end of the sitting, when he almost invariably walked home. No matter how late it was, he would never take any further nourishment beyond an occasional cup of tea, and without a moment's dawdling he would retire to bed. However exciting might be the scene which he had quitted, his power of falling asleep, almost at once, rarely deserted him — a power which he counted among the principal blessings of his life. "He put off his cares when he put off his clothes," as Sir Robert Walpole said of himself.[1]

[1] See "Walpole," by Mr. John Morley, p. 109.

If Parliament were not sitting, the programme of Mr. Gladstone's afternoons was slightly varied. Guided by the weather, he took a longer walk or longer drive, which generally ended in his paying a call on some friend at about five o'clock. On his return home, he was ready again to attend to business matters; but so far as the interval till dinner was not required to be devoted to this purpose, he would give himself up to relaxation by reading and resting. He would, more often than not, dine at the houses of friends, or, when opportunities occurred, he would present himself at "The Club" or at "Grillions"; and after walking the whole or part of the way home, he would straightway retire to his bedroom.

XI

HOW MR. GLADSTONE EXERCISED CROWN PATRONAGE AND JUDGED CHARACTER

ONE of the most difficult duties which a Prime Minister of England has to discharge is the appointment of the right men to political and permanent offices, and the bestowal of decorations and hereditary titles with proper discrimination. What adds vastly to the difficulty is that he is rarely a free agent, and can rarely exercise his own unfettered judgment, so many are the political considerations and party exigencies that come into play.

Mistakes are consequently often not the Prime Minister's own making; though he is none the less himself responsible to the Queen and the public for every recommendation which he may submit. Mr. Gladstone regarded the exercise of Crown patronage as an important trust, to which he was bound to give his best attention. Attaching to its distribution there are inevitable cares and annoyances; but he looked upon it as part of the ministerial day's work which could not be shirked; and he would not have denied that he found a pleasurable excitement in proffering a lord-lieutenancy or a peerage,[1] an order or a baronetcy.[2]

1 Mr. Gladstone was responsible for the creation of 67 new peerages (of which 22 are now extinct); and on his recommendation 14 Scottish and Irish peers were called to the House of Lords. He was also responsible for 7 promotions in the peerage — 1 dukedom, 2 marquisates, 1 earl, and 3 viscounts.

2 The number of baronetcies created on Mr. Gladstone's recommendation was 97.

He would fain have ruled out of consideration the claims of those who importunately pressed upon him their own deserts, and have applied to them the nurse's injunction to children, that "those who ask don't get." But such a counsel of perfection was not open to him any more than it is to other prime ministers.

The Crown patronage the disposal of which interested him most was ecclesiastical preferment; and of all the appointments due to his recommendation, that which probably afforded him the most genuine excitement was the appointment of an Archbishop of Canterbury, which fell to his lot in 1883. It may be said that the trouble which Mr. Gladstone took in making selections for ecclesiastical appointments was, on the whole, well repaid. His own knowledge of the clerical world was always

great, and he would constantly supplement it by making inquiries of ecclesiastical authorities, and by satisfying himself personally of the preaching powers of a clergyman who stood high on the list for preferment. Assisted by such knowledge, and by the advice of such dignitaries of the Church as Dean Wellesley of Windsor, and Dean Church of St. Paul's, Mr. Gladstone probably made fewer mistakes than most other prime ministers in discharging this duty, and in the discharge of it he was very scrupulous about meting out, so far as was feasible, equal justice to the claims of High, Low, and Broad Churchmen.

With respect to other patronage he took equal pains to weigh and sift claims with conscientiousness and impartiality. One of the rules to which he liked to adhere was not to appoint men

straight into the Cabinet. Every aspirant to a high place in the counsels of the nation should, he thought, go through the "treadmill," however short a period of probation it might be. Indeed, without the training and discipline acquired by the holding of subordinate office, Mr. Gladstone considered that a man rarely became an administrator of the first class. He was occasionally hampered by this rule when he determined to observe it; but what was more frequently responsible for his making an ill-judged appointment was his being endowed with a limited stock of what is commonly called "knowledge of the world." Like his great forerunner, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone was not gifted with intuitive perception of individual character.

For the same reason he was not always happy in the manner in which he

handled his colleagues. Sometimes he would insufficiently flatter their vanity. At other times he would not adequately recognize the position which they occupied or the power which they wielded He was apt to be somewhat easily imposed upon and taken in. He unduly appraised the worth of some men, and unduly depreciated the value of others. This deficiency was in great part due to an almost childlike simplicity. He failed to "see through" some people, while others had no difficulty in appearing to him in a more favorable light than their qualities justified. Nor did he always take into sufficient account the deteriorating effect of age on those who, in younger days, had rendered efficient service to the state, or the claims of a rising generation. He forgot that all men were not endowed with the same peren-

nial powers as himself, and he disliked facing the pain and wrench of severing himself from old and valued colleagues, who had long borne with him the heat and brunt of the fight. The fact is, he could not bring himself to harden his heart. Again, he was somewhat lacking in a sense of proportion, which want palpably increased in his later days. His energy would hardly be less if some trifling matter were in question than if the fate of the Empire were at stake. He was apt to see everything through one pair of spectacles — the pair which he happened to be wearing at the moment. Consequently his perspective was not always correct, and his judgment was not unfrequently at fault. Nevertheless, when to his colleagues and those around him his judgment seemed most in error, it would happen — and indeed

not rarely — that he turned out to be right in the end. I have often heard it declared that it was absurd for him to attempt the passage of this and that bill, that such and such a step was bound to be fatal in the House of Commons, that he was living in a fool's paradise. But, in the long run, he proved to be a truer prophet than his critics. In fact, had he at times taken his own line more decidedly, he would have avoided many a political fiasco, which resulted from his disliking to break with his colleagues, and thus acquiescing in compromises.

Closely connected with his want of discrimination was his credulity, and his inability to suspect mischief. His credulity was unbounded; it, indeed, extended to a belief in the existence of certain things which are ordinarily regarded as mythical. He regarded sus-

picion (to use his own words) as "the most obstinate among the besetting sins of politicians, even in men of upright nature."[1] This tendency to suspect everybody was, in his opinion, so common to all statesmen that I have heard him say that the only exception that he knew was Lord Aberdeen. Mr. Gladstone might well have included himself in the exceptions. There was not a particle of suspicion in his nature. With him there was "wisdom in a policy of trust, and folly in a policy of mistrust." This spirit of trustfulness actuated him in many ways, and in no way more than in his attitude toward "the masses." That attitude admits of being briefly summarized: "Trust them, and they will trust you." It was the same spirit that permeated his conduct toward

[1] See "Gleanings of Past Years," vol i. p. 39.

Irishmen. So long as a "righteous policy" was pursued toward them, he believed that "all the follies that Ireland might commit, however much they hampered good government for the time being, could not in the end frustrate the action or endanger the security of the Empire." It was with him, "Be just, and fear not."

XII

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS AND POWERS OF MEMORY

CHARACTERIZED by great modesty and humility, even to a fault, Mr. Gladstone could rarely be induced to allude to his own parliamentary achievements. But occasional glimpses of his mind would be forthcoming. Of the dozen Budgets[1] for which he was re-

[1] The twelve Budgets with which Mr. Gladstone's name is connected were opened (1) on April 18, 1853; (2) on March 6, 1854; (3) on July 18, 1859; (4) on February 10, 1860; (5) on April 15, 1861; (6) on April 3, 1862; (7) on April 16, 1863; (8) on April 7, 1864; (9) on April 27, 1865; (10) on May 3, 1866; (11) on April 4, 1881; and (12) on April 4, 1882. He also brought in a supplementary Budget in connection with the Repeal of the Malt Duty on June 10, 1880.

sponsible, the one which he considered to be by far his "greatest effort" (in every sense of the word) was his Budget of 1853, the principal feature of which was the Succession Duty Bill. In connection with the construction of that measure, he put forward his fullest powers, and he never displayed greater mastery of technical detail than in this connection. The only member of the government from whom he derived material assistance was the Solicitor-General, Sir R. Bethell (afterward Lord Westbury); and to the piloting of the bill through committee he used to allude with evident delight, recalling with laughter the duet-like character of the discussion, by reason of its being mainly carried on by "Malins"[1] and "Mullings."[2] He con-

[1] Mr. Malins, M. P. for Wallingford; afterward Vice-Chancellor Sir R. Malins.

[2] Mr. Mullings, M. P. for Cirencester.

sidered that the Irish Land Act of 1881 was the most "difficult" measure which he ever conducted through the House of Commons; while the measure upon which he once admitted to me that he looked back "with most satisfaction" was the bill of 1869, for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church — an institution which he had gradually come to consider as "absolutely indefensible." He was still less given to referring to his oratorical successes. Indeed, I never heard him specify any particular speech or speeches to which he himself awarded the palm. But I recollect being at dinner with him on February 8, 1882, just after he had delivered himself at length in the debate on the Address, and his turning to his children, and saying, "You

will never hear anything better from me."[1]

But though he would hardly ever allude to, and never boast of, any of his constructive measures or oratorical achievements, yet he frequently prided himself on trivial performances. He used, for instance, smilingly to say that, at any rate, he had one claim to be gratefully remembered by posterity, and that was, as the inventor of a method for abbreviating the representation of millions. The use of the small "m" had long been recognized as the symbol for thousands. He had applied the use of the same letter to millions by the simple

[1] Hansard, third series, vol. cclxvi. pp. 160–183. The speech was a discursive one, as the occasion naturally demanded, touching upon such various subjects as the Duke of Albany's betrothal, Egypt, French Commercial Treaty, Free Trade, and Ireland's Land Act.

process of turning its "tail" backward. Thus, while 5m. represented 5000, he made 5m̄ do duty for 5,000,000, thus dispensing with the necessity of six ciphers. He had his symbol for this and his symbol for that — each calculated to economize time and labor. To give another instance, he had signs for different responses to invitations. To the names of those invited he would prefix a stroke (thus —), as evidence of their having been asked. If the answer was an acceptance, he would cross the line (thus +). If it was a refusal, he would add another parallel stroke (thus =). If somebody had first accepted, and then subsequently was prevented from coming, he would surround the cross with a circle (thus ⊕).

One of the things that could not fail to astonish those who came in frequent

contact with Mr. Gladstone was his power of memory. It was not only that an inexhaustible store of knowledge was stowed away in the recesses of his brain, but that he was able to draw upon the store at pleasure. He could always cite some precedent, quote a name, and furnish a date with extraordinary accuracy. Indeed, any one venturing to "measure swords" with him about an historical incident would almost certainly emerge from the contest in a worsted condition. In his later years he used to lament that his memory was not what it had been formerly; but I can call to mind two instances calculated to show that, even when he was an octogenarian, his powers in this respect were marvellous. When he was young, he had translated into English an ode by Manzoni on the death of Napoleon the Great — an ode which

Mr. Gladstone considered "the only good thing ever written about the end of that great career." In 1892, apparently with a view mainly of testing the strength of his memory, he determined to see whether he could recollect the original of the ode. He had entirely forgotten his own translation.[1] But by slow degrees — by dint of hard "digging," or "fishing up" (as he called it) the scattered fragments — he succeeded in writing down 104 out of the 108 lines of the poem in the Italian tongue. About two years later he set himself another task. Having served as a Cabinet minister in nine administrations, extending over fifty years, his colleagues in the Cabinet had been very numerous. He wished to

[1] See second edition of the "Volume of Translations," by Lord Lyttelton and Mr. Gladstone. In the first edition, somewhat curiously, only one stanza of the Manzoni Ode is given.

know how far he could write down a complete list of them. By a similar process, he succeeded in enumerating, correctly, sixty-eight names out of seventy, notwithstanding the many shifts and changes which took place in the composition of the Cabinets. A record of not less than seventy colleagues is almost unprecedented;[1] and it is interesting to note, by the way, that the oldest, as compared with himself, was the Duke of Wellington, born in 1769; while the youngest was Mr. Asquith, born in 1852.

[1] Both Lord Palmerston and Lord Lansdowne eclipsed Mr. Gladstone in the number of Cabinet colleagues. Lord Palmerston is to be credited with 76, and Lord Lansdowne with 74.

XIII

HIS PERSONAL CHARM AND HOME LIFE

THE personal fascination of the man was so great that it could only be properly understood by those who were brought in social contact with him. One had to stand close by him — to "go behind scenes"— in order to appreciate in full the dexterity of the magician's wand. The moment one came into his near presence one felt the peculiar spell. When brought face to face with him political antagonists and detractors succumbed to it equally with personal friends and admirers. In short,

people were drawn to him in spite of themselves. His magnetism could not be resisted. It is recorded that George North[1] once met Mr. Pitt in a country house, and wrote that he was sorry to find that "so bad a politician was so very pleasant a man."[2] Many opponents of Mr. Gladstone, who casually met him in social circles, not only made similar confessions, but also often had the grace to admit that their preconceived notions of him had been mistaken. The spell was partly attributable to his natural courtesy, charm of manner, and polish of bygone days, and perhaps still more so to the power that he had of making those around him at their ease, of placing himself *en rapport* with them, of

1 Son of Lord North (third Earl of Guilford), Prime Minister.

2 See Lord Holland's "Memoirs of the Whig Party," vol. i. p. 34.

unbending himself to them without the least affectation. It is probable that he never knew what it was to be bored. He certainly never allowed himself to exhibit any sign of boredom. He was the same to every one — the same to the lowest as to the highest in the land, the same to a foe as to a friend, the same to a nonentity as to a notoriety, the same to the school-room girl as to the most fashionable lady of society. He never exhibited intellectual superiority. He always placed himself on a level with a person with whom he was conversing. With the untold number of his interests, it would seldom happen that some subject in common could not be found, and so wide was his range of information that there was hardly any matter about which he did not know more than his neighbor. But if by chance the conver-

sation turned on a topic with which he had little or no acquaintance, he showed himself a keen listener, being ever anxious to enlarge his store of knowledge. He was not only the acme of "agreeableness" in society; he was a brilliant conversationalist. Whether the subject under discussion was a question of high politics or some insignificant matter about dress or fashion, he threw himself into it with equal earnestness and vigor. One thing specially noticeable about Mr. Gladstone's table-talk was the absence of all offences against the canons of syntax. In ordinary conversation most people unconsciously pay little or no heed to the grammatical construction of their sentences. So slipshod, indeed, is their talk, that if it were taken down word for word by a shorthand writer, they would be surprised at the badness

of their own English. But in the case of Mr. Gladstone, so easy and natural was the flow of words which always fell into the right place at the right moment, and so ingrained in him was the strict observance of grammar, that his talk would at any time have stood the ordeal of a verbatim report. And yet there was nothing pedantic about his conversational language.

He was not a wit himself, but he appreciated it in others. He held that Aristophanes and Shakespeare had claims to be considered the two greatest wits in literature. He was by no means deficient in humor, and had a strong sense of the ridiculous. Although he was not quick to see a refined jest or a *bon mot*, yet he greatly enjoyed common jokes; and in telling or listening to stories, he laughed heartily.

It has been said that great genius is incompatible with domestic happiness. If that be a rule, Mr. Gladstone proved a notable exception to it. His home life was singularly happy. He was a devoted husband; and, as is well known, that devotion was continuously reciprocated by the wife who had shared his joys and sorrows, his triumphs and defeats, for nearly sixty years, and whose one absorbing thought in life was how to minister to his wants, how to lighten the strain upon him, how to conceal worries from him, how to save him trouble, how to devise relaxation for him, how "to keep him in sickness and in health." He was also the fondest of parents. His sons and daughters, all in their respective ways, were "the apple of his eye," and their constant care and devotion to him were ever a source of

comfort, pleasure, and gratification to him. In the last interview which I had with him, a few weeks before his death, he told me that one of the reasons why he so much wished to die was the feeling that he was overtaxing the kindness and attention of those nearest and dearest to him.

In short, to see Mr. Gladstone at his best, it was necessary to see him in his home at Hawarden. Several faithful representations of his home life have lately appeared; and, therefore, any attempt to reproduce it here would be a repetition of that which has already been better told. What struck one most was the dignified simplicity of the establishment, the courteous manner in which he played the part of host, the ease with which he unbent to his guests, the unreserve with which he discoursed, princi-

pally at table. Anybody who visited him at Hawarden in the expectation of hearing him hold forth on the politics of the day, whether he happened to be in power or in opposition, would have been grievously disappointed. He was always ready to draw freely on his store of reminiscences, to discuss current topics, to express his views on books and persons. But contemporary politics were nearly a tabooed subject.

XIV

HIS RELIGIOUS VIEWS

IT is always a delicate matter to refer to any man's religious principles. But, as religion was one of the principal keys to Mr. Gladstone's character, it is difficult to omit all reference to that sacred subject in his case. It was religion that inspired the deepest motives which actuated his conduct. Indeed, it animated his whole life, public as well as private. It was with him a great controlling force and the leading principle of his actions. In his mind belief in "a Divine governing power, to which we

are to account for every thought we conceive, for every word we utter,"[1] was implanted when he was a boy; it there took fixed root, and it ever deepened its hold in that congenial soil. The truth of Christianity was to him the most assured reality. Doubts can hardly be said to have at any time seriously troubled him; nor could difficulties ever avail to shake his convictions or lessen his enthusiasm. He believed that "religion could be harmonized with science," and that "religion of authority was compatible with freedom of thought." His faith was — to use Lord Rosebery's eloquent words — "the faith, the pure faith of a child, confirmed by the experience and conviction of manhood."[2] Various

1 See Mr. Gladstone's speech in the House of Commons on the second reading of the Parliamentary Oaths Act Amendment Bill on April 26, 1883.

2 See Hansard, 4th series, vol. lviii. p. 87.

positions in the Anglican Church have been assigned to him. By those who knew him best, he was probably always regarded as the most loyal and devoted of her members. But in the more prejudiced eyes of others, he was at times a Papist in disguise, and at other times a powerful opponent of the Church of Rome. Bred up in the traditions of Presbyterianism, he retained to the last not a little of the spirit of severe simplicity and solemn reverence associated with the religion of his childhood; but in early manhood he undoubtedly became identified with the religious opinions and aspirations of the "Oxford School," and transferred his sympathies to the Tractarian movement. He had a robust belief in the life and mission of the English Church, regarding her as the most faithful representative of the Church

of Christ. He was devoid of bigotry and sectarianism. Wherever the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were conscientiously held, he was ready to express his sympathy with members of all denominations, however different might be their ecclesiastical standpoint from his own.

In his own practice he was scrupulously careful about the observances of religion. Few laymen ever studied their Bible with more assiduous and reverent care. Sunday to him was the Lord's Day — the day of rest and worship. Nothing short of urgent necessity hindered him from attending church every Sunday more than once; and he was a regular and frequent communicant. On Sundays he avoided, as far as possible, doing ordinary work. On week-days, for some forty years of his life, he rarely

failed, when residing at Hawarden, to be present at an early morning service, held in the village church; and on one occasion, though advanced in years, he made a point of attending a service of the Holy Communion, arranged for the convenience of the colliers, at 4 A. M. on a week-day. In his home, family prayers were said every morning, and on Sunday evenings there was a short family service, at which his household was present in full force.

The moral teachings of Christianity were not only professed by Mr. Gladstone, but they were practised by him. It was due to this profession, followed by practice, that he displayed such intolerance of wrong and cruelty, such sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, such love for peace and freedom.

XV

SOME OF HIS OPINIONS ON OTHERS

BEING a man of strong character, Mr. Gladstone naturally formed strong likes and dislikes. With a disposition kindly and generous, his likes preponderated over his dislikes; but attached though he was to his friends, he never sought the friendship of those who evidently cared no longer to be friends with him. It is obviously impossible to refer to his judgment of persons who survived him; but it may not be uninteresting to record some of his opinions about men of mark who had preceded him.

The two statesmen on whom Mr. Gladstone probably most founded himself were Mr. Canning and Sir Robert Peel. In matters of foreign policy, Mr. Canning was the man whom Mr. Gladstone aspired to follow. He could not but regard with misgivings and regrets Sir Robert Peel's Irish policy, which constituted "a black page" in the history of that great minister; nor did Mr. Gladstone consider that Sir Robert's real knowledge of finance and of trade questions was commensurate with the successful and masterly manner in which he handled economic measures. But, in general matters of domestic policy, Mr. Gladstone looked upon Sir Robert Peel as the safest of all guides, and the greatest of all administrators. Indeed, he once went so far as to say in my hearing, "Taken all round, Peel was the greatest

man I ever knew." With his profound admiration for Mr. Canning as well as for Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone was never tired of referring to the debts which he owed to them by their precepts and examples.

Of his immediate contemporaries who were also colleagues during the first half of his political career, there was probably no one for whom Mr. Gladstone had more affectionate regard than for Sidney Herbert (Lord Herbert of Lea), whose high character, shrewdness, and intrepidity, together with his "gentleness, tenderness, and simplicity," combined to make him, in Mr. Gladstone's estimation, the ideal of a man in public life.

The colleague on whom he unquestionably leaned more than on any one else, during the quarter of the century preceding his last assumption of office,

was Lord Granville. Mr. Gladstone set the highest store on Lord Granville's judgment, dexterity, and tact; and he rarely took any course or came to any important decision without first consulting Lord Granville. Between the two men, greatly as they varied in many respects, there was the closest political brotherhood. In short, what one wanted the other supplied.

Another colleague whom Mr. Gladstone regarded with special affection was John Bright, to whom Mr. Gladstone used in familiar terms occasionally to refer as "honest John." The "grand moral tone" which characterized Bright's sayings and doings, his high principle, the consistency of his public career and solidarity of his character, appealed with special force to Mr. Gladstone; and acutely as he felt breaches of political

friendship, there was no one with whom he parted company with a heavier heart than John Bright when he left the government in 1882, and again when he felt unable to support the policy which was enunciated for Ireland in 1886.

There was, as is well known, no cordiality in the relations between Lord Palmerston and Mr. Gladstone. Indeed, it is probable that no two men ever sat together in the same Cabinet for six consecutive years who had less in common with one another, or who understood each other so little. What was of vital importance in the judgment of the one seemed to the other to be comparatively immaterial. Mr. Gladstone used to say, not wholly in jest, that in attending Cabinet meetings in 1859–65, he not unfrequently took the precaution of carrying his resignation "in his pocket." It was

not that he failed to respect Lord Palmerston's high qualities as a leader of men and a leader in Parliament. But to Mr. Gladstone Lord Palmerston appeared to be too ready to sacrifice interests at home to interests abroad; and while excellent at "sounding the big drum," to be commonly credited with a larger amount of political courage than that to which he was properly entitled.

Of his greatest rival, Lord Beaconsfield, from whom Mr. Gladstone admitted that he was "separated by longer and larger differences than perhaps ever separated two persons brought into constant contact in the transaction of public business," he seldom spoke in really disparaging terms. He had conceived that Mr. Disraeli was wanting in *character* and in reality of conviction; was "laughing in his sleeve," and was playing the

game of politics as if it were a game of chance; and this want of sincerity engendered a feeling of distrust and apprehension in Mr. Gladstone, as it had previously done in Sir Robert Peel. But Mr. Gladstone had the greatest respect for Lord Beaconsfield's remarkable gifts — his strength of will, his long-sighted persistency of purpose, his power of self-government, and, most of all, his great political courage.[1] There were, moreover, two traits in Mr. Disraeli's character which he specially admired. These were Mr. Disraeli's devotion to his wife and his love for his own race. He also held in genuine esteem Mr. Disraeli's parliamentary conduct under adverse circumstances, and he once told me that he considered Disraeli to be "the most

1 See Hansard, 3d series, vol. cclxi. pp. 38-45. Speech on proposal for erecting a public monument to Lord Beaconsfield on May 9, 1881.

extraordinary personality that there had ever been in Parliament."

Of other contemporaries to whom Mr. Gladstone not unfrequently referred, Mr. Lowe may be cited as an instance. In sheer intellect Mr. Gladstone considered that Mr. Lowe had few equals; and, according to Mr. Gladstone's estimate, nothing in the records of parliamentary debate was entitled to rank higher as a masterpiece of reasoning than Mr. Lowe's speeches on Parliamentary Reform. But Mr. Gladstone knew no one of more mixed and contradictory qualities than Mr. Lowe — "splendid in attack, but most weak in defence; at times exhibiting pluck beyond measure, but at other times pusillanimity almost amounting to cowardice; one day headstrong and independent, and the next day helpless as a child to walk alone; capable

of tearing anything to pieces, but of constructing nothing."

In Mr. Gladstone's later days the two men in the political fray who probably interested him most were Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Parnell. That which chiefly impressed Mr. Gladstone about Lord Randolph Churchill was his "nimble-mindedness" — his quickness in seeing where the strong points of attack and the weak points of defence lay, and in gauging the feeling of the House of Commons. Had Lord Randolph had more principle and more "ballast," and had his life been spared, Mr. Gladstone believed that to the man who had attacked him so often, with no scruples and with no respect for weight of years, there would have been assured by his "brilliant cleverness" a remarkable name in political history. Parnell was an enigma

to Mr. Gladstone as he was to most other people; but the genius of the man, the extraordinary hold which he had over his followers, the life of mystery which he led, and his "self-containedness," exercised no small fascination for Mr. Gladstone, in whose opinion Parnell was the "greatest leader" Ireland had ever had.

Of those whom he had come across entitled to be considered as practical authorities on the subject of political economy, no one stood higher in his estimation than Joseph Hume, in the sense of being a real apostle of public thrift; and the three men whom he regarded as most sound on economic subjects, as distinguished from practical finance, were Sir George Cornewall Lewis, the first Lord Wolverton, and Mr. Bertram Currie.

Living to the advanced age of eighty-

eight, and moving in such varied circles ever since he finished his university career, Mr. Gladstone probably came in contact with a greater number of all sorts and conditions of men in public life than any other individual of this century; but great as that number was, there were several persons with whom he much regretted not to have made personal acquaintance. Foremost of these was Lord Melbourne, to whom, living as he did until 1848, it is curious that Mr. Gladstone should not have been introduced. No two public men were probably more essentially different in all respects than Lord Melbourne and Mr. Gladstone, except that they had in common a love for theology. But Mr. Gladstone had no small admiration for Lord Melbourne, to whom he thought that a sufficiently high place had not

been accorded in political history. None of the conspicuous men of the present reign appeared to Mr. Gladstone to possess in a more marked degree the characteristics of a *gentleman* than Lord Melbourne. Mr. Gladstone would illustrate his meaning by Lord Melbourne's conduct in connection with the appointment of Dr. Hampden to the Regius Professorship of Divinity in 1836. Before Lord Melbourne had made the appointment he had consulted Archbishop Howley, and his Grace had acquiesced in the Prime Minister's proposal. As soon as the storm broke out about the appointment, the Archbishop threw over Lord Melbourne and denounced his action. But Lord Melbourne, though he had in his possession the Archbishop's original letter, abstained, to his own detriment, from revealing the truth and denouncing

his Grace. "That," said Mr. Gladstone, "was behaving something like a real gentleman." The two men besides Lord Melbourne whom Mr. Gladstone might have known, and whom he most regretted not knowing, were Sir Walter Scott and Dr. Arnold.

Among the other persons of real mark belonging to the first half of this century whom Mr. Gladstone held in high regard, the Duke of Wellington may be mentioned. In Mr. Gladstone's view, it was difficult to overrate the influence for good which the Duke, by his commanding personality and personal weight, exercised over his fellow-peers in counselling them, for the first twenty years after the Reform Act of 1832, to be moderate, and in persuading them not to resist popular demands.

Of the men who had gone before him,

there was no one whose memory he cherished more dearly, and even worshipped, than that of Burke, notwithstanding that, in Mr. Gladstone's opinion, "the mischief resulting from the 'Reflections' outweighed what he did for freedom, justice, religion, and purity of government."

For one of Burke's distinguished contemporaries of the last century Mr. Gladstone had a still higher veneration, and that was for George Washington. "If there were a row of pedestals," Mr. Gladstone once said, "on which to place human gods, and one were higher than the rest, I should place Washington on that pedestal as the most fitting occupant of it, so strongly am I impressed with his moral elevation and greatness of character."

His feeling toward the United States as a nation was almost as cordial as that

which he had for the first President of the republic. He had implicit belief in the future of the English-speaking races on both sides of the Atlantic. The ultimate if not the immediate prospect of those races, united in blood and language, was to him, as he once expressed himself, "majestic, inspiring, and consolatory." Nay, further,—and it is specially interesting to note at a time when there apparently exists a more cordial feeling between England and the United States than at any former period,—he considered that it would be "nothing short of a crime, were there not an understanding among these peoples." Failure to achieve this end, sooner or later, "would be the renunciation of the most peaceful primacy that ever was presented to the human understanding."

XVI

CONCLUSION

A SKETCH of Mr. Gladstone lends itself to indefinite expansion. The limits, however, of a short monograph have been reached; and the object of it will have been served if it should help to focus from a near standpoint, and thus lead others to appreciate more thoroughly, the leading traits of the character of the *man* whose death England mourns, and whose familiar presence here on earth is missed, and (as one may well believe) will continue to be missed, not only by his own country, which he loved so

dearly, but by other countries whose welfare he had specially at heart.

That Mr. Gladstone had failings, it would be absurd to deny; and he was the last person to have claimed immunity from them himself. At times he was too impulsive; his zeal got the better of his wisdom. At other times he allowed himself to give too much play to sentiment. His judgment was often mistaken. He may not have been free from the extravagances, inconsistencies, and mystifications which were freely imputed to him; though, if they were so conspicuous in him as his opponents have alleged, how came it that, while these characteristics are repugnant to plain Englishmen, he exercised supreme influence over a large section of the community? However that may be, he was unquestionably imbued with

high principles; and to high principles he appealed. The furtherance of liberty, toleration, and progress, the amendment of the lot of his fellow-creatures, the relief of suffering, the wise husbanding of the nation's resources — in short, the promotion of better government — were his aims. What he desired most to find in men was *character;* in measures, *equity.* He believed, persistently and implicitly, in the existence of truth, and this belief he endeavored to instil in others. It was, no doubt, a high standard — perhaps too high to be attained. But, high though that standard may have been, he may surely be credited with having used all the great intellectual and moral powers with which he had been endowed in perseveringly trying to approach the attainment of it.

Those powers were, indeed, singularly

great; but that which was most remarkable about him was not so much that he was unique in one particular respect or unrivalled in another, as that he combined so many splendid qualities — quickness of comprehension combined with patience of investigation; fervent enthusiasm and energy combined with vast experience and industry; administrative and initiative capacity combined with constructive genius; deep religious conviction combined with strength of character; oratorical powers with powers of exposition; nobility with simplicity; high-mindedness with humility; concentration with versatility; courage with resourcefulness; courtesy with dignity; and dogged determination with heartfelt sympathy. It was this extraordinary combination of faculties possessed in a preëminent degree by one individual

that gave Mr. Gladstone the commanding position which he held in state affairs, the sway which he exercised over his fellow-citizens, and the high place which he won in their affections. The ultimate verdict on Mr. Gladstone the *statesman* — that is, on the count of his policy, foreign as well as domestic — must be given by the impartial historian; but it is probably not unsafe to say that no man will occupy a higher pedestal in the row erected for the "human gods" of the nineteenth century, in England, than William Ewart Gladstone.