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The Grand Old Man

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PREFACE

William E. Gladstone was cosmopolitan. The Premier of the British Empire is ever a prominent personage, but he has stood above them all. For more than half a century he has been the active advocate of liberty, morality and religion, and of movements that had for their object the prosperity, advancement and happiness of men. In all this he has been upright, disinterested and conscientious in word and deed. He has proved himself to be the world's champion of human rights. For these reasons he has endeared himself to all men wherever civilization has advanced to enlighten and to elevate in this wide world.

With the closing of the 19th century the world is approaching a crisis in which every nation is involved. For a time the map of the world might as well be rolled up. Great questions that have agitated one or more nations have convulsed the whole earth because steam and electricity have annihilated time and space. Questions that have sprung up between England and Africa, France and Prussia, China and Japan, Russia and China, Turkey and Armenia, Greece and Turkey, Spain and America have proved international and have moved all nations. The daily proceedings of Congress at Washington are discussed in Japan.

In these times of turning and overturning, of discontent and unrest, of greed and war, when the needs of the nations most demand men of world-wide renown, of great experience in government and diplomacy, and of firm hold upon the confidence of the people; such men as, for example, Gladstone, Salisbury, Bismark, Crispi and Li Hung Chang, who have led the mighty advance of civilization, are passing away. Upon younger men falls the heavy burden of the world, and the solution of the mighty problems of this climax of the most momentous of all centuries.

However, the Record of these illustrious lives remains to us for guidance and inspiration. History is the biography of great men.

The lamp of history is the beacon light of many lives. The biography of William E. Gladstone is the history, not only of the English Parliament, but of the progress of civilization in the earth for the whole period of his public life. With the life of Mr. Gladstone in his hand, the student of history or the young statesman has a light to guide him and to help him solve those intricate problems now perplexing the nations, and upon the right solution of which depends Christian civilization—the liberties, progress, prosperity and happiness of the human race.

Hence, the life and public services of the Grand Old Man cannot fail to be of intense interest to all, particularly to the English, because he has repeatedly occupied the highest position under the sovereign of England, to the Irish whether Protestant or Catholic, north or south, because of his advocacy of (Reforms) for Ireland; to the Scotch because of his Scottish descent; to the German because he reminds them of their own great chancellor, the Unifier of Germany, Prince Bismarck; and to the American because he was ever the champion of freedom; and as there has been erected in Westminster Abbey a tablet to the memory of Lord Howe, so will the American people enshrine in their hearts, among the greatest of the great, the memory of William Ewart Gladstone.

"In youth a student and in eld a sage;
Lover of freedom; of mankind the friend;
Noble in aim from childhood to the end;
Great is thy mark upon historic page."

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[Illustration: Gladstone entering Palace Yard, Westminster.]

"In thought, word and deed,
How throughout all thy warfare thou wast pure,
I find it easy to believe."

—ROBERT BROWNING

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INTRODUCTORY.

There are few, even among those who differed from him, who would deny to Mr. Gladstone the title of a great statesman: and in order to appreciate his wonderful career, it is necessary to realize the condition of the world of thought, manners and works at the time when he entered public life.

In medicine there was no chloroform; in art the sun had not been enlisted in portraiture; railways were just struggling into existence; the electric telegraph was unknown; gas was an unfashionable light; postage was dear, and newspapers were taxed.

In literature, Scott had just died; Carlyle was awaiting the publication of his first characteristic book; Tennyson was regarded as worthy of hope because of his juvenile poems; Macaulay was simply a brilliant young man who had written some stirring verse and splendid prose; the Brontës were schoolgirls; Thackeray was dreaming of becoming an artist; Dickens had not written a line of fiction; Browning and George Eliot were yet to come.

In theology, Newman was just emerging from evangelicalism; Pusey was an Oxford tutor; Samuel Wilberforce a village curate; Henry Manning a young graduate; and Darwin was commencing that series of investigations which revolutionized the popular conception of created things.

Princess, afterwards Queen Victoria, was a girl of thirteen; Cobden a young calico printer; Bright a younger cotton spinner; Palmerston was regarded as a man-about-town, and Disraeli as a brilliant and eccentric novelist with parliamentary ambition. The future Marquis of Salisbury and Prime Minister of Great Britain was an infant scarcely out of arms; Lord Rosebery, (Mr. Gladstone's successor in the Liberal Premiership), Lord Spencer, Lord Herschell, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Brice, Mr. Acland and Mr. Arnold Morley, or more than half the members of his latest cabinet remained to be born; as did also the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, among those who were his keenest opponents toward the end of his public career.

At last the end of Mr. Gladstone's public life arrived, but it had been extended to an age greater than that at which any English statesman had ever conducted the government of his country.

Of the significance of the life of this great man, it would be superfluous to speak. The story will signally fail of its purpose if it does not carry its own moral with it. We can best conclude these introductory remarks by applying to the subject of the following pages, some words which he applied a generation ago to others:

In the sphere of common experience we see some human beings live and die, and furnish by their life no special lessons visible to man, but only that general teaching in elementary and simple forms which is derivable from every particle of human histories. Others there have been, who, from the times when their young lives first, as it were, peeped over the horizon, seemed at once to —

"Flame in the forehead of the evening sky,"
— Whose lengthening years have been but one growing
splendor, and who at last —
" — — Leave a lofty name,
A light, a landmark on the cliffs of fame."

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND BIRTH

All history, says Emerson, "resolves itself into the biographies of a few stout and earnest persons." These remarks find exemplification in the life of William Ewart Gladstone, of whom they are pre-eminently true. His recorded life, from the early period of his graduation to his fourth premiership, would embrace in every important respect not only the history of the British Empire, but very largely the international events of every nation of the world for more than half a century.

William Ewart Gladstone, M.P., D.C.L., statesman, orator and scholar, was born December 27, 1809, in Liverpool, England. The house in which he was born, number 62 Rodney Street, a commodious and imposing "double-fronted" dwelling of red brick, is still standing. In the neighborhood of the Rodney Street house, and a few years before or after the birth of William E. Gladstone, a number of distinguished persons were born, among them William Roscoe, the writer and philanthropist, John Gibson, the sculptor, Doctor Bickersteth, the late Bishop of Ripon, Mrs. Hemans, the poetess, and Doctor James Martineau, Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in Manchester New College, and the brother of Harriet Martineau, the authoress.

The Gladstone family, or Gledstanes, which was the original family name, was of Scottish origin. The derivation of the name is obvious enough to any one familiar with the ancestral home. A *gled* is a hawk, and that fierce and beautiful bird would have found its natural refuge among the *stanes*, or rocks, of the craggy moorlands which surround the "fortalice of gledstanes." As far back as 1296 Herbert de Gledstane figures in the Ragman Roll as one of the lairds who swore fealty to Edward I. His descendants for generations held knightly rank, and bore their part in the adventurous life of the Border. The chief stock was settled at Liberton, in the upper part of Clydesdale. It was a family of Scottish lairds, holding large estates

in the sixteenth century. The estate dwindled, and in the beginning of the seventeenth century passed out of their hands, except the adjacent property of Authurshiel, which remained in their possession for a hundred years longer. A younger branch of the family—the son of the last of the Gledstanes of Arthursiel—after many generations, came to dwell at Biggar, in Lanarkshire, where he conducted the business of a "maltster," or grain merchant.

Here, and at about this time, the name was changed to Gladstones, and a grandson of the maltster of Biggar, Thomas Gladstones, settled in Leith and there became a "corn-merchant." He was born at Mid Toftcombs, in 1732, and married Helen Neilson, of Springfield. His aptitude for business was so great that he was enabled to make ample provision for a large family of sixteen children. His son, John Gladstone, was the father of William E. Gladstone, the subject of our sketch.

Some have ascribed to Mr. Gladstone an illustrious, even a royal ancestry, through his father's marriage. He met and married a lovely, cultured and pious woman of Dingwall, in Orkney, the daughter of Andrew Robertson, Provost of Dingwall, named Ann Robertson, whom the unimpeachable Sir Bernard Burke supplied with a pedigree from Henry III, king of England, and Robert Bruce, of Bannockburn, king of Scotland, so that it is royal English and Scottish blood that runs in the veins of Mr. Gladstone.

"This alleged illustrious pedigree," says E.B. Smith, in his elaborate work on William E. Gladstone, "is thus traced: Lady Jane Beaufort, who was a descendant of Henry III, married James I, of Scotland, who was a descendant of Bruce. From this alliance it is said that the steps can be followed clearly down to the father of Miss Robertson. A Scottish writer upon genealogy, also referring to this matter, states that Mr. Gladstone is descended on the mother's side from the ancient Mackenzie of Kintail, through whom is introduced the blood of the Bruce, of the ancient Kings of Man, and of the Lords of the Isles and Earls of Ross; also from the Munros of Fowlis, and the Robertsons of Strowan and Athole. What was of more consequence to the Gladstones of recent generations, however, than royal blood, was the fact that by their energy and honorable enterprise they carved their own fortunes, and rose to positions of public es-

teem and eminence." It has been their pride that they sprang from the ranks of the middle classes, from which have come so many of the great men of England eminent in political and military life.

In an address delivered at the Liverpool Collegiate Institute, December 21, 1872, Sir John Gladstone said; "I know not why the commerce of England should not have its old families rejoicing to be connected with commerce from generation to generation. It has been so in other countries; I trust it may be so in this country. I think it is a subject of sorrow, and almost of scandal, when those families who have either acquired or recovered wealth and station through commerce, turn their backs upon it and seem to be ashamed of it. It certainly is not so with my brother or with me. His sons are treading in his steps, and one of my sons, I rejoice to say, is treading in the steps of my father and my brother."

George W.E. Russell, in his admirable biography of Mr. William E. Gladstone, says, "Sir John Gladstone was a pure Scotchman, a lowlander by birth and descent. Provost Robertson belonged to the Clan Donachie, and by this marriage the robust and business-like qualities of the Lowlander were blended with the poetic imagination, the sensibility and fire of the Gael."

An interesting story is told, showing how Sir John Gladstone, the father of William E. Gladstone, came to live in Liverpool, and enter upon his great business career, and where he became a merchant prince. Born at Leith in 1763, he in due time entered his father's business, where he served until he was twenty-one years old. At that time his father sent him to Liverpool to dispose of a cargo of grain, belonging to him, which had arrived at that port. His demeanor and business qualities so impressed Mr. Corrie, a grain merchant of that place, that he urged his father to let him settle there. Consent was obtained and young Gladstone entered the house of Corrie & Company as a clerk. His tact and shrewdness were soon manifest, and he was eventually taken into the firm as a partner, and the name of the house became Corrie, Gladstone & Bradshaw.

John Gladstone on one occasion proved the temporary preserver of the firm of which he had become a member. He was sent to America to buy grain for the firm, in a time of great scarcity in Eu-

rope, owing to the failure of the crops, but he found the condition of things the same in America. There was no grain to be had. While in great perplexity as to what to do he received advices from Liverpool that twenty-four vessels had been dispatched for the grain he was expected to purchase, to bring it to Europe. The prospect was that these vessels would have to return to Europe empty as they had come, and the house of Corrie & Company be involved thereby in ruin. It was then that John Gladstone rose to the emergency of the occasion, and by his enterprise and energy saved himself and partners from financial failure, to the great surprise and admiration of the merchants of Liverpool. It was in this way: He made a thorough examination of the American markets for articles of commerce that could be sold in Europe to advantage, and filling his vessels with them sent them home. This sagacious movement not only saved his house, but gave him a name and place among the foremost merchants of his day. His name was also a synonym for push and integrity, not only on the Liverpool exchange, but in London and throughout all England. The business of the firm became very great and the wealth of its members very large.

During the war with Napoleon, on the continent, and the war of 1812 with the United States, the commerce of England, as mistress of the seas, was injured, and the Gladstone firm suffered greatly and was among the first to seek peace, for its own sake and in the interests of trade. In one year the commerce of Liverpool declined to the amount of 140,000 tons, which was about one-fourth of the entire trade, and there was a decrease of more than \$100,000 in the dock-dues of that port. John Gladstone was among those who successfully petitioned the British government for a change of its suicidal policy towards the American States.

After sixteen years of successful operations, during a part of which time it had been government agent, the firm was dissolved and its business was continued by John Gladstone. His six brothers having followed him from Leith to Liverpool, he took into partnership with him his brother Robert. Their business became very extensive, having a large trade with Russia, and as sugar importers and West India merchants. John Gladstone was the chairman of the West India Association and took an active part in the improvement and enlargement of the docks of Liverpool. In 1814, when the mo-

nopoly of the East India Company was broken and the trade of India and China thrown open to competition, the firm of John Gladstone & Company was the first to send a private vessel to Calcutta.

John Gladstone was a public-spirited man and took great interest in the welfare of his adopted city. He was ever ready to labor for its prosperity, and consequently endeared himself to the people of all classes and conditions, and of every shade of political opinion.

The high estimation in which he was held by the citizens of Liverpool was especially manifest October 18, 1824, when they presented him with a testimonial, consisting of a magnificent service of plate, of twenty-eight pieces, and bearing the following inscription: *"To John Gladstone, Esq., M.P., this service of plate was presented MDCCCXXIV, by his fellow townsmen and friends, to mark their high sense of his successful exertions for the promotion of trade and commerce, and in acknowledgment of his most important services rendered to the town of Liverpool."*

John Gladstone, though devoted to commerce, had time for literary pursuits. He wrote a pamphlet, "On the Present State of Slavery in the British West Indies and in the United States of America; and on the Importation of Sugar from British Settlements in India." He also published, in 1830, another pamphlet, containing a statement of facts connected with the same general subject, "in a letter addressed to Sir Robert Peel." In 1846 he published a pamphlet, entitled "Plain facts intimately connected with the intended Repeal of the Corn Laws; or Probable Effects on the Public Revenue and the Prosperity of the Country."

From the subject discussed it can be readily and truly imagined that John Gladstone had given thought to political subjects. He was in favor of a qualified reform which, while affording a greater enfranchisement of the people, looked also to the interests of all. Having an opinion, and not being afraid to express it, he was frequently called upon to address public meetings. The matters discussed by him were, however, rather national than municipal, rather humane than partisan. He was a strong advocate for certain reforms at home in 1818, and in 1823 on the seas, and for Greek independence in 1824. "On the 14th of February, 1824, a public meeting was held in Liverpool Town Hall, 'for the purpose of considering the best means

of assisting the Greeks in their present important struggle for independence.' Mr. Gladstone spoke impressively in favor of the cause which had already evoked great enthusiasm amongst the people, and enlisted the sympathies and support of Lord Byron and other distinguished friends of freedom."

It was in 1818 that he addressed a meeting called "to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament to take into consideration the progressive and alarming increase in the crimes of forging and uttering forged Bank of England notes." The penalties for these crimes were already heavy, but their infliction did not deter men from committing them, and these crimes increased at an enormous rate. Resolutions were passed at the Liverpool meeting, recommending the revision and amendment of existing laws.

Then again, so late as the year 1823, the navigation between Liverpool and Dublin was in a lamentable condition, and human life was recklessly imperiled, and no one seemed willing to interfere and to interest himself in the interests of humanity. It was then that he again came to the front to advocate a just cause. To illustrate the dangers to vessels and passengers, the case of the sloop *Alert* may be cited. It was wrecked off the Welsh coast, with between 100 and 140 persons on board, of whom only seventeen were saved. For the safety and rescue of all those souls on board this packet-boat there was only one small shallop, twelve feet long. Mr. Gladstone was impressed with the terrible nature of the existing evil, and obtained an amendment to the Steamboat Act, requiring imperatively that every passenger vessel should be provided with boats sufficient for every passenger it was licensed to carry. By this wise and humane provision thousands of lives were doubtless saved that would otherwise have been lost—the victims of reckless seamanship and commercial greed.

John Gladstone, either through the influence of Mr. Canning, or from having imbibed some political taste, sat in the House of Commons nine years, representing Lancaster in 1819, Woodstock from 1821 to 1826, and Berwick in 1827; but he never would consent to sit in Parliament for the city of Liverpool, for he thought that so large and important a constituency required peculiar representation such as he was unqualified to give.