

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE story of Gladstone's life is now all told. It came to its end on the morning of Ascension Day, the 19th of May 1898. The long and, on the whole, singularly happy story had what must be called a happy closing chapter. In describing the final passages of the life of Swift, Sir Walter Scott has said in powerful and touching words that "the stage darkened before the curtain fell." It was not so with the great man whose death the whole civilised world is now lamenting. The stage did not darken before the curtain fell; the light of peace and love, of Christian resignation and of Christian hope, shone over that earthly scene on which the curtain has just fallen at Hawarden Castle. I have thought it well in this volume which tells the completed story to dwell at some length on the closing months of that marvelously active, splendid, and successful life. I have told of those months as we all read of them here, as we all followed with intense interest from day to day the accounts which kept us, in mind and heart at least, within touch of what was happening at Cannes,