

Great Britain's Greatest Commoner

By An Admirer

IN the great muster-roll of Britain's famous sons no name shines out with brighter lustre than does that of him whose ashes were laid away with those of the nation's illustrious dead in the crypt of old Westminster Abbey on the afternoon of May 28th—he to whose plain name, William Ewart Gladstone, earth's glittering titles could add no further glory. His death was not the loss of Britain alone, but throughout the civilized world wherever a heart was burning for freedom, or a soul was reaching out for light and knowledge, or wherever there was a lover of his fellows, there was found a mourner over the bier of this noble man. I feel quite safe in asserting that no death ever occurred in the world which caused such universal sorrow, for he belonged to the whole human race. No profounder scholar, no more powerful orator, no more conscientious statesman, no sincerer Christian, ever graced the floor of any legislative hall, for in him were combined more graces and talents than usually fall to the lot of any one man. His life was a better evidence of the reality and power of the Christian religion than all the books ever written.

And his death was worthy of, and a fitting complement to his remarkable life. As I read of his stately departure—like a well-laden ship under full sail sweeping with an abundant entrance into the sheltering harbor—I said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." With his head pillowed upon the "Rock of ages" of which he so fondly loved to sing, he passed triumphantly home, and so shall he be forever with the Lord.

But he is not dead; the great never die. He lifted the plane of political life nearer the ideal than it ever was before, and his example as an upright, conscientious, patriotic politician will continue to inspire and prompt men years upon

years after his bones have crumbled into dust. William Ewart Gladstone still lives, and while Truth and Righteousness and Fairplay require champions and while Error and Oppression and Dishonesty remain to be combatted he will continue to live in the noble army of worthy successors in the struggle for liberty and reform.

From the host of appreciative utterances regarding Mr. Gladstone with which the press has been flooded I give the following beautiful tribute which appeared in *Christian Endeavour* from the pen of Mr. Andrew Melrose:

So many and so eloquent have been the tributes paid to the great statesman who has passed away, that one has a certain timidity in approaching the subject, and a feeling that what has been done already so well need not be added to by us. Yet every man who has given thoughtful consideration to the illustrious life of William E. Gladstone, crowded as it was with chivalrous enterprises and noble work—not only on behalf of his own countrymen, but of every nationality—affording as it does the supreme example of religion applied to public life, and constant Christian endeavor, must feel a certain obligation upon him to express his appreciation of that life, al-



WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

though it may be in poor and ineffective fashion.

From the first Mr. Gladstone was of the reforming instinct. It is true that his training was in the midst of Conservative influences, and his education in that world of Conservatism and "home of lost causes," the University of Oxford. It is true also that when he stepped into public life, he did so as a Tory candidate, and for years was the rising hope of Conservatism. But his nature was essentially a progressive one; his principles were based upon the loftiest of all types; and he had an earnestness of conviction that made him a doubtful acquisition to a party whose