

PREFACE



IN the century just closing the human intellect has reached a climax in its activity. The inventor has filled the world with new machinery for almost every conceivable purpose in life; the scientific man has interrogated nature more successfully than she was ever interrogated before; the merchant has explored the remotest corners of the earth to indulge the tastes or supply the wants of his customers; the philanthropist has ministered to human suffering in all its phases; in short, the whole human race seems to be moved by a supernatural impulse to assert its dominion over every force, social, physical, or political, which might impede its progress, or mar its enjoyment.

But, great as may have been the activity of those who by their achievements in science and invention gave to the civilization of the century its distinctive features, not less worthy of notice has been the activity of those men who impressed their personality upon the political institutions of the age, and probably on all ages to come. Among those worthy of special mention in the latter category, three names stand out conspicuously—Lincoln, Bismarck, and Gladstone. By Lincoln's statesmanship, a great republic was saved from destruction and disgrace; by Bismarck's statesmanship, a great empire was founded in the very heart of Europe; by Gladstone's statesmanship, the material resources of a great people were developed beyond precedent, and their political liberties, at the same time, extended and strengthened. No record of the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire would be complete which did not include the contributions received from the comprehensive statesmanship, the moral purpose, and the dignified self-reliance which characterized the legislation and career of this marvellous man.

The circumstances under which Mr. Gladstone entered public life were by no means favourable to the development of a Liberal statesman. He was in no sense a man of the people. His father, Sir John Gladstone, though not a nobleman by birth, was all but a nobleman in affluence and social status, and the early associations of his son corresponded to the social rank of the father's household. His school and college days were spent with the sons of the English aristocracy, and, when he entered Parliament, he entered it under the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, one of the most active Tories of the day. He was constitutionally a man of strong religious convictions, and believed that