



WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

W. E. Gladstone.

As a Student, a Statesman, an Orator, and a Man

Extracts from a Sermon preached in St James' Church, Kentville, on Sunday evening July 10 1898, by the Rev Canon Brock. D. D.

Isaiah xxvi, 4.
In the Lord Jehovah is THE ROCK OF AGES.
(marginal reading.)

We have just been singing one of Mr. Gladstone's favorite Hymns, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," one of the Hymns which was sung at the national funeral of this great statesman, at Westminster Abbey. The first line of that familiar Hymn of Toplady's is of course founded on the marginal reading of the text.

I have more than once referred in this place to Mr. Gladstone's death, and to the immense loss which England, Victoria's Empire, and indeed the whole world have sustained in his removal from among us.

This evening I wish to glance at Mr Gladstone's career in four notable directions; as a Student, a Statesman, an Orator, and a Man

I. THE STUDENT

First let us look at Mr. Gladstone as a student and a scholar. In 1830, when he was only 21 years of age he graduated at the University of Oxford with double first class honors. During his long and busy career he always found time to gather information, to stimulate his brain, and to

enable him to grow in wisdom and knowledge. His library at Harwarden Castle consisted of 24,000 volumes, every one of which had been put in its appointed place with his own hands, and so familiar was he with the contents of his vast Library, that often when in London, and in need of some particular books, he could write to his Secretary at the Castle, and tell him exactly where to find them. His favorite authors, after those of the Holy Bible, were Homer, Bishop Butler, Dante, St. Augustine, and Aristotle.

His literary versatility may be illustrated from the fact that during his last and fiercest electioneering campaign in Scotland, in Midlothian, he had in preparation simultaneously an article on Home Rule—a dissertation on the Psalms—a paper for the Oriental Congress—and his great Lecture on, "The Rise and Progress of Learning in the University of Oxford."

His work on Homer has been spoken of as a mighty monument of learning, scholarship, and industry

In many other directions Mr. Gladstone's studies were careful and broad: as shown by his essays on Vaticanism, Ritualism, Divorce, The Church of England, Socrates, Tennyson, Our Kin beyond the sea. The Hellenic factor in the Eastern problem, Egypt, Freedom in the East, and so on, and in his declining years by that masterly

work, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture."

A striking illustration of Mr. Gladstone's powers as a linguist is told by one of his biographers. Several years ago he addressed an assembly on the island of Corfu in modern Greek, a few days later he spoke to an assembly in Florence in Italian, a few days still later he conversed with ease in German with Prince Bismark, soon afterwards he responded in fluent French to a toast at a banquet in Paris, and then he crossed the channel to deliver in beautiful English in his place in Parliament one of his great speeches as Chancellor of the Exchequer

He could write with equal facility in English, Latin, and Greek; it was therefore not an unfitting thing that at his funeral on the programme of the Hymns sung on that occasion, printed and distributed over the Abbey, Gladstone's Latin version of "Rock of Ages cleft for me," (made in 1848) was printed in parallel columns with Toplady's English Hymn.

II. THE STATESMAN.

As a statesman more than as a student, Mr. Gladstone arrests attention, and commands admiration even from his political opponents. An eloquent American Editor has lately written in this strain on this aspect of Mr. Gladstone's life:

"For threescore memorable years this tireless gladiator has led the vanguard in assaults on entrenched wrong: under his magnetic leadership traditional and deep rooted evils both in the Church and State have been swept away; suffrage has been broadened; burdens have been removed; public servants have been held to a higher plane of service; corporations have been made to feel their responsibility; in short England, under Gladstone has been given a cleaner official air to breathe, wider latitude of citizenship, stronger safeguards of law and more potent codes of equity in her foreign relations."

Of course occasions may be found here and there in Mr. Gladstone's long public career, in which he subjects himself to adverse criticism; for with all his greatness, the man was not perfect: but take his political life, as a whole it was wonderfully noble, pure, and true.

As a financier Gladstone's history has been most remarkable. Beyond any man that ever lived, he threw a halo around the science of finance, and brought it, and other questions of administration, within the realm of popular apprehension. From 1853 to 1880 he was five times Chancellor of the Exchequer. And how grandly our statesman-hero carried into effect his strong financial ideas may be inferred from a few facts presented by one of his most reliable biographers.

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