



WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, PRIME MINISTER OF ENGLAND.

William Ewart Gladstone, the fourth son of a wealthy Liverpool merchant—the late Sir John Gladstone, of Fasque, in the county of Kincardine, Scotland—was born on the 29th December, 1809, and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, of which he was nominated a student in 1829, and graduated, taking a double first-class in Michaelmas term, 1831. Having spent some time on a continental tour, he was returned at the general election in December, 1832, in the Conservative interest for the borough of Newark, and entered Parliament just as the great struggle between the Reformers and Conservatives was at its height. His high attainments, business habits, and personal associations, soon recommended him to the notice of Sir Robert Peel, who, in December, 1834, appointed him a junior Lord of the Treasury, an office which, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, he has had the pleasure of conferring upon his own son. In February of the following year, Mr. Gladstone was made under-Secretary for the Colonies; but the Peel Ministry being defeated, and resigning in April, '35, Mr. Gladstone went out of office with his leader and remained in opposition till September, 1841, when Sir Robert Peel again came into power, and Mr. Gladstone was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint, being at the same time sworn in as a Member of the Privy Council. This was a high position for a commoner to attain at his early age, but the great administrative ability he displayed fully warranted his promotion. The task devolved upon him of explaining and defending the commercial policy of the Govern-

ment in the House of Commons. The revision of the tariff in 1842 was almost entirely the result of his energy and industry; and when brought before Parliament, was found to be as admirably executed in detail as complete in its mastery of general principles. In 1843 he succeeded the Earl of Ripon as President of the Board of Trade; but resigned that position early in 1845, and succeeded Lord Stanley—the late Earl Derby—as Chief Secretary of State for the Colonies. When Sir Robert Peel, in 1846, announced his determination to propose a modification of the Corn Laws, Mr. Gladstone continued to adhere to his leader, but surrendered his seat for Newark, and remained for a short time out of Parliament. At the general election, in 1847, he was returned with the late Sir R. H. Inglis for Oxford University. Among the questions which excited deep interest in the House of Commons during that Parliament were those of University Reform, and the abolition of Jewish disabilities. Upon both these questions, in spite of his pronounced High Church and Tory sympathies, Mr. Gladstone frequently found himself opposed to his former friends. This estrangement, brought about gradually between '47 and '52, had gone so far during the latter year that, on the fall of the Russell Ministry in February, Mr. Gladstone refused to accept office in the Conservative Cabinet then formed by the Earl of Derby. At the general election of 1852 his proclivities in the direction of Reform had so alienated the electors of the University, that despite his great personal popularity among them, he was only returned after a severe contest. In the "Ministry of all the talents," the Coalition formed under the Premiership of the late Earl of Aberdeen, Mr. Gladstone was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, and many people knowing him

only as a brilliant orator, and forgetting the ability he had displayed ten years before at the Board of Trade, were fain to speak of him as a "fancy" financier. But his thorough knowledge of finance, his practical experience and great faculty in mastering and marshalling details were again brought into full view, and his labours were of signal service in sustaining that government. On the reconstruction of the Cabinet, under Lord Palmerston, at the beginning of 1855, Mr. Gladstone still continued for a few weeks to hold the same office; but when he found the new Ministry indisposed to make a united stand against Mr. Roebuck's motion for a committee of enquiry into the condition of the British troops before Sebastopol, he resigned, regarding that motion as a virtual censure of the Cabinet of which he had been a member. Lord Palmerston was not by any means so squeamish, and Mr. Gladstone continued, while out of office, to give the Palmerston Cabinet an independent support. This Cabinet, after many reverses, fell to pieces in 1856, and Lord Derby again took office, when Mr. Gladstone accepted a special mission to the Ionian Islands to arrange some difficulties which had arisen in the administration there; and it may perhaps be a not unsuggestive commentary on his way of getting over intricate questions that the seven islands were shortly afterwards surrendered to the petty kingdom of Greece. In June, 1859, Lord Palmerston again came into power, and Mr. Gladstone assumed his old position as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Many reforms in the taxation of the country are due to this period of his official career. He veered more and more towards the Manchester School, and was mainly instrumental in promoting the negotiations conducted by Mr. Cobden, which re-