

Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXIII, No. 23.

MONTREAL, JUNE 10, 1898.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

William Ewart Gladstone.

It is with some divine language, and not in a common tongue, that we would wish to tell the greatness of the most godlike man whom our age has known. To see him die and to give him royal burial his country forgets the strife of parties and the story or the threat of war. The nations stand with uncovered head, while emperors and presidents send their garlands of sympathy and honor for the bier of the untitled king of men. Westminster Abbey hastens to open her doors for his burial, and those who

stone was the university prodigy not only in the power of acquiring all learning, but also in all the arts of the writer and orator. That was a combination of powers unique indeed, one which gave true promise of surpassing success in life. All this inherent power Nature gave him, and he cultivated, as a youth, every fibre of his wonderful brain. He left Oxford the most promising man of his time, the favorite of all the prophets; for to his prodigious powers of acquirement, his intense energy, his unflinching industry and his wonderful oratorical faculty he added a noble person, and a facile and charming

abilities mastered by the noblest purpose?

It was this controlling conscientious sense of duty which made his career other than was expected. He entered public life a stout Conservative in politics; he ended it a Radical. His father was a slave-holder, and he believed slavery right, and the aristocracy that comes with birth, and all powers of kingship. His interests and prospects were with the Tories; but such a man, with such a purpose, could not long remain a Tory. His work was for the people, and against the privileges of the classes. He did not fear or hesitate to balance the masses against the classes in antithetic rhyme, and to give his voice for the many against the few. Of course, he was beaten, and driven out of office again and again; but what he planned and championed to the extreme of personal defeat, he saw victorious at last, perhaps under the banner of his political foes; for it was his good fortune to make platforms not for his own party alone, but for the opposite party when he was defeated. England owes Disraeli's gift of popular franchise to Gladstone, and to Gladstone's persistence is due that measure of justice which a Conservative government is giving to Ireland. What cared he, if only justice won? The people of England knew that he was their stoutest champion, that he would never fail them, that policy had no allurements for him; and four times Great Britain called him to lead her councils.

The classes never loved Gladstone. How could they love the man who disestablished the Church in Ireland? No man in England was so hated as the man who demanded self-government for Ireland. If Gladstone was the best loved man in England he was the most detested. He was called a traitor to the nation, because he wished to elevate its common people. To him England was not the House of Lords, but the men and women behind the House of Commons. He was an Anglican Protestant in religion, and he wrote strongly against the assumptions of the Vatican; but between Roman and Anglican, Trojan or Tyrian, he made no discrimination of religious or political rights. To men of short vision that seemed a crime; but Gladstone could look across the gaps of time. He looked down from the pinnacles of principle through the clear ether of heaven's justice. He could go out of office, but it was to bequeath his teachings to his successors.

Gladstone was a nobly inconsistent man; that is, he could learn. His inconsistency deviated always to the right. It pointed the finger to larger liberty. He always kept his eyes open for new light, and his ears for new voices of God, the voices of the wronged calling for help, whether in England or Islam. When he had been wrong he owned his error and made himself right. So he was not like the lost leader among the poets, whose youth sounded the peans of freedom, and whose laureate and satiate age was content to laud the past; his face was set the other way, the way of progress, and every year of his life was a triumphal march.

We cannot help contrasting Gladstone with Bismarck. Bismarck created an empire for his king. He contrived a glorious victory out of a wicked war. He had no love for his own people, any more than for people of other nations. His old age is querulous, pitiful. His one aim was the ambition



WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

would give voice in Parliament to their love cannot speak for grief. No other man so honored, so loved, has this century been borne to a royal grave.

Mr. Gladstone was made on a larger better plan than other men. We never hear of his boyhood—was he ever a boy? He comes to our knowledge as a graduate from Oxford, a 'double first,' one of those rare scholars who are equally first above their fellows in classics and mathematics, one to whom all sorts of learning are but play. There have been other double firsts; but young Glad-

stone was the university prodigy not only in the power of acquiring all learning, but also in all the arts of the writer and orator.

Almost direct from the university he entered Parliament. What might have been foretold of him he became, and more.

Yet other than might have been expected; and it was other because while heaven's bounty bestowed upon him all intellectual gifts, heaven's grace gave him a heart which worshipped the truth, that was bond-slave to right, that held every power consecrate to the task of serving his country and benefiting his people. (Where else can such an angelic combination be found — the finest