

What Gladstone would have done in 1862 had he been Premier.

All are aware of his fluency of speech and persuasiveness. But few understand his skill in glossing over facts, presenting them shorn of part of the truth and attractively dressed up with the opposite of truth. In Peel's cabinet of 1841, Sir William Follett, "the silver-tongued advocate," was Solicitor-General. He was reputed to be the cleverest lawyer of his time for glozing affidavits. Thus if in the course of an argument before a court, he had to read affidavits—his practice was chiefly in Chancery—he would most dexterously and innocently omit passages that told against himself and touch up passages in his favour, and leave out or confuse the meaning of the context. Gladstone, when in the humour, is certainly his equal. The unreflecting majority do not take heed of this.

Those who have made a study of Gladstone's career and of his skill in dressing up a case will easily understand how he would have acted had he unhappily for the Anglo-Saxon race, been Premier in 1862. Certainly he would not have confined himself to his Newcastle speech. He would have orated in those districts, where the million sufferers from the cotton famine lived. Consider—with no superior or equal to say him nay—how he would have enlarged upon the fact that all that was required to relieve this half-starved multitude was simply to agree to the urgent demands of our good ally Napoleon, and, acting with him, merely to acknowledge the independence of the South. He would have indignantly repudiated any idea of actual interference. To do him justice he never advocated or remotely hinted at using force. Neither did anyone else. What stage indignation he would have displayed towards "the classes as against the masses"—the former representing the intelligent minority—for their refusal to recognize Southern Independence as seeking practically to deprive of bread the less instructed majority in the United Kingdom. Considering his great persuasive powers it is morally certain that he would have brought over to his side the vast majority of that suffering million. That would practically have meant a great increase of support in the House of Commons.

Free Trade had much to do with Secession. The belief that Secession would enable the South to get rid of the then comparatively mild Protective tariff of the North, induced numbers to vote for it. In some of the States Secession was only carried by moderate majorities. Although of course the retention of slavery, uninterfered with, was the principal cause, yet if the question of Free Trade had been lost sight of—more than one of the seceding states would have stayed in the Union. In Gladstone's hands this question of Free Trade with the South, and an increase of commerce and employment, by simply acknowledging the Secession, would have been amplified, and, after his optimistic manner, exaggerated; and would have brought over multitudes of proof against other arguments.

Then think how he would have posed as a philanthropist and peace-maker. How he would have enlarged upon the fact that his proposed step would save the lives of hundreds of thousands and avoid the waste of untold treasure. How he would have charged against opponents—especially against the peace-at-any-price party—the members of which were the strongest advocates of the Civil War being carried out to the bitter end—that it was they who desired this loss of life and waste of treasure, and that he only aspired to act the part of a peace-maker. How effective his wealth of words would ornately have rendered Pecksniff's famous expression, "My friends, let us be moral," also, would have pointed out that practically the slave line would have had an increased southing of hundreds of miles. That it would be impossible to keep slaves in bondage against their will, when a few miles would take them beyond the reach of the Fugitive Slave Law, instead of, as hitherto, having hundreds of miles to travel before reaching Canada.

All who are aware of the real plane of English and Scotch moral feeling—which is higher than that of their reasoning power—know that, with such a consummate master of rhetorical fence, the humanitarian weapon would have been very effective. Multitudes who would have rejected any appeal to cash or trade arguments would have yielded to Gladstone's superficial moral reasoning. To those who spoke of possible war, he would have pointed out that with such an ally as France, which had a fleet nearly as strong as that of Great Britain, and had in addition a powerful army, there was really nothing to fear from that source. Independent of this, after his manner, he would have taken steps which practically would have committed the country, thus bringing over those who, proof against all other reasoning, yield to the logic of accomplished facts. Of course many of his colleagues would have resigned (as in 1886), and there would have been a powerful minority in the House of Commons opposed to his views, but nevertheless he would have carried his point.

Its effect upon Canada.

The independence of the South, brought about by Gladstone under such circumstances, would have greatly embittered the North, not only against Great Britain, but also against Canada. Instead of having a friendly nation as a neighbour, we should have had a hostile one—one always willing to do us an evil turn. It must be borne in mind, that, after peace had been settled between the North and the South, there would have sprung up on both sides a strong party to bring about a re-union. Although it would have taken a very long time to effect all this,

yet some of the Border States would long before have returned to the old flag. The Unionists on both sides would have always charged that it was owing to the fault of Great Britain that the Union had been broken up. Britain would have been the scapegoat for all their political sins. The evils resulting from such a belief would have existed for many generations. Only well-informed people know that the great majority of Americans are intellectually reared upon false history. For years many believed that England actually caused the Civil War. The writer received a letter in 1862 from an American author of Irish extraction, who was always held to be at the head of his branch of literature, distinctly charging that Britain was mainly responsible for the war. He did not specifically allege that England originated it. He believed what the Jefferson Bricks wrote.

How much stronger would this feeling have been had Gladstone unfortunately steered the ship of state! Among other probable results of a disruption would have been a repudiation of the debt. This would have caused a financial earthquake, affecting the whole civilized world. The course of strict non-intervention, which was carried out by the British Government, was the wisest course. It was better to let the Americans settle their own affairs. Napoleon's breach of faith to England in 1860 on the Savoy question showed the extreme danger of having any entangling alliance with him, or even adopting his suggestions. Always after the Savoy affair Palmerston rightly distrusted him. With the best intentions to lessen the loss of life and treasure, it was impossible to foresee what complications would have resulted from the recognition of the South. Under such circumstances the only wise course was the one pursued, although under the circumstances it required great self-command. It is a comfort to know that Gladstone was the only statesman who wished to pursue a different course. A still greater comfort to know that neither he nor any one else advocated using force.

To show how historical falsehoods are started and kept alive, a renegade Scotchman, naturalized in the States—who has made a large fortune by keeping down the wages of his work-people—has recently charged, well knowing it to be false, "that the Government of Great Britain was on the eve of entering the struggle against the Republic." If an intelligent and travelled Scotchman who does know better, forgetful of the old proverb, "it is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," seeks to inculcate national ill-will by publishing such a transparent falsehood, how much more common would that feeling have been among less-informed people if Gladstone had had his way?

I repeat that in future times, the strict neutrality adopted by Great Britain under great temptation will be looked upon as one of the grandest actions of the nineteenth century.

In my next I propose to deal with Gladstone and his unwitting attempt to do that for the United Kingdom in 1886 which he sought to do for the United States in 1862. His failure in both instances was truly providential.

FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

DE QUINCEY.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY (or Quincey, for it appears that he invented or revived the *de*) was born in Manchester—but apparently not, as he himself thought, at the country house of Greenhay which his parents afterwards inhabited—on August 15th, 1785. His father was a merchant, well to do but of weak health, who died when Thomas was seven years old. Of his childhood he has left very copious reminiscences, and there is no doubt that reminiscences of childhood do linger long after later memories have disappeared. But to what extent De Quincey gave "cocked hats and canes" to his childish thoughts and to his relations with his brothers and sisters individual judgment must decide. I should say for my part that the extent was considerable. It seems, however, pretty clear that he was as a child very much what he was all his life—emphatically "old-fashioned," retiring without being exactly shy, full of far-brought fancies and yet intensely concentrated upon himself. In 1796 his mother moved to Bath, and Thomas was educated first at the Grammar School there and then at a private school in Wiltshire. It was at Bath, his head-quarters being there, that he met, according to his own account, various persons of distinction—Lord Westport, Lord and Lady Carbery and others, who figure largely in the "Autobiography," but are never heard of afterwards. It was with Lord Westport, a boy somewhat younger than himself, that he took a trip to Ireland, the only country beyond Great Britain that he visited. In 1800 he was sent by his guardians to the Manchester Grammar School in order to obtain, by three years' boarding there, one of the Somerset Exhibitions to Brasenose. As a separate income of £150 had been left by De Quincey's father to each of his sons, as this income, or part of it, must have been accumulating, and, as the mother was very well off, this roundabout way of securing for him a miserable forty or fifty pounds a year seems strange enough. But it has to be remembered that for all these details we have little security but De Quincey himself—a security which I confess I like not. However, that he did go to Manchester, and did, after rather more than two of his three years' probation, run away is, I suppose, indisputable. His mother was living at Chester, and the calf was not killed for this prodigal son; but he had the liberty given him of wandering about Wales on an allowance of a guinea

a week. That there is some mystery, or mystification, about all this is nearly certain. If things really went as he represents them his mother ought to have been ashamed of herself, and his guardians ought to have had, to say the least, an experience of the roughest side of Lord Eldon's tongue. The wanderings in Wales were followed by the famous sojourn in Soho, with its waitings at money-lenders' doors, and its perambulations of Oxford Street. Then, by another sudden revolution, we find De Quincey with two-thirds of his allowance handed over to him and permission to go to Oxford as he wished, but abandoned to his own devices by his mother and his guardians, as surely no mother and no guardians ever abandoned an exceptionally unworldly boy of eighteen before. They seem to have put fifty guineas in his pocket and sent him up to Oxford, without even recommending him a college (they could at least have made sure that he would not have gone to that particular one if they had), and with an income which made it practically certain that he would once more seek the Jews. When he had spent so much of his fifty guineas that there was not enough left to pay caution money at most colleges, he went to Worcester where it happened to be low. He seems to have stayed there, on and off, for nearly six years. But he took no degree, his eternal caprices making him shun *viva voce* (then a much more important part of the examination than it is now) after sending in unusually good written papers. Instead of taking a degree he began to take opium, and to make acquaintance with the "Lakers" in both their haunts of Somerset and Westmoreland. He entered himself at the Middle Temple, he may have eaten some dinners, and somehow or other he "came into his property," though there are dire surmises that it was by the Hebrew door. At any rate in November, 1809, he gave up both Oxford and London, which he had frequented a good deal, chiefly, he says, for the sake of the opera of which he was very fond, and established himself at Grasmere. One of the most singular things about his singular life—an oddity due, no doubt, in part to the fact that he outlived his more literary associates instead of being outlived by them—is that though we hear much from De Quincey of other people we hear extremely little from other people about De Quincey. Indeed, what we do so hear dates almost entirely from the last days of his life.

As for the autobiographic details in his "Confessions" and elsewhere, anybody who chooses may put those Sibylline leaves together for himself. It would only appear certain that for ten years he led the life of a recluse student and a hard laudanum-drinker, varied by a little society now and then; that in 1816 he married Margaret Simpson, a dalesman's daughter, of whom we have hardly any personal notices save to the effect that she was very beautiful, and who seems to have been almost the most exemplary of wives to almost the most eccentric of husbands; that for most of the time he was in more or less ease and affluence (ease and affluence still it would seem of a treacherous Hebraic origin); and that about 1819 he found himself in great pecuniary difficulties. Then at length he turned to literature, started as editor of a little Tory paper at Kendal, went to London, and took rank, never to be cancelled, as a man of letters by the first part of "The Confessions of an Opium Eater," published in the *London Magazine* for 1821. He began as a magazine-writer and he continued as such till the end of his life; his publications in book-form being, till he was induced to collect his articles, quite insignificant. Between 1821 and 1825 he seems to have been chiefly in London, though sometimes at Grasmere; between 1825 and 1830 chiefly at Grasmere, but much in Edinburgh, where Wilson (whose friendship he had secured, not at Oxford, though they were contemporaries, but at the Lakes) was now residing and where he was introduced to Blackwood. In 1830 he moved his household to the Scotch capital, and lived there, or (after his wife's death in 1837) at Lasswade, or rather Polton, for the rest of his life. His affairs had come to their worst before he lost his wife, and it is now known that for some considerable time he lived, like Mr. Chrystal Croftangry, in the sanctuary of Holyrood. But De Quincey's way of "living" at any place was as mysterious as most of his other ways; and, though he seems to have been very fond of his family and not at all put out by them, it was his constant habit to establish himself in separate lodgings. These he as constantly shifted (sometimes as far as Glasgow) for no intelligible reason that has ever been discovered or surmised, his pecuniary troubles having long ceased. It was in the latest and most permanent of these lodgings, 42 Lothian Street, Edinburgh, not at Lasswade, that he died on the 8th of December, 1859. He had latterly written mainly, though not solely, for *Tait's Magazine* and *Hogg's Instructor*. But his chief literary employment for at least seven years before this had been the arrangement of the authorized edition of his works, the last or fourteenth volume of which was in the press at the time of his death.

The quantity of work produced during this singular existence, from the time when De Quincey first began, unusually late, to write for publication, was very large. As collected by the author, it filled fourteen volumes; the collection was subsequently enlarged to sixteen, and, though the new edition promises to restrict itself to the older and lesser number, the contents of each volume have been very considerably increased. But this printed and reprinted total, so far as can be judged from De Quincey's own assertions and from the observations of those who were acquainted with him (nobody can be said to have known him) during his later years, must have been but the smaller part