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GLADSTONE

THE DEATH OF MR. GLADSTONE.

"God's finger touch'd him, and he slept."
(Tennyson.)

The bulletin board of the Montreal *Star* on Wednesday morning displayed frequent cablegrams from England, concerning the condition of Mr. Gladstone. Among them was one stating that, in the early morning, he seemed to be dying; but, with "almost super-human vitality, he fought death away, and relapsed into sleep." On the following morning, Ascension day, news of the war failed to attract the passer-by in face of the sad intelligence that the beloved, "grand old man" of Great Britain had joined the majority.

When contrasted with the best men in any period of history, William Ewart Gladstone will always be one of the wisest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity.

Years ago, Mr. Kinglake, in writing of Gladstone, said: "If Mr. Gladstone was famous among us for the splendour of his eloquence, his unaffected piety, and for his blameless life, he was also celebrated far and wide for a more than common liveliness of conscience . . . His friends lived in dread of his virtues as tending to make him whimsical and unstable; and the practical politicians, perceiving he was not to be depended upon for party purposes, and was bent upon none but lofty objects, used to look upon him as dangerous, used to call him behind his back—a good man, in the worst sense of the term."

This opinion of the historian's was formed thirty years ago, and the truth of the estimate of Gladstone's character has been exemplified again and again in the later years of his political life. He was always sincere, always earnest.

The people of Great Britain have become in a measure reconciled to the passing away of the old Liberal leader, and, since his retirement from public life, interest has centred more in his marvellous constitution after such an active career than in any change likely to follow his death; although, since his resignation from parliamentary work in 1894, at the great age of eighty-five, his energy and earnestness have caused him to occasionally exhibit a keen interest in public affairs.

To record the principal events of Mr. Gladstone's remarkable career would be to write the parliamentary history of Great Britain from 1834 almost to the day of his death. It is doubtful if, since the death of Nelson, such genuine sorrow has fallen upon the masses as will be felt when the sad words are passed from house to house—"Gladstone is dead." He has filled a large space in the history of his country, and, even when his advanced Radicalism made him appear to be a revolutionist rather than a reformer, his absolute sincerity was seldom questioned even by his strongest political enemies.

Now, after a long and busy life, unless the nation claims that he is to rest with her other faithful sons who have contributed to the majesty and glory of Britain in state-craft, arms, art, industry and science, William Ewart Gladstone will sleep with the quiet dead in his pretty and much loved Hawarden.

Nothing can we call our own, but Death;
And that small model of the barren earth,
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

(Shakespeare.)