

## OUR BIOGRAPHICAL BUREAU.

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing, leave behind us  
Foot-prints on the sands of time."

## William Gladstone.

THERE is a story of an American going on a pilgrimage to Chelsea to look at the house where Carlyle lived, and being much scandalized to find that an inhabitant of the locality had never heard of the great man, and was consequently unable to say which house in Cheyne Row he occupied. One can imagine a tourist of the same reverent disposition visiting Oxford with a list of the great men who had been educated at that university, and trying to ascertain from college gate-porters what rooms these celebrities tenanted as undergraduates. The rooms would in most cases be still existent, for Oxford changes little; but the porters would be at a sad loss to furnish any record of those who owned them in old time. That an eminent man should, when a boy have lived here or there may seem to be a matter of slight moment. Nevertheless there is something in the *genius loci*, in associations of a place where a man lives; and considering what distances people will travel to see a table on which somebody wrote, or a tree under which somebody preached, it does strike one as a little incongruous to find undergraduates sometimes occupying rooms fraught with intensely interesting memories and yet having no knowledge whatever of their predecessors.

Not long ago an undergraduate of Trinity was informed that he had the rooms which were once John Newman's (the Cardinal). Being a lazy man his first impulse was to exclaim, "I hope the thing won't get about, or I shall be pestered by reporters and photographers like Toole in the 'Birth-place of Podgers.'" But next term he hung a portrait of Cardinal Newman over his mantelpiece; then he took to reading his Eminence's works; and in the result, though he did not change his religion, he was converted from an idle man into an industrious one. What is more he always kept his apartments in excellent order; less, as he said, the Cardinal himself or some of his friends should come to visit the old rooms. In this case at least there was a man who feels that succession brings duties with it, and it must be added that he did not relapse into his old ways when it was discovered that there was a mistake about his inheritance, and that the John Newman in whose room he sat was not the author of the "Apologia," but a noted fox-hunter.

Gladstone had come up from Eton with quite an uncommon reputation for ability, and all his contemporaries agree in saying that he was regarded as a young man of exceptional promise. His management of the Eton Miscellany had shown what power he possessed of attracting lads of talent into his fellowship, and of maintaining his ascendancy over them; and at Christ Church he became in his first term the recognized leader of a set whose doings were watched with interest by dons and undergraduates alike. His fluency in argumentation, and the trouble he took to convince people of things which often did not seem worth a dispute, were among the noticeable traits in his character; but this fondness for reasoning had been purposely fostered in him by his father. Mr John Gladstone liked that his children should exercise their judgment by stating the why and wherefore of every opinion they offered, and a college friend of William's who went on a visit to Fasque in Kincardineshire during the summer of 1829, furnishes amusing particulars of the family customs in that house, "where the children and their parents argued upon everything." "They would debate as to whether the trout should be boiled or broiled, whether a window should be opened, and whether it was likely to be fine or wet next day. It was all perfectly good-humored, but curious to a stranger because of the evident care which all the disputants took to advance no proposition, even as to the prospect of rain, rashly. One day Thomas Gladstone knocked down a wasp with his handkerchief and was about to crush it on the table, when the father started the question as to whether he had the right to kill the insect, and this point was discussed with as much seriousness as if a human life had been at stake. When at last it was adjudged that

the wasp deserved death because he was a trespasser in the drawing-room, a common enemy and a danger there, it was found that the insect had crawled from under the handkerchief, and was flying away with a sniggering sort of buzz, as if to mock them all."

On another occasion William Gladstone and his sister Mary disputed as to where a certain picture ought to be hung. An old Scotch servant came in with a ladder and stood irresolute while the argument progressed; but as Miss Mary would not yield, William gallantly ceased from speech, though unconvinced of course. The servant then hung up the picture where the young lady ordered; but when he had done this he crossed the room and hammered a nail into the opposite wall. He was asked why he did this: "Aweel, miss, that'll do to hang the picture on when ye'll have come round to Master Willie's opinion."

The family generally did come round to William's opinion, for the resources of his tongue-fencing were wonderful, and his father, who admired a clever feint as much as a straight thrust, never failed to encourage him by saying: "Hear, hear; well said, well put, Willie!" if the young debater bore himself well in an encounter. Another thing which Mr John Gladstone taught his children was to accomplish to the end whatever they might begin, and no matter how insignificant the undertaking might be. Assuming that the enterprise had been commenced with a deliberate, thoughtful purpose, it would obviously be weakness to abandon it, whereas if it had been entered upon without thought it would be useful to carry it through as a lesson against acting without reflection. The tenacity with which William Gladstone adhered to this principle exercised no doubt a beneficial moral discipline upon himself, but was frequently very trying to his companions. "At Fasque," says his friend already quoted, "we often had archery practice, and the arrows that went wide of the targets would get lost in the long grass. Most of us would have liked to collect only the arrows that we could find without trouble, and then begin shooting again; but this was not William's way. He would insist that all the arrows should be found before we shot our second volley, and would marshal us in Indian file and make us tramp about in the grass till every quiver had been refilled. Once we were so long in hunting for a particular arrow that dust came on and we had to relinquish the search. The next morning as I was dressing I saw through my window William ranging the field and prodding into every tuft of grass with a stick. He had been busy in this way for two hours, and at length he found the arrow just before breakfast. I remarked that he had wasted a good deal of time. 'Yes and No,' he said. 'I was certain the arrow could be found if I looked for it in a certain way, but it was the longest way and I failed several times from trying shorter methods. When I set to work in the proper fashion I succeeded.' 'Well done, Willie!' concurred his always appreciative father."

It was the same at Oxford. Gladstone would start for a walk to some place eight miles distant, and make up his mind to go "at least more than half the way." Rain might fall in torrents (a serious matter in those days when no undergraduate ever carried an umbrella), but this would not shake him from his purpose; so long as he had not passed his fourth mile-post nothing would make him turn back. Directed towards higher objects, this stubbornness could be dignified with the name of perseverance, and it was a master quality that kept all Gladstone's friends in subjection to him more or less. Those who would not give in to him from reason would do so to avoid a contest—this being a world in which there are more earthen pots than iron ones, and the earthen try to escape collisions when they can. Besides, Gladstone's intense conviction of being always in the right gave him an assured superiority over young men who did not ponder very deeply over their opinions and were not prepared to defend them against vigorous onslaughts. "Gladstone seems to do all the thinking for us," Frederick Rogers once said; "the only trouble is that when he starts some new idea he expects you to see all its beauties at once as clearly as he does after studying them." Years afterwards, when Mr Gladstone had become Prime Minister, another old college friend observed, "You must know Gladstone to understand how much it costs him to give up any clause in a bill which he has framed. He hates compromise as a con-