

Collected Mr. Gladstone's memoirs

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**Mr. Gladstone's  
Papers Fill  
750 Volumes**

By a Special Correspondent of the  
London Times.

THE trustees of the British Museum appealed to Mr. Gladstone, as long ago as 1887, to allow his papers and correspondence to find their final resting place with them "on any terms and conditions he might impose". His reply has not been recorded, but in 1929 the hopes of the trustees were realized when his son, Henry Gladstone, afterwards Lord Gladstone of Hawarden, presented them, on behalf of the Gladstone Trustees, to the museum.

The muniment room at Hawarden was speedily dismantled and its 300,000 documents despatched in two large vans to Bloomsbury, where they were placed alongside the papers of Gladstone's former chief, Sir Robert Peel.

Some 50,000 of these papers were not retained by the museum authorities and the collection was thus left at its present figure of about a quarter of a million documents, each and all of which are now available to the public.

Prompt steps were taken to arrange, describe, and classify this enormous mass of written matter within which lies the political and social history of the Victorian era. This work, with an index of some 20,000 headings, has now been completed and has resulted in a formidable array of 750 volumes. Nearly two-thirds are devoted to the statesman's enormous correspondence with all sorts and conditions of men and women.

It has been said that a man's character may be judged by the books he reads. If this be so, how much more true is it of the letters he writes, though reading between the lines may at times be necessary in order to complete a proper estimate of the writer. Here, among the tens of thousands of letters, this contention is borne out and human nature reveals itself at its highest and, alas, at its lowest.

More than 3,000 names in the "Dictionary of National Biography" are among the letter-writers. Naturally for one whose first and last Cabinet colleagues ranged from Wellington and Peel to Bryce and Asquith, the statesmen of all parties are there. Science is represented by Darwin, Sir Richard Owen, Huxley, Tyn-dall; poetry by Wordsworth (for whom Gladstone obtained a pension), Tennyson, Browning, Long-fellow; the world of letters shows Dickens, Trollope, Macaulay, and Burne Jones; Landseer, Herk-omer, Millais are among the artists. The stage has Charles Kean (who was with Gladstone at Eton), Ristori, Irving, Ellen Terry.

A mixed bag of foreign statesmen and others brings to light Li Hung Chang, Kruger, Bismarck, Garibaldi, Guizot, Cetsawayo, Cavour.

THE handwriting expert would have a royal time examining the correspondences. He would find, beyond a doubt, that for bad writing there was no one to approach Lord Brougham, who is so hard to read that, in spite of the efforts of various secretaries to transcribe his words, some of them remained, and still remain, undecipherable. Dean Stanley, a good second, was said to have been unable to read his own writing.

The varying style of the letters is of interest. When at Oxford "Glad" seems to have been the name used by his more intimate friends. So Lord Canning and Martin Tupper addressed him. The latter once burst forth with "Dear splendid, capital Glad". Gladstone's reply to "My dear Tupper" was more restrained. Lord Brougham always wrote "My dear Mr. G." and signed himself "H. B." Another who never departed from initials was Lord Rosebery with his "A. R."

After the mammoth correspondence are the volumes of official documents, including many secret memoranda "printed for the use of the Cabinet". These are followed by Gladstone's own records of every Cabinet meeting which he attended, either as Chancellor of the Exchequer or

as Prime Minister, from 1853 to his last in 1894. Accompanied, as they are, by memoranda from other Cabinet ministers they must prove of high value for the student of history.

Next are the notes, some very voluminous, for his speeches beginning with "my maiden speech at the society" (the Eton Debating Society) in 1825 and ending 70 years later. Then come the manuscripts of Gladstone's literary output—Homer, Butler, contributions to magazines, and articles, some unpublished, on subjects of all kinds. They begin with a paper written for the Essay Club, known as the Weg from its founder's initials, at Oxford in 1830 on the "Comparable rank of philosophy and poetry" and they end in the year of his death with Homer, to whom he had given the devotion of a lifetime.

The final section of the Gladstone Papers is probably by far the most important of the whole collection. It consists of 120 volumes in Gladstone's handwriting and covers, among much else, the inner political history of the nineteenth century. It begins with the earliest of his writings, penned when eight and a half years old—an account, with verse, of an escape from being killed "by a madman with a hatchet".

This is followed by work at Eton and Oxford—Latin and Greek verses and compositions, abstracts of histories, and digests of books read. Of Gibbon's Decline and Fall the schoolboy's verdict was: "Elegant and acute as he is, not so clear, so able, so attractive as Hume; does not attract my mind so much". Then "dear Oxford" and the beginning of his Parliamentary career.

POLITICAL memoranda—"highly important", notes Lord Morley—are abundant. Memoranda in Gladstone's case were not mere jotting on a half sheet of paper, but frequently extended to close on 200 quarto pages. The composition of inscriptions, and epitaphs had a great attraction for Gladstone, and here are many of them.

A series of nearly 200 sermons written by Gladstone during a period of 30 years for family use lie close to records of foreign journeys. Of music he was always fond and some of his musical compositions, one of which was heard at Eton a few years ago, meet the eye. Singing, too, is often referred to, but Lord Malmesbury's statement that he was enthusiastic about Negro melodies, especially such as "Camp-town Races", needs corroboration. Conversations with, among others, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Pius IX, Samuel Rogers, Lord Brougham, and leading statesmen are minutely recorded.

Gladstone's autobiographical notes, mostly written during the last four years of his life, fill two volumes.

No sooner was the announcement made that the papers had reached the British Museum than application to inspect them came in, if not from China to Peru, at least from China to Brazil. A Chinese student stated that he had travelled 6,000 miles for no other object than to see one section of the collection. The Dominions and the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and other countries sent their quota, and there has been a constant flow of research workers from this country, mainly from the universities.

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