

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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MR. ROSEBERY has somewhere observed that the Life of Mr. Gladstone, when it came to be written, would have to be undertaken by a limited liability company. No one can study the history of the present century without feeling the full force of this remark; certainly no one can appreciate it more fully than I do. In venturing upon the attempt at all, I have been actuated, in the first place, by a profound belief in the value to us all of British institutions; the interest attaching to British political development; and the importance of comprehending, even in a sweeping way, the springs of British Parliamentary action during the past sixty or seventy years. In the second place, I have felt that any effort, however inadequate, to picture the career of a leader such as Mr. Gladstone, must take the form of an impartial study of his share in the great events of a pregnant period, and be an attempt to estimate his character and influence through analyzing the correspondence and public utterances of his leading contemporaries as well as himself.

Distance in space from the scene of his struggles and achievements may help in giving this biography something, at least, of the impartiality which distance in time is usually expected to give. Whatever our political sympathies, any study of the prolonged period here dealt with must inspire impartial men with a strong belief in Mr. Gladstone's sincerity of mind, and power of deep conviction; with a sincere admiration for his noble personal character and Christian life; with a keen sympathy for his wonderful courage, his remarkable and sustained enthusiasm, his love of liberty, and his desire to do justice to the oppressed. His achievements as Chancellor of the Exchequer, his varied contributions to literature, his scholarship, and strong religious belief and teachings, his eloquence, to which I can find no comparison, unless it be the oratory of Pitt, must appeal strongly to any one who has followed modern British history.

After all, the two streams of thought and practice perceptible in British politics are reconcilable with the most absolute sincerity and honour, and even statesmanship, amongst the leaders of the two great parties. There will always be the tendency to preserve present institutions and rule by precedent, and the opposing tendency to reform, and change, and restless effort. Both are good in their action and reaction within the Constitution of the realm, and the combination of the two in one person tends to enhance the remarkable nature of Mr. Gladstone's career. It has been an exceedingly difficult, though not unpleasant, task to trace such a life from that time, eighty-six years ago, when it first

"Flamed in the forehead of the morning sky,"

and I can only hope, personally, for that degree of consideration which the public is always ready to grant to an honest effort, honestly made. In this connection, also, my warmest thanks are due to the officials of the Parliamentary and Public libraries for the hundreds of volumes I have been allowed to consult, and especially to Mr. James Bain, Jr., the Toronto Public Librarian.

TORONTO, September 2nd, 1895.

J. CASTELL HOPKINS.