

orators seem to have caught no bright ray, and are not lit up with the lambent spark. There are no McGees now, and but one Macdonald, while the dull and uninteresting are counted by the hundreds in the college, the forum and the Legislature. G.

## GLADSTONE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—The discussion recently raised by our talented fellow-citizen, Mr. Goldwin Smith, in the *North American Review*, has called forth observations from representative Americans upon the supposed ill-will of Americans to England, arising out of questions connected with the Civil War. In my letter, appearing in THE WEEK for June 27, I showed that in 1870-71 I found in New York and New England that the real Americans, at that time, were free from any such feeling. After the lapse of 20 years of uninterrupted peace it is absurd to suppose that the real American feeling on that subject has risen from temperate to boiling point.

I referred to Gladstone as the only British statesman who wished to depart from the very strictest neutrality. In justice to him it must be stated that he only advocated the recognition of Southern independence but not the slightest active interference. But on both sides of the Atlantic all felt that simply acknowledging the independence of the South—without the slightest act of hostility—would have practically decided the struggle. As Napoleon I. continually asserted with respect to warfare—moral force (in the sense in which he understood it) to physical force is as three to one. The recognition of independence by Europe, without any nation actively interfering, would practically have meant an increase of power of the South by one-third, and a corresponding diminution of that of the North. Besides this special trouble it was clear that Napoleon (who was strongly urging Great Britain to join with him and his satellites in taking the dreaded step) would have been happy to achieve a little cheap military glory, to have dazzled the eyes of the French, who so dearly love political theatricalism. He had a great liking for limited-liability wars—a maximum of glory with a minimum of risk. His ruling passion was to perpetuate his dynasty on the throne. A successful and triumphant Republic was an eyesore to a man who had strangled one on the banks of the Seine. It would have been easy for him—there was no one in that dread hour to practically say him nay—to have sent 20,000 French soldiers to swell the forces of Lee. The French, as military co-partners, excel in making people believe that “Codlin is the” man—and not Short.” So that while the Southerners would have done nine-tenths of the fighting, the ignorant small farmers of France, who mainly upheld his throne, would have believed that France had done nine-tenths of the fighting and the Confederates the remaining one-tenth. Or he might have figured as a mediator, and, borrowing from Lafayette’s tinseiling, been hailed by his adherents as the “Hero of Two Worlds.” From his restless intriguing nature it is certain that after the recognition of the South he would not have looked on with folded arms.

In time to come when third-rate American politicians and Irish-American editors will have ceased grinding their axes at the expense of their dupes, the neutrality of Great Britain, under great temptations and provocation, will be looked upon as one of the grandest historical actions of this century. No other great power would have done the like. While I was in the States, in 1870-71, I repeatedly read accounts in the daily papers of projected warlike invasions of Cuba, the territory of a nation with whom the United States was at peace, and against whom they had not the slightest cause of quarrel. The particulars of the ships, commanders, etc., were fully given, but only occasionally were any steps taken to prevent these acts of open piracy. They caused great loss of life and treasure, and the commission of many crimes. The Cubans never had in arms more than two or three guerilla bands, so that as against the power of Spain the struggle was a hopeless one.

## What Gladstone Actually Did Do.

In “Ireland Under Coercion” (Houghton, Mifflin and Company), W. H. Hurlbert, one of the ablest and most judicial-minded of American authors, refers (p. 7 and note A) to Gladstone’s celebrated speech at Newcastle, on October 7, 1862. Gladstone, as a Cabinet Minister, stated that “Jefferson Davis had created an army, navy, and a nation”—and that it was “as certain as anything in the future could be, that the ‘South must separate itself from the Union.’” This rash statement, without regard to consequences, was evidently a bid for popularity among unthinking people. At that time (see “Chambers’ Encyclopedia—Cotton Famine”) a million of men, women, and children in Great Britain were suffering through the cotton famine—and Napoleon was bringing all the influence he could to bear upon the British Government to get it to recognize the independence of the South. Lord Palmerston, the Premier, and the other ministers were naturally indignant at Gladstone’s conduct—and Sir G. C. Lewis, “the scholar statesman,” one of his colleagues—who was looked upon as Palmerston’s future successor—although then suffering from an illness which ultimately ended his life—repudiated Gladstone’s utterance at Hereford, on the 17th of October. Milner Gibson, a second cabinet minister, also publicly did the like. It is noteworthy that, except Gladstone not a single statesman, either among the Liberals or Conservatives, advocated the recognition of the South—

and, so far as actual force was concerned, there was not a single instance known of any one advocating it.

## Why Did Gladstone Act Thus?

Probably from several motives. First, from a reason which has never before been pointed out. He was, from family antecedents, predisposed to look leniently upon slavery—for his father had been a slave owner, and part of his own fortune was derived from that source. His maiden speech was an excuse for slavery—“honourably and legally acquired property.” But by what will be known in future ages as the verb, “To Gladstonize,” he characteristically worded his speech so that, when desired, a portion of it might be quoted to show that he was opposed to slavery—while his father and all other slave-owners would be impressed by his vigorous defence of their real or supposed rights, and exultingly quote him as a great champion on their side. There was a celebrated barrister in England, Sir Charles Wetherell, whose handwriting was a miserable scrawl. When solicitors tried to read his written opinions they were often sorely puzzled to decipher them. There was a saying in the legal profession that he had three sorts of handwriting—one that his clerk and no one else could read, a second that he could read but no one else, and a third that neither he, nor his clerk, nor any one else could read. This applies to some of Gladstone’s speeches—but the simple key when one is puzzled is from Dickens—“Codlin’s the friend—not Short.”

Gladstone spoke his maiden speech on the 17th of May, 1833. It was on a question of slavery. Gladstone senior owned many slaves on his estate in Demerara. Lord Howick—a Liberal—had, in the House of Commons, charged that owing to severity in working the slaves on the Gladstone estate there had been a loss of 71 lives. Gladstone, in reply, stated (see Cassell’s Life of Gladstone, p. 78) that when the estate of Vreedom Hoop came into his father’s possession “it was so weak owing to the great number of Africans upon it, that he was obliged to add 200 people to the gang.” (This, of course, proved that Gladstone, Senior, bought 200 slaves.) He then added that the loss of life was caused by changing the cultivation from cotton and coffee to that of sugar. He was ready to admit that this cultivation (sugar) was of a more severe character than others. But what should we say of a system of management which caused the deaths of 71 people on one estate? The truth really was as a correspondent of the *London Spectator* stated—the father was a man capable of great hardness to others. Evidently he was bound to have his pound of flesh, and his slaves suffered accordingly.

There was something very rich in Gladstone’s speech. It has often been stated that he evidently lacks the sense of the ridiculous. It recalls to mind Squeers’ pathetic description of the imaginary happiness of his unfortunate and deeply-wronged pupils at Dotheboys Hall. Mr. Gladstone stated that he held in his hand two letters from the agent (the practical overseer of his father’s estate) in which that gentleman spoke in the kindest terms of the people under his charge—described their state of happiness, content and healthiness, etc., etc. Under such circumstances, as the Irish comic song runs, “Oh, why did you die?” Could Squeers, when morally riding his highest horse, have beaten this? This slip is a striking corroboration of what Mr. Goldwin Smith has written of Gladstone—that he often appears to be unable to understand the consequences resulting from what he does or says.

On the debate being resumed, Gladstone observed that he “deprecated slavery,” but he asked, “Were not Englishmen to retain a right to their own honestly and legally acquired property?” He thought there was excessive wickedness in any “violent interference (i.e. freeing the slaves without compensating the owners) under the present circumstances.”

Gladstone’s father was one of the leading Liverpool merchants. Until the slave trade was abolished, early in the century, that town was the headquarters of those engaged in that most iniquitous traffic. Gladstone in his early life must in his father’s house have met numbers of those who believed it to be an honest trade—consequently he was in sympathy with his father and other slave owners, and not with the slaves. It is reasonably certain that these facts greatly influenced his opinions on the American Civil War. We should especially note his opinion as to “the excessive wickedness of violent interference.”

## Another of Gladstone’s Reasons.

Unfortunately for the general welfare, the real history of Gladstone’s conduct while he was a member of Palmerston’s Cabinet has been unwisely withheld from the public. A few facts, however, are well known. Palmerston complained that Gladstone never behaved as a loyal colleague. In plain English he subterfugously intrigued. Palmerston said he had a drawer full of Gladstone’s letters of resignation. Was one of those anent the public repudiation of his Secession Speech? Doubtless when he found that he could affect nothing by such devices, he suffered friends to persuade him to withdraw them. It should also be borne in mind that it was only so late as 1858—he then being forty-nine—that he definitively joined the Liberal party. The late Earl Derby asked him to join his Conservative Cabinet in 1858, which he was willing to do if he had the leadership of the House of Commons. But Disraeli would not vacate that position in favour of a man whom he regarded as a rival. Therefore Gladstone finally broke with the Conservatives.

## A Third Reason.

One of the leading features of Gladstone’s character is his excessive love of approbation. It is his ruling passion. Bearing this in mind, and also what Palmerston said of his behaviour as a colleague, the inference naturally is that his famous Secession Speech was an attempt to force Palmerston’s hand; an effort to make himself the leading man in the Cabinet; a bid for popularity among unthinking people; to figure as “the observed of all observers,” and this without the slightest regard to the disasters that would have been caused by such reckless conduct. But providentially it was otherwise ordered. Yours, etc.

June 28, 1890.

FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

## THE NYMPHS’ GROTTTO.\*

Sic niger, in ripis errat quum forte Caystri,  
Inter Ledaos ridetur corvus olores.—*Martial*.

BESIDE the Euxine sea, beneath a hill,  
There is a dell: here grows a laurel staid;  
And, clinging to its boughs, a laughing maid  
With timid foot plays with the waters chill.  
Her comrades gay, at conchal trumpet’s sound,  
Dive ‘neath the dancing wave; the foamy brim  
Shows here a body white, and there a limb,  
Here shining hair, there rose of bosom round.

A gleesomeness divine fills all the wood—  
But see! two eyes through sombre shadows gleam;  
The Satyr’s laugh breaks in upon their play.  
The nymphs, they flee!—So when, of sinister brood,  
A raven swart croaks o’er the snowy stream  
Of Caystros, he frights the swans away.

ARNOLD HAULTAIN.

## A SHORT DEFENCE OF VILLAINS.

AMID the universal grayness that has settled mistily down upon English fiction, amid the delicate drab-coloured shadings and half-lights which require, we are told, so fine a skill in handling, the old-fashioned reader misses, now and then, the vivid colouring of his youth. He misses the slow unfolding of quite impossible plots, the thrilling incidents that were wont pleasantly to arouse his apprehension, and, most of all, two characters once deemed essential to every novel,—the hero and the villain. The heroine is left us still, and her functions are far more complicated than in the simple days of yore, when little was required of her save to be beautiful as the stars. She faces now the most intricate problems of life; and she faces them with conscious self-importance, a dismal power of analysis, and a robust candour in discussing their equivocal aspects that would have sent her buried sister blushing to the wall. There was sometimes a lamentable lack of solid virtue in this fair dead sister, a pitiful human weakness that led to her undoing; but she never talked so glibly about sin. As for the hero, he owes his banishment to the riotous manner in which his masters handled him. Bulwer strained our endurance and our credulity to the utmost; Disraeli took a step further, and Lothair, the last of his race, perished amid the cruel laughter of mankind.

But the villain! Remember what we owe to him in the past. Think how dear he has become to every rightly constituted mind. And now we are told, soberly and coldly, by the thin-blooded novelists of the day, that his absence is one of the crowning triumphs of modern genius, that we have all grown too discriminating to tolerate in fiction a character whom we feel does not exist in life. Man, we are reminded, is complex, subtle, unfathomable, made up of good and evil so dexterously intermingled that no one element predominates coarsely over the rest. He is to be studied warily and with misgivings, not classified with brutal ease into the virtuous and bad. It is useless to explain to these analysts that the pleasure we take in meeting a character in a book does not always depend on our having known him in the family circle, or encountered him in our morning paper; though, judged even by this stringent law, the villain holds his own. Accept Balzac’s rule, and exclude from fiction not only all which might not really happen, but all which has not really happened in truth, and we would still have studies enough in total depravity to darken all the novels in Christendom. I have before me now two newspaper cuttings, briefly narrating two recent crimes, which display in one case an ingenuity, and in the other a stolidity of wickedness quite unparalleled in the regions of romance. The first—which I would like to commend to the consideration of Frances Power Cobbe, who thinks that jealousy is an obsolete vice—is an account of a young Cuban, who revenged himself on a successful rival by mixing the dried virus from a smallpox patient with some tobacco, which he proffered him for cigarettes; the result being the death, not of the victim only, but of his entire household. The other is a history of a poor German farm hand who, seeing his mistress attacked by a rabid dog, went bravely to her rescue, and throttled the animal, after having been bitten several times in the hands. His employer ascertained that the dog was really mad, and that hydrophobia might possibly ensue, and then promptly and coolly turned out-of-doors the man who had saved his wife. Alone, friendless, penniless, unable even to speak a word of English, the young fellow was carried to the almshouse, there to have his wounds dressed and to take

\* Translated from M. José-Maria de Heredia’s “Sonnet Antique,” in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of May 15th, 1890.