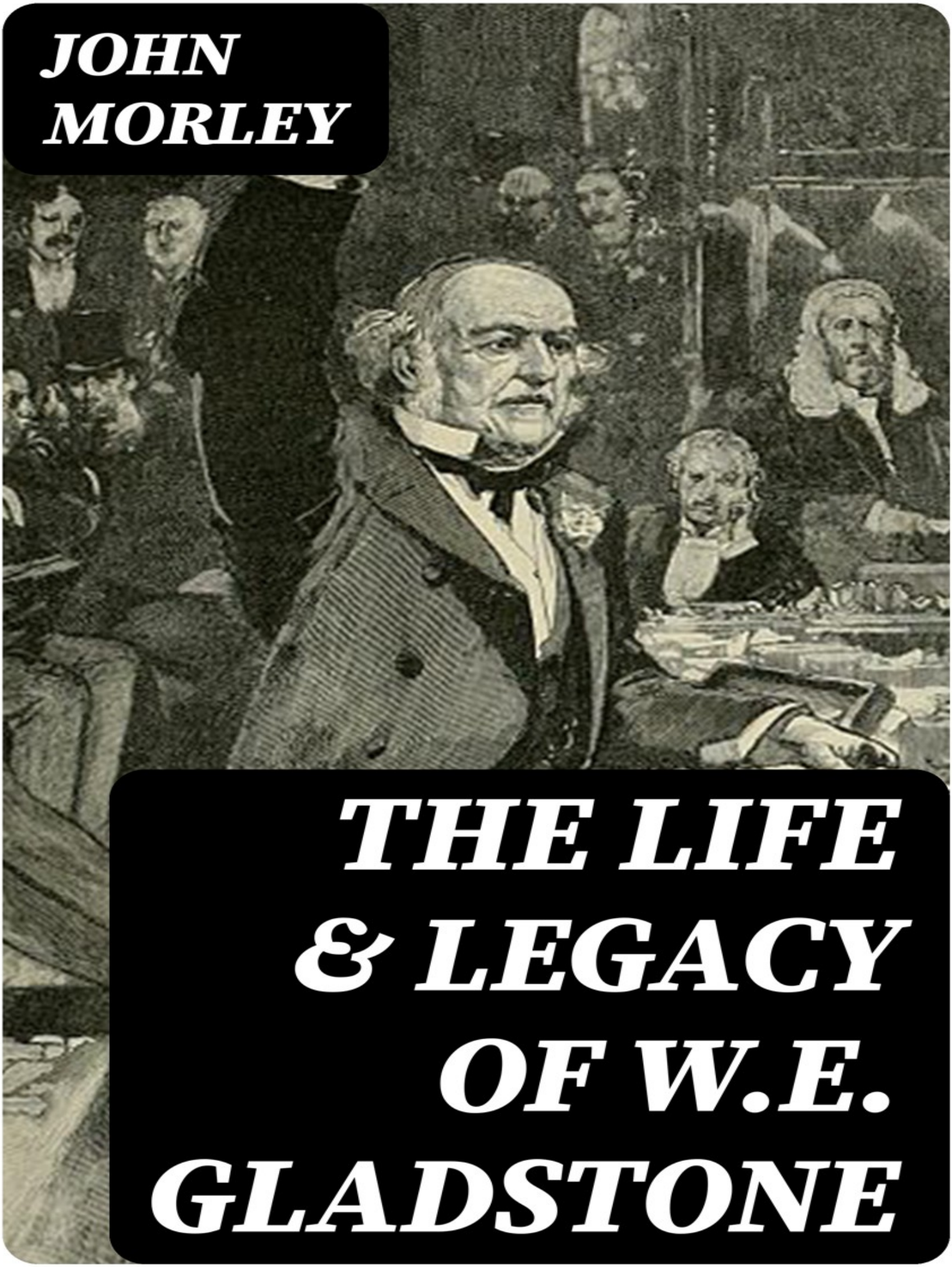
JOHN MORLEY



THE LIFE & LEGACY OF W.E. GLADSTONE

John Morley

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VOLUME 1

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NOTE

The material on which this biography is founded consists mainly, of course, of the papers collected at Hawarden. Besides that vast accumulation, I have been favoured with several thousands of other pieces from the legion of Mr. Gladstone's correspondents. Between two and three hundred thousand written papers of one sort or another must have passed under my view. To some important journals and papers from other sources I have enjoyed free access, and my warm thanks are due to those who have generously lent me this valuable aid. I am especially indebted to the King for the liberality with which his Majesty has been graciously pleased to sanction the use of certain documents, in cases where the permission of the Sovereign was required.

When I submitted an application for the same purpose to Queen Victoria, in readily promising her favourable consideration, the Queen added a message strongly impressing on me that the work I was about to undertake should not be handled in the narrow way of party. This injunction represents my own clear view of the spirit in which the history of a career so memorable as Mr. Gladstone's should be composed. That, to be sure, is not at all inconsistent with our regarding party feeling in its honourable sense, as entirely the reverse of an infirmity.

The diaries from which I have often quoted consist of forty little books in double columns, intended to do little more than record persons seen, or books read, or letters written as the days passed by. From these diaries come several of the mottoes prefixed to our chapters; such mottoes are marked by an asterisk.

The trustees and other members of Mr. Gladstone's family have extended to me a uniform kindness and

consideration and an absolutely unstinted confidence, for which I can never cease to owe them my heartiest acknowledgment. They left with the writer an unqualified and undivided responsibility for these pages, and for the use of the material that they entrusted to him. Whatever may prove to be amiss, whether in leaving out or putting in or putting wrong, the blame is wholly mine.

J. M.

1903.

BOOK I

1809-1831

INTRODUCTORY

I am well aware that to try to write Mr. Gladstone's life at all—the life of a man who held an imposing place in many high national transactions, whose character and career may be regarded in such various lights, whose interests were so manifold, and whose years bridged so long a span of time—is a stroke of temerity. To try to write his life to-day, is to push temerity still further. The ashes of controversy, in which he was much concerned, are still hot; perspective, scale, relation, must all while we stand so near be difficult to adjust. Not all particulars, more especially of the latest marches in his wide campaign, can be disclosed without risk of unjust pain to persons now alive. Yet to defer the task for thirty or forty years has plain drawbacks too. Interest grows less vivid; truth becomes harder to find out; memories pale and colour fades. And if in one sense a statesman's contemporaries, even after death has abated the storm and temper of faction, can scarcely judge him, yet in another sense they who breathe the same air as he breathed, who know at close quarters the problems that faced him, the materials with which he had to work, the limitations of his time—such must be the best, if not the only true memorialists and recorders.

Every reader will perceive that perhaps the sharpest of all the many difficulties of my task has been to draw the line between history and biography—between the fortunes of the community and the exploits, thoughts, and purposes of the individual who had so marked a share in them. In the

case of men of letters, in whose lives our literature is admirably rich, this difficulty happily for their authors and for our delight does not arise. But where the subject is a man who was four times at the head of the government—no phantom, but dictator—and who held this office of first minister for a longer time than any other statesman in the reign of the Queen, how can we tell the story of his works and days without reference, and ample reference, to the course of events over whose unrolling he presided, and out of which he made history? It is true that what interests the world in Mr. Gladstone is even more what he was, than what he did; his brilliancy, charm, and power; the endless surprises; his dualism or more than dualism; his vicissitudes of opinion; his subtleties of mental progress; his strange union of qualities never elsewhere found together; his striking unlikeness to other men in whom great and free nations have for long periods placed their trust. I am not sure that the incessant search for clues through this labyrinth would not end in analysis and disquisition, that might be no great improvement even upon political history. Mr. Gladstone said of reconstruction of the income-tax that he only did not call the task herculean, because Hercules could not have done it. Assuredly, I am not presumptuous enough to suppose that this difficulty of fixing the precise scale between history and biography has been successfully overcome by me. It may be that Hercules himself would have succeeded little better.

Some may think in this connection that I have made the preponderance of politics excessive in the story of a genius of signal versatility, to whom politics were only one interest among many. No doubt speeches, debates, bills, divisions, motions, and manœuvres of party, like the manna that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness, lose their savour and power of nutriment on the second day. Yet after all it was to his thoughts, his purposes, his ideals, his performances as statesman, in all the widest significance of that lofty and

honourable designation, that Mr. Gladstone owes the lasting substance of his fame. His life was ever '*greatly absorbed*,' he said, '*in working the institutions of his country*.' Here we mark a signal trait. Not for two centuries, since the historic strife of anglican and puritan, had our island produced a ruler in whom the religious motive was paramount in the like degree. He was not only a political force but a moral force. He strove to use all the powers of his own genius and the powers of the state for moral purposes and religious. Nevertheless his mission in all its forms was action. He had none of that detachment, often found among superior minds, which we honour for its disinterestedness, even while we lament its impotence in result. The track in which he moved, the instruments that he employed, were the track and the instruments, the sword and the trowel, of political action; and what is called the Gladstonian era was distinctively a political era.

On this I will permit myself a few words more. The detailed history of Mr. Gladstone as theologian and churchman will not be found in these pages, and nobody is more sensible than their writer of the gap. Mr. Gladstone cared as much for the church as he cared for the state; he thought of the church as the soul of the state; he believed the attainment by the magistrate of the ends of government to depend upon religion; and he was sure that the strength of a state corresponds to the religious strength and soundness of the community of which the state is the civil organ. I should have been wholly wanting in biographical fidelity, not to make this clear and superabundantly clear. Still a writer inside Mr. Gladstone's church and in full and active sympathy with him on this side of mundane and supramundane things, would undoubtedly have treated the subject differently from any writer outside. No amount of candour or good faith—and in these essentials I believe that I have not fallen short—can be a substitute for the confidence and ardour of an adherent, in the heart of those

to whom the church stands first. Here is one of the difficulties of this complex case. Yet here, too, there may be some trace of compensation. If the reader has been drawn into the whirlpools of the political Charybdis, he might not even in far worthier hands than mine have escaped the rocky headlands of the ecclesiastic Scylla. For churches also have their parties.

Lord Salisbury, the distinguished man who followed Mr. Gladstone in a longer tenure of power than his, called him 'a great Christian'; and nothing could be more true or better worth saying. He not only accepted the doctrines of that faith as he believed them to be held by his own communion; he sedulously strove to apply the noblest moralities of it to the affairs both of his own nation and of the commonwealth of nations. It was a supreme experiment. People will perhaps some day wonder that many of those who derided the experiment and reproached its author, failed to see that they were making manifest in this a wholesale scepticism as to truths that they professed to prize, far deeper and more destructive than the doubts and disbeliefs of the gentiles in the outer courts.

The epoch, as the reader knows, was what Mr. Gladstone called 'an agitated and expectant age.' Some stages of his career mark stages of the first importance in the history of English party, on which so much in the working of our constitution hangs. His name is associated with a record of arduous and fruitful legislative work and administrative improvement, equalled by none of the great men who have grasped the helm of the British state. The intensity of his mind, and the length of years through which he held presiding office, enabled him to impress for good in all the departments of government his own severe standard of public duty and personal exactitude. He was the chief force, propelling, restraining, guiding his country at many decisive moments. Then how many surprises and what seeming paradox. Devotedly attached to the church, he was the

agent in the overthrow of establishment in one of the three kingdoms, and in an attempt to overthrow it in the Principality. Entering public life with vehement aversion to the recent dislodgment of the landed aristocracy as the mainspring of parliamentary power, he lent himself to two further enormously extensive changes in the constitutional centre of gravity. With a lifelong belief in parliamentary deliberation as the grand security for judicious laws and national control over executive act, he yet at a certain stage betook himself with magical result to direct and individual appeal to the great masses of his countrymen, and the world beheld the astonishing spectacle of a politician with the microscopic subtlety of a thirteenth century schoolman wielding at will the new democracy in what has been called 'the country of plain men.' A firm and trained economist, and no friend to socialism, yet by his legislation upon land in 1870 and 1881 he wrote the opening chapter in a volume on which many an unexpected page in the history of Property is destined to be inscribed. Statesmen do far less than they suppose, far less than is implied in their resounding fame, to augment the material prosperity of nations, but in this province Mr. Gladstone's name stands at the topmost height. Yet no ruler that ever lived felt more deeply the truth—for which I know no better words than Channing's—that to improve man's outward condition is not to improve man himself; this must come from each man's endeavour within his own breast; without that there can be little ground for social hope. Well was it said to him, 'You have so lived and wrought that you have kept the soul alive in England.' Not in England only was this felt. He was sometimes charged with lowering the sentiment, the lofty and fortifying sentiment, of national pride. At least it is a ground for national pride that he, the son of English training, practised through long years in the habit and tradition of English public life, standing for long years foremost in accepted authority and renown before the eye of England,

so conquered imagination and attachment in other lands, that when the end came it was thought no extravagance for one not an Englishman to say, 'On the day that Mr. Gladstone died, the world has lost its greatest citizen.' The reader who revolves all this will know why I began by speaking of temerity.

That my book should be a biography without trace of bias, no reader will expect. There is at least no bias against the truth; but indifferent neutrality in a work produced, as this is, in the spirit of loyal and affectionate remembrance, would be distasteful, discordant, and impossible. I should be heartily sorry if there were no signs of partiality and no evidence of prepossession. On the other hand there is, I trust, no importunate advocacy or tedious assentation. He was great man enough to stand in need of neither. Still less has it been needed, in order to exalt him, to disparage others with whom he came into strong collision. His own funeral orations from time to time on some who were in one degree or another his antagonists, prove that this petty and ungenerous method would have been to him of all men most repugnant. Then to pretend that for sixty years, with all 'the varying weather of the mind,' he traversed in every zone the restless ocean of a great nation's shifting and complex politics, without many a faulty tack and many a wrong reckoning, would indeed be idle. No such claim is set up by rational men for Pym, Cromwell, Walpole, Washington, or either Pitt. It is not set up for any of the three contemporaries of Mr. Gladstone whose names live with the three most momentous transactions of his age—Cavour, Lincoln, Bismarck. To suppose, again, that in every one of the many subjects touched by him, besides exhibiting the range of his powers and the diversity of his interests, he made abiding contributions to thought and knowledge, is to ignore the jealous conditions under which such contributions come. To say so much as this is to make but a small deduction from the total of a grand account.

I have not reproduced the full text of Letters in the proportion customary in English biography. The existing mass of his letters is enormous. But then an enormous proportion of them touch on affairs of public business, on which they shed little new light. Even when he writes in his kindest and most cordial vein to friends to whom he is most warmly attached, it is usually a letter of business. He deals freely and genially with the points in hand, and then without play of gossip, salutation, or compliment, he passes on his way. He has in his letters little of that spirit in which his talk often abounded, of disengagement, pleasant colloquy, happy raillery, and all the other undefined things that make the correspondence of so many men whose business was literature, such delightful reading for the idler hour of an industrious day. It is perhaps worth adding that the asterisks denoting an omitted passage hide no piquant hit, no personality, no indiscretion; the omission is in every case due to consideration of space. Without these asterisks and, other omissions, nothing would have been easier than to expand these three volumes into a hundred. I think nothing relevant is lost. Nobody ever had fewer secrets, nobody ever lived and wrought in fuller sunlight.

CHAPTER I
CHILDHOOD

(*1809-1821*)

> I know not why commerce in England should not have its old families, rejoicing to be connected with commerce from generation to generation. It has been so in other countries; I trust it will be so in this country.—GLADSTONE.

The dawn of the life of the great and famous man who is our subject in these memoirs has been depicted with homely simplicity by his own hand. With this fragment of a record it is perhaps best for me to begin our journey. 'I was born,' he says, 'on December 29, 1809,' at 62 Rodney Street, Liverpool. 'I was baptized, I believe, in the parish church of St. Peter. My godmother was my elder sister Anne, then just seven years old, who died a perfect saint in the beginning of the year 1829. In her later years she lived in close relations with me, and I must have been much worse but for her. Of my godfathers, one was a Scotch episcopalian, Mr. Fraser of ——, whom I hardly ever saw or heard of; the other a presbyterian, Mr. G. Grant, a junior partner of my father's.' The child was named William Ewart, after his father's friend, an immigrant Scot and a merchant like himself, and father of a younger William Ewart, who became member for Liverpool, and did good public service in parliament.

> Before proceeding to the period of my childhood, properly so-called, I will here insert a few words about my family. My maternal grandfather was known as Provost Robertson of Dingwall, a man held, I believe, in the highest respect. His wife was

a Mackenzie of [Coul]. His circumstances must have been good.

Of his three sons, one went into the army, and I recollect him as Captain Robertson (I have a seal which he gave me, a three-sided cairngorm. Cost him 7½ guineas). The other two took mercantile positions. When my parents made a Scotch tour in 1820-21 with, I think, their four sons, the freedom of Dingwall was presented to us all,[1] with my father; and there was large visiting at the houses of the Ross-shire gentry. I think the line of my grandmother was stoutly episcopalian and Jacobite; but, coming outside the western highlands, the first at least was soon rubbed down. The provost, I think, came from a younger branch of the Robertsons of Struan.

On my father's side the matter is more complex. The history of the family has been traced at the desire of my eldest brother and my own, by Sir William Fraser, the highest living authority.[2] He has carried us up to a rather remote period, I think before Elizabeth, but has not yet been able to connect us with the earliest known holders of the name, which with the aid of charter-chests he hopes to do. Some things are plain and not without interest. They were a race of borderers. There is still an old Gledstanes or Gladstone castle. They formed a family in Sweden in the seventeenth century. The explanation of this may have been that, when the union of the crowns led to the extinction of border fighting they took service like Sir Dugald Dalgetty under Gustavus Adolphus, and in this case passed from service to settlement. I have never heard of them in Scotland until after the Restoration, otherwise than as persons of family. At that period there are

traces of their having been fined by public authority, but not for any ordinary criminal offence. From this time forward I find no trace of their gentility. During the eighteenth century they are, I think, principally traced by a line of maltsters (no doubt a small business then) in Lanarkshire. Their names are recorded on tombstones in the churchyard of Biggar. I remember going as a child or boy to see the representative of that branch, either in 1820 or some years earlier, who was a small watchmaker in that town. He was of the same generation as my father, but came, I understood, from a senior brother of the family. I do not know whether his line is extinct. There also seem to be some stray Gladstones who are found at Yarmouth and in Yorkshire.[3]

ANCESTRY

My father's father seems from his letters to have been an excellent man and a wise parent: his wife a woman of energy. There are pictures of them at Fasque, by Raeburn. He was a merchant, in Scotch phrase; that is to say, a shopkeeper dealing in corn and stores, and my father as a lad served in his shop. But he also sent a ship or ships to the Baltic; and I believe that my father, whose energy soon began to outtop that of all the very large family, went in one of these ships at a very early age as a supercargo, an appointment then, I think, common. But he soon quitted a nest too small to hold him. He was born in December 1764: and I have (at Hawarden) a reprint of the *Liverpool Directory* for 178-, in which his name appears as a

partner in the firm of Messrs. Corrie, corn merchants.

Here his force soon began to be felt as a prominent and then a foremost member of the community. A liberal in the early period of the century, he drew to Mr. Canning, and brought that statesman as candidate to Liverpool in 1812, by personally offering to guarantee his expenses at a time when, though prosperous, he could hardly have been a rich man. His services to the town were testified by gifts of plate, now in the possession of the elder lines of his descendants, and by a remarkable subscription of six thousand pounds raised to enable him to contest the borough of Lancaster, for which he sat in the parliament of 1818.

At his demise, in December 1851, the value of his estate was, I think, near £600,000. My father was a successful merchant, but considering his long life and means of accumulation, the result represents a success secondary in comparison with that of others whom in native talent and energy he much surpassed. It was a large and strong nature, simple though hasty, profoundly affectionate and capable of the highest devotion in the lines of duty and of love. I think that his intellect was a little intemperate, though not his character. In his old age, spent mainly in retirement, he was our constant [centre of] social and domestic life. My mother, a beautiful and admirable woman, failed in health and left him a widower in 1835, when she was 62.

He then turns to the records of his own childhood, a period that he regarded as closing in September 1821, when he was sent to Eton. He begins with one or two juvenile

performances, in no way differing from those of any other infant,—*navita projectus humi*, the mariner flung by force of the waves naked and helpless ashore. He believes that he was strong and healthy, and came well through his childish ailments.

> My next recollection belongs to the period of Mr. Canning's first election for Liverpool, in the month of October of the year 1812. Much entertaining went on in my father's house, where Mr. Canning himself was a guest; and on a day of a great dinner I was taken down to the dining room. I was set upon one of the chairs, standing, and directed to say to the company 'Ladies and gentlemen.'
>
> I have, thirdly, a group of recollections which refer to Scotland. Thither my father and mother took me on a journey which they made, I think, in a post-chaise to Edinburgh and Glasgow as its principal points. At Edinburgh our sojourn was in the Royal Hotel, Princes Street. I well remember the rattling of the windows when the castle guns were fired on some great occasion, probably the abdication of Napoleon, for the date of the journey was, I think, the spring of 1814.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

> In this journey the situation of Sanquhar, in a close Dumfriesshire valley, impressed itself on my recollection. I never saw Sanquhar again until in the autumn of 1863 (as I believe). As I was whirled along the Glasgow and South-Western railway I witnessed just beneath me lines of building in just such a valley, and said that must be Sanquhar, which it was. My local memory has always been

good and very impressible by scenery. I seem to myself never to have forgotten a scene.

I have one other early recollection to record. It must, I think, have been in the year 1815 that my father and mother took me with them on either one or two more journeys. The objective points were Cambridge and London respectively. My father had built, under the very niggard and discouraging laws which repressed rather than encouraged the erection of new churches at that period, the church of St. Thomas at Seaforth, and he wanted a clergyman for it.[4] Guided in these matters very much by the deeply religious temper of my mother, he went with her to Cambridge to obtain a recommendation of a suitable person from Mr. Simeon, whom I saw at the time.[5] I remember his appearance distinctly. He was a venerable man, and although only a fellow of a college, was more ecclesiastically got up than many a dean, or even here and there, perhaps, a bishop of the present less costumed if more ritualistic period. Mr. Simeon, I believe, recommended Mr. Jones, an excellent specimen of the excellent evangelical school of those days. We went to Leicester to hear him preach in a large church, and his text was '*Grow in grace*.' He became eventually archdeacon of Liverpool, and died in great honour a few years ago at much past 90. On the strength of this visit to Cambridge I lately boasted there, even during the lifetime of the aged Provost Okes, that I had been in the university before any one of them.

I think it was at this time that in London we were domiciled in Russell Square, in the house of a brother of my mother, Mr. Colin Robertson; and I was vexed and put about by being forbidden to

run freely at my own will into and about the streets, as I had done in Liverpool. But the main event was this: we went to a great service of public thanksgiving at Saint Paul's, and sat in a small gallery annexed to the choir, just over the place where was the Regent, and looking down upon him from behind. I recollect nothing more of the service, nor was I ever present at any public thanksgiving after this in Saint Paul's, until the service held in that cathedral, under my advice as the prime minister, after the highly dangerous illness of the Prince of Wales.

Before quitting the subject of early recollections I must name one which involves another person of some note. My mother took me in 181—to Barley Wood Cottage, near Bristol. Here lived Miss Hannah More, with some of her coeval sisters. I am sure they loved my mother, who was love-worthy indeed. And I cannot help here deviating for a moment into the later portion of the story to record that in 1833 I had the honour of breakfasting with Mr. Wilberforce a few days before his death,[6] and when I entered the house, immediately after the salutation, he said to me in his silvery tones, 'How is your sweet mother?' He had been a guest in my father's house some twelve years before. During the afternoon visit at Barley Wood, Miss Hannah More took me aside and presented to me a little book. It was a copy of her *Sacred Dramas*, and it now remains in my possession, with my name written in it by her. She very graciously accompanied it with a little speech, of which I cannot recollect the conclusion (or apodosis), but it began, 'As you have just come into the world, and I am just going out of it, I therefore,' etc.

I wish that in reviewing my childhood I could regard it as presenting those features of innocence and beauty which I have often seen elsewhere, and indeed, thanks be to God, within the limits of my own home. The best I can say for it is that I do not think it was a vicious childhood. I do not think, trying to look at the past impartially, that I had a strong natural propensity then developed to what are termed the mortal sins. But truth obliges me to record this against myself. I have no recollection of being a loving or a winning child; or an earnest or diligent or knowledge-loving child. God forgive me. And what pains and shames me most of all is to remember that at most and at best I was, like the sailor in Juvenal,

> digitis a morte remotus,
> Quatuor aut septem;[7]

the plank between me and all the sins was so very thin. I do not indeed intend in these notes to give a history of the inner life, which I think has been with me extraordinarily dubious, vacillating, and above all complex. I reserve them, perhaps, for a more private and personal document; and I may in this way relieve myself from some at least of the risks of falling into an odious Pharisaism. I cannot in truth have been an interesting child, and the only presumption the other way which I can gather from my review is that there was probably something in me worth the seeing, or my father and mother would not so much have singled me out to be taken with them on their journeys.

I was not a devotional child. I have no recollection of early love for the House of God and for divine service: though after my father built the

church at Seaforth in 1815, I remember cherishing a hope that he would bequeath it to me, and that I might live in it. I have a very early recollection of hearing preaching in St. George's, Liverpool, but it is this: that I turned quickly to my mother and said, 'When will he have done?' The *Pilgrim's Progress* undoubtedly took a great and fascinating hold upon me, so that anything which I wrote was insensibly moulded in its style; but it was by the force of the allegory addressing itself to the fancy, and was very like a strong impression received from the *Arabian Nights*, and from another work called *Tales of the Genii*. I think it was about the same time that Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*, and especially the life and death of Wallace, used to make me weep profusely. This would be when I was about ten years old. At a much earlier period, say six or seven, I remember praying earnestly, but it was for no higher object than to be spared from the loss of a tooth. Here, however, it may be mentioned in mitigation that the local dentist of those days, in our case a certain Dr. P. of —— Street, Liverpool, was a kind of savage at his work (possibly a very good-natured man too), with no ideas except to smash and crash. My religious recollections, then, are a sad blank. Neither was I a popular boy, though not egregiously otherwise. If I was not a bad boy, I think that I was a boy with a great absence of goodness. I was a child of slow, in some points I think of singularly slow, development. There was more in me perhaps than in the average boy, but it required greatly more time to set itself in order: and just so in adult, and in middle and later life, I acquired very tardily any knowledge of the world, and that simultaneous conspectus of the relations of persons and things

which is necessary for the proper performance of duties in the world.

I may mention another matter in extenuation. I received, unless my memory deceives me, very little benefit from teaching. My father was too much occupied, my mother's health was broken. We, the four brothers, had no quarrelling among ourselves: but neither can I recollect any influence flowing down at this time upon me, the junior. One odd incident seems to show that I was meek, which I should not have supposed, not less than thrifty and penurious, a leaning which lay deep, I think, in my nature, and which has required effort and battle to control it. It was this. By some process not easy to explain I had, when I was *probably* seven or eight, and my elder brothers from ten or eleven to fourteen or thereabouts, accumulated no less than twenty shillings in silver. My brothers judged it right to appropriate this fund, and I do not recollect either annoyance or resistance or complaint. But I recollect that they employed the principal part of it in the purchase of four knives, and that they broke the points from the tops of the blades of my knife, lest I should cut my fingers.

Where was the official or appointed teacher all this time? He was the Rev. Mr. Rawson of Cambridge, who had, I suppose, been passed by Mr. Simeon and become private tutor in my father's house. But as he was to be incumbent of the church, the bishop required a parsonage and that he should live in it. Out of this grew a very small school of about twelve boys, to which I went, with some senior brother or brothers remaining for a while.

Mr. Rawson was a good man, of high no-popery opinions. His school afterwards rose into considerable repute, and it had Dean Stanley and the sons of one or more other Cheshire families for pupils. But I think this was not so much due to its intellectual stamina as to the extreme salubrity of the situation on the pure dry sands of the Mersey's mouth, with all the advantages of the strong tidal action and the fresh and frequent north-west winds. At five miles from Liverpool Exchange, the sands, delicious for riding, were one absolute solitude, and only one house looked down on them between us and the town. To return to Mr. Rawson. Everything was unobjectionable. I suppose I learnt something there. But I have no recollection of being under any moral or personal influence whatever, and I doubt whether the preaching had any adaptation whatever to children. As to intellectual training, I believe that, like the other boys, I shirked my work as much as I could. I went to Eton in 1821 after a pretty long spell, in a very middling state of preparation, and wholly without any knowledge or other enthusiasm, unless it were a priggish love of argument which I had begun to develop. I had lived upon a rabbit warren: and what a rabbit warren of a life it is that I have been surveying.

My brother John, three years older than myself, and of a moral character more manly and on a higher level, had chosen the navy, and went off to the preparatory college at Portsmouth. But he evidently underwent persecution for righteousness' sake at the college, which was then (say about 1820) in a bad condition. Of this, though he was never querulous, his letters bore the traces, and I cannot but think they must have

exercised upon me some kind of influence for good. As to miscellaneous notices, I had a great affinity with the trades of joiners and of bricklayers. Physically I must have been rather tough, for my brother John took me down at about ten years old to wrestle in the stables with an older lad of that region, whom I threw. Among our greatest enjoyments were undoubtedly the annual Guy Fawkes bonfires, for which we had always liberal allowances of wreck timber and a tar-barrel. I remember seeing, when about eight or nine, my first case of a dead body. It was the child of the head gardener Derbyshire, and was laid in the cottage bed by tender hands, with nice and clean accompaniments. It seemed to me pleasing, and in no way repelled me; but it made no deep impression. And now I remember that I used to teach pretty regularly on Sundays in the Sunday-school built by my father near the Primrose bridge. It was, I think, a duty done not under constraint, but I can recollect nothing which associates it with a seriously religious life in myself.[8]

II
GENEALOGY

To these fragments no long supplement is needed. Little of interest can be certainly established about his far-off ancestral origins, and the ordinary twilight of genealogy overhangs the case of the Glaidstanes, Gledstanes, Gladstanes, Gladstones, whose name is to be found on tombstones and parish rolls, in charter-chests and royal certificates, on the southern border of Scotland. The explorations of the genealogist tell of recognitions of their

nobility by Scottish kings in dim ages, but the links are sometimes broken, title-deeds are lost, the same name is attached to estates in different counties, Roxburgh, Peebles, Lanark, and in short until the close of the seventeenth century we linger, in the old poet's phrase, among dreams of shadows. As we have just been told, during the eighteenth century no traces of their gentility survives, and apparently they glided down from moderate lairds to small maltsters. Thomas Gladstones, grandfather of him with whom we are concerned, made his way from Biggar to Leith, and there set up in a modest way as corndealer, wholesale and retail. His wife was a Neilson of Springfield. To them sixteen children were born, and John Gladstones (b. Dec. 11, 1764) was their eldest son. Having established himself in Liverpool, he married in 1792 Jane Hall, a lady of that city, who died without children six years later. In 1800 he took for his second wife Anne Robertson of Dingwall. Her father was of the clan Donnachaidh, and her mother was of kin with Mackenzies, Munros, and other highland stocks.[9] Their son, therefore, was of unmixed Scottish origins, half highland, half lowland borderer.[10] With the possible exception of Lord Mansfield—the rival of Chatham in parliament, one of the loftiest names among great judges, and chief builder of the commercial law of the English world, a man who might have been prime minister if he had chosen.—Mr. Gladstone stands out as far the most conspicuous and powerful of all the public leaders in our history, who have sprung from the northern half of our island. When he had grown to be the most famous man in the realm of the Queen, he said, 'I am not slow to claim the name of Scotsman, and even if I were, there is the fact staring me in the face that not a drop of blood runs in my veins except what is derived from a Scottish ancestry.'[11] An illustrious opponent once described him, by way of hitting his singular duality of disposition, as an ardent Italian in the custody of a Scotsman. It is easy to

make too much of race, but when we are puzzled by Mr. Gladstone's seeming contrarieties of temperament, his union of impulse with caution, of passion with circumspection, of pride and fire with self-control, of Ossianic flight with a steady foothold on the solid earth, we may perhaps find a sort of explanation in thinking of him as a highlander in the custody of a lowlander.

Of John Gladstone something more remains to be said. About 1783 he was made a partner by his father in the business at Leith, and here he saved five hundred pounds. Four years later, probably after a short period of service, he was admitted to a partnership with two corn-merchants at Liverpool, his contribution to the total capital of four thousand pounds being fifteen hundred, of which his father lent him five hundred, and a friend another five at five per cent. In 1787 he thought the plural ending of his name sounded awkwardly in the style of the firm, Corrie, Gladstones, and Bradshaw, so he dropped the *s*.[12] He visited London to enlarge his knowledge of the corn trade in Mark Lane, and here became acquainted with Sir Claude Scott, the banker (not yet, however, a baronet). Scott was so impressed by his extraordinary vigour and shrewdness as to talk of a partnership, but Gladstone's existing arrangement in Liverpool was settled for fourteen years. Sometime in the nineties he was sent to America to purchase corn, with unlimited confidence from Sir Claude Scott. On his arrival, he found a severe scarcity and enormous prices. A large number of vessels had been chartered for the enterprise, and were on their way to him for cargoes. To send them back in ballast would be a disaster. Thrown entirely on his own resources, he travelled south from New York, making the best purchases of all sorts that he could; then loaded his ships with timber and other commodities, one only of them with flour; and the loss on the venture, which might have meant ruin, did not exceed a

few hundred pounds. Energy and resource of this kind made fortune secure, and when the fourteen years of partnership expired, Gladstone continued business on his own account, with a prosperity that was never broken. He brought his brothers to Liverpool, but it was to provide for them, not to assist himself, says Mr. Gladstone; 'and he provided for many young men in the same way. I never knew him reject any kind of work in aid of others that offered itself to him.'

JOHN GLADSTONE

It was John Gladstone's habit, we are told, to discuss all sorts of questions with his children, and nothing was ever taken for granted between him and his sons. 'He could not understand,' says the illustrious one among them, 'nor tolerate those who, perceiving an object to be good, did not at once and actively pursue it; and with all this energy he joined a corresponding warmth and, so to speak, eagerness of affection, a keen appreciation of humour, in which he found a rest, and an indescribable frankness and simplicity of character, which, crowning his other qualities, made him, I think (and I strive to think impartially), the most interesting old man I have ever known.'[13]

To his father's person and memory, Mr. Gladstone's fervid and affectionate devotion remained unbroken. 'One morning,' writes a female relative of his, 'when I was breakfasting alone with Mr. Gladstone at Carlton House Terrace something led to his speaking of his father. I seem to see him now, rising from his chair, standing in front of the chimneypiece, and in strains of fervid eloquence dwelling on the grandeur, the breadth and depth of his character, his generosity, his nobleness, last and greatest of all—his loving nature. His eyes filled with tears as he exclaimed: "None but his children can know what torrents of tenderness flowed from his heart."'