

GLADSTONE.

The New English Premier and his Family—The Honorable Career of his Father.

The London Athenaeum, in reviewing a recently published biography of Premier Gladstone, says:—

In a speech delivered at Glasgow towards the close of his last tenure of office, Mr. Gladstone, alluding to his extraction, observed that, though born in England, he had not a drop of English blood in his veins. Descended from Scotch ancestors, who, after maintaining for several generations a respectable status amongst the humbler yeomanry of Lanarkshire, exchanged the vocation of agriculture for the pursuits of commerce in the latter half of the seventeenth century, William Kwart Gladstone is a descendant in the fifth generation from James Gladstone, of Glasgow (of Anstruther), a small Scotch laird, who sold his farm to one James Brown, of Edmonstone, and died somewhere about the year 1680. Having lost their title to rank amongst owners of land, the children of this John Gladstone of Charles the Second's time became tradesmen of humble degree in the locality where their forefathers had been industrious tillers of the soil. The manufacture of malt was the industry to which several of the family turned their energies. Settling at Biggar, a village whose population was not at that time more than a few hundred souls, the laird John's eldest son, William, became a maltster, and dying in 1723, was buried in Liberton churchyard. Of the offspring of this obscure but worthy person, two followed their father's business with considerable success, Grizell (the only daughter) married a dyer named Thomas Cosh, and a third son, after failing in business and sinking to fill the lowly offices of a bellman and grave-digger in 1784. The most successful of these three children was John Gladstone, of whom the author records:—"Like so many of his kin, he was a maltman, and Burgess of Biggar, keeper of the Baron's Giraeil, an active Free Mason, and elder of the kirk. His name very frequently occurs in the annals of the town during the former half of the eighteenth century. By his industry he acquired the means to purchase the small farm of Midfootmoss. He died on the 1st of June, 1759, aged sixty-three." This John Gladstone, of Midfootmoss, had eleven children, five sons and six daughters, of which progeny Thomas, the fourth son, became so prosperous a corn merchant at Leith, that he was able to "do well," as the phrase goes, by his numerous family of sixteen children, of whom seven sons and five daughters arrived at maturity. The eldest of this strong party of brothers and sisters died at Fasque, Kincardineshire, in 1851, in his eighty-eighth year, after having gained the honor of a baronetcy, played a conspicuous part in politics, was a foremost place amongst the merchant princes of Great Britain, and witnessed the elevation of his son, William Ewart, to the highest class of political actors. Of this singularly fortunate and honorable merchant, whose long life comprised nearly every triumph and happiness for which an Englishman born in the middle rank of society and following commercial pursuits can reasonably hope to experience, Mr. McNeill writes in the following terms:—"John, afterwards Sir John, was born in Leith in 1763. He lived to reach his eighty-eighth year, and after a most prosperous career, died at his mansion at Fasque, in Kincardineshire, in 1851. When John was just of age, he was sent by his father to Liverpool, to sell a cargo of grain which had arrived at that port. He so attracted the attention of a leading corn merchant there, that the latter earnestly entreated his father to let his son settle at the port. After sundry negotiations, the result was the formation of the firm of Corrie, Gladstone, and Bradshaw, corn merchants; Mr. Corrie taking the two latter young men into partnership. The firm had hardly existed two years ere its stability was very sorely tried. There came a general failure of the corn crops throughout Europe. Mr. Corrie at once despatched his junior partner, Mr. Gladstone, to the United States, to buy grain. John Gladstone was then about twenty-four years of age. Having the needful letters of credit, he started upon a mission to it entertained the most sanguine hopes. On reaching America, he found that the corn crops had failed there also, and that there was not a single bushel to be procured. To his dismay, by the advice of which he received in England, he was informed that some twenty-four large vessels had been chartered to bring home the grain which he was supposed to have bought. The situation was most perilous, and it seemed that the prospects of so young a man were fairly shipwrecked. Indeed, when the news became known at Liverpool, it was considered impossible for the house to recover from the shock arising from so many vessels returning in ballast instead of bearing the cargoes which they had chartered to convey. Corrie & Co. were therefore regarded as a doomed house, and the deeper commiseration was felt for the young partner, while the senior was blamed for his precipitancy. But young Gladstone, though strongly impressed with the difficulties of the position in which he found himself, maintained unimpaired his courage and presence of mind. He sought every means by which to lighten, if not to avert, the blow. By careful examination of price lists, by ascertaining what suitable products would best suit the English market, he succeeded, without waste of time, in filling the holds of all the vessels. And when at last it was realized, the net loss on the large transaction of the house hardly exceeded £5000. From that time John Gladstone became a marked man on the Liverpool Exchange and in the English commercial world. He became the leading spirit in his house, and for some fourteen years more the partnership continued, ending naturally by effluxion of time. The corn death had continued, and so widely spread, that the Administration determined to hold stores of grain at the different ports. Corrie, Gladstone, and Bradshaw were appointed the Government agents at Liverpool, a fact which recognized the holding the leading position in the trade. They were so successful that at the close of the partnership the sum of no less than £75,000 stood to the credit of the guarantee account alone. Corrie retired wealthy, and Bradshaw returned early in life to his native town, Wigan, where he lived for many years. John Gladstone continued in business, taking his brother Robert into partnership, and engaged largely in the trade with Russia. They also became large West India merchants and sugar importers. As Liverpool offered more interesting field than Leith, three other of the brothers soon followed John and Robert, and eventually all the seven were settled there. It was about this time that Mr. Brougham, while going the Northern Circuit, was John Gladstone's guest, and accompanied his host to the Liverpool Theatre. The play was Macbeth, and Kean played the chief character. When Macduff said, 'Stand Scotland where it did,' a Scotchman in the gallery cried out, 'No, sir; there's a point of Stand in England, no there's John Gladstone and his clan.' The Gladstones were

the first to send a private vessel (the Kingsmill) to Calcutta, upon the opening of the East India and China trade to other than East India Company's vessels, in 1814. From that time to the present the family have been extensively engaged in that trade. The house of Robertson Gladstone (John's second son) is one of the first firms in Liverpool, having very large relations with every part of the East. It was but natural that so energetic a character as John Gladstone should take a deep interest in the public affairs of the town in which he lived. As he was always opposed to the close and self-elected municipal corporation of the ante-Reform bill days, it is not to be wondered at that he was never elected to any corporate office, but he was the means of removing very many local abuses and restrictive imposts which bore heavily against the interests of the port. A very valuable service of plate was presented to him in recognition of what he had effected, many of the subscribers being his strongest opponents on corporate matters of dispute. At that period Liverpool was like a young giant, though not containing one fifth of its present population. Supported at the back by the great products of manufacture from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Cheshire, with immediate access to coal and salt, it became the port of shipment to all parts of the world, and by 1832 the declared value of its exports exceeded that of London itself. In political opinion John Gladstone was what would now be termed a Liberal Conservative, and his desire to have the best men to represent the town, to some extent, independently of their being ardent partisans of either of the two great parties. When the celebrated William Roscoe retired from the representation, Mr. Gladstone was desirous that George Canning and Henry Brougham should be returned. They were then in their early prime, and gradually becoming regarded as the two leading men of the day. But Brougham selected Creevey, a very extreme Radical, and a man of little or no public standing. Throughout Canning's premature shortened life, he consulted Mr. Gladstone on all important mercantile affairs. Ever long, at the suggestion of Canning, Gladstone solicited return to Parliament, being provided by the Marlborough family with a seat for their pocket borough of Woodstock. He remained long enough in Parliament to be witness of the earlier triumphs of his youngest son. John Gladstone was twice married. He does not appear to have had any issue by his first wife. He married, secondly, Ann Robertson, of Stranorroy, N. B., daughter of Andrew Robertson, who had been Provost of Dingwall. Miss Robertson was a native of Dingwall. One who knew her well testified that she was 'a lady of very great accomplishments, of fascinating manners, of commanding presence and high intellect, one to grace any home and endear any heart.' By her he had a family of four sons and two daughters. Of these, three sons—Sir Thomas, Bart., of Fasque; Robertson, the Liverpool merchant; and William Ewart—one daughter, who is unmarried, survive. John Neilson, a captain in the navy, and P. P. Forth, a barrister, died a few years ago. John Gladstone was made a baronet by Sir Robert Peel in 1845. He died in 1851. Besides the provision made for his family by will, he gave to each of his sons £100,000 in his lifetime. "With such parents as John Gladstone and Ann Robertson, it was most natural that the development of the minds of each of their children should be carefully watched, and any germs of excellence which should appear be as sedulously cultivated. William Ewart was born on the 24th of December, 1809, in the same bedroom as that in which, five years later, his friend Mr. Cardwell first saw the light. The Cardwell family purchased the residence of Mr. Gladstone on his removing from one house to another."

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