

## Messenger and Visitor

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### The Passing of Gladstone.

Above the din of war, the clatter of business and all the tumult of this busy, noisy world, has been heard the tolling of the bell which announced the departure of one who has well deserved to be called the foremost man of his time. Probably no man has ever lived whose name became, during his life time, so universally a household word, none for whom, during his last illness, the world's sympathy has been so profoundly stirred and none whose departure calls forth so sincere and world-wide regret. While the world must feel bereaved at the death of Mr. Gladstone there seems reason for thankfulness that he has been permitted to go now. But for the disease which has laid him low, Mr. Gladstone's superb constitution might have resisted the approach of death for another decade, and as the physical powers gradually succumbed before the advance of the great enemy, his mighty intellect might also have fallen into ruins. Such an ending of a life of so transcendent power and influence one does not like to contemplate. As it is, he seems like an ancient tree which falls before the axe in the full grandeur of its perfected life. It is true that his eye had grown dim and his natural force had become abated. The physical weakness and incapacities of advanced age had come. The indomitable strength and fire of his early years no longer stirred in his blood, but he had not passed into the senility of second childhood. It was Gladstone, old and worn and weary, but still the great Gladstone, who, a few weeks ago, returned to Hawarden, and, conscious that the end had come, lay himself down to die in the peaceful shelter of his own home, comforted by the ministry of loving wife and children and sustained by an undying trust in God.

The name of William Ewart Gladstone must stand in history among the very greatest which the Anglo-Saxon race has produced. It is true there have been men of greater genius in the exercise of a certain limited range of faculty. He does not come into comparison with the great poets, philosophers and artists. In the imaginative realm he was student, scholar, critic, but not a master. Mr. Gladstone's bent was to the practical rather than to the æsthetic side of things. But if a man is great in proportion to the range, strength and symmetry of his intellectual powers, the largeness of his soul and the nobility of his purposes, where shall we find a greater than Gladstone? His mental activity was marvellous, his appetite for knowledge insatiable and his powers of acquisition and assimilation almost incredible. Entering the House of Commons at the age of twenty-two, his parliamentary career continued, with comparatively slight interruptions, for sixty-two years. He was four times Premier and held other important official positions. With all his natural ardor he devoted himself to his public duties, which, especially during the period of his official life, must have made immense demands upon his energies, yet he was able to command time and strength for study along many lines, writing voluminously and with masterly power on classical, theological and other subjects. "During all his life," says Justin McCarthy, "Mr. Gladstone was a man of prodigious study. He was always studying some author or series of authors. He wrote criticisms on Homer, criticisms by the enraptured admirer rather than by the dry-as-dust scholiast. He seemed to want to read everything and understand everything, and all the time his parliamentary work was going on in full swing.

No subject that could have an interest for humanity failed to have an absorbing interest for him. . . . He had tastes the most varied and all but universal. He loved pictures and statues and architecture and old china and medals and bric-a-brac of every kind, and he had made himself ac-

quainted with the history of all these subjects. There was almost nothing about which he could not talk with fluency and with the keenest interest. He had a thirst for information and it was a pleasure to him to get out of every man all that the man could tell him about his own particular subject." Mr. Gladstone was an accomplished linguist. He was of course a master of the classical languages. He spoke French with perfect fluency, but with a very marked accent, and he spoke Italian with marvellous fluency and accuracy. An eminent Italian told Justin McCarthy that if Gladstone were to address the representative chamber in Rome, everyone present would take him for an Italian.

Any extended reference to Mr. Gladstone's political career is impossible here. Entering Parliament as a Tory of the old school, he soon began to renounce his traditional views, and steadily marched forward to so advanced a type of liberalism that a number of prominent Liberals were unable to keep him company. Mr. Gladstone's adoption of a Home Rule policy for Ireland especially cost him the support of many valued political friends. Whether they or he were the wiser in this matter time will decide. Of one thing, however, we may feel certain, but for Mr. Gladstone's espousal of the Irish cause, the liberal legislation concerning Ireland, now before Parliament, would never have been projected by Lord Salisbury's government. Mr. Gladstone has been charged by his political enemies with being an opportunist. Considering his somewhat frequent changes of policy, it was natural that such charges should be made, and with more or less of honesty, on the part of those who preferred them. But probably the verdict of history will be that Mr. Gladstone was as honest in his political views as he was courageous and able in maintaining them, that any line of policy which he adopted was not determined by the mere question of party advantage, but by considerations of justice and the good of the commonwealth. He has been bitterly opposed and in some quarters bitterly hated. But now that his life's battles are over, it will hardly be questioned by any honest foe but that Gladstone was a high-minded patriot, a man who, with all the ardor of his great soul, sought to do his duty before God and his country, according to his knowledge and conviction. He was not always right, but he was not invulnerable to conviction, and when convinced that he had been wrong, he acknowledged his error and changed his course, regardless of what friend or enemy might say.

Gladstone was a man of profoundly religious spirit and exemplary Christian character. His life and the far-reaching influence of it are a priceless benediction to his own nation and to the world. On "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture" he built his faith; and that Word of Truth was the support and inspiration of his life. He was a Churchman of a pronounced type, but whatever lack of fellowship there might be between him and Nonconformists as to certain matters of doctrine and modes of worship, his spirit was large and catholic enough to regard as brethren all who had fellowship with his Saviour, and it is safe to say that the feeling of Christian fellowship for Mr. Gladstone among the members of the free church bodies in England was quite as cordial as among those belonging to the Establishment.

Moved ever by a strong sense of justice and profound sympathy with the oppressed, Mr. Gladstone's endeavors on behalf of humanity were not confined to his own nation and people. How, only a year or two ago, his sympathy for the cruelly oppressed Armenians and his horror of Turkish barbarity flamed up into fiery, indignant speech on behalf of the oppressed and against the oppressor, everyone remembers. In Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro, his name is held in reverence for the services which he rendered the cause of human liberty in those countries.

William Ewart Gladstone was surely a man whose like, take him for all in all, the world will not soon look upon again. His great personality at once humbles us with a sense of inferiority and exalts us with a sense of fellowship with greatness, for this man was but our greater brother and a prophecy of the larger man that is to be.

### The Upper Room.

ALEXANDER MCLAREN, D. D.

1. Mark agrees with Matthew in representing the disciples as taking the initiative, by the question

where Jesus would have them prepare the passover; but Luke tells of a command from him to do so, which occasioned the question. He also tells that the injunction was given to Peter and John. Matthew does not seem to have known of the singular mode by which they were to be guided to the place, but his expression, "to such a man," implies that for some reason there was secrecy observed. Was our Lord's assurance that they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water the result of supernatural knowledge or of previous arrangement with the man's master? Most probable the latter. Carrying water was woman's work, and a man doing it would be conspicuous. Such a sign might well have been agreed on between Jesus and the householder.

We know that "with desire he desired to eat the passover with the twelve before he suffered," and we may fairly conclude that that earnest wish was not only due to his concern for them, or to his purpose of marking, by the very day of his death, that he as "our passover is sacrificed for us," but was partly due to the natural human longing for an hour of solace and strengthening, by participating with his humble friends in the sacred joy of the feast. His love clung to them, his hands would fain grasp theirs for as long as might be ere he went forth to the awful solitude of his sacrifice.

2. How true to human nature is it that the very closeness of heart intercourse, which Jesus had longed for in that sacred hour, should raise the stinging thought that the betrayer was there, poisoning the peaceful joy with his presence! His previous announcements had foretold betrayal, but not the traitor; for to have done so earlier would have been to sow distrust of each other in the disciples' minds. But now the need for silence was past. There are not wanting indications that Jesus strove to win back the traitor till the last moment, and perhaps this plain intimation that his treason was not hid was one of the last efforts of that love which hoped all things.

The joy of the feast was clouded for the disciples, but none of them ventured to say, as Peter had once done, "This shall not be unto thee." Matthew gives the agitation and showers of questions vividly by that word "began," (v. 22). Each man cast a shuddering look into the depths within, and saw enough there to make him feel it not impossible that he might be the betrayer. No man can wisely say, as to any sin, "I could never do that." The surest protection against it is to recognize that it is in us to do it, and to cry, "Keep back thy servant." One of the twelve asked, "Is it I?" but "Who is it?" That was not presumption or curiosity, but it was love speaking from its place nestling by Christ's heart.

Jesus did not answer the many questions, for he did not desire to make the traitor known to all. The reply which he did give conveyed no information as to which of them should betray him; for many hands would dip in the dish at the same moment, since to dip the unleavened bread in a mixture of vinegar or salt water was part of the ceremonial.

In verse 24, the two aspects of Christ's death are brought together. Viewed from the Divine side, or from Christ's own inner consciousness, it was his voluntary "departure," in willing submission to the eternal and long since prophesied purpose of the Father; viewed from the human side, it was the consummation of black treason, and a crime which brought ruin to its doer.

Matthew probably did not know of the conversation between John and Jesus, of the token by which Judas was pointed out, not to all, but to John only—the giving of the sop, which, as a mark of special favor, may be regarded as Christ's last attempt to win back the betrayer, and which is to be distinguished carefully from the dipping together in the dish. We may take Matthew's narrative as representing the knowledge possessed by the bulk of the Twelve, while John's shows the fuller acquaintance with facts belonging to himself and Peter.

3. Matthew's account gives no hint that Jesus was instituting a rite for future ages, but omits the words which make the Lord's Supper a commemorative feast. We can but touch inadequately on that meaning, and would first note the position which Jesus takes of abrogating a divinely appointed rite, which has been consecrated by ages, and pointed back to the great redemption that made Israel a nation. He brushes it aside with all its venerable

sanctity, and, in the exodus from Egypt. Do not regard this thing; look to the seal of a better redemption."

We note, too, what part of his and desired us to aces, not his own unique beauty and As long as that men that Jesus C or a sublime teach himself as the tr School Times.

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