

**CERTAIN MEN OF
MARK: STUDIES OF
LIVING CELEBRITIES**

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Certain men of mark: studies of living celebrities by George Makepeace Towle

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GEORGE MAKEPEACE TOWLE

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MARK: STUDIES OF
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Studies of Living Celebrities.

BY

GEORGE MAKEPEACE TOWLE.

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
GLADSTONE	7
BISMARCK	37
GAMBETTA	66
BEACONSFIELD	95
CASTELAR	124
VICTOR HUGO	154
JOHN BRIGHT	183
THREE EMPERORS	213

CERTAIN MEN OF MARK.

I.

GLADSTONE.¹

THE lobbies of the Lords and Commons, in the Parliament Palace at Westminster, are free for every one to enter; and there it is that one may, any day during the parliamentary session, meet the statesmen of England, as it were,

¹ The author having sent a copy of this sketch to Mr. Gladstone, received from him the following reply:—

“LONDON, *April 21, '80.*”

“DEAR SIR,—I have now read the article so kindly sent me twice over, and I congratulate you as an author on a paper of so much ability and so much discernment.

“In its praise it is far too liberal. To only one of the items set down on the other side do I take any exception. I really do not admit myself to have been a bad follower. There never was any opposition between Lord Hartington and myself on the Public Worship Bill. On the Eastern Question I was too deeply committed by antecedent action, as well as by conviction, to be simply obedient; for which, however, on various occasions, I made great efforts.

“I remain, dear sir,

“Your faithful and obedient,

“W. E. GLADSTONE.”

tête-à-tête. It is interesting to observe eminent men from a near point of view, and at moments when they are "off duty;" and in the lobbies, during the half hour before the two Houses are called to order, the members stand about, chat with a friend here and a constituent there, and relax, if ever, their official dignity in social converse.

It was in the lobby of the Commons that, some fifteen years ago, I first saw Mr. Gladstone. He was then in the full prime of life, being about fifty-five years of age. He had already won a degree of political renown only less than the highest. At that time he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Palmerston's cabinet; and, next to Lord Palmerston, was the most distinguished member of the popular House. He had been a member of parliament thirty-three years; and his career there, at least as far as reputation was concerned, had been a triumphal progress, ever and steadily advancing. No one doubted that at some day not far distant Mr. Gladstone would be summoned to assume the post of Prime Minister.

A glance sufficed to recognize him. His photographs peered at the passer-by from every

bookstore and print shop in London; and no one could have seen them without taking note of the very remarkable, expressive, intense features they discovered. But there was something about Mr. Gladstone as he stood there, gravely talking with two gentlemen who listened to him with every outward sign of respect, which the photographs had not disclosed. There was a certain plainness, almost rusticity, of dress and external appearance; a thick-set, farmer-like body, far from graceful; a certain negligence of attire and toilet and manner, and simple gravity of bearing, which one had not expected to see in the brilliant and eloquent scholar who had so often thrilled the House, and, through the medium of the press, the world. But after the first superficial glance, when you raised your eyes to the face and head, and observed the features, you soon found the man's character reflected there. The not very large, but brilliant, earnest, burning eyes; the retreating, but nobly shaped forehead; the very un-English swarthy complexion; the firm, thin mouth, to which every line lent new expressiveness; the square-set jaw, and bold straight nose; the spirit and warmth that glowed in the whole countenance

betokened a mind and soul alike lofty, zealous, and intense.

Never once did the slightest smile cross those almost grim features; and the contrast between this grimness of expression, and the sweet, silvery voice, the tones of which now and then reached my ear, was very striking. Mr. Gladstone's smiles, indeed, are very few and slight. He has always been too dead-in-earnest; and dead-in-earnestness has stamped itself on his face, as it has throughout the record of his public career.

Not many evenings after, I was fortunate enough to see Mr. Gladstone on another scene, and in a new aspect. A great debate was proceeding in the House of Commons, on the usually dry subject of Supply. Mr. Gladstone had, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, brought in a Budget, some features of which had aroused the hostility of certain attacked interests. Among other items he had proposed, for the first time, to tax the great public charities of England. Such institutions as Bartholomew and Christ's Hospitals had before been exempt from taxation, as being devoted to purposes of benevolence. They had now grown, however, to be