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## GLIMPSES OF STATESMEN

One of the early champions of The Salvation Army among British statesmen was John Bright. He it was who wrote to us, at a time when we were harassed by unruly mobs and law-breaking magistrates, 'I suspect that your good work will not suffer materially from the ill treatment you are meeting with. The people who mob you would, doubtless, have mobbed the Apostles.'

For a long period Bright had rooms in Piccadilly, over a shop, where he stayed during the Parliamentary week, going home into the country for the week-end. It was a dismal place, musty and dusty. At the time I saw him the Home Rule agitation was beginning to rend the Liberal Party. Bright was angry with Gladstone for having sent up his 'kite' without notice to his colleagues. 'Why didn't he ask us?' he kept on saying. I can see him now in the shadows of that room, his deep voice repeating the question. He seemed even more annoyed at the neglect of Gladstone to inform his colleagues than at his change of attitude on the Irish question.

We talked of W. T. Stead. Of some of Stead's views Bright had a great horror. He spoke with indignation of Stead's former agitation for increasing the fleet. I suggested that if he had a fine mansion, filled with precious things, he might not think it very wicked, with burglars about, to keep a good-sized bulldog in the garden. He laughed so that the teacup shook in his hand.

'Well,' he said at parting, 'tell your friend Stead I will let him have the dog, but he must keep him on the chain.'

It struck me — was I wrong? — that his objection to the fleet and, indeed, to armaments in general, was more to the appearance than to the reality. He did not think it so very wicked to have a navy. What he objected to was having it too much in evidence!



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With Bright, as with every really great man, there was a total absence of side.' Before I had been in his room for five minutes he had made me as much at home as if I had had his acquaintance for years. In some ways he was really a most charming man, and in appearance one of the most noble. Although, as in the case of Gladstone, at first sight his shortness of stature was disappointing, he had the most beautiful face and hands, and a head in ten thousand.

For all his Liberalism — shall I say Radicalism? — there was a strain of real Conservatism in Bright. He had a mind capable of certain important distinctions. I believe he was able to perceive, and did perceive, that while persecution is always bad, intolerance of vice, and of the opinions that promote vice, is the life-blood of a healthy society; that what is called broadmindedness is often just no more than not knowing what you think yourself, and not caring what other people think.'

Lord Salisbury impressed me in a different way. Like Bright's, his head was magnificent, though his features, if there be anything in physiognomy, were scarcely those of a strong character. His figure was an imposing one. A feature of it — especially in his later years — was a marked stoop, which at times seemed to be a defect, but which at other times appeared, curiously enough, as a not unfitting accentuation of the weight and burliness of the man. His head appeared to be too heavy for his frame. It was said of him, possibly with some truth, that in diplomacy he was a lath painted to look like iron. There was something about his appearance which gave an idea of tremendous force, combined with a curious frailty. In some respects I regarded Lord Salisbury as an ideal diplomatist, as diplomatists go, though I was quite alive to his mistakes. first interested in him because of the fine part he played, then

I was as Lord Robert Cecil, in the Schleswig-Holstein affair, in 1866. That, of course, was before my time of intelligent comprehension of world affairs, but in after years I read his published speeches, and in my early visits to Denmark I attained a somewhat intimate knowledge of the heartbreak caused by the British failure in that matter. I never sympathized, however, with the clamour of those who abused Lord Salisbury's line of action in Berlin after the Turco-Russian War, miserable as the consequences have turned out to be for the world. I am confident that he really fought for what he believed to be right, and that the result might have been a far happier one for Europe if he had been alone there instead of being an understudy to Disraeli.



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Hatfield is on the same railway line as my own station, and sometimes I saw Lord Salisbury on his journeys to and from town. On occasion, without noticing that he was already occupying the carriage, I got into the same compartment, to find him alone. Several times I noticed that he was reading the New Testament; once or twice it may have been the Book of Common Prayer. Now and again we had a brief conversation on these little journeys. One occasion I remember particularly. He was seeking to encourage me about the work of The Army, and he advised me not to take too much notice of the attacks which were constantly being made upon us. I cannot recall whether he said he had made the remark in a speech he had just delivered, or that he was intending to make it, but he said, 'I give you the counsel which I give to my own friends, "Never say anything for me unless you say something against me."' That idea, that unmixed praise may be a serious evil, and that a moiety of abuse may be a positive good, has often thrown a little ray of light upon the way.

Mr. Asquith, whose title, the Earl of Oxford, is not yet familiar to the public ear, I came to know owing to his being retained for us in various law proceedings. Of his skill as a lawyer I have something to say in another chapter. Later on we consulted him in matters concerning developments in our constitutional arrangements. From the first I felt a kind of surprised admiration for his ability, about which, indeed, no man with half an eye could be mistaken. His is the kind of genius which I hold most in respect—the ability to take trouble, plus the will to take it.

In my opinion Mr. Asquith has always suffered from two great disadvantages. He came late in life to Parliament and office, and this, coupled perhaps with his legal training, in a great measure accounts for that inflexibility of manner and that compartmental habit of thinking noted by so many students of his personality. They are the signs of the mechanical habit of mind, although of the mechanical raised to the level of genius. It is a Jove who wields the hammer, but the strokes are too precise. One must recognize, however, that it was probably this very characteristic which helped to make him a master of lucid and precise statement. His other defect, to which I have referred, is the absence of what has been called the emotion ideal.' But I should like to say that I believe the Earl of Oxford to be a man of true principle. If he is not possessed of any great



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moral passion or crusading ardour, he is a true hater of compromises and shams, he detests dodgery, in politics or elsewhere, and he is a man who sees clearly what he sees and acts with concentrated energy. If he had seen that spiritual truth is not dependent on history, and if only he had had the dominating motive of religious conviction and experience — especially experience — he could easily have taken as commanding a place in his own time as Gladstone took in his perhaps even more commanding.

With Gladstone I never came into personal contact. My father had one interview with him at Hawarden, and Gladstone greatly impressed him as a sincere and spiritually minded man, and the Founder was a good judge! A letter from Gladstone followed the interview, in which, referring to some notes which the Founder had sent him, he said that they helped him 'to look out upon the wide world and reflect with reverence upon the singular diversity of the instruments which are in operation for recovering mankind, according to the sense of those who use them, from their condition of sin and misery; and encourages hearty goodwill towards all that, under whatever name, is done with a genuine purpose to promote the work of God in the world.'

Both men made a deep impression on the other. Writing shortly afterwards of the matter my father said:

It may be asked what were the general impressions made upon me by my conversation with this remarkable man? No matter how widely divergent opinions may be respecting Mr. Gladstone's political views and legislative action, there is no room for opposing estimates of his intellectual powers, his oratorical gifts, the lofty positions he has filled in the Councils of his country, or the vast influence he has wielded in the world. No one could be with him, and hear him talk in the unconventional manner I had the opportunity of doing, without receiving some definite and lasting impressions respecting him. In my case, what were they? At least, what were some of them?

The first thing that struck me was his earnestness — you might term it his unaffected earnestness. He put his heart into my business, and that right away, going straight to the very vitals of the subject as phase after phase of it passed before him.



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I was also much impressed by the geniality which made me feel at home all in a moment. Then at every point I could not help feeling that I was in contact with a lofty soul, controlled by motives of generous kindness, who was pleased to learn something of what seemed like a wonderful work of God.

I was also impressed by the disinterestedness with which he pursued his inquiries, as well as with the choice and beautiful and expressive words which he evidently had at perfect command. There was no hesitation. The phrases wanted to express the exact shade of meaning he desired came at will and that, I thought, in tones most grateful to the ear. I had heard it said before the interview that he was a great talker. After the interview it is my opinion that he ought to talk. It is a luxury to listen to him. It is a shame for him to be silent. It surely is the message, and not the age of a speaker, which is the vital matter.

My Salvationist friends will ask me how far I was impressed with Mr. Gladstone's religious realizations? I shall answer, that I had not much opportunity for judging; but I may say that not only was the whole tenor of that conversation favourable to such a conclusion, but that there were passages in that interchange of thoughts, views, and feelings that produced on my mind very forcibly the impression that, among the many things carefully considered and experimentally known to W. E. Gladstone were the governing influences of the Holy Spirit and the saving Grace of God.

I saw Gladstone in the House once or twice and heard him make a short speech. Some time after — during the period I think of his second administration — I was walking down Regent Street one afternoon when I recognized the Prime Minister on the other side of the street. No one who knew him at all could mistake him. The vivacity which belonged to his speaking and action showed itself in his very gait, and he conveyed something of himself in the varying changes of his facial expression. On this occasion he was accompanied by a young woman, and I, probably quickened in my perceptions as a result of Salvation Army experience, instantly saw that she was one of a sorrowful class. Mr. Gladstone was evidently speaking to her in the most kindly and fatherly manner. I did not of course hear what he said, but there was something about his whole



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attitude, and about the girl's appearance also, which led me to feel that he was appealing to her and bestowing some kind of favour upon her.

I did not then know what I afterwards found to be the case, that both he and Mrs. Gladstone concerned themselves for many years in work for those unhappy women, but it was certainly a curious thing that I, already much interested in Rescue Work and at that time feeling the admiration which many young men felt for the Grand Old Man, should have had a glimpse of him under such circumstances.

Perhaps my distant picture of Gladstone as a man worthy of all homage was coloured by my firm belief in his deep personal religion. The contrast with his great antagonist, Disraeli, no doubt heightened the effect in Gladstone's favour; and it was still further added to by some illuminating flashes upon the home-life both of himself and of Mrs. Gladstone. These were forthcoming from an old servant of the family, who through his own fault had fallen on evil days, and who at the request of the Gladstones was taken in hand and helped by us.

When, later on, I came to read Morley's 'Life,' I was glad to find so much that tended to confirm my former estimate. Few passages in any literature that I know of more finely express the fundamentals of the personal faith and practice of spiritual religion than some words of Gladstone's, which I see I have underscored in my copy of that book:

In the Christian mood, which ought never to be intermitted, the sense of this conviction — [In His will is our peace] — should recur spontaneously; it should be the foundation of all mental thoughts and acts, and the measure to which the whole experience of life, inward and outward, is referred. The final state which we are to contemplate with hope, and to seek by discipline, is that in which our will shall be one with the will of God; not merely shall submit to it, not merely shall follow after it, but shall live and move with it, even as the pulse of the blood in the extremities acts with the central movement of the heart. ...



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Resignation is too often conceived to be merely a submission, not unattended with complaint; to what we have no power to avoid. But it is less than the whole of the work of a Christian. Your full triumph is ... that you would not if you could alter what in any matter God has plainly willed....

Here is the great work of religion; here is the path through which sanctity is attained, the highest sanctity; and yet it is a path evidently to be traced in the course of our daily duties.

It has been said that Gladstone was a disciple, almost a creation, in fact, of Bishop Butler. I am not sure. I do not think we can easily overstate the greatness of Bishop Butler's conception of the truth or the unflinching sincerity with which he states it. He was one of the greatest teachers and one of the most earnest characters in the history of our faith, at any rate in England. Dean Church has a valuable comment on one aspect of Butler which I quote:

Pitt is reported to have said of the 'Analogy' that it was a book which opened as many questions and raised as many doubts as it solved. Of course it does. No one can expect to sound the 'great deeps' of God's government, without meeting difficulties which defy human understanding. This would be true of any discussion going deeply and sincerely into a subject in which our only possible knowledge can be but 'in part, seeing through a glass darkly. But Butler's object is not to remove all doubts and difficulties, which, in such a matter as religion, with light and faculties like ours, is obviously impossible, but to put doubts and difficulties in their proper place and proportion to what we do see and know in a practical scheme of life and truth, and in a practical choice between God and the rejection of Him.

But I would rather speak of Gladstone as a disciple of Paul. I think that his fine intellect drank at that source. For Paul, history, revelation, reason, emotion, faith, ceased to be a huge aggregation of differing and sometimes contending forces the moment he saw them from the Cross of Christ. This was the great Apostle's chief lesson to the ages. Gladstone had received and assimilated that lesson, and in his long life, cast in surroundings perhaps the least favourable to spiritual things, he really strove to apply it.



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I should like to add one word here about another view of Gladstone, described to me by the late Lord Armitstead, with whom I was rather intimate. Lord Armitstead always spoke of the sympathetic quality in his nature. He who saw Gladstone, not as a political leader but as a friend, saw the tenderness and considerateness that was hidden from the world by that stern old countenance and often remote and imperious manner. Lord Armitstead, who with Sir Donald Currie arranged little sea trips for their hero, said that when on board ship with Gladstone it often happened that many other members of the company had not the smallest inclination for devotions. But there was one who never missed the short daily service, who faithfully took his place whether any others joined him or not. It was the Grand Old Man.