

**MR. GLADSTONE:
A MONOGRAPH**

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Mr. Gladstone: a monograph by Sir Edward W. Hamilton

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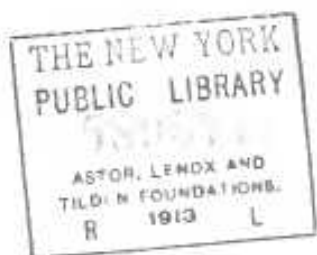
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SIR EDWARD W. HAMILTON

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Preface

MUCH has lately been said of Mr. Gladstone, the statesman who sat in Parliament for a nearly unbroken term of sixty-two years, who held office under the Crown for twenty-seven years, and who served four times as the Queen's Prime Minister during an aggregate period of twelve years and a half. Much more remains to be said. In fact, the task of recording fully and faithfully his public career will tax the power of a biographer of consummate industry as well as skill, if indeed it will not need to be intrusted to a group of biog-

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raphers. It is not only that the materials which will have to be digested are so extensive, and that much of them cannot with propriety be turned to immediate account, but, in the same way as the artist who has to depict a mountainous height must withdraw to an appreciable distance from it in order to represent the proportions truly, so must the biographer who desires to write with fidelity the life of a great public man allow an interval of time to elapse before a just retrospect can be formed of the subject of his pen.

It is otherwise with the personality of the man as distinguished from his public career. The more closely one has stood by him, and the fresher are one's impressions, the more faithfully and promptly ought the likeness to admit of being drawn. It may, therefore,

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be permissible, at the risk of presumptuousness, for one who was privileged to know Mr. Gladstone for nearly forty years, and still more privileged to have been brought in the closest contact with him for a considerable time, to attempt to give a just notion of the *man*, by describing, however imperfectly, some of his intellectual powers, characteristics, and accomplishments, some of his ways, aims, and objects, his likes and dislikes, and the general disposition of his mind. Character-drawing is always difficult; but the difficulties are specially great in the present case. For, not only is the subject one who, whatever may be the opinions now and hereafter formed of his statesmanship, will be admitted to be one of the most extraordinary men that England has ever produced, but I feel that, however much I may strive to

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observe strict impartiality, I may, from having long been under the glamour of Mr. Gladstone, unconsciously lapse into undue eulogy. Accordingly, I approach my task with much diffidence and many misgivings.