



Life & Times of William E. Gladstone.

John Clark Ridpath

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1898 Excerpt: ... CHAPTER XXV. Out of Office. HE preceding chapters have been greatly extended because they cover one of the most remarkable periods in the life and work of William E. Gladstone. Not that other parts are of minor importance, but that the epoch of the first Liberal ascendency is of prime importance may be assigned as the reason for devoting relatively a smaller space to the period upon which we now enter. That period considers Mr. Gladstone in retirement, of half-retirement, from his active duties in the House of Commons. Mr. Disraeli was now for the first time in unequivocal conduct of the government. He had a clear Conservative majority in his support. The House and the whole nation had become accustomed to his manners and methods. Certainly England and all the world were now acquainted with his abilities. With little reserve we may regard him intellectually as the most brilliant Prime Minister of Great Britain, but his other powers were not equal to his intellect. He prevailed by force of mind, by wit, by long-headedness, sometimes by subtlety. There was in his constitution the capacity of a fox--a great fox, but nevertheless a fox. That he was a true Englishman none can any longer doubt. That he had confirmed his reputation with the aristocracy of Great Britain and with the reigning house cannot le doubted. It is always difficult and critical to begin. In fact, there was not at this juncture much to begin with. The Conservative victory hardly implied action, but rather rest from action. As for Mr. Gladstone, though he gave no sign, he must have felt deeply the late reverse. That political disaster had come by the defection of his friends. The solidarity of the Liberal party had been broken. Some of the leaders had gone over to the enemy. There was much rib...

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