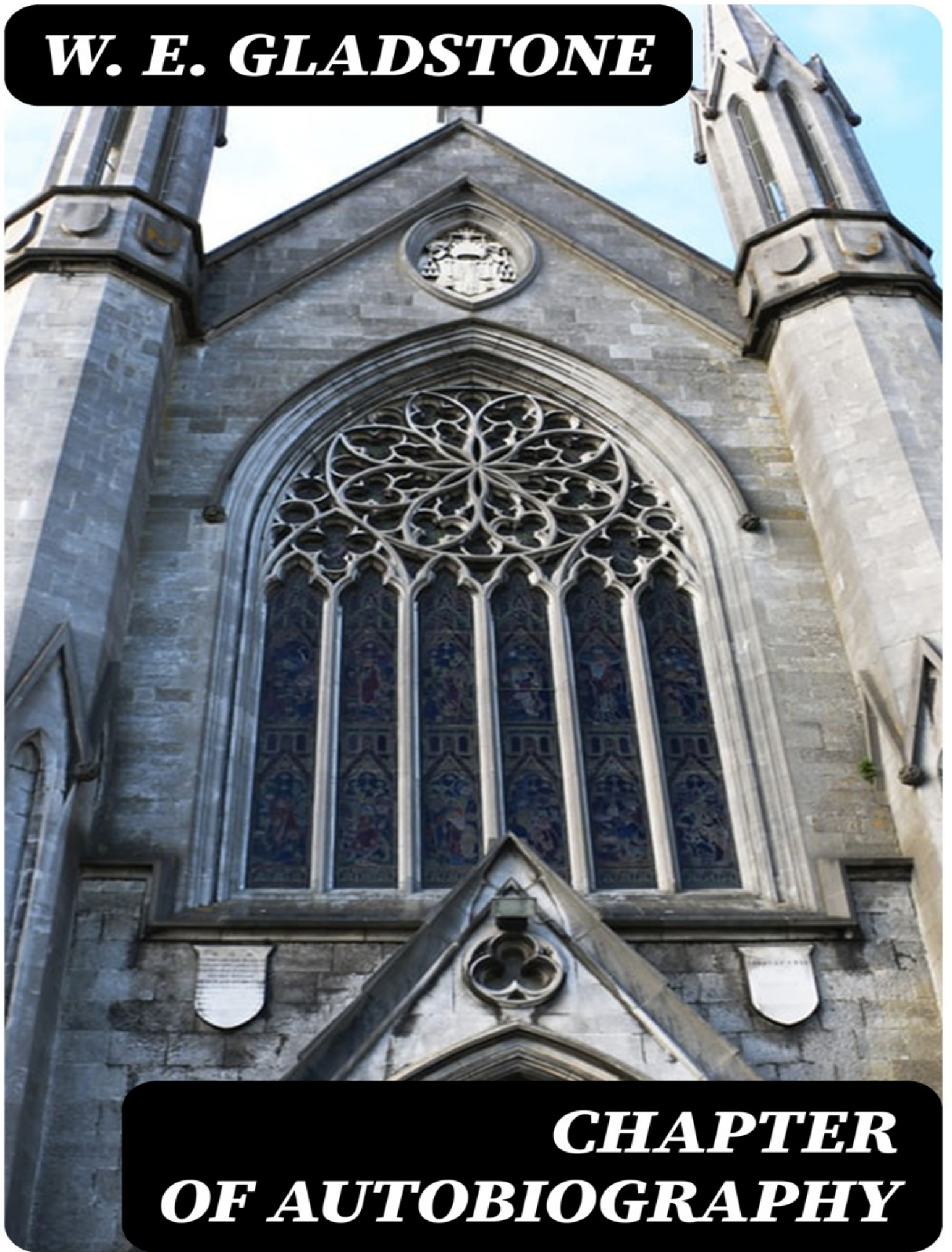


***W. E. GLADSTONE***



***CHAPTER  
OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY***

**W. E. Gladstone**

# Chapter of Autobiography

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# INTRODUCTION.

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At a time when the Established Church of Ireland is on her trial, it is not unfair that her assailants should be placed upon their trial too: most of all, if they have at one time been her sanguine defenders.

But if not the matter of the indictment against them, at any rate that of their defence, should be kept apart, as far as they are concerned, from the public controversy, that it may not darken or perplex the greater issue.

It is in the character of the author of a book called 'The State in its Relations with the Church,' that I offer these pages to those who may feel a disposition to examine them. They were written at the date attached to them; but their publication has been delayed until after the stress of the General Election.

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# **A CHAPTER OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY.**

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Autobiography is commonly interesting; but there can, I suppose, be little doubt that, as a general rule, it should be posthumous. The close of an active career supplies an obvious exception: for this resembles the gentle death which, according to ancient fable, was rather imparted than inflicted by the tender arrows of Apollo and of Artemis. I have asked myself many times, during the present year, whether peculiar combinations of circumstance might not also afford a warrant at times for departure from the general rule, so far as some special passage of life is concerned; and whether I was not myself now placed in one of those special combinations.

The motives, which incline me to answer these questions in the affirmative, are mainly two. First, that the great and glaring change in my course of action with respect to the Established Church of Ireland is not the mere eccentricity, or even perversion, of an individual mind, but connects itself with silent changes, which are advancing in the very bed and basis of modern society. Secondly, that the progress of a great cause, signal as it has been and is, appears liable nevertheless to suffer in point of credit, if not of energy and rapidity, from the real or supposed delinquencies of a person, with whose name for the moment it happens to be specially associated.

One thing is clear: that if I am warranted in treating my own case as an excepted case, I am bound so to treat it. It is only with a view to the promotion of some general interest,