

CHAPTER III

THE RESTORATION ERA

IN his speech of 1855, which has already been mentioned,¹ Mr. Gladstone referred to the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century as the golden age of English colonisation, when, he said, the colonial connexion was conceived in the true spirit of British freedom. In particular he commended the early part of the reign of Charles II, maintaining that the true principle of colonial government was never better understood in this country than at that time, and giving as an illustration the liberal charter granted to the colony of Rhode Island. To Mr. Gladstone's mind Greek colonisation in classical times strongly appealed, as embodying perfect freedom and perfect self-government. Perfect freedom and perfect self-government he desired to be associated with British colonisation; not the acquisition of dependencies, but the founding of peoples on the English pattern, the multiplying of happy Englands beyond the seas, such was his interpretation—a very noble one—of what ought to be the outlook upon the British overseas Empire. He was careful to explain that, in his eulogy of the latter part of the

¹ See above, p. 7.