



THE LATE DR. SAMUEL SMILES.

Author of "Self-Help," one of the most remarkable publishing successes of the nineteenth century.

DEATH OF THE VENERABLE
AUTHOR OF "SELF-HELP."

SINCE the publication, some fifty years ago, of "Self-Help, with Illustrations of Character and Conduct," the book has been translated into nearly a score of languages, and hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold. From the commercial point of view, we are told, it was one of the most remarkable publishing successes of the nineteenth century. The author, Dr. Samuel Smiles, died in London on April 16, at the advanced age of ninety-two. His death, states the New York *Outlook*, "will recall to tens of thousands of readers the profit and incentive to effort that they have received through his books." "Duty," "Thrift," and "Character," from the same pen, while less known than the famous "Self-Help," are naturally classified with it. *The Outlook* claims that

while the sophisticated critic may smile at the truisms and aphorisms in these books, it is beyond question that they have in a large way proved an incentive to character-building. We quote the following brief account of the author's life from the *Springfield Republican*:

"Mr. Smiles was the son of a Scotch country doctor, who died, leaving his wife with eleven children to educate. He went to the schools of his native place, Haddington, then to Edinburgh University, where he got his doctor's degree; and he practised as a surgeon for some years. Afterward he was editor of the *Leeds Times*, and later was engaged in railway offices, retiring in 1866 to give his time to the work by which he is known. He wrote [besides the books already mentioned] 'Lives of the Engineers,' life of 'Thomas Edward, Naturalist'—who was a cobbler to the end of his days, but a fellow of the Linnean Society; 'Life of Robert Dick, Baker, of Thurso, Geologist and Botanist'; 'Life and Labor, or Characteristics of Men of Culture and Genius'; 'Life of George Moore, Merchant and Philanthropist'; an interesting account of 'The Huguenots after the Edict of Nantes,' and 'Life of John Murray: a Publisher and His Friends.' He also was a constant contributor to *The Quarterly Review* and other periodicals. The helpful nature of his writings brought all his honors. France made him Chevalier of Sts. Maurice and Lazare; Servia made him Knight Commander of St. Sava; his university gave him the degree of LL.D. The later years of his life were spent in London. He had a large family, extending to the third generation, and beyond his ninetieth birthday he was still strong and took long walks every day."

Dr. Smiles's "Life of John Murray" has been characterized as one of the most entertaining works of literary reminiscence of our times. His "Memoirs," prepared in his later years, await publication.

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SAMUEL SMILES, LL.D.

By WILLIAM SHARP

THE veteran author of "Self-Help," now the doyen of the English literary world, has much of which to be proud. That his most famous work has been translated into every European language, as well as into languages and dialects of more remote lands, might not signify much. We have popular novelists whose writings might appear in Choctaw or Manchurian without the fact profoundly impressing us. But that Dr. Smiles's writings, and this book in particular, should have admittedly exercised and continue to exercise an immense influence for good not only on the youth of Great Britain and Greater Britain but over the young generations of the United States of America and the disunited States of Europe—this, indeed, is an unction to lay to the spirit such as can happen rarely to the most fortunate of the masters of the pen. Nor has Dr. Smiles lacked for those distinguished personal tributes which naturally mean so much to the recipient. Queen Victoria, it is known, wished to confer upon him in some titular form a mark of her high and sincere respect. Of Prince Bismarck there is an anecdote that at Homburg (or some other Spa) he went up to an elderly gentleman in the belief that he was addressing the author of "Self-Help" and "Thrift," and begged to thank him in the name of Germany for works of so sterling and finely formative a character. True, the Dr. Smiles thus addressed proved to be a Pennsylvanian vendor of a quack remedy for gout! However, Bismarck's compliment stands on record, and doubtless it duly reached and gratified the person for whom it was intended. To give one more instance, the late Cecil Rhodes, on opening a library in a small town in South Africa, is reported to have said: "I have been called an empire-maker. I don't know about that. I'm not sure if I quite understand what is meant. But there's one thing I know and am sure of, and that is (and here he lifted Dr. Smiles's "Self-Help") that here we have what is still better, a *man-maker*, a *character-maker*." After all this, it would seem commonplace to add that Dr. Smiles has received many honourable official distinctions—among them probably none more valued than the degree of LL.D. conferred on him by the University of Edinburgh exactly a quarter of a century ago. If he cared, he could prefix "Sir" to his name; but his friends will appreciate his reticence the more when

aware that the knighthood is a knight-commandership of the Order of St. Sava, conferred on him by so dubious an admirer as the late King Milan of Servia. Among the foreign distinctions borne by the nonagenarian author who lives so retiredly and contentedly in a quiet square in Kensington are the Chevaliership of St. Maurice and that of St. Lazare.

Samuel Smiles was born ninety-one years ago at Haddington—almost within the smell of Edinburgh, as the Lothian folk say. The boy learned early those lessons in self-help and thrift which he was afterwards to commit to generations of youth all over the world. At his father's death he was one of eleven young children dependent on a mother who for the coming struggle had but scanty means, derived from a small business. But Mrs. Smiles was a woman of strong character, shrewd in affairs, intelligent in all respects. In a hundred ways, directly and indirectly, she inculcated that homely and sane wisdom of which her son has become the acknowledged exemplar. Young Samuel had fancy for the painter's craft, but Mrs. Smiles urged that he should at least study for one of the three Care-taker professions which stand for the glory of this world in the esteem of most Scottish mothers.

To the Church he did not lean, and had still less inclination for the Law; so he chose Medicine. In time he returned to Haddington, and practised for six years. But either the folk were too healthy or too thrifty or misdoubted so young a physician; for even with his lectures on chemistry and his occasional contributions to the *Edinburgh Courant* he found himself no nearer prosperity. He had (in his twenty-sixth year) published, at his own expense, a work on "Physical Education." It brought neither financial nor literary award. In his twenty-seventh year he left his native shire and settled as a surgeon in Leeds. But more and more it became evident that the pen and not the lancet was to be his wage-earner. He was offered the editorship of the *Leeds Times*; accepted, and from that day all went well. For a time he combined journalistic and business avocations, for in 1845 he became Secretary of the Leeds and Thirsk Railway, and in 1854 (till his retirement in 1866) Secretary of the South-Eastern Railway.

At Leeds he came to know George Stephenson, and his first literary success came with the publication (in 1857) of his

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The following pleasant paragraph concerning the late Samuel Smiles, author of the "Self Help" books which have had an enormous circulation in America, is reprinted from the London "Chronicle":—

Dr. Samuel Smiles was one of the most genial of men. Those who met the author of "Thrift," expecting to find him a prig, had a pleasant surprise. He was all his own surname; was never happier than at a dinner party; and did not complain, nor shirk his part, when beauty fell to his lot in the usual course of diners' luck. Holding out success as one of the tests almost of righteousness, no other being easily available for the didactic purposes of his books, he was, of course, delighted when large profits came to reward his literary labors. His simplicity remained with him through all his popularity, just as his soft and welcoming Haddington accent clung to him through his long residence in England. With the gains that quickly accrued to Dr. Smiles after the publication of "Self Help," he built for himself a substantial house at Blackheath. There he intended to live and die, but as years passed and his sons and daughters dispersed, he decided to sell the goodly pile of bricks and mortar which his pen had reared. In order, however, to mark the fact that the book had bought the land and built the house, Dr. Smiles had placed a copy of "Self Help" in the foundations. The feet of strangers now pass unconscious over the cenotaph of that buried copy of a still living book.

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