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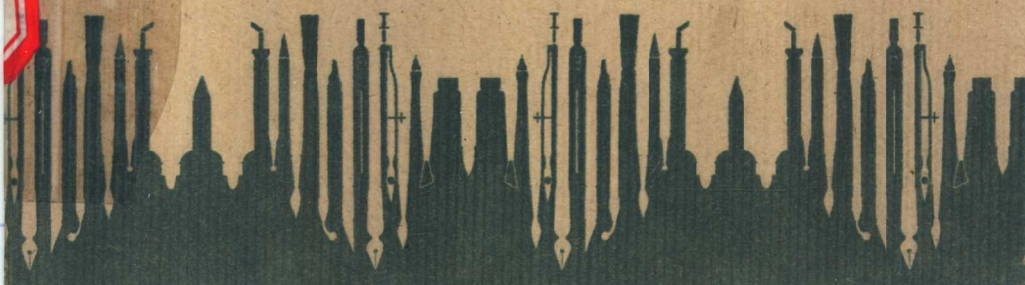
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# Self-Help

自己拯救自己

Samuel Smiles

〔英〕塞缪尔·斯迈尔斯



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# 出版说明

有史以来,无论东方西方,皆有这样一些人——他们仰望星空,环视人类,目极八荒,思接千载;他们探索真理,创立学说,预设问题,启迪众生。这样一种人,我们称之为人类精英;他们披发沥血写就的著述,我们视之为不朽经典。而正是这样的人和书,在影响和推进着全人类的整体进步。

在此之中,毫无疑问,西方文化迥异于中国传统文化。一个世纪前的先哲们,在国门初开之际,即深明此理,而将西学大量引入中国,对中国在 20 世纪的崛起和发展,确曾影响深远。然而,经典浩瀚,殊多沧海遗珠;虽有百年译述充栋,却仍多千秋巨著无觅于市。且译作虽佳,终不如原著之精准;而多语对照,则更能阐隐发幽,得前贤之精髓。因是,值此新世纪初年,我社为继承和弘扬世界文化遗产,促进中西文化交流和提高国人英文阅读水平,特推出“英语阅读文库”。

本文库呈完全开放状,不限时代,不限学科,不限国别,不限数量。凡中外知识界公认的名著皆可入选,所选皆为英文原版或他语英译之善本,旨在与国内业已出版的大批汉译名著交相辉映,并方便学子参照互读,丰富知识,拓宽视野,加深对西方历史与文化的理解。由于国际之别,众多原版好书国人买不到、借不到甚或买不起。本文库则尽量首选国内尚未推出且便于阅读的大众经典,精编精校,分批推出,意在让国人以国内版书价而拥有外版书,为后代求知者行一扇方便法门。

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## P R E F A C E

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**T**HIS is a revised edition of a book which has already been received with considerable favour at home and abroad. It has been reprinted in various forms in America ; translations have appeared in Dutch and French, and others are about to appear in German and Danish. The book has, doubtless, proved attractive to readers in different countries by reason of the variety of anecdotal illustrations of life and character which it contains, and the interest which all more or less feel in the labours, the trials, the struggles, and the achievements of others. No one can be better aware than the author of its fragmentary character, arising from the manner in which it was for the most part originally composed,—having been put together principally from jottings made during many years,—intended as readings for young men, and without any view to publication. The appearance of this edition has furnished an opportunity for pruning the volume of some superfluous matter, and introducing various new illustrations, which will probably be found of general interest.

In one respect the title of the book, which it is now too late to alter, has proved unfortunate, as it has led some, who have judged it merely

by the title, to suppose that it consists of a eulogy of selfishness: the very opposite of what it really is,—or at least of what the author intended it to be. Although its chief object unquestionably is to stimulate youths to apply themselves diligently to right pursuits,—sparing neither labour, pains, nor self-denial in prosecuting them,—and to rely upon their own efforts in life, rather than depend upon the help or patronage of others, it will also be found, from the examples given of literary and scientific men, artists, inventors, educators, philanthropists, missionaries, and martyrs, that the duty of helping one's self in the highest sense involves the helping of one's neighbours.

It has also been objected to the book that too much notice is taken in it of men who have succeeded in life by helping themselves, and too little of the multitude of men who have failed. "Why should not Failure," it has been asked, "have its Plutarch as well as Success?" There is, indeed, no reason why Failure should not have its Plutarch, except that a record of mere failure would probably be found excessively depressing as well as unconstructive reading. It is, however, shown in the following pages that Failure is the best discipline of the true worker, by stimulating him to renewed efforts, evoking his best powers, and carrying him onward in self-culture, self-control, and growth in knowledge and wisdom. Viewed in this light, Failure, conquered by Perseverance, is always full of interest and instruction, and this we have endeavoured to illustrate by many examples.

As for Failure *per se*, although it may be well to find consolations for it at the close of life, there

is reason to doubt whether it is an object that ought to be set before youth at the beginning of it. Indeed, "how *not* to do it" is of all things the easiest learnt: it needs neither teaching, effort, self-denial, industry, patience, perseverance, nor judgment. Besides, readers do not care to know about the general who lost his battles, the engineer whose engines blew up, the architect who designed only deformities, the painter who never got beyond daubs, the schemer who did not invent his machine, the merchant who could not keep out of the Gazette. It is true, the best of men may fail, in the best of causes. But even these best of men did not try to fail, or regard their failure as meritorious; on the contrary, they tried to succeed, and looked upon failure as misfortune. Failure in any good cause is, however, honourable, whilst success in any bad cause is merely infamous. At the same time success in the good cause is unquestionably better than failure. But it is not the result in any case that is to be regarded so much as the aim and the effort, the patience, the courage, and the endeavour with which desirable and worthy objects are pursued;—

"'Tis not in mortals to command success;  
We will do more—deserve it."

The object of the book briefly is, to re-inculcate these old-fashioned but wholesome lessons—which perhaps cannot be too often urged,—that youth must work in order to enjoy,—that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence,—that the student must not be daunted by difficulties, but conquer them by patience and



perseverance,—and that, above all, he must seek elevation of character, without which capacity is worthless and worldly success is naught. If the author has not succeeded in illustrating these lessons, he can only say that he has failed in his object.

Among the new passages introduced in the present edition may be mentioned the following: Illustrious Foreigners of Humble Origin (pp. 12, 14), French Generals and Marshals risen from the Ranks (16), De Tocqueville and Mutual Help (29), William Lee, M.A., and the Stocking-loom (50), John Heathcoat, M.P., and the Bobbin-net Machine (56), Jacquard and his Loom (66), Vaucanson (69), Joshua Heilmann and the Combing-machine (74), Bernard Palissy and his Struggles (81), Böttgher, Discoverer of Hard Porcelain (95), Comte de Buffon as Student (123), Cuvier (151), Ambrose Paré (158), Claude Lorraine (189), Jacques Callot (192), Benvenuto Cellini (194), Nicolas Poussin (199), Ary Scheffer (202), the Strutts of Belper (252), Francis Xavier (280), Napoleon as a Man of Business (325), Intrepidity of Deal Boatmen (471), besides numerous other passages which it is unnecessary to specify.

LONDON, *May*, 1866.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

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THE origin of this book may be briefly told.

Some fifteen years since, the author was requested to deliver an address before the members of some evening classes, which had been formed in a northern town for mutual improvement, under the following circumstances:—

Two or three young men of the humblest rank resolved to meet in the winter evenings, for the purpose of improving themselves by exchanging knowledge with each other. Their first meetings were held in the room of a cottage in which one of the members lived; and, as others shortly joined them, the place soon became inconveniently filled. When summer set in, they adjourned to the cottage garden outside; and the classes were then held in the open air, round a little boarded hut used as a garden-house, in which those who officiated as teachers set the sums, and gave forth the lessons of the evening. When the weather was fine, the youths might be seen, until a late hour, hanging round the door of the hut like a cluster of bees; but sometimes a sudden shower of rain would dash the sums from their slates, and disperse them for the evening unsatisfied.

Winter, with its cold nights, was drawing near, and what were they to do for shelter? Their numbers had by this time so increased, that no room of an ordinary cottage could accommodate them. Though they were for the most part young men earning comparatively small weekly wages, they resolved to incur the risk of hiring a room; and, on making

## x INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

inquiry, they found a large dingy apartment to let, which had been used as a temporary Cholera Hospital. No tenant could be found for the place, which was avoided as if the plague still clung to it. But the mutual improvement youths, nothing daunted, hired the cholera room at so much a week, lit it up, placed a few benches and a deal table in it, and began their winter classes. The place soon presented a busy and cheerful appearance in the evenings. The teaching may have been, as no doubt it was, of a very rude and imperfect sort; but it was done with a will. Those who knew a little taught those who knew less—improving themselves while they improved the others; and, at all events, setting before them a good working example. Thus these youths—and there were also grown men amongst them—proceeded to teach themselves and each other, reading and writing, arithmetic and geography; and even mathematics, chemistry, and some of the modern languages.

About a hundred young men had thus come together, when, growing ambitious, they desired to have lectures delivered to them; and then it was that the author became acquainted with their proceedings. A party of them waited on him, for the purpose of inviting him to deliver an introductory address, or, as they expressed it, “to talk to them a bit”; prefacing the request by a modest statement of what they had done and what they were doing. He could not fail to be touched by the admirable self-helping spirit which they had displayed; and, though entertaining but slight faith in popular lecturing, he felt that a few words of encouragement, honestly and sincerely uttered, might not be without some good effect. And in this spirit he addressed them on more than one occasion, citing examples of what other men had done, as illustrations of what each might, in a greater or less degree, do for himself; and pointing out that their happiness and well-being as individuals in after life must necessarily depend mainly upon themselves—upon their own diligent self-culture, self-discipline, and self-control—and, above all, on that honest

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION xi

and upright performance of individual duty which is the glory of manly character.

There was nothing in the slightest degree new or original in this counsel, which was as old as the Proverbs of Solomon, and possibly quite as familiar. But old-fashioned though the advice may have been, it was welcomed. The youths went forward in their course ; worked on with energy and resolution ; and, reaching manhood, they went forth in various directions into the world, where many of them now occupy positions of trust and usefulness. Several years after the incidents referred to, the subject was unexpectedly recalled to the author's recollection by an evening visit from a young man—apparently fresh from the work of a foundry—who explained that he was now an employer of labour and a thriving man ; and he was pleased to remember with gratitude the words spoken in all honesty to him and to his fellow-pupils years before, and even to attribute some measure of his success in life to the endeavours which he had made to work up to their spirit.

The author's personal interest having in this way been attracted to the subject of Self-Help, he was accustomed to add to the memoranda from which he had addressed these young men ; and to note down occasionally in his leisure evening moments, after the hours of business, the results of such reading, observation, and experience of life, as he conceived to bear upon it. One of the most prominent illustrations cited in his earlier addresses was that of George Stephenson, the engineer ; and the original interest of the subject, as well as the special facilities and opportunities which the author possessed for illustrating Mr. Stephenson's life and career, induced him to prosecute it at his leisure, and eventually to publish his biography. The present volume is written in a similar spirit, as it has been similar in its origin. The illustrative sketches of character introduced are, however, necessarily less elaborately treated—being busts rather than full-length portraits, and, in many of the cases, only some striking feature has been noted ; the lives of individuals, as indeed of nations

## xii INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

often concentrating their lustre and interest in a few passages. Such as the book is, the author now leaves it in the hands of the reader ; in the hope that the lessons of industry, perseverance, and self-culture, which it contains, will be found useful and instructive, as well as generally interesting.

LONDON, *September*, 1859.

# CONTENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### SELF-HELP—NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

Spirit of Self-Help—Institutions and men—Government a reflex of the individualism of a nation—Cæsarism and Self-Help—William Dargan on Independence—Patient labourers in all ranks—Self-Help a feature in the English Character—Power of example and of work in practical education—Value of biographies—Great men belong to no exclusive class or rank—Illustrious men sprung from the ranks—Shakespeare—Various humble origin of many eminent men—Distinguished astronomers—Eminent sons of clergymen—Of attorneys—Illustrious foreigners of humble origin—Vauquelin, the chemist—Promotions from the ranks in the French army—Instances of persevering application and energy—Joseph Brotherton—W. J. Fox—W. S. Lindsay—William Jackson—Richard Cobden—Diligence indispensable to usefulness and distinction—The wealthier ranks not all idlers—Examples—Military men—Philosophers—Men of science—Politicians—Literary men—Sir Robert Peel—Lord Brougham—Lytton—Disraeli—Wordsworth on self-reliance—De Tocqueville : his industry and recognition of the help of others—Men their own best helpers . . . 1

## CHAPTER II

### LEADERS OF INDUSTRY—INVENTORS AND PRODUCERS

Industry of the English people—Work the best educator—Hugh Miller—Poverty and toil not insurmountable obstacles—Working men as inventors—Invention of the

steam-engine—James Watt : his industry and habit of attention—Matthew Boulton—Applications of the steam-engine—The cotton manufacture—The early inventors—Paul and Highs—Arkwright : his early life—Barber, inventor and manufacturer—His influence and character—The Peels of South Lancashire—The founder of the family—The first Sir Robert Peel, cotton-printer—Lady Peel—Rev. William Lee, inventor of the stocking-frame—Dies abroad in misery—James Lee—The Nottingham lace manufacture—John Heathcoat, inventor of the bobbin-net machine—His early life, his ingenuity, and plodding perseverance—Invention of his machine—Anecdote of Lord Lyndhurst—Progress of the lace-trade—Heathcoat's machines destroyed by the Luddites—His character—Jacquard : his inventions and adventures—Vaucanson : his mechanical genius, improvements in silk manufacture—Jacquard improves Vaucanson's machine—The Jacquard loom adopted—Joshua Heilmann, inventor of the combing-machine—History of the invention—Its value . . . . . 32

### CHAPTER III

#### THREE GREAT POTTERS—PALISSY, BÖTTGHER, WEDGWOOD

Ancient pottery—Etruscan ware—Luca della Robbia, the Florentine sculptor : re-discovers the art of enamelling—Bernard Palissy : sketch of his life and labours—Inflamed by the sight of an Italian cup—His search after the secret of the enamel—His experiments during years of unproductive toil—His personal and family privations—Indomitable perseverance, burns his furniture to heat the furnace, and success at last—Reduced to destitution—Condemned to death, and release—His writings—Dies in the Bastille—John Frederick Böttgher, the Berlin 'gold cook'—His trick in alchemy and consequent troubles—Flight into Saxony—His detention at Dresden—Discovers how to make red and white porcelain—The manufacture taken up by the Saxon Government—Böttgher treated as a prisoner and a slave—His unhappy

## CONTENTS

xv

end—The Sèvres porcelain manufactory—Josiah Wedgwood, the English potter—Early state of English earthenware manufacture—Wedgwood's indefatigable industry, skill, and perseverance—His success—The Barberini vase—Wedgwood a national benefactor—Industrial heroes . 79

## CHAPTER IV

### APPLICATION AND PERSEVERANCE

Great results attained by simple means—Fortune favours the industrious—"Genius is patience"—Newton and Kepler—Industry of eminent men—Power acquired by repeated effort—Anecdote of Sir Robert Peel's cultivation of memory—Facility comes by practice—Importance of patience—Cheerfulness—Sydney Smith—Dr. Hook—Hope an important element in character—Carey the missionary—Anecdote of Dr. Young—Anecdote of Audubon the ornithologist—Anecdote of Mr. Carlyle and his MS. of the 'French Revolution'—Perseverance of Watt and Stephenson—Perseverance displayed in the discovery of the Nineveh marbles by Rawlinson and Layard—Comte de Buffon as student—His continuous and unremitting labours—Sir Walter Scott's perseverance—John Britton—Loudon—Samuel Drew—Joseph Hume 111

## CHAPTER V

### HELPS AND OPPORTUNITIES | SCIENTIFIC PURSUITS

No great result achieved by accident—Newton's discoveries—Dr. Young—Habit of observing with intelligence—Galileo—Inventions of Brown, Watt, and Brunel accidentally suggested—Philosophy in little things—Apollonius Pergæus and conic sections—Franklin and Galvani—Discovery of steam power—Opportunities seized or made—Simple and rude tools of great workers—Lee and Stone's opportunities for learning—Sir Walter Scott's—Dr. Priestley—Sir Humphry Davy—Faraday—Davy and



Coleridge—Cuvier—Dalton's industry—Examples of improvement of time—Daguesseau and Bentham—Melancthon and Baxter—Writing down observations—Great note-makers—Dr. Pye Smith—John Hunter : his patient study of little things—His great labours—Ambrose Paré, the French surgeon—Harvey—Jenner—Sir Charles Bell—Dr. Marshall Hall—Sir William Herschel—William Smith, the geologist : his discoveries, his geological map—Hugh Miller : his observant faculties—John Brown and Robert Dick, geologists—Sir Roderick Murchison : his industry and attainments . . . . . 139

## CHAPTER VI

### WORKERS IN ART

Sir Joshua Reynolds on the power of industry in art—Humble origin of eminent artists—Acquisition of wealth not the ruling motive with artists—Michael Angelo on riches—Patient labours of Michael Angelo and Titian—West's early success a disadvantage—Richard Wilson and Zuccarelli—Sir Joshua Reynolds, Blake, Bird, Gainsborough, and Hogarth, as boy artists—Hogarth a keen observer—Banks and Mulready—Claude Lorraine and Turner : their indefatigable industry—Perrier and Jacques Callot and their visits to Rome—Callot and the gipsies—Benvenuto Cellini, goldsmith and musician : his ambition to excel—Casting of his statue of Perseus—Nicolas Poussin, a sedulous student and worker—Dumesnoy—Poussin's fame—Ary Scheffer : his hindrances and success—John Flaxman : his genius and perseverance—His brave wife—Their visit to Rome—Francis Chantrey : his industry and energy—David Wilkie and William Etty, unflagging workers—Privations endured by artists—Martin—Pugin—George Kemp, architect of the Scott monument—John Gibson, Robert Thorburn, Noel Paton—James Sharples, the blacksmith artist : his autobiography—Industry of musicians—Handel, Haydn, Beethoven, Bach, Meyerbeer—Dr. Arne—William Jackson, the self-taught composer . . . . . 182