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Herbert Eustace Maxwell

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Life and Times of the Right Honourable William Henry Smith, M.P

This is a lively two-volume biography, first published in 1893, of the influential Victorian businessman and politician W. H. Smith (1825–1891), whose father and uncle established the well-known stationery and bookselling business. The author, Herbert Maxwell (1845–1932), was a Scottish essayist and Conservative Member of Parliament who greatly admired Smith's human qualities and had access to his personal papers. Volume 1 documents the foundation of the newspaper wholesaling business, Smith's education and his thwarted desire to become a priest. It describes how Smith helped his father expand their efficient and successful business to include a chain of railway station news- and bookstalls and a lending library, as well as becoming sole agents for the Times in 1854. Smith went into Parliament in 1868, and worked for several years at the Treasury. Volume 1 ends with his tour to Cyprus in 1878 as First Lord of the Admiralty.

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VOLUME 1

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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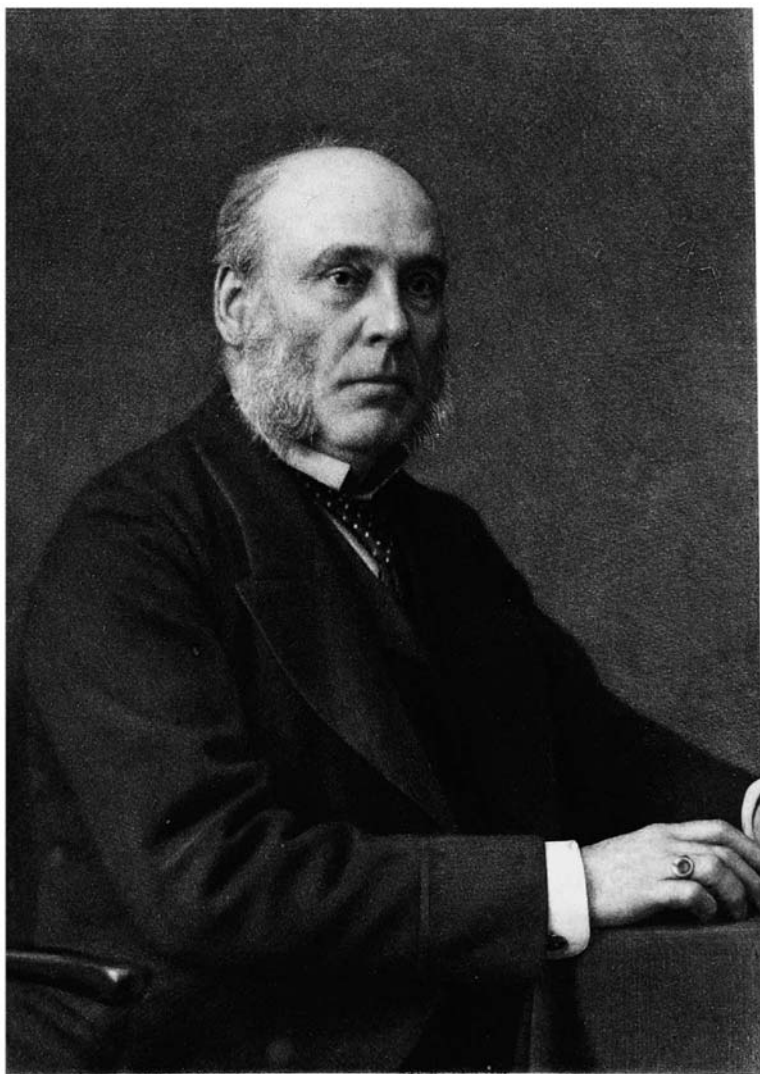
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W H Smith

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L I F E A N D T I M E S
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM HENRY SMITH, M.P.

BY
SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, BART. M.P.

WITH
PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

*Civis talis, qualis et prudentissimus
et fortunâ optimâ esse debet.*—CICERO.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXCIII

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P R E F A C E.

IN preparing these Memoirs, there has been present to me the difficulty besetting every one who attempts to deal with political events during the lifetime of many who have borne a part in them. There is much that cannot be alluded to without reviving slumbering controversy, or reflecting on the actions of public men, until the charitable finger of Time shall have touched the harshness out of recent events, and brought them into right perspective with the history of the country.

Yet I am not without the courage to hope that in recording the chief incidents in the career of one with whom it was my privilege to be associated, and to follow as leader during some anxious and eventful years, I may have succeeded in

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avoiding obvious errors, and giving a true account of a life nobly led and purely ended. In whatever measure that hope may be realised, it is owing to the abundance of material placed at my disposal by the family and friends of Mr Smith, and to the assistance willingly given by many who had been associated with him in commercial, philanthropic, and political affairs. It is possible that in the attempt to give a true impression of the course steered by Mr Smith in politics, I have found it necessary to refer to the actions of those opposed to him in terms which their friends may consider unfavourable. They will, however, be slow to suspect me of any intention of serving the ends of party, or indeed of any motive other than that of giving a faithful narrative.

In requesting me to undertake the compilation of these volumes, Lady Hambleden has reposed a degree of confidence in me which I am not likely to undervalue. She has put at my disposal the private papers and correspondence of her husband, and her daughters have greatly lightened my labours by arranging these, and copying some which were least easy to decipher.

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Among others who have given me valuable information have been the Duke of Rutland, the Marquis of Salisbury, the Earl of Harrowby, the Earl of Iddesleigh, Lord Rowton, Lord Ashcombe, the Right Hon. Edward Stanhope, M.P., the Rev. Sir Emilius Laurie, Sir Edward Lawson, Sir Henry Acland, Mr Penrose Fitzgerald, M.P., the Rev. Canon Jacob, the Rev. Canon Ince, the Rev. Canon Pinder, the Rev. M. A. Nisbet, Mr W. Lethbridge, Captain Blow of the Pandora, Mr White and Mr Monger of 186 Strand. To all these, as well as to others too numerous to mention, my hearty thanks are due.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

MONREITH, *October* 1893.

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