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Samuel Smiles

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The Life of Thomas Telford, Civil Engineer

This biography of the civil engineer Thomas Telford (1757–1834) was published in 1867 by Samuel Smiles (1812–1904), the author of *Self-Help* and of other biographies of engineers and innovators. Smiles had already written about Telford's life and achievements in Volume 2 of his *Lives of the Engineers* (which is also reissued in this series), but in returning to the topic he adds to this new edition an introductory section (taken from Volume 1 of *Lives of the Engineers*) on the history of roads in Britain, from prehistoric trackways, via the Romans, to the modern road-building system pioneered by John Metcalf (the extraordinary 'Blind Jack of Knaresborough') and Telford himself. This illustrated work gives engaging accounts from earlier writers of the perils of road travel, and also deals in detail with Telford's own career as a builder of roads, bridges and canals.

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THE LIFE
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THOMAS TELFORD,
CIVIL ENGINEER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY HISTORY OF ROADS AND
TRAVELLING IN GREAT BRITAIN.

BY SAMUEL SMILES,
AUTHOR OF 'SELF-HELP,' 'INDUSTRIAL BIOGRAPHY,' ETC.

~~~~~  
"Let us travel, and wherever we find no facility for travelling from a city to a town, from a village to a hamlet, we may pronounce the people to be barbarous."—*Abbé Raynal*.

"The opening up of the internal communications of a country is undoubtedly the first and most important element of its growth in commerce and civilization."—*Richard Cobden*.

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## P R E F A C E.



THE present is a revised and in some respects enlarged edition of the 'Life of Telford,' originally published in the 'Lives of the Engineers,' to which is prefixed an account of the early roads and modes of travelling in Britain.

From this volume, read in connection with the Lives of George and Robert Stephenson, in which the origin and extension of Railways is described, an idea may be formed of the extraordinary progress which has been made in opening up the internal communications of this country during the last century.

Among the principal works executed by Telford in the course of his life, were the great highways constructed by him in North Wales and the Scotch Highlands, through districts formerly almost inaccessible, but which are now as easily traversed as any English county.

By means of these roads, and the facilities afforded by railways, the many are now enabled to visit with ease and comfort magnificent mountain scenery, which before was only the costly privilege of the few; at the same time that their construction has exercised a most beneficial influence on the population of the districts themselves.

The Highland roads, which were constructed with the active assistance of the Government, and were maintained partly at the public expense until within the last few years, had the effect of stimulating industry, improving agriculture, and converting a turbulent because unem-

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ployed population into one of the most loyal and well-conditioned in the empire;—the policy thus adopted with reference to the Highlands, and the beneficial results which have flowed from it, affording the strongest encouragement to Government in dealing in like manner with the internal communications of Ireland.

While the construction of the Highland roads was in progress, the late Robert Southey, poet laureate, visited the Highlands in company with his friend the engineer, and left on record an interesting account of his visit, in a manuscript now in the possession of Robert Rawlinson, C.E., to whom we are indebted for the extracts which are made from it in the present volume.

*London, October, 1867.*

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By PERCIVAL SKELTON.

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