

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF SIR WALTER  
BESANT**

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Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant by Sir Walter Besant & S. Squire Sprigge

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**SIR WALTER BESANT & S. SQUIRE SPRIGGE**

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BESANT**





Walter Assant

AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
*of*  
SIR WALTER BESANT

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WITH A PREFATORY NOTE  
BY S. SQUIRE SPRIGGE



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## A Prefatory Note

... "It is hard to speak of him within measure when we consider his devotion to the cause of authors, and the constant good service rendered by him to their material interests. In this he was a valorous, alert, persistent advocate, and it will not be denied by his opponents that he was always urbane, his object being simply to establish a system of fair dealing between the sagacious publishers of books and the inexperienced, often heedless, producers. How unselfishly, with how pure a generosity he gave his valuable time to the previously neglected office of adviser to the more youthful of his profession, may be estimated by a review of his memorable labours in other fields. They were vast and toilsome, yet he never missed an occasion for acting as the young author's voluntary friend in the least sentimental and most sensible manner. He had no thought of trouble or personal loss where the welfare of his fellow-workers was concerned. . . ." —MR. GEORGE MEREDITH, writing of Sir Walter Besant in the *Author* of July, 1901.

**A**N autobiography should be its own justification and its own interpretation. There should be no room for a preface and no need for any intermediary between the writer and the public to whom he has designed to appeal. If it is necessary to add much to an autobiography, the author is made to appear to have suppressed things that he should have said; if any passages are deleted, the portrait of himself which he proposed to draw is rendered incomplete. I have kept these things before me, and in preparing Sir Walter Besant's autobiography for the press have confined

## A P R E F A T O R Y N O T E

the modifications to the correction of obvious slips, and to the addition of certain passages — mainly quotations from his own works<sup>1</sup> — to which references were made in the manuscript. Only a few words are called for, but the circumstances in which Sir Walter Besant's autobiography is being published require a little explanation. These circumstances account for the slight corrections that have been made, as well as for the obvious incompleteness of his record in certain directions. It has been felt by his widow, by the executors of his will, and by his literary executor, that this, in justice to his memory, should be made clear to the reader.

Sir Walter Besant's autobiography was written for publication, and no one had any right to withhold the book from the public. Yet although Sir Walter Besant expressly meant his account of his life to be published, death overtook him before he had prepared it for press. Those who were familiar with the man and his literary methods know well what that means; they know that the autobiography is not presented in the form it would have appeared in had it undergone the minute revision to which all his written matter was subjected. His limpid style did not betray the fact that he was a rigorous critic of himself. In the eleventh chapter of the autobiography he explains to all whom it may interest his manner of writing a book. He compares

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Chatto & Windus, the publishers of Sir Walter Besant's novels, have kindly given permission for the inclusion of these passages in the autobiography.