GEORGE STEPHENSON: HIS LIFE AND CAREER

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George Stephenson: His Life and Career by F. L. Clarke

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F. L. CLARKE

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GEORGE STEPHENSON:

Dis Life and Carcer.

F. L. CLARKE,

Author of " The Life of Raleigh," " The Life of Tyndale," etc., etc.



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1884 1801. e. \.



PREFACE.

THE name of GEORGE STEPHENSON is so well known in connection with railways and locomotives, that but very few words are needed to explain the scope of this little book, which aims at giving, in a smaller compass, that which Mr. Smiles has so admirably given in his interesting and exhaustive "Life of George Stephenson." Technicalities have been avoided as far as possible, or explained, so that younger readers may read and enjoy the details of the life-struggles and the success of this noble advocate and example of the virtues of perseverance.

One of the many advantages that biography possesses over narrative-fiction, lies in its reality. The men and the women whose careers are so constantly brought before us were really flesh and blood like ourselves—they played their part in the world's drama, they had their faults, their enemies, their friends, their successes just as we have, or may have, and we can

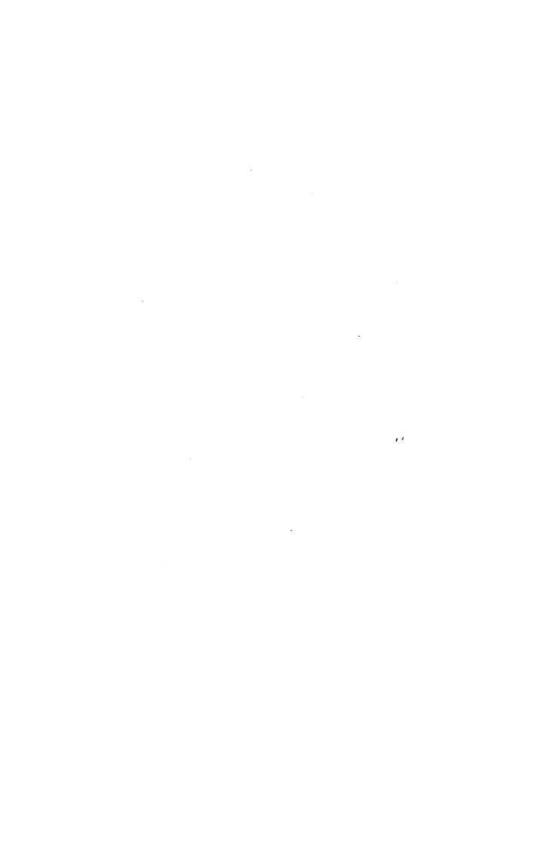
feel that what man has done, man may do again. When the boy or girl reads an interesting book, one of the first questions is, "Is it true?" Did it really all happen?" and their enthusiasm is much damped when informed that such and such a hero—the very good boy, and the exceedingly amiable girl—had no real existence: their virtues and their faults, their trials and sorrows, through which they pass so triumphantly, were all imaginary, though they might possibly be true. "Oh," is the comment, "they are only people in books. We can't be like people in books, you know;" and so the wise lesson often passes unheeded.

Not such can be said of George Stephenson. The trials and difficulties of his early life can hardly happen in these more favoured days of general education, but the example of his watchful patience, his unvarying industry, and the thorough kindliness of his whole nature can hardly be thrown away upon any reader. He is not a "character in a book;" he is a real living person—the results of his thoughtful youth and manhood have greatly tended to England's prosperity. The energy which he threw into whatever he undertook has roused and ani-

mated the energies of thousands of others to whom the perfection of the locomotive has been the very means of their existence.

Wherever we see him, whether taking care of little children, scaring birds, or by the pitengine fire studying his scanty lessons, we see the same thoroughness, the unflagging industry -sometimes called genius-which characterized him in his manhood's prime, when before the eyes of a critical public he produced the complete locomotive engine, which had been the object of desire of so many before him. him it was given to perfect this wondrous piece of mechanism, and he knew and acknowledged with all humility that he was not the originator -he but ended the long line of men whose "heroic industry" led up to one of the greatest triumphs of mechanical science. "It is due," said his son at a meeting of engineers at Newcastle, "not to one man, but to the efforts of a nation of mechanical engineers,"

F. L. C.



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