

Obituary.

ADMIRAL SMYTH, F.R.S., F.R.A.S., Etc.

Although several notices of the late ADMIRAL SMYTH have already been printed, as in "Fraser's Magazine," in the "Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society," and in the Address of Sir R. I. Murchison, Bart., President of the Royal Geographical Society, etc., etc., a brief obituary of this distinguished man may fitly find a place in the "Records of the Bucks Archaeological Society," not only because he was one of its Vice-Presidents, but also because he took a lively interest in its proceedings, and contrived, amidst the pressure of other and more arduous labours, to send some valuable and interesting communications to these pages.

WILLIAM HENRY SMYTH was born January 21, 1788. He was an only son. His father was J. B. P. Smyth, Esq., of New Jersey; his mother was a granddaughter of Rev. M. Pilkington. Mr. J. B. P. Smyth distinguished himself during the American War of Independence, by his zeal for the cause of the mother country; but upon the triumph of the revolutionists, his patriotism cost him the loss of large family possessions. Young Smyth, directed by that instinct which has prompted so many to seek their fortunes on the sea, found himself at a very early age on board a West India merchantman, and was fortunate enough to be under an intelligent and kind commander, a master in the Royal Navy, who appreciated the abilities of the boy, and instructed him in the rudiments of seamanship. Not long afterwards he joined the East India Company's ship "Cornwallis"; and when this vessel was purchased by Government and commissioned as a frigate under the command of Captain C. Johnston, a talented officer, his youthful wishes were gratified, and he entered service in the Navy. During the following five years of long cruises in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, he availed himself of the opportunity of studying hydrography, based on astronomy, which stamped his future life. Having subsequently acquitted himself with ability and credit in other vessels, he was appointed in 1810 to the command of a Spanish

gun-boat named the "*Mors aut Gloria*," in which he greatly distinguished himself during the operations of the flotilla in the defence of Cadiz. On the 15th of March, 1813, he received a Lieutenant's commission, on the recommendation of Lord Melville, a promotion which was due, not less to his eminent services as an officer, than to his carefully and accurately executed charts of *La Isla-de-Leon* and the neighbouring coast.

Almost immediately after this commission he was appointed to a command in the Anglo-Sicilian fleet at *Messina*.

The abdication of Napoleon in April, 1814, having put an end for a time to the European war, Lieutenant Smyth had leisure to apply himself to a detailed survey of the island of Sicily; and the plans and charts which he then executed, having been highly commended to the notice of the Board of Admiralty, procured for him another step up the ladder. On September 18th, 1815, he was advanced to the rank of Commander. The peace being now continued, he was next engaged in archæological pursuits, and collected several interesting specimens of ancient architecture from *Leptis Magna*, in Barbary, for our Government. These specimens are now at Windsor, and have been largely used as architectural models.

About this time he entered upon one of his greatest works, the "Survey of the Mediterranean," an employment which developed and confirmed his aptitude for astronomical study. While thus engaged, he formed an intimate acquaintance with the great Italian astronomer, *Piazzi*.

At this period he formed also another acquaintance, destined to have an important influence on the success and happiness of his future life. It was at *Messina* that he was first introduced to *Annarella Warrington*, daughter of *T. Warrington, Esq.*, a long-established Banker and Merchant at *Naples*. This highly-gifted and excellent lady became his wife on October 7, 1815; and thenceforth was for fifty years not only his beloved companion, but also his able assistant in all his literary and scientific labours.

His survey of the Mediterranean Sea, stimulated by his acquaintance with *Piazzi*, seems to have roused into activity his latent love for astronomy, and he resolved to enter upon "a wider scrutiny of the general sidereal phenomena." The results of these labours are given in the "*Celestial Cycle*," a work which, together with his "Survey of the Mediterranean," has established his reputation for ever, as a singularly accurate observer and a man of science of the first order.

It should be mentioned that the observations which were the foundation of the "*Celestial Cycle*" were chiefly made during his residence at *Bedford*, where he erected an excellent Observatory. This Observatory was dismantled in 1839; and the Equatoreal which he had employed with so much success was then removed to *Hartwell*, near *Aylesbury*, and placed in another Observatory, built under his direction for *Dr. Lee*. This instrument he frequently used during the latter part of his life; and the result was a work called "*Speculum Hartwellianum*," which appeared in 1860. This publication contains the history of many of the more remarkable double stars, amongst which γ *Virginis* deserves special mention; for it was from the wonderfully accurate measures by Admiral Smyth that *Mr. Hind* computed the elements of the orbit of this comparison star.

These are the works by which the name of Admiral Smyth will live amongst scientific men. But they by no means comprehend the whole of his labours. He was never idle. All intervals of his busy life were filled up with what to most men would have been studies, but to him were recreations. In Archæology he collected a cabinet of Roman large brass coins, of which he published an account. He also compiled a descriptive catalogue of the *Northumberland Collection*, which was printed in a handsome quarto by the Duke. In biography, he wrote a life of "*Captain Beaver*," in which he tells, with much originality and power, how a noble English sailor lived and died. Besides these, he wrote for twenty years of his life for the *United Service Journal*; and whatever he wrote was always worth reading.

The last fifteen years of his life were spent at St. John's Lodge, near Aylesbury, where his noble simplicity of character, his high morality, his genial temper, and his varied information, gained for him a universal esteem and affection. He became Vice-Admiral in 1858, and Admiral in 1863.

Though his late years were spent in comparative retirement, his mental vigour remained unimpaired to the last ; and he was engaged in preparing another work for the press when his earthly end arrived. His death was somewhat sudden, as indeed he desired that it might be. Till within the last few days of his life, no one seems to have apprehended that his change was so near. Early in September, 1865, he had an attack, from which, however, he rallied so far as to be able to take his usual drive, and to pursue his employments at home. On Friday, September 8th, he was as cheerful as usual, and sufficiently well in the evening to adjust a small telescope to show the planet *Jupiter* to his little grandson, Arthur Smyth Flower. But this was almost the last act of his life. He retired to rest at his usual hour. In the night he was seized with a sudden hæmorrhage on the lungs, and shortly afterwards, on the morning of September 9, 1865, died peacefully and without a struggle. His body rests in the churchyard of Stone, near Aylesbury, by the side of his beloved daughter, Caroline Mary. He was in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

For a more full obituary of Admiral Smyth, the reader is referred to the papers mentioned at the beginning of this notice. It may suffice here to say, that he has left his mark behind him as a man of rare intellectual vigour, of high moral courage, of great accuracy of thought, and of very varied accomplishments. He was great in the active duties of his profession ; great as an astronomer ; great as a geographer ; great, we may truly say, in everything that he touched ; but greatest of all in his contempt for all that was mean and sordid, in his admiration of everything that was true and intellectual. To these high qualifications he added a thorough kindliness of disposition, a generosity in imparting the fruits of his labours to others, a sailor-like frankness and simplicity of character, and a sprightliness of wit, which made him a favourite everywhere, even amongst those who could hardly appreciate the higher qualities of his mind.

Such men are a real loss, when it pleases God to remove them. And never are such losses more felt than in an age like the present, of great intellectual activity, the very buoyancy of which needs the counterpoise of steadfast principle. The late Admiral combined with the successful pursuit of Science in all its branches, a humble trust in God, and an unflinching faith in Divine Revelation. He has left no unworthy representatives behind him in his accomplished widow and his intellectual and distinguished children ; and his name bids fair to be handed onwards, with that breadth and force of character which made him so great, and which fills us with gratitude to the Giver of all good things, who made him what he was.

E. B.