

of the name, that, as that particular problem is one of the easiest for a beginner to solve, so if he failed in crossing it (i. e., in solving it) he must indeed be an ass!

W. L. S.

Jersey City Heights, Dec. 19, 1890.

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Anonymous.
1890

"Herbert Spencer Attacked /editorial/,"
The New York Times, vol 39 (Sunday, 23 March),
page 4, column 4.

HERBERT SPENCER ATTACKED.

Is the philosophy of HERBERT SPENCER permanent or perishable? Has he constructed a working theory of the universe or only a patchwork of speculation, unsound in its parts and unstable as a whole? These are questions of immense interest to men of science, for the philosophy of SPENCER has found wide acceptance, has visibly guided and shaped much of the philosophical thought of the last thirty years, and its author is revered as a Prophet and Founder by great numbers of men who have turned from the dogmas of the theologians and the wranglings of the metaphysicians to his teachings as one turns from darkness to the light.

These questions are asked about SPENCER, and his system and his pretensions are squarely attacked in a remarkable article elsewhere printed upon this page of THE TIMES. The writer of the article signs himself "Outsider," too modestly, we think, for while for the purposes of his inquiry he may desire to stand apart from the adepts whom he calls upon to speak their minds about HERBERT SPENCER, he is himself eminent for his attainments in science and might speak with some authority upon the questions he raises. "Outsider" makes his assault with spirit and skill. It would be a serious matter for Mr. SPENCER and for his followers and the converts to his teachings to have his standing questioned and not speedily and satisfactorily established in the several branches of science which he has made tributary to his great work. Is SPENCER'S competence recognized in mathematics by mathematicians, in biology by biologists, in psychology by the leaders of the modern school, asks "Outsider," or "is each of these specialists accustomed to think of Mr. SPENCER as eminent in every branch but his own"? Furthermore, he asks, what "successful predictions" have been based upon the synthetic philosophy, what discoveries have come of it? If it is a working system, it must be able to stand the wear and tear of application in a hundred ways to the phenomena of the universe. Can it stand this test, or is it to be set down as a closet philosophy, fit only for the entertainment of minds not too inquisitive?

For our part, we should like to see "Outsider's" position thoroughly discussed, to see the pretensions of the synthetic philosophy examined by friend and foe, and to find out which way opinion about SPENCER is drifting among the high priests and the laity of scientific and theological thought. In the whole range of subjects about which human minds are busying themselves there is nothing more important. It involves faith, ethics, and politics, and leaves scarcely any point of man's life and activities untraced. HERBERT SPENCER has sought to weld into a sublime whole all the discoveries of science, all the beliefs which the modern world holds to be

well established. The doctrine of evolution which DARWIN, in his study of its workings, purposely restricted to a field convenient for his personal examination is made by HERBERT SPENCER to account not only for living forms but for the development of human society and human institutions, for man's conscience and his notions of right and wrong. He puts the universe under the sway of Law, and upon the demonstration of that law his system rests. In place of the wayward gropings of science and philosophy, in place of a score of irreconcilable systems, he has set up a Unity as broad as the Kosmos itself. Some thousands of minds he has converted to his beliefs, other thousands he has stirred to denial and hostility, and all minds capable of taking thought about so vast a matter he has deeply interested.

We repeat that we should like to see HERBERT SPENCER subjected afresh to analysis and inquest. It is a popular subject, for everybody knows something of the synthetic philosophy, and it is a subject about which men of science, philosophers, and theologians are forced to do a good deal of thinking. THE TIMES will make room for a discussion of the subject and will give it every encouragement. Let the champions of the two hosts come forth and join battle. It shall be a free field and a fair one.