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MR. SPENCER'S RANK AS A PHILOSOPHER.

A FORMIDABLE ARRAY OF EVIDENCE
IN HIS SUPPORT—METAPHYSICIANS,
BIOLOGISTS, MATHEMATICIANS, PHY-
SICIANS, AND LEARNED SOCIETIES IN
MANY LANDS PAY HIM HONOR.

To the Editor of The New-York Times:

It appears from his second letter, printed in THE TIMES of April 13, that your correspondent, "Outsider," is in need of more light on the subject of Herbert Spencer's standing as a philosopher. I therefore ask space for certain facts which, it is hoped, will meet his want, and which seem to me decisive regarding the principal point of the discussion: To make the bearing of these facts more evident, it will be needful to repeat the question in "Outsider's" first letter, to which they are offered as a reply. In the opening paragraph, he says:

"But what we would like to have told is whether the pretensions of Mr. Spencer are acknowledged to be well founded; whether, for example, since his doctrine partly rests upon mathematical considerations, he ranks high as a mathematician among mathematicians; whether biologists have awarded him those tokens of respect (such as medals and foreign memberships of academies) which usually mark their recognition of a leader; whether the modern school of psychology reckons him as one of its chiefs, and whether anthropologists hold that his sociological tables have been drawn up in a truly scientific and critical method, or whether, on the other hand, each of these specialists is accustomed to think of Mr. Spencer as eminent in every branch but his own."

It is amusing to see the self-confidence with which "Outsider" asks "whether the pretensions of Mr. Spencer are acknowledged to be well founded," the tacit assertion being that they are not so acknowledged. And it is curious also to observe how in respect of each division of science he asks so confidently whether the experts have given him their adhesion; the implication, which the reader is expected to accept as unquestionable, being that they have not done this. To dispose fully of his implied assertion that those who are the most competent in each department are those who have not indorsed Mr. Spencer's views, we will take these respective departments serially, and perhaps surprise "Outsider" by the proofs that his airs of

superior knowledge simply cover his want of knowledge. For though Mr. Spencer has made it a point never to append laudatory opinions to his books, or to quote them in advertisements, yet my brother, the late Prof. Youmans, collected a number of such opinions and appended them to the earlier American editions of his books, thus putting them within the reach of "Outsider" among others. Here they are, with sundry additions:

Take first the testimonies respecting philosophy at large. In the third edition of his "History of Philosophy," Vol. II., page 653, Mr. G. H. Lewes writes: "It is questionable whether any thinker of finer calibre has appeared in our country. * * * He alone of all British thinkers has organized a philosophy." In the Quarterly Review (English) for October, 1873, Prof. St. George Mivart (Roman Catholic) wrote: "The two deepest scientific principles now known of all those relating to material things are the law of gravitation and the law of evolution. * * * We cannot deny the title of philosopher to such a thinker as Mr. Herbert Spencer who does genuinely bind together different and hitherto alien subjects of thought by a clear and wide, though neither an all-comprehensive nor a spiritual, hypothesis, the principle of evolution." Prof. David Masson, in "Recent British Philosophy," says: "Of all our thinkers, he is the one who, as it appears to me, has formed for himself the largest new scheme of a systematic philosophy, and in relation to some of the greatest questions of philosophy in their most recent forms, as set or reset by the last speculations and revelations of science, has already shot his thoughts the furthest." In his "Intuitions of Mind" Dr. McCosh says: "His bold generalizations are always instructive, and some of them may in the end be established as the profoundest laws of the knowable universe." Mr. John Stuart Mill, in his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," says, concerning the relativity of knowledge: "The same doctrine is very impressively taught by one of the acutest metaphysicians of recent times, Mr. Herbert Spencer." (Third edition, page 13.) And then in Darwin's "Descent of Man," page 123, we read: "Our Great Philosopher, Herbert Spencer."

Taking logic next in order, there comes the opinion of the inventor of the logic machine, Mr. Stanley Jevons, Professor of Logic in Owen's College, who, in "The Principles of Science," says: "I question whether any scientific works which have appeared since the 'Principia' of Newton are comparable in importance with those of Darwin and Spencer, revolutionizing as they do all our views of the origin of bodily, mental, moral, and social phenomena." Though in this extract there is no expressed opinion concerning Mr. Spencer's contributions to logic, yet as Mr. Jevons's logical work, "The Substitution of Similars the True Principle of Reasoning" is but another form of the theory of logic set forth in "The Principles of Psychology," the indorsement is clear enough. To which it should be added that the "Theory of Logic" by Mr. Carveth Read is avowedly written from a new point of view "at the instigation of certain passages in the works of Mr. H. Spencer, particularly 'Principles of Psychology,' Part VI., Chapter 8."

Mr. Spencer has not written on mathematics, nor does the synthetic philosophy involve mathematical investigation to a further extent than is implied by certain general deductions from the primary truths of mathematics, as shown in "First Principles." Nevertheless, in this department, too, he has not been without indorsement. An attack made upon his view concerning certain ultimate mechanical principles by a senior wrangler, in

October, 1873, led to a controversy which lasted through the early part of the next year. As will be found by reference to his "Replies to Criticisms," included in the last series of his "Essays," he had the expressed agreement of the then President of the Mathematical Society of London, Dr. Hirst, and also of the two highest authorities on mathematics, Profs. Cayley and Sylvester.

Though, had it been possible everywhere to fill up the outline of the Synthetic Philosophy, a volume on astronomy would have been requisite, Mr. Spencer has done nothing in this department beyond an essay on "The Nebular Hypothesis," published in 1858. At that time the nebular hypothesis was discredited and the belief current among astronomers was that the nebulae are remote galaxies like our own. Mr. Spencer undertook to defend the nebular hypothesis as previously entertained and to point out the invalidity of the conclusions which had been supposed to show that the nebulae are immeasurably distant sidereal systems. Concerning his arguments, Mr. Proctor says, in Knowledge, June 15, 1883: "Yet, as I showed sixteen years ago, (though Mr. Herbert Spencer, clearest of thinkers, had been beforehand with me by many years,) there are reasons, &c. * * * Mr. Herbert Spencer has admirably shown the inherent absurdity of the notion to which many (especially many professional astronomers, who appear to imagine that measuring star places must give them an insight into astronomical truths) cling as if it were a demonstrated truth." To which it needs only to add that the doctrine Mr. Spencer contested when it was popular has since been abandoned and the discredited nebular hypothesis has been reinstated. Three other significant facts concerning this essay should be mentioned. The French astronomer, M. Faye, has abandoned the theory of the solar spots which he had enunciated and has adopted that which Mr. Spencer propounded in opposition to it. (See "Comptes Rendus" for 1872, Vol. LXXV., page 1,664.) The belief expressed in the said essay in 1858 that the sun's photosphere consists of metallic vapors was in 1859 verified by the discoveries of Kirchhoff. And then the discovery made since the essay was written that Mars has two satellites yields strong support to the theory concerning the genesis of satellites which Mr. Spencer had enunciated in pursuance of the nebular hypothesis.

Passing now to biology, the first quotation may be made from the essay on "Comparative Longevity" by Prof. Ray Lankester, to which the University of Oxford awarded the prize it had offered. After remarking that "the correspondences of organisms to their environment, so ably set forth in Mr. Spencer's grand work, must enter into our theory of nature," he goes on to say that "it would be perhaps the most satisfactory way of treating the question of longevity to assume the contents of Mr. Spencer's volumes and to write a last chapter on the duration of individuals." In his inaugural address as President of the British Association in 1868, Dr. Hooker, speaking of Mr. Spencer's discovery concerning plant circulation, said: "I need dwell no further on it here than to quote it as an example of what may be done by an acute observer and experimentalist versed in physics and chemistry, but, above all, thoroughly instructed in scientific methods." In a lecture before the Royal Institution Prof. Huxley said: "The only complete and systematic statement of the doctrine [evolution] with which I am acquainted is that contained in Mr. Herbert Spencer's 'System of Philosophy,' a work which should be carefully studied by all who desire to know whither scientific thought is tending." More recently, in the article on evolution in the new edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, Prof. Huxley wrote: "The profound and vigorous

writings of Mr. Spencer embody the spirit of Descartes in the knowledge of our own day, and may be regarded as the 'Principes de Philosophie' of the nineteenth century." And then Mr. Darwin, already quoted under the head of philosophy, may be again quoted under the head of biology. On page 10 of his "Expression of the Emotions" he refers to Mr. Spencer as "the great expounder of the principle of evolution"; and a letter to Mr. Spencer, dated June 10, 1872, quoted in his son's biography of him, contains the sentence: "Every one with eyes to see and ears to hear (the number, I fear, are not many) ought to bow their knee to you."

If we turn from theoretical biology to that practical biology with which the medical man concerns himself, we meet with like expressions of opinion. "The study of cases of disease of the nervous system appears to me to supply continual illustrations of the correctness of many of Mr. Spencer's deductions," says Dr. Hughlings Jackson in the British Medical Journal, and numerous papers by Dr. Jackson have avowedly followed the guidance thus afforded. The work on "Dissolution and Evolution and the Science of Medicine," by Mr. Pitfield Mitchell, has a preface which begins with the words: "By the following pages it is proposed to disseminate some new applications of Mr. Herbert Spencer's leading generalizations"; and in a previous work on "The Treatment of Wounds as Based on Evolutionary Laws," Mr. Mitchell avowed that he had found guidance "in the Spencerian doctrine of evolution." Dr. Campbell, in his work on "The Causation of Disease," is similarly guided, quoting Mr. Spencer in eighteen places, and Dr. W. J. Collins, F.R.C.S., taking from Mr. Spencer his leading ideas, dedicates to him his published lecture on "Specificity and Evolution in Disease."

Nor when we turn to psychology do we find less decisive testimonies. Dr. J. D. Morell, author of various philosophical works, says in his "Introduction to Mental Philosophy": "Among modern English psychologists the author to whom I have been most indebted in this work is Mr. Herbert Spencer; more especially to the very able analysis which he has given of the process of reasoning in its qualitative and quantitative forms." In his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," Mr. J. S. Mill describes Mr. Spencer as "one of the most vigorous as well as boldest thinkers that English speculation has yet produced"; and in the same work he refers to the "Principles of Psychology" as "on the whole one of the finest examples we possess of the psychological method in its full power." In his account of contemporary English psychology, M. Ribot, Professor of Philosophy, writes: "In his study of psychological phenomena Mr. Herbert Spencer has employed the fundamental processes of every method, synthesis and analysis. In our eyes one of the greatest merits of this rare mind is his skill in using these two difficult instruments." And then, in his inaugural address to the British Association in 1874, Prof. Tyndall, after pointing out that the evolutionary view of mind had been enunciated in Mr. Spencer's "Principles of Psychology" in 1855, (four years before the "Origin of Species,") says of him: "His illustrations possess at times exceeding vividness and force; and from his style on such occasions it is to be inferred that the ganglia of this apostle of the understanding are sometimes the seat of a nascent poetic thrill."

Passing to the sciences dependent on psychology, kindred facts are presented. Mr. Grant Allen's "Physiological Aesthetics" is avowedly based

on the writings of Spencer: "My acknowledgments are due in the first and greatest degree to Mr. Herbert Spencer, and more especially to his 'Principles of Psychology' and his 'Essays.'" Similarly in the preface to his "Science of Ethics," Mr. Leslie Stephen, describing how the change in his previous views originated, says: "I believe that this conviction came to me from a study of some of Mr. Herbert Spencer's works," and he recognizes the probability that will question whether his book "has not been made superfluous by the discussion of the same topic upon the same assumptions by the leading exponent of the philosophy of evolution in Mr. Herbert Spencer's 'Data of Ethics.'"

To the ironical inquiry concerning the "Descriptive Sociology" two answers will suffice. One is the opinion of the leading English anthropologist, Mr. E. B. Tylor, who says: "His tables are a sufficient answer to all disbelievers in the possibility of a science of history. So much information, incumbered with so little rubbish, has never before been brought to bear on the development of English institutions." The other is the joint opinion, published by Prof. Youmans, of a number of American authorities, who say: "We agree with the British Quarterly Review that the carrying out of this undertaking 'will constitute an epoch in the science of comparative sociology'"--an opinion to which are appended among others the names of Draper, Bryant, Everts, Beecher, Chapin, Ripley, and five heads of colleges and universities.

If "Outsider" wants further evidence it is furnished by the various European nations. Translations of philosophical books can never result from a popular demand, but must necessarily result from a demand by the elite, who alone can know the originals. As early as 1875 all Mr. Spencer's works had been translated into Russian, the last translation being that of the "Descriptive Sociology" by the professors of Kiev University. Many have been translated into Italian--"First Principles" by Prof. G. Cattaneo, and the prefaces to others being by Prof. Sergi. With the exception of "Social Statics" and the "Essays," they are all translated into German by Dr. Vetter, professor in Dresden. They are all translated into French with the exception of "Social Statics," the translation of which Mr. Spencer interdicted, and among the translators are Dr. Caselles and Profs. Ribot, Rethore, and Burdeau. Other evidence of French appreciation may be named. In 1879, by advice of a commission, the Minister of Public Instruction ordered that Mr. Spencer's works should be placed at the disposal of pupils in lyceums and might be given to them in prizes. In 1880, by request of the same authority, a cheap edition of the "Education" was published for the use of State teachers; and further, in 1881, the French Government purchased 100 copies of the "Data of Ethics" for the lyceum libraries. There may be added a still more significant fact. "La Psychologie de l'Association," by Louis Ferri, professor in the University of Rome, was crowned by the French Academy; and the Academician, M. Bouillier, who reported to the Academy upon the work, writes: "Voici maintenant le dernier, comme le plus illustre des représentants de cette école, Herbert Spencer. On peut dire il en est le metaphysicien, comme Stuart Mill le logicien et le psychologue. L'auteur rend un juste hommage à l'étendue de ses connaissances, à la hauteur de ses vues et à cette vaste et puissant-synthèse où il résume l'oeuvre entière de ses prédécesseurs, en la rattachant à une philosophie universelle des choses, à la loi suprême de l'évolution." [Then there is the most illustrious of the representatives of that school, Herbert Spencer. One might

say of him that he is its metaphysician, as Stuart Mill is its logician and psychologist. The author renders a just tribute to the extent of his knowledge, to the loftiness of his views, and to that vast and powerful synthesis with which he summarizes all the work of his predecessors connecting it with a universal philosophy of things, with the supreme law of evolution.]

"But where are Mr. Spencer's academic honors?" tacitly asks "Outsider"; "the title pages of his books bear none." Here there is some excuse for the implied conclusion, for it is so rare a thing for an author to refuse distinctions accorded by learned bodies, that every one naturally supposes the absence of them to imply the absence of offers. In this case, however, it happens to be otherwise. Mr. Spencer's American friends have long known that he disapproves of honorary degrees, and the like and never accepts them. I learn from Mr. Spencer that in 1871 he was offered the degree of LL.D., which he declined for the assigned reason that such honors habitually come when they are no longer wanted and are withheld at the times when they would be encouragements. While he was President of the Royal Society, Sir Joseph Hooker pressed Mr. Spencer to become a Fellow of it, but he did not accede. When the Royal Academy of Rome, founded by Galileo, and long existing in a state of suspended animation, was revived after the political power of the Pope had been abolished, Mr. Spencer was among those foreigners first affiliated to it; he is now a member only because it was urged upon him that withdrawal might be injuriously misconstrued. In 1880 he was elected by the Royal Academy of Turin, in 1882 by the Royal Society of Naples, and in 1883 by the American Philosophical Society, but in each case declined, as before. In 1883 he was almost unanimously elected by the French Academy, there being three dissentients only. Nevertheless, as the daily papers of the period might have told "Outsider," he did not accept. Lastly, in 1888, on the celebration of the eight hundredth anniversary of the oldest university existing, that of Bologna, the degree of Doctor was conferred on Mr. Spencer, notwithstanding his intimation that he could make no use of it.

The foregoing statement, made so long by the numerous facts to be set down, has been in great measure rendered compulsory by the reiterated demand of "Outsider" for information, backed by the expressed editorial wish of THE TIMES "to see his position thoroughly discussed." Being in possession of the particulars called for, to withhold them would be apparently to admit the truth of "Outsider's" insinuations. As the facts are diametrically opposed to what he tacitly affirms, it has appeared imperative, in justice to Mr. Spencer and to prevent the diffusion of wholly erroneous beliefs, to set the facts forth. "Outsider" said he would like to be told what the facts are, and now he has been told. Whether he "likes" the information may reasonably be doubted. His obvious purpose was to discredit Mr. Spencer's teachings and to shame his American friends. Unhappily for him he has succeeded in doing the reverse.

When Macaulay's "History of England" was criticized in the Quarterly Review it was said of Croker, the editor who wrote the article, that he intended to commit murder, but instead committed suicide. May not the same thing be said of "Outsider?"

W. J. YOUMANS.

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