

And coming generations will look up to Herbert Spencer as to the greatest of the world's philosophers--great indeed in his mastery of speculative research, but greater in the illuminating power of his teaching upon the practical problems of our daily life.

Let me beg "Outsider" to get in out of the cold before it is too late.

LEWIS G. JANES,

President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association.

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SEVENTY YEARS OLD TO-DAY.

HERBERT SPENCER'S EARLY TRAINING AND LIFE WORK--THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVOLUTION AND ITS RECEPTION IN AMERICA.

When the history of the nineteenth century comes to be written, one of the questions it must consider will be, What great transforming thought did mankind reach in that cycle, what new truth of utmost worth did it add to the world's heritage of science and philosophy? To this question the answer will be Evolution, and to Herbert Spencer must be accorded the honor of being its chief expounder. As in the case of every other great truth, it had due advent--"eyes not yet open were turned toward a sun not yet above the horizon." Lucretius as long ago as the century before Christ made shrewd guesses at it, but something more than guesses were needed before the thought of evolution should be born. Speculation unharnessed to fact, the examination of consciousness pure and simple, had to be exchanged for observation and experiment. When the orbs of heaven, the strata of the earth, the flowers of the field, the internal structure of beast, fish, bird, and insect were diligently studied, then and then only did it become possible to replace the old verbal explanations of magic by the new and real explanations of order. For the theory of development Kant and Laplace laid the foundation in their nebular hypothesis. Goethe contributed the proof that all parts of a flower except its stem and root are but modifications of its leaf. Oken followed with his demonstration that the skull is but expanded vertebræ. Lamarck pointed out the influence of environment, of the use or disuse of organs in modifying a living structure. Sedgwick and Lyell showed the sufficiency of forces now at work to account in their past activity for every geological change the earth has known. Most suggestive of all were the discoveries of Von Baer. Examining the embryos in their daily transformations from stage to stage, he found the development of a race from lower forms to be recapitulated by every individual before birth. In this view every human frame in bone, thew, and nerve is no other than a historical register of impressions, struggles, and adaptations dating back to the dawn of life on earth. As all this evidence accumulated, the opportunity ripened for a master mind to resolve it in one comprehensive explanation. That mind arose in Herbert Spencer.

Herbert Spencer was born in Derby April 27, 1820. His father and grandfather were teachers, so that he came naturally enough by his gifts of exposition. His father was a man of originality, who would often introduce new methods of teaching in his school. One of these methods stands recorded in his capital primer, "Inventional Geometry," now gradually winning its way in American public schools. It is not improbable that one of the sources of Herbert Spencer's opposition to State education grows out of the check it imposes upon such an inventive and unmechanical teacher as his father. As a child and youth Herbert Spencer was delicate, and his education was not pressed. At school he excelled in geometry, physics, and drawing--the constructive studies; he showed little talent for languages. At sixteen he joined the engineering staff of the London and Birmingham Railway. Afterward, in 1838, he became connected with the Birmingham and Gloucester line. From 1841 to 1850 he was occupied with private study, with literary labor, and occasional engineering engagements. In the Summer of 1842 he began a series of letters to the Nonconformist on "The Proper Sphere of Government." Subsequently he was for a short time sub-editor of the Economist. In 1850 he published "Social Statics," which presents doctrines concerning land which he no longer entertains. This work was followed by his "Philosophy of Style," the only scientific treatment of the theme in existence. He next wrote the articles afterward assembled in his volume on education. This book, which has far exceeded in circulation any other of his works, contained more than a hint of the philosophy he was soon to unfold. He maintained that education should observe the order in which the faculties develop, that it should proceed from the simple to the complex, and always give the fact before its explanation. Passing from the treatment of political and educational questions to the study of mind, he began to write his "Psychology" in 1854, completing it the following year. So serious was his overwork on its volumes that he suffered a nervous break-down which compelled him to several months' idleness, and has made him more or less of an invalid ever since. It was while writing his "Psychology" that Mr. Spencer conceived the idea that evolution is a law of universal sweep. Applying it to the problems of mind, he was able to harmonize the philosophies of intuition and of individual experience. An infant's mind was no longer regarded as a blank tablet upon which instruction might write what it pleased. It was rather a photographic plate, whose latent image, due to ancestral experiences, was to be developed by the chemistry of individual experience. In the chapters of this epoch-making work the human race stood forth as might one man who ever lives and ever learns.

In 1857, Mr. Spencer wrote "Progress, its Law and Cause," an essay wherein he outlined in part what afterward became his philosophical system. The next year, while writing an article on the nebular hypothesis, the idea fully dawned upon him that evolution could be made the basis of a philosophy which should generalize all orders of phenomena. Knowledge, after all, was a tree, and every far-spreading branch of it converged to one mighty trunk. Nature was in truth but a family, and genetic relationship gave classification its only trustworthy method. Mr. Spencer determined to write a series of works which should systematically explain the phenomena of nature, of life, mind, and society from the standpoint of evolution. At the outset he was confronted with a pecuniary difficulty. His books had not been profitable, and, with the aid of his friend, John Stuart Mill, he sought a post in the administration of India without success. His decided views as to the just limits of Governmental functions

obliged him to decline offices which to the ordinary office seeker would have been inviting enough. An Inspectorship of Prisons for which he applied was, for political reasons, bestowed upon some one else. Relinquishing the idea of Government service, Mr. Spencer resolved to go on with his system independently, with the expectation that it would be completed in twenty years. He adopted the subscription plan of publication and at once issued his announcements. One of his prospectuses by good fortune fell into the hands of the late Prof. E. L. Youmans of New-York, who already knew and greatly admired Mr. Spencer's published works. A momentous event was it for the synthetic philosophy when, at a Brooklyn tea table, Mr. Spencer's programme came before the man who of all others in the world was the one to give its fulfillment indispensable aid! From that hour to the time of his death, in 1887, Prof. Youmans was the enthusiastic apostle of evolution and of Herbert Spencer in this country. All his extraordinary gifts of persuasion and exposition, all his opportunities as journalist, editor, and lecturer, were thenceforth devoted to spreading the new philosophy. Through his agency Mr. Spencer's books were reprinted in New-York; they were pressed upon the attention of the American public with a zeal and address which for many years made the philosopher's influence in the United States much wider than at home. Indeed, the success he has won in Great Britain in recent years is in no small measure attributable to appreciation for his thought in America--reflected at last across the Atlantic.

"First Principles," having been duly completed in 1862, "The Principles of Biology" was in process of publication when, in the Summer of 1865, Mr. Spencer was obliged to announce that he must shortly cease his issues. Subscribers in England had from the first been few, and in America the turmoil and distractions of civil war had constantly narrowed the circle of his readers. What was to be done? Prof. Youmans resolved that, come what might, the system should not die. Going in and out among his friends, and with the unstinted aid of Mr. Beecher, he gathered a subscription list of a new kind--a list at the foot of which appeared \$7,000 as the sum total. A committee of subscribers then met, the late Mr. Robert B. Minturn of New-York was appointed Chairman, and commissioned to draft an address to Mr. Spencer. On July 30, 1866, Prof. Youmans had perhaps the keenest pleasure of his life in delivering both a presentation and address to his friend. The death of Mr. Spencer's father, which had recently taken place, had so improved the philosopher's income that he was able to set the gift apart for the preparation of his "Descriptive Sociology." In 1867 he finished "The Principles of Biology," and by 1872 had thoroughly revised "The Principles of Psychology" in the light of new knowledge. The next subject on his programme was Sociology, and at Prof. Youmans's instigation he wrote his introductory "Study of Sociology," a volume which in popularity ranks next to his "Education." As his labors in writing "The Principles of Sociology" went on from stage to stage, he found his plan growing under his hand, while the curtailment of working hours due to ill health made the conclusion of his task seem more and more remote. Fearing that he might be unable to complete his original design in its fullness, he decided that he should pass at once to the theme of ethics--the theme for which in important respects he deemed the others he had treated but a preparation. In 1883 he accordingly published his "Data of Ethics," wherein the philosophy of evolution is employed not simply to explain existing codes of conduct,

but to criticise them in the light of a rigorous scientific method. Taking up the dropped thread of his series, Mr. Spencer has written "Political Institutions" and "Ecclesiastical Institutions" as the fifth and sixth parts of his "Principles of Sociology." He has in manuscript quite enough to enable his system to be substantially completed, in case he should be unable to carry out to the end the purpose he resolved upon now thirty years ago. Apart from the volumes of his series, Mr. Spencer in 1884 issued his "Man versus the State," and in 1886 "The Factors of Organic Evolution."

In the main, Mr. Spencer's work divides itself into three parts, his exposition of evolution, his metaphysics of agnosticism, and his political and social criticism. As time goes on, the principle of evolution takes firmer and firmer hold of the scientific world, and here it is that Mr. Spencer has done the work he will be longest and best remembered by. His doctrine of the "Unknowable" as formulated in "First Principles" has elicited criticism from which it has not emerged without damage. As it was Mr. Spencer's fortune to have for his evolutionary principles a doughty second and support in one American, he was to find the most formidable critic of his agnosticism in another. Mr. Francis E. Abbot has for years been powerfully impeaching the philosophy of the "Unknowable." In his "Scientific Theism," published in 1885, his attack is presented in connected and telling form. He has recently issued, under the title, "The Way out of Agnosticism," a brief and compact argument to prove that the essential constitution of the universe is positively knowable, and need not baffle the available resources of science and philosophy.

So much briefly for Mr. Spencer the author, what of him as a man? Soon after going to London to make it his home he formed the acquaintance of George Henry Lewes and of George Eliot. Upon George Eliot his influence was deep, and it clearly comes out in her essays, originally contributed to the Westminster Review, in which also appeared some of Mr. Spencer's early and most brilliant productions. Among his warmest friends are Prof. Huxley and Prof. Tyndall, to whom he is doubtless indebted for much information in the branches of research they have made their own. As a member of the Athenæum Club he is usually, when in London, to be found in its billiard room, seeking recreation at a game he can play with decided skill. Finding it difficult at times to insure the seclusion he required, he engaged a few years ago an apartment at some distance from his lodgings, and here it was that his assistants compiled, under his direction, the "Descriptive Sociology." For some years past he has employed an amanuensis, who takes down an article or a chapter so thoroughly thought out as to require scarcely any revision afterward. While Mr. Spencer has the abstracted air of a scholar and thinker, he has qualities which greatly endear him to his friends. He is the soul of generosity; so scrupulously honorable that justice may be said to be his passion. As those who were privileged to meet him in America during his visit in 1882 can testify, his talk can be witty as well as wise.

GEORGE ILES.