# NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER.

FIRST PRINCIPLES. By HERBERT SPENCER. 8vo. pp. 502. D. Appleton & Co.

THE PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGY. Vol. I. By HERBERT SPENCER. pp. 475. The Same.

There is in human nature a divine aspiration which we name the Spirit of Inquiry, and which gives origin to Philosophy. By 'philosophy' is to be understood the highest explanation to which man has attained of the frame of things in the midst of which he finds himself placed, and part of which he is. But if this definition be correct, it is obvious that the philosophy of one age may be a very different thing from that of another. Knowledge is progressive, and the resulting insight becomes clearer and deeper with the lapse of time. Plato constructed a philosophy more than two thousand years ago, and therefore in the infancy of positive knowledge. He understood nothing of the heavens above, nor of the earth beneath, nothing of the order of nature, or the laws of the universe, and consequently nothing of his own being in its largest and truest interpretation. It was therefore, as it must have been, a philosophy with *nature left out*. Turning within he opened the questions which arise in consciousness, and thus founded Metaphysics. The mind was assumed as the measure of nature and the fountain of truth, and it was believed that by pure meditation—the naked power of thought—man could solve all the problems of the world. This system prevailed for centuries, and finally exhausted itself in the empty scholasticism of the middle ages.

Modern science took its rise in a complete inversion of the ancient method. It began by observing the facts of the outward world and cautiously rising to general principles which might be tested by all. One department of nature after another has been explored, science after science has arisen, and a vast body of verified and productive truth has been called into being. What mighty meanings do we now find in such terms as astronomy, geology, the seasons, climate, heat, electricity, light, magnetism, the elements, combustion, growth, decay, digestion, respiration, circulation, innervation, cerebration, life, force, law, meanings of which the ancients knew absolutely nothing. Nor is the modern method without its abounding and priceless fruits, which stand in glorious contrast with the scanty and worthless results of the old procedure. Through science man has subordinated the energies of nature to his uses, has developed her inexhaustible materials, has extended and multiplied the processes of industry. These are more than material triumphs; they are supreme attestations that Nature has been questioned aright, that man is coming to a better understanding of his possibilities and position, and the truth is beginning slowly to dawn that his earthly destiny is nothing less than to accomplish his own unfolding through the development of the planet which has been given into his charge. Social and political changes, wide and profound, the subversion of old institutions and the growth of new, indeed nothing less than the reorganization of human relations has flowed from this progress of inquiry into the course of nature and the laws of man's physical surroundings.

But these material and social effects are but the result of new modes of thinking. The new heavens and the new earth are but a new understanding of the universe. Scientific discovery familiarizes men with advanced conceptions and establishes better principles of inquiry. The spirit of doubt and the demand for evidence are incultrated as the fundamental canons of valid thinking, while reason presses her inexorable inquest into the objects of nature and the realities of experience, into all questions of human interest and universal moment.

But notwithstanding this great intellectual revolution, this altered direction of the very axis of intelligence, by which all the high questions of human affairs have become readjusted, it is still possible for men to move round in the old traditional ruts of thought; they can still ignore the entire realm of modern knowledge and busy themselves with the never-ending questions of metaphysics. Because such was the scope of philosophy two thousand years ago, they assume that it is so still. But the mistake is immense. For while the problem of philosophy remains essentially unchanged, to unfold and explain the true order of the world, and thus throw a clearer and better light upon the nature of man, how multiplied are now the factors and how different the possible solution! If philosophy aspires to be the regulator of human thought, it must first become the master of human thought. It must gird itself to the sublimest task that the intellect has ever yet proposed—to grasp the great principles of science in their encyclopedical range—to organize the comprehensive and solid results of the world's thinking, and coördinate the varied and fragmentary truths of research into one grand organon of principles that shall be a faithful reflex of the verity of things, that shall combine the authenticity of science with the full breadth of nature, and become a guiding and trusting light to man through the vicissitudes of his earthly experience. In the din and chaos of sects and parties, in the confusion of doctrines and conflict of opinions, amid the gropings of despondency and the exaltations of hope, we yearn for the voice of nature, for the consolations and encouragements of a philosophy which has the Divine warrant of accordance with the realities of the universe. It was the aim of ancient philosophy to bring thought into harmony with thought; it is the higher aim of modern philosophy to bring thought into harmony with things.

Probably no man has so clearly discerned this exalted requirement of the present age as Mr. Herbert Spencer. He published some four or five years ago a complete outline of a new philosophical system which evinced a broad and lucid perception of the intellectual needs and possibilities of his time, while the parts already accomplished prove that he who could so admirably map out the scheme, is also eminently the man to execute it.

A loving student of nature from boyhood, fascinated with science, and giving himself to its systematic pursuit, bold and independent as a thinker, unincumbered with university traditions, of a highly philosophical turn of inquiry, master of a style of remarkable clearness and force, and finally of a deeply conscientious nature, and profoundly sympathetic with all healthful social ameliorations, he combines rare accomplishments for the imposing task. Nor were his claims without due recognition. The author of a work upon social science pronounced by many the most original and suggestive treatise yet produced upon the subject; the author of a work upon Mind, declared by perhaps the best judge in Europe—Mr. John Stuart Mill—to be "one of the finest examples we possess of the psychological method in its full power," and the author also of various essays upon a wide range of topics, which, in their anonymous publication, had arrested the marked attention of thoughtful men, Mr. Spencer was publicly and thoroughly justified in entering upon his great undertaking.

The fundamental question in a work of this kind is, of course, that of method. What is the all-intepreting conception that is to give unity to the scheme? More and more is the conviction deepening that nothing in nature is to be understood by itself, but only in relation to other parts, and to the whole. The ties of interdependence are close and universal; the understanding of one thing throws light upon others, and the mastery of each helps to the comprehension of all. This truth has found expression in such works as Mrs. Somerville's "Connexion of the Physical Sciences;" Humboldt's "Cosmos," and the "Positive Philosophy" of M. Comte, which is an attempt to affiliate the great branches of knowledge in their natural order of development. This leading tendency of modern thought—and which is at once the proof and the measure of scientific advancement—is embodied by Mr. Spencer in his system with more completeness than by any other thinker. For while the "Cosmos" of Humboldt is limited to the strictly physical sciences and ignores mind and society, and while Comte in his hierarchy denies a place to psychology, which is not only itself a fundamental science, but the key to all the others, Mr. Spencer has worked out his scheme in the full breadth and proportions of the phenomena involved. Its exposition is to embrace eight or ten volumes, occupying several years in its development. The opening work, "First Principles," unfolds the general method to be pursued; then comes a treatise on the laws of life, entitled the "Principles of Biology," and this is to be followed by a work on the laws of mind, called the "Principles of Psychology." These inquiries, which are designed to unfold a philosophy of man and his true relations to nature, will prepare for the comprehensive study of the great subject of human relations—the science of society or the "Principles of Sociology."

The principle which Mr. Spencer finds to be a universal law of nature and therefore makes the basis of his Philosophy is that of Evolution. It is this conception which spans the universe and solves the widest range of its problems—which reaches outward through boundless space, and backward through illimitable time, resolving the deepest questions of life, mind, society, history, and civilization—which predicts the glorious possibilities of the future, and reveals the august method by which the Divine Power works evermore.

The extent to which this principle is adapted to become the foundation of a philosophy of nature and of man will be apparent upon a little reflection. The only explanation which astronomy can offer of the great facts of the solar system is, that it originally existed as a diffused nebula, and through the lapse of immeasurable ages has been slowly evolved into its present state. So, also, with the earth. Geology is but the biography of the planet, and that but a history of its evolution from the primitive molten state, through vast periods, up to its present development. Again, the most familiar of all facts is that of growth—the evolution of life. Each organism, plant and animal, is unfolded from a minute, structureless germ, through a succession of higher and more complex states, up to the condition of maturity. And not only is evolution the central and essential fact of individual life, but a perusal of the rocky records of geological time shows that there has been also a mighty progress of the collective life of the globe. Nor is the world of mind an exception to the law. With bodily development there is a mental unfolding—an evolution of the psychical powers in correspondence with the order of nature. And so also with the social state; there is an evolution of knowledge, of religion, of the arts and sciences, of institutions, manners, governments, and civilization itself. Mr. Spencer may claim the just honor of having worked out the conditions and the causes of this stupendous law of evolution, and of establishing the universality of its application.

There has been much absurd criticism of Mr. Spencer's relation to this fundamental principle of his system. How naturally it grew up in his own mind is shown by the following passage from a pamphlet disclaiming indebtedness to M. Comte: "And now let me point out that which really *has* exerted a profound influence on my course of thought. The truth which Harvey's embryological inquiries first dimly indicated, which was more clearly perceived by Wolf and Goethe, and which was put into definite shape by Von Baer, the truth that all organic development is a change from a state of homogeneity to a state of heterogeneity—this it is from which very many of the conclusions which I now hold indirectly resulted. In Social Statics there is everywhere manifested a dominant belief in the evolution of man and of society. There is also manifested the belief that this evolution is in both cases determined by the incidence of conditions—the actions of circumstances. And there is further a recognition of the fact that organic and social evolutions conform to the same law. Falling amid beliefs in evolutions of various orders, everywhere determined by natural causes, the Formula of Von Baer acted as an organizing principle. The extension of it to other kinds of phenomena than those of individual and social organization, is traceable through successive stages. (References are here made to his various writings.) Afterward there came recognition of the need for further limitation of this formula; next, the inquiry into those general laws of force from which this universal transformation necessarily results; next, the deduction of these from the ultimate law of the persistence of force; next, the perception that there is everywhere a process of Dissolution complimentary to that of Evolution, and finally, the determination of the conditions under which evolution and dissolution respectively occur. The filiation of these results is, I think, tolerably manifest. The process has been one of continuous development, set up by the addition of Von Baer's law to a number of ideas in harmony with it."

The larger portion of First Principles is devoted to the working out of this great principle and its firm establishment as the foundation of the subsequent philosophical superstructure. That a work like this, produced from an entirely new point of view, and, therefore, in but slight accordance with previous systems, should be at once accepted is, of course, not to be expected; it is enough that adverse critics accord to it a high place among the contributions to original and advancing thought. Dr. McCosh, for example, in his "Intuitions of Mind," while contesting some of the doctrines, and questioning whether the attainment of so vast a scheme is not beyond the present possibility of science, observes of "First Principles," that "its bold generalizations are always suggestive, and some of them may in the end be established as the profoundest laws of the knowable universe."

Having unfolded his general method in "First Principles" (which has been before the public a year or two), Mr. Spencer passes on to his main work, giving us the first installment in the Principles of Biology, Vol. I of which is just published. It may not be superfluous to remark that Biology is the science which treats of life in its most comprehensive aspects. The opinion prevailing among many that, as life is an inscrutable mystery, nothing positive or important can be known concerning it is mischievously erroneous. The laws of life may be understood and it is the knowledge of these which give rise to biological science. And not only may we understand them, but they are of transcendent moment; in the whole range of subjects accessible to reason none have such urgent and imminent claims as those which deal with the laws and conditions of life.

When we are informed that in the careful breeding of cattle at least 96 per cent, and of horses 95 per cent, come to maturity even in our rugged climate, while of the race of man no less than 35 per cent perish in infancy and youth, and of the least favored classes full 50 per cent die before they are seven years old, the subject is found to have appalling attractions for all who care aught for the welfare of humanity. Nor does this fearful and wanton waste of life by any means exhaust the gloomy interest of the subject. From the multitudes that are thus swept into unripe graves we turn to the living and meet the ghastly question of the *quality* of life in the multitudes that remain. Tracing this premature mortality to its causes, we find that they act in varying degrees and produce a wide diversity of effects. Physical and mental conditions stamp themselves upon the living organism. Bad diet, imperfect clothing, foul air, impure water, overexhausting labor, mental discouragement, evil associations, vicious habits and a host of morbific agencies are doing their fatal work upon large classes of society. But while thousands perish, the stream of life itself is poisoned, so that these destructive agencies are seen, not only in untimely death, but in a diseased and debilitated stock, which imparts its own imperfections to its progeny, and thus curses unborn generations. Organic imperfections, constitutional weakness, bodily and mental maladies, and even tendencies to crime, are transmissible from parents to offspring. The laws of hereditary descent, which carry down likenesses of form and feature and bodily peculiarities from generation to generation, carry also bodily and mental debility, taints of blood, predisposition to scrofula and insanity, morbid appetites, feeble self-control, and dominance of the lower propensities.

The human problem is thus deepened. The imperfections of man and the consequent evils of society are very far from being accounted for by present external conditions. The living organism is what it is through the cooperation of two great factors—the influences it receives from the universe, and the influences it inherits from ancestral organisms. The subject is therefore doubly controllable; the outward conditions may be altered, while the human stock, like that of the lower animals, may be improved. The life thrown away may be saved, deteriorated organization may be reinvigorated; but this can only be done through knowledge. Society must comprehend something of the laws and conditions of life. Nor will a pious fatalism, with its theological soporifics, inscrutable dispensations, mysterious ways of Providence, and the like, avail forever to palliate and perpetuate the general ignorance upon the subject. There are encouraging symptoms that it is beginning to receive the attention it deserves. The general question, in its public and practical bearings, is treated with admirable ability by Dr. Howe in his recent "Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts," a document which is an honor alike to its author and his State, and which should be scattered broadcast through the land.

Mr. Spencer's "Principles of Biology" is a systematic and comprehensive treatise upon this subject, in which he addresses himself to it purely as a man of science, to unfold the laws of life as part of the philosophy of nature. The relation of constitution to conditions, the intercourse and reactions of organisms and environment and that modifiability of living beings through descent which is the key of evolution—this is the axial conception upon which everything turns in his system. "First Principles" prepares for it; the Biology develops it in the field of life; the Psychology will still further unfold it, and it will be found the all-elucidating idea of the Sociology. The Principles of Biology is therefore a text-book for thinkers, and will be indispensable to every student of the intellectual movement of the age in its bearing upon the progress of society and the nature and destiny of man.

The volume is divided into three Parts. Part I. considers the Data of Biology: Part II. its Inductions and Part III. the Evolution of Life. The first Part is an inquiry into the properties and actions of those forms of matter of which living beings are chiefly composed, and presents the latest results of science in the field of Organic Chemistry and Organic Physics. After treating the general nature of organic matter, the actions of forces upon it, and the reactions of organic matter on forces, Mr. Spencer enters upon the profound question of the nature of life, of which he aims to work out a more definite and comprehensive conception than has hitherto been attained. The range of discussion in Part II.—the Inductions of Biology—will be indicated by the titles of the chapters. They are I., Growth: II., Development: III., Function: IV, Waste and Repair: V., Adaptation: VI., Individuality: VII., Genesis: VIII., Heredity: IX., Variation: X., Genesis, Heredity and Variation: XI., Classification: XII., Distribution.

Mr. Spencer opens the third part of the volume on the Evolution of Life, with a discussion of the relative claims of the Special Creation Hypothesis, and of the Evolution Hypothesis. He accepts the latter and presents in a very clear and forcible manner the various arguments in its favor, from embryology, morphology, distribution and classification. There has been no end to denunciation of the Development Hypothesis as a piece of crude absurdity, scientifically worthless and morally pernicious; but this is hardly the true method of settling the question. Let those who have hitherto appealed to prejudice and dealt in invective, lay their passion aside and give the public a straightforward and logical answer to Mr. Spencer's arguments. The interests of truth will be thereby promoted.

We have attempted to show as fully as is possible within the space at our command, that this philosophy is not a piece of aimless and barren speculation. Nothing can be of this character which affords a deeper clue to the workings of nature and thus gives a higher understanding of the method of the Supreme Cause. But the nobleness of Spencer's Philosophy is best discerned in the conscious convergence of all its lines of inquiry to the great end of human beneficence. In this it differs profoundly from all preceding systems. Its ultimate bearing is upon human well-being, and it is the lofty inspiration of his purpose which commands our chiefest admiration. A philosophy grounded in the positive knowledge which enforces universal assent—which starts with data that all men can confirm, and advances from this point to the consideration of the most momentous subjects of human interest—education, art, ethics, government, and social institutions, stands in majestic contrast to the narrowness and inadequacy of preceding systems.

If the very name of philosophy has fallen into contempt from the emptiness of its results, we must not forget the disadvantages under which its cultivators have labored in the past periods of imperfect knowledge, and we should gladly welcome the promise of its elevation to a higher place in the respect and reverence of mankind.

It has been happily said that "Herbert Spencer is the greatest of Englishmen, because he is so little of an Englishman." He belongs to the world of thought rather than to his nationality; to civilization rather than to Britain. When estimated according to his principles, sympathies, and aspirations, he is more of an American than a European. He lives in a country which clings to the past and fears the future—which worships precedents and dreads principles. Abundant reason has such a country to "beware when God lets loose a thinker" upon its soil, and in this case it is true to the instincts of the situation. Mr. Spencer has been systematically ignored by the leaders of opinion in his country; and while his writings have had a powerful influence upon the thinking few, the English public have given him the full benefit of the "conspiracy of silence." Instead of meeting with the reward to which the scope of his genius and the value of his labors justly entitles him, he has been left to publish his works at his own expense, and in this way has lost thousands of dollars.

This policy he cannot afford to continue, and, accordingly, his American readers have been lately startled by the announcement of the discontinuance of his system of philosophy for lack of support. That Mr. Spencer should be compelled to abandon his great undertaking for a cause of this kind is discreditable to his country, and if England can afford it, America cannot. It would be a disgrace to the age, and must on no account be permitted.

If we are yet behind Europe in the production of great philosophic thinkers, we are a long way in advance of her in their general appreciation, and in reducing the truths they establish to the practice of life. While England did not want enough of Spencer's "Principles of Education" to pay the expenses of issuing a small edition, in this country edition after edition has been called for, and not only have many thousand copies been sold, but the work has exerted a powerful influence upon educational management in families and schools. And while the growth of enlightened opinion and humane feeling among ourselves brought on a conflict of ideas which resulted in a mighty clash of the elements of barbarism and civilization, and while England was jeering at the mortal struggle as a carnival of brutality—the foul and bloody sequel of the great democratic experiment—we published some seventeen thousand copies of the various works of this profound writer, and accorded to him the full pecuniary rights of an American author. His thinking has thus taken a deep hold of the American mind, and we cannot certainly let him stop work now, for our interest in independent thought and the progress of institutions is more earnest than ever since the war. It is hardly possible that his liberal countrymen will suffer the discontinuance of Mr. Spencer's Philosophy; but if England chooses to neglect him, America will vindicate the liberality of the age, and see to it that he is put beyond embarrassment in the further execution of his great philosophic plan.

### Books Received.

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The Man of the World. By William North. 12mo. pp. 437. T. B. Peterson & Brothers.

Sweet Counsel. A Book for Girls. 12mo. pp. 308. Roberts Brothers.

Campaigns of A Non-Combatant. By Geo. Alfred Townsend. 12mo. pp. 366. Blelock & Co.

A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital. By J. B. Jones. 2 vols. 8vo. J. B. Lippincott & Co.

Poetry of the War. Selected and Edited by Richard Grant White. 12mo. pp. 334. The American News Company.

Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Par Victor Hugo. 6vo. pp. 184. F. W. Christern.

The Toilers of the Sea. A Novel. By Victor Hugo. 8vo. pp. 155. Harper & Brothers.

The Adventures of Reuben Davidger. By James Greenwood. 8vo. pp. 344. The Same.

Cerise. A Tale of the Last Century. By G. J. Whyte Melville. 12mo. pp. 411. J. B. Lippincott & Co.

Life of Emanuel Swedenborg. By William White. With an Introduction, By B. T. Barrett. 12mo. pp. 272. The Same.

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