The Latest and Last of Mr. Spencer's Writings.*

Feelings of the most opposite nature remain after the reading of Mr. Herbert Spencer's volume of "Facts and Comments": thankfulness that he has been spared so long, sorrow that he is to write no more. The little preface sets forth the reasons for the book. "During the years spent in writing various systematic works," he says, "there have from time to time arisen ideas not fitted for incorporation in them." These ideas form the bulk of the book, though there is an occasional addendum to the "Synthetic Philosophy" also included. "Possibly to a second edition I shall make some small additions," he concludes, "but, be this as it may, the volume herewith issued I can say with certainty will be my last." And a fitting end it makes to a great work greatly conceived and greatly done.

There are thirty-nine brief essays in "Facts and Comments," — much briefer, on an average, than the papers included in the earlier volumes like "Illustrations of Universal Progress" and "Essays, Moral, Political, and Æsthetic." The widest range is given, making the work in general effect a sort of exalted scrap-book. The volume of "Various Fragments" is also suggested by the treatment accorded the topics here. The commercial world, imperialism *vs.* righteousness, music and literature, art in general, education, linguistics, psychology, meteorology, gymnastics and hygiene, the science of history, religion in the broad and undogmatic sense, personal reminiscence, and much more of a similar nature, will indicate the philosopher's scope.

*Facts and Comments. By Herbert Spencer. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

To say that everything included falls within Huxley's admirable definition of science as "organized common-sense" is to be expected. Many of the statements come home with the force of truisms, yet not one is to be passed lightly by. Who can deny, for example, the crying need for such thought as this?

> "I detest that conception of social progress which presents as its aim, increase of population, growth of wealth, spread of commerce. In the politico-economic ideal of human existence there is contemplated quantity only and not quality. Instead of an immense amount of life of low type I would far sooner see half the amount of life of high type. A prosperity which is exhibited in Board-of-Trade tables, year by year increasing their totals, is to a large extent not a prosperity, but an adversity. Increase in the swarms of people whose existence is subordinated to material development is rather to be lamented than to be rejoiced over."

This same thought is expanded in another direction in the article on "State Education." As an evolutionist, Mr. Spencer regards the imposition of the book learning of the common schools, — "education artificially pressed forward," in his apt phrase, — upon the lower classes of Great Britain, as revolutionary and causative of great and untoward disturbances in the social state. From the ability to read being fostered when the ability to think is still undeveloped, he argues the growth of imperialism, the rise and masterfulness of "yellow journalism," and a number of other evil things. So far as he deals with the sort of education given commonly in state-supported schools, he seems to be at one here with Dr. John Dewey and Miss Jane Addams, who, however, express themselves as holding that the evils complained of grow out of mistakes in the school curricula rather than in education itself. Mr. Walter H. Page, in a lately published volume, seeks to identify training and education; and it is here that the fault probably lies and the remedy is to be found. Too much book learning and too little training are doubtless at the bottom of the trouble, and the disposition of the British as well as the American people to wander away from paths of common-sense in politics may better be laid to lack of training — *i. e.*, to improper education — rather than to education as such.

There are two interesting chapters on "Style," extensions of the well-known essay of Mr. Spencer's youth. The first of the two is given up to criticism of the phrasing of certain extracts from the stylists, Matthew Arnold and Francis Palgrave among them, in disproof of "the current belief that a good style implies

linguistic culture — implies classical education and study of the best models," and counter-proof that "the great mass of those who have had the discipline of a university do not write well." The second of these chapters is a sort of criticism of the author's own essay of an earlier day, in which he openly confesses that he has not followed his own precepts, and finds his writings obnoxious to his own strictures. He says in this connection:

"From moment to moment such words and forms of expression as habit had made natural to me were used without thought of their conformity or nonconformity to the principles I had espoused. Occasionally, indeed, when revising a manuscript or a proof, one of these principles has been recalled and has dictated the substitution of a word, or the search for a brief phrase to replace a long one. But the effect has been extremely small. The general traits of my style have remained unchanged, notwithstanding my wish to change some of them. There is substantial truth in the French saying. Varying it somewhat, we may say: Style is organic. Doubtless organization may be modified, but the function, like the structure, retains its fundamental characters."

Another interesting question, and one of more importance to contemporaneous literature than is at first apparent, is discussed thus:

"Up to 1860 my books and review articles were written. Since then they have all been dictated. There is a prevailing belief that dictation is apt to cause diffuseness, and I think the belief is well founded. It was once remarked to me by two good judges — the Leweses — that the style of *Social Statics* is better than the style of my later works, and, assuming this opinion to be true, the contrast may, I think, be ascribed to the deteriorating effect of dictation. A recent experience strengthens me in this conclusion. When finally revising *First Principles*, which was dictated, the cutting out of superfluous words, clauses, sentences, and sometimes paragraphs, had the effect of abridging the work by fifty pages — about one-tenth."

One of the most interesting papers in the book is that on "Feeling *versus* Intellect." Beginning with an anecdote of Professor Huxley concerning the unexpectedly large brain of the porpoise, Mr. Spencer goes on to show that this brain capacity, "seemingly out of all relation to the creature's needs," is due to the unusual amount of feeling which it manifests, and then goes on to discuss a popular and egregious error.

"There has grown up universally an identification of mind with intelligence. Partly because the guidance of our actions by thought is so conspicuous, and partly because speech, which occupies so large a space in our lives, is a vehicle that makes thought predominant to ourselves and others, we are led to suppose that the thought element of mind is its chief element; an element often excluding from recognition every other. Consequently, when it is said that the brain is the organ of the mind, it is assumed that the brain is chiefly if not wholly the organ of the intellect.

"The error is an enormous one. The chief component of mind is feeling. To see this it is necessary to get rid of the wrong connotations which the word mind has acquired, and to use instead its equivalent — consciousness. Mind properly interpreted is coëxtensive with consciousness; all parts of consciousness are parts of mind. Sensations and emotions are parts of consciousness, and so far from being its minor components they are its major components."

Here, perhaps, is to be found the reason for the decay of pure poetry — which is primarily feeling — in popular estimation, and the substitution for it of didactic verse among many persons whose intellect has been developed at the expense of their emotions. But this is as nothing compared to the further effects of doctrine, as eloquently set forth by Mr. Spencer in the following paragraph:

"An over-valuation of teaching is necessarily a concomitant of this erroneous interpretation of mind. Everywhere the cry is — Educate, educate, educate! Everywhere the belief is that by such culture as schools furnish, children, and therefore adults, can be moulded into the desired shapes. It is assumed that when men are taught what is right, they will do what is right — that a proposition intellectually accepted will be morally operative. And yet this conviction, contradicted by every-day experience, is at variance with an every-day axiom — the axiom that each faculty is strengthened by exercise of it — intellectual power by intellectual action, and moral power by moral action. The current notion is that these causes and effects can be transposed — that assent to an injunction will be followed by exercise of the correlative feeling. . . . It seems, however, that this unlimited faith in teaching is not to be changed by facts. Though in presence of multitudinous schools, high and low, we have the rowdies and Hooligans, the savage disturbers of meetings, the adulterators of food, the givers of bribes and receivers of corrupt commissions, the fraudulent solicitors, the bubble companies, yet the current belief continues unweakened; and recently in America an outcry respecting the yearly increase of crime was joined with an avowed determination not to draw any inferences adverse to their educational system. But the refusal to recognize the futility of mere instruction as a means to moralization is most strikingly shown by ignoring the conspicuous fact that after two thousand years of Christian exhortations, uttered by a hundred thousand priests throughout Europe, pagan ideas and sentiments remain rampant, from emperors down to tramps. Principles admitted in theory are scorned in practice. Forgiveness is voted dishonorable. An insult must be wiped out by blood: the obligation being so peremptory that an officer is expelled from the army for even daring to question it. And in international affairs the sacred duty of revenge, supreme with the savage, is supreme also with the so-called civilized."

If space availed, it would be worth while showing the amplification of this last idea in the treatment of such cries as that attributed to Stephen Decatur, Jr., "My country, right or wrong!" It would certainly be profitable to show the connection noted in the title of the

paper on "Imperialism and Slavery." In other fields, the general disregard of the part played by the individual in the development of world-resources by socialists and collectivists generally deserves consideration. And so does the general conclusion arrived at in respect of art, that its function as an amusement is sufficient justification for its existence.

Generally speaking, the book shows the same openness and receptivity to new impressions that have been so marked a part of Mr. Spencer's mental equipment throughout his career as a philosopher, and with this a development of feeling for right and a refusal to be governed by opportunity rather than principle as welcome as they are rare.

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