HERBERT SPENCER

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Herbert Spencer by Josiah Royce

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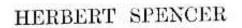
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CONTENTS

| | | | | | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|------------|----|-----|------|
| SPENCER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE | Conc | EPI | 0 | oF. | |
| EVOLUTION , | 0 | 4 | ÷ | ÷ | 7 |
| HIS THEORIES OF EDUCATION | |) <u>*</u> | | × | 119 |
| Personal Reminiscences by James | | | | 577 | |
| FOR NINE YEARS THE SECRETAR | YA | ND | FO | R | |
| TEN YEARS THE AMANUENSIS O | F SI | ENC | CE | t | 185 |

HERBERT SPENCER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CON-CEPT OF EVOLUTION

HERBERT SPENCER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONCEPT OF EVOLUTION

Since Spencer's death, there already have appeared many reviews and estimates of his lifework. Their number is likely soon to be increased by the reading of his "Autobiography" which we now have in our hands. The new perspective in which this work enables us to see our philosopher is a sufficient justification for many attempts afresh to sum up and to characterize what he did for philosophical inquiry, and what his influence meant. Features of Spencer's activity which we have heretofore been obliged to view

as it were from a distance, and to know only through the necessarily inadequate reports of his personal friends and disciples, are now brought near to us, and are exhibited in the decidedly clear light of his own deliberate and wholesomely straightforward confession. What, then, is the consequence of reconsidering the ideals and the methods of Spencer's philosophy in the light of his autobiography? To this question the following paper is an attempted, and admittedly partial, contribution.

Spencer's life-work is a part of a very large historical movement. For the sake, therefore, of giving the whole discussion its due setting, I shall begin with a few comments upon the general history and meaning of the concept of Evolution. I shall then review what the "Autobiography" tells us about the origin and significance of Spencer's own view of Evolution. Thirdly, I

HERBERT SPENCER

shall attempt a sketch of this view itself in its finished form. Fourthly, I shall close with some critical observations upon the significance of Spencer's work as a thinker.