

**HINTS TOWARDS THE
FORMATION OF A
MORE COMPREHENSIVE
THEORY OF LIFE**

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Hints towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life by S. T. Coleridge & Seth B. Watson

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S. T. COLERIDGE & SETH B. WATSON

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THE
IDEA OF LIFE.

H I N T S

TOWARDS THE

FORMATION OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE

THEORY OF LIFE.

BY

S. T. COLERIDGE.

EDITED BY

SETH B. WATSON, M. D.

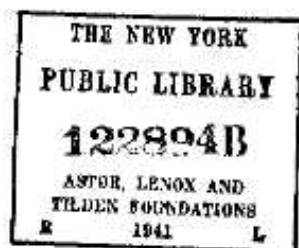
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,
AND FORMERLY ONE OF THE PHYSICIANS TO THE HOSPITAL AT OXFORD.

"Magnæ sunt opera Domini: exquisita in omnes voluntates ejus."

PHILADELPHIA:
LEA AND BLANCHARD.

MDCCCXLVIII.

R. B. C.



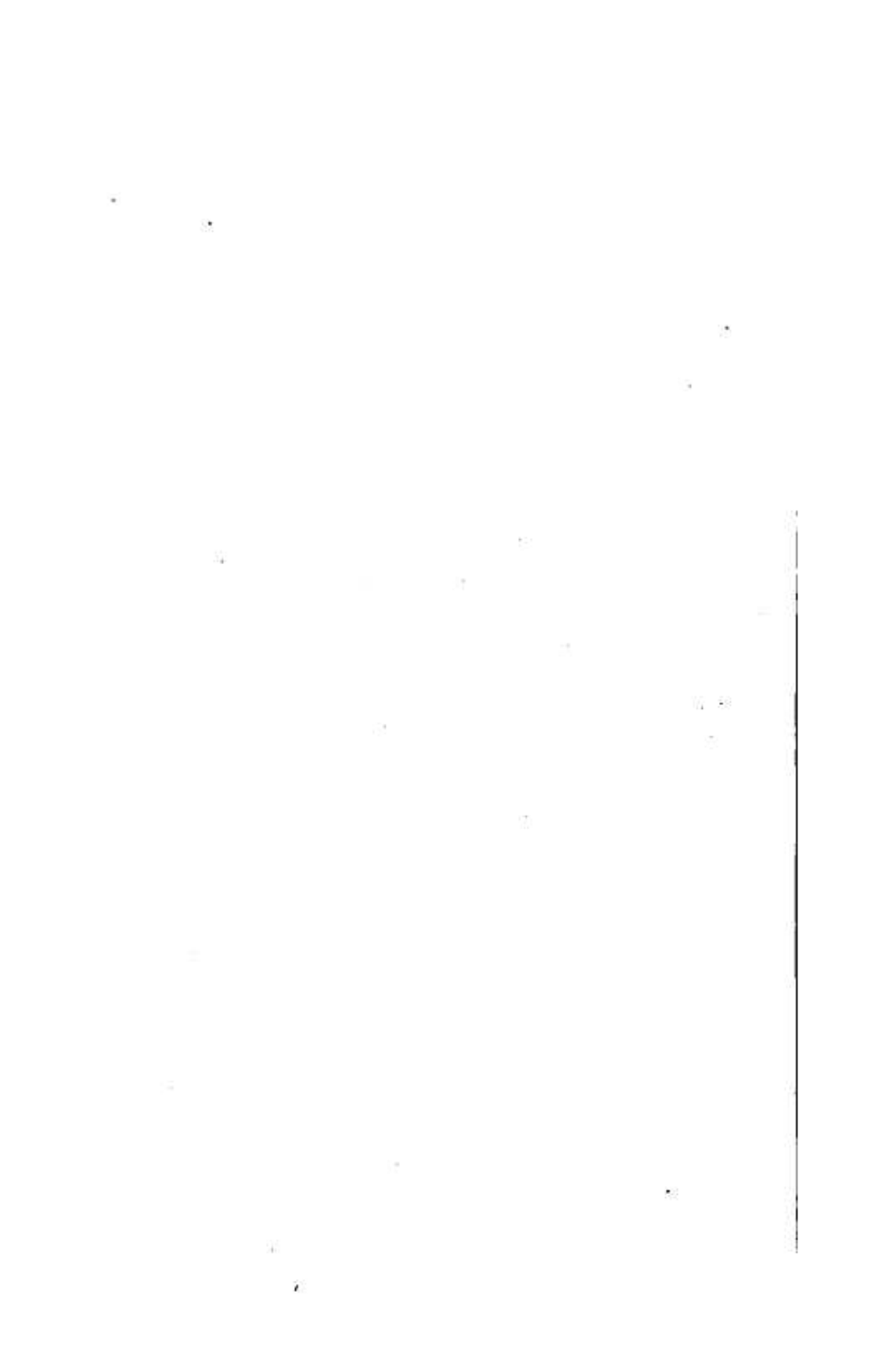
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16 Norfolk Street, Park Lane.



P R E F A C E .

THE accompanying pages contain the unfinished Sketch of a Theory of Life by S. T. Coleridge. Everything that fell from the pen of that extraordinary man bore latent, as well as more obvious indications of genius, and of its inseparable concomitant—originality. To this general remark the present Essay is far from forming an exception. No one can peruse it, without admiring the author's comprehensive research and profound meditation; but at the same time, partly from the exuberance of his imagination, and partly from an apparent want of method (though, in truth, he had a method of his own, by which he marshalled his thoughts in an order perfectly intelligible to himself), a first perusal will, to many readers, prove unsatisfactory, unless they are prepared for it by an introduction of a more popular character. This purpose, therefore, I shall endeavour to accomplish; it being to be understood that I by no means make myself responsible either for Mr. Coleridge's speculations, or for the manner in which they are enunciated; and that, on the contrary, I shall occasionally indicate views from which I dissent, and expressions which perhaps the author himself, on revision, would have seen reason to correct.

It is clear that Mr. Coleridge considers the unity of human nature to result from two combined elements, Body and Soul; that he regards the latter as the principle of Reason and of Conscience (both which he has largely treated in his published works), and that the "Life," which he here investigates, concerns, in relation to mankind, only the Body. He is far, however, from confining the term "Life" to its action on the human body; on the contrary, he disclaims the division of all that surrounds us into things with life, and things without life; and contends, that the term Life is no less applicable to the irreducible *bases* of chemistry, such as sodium, potassium, &c., or to the various forms of crystals, or the geological strata which compose the crust of our globe, than it is to the human body itself, the acme and perfection of animal organization. I admit that there are certain great powers, such as magnetism, electricity, and chemistry, whose action may be traced, even by the limited means which science at present possesses, in admirable gradation, from purely unorganized to the most highly organized matter: and, I think, that Mr. Coleridge has done this with great ingenuity and striking effect; but what I object to is, that he applies to the combined operation of these powers, in all cases, the term *Life*. If we look back to the early history of language, we shall probably find that this word, and its sy-