

**HERBERT SPENCER,  
THE MAN  
AND HIS WORK**

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Herbert Spencer, the man and his work by Hector Macpherson

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**HECTOR MACPHERSON**

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(67)

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HERBERT SPENCER

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THE MAN AND HIS WORK

BY

HECTOR MACPHERSON

Author of

'Thomas Carlyle' and 'Adam Smith'

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## PREFACE

A PHILOSOPHIC thinker of the first rank is always known by the amount of literature which his writings call forth. Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Hegel—these in their respective spheres were epoch-makers. From the philosophic germs which they scattered have sprung whole libraries of controversial literature. In like manner Mr. Herbert Spencer has paid the penalty of his great philosophic fame. As an epoch-maker, he, too, has had to pass through the fire of hostile criticism. For a great number of years his philosophy has been the battle-ground of controversialists who, differing in many ways among themselves, have united in their attempts to discredit a system of thought which threatened to destroy long-cherished opinions and stereotyped beliefs. One result of this has been that to the general public the Synthetic Philosophy, embedded as it has been in the works of critics, has necessarily appeared in

a fragmentary form. My object in writing this book has been to present to the general reader Spencerism in lucid, coherent shape. Nothing can take the place of Mr. Spencer's own writings, but mastery of these demands an amount of leisure and philosophic enthusiasm which are by no means widespread.

Until after the first negotiations had been entered upon for the publication of this work Mr. Spencer was unaware that it was in contemplation, but since he has been informed of my design I have had his approval. I must add that Mr. Spencer has not seen a sentence of this work before publication, either in manuscript or in proof. He has been anxious that I should not be influenced by any criticisms he might pass. He has taken a kindly interest in the undertaking, and responded to my request for certain materials. The book is by no means a slavish reproduction of Mr. Spencer's writings. Taking my stand upon the fundamental ideas of the Synthetic Philosophy, I have used them in my own way to interpret and illustrate the great evolutionary process. While, therefore, Mr. Spencer has been in full sympathy with the aim of the book, he does not stand committed to the detailed treatment of the subject. The work has indeed been a labour



of love. Should it induce the reader to study Spencerism as expounded by the master himself, my reward will be ample.

I should be lacking in gratitude did I not express my obligations to the elaborate work of Mr. John Fiske, entitled *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*. No student of Spencer can afford to neglect Mr. Fiske's book, which it would be difficult to rival in point of lucidity and intellectual ability. I am also indebted to Professor Hudson of California for his admirable book, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*. In the philosophic and economic parts of the book, I have drawn upon a few paragraphs in my *Thomas Carlyle* and *Adam Smith*. Knowledge of a philosopher's system of thought is greatly helped by knowledge of the philosopher himself, and in this respect I have been exceedingly fortunate. The recollection of my personal relations with Mr. Spencer will ever be to me a priceless possession.

HECTOR MACPHERSON.

EDINBURGH, April 1900.



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