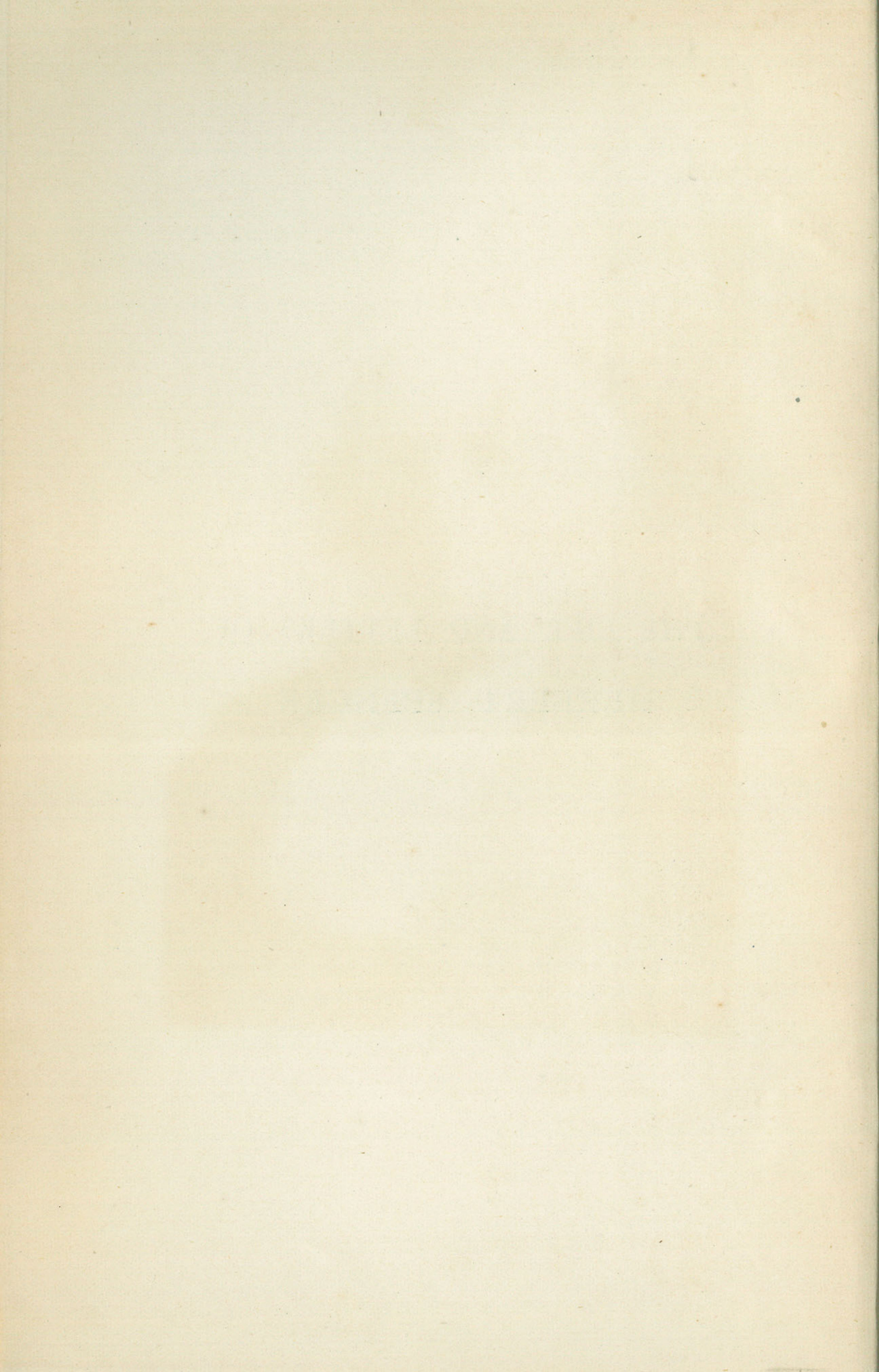
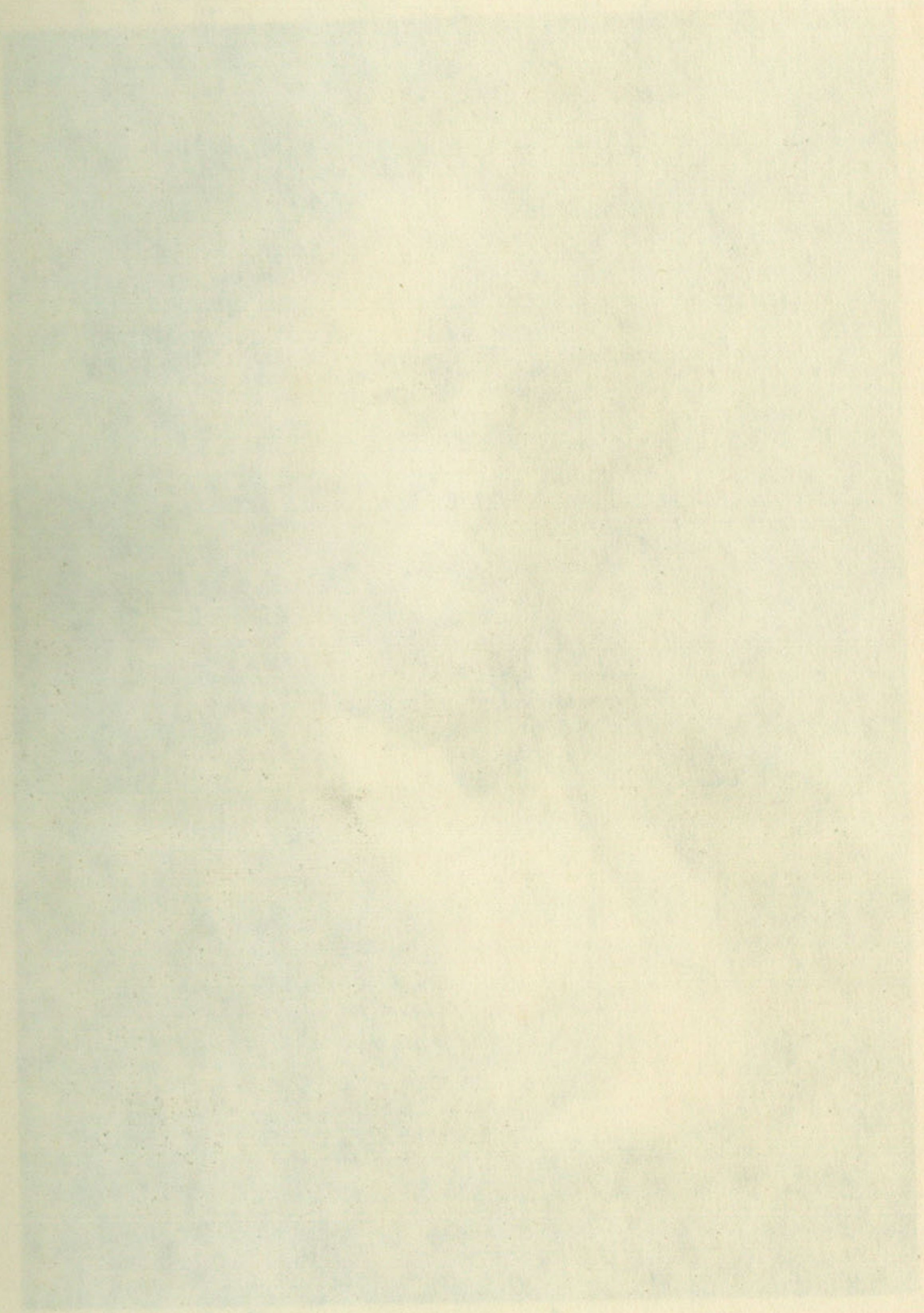


LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
HERBERT SPENCER

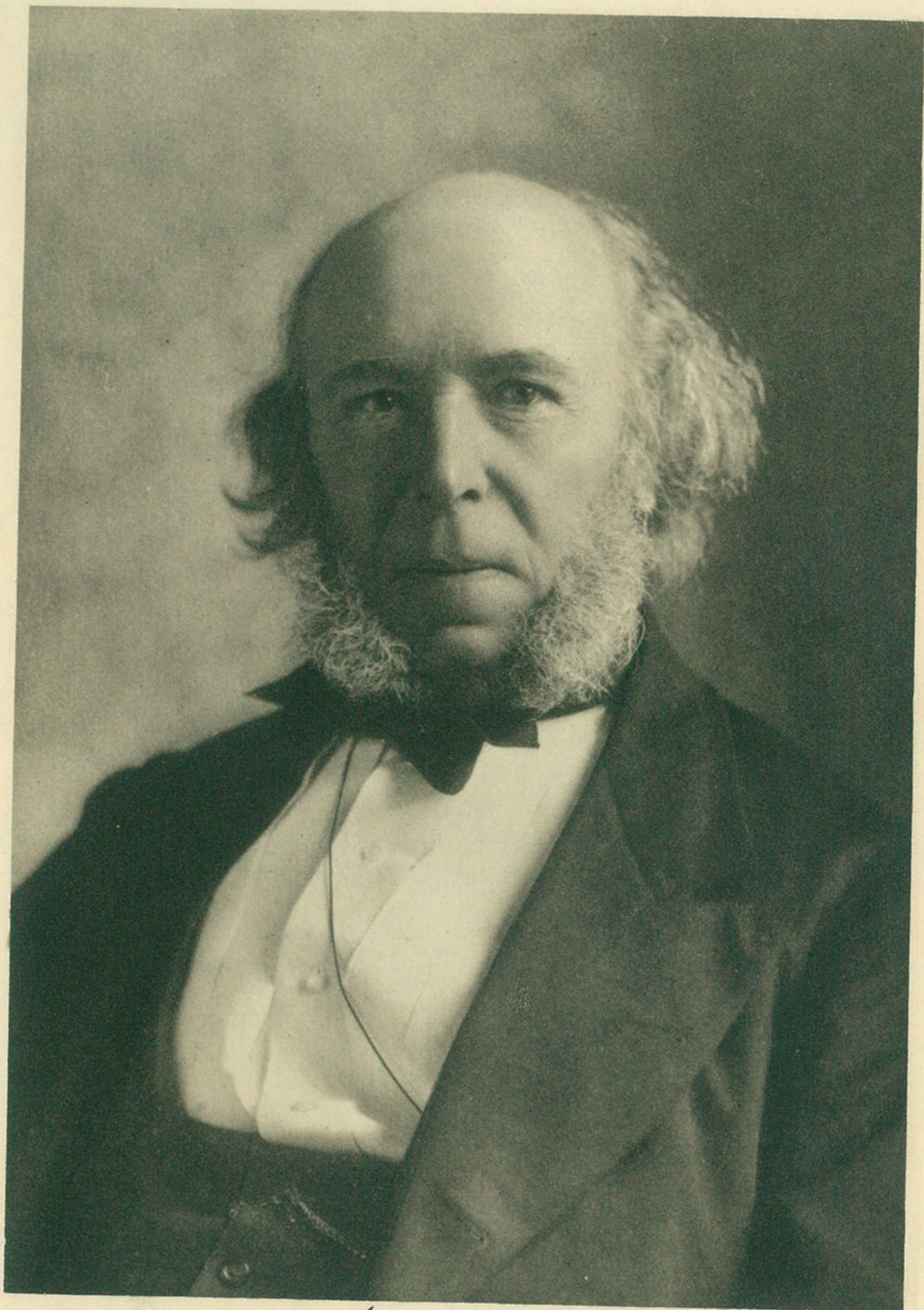
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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
HERBERT SPENCER





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Herbert Spencer
When 73

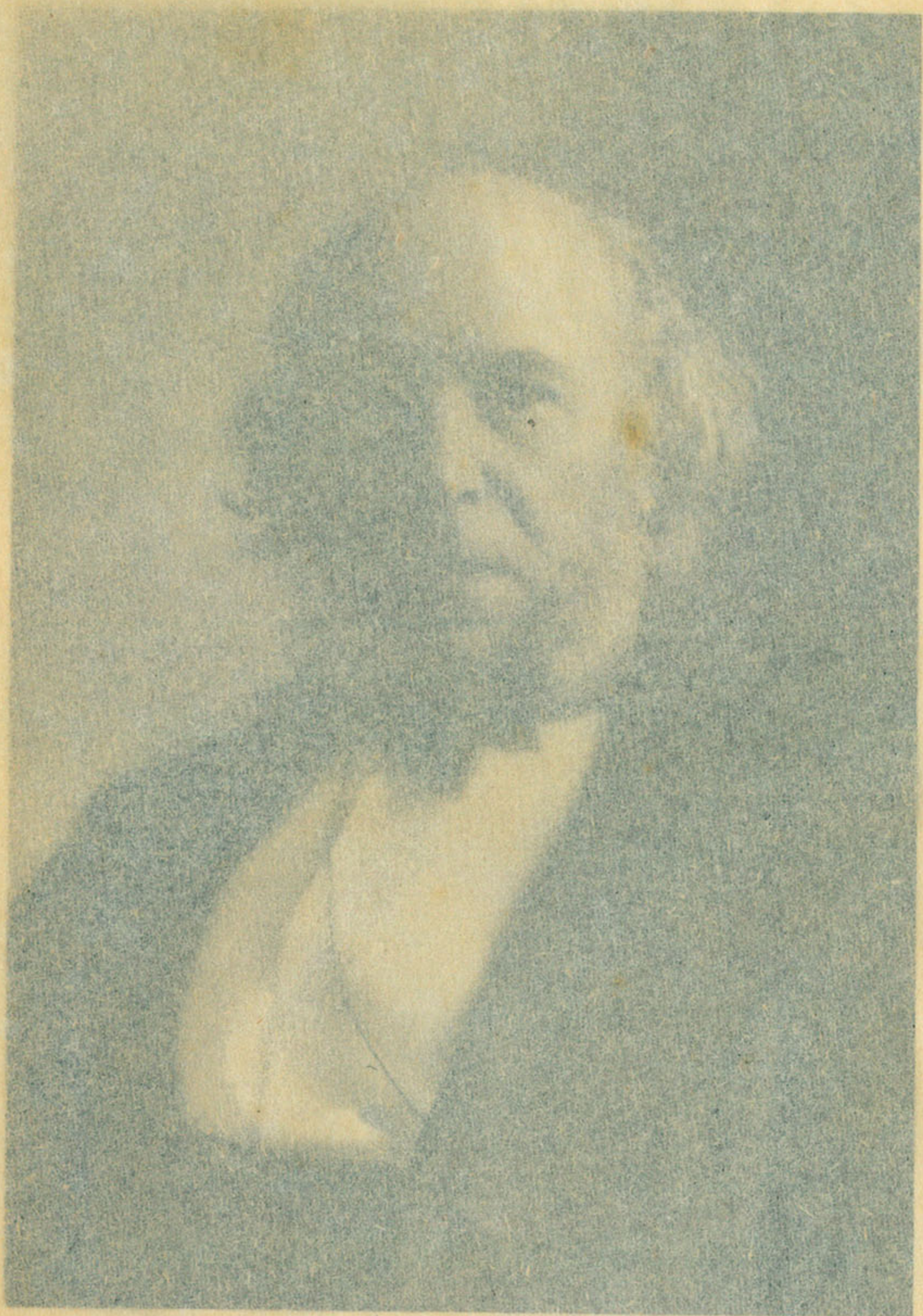
THE
LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
HERBERT SPENCER

BY
DAVID DUNCAN, LL.D.

LATE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, MADRAS

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
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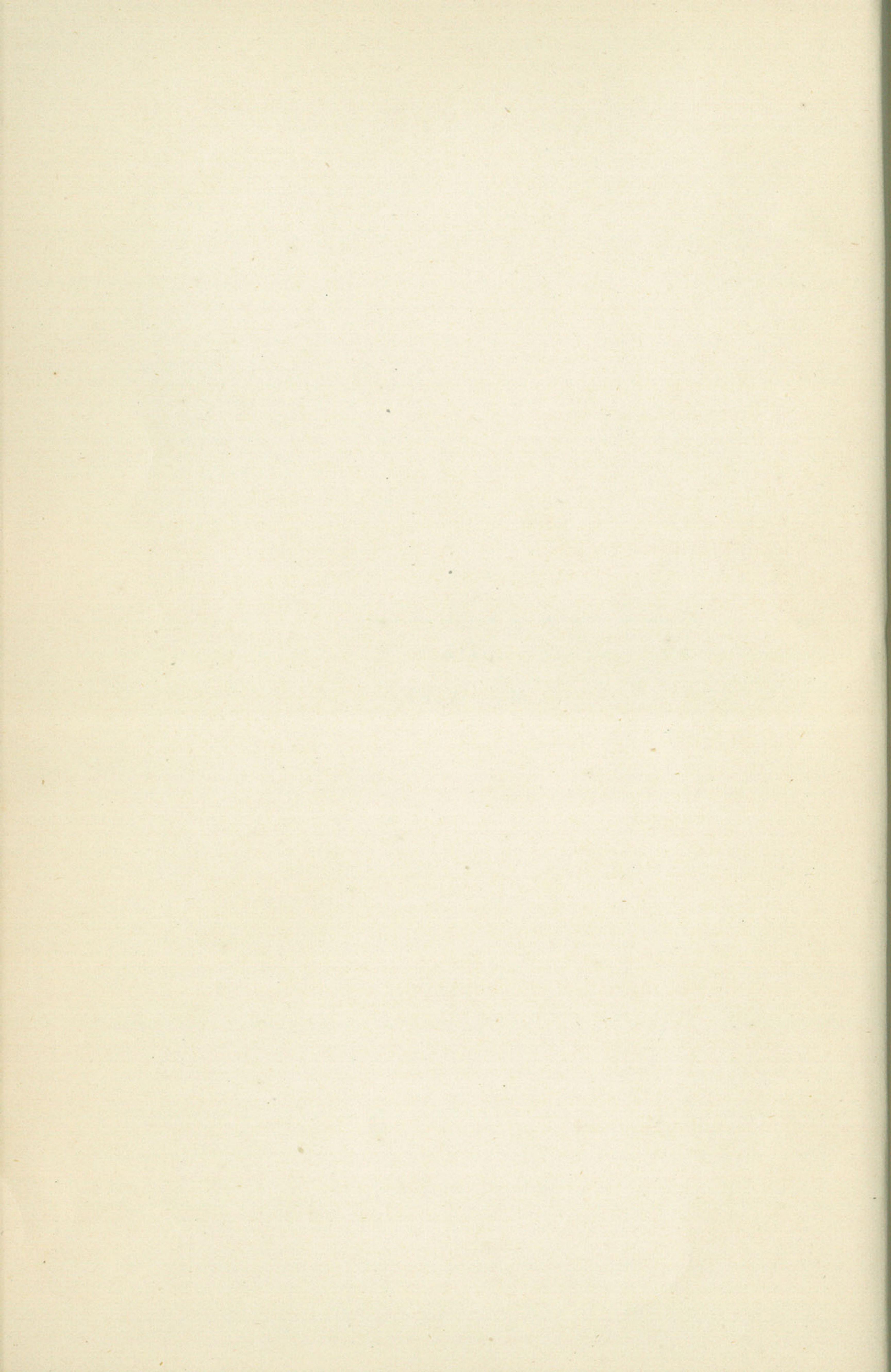
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First Published in 1908

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TO
MY WIFE



PREFACE.

A WORD or two seems necessary by way of explanation of the publication of a biography of Mr. Herbert Spencer, within a few years of the publication of his voluminous *Autobiography*. Twenty-eight years ago, while I was at home on furlough, Mr. Spencer obtained from me a promise to write his *Life*. In subsequent years, partly owing to his fears that his own life might not be prolonged, and partly because he thought that my absence in India would render it difficult, if not impossible, for me to fulfil my promise, he made other arrangements. These other arrangements, however, fell through. Hence the question, in a letter to me, dated 10 May, 1893: "Does the assent which you gave years ago still hold, and is it likely to hold?" On receiving an affirmative answer, Mr. Spencer had the following paragraph inserted in his Will:—"I request that the said David Duncan will write a Biography in one volume of moderate size, in which shall be incorporated such biographical materials as I have thought it best not to use myself, together with such selected correspondence and such unpublished papers as may seem of value, and shall include the frontispiece portrait and the profile portraits, and shall add to it a brief account of the part of my life which has passed since the date at which the *Autobiography* concludes."

Mr. Spencer was impressed with the truth that one's estimate of one's self is sure to err on the side of excess or defect. To say nothing of the limitations of memory, the mere assumption of the attitude of narrator of one's own life is unfavourable to correct representation. Peculiarities of intellectual and moral character also interfere with the adjustments of lights and shades and colours. Vanity, in one case, self-depreciation, in another, will prevent a well-balanced estimate of one's self being arrived at. While not trying to hide his shortcomings, Mr. Spencer,

like all the finer natures, shrank from parading the more attractive and lovable aspects of his character—thus permitting an apparent justification for the opinion that he was “all brains and no heart.” This is one of the erroneous opinions which will, it is hoped, be removed by perusal of the following pages.

The existence of the *Autobiography*, which covers sixty-two years of Mr. Spencer's life, has added to the difficulties of my task. The road traversed by him has had to be traversed by me; but I have endeavoured to avoid needless repetition, while omitting nothing that has seemed necessary to form a continuous and complete narrative. Of the remaining twenty-one years, the volume now published constitutes the only authoritative record. To avoid multiplication of references, a note has been inserted at the beginning of each chapter—from chapter i. to chapter xvi.—to show the corresponding chapters in the *Autobiography*.

I have not aimed at giving an exposition or criticism of the philosophy of Evolution. Even had such an aim been in accordance with Mr. Spencer's wishes, it would have been impossible, within the prescribed limits, to do justice either to the Life or to the Philosophy, had the attainment of both ends been attempted. Expositions and estimates of his Philosophy have been plentiful enough. The fact of the matter is that we stand as yet too near the stupendous edifice to form a correct idea of its proportions and grandeur. The letters, so freely quoted in the following pages, will, however, it is hoped, while indicating the growth of Mr. Spencer's striking and many-sided character, throw new light upon the development of his scheme of thought. Very important in this respect is the appendix on “The Filiation of Ideas,” written by him in 1898-99, and left for publication in this volume. Being an intellectual history of himself, it elucidates the natural evolution of the Evolution theory, besides serving as a sketch plan of the Synthetic Philosophy. In itself an exceedingly valuable document, its value is enhanced by the fact that it was his final contribution to the theory of evolution.

Mr. Spencer outlived most of his contemporaries and, as a consequence, my opportunities of direct consultation with literary and scientific friends, with whom he was on

terms of friendship and intimacy, have been few. Even his correspondence with those who pre-deceased him has in several cases disappeared. To those, however, who have kindly placed his letters at my disposal, or given me permission to publish their letters to him, or favoured me with personal reminiscences, I have to express my grateful thanks. To my co-trustee, Dr. H. Charlton Bastian, and to Mr. Henry R. Tedder, Secretary and Librarian of the Athenæum, both of whom have assisted me by reading proofs and by many valuable suggestions, I owe a special debt of gratitude. Mr. Walter Troughton, besides placing at my disposal his intimate knowledge of Mr. Spencer's life from 1889 to 1903, has been good enough to relieve me entirely of correspondence and arrangements connected with the preparation of the illustrations. Though his help has been rendered in great measure out of regard for Mr. Spencer's memory, he has at the same time earned my cordial thanks.

D. DUNCAN.

*Office of Mr. Herbert Spencer's Trustees,
Whitcomb House,
Whitcomb Street, W.C.*

9 February, 1908.

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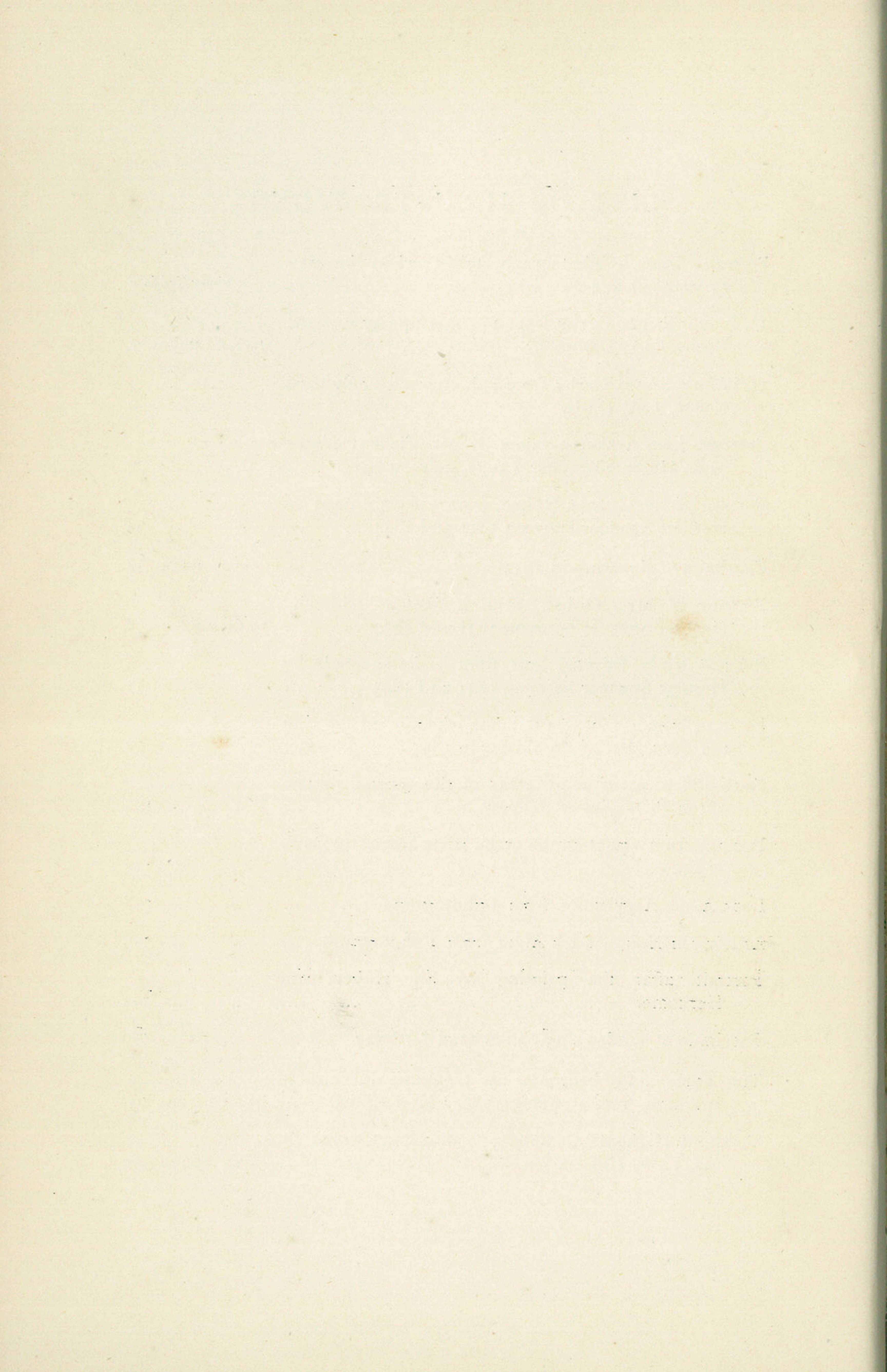
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LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
HERBERT SPENCER.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY HISTORY AND PARENTAGE.

¹⁰ TOWARDS the end of the sixteenth century Thomas and Balthazar de Henzu or de Hennezel, with other Huguenots, driven by religious persecution from Lorraine, to which they seem to have migrated from Bohemia, took up their abode near Stourbridge. Other immigrants, apparently also of Bohemian origin and bearing the name afterwards known as Hemus, appeared on the scene about the same time. A century earlier, families of the name of Brettell, connected seemingly with the de Breteuils of Normandy, had settled in the same locality.

The neighbourhood of Stourbridge was a favourite resort of foreign immigrants. Tradition has it that the famous clay was discovered in the sixteenth century by wandering glass-makers from Lorraine, and that the manufacture of glass, begun about 1556, was introduced by Hungarians. These traditions are in harmony with the supposition that the Henzeys, Hemuses, &c., migrated from Bohemia to Lorraine, and thence to England, taking with them their skill in the manufacture of glass. They would naturally settle in a locality where they could carry on to advantage their native industry, especially if it had the additional attraction of being the adopted home of other exiles like themselves.

Marriages between families thus brought together would

NOTE.—*Autobiography*, i., chaps. i., ii., iii.

be likely to take place. Unions of Brettells and Henzeys are, in fact, recorded in the sixteenth century, and the register of the parish of Oldswinford, within which Stourbridge has grown up, shows how common these unions were in the two centuries following. One entry is of special interest. In June, 1740, Joseph Brettell, a farmer of Wordsley, married Elizabeth Hemus. Joseph Brettell and Elizabeth Hemus were Spencer's great-grandparents on the mother's side. To him the chief interest in this genealogy lay in the evidence it furnished of descent from families who had resisted arbitrary authority. The non-conformity of the Brettells, Henzeys, and Hemuses in religious matters remained with them. Besides a daughter, Jane, Joseph and Elizabeth Brettell had two sons, Jeremiah and John, who became well-known Wesleyan ministers. One Joseph Brettell, a relative of Jane Brettell's, was licensed as a local preacher by John Wesley. A copy of a letter, dated March 25, 1785, shows the founder of Wesleyanism to have been a strict disciplinarian, who took care that his adherents did not interpret non-conformity as liberty to do as they pleased.

You think it your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof hereof and we shall rejoice to own you as a fellow labourer.

Observe.—You are not to ramble up and down, but to go where I direct and there only.

(signed) JOHN WESLEY.

Jane Brettell married John Holmes, a widower, whom Spencer remembered as a broken-down old man, whose "strong sense of responsibility and obligation remained dominant even when his faculties were failing." The verses referred to in the *Autobiography* (i., 15) as exhibiting "some small power of literary expression," caused John Holmes searchings of heart as to the consistency of verse-making with religious principles. "Some of the expressions, I know, are very lively," he writes to his daughter by way of apology, "though they may be over-looked, as poetry is confined to words." About Mrs. Holmes it may be said that, in judging of her character as portrayed by her grand-

son one has to bear in mind that his estimate was derived mainly from his father, who was biassed, owing to her long opposition to her daughter's marriage.

The Derbyshire Spencers with whom we are concerned had lived in the parish of Kirk Ireton for centuries. The earliest entry in the parish register is dated 1581, but Spencer's ancestry cannot, with certainty, be traced further back than to about the middle of the seventeenth century, at which time there lived two brothers, Thomas and William Spencer. From Thomas the lineage can be traced to 1762, when Spencer's grandfather, Matthew, was born. The family property at this time consisted of a few houses and two fields. Early in life Matthew Spencer settled in Derby, becoming assistant in St. Peter's parish school. In the *Derby Mercury* for December, 1790, Mr. Frear, the retiring head of the school, recommends as his successor Matthew Spencer, who had been his assistant for many years. Twelve months later Matthew Spencer advertises a school in the Green Lane, "where he instructs youths in Reading, Writing, Merchants' accounts, Mensuration (with Land Surveying), Algebra, &c. He can accommodate a few young gentlemen at his house. Terms: Entrance fee, £1 1s. Board and Education, 13 guineas per annum." On his death in 1831 the Kirk Ireton property passed to his son George, in consideration of his long residence with his father and of his having rendered assistance in the school; the Green Lane house was left to the youngest son, William.

Matthew Spencer's wife, Catherine Taylor, was the grand parent whom Spencer knew best, she having lived till he was 23 years of age. "She showed," says her grandson, "no marked intellectual superiority. Indeed, I remember my mother expressing her wonder that from her and from my grandfather there should have proceeded a number of sons who, on the whole, were decidedly marked in their abilities." But of the superiority of her moral nature, "the evidences are unquestionable. My own recollections verify the uniform testimony of her sons that she had all the domestic virtues in high degrees." About the age of nineteen she came under the influence of John Wesley, whom she heard preach in the market-place of Derby amid much insult and

persecution, and whose company and conversation she had afterwards frequent opportunities of enjoying.

The six children who grew up "formed a fine family in point of physique, all the sons but one ranging from 5 ft. 10 in. to 6 ft., well-looking in feature, and though not as a family very robust, still tolerably well-balanced." They were characterised by individuality almost amounting to eccentricity, by pugnacious tenacity in holding to their opinions, by self-assertiveness, and by disregard for authority. In Henry the family traits were softened by the saving grace of humour; in John they were intensified by overweening egotism. Remembrance of the genial nature and kindly ways of the former was one of the motives that, in after life, prompted Spencer's generosity to the children and grandchildren; whereas the unfavourable impression made on his youthful mind by what he knew and heard about the latter was never entirely effaced. Thomas, the best known of the family, was the uncle whose influence on the nephew was the most marked and abiding. William diverged the least from current opinions, and perhaps on that account made less impression on his nephew intellectually; but the memory of his fine, generous character was cherished by Spencer to the last.

Spencer's father is described as a singularly handsome man. Although his constitution gave way a year or two after his marriage, and ill-health dogged his footsteps for the remainder of his days, he lived to the age of 76. Before he married he had saved enough to purchase several small houses, and to advance money to enable Thomas to go to Cambridge. By 1824, however, sickness and the failure of the lace-machine venture had told on his finances; whereas Thomas had already entered on a career of moderate prosperity, leading George to say: "Now the scales are turned upon us; you the lender, the borrower I." With intellectual abilities in some respects remarkable there went a singular lack of well-balanced judgment in practical affairs. In some things absurdly economical, he was in others absurdly extravagant. He did not weigh the cost of means against the value of ends. "While always occupied, he was often occupied rather about trivialities than about large things: large things had a tendency to

paralyze him." He himself confesses this: "I find that I have, and particularly since my illness, a constant propensity to neglect those things of the greatest consequence and am particularly punctual in attending to those of the least." His studies were mainly in science, natural causation being the ruling idea. Of ethical, political, and metaphysical questions, he never made a systematic study. As for literature, books were read less for their subject-matter than as a field for verbal criticism. His composition was appropriate, clear, and pure, though not forcible. Firmness, reaching almost to obstinacy, argumentativeness, disregard of authority, censoriousness—were his in high degree. Excessively conscientious himself, he was prone to be suspicious of others. Writing from Paris to his future wife he gives as a reason for addressing the letter to "H. Holmes" instead of "Miss Holmes," that the gentleman who was to convey the letter would "not be tempted to open it"! "In public affairs especially, instead of taking some obvious cause for an act, he was habitually seeking for some secret, underhand intention as having prompted it." In dress and social intercourse, as well as in opinions, his independence showed itself. While frank and suave in manner, no man laid less store by the conventions of society. He took an active part in most of the great movements of his day. "His eyes were ever open to any evil to be rectified or good to be done."

In common with his brothers (writes Spencer), he was brought up under strong religious impressions; and up to the age of 35 he was in the habit of going through the usual religious observances—not, however, domestically. But with the extension of his independent thinking in all directions he gradually became more and more alien in religious opinion from those he was brought up with; and, giving up the worship of the Wesleyans, attended for a considerable number of years a chapel of the Quakers: not because he agreed with them in their peculiarities, but because it was a course which allowed of free scope to his own views. He had become very much opposed to all forms of priesthood, and among others to that of the Wesleyans; and I doubt not that the Quakers commended themselves to him as not having any order of priests. In later life he separated himself still further from current opinions, ending, indeed, by agreeing in the religious views I

had set forth. Not, indeed, that he ever distinctly said so ; but observations he made in his last years concerning the current creed implied that he had abandoned it. And this illustrates what was a speciality of his nature shown in an unusual degree ; namely, that he remained plastic in opinion to a very late period in life. Most men, and still more most women, early become fixed. He went on modifying, and continued his modifiability to the last.

Spencer's mother, Harriet Holmes, is described as of medium height, with a spare figure, and, when young, as decidedly good-looking. A journal she kept for over a year when she was eighteen reveals an amiable character, strong on the moral side. This also comes out in a letter to her parents with reference to their opposition to her engagement with George Spencer: "Whatever it may cost me, it is, and ever has been my firm intention from the first not to act in opposition to your wishes upon the subject ; and though we never shall be of one opinion respecting it, yet you may rest quite easy in the assurance that I have quite given up the thought of it." In several respects her character belied the Hussite and Huguenot extraction her son was at some pains to make out. She was always more ready to conform than to dissent. With the intellectual pursuits of her husband or her son she had little sympathy, and being absolutely sincere she could not pretend to an interest she did not feel. Though she cared little for literature, her style was clear and not wanting in felicities of expression. Evenness and sweetness of temper, conscientiousness in the discharge of duties, readiness to sacrifice herself for others, were life-long characteristics. In her journal, chapel news and preachers bulk largely. One of the entries would have held good for every Sunday in her grown up life: "I should not like to miss going to chapel, it would not seem at all like Sunday." Although her husband was not wanting in tender solicitude for her, the advent of ill-health and straightened means tended to cloud their domestic happiness. The manifestations of affection were often obscured—on her side by want of sympathy with his intellectual pursuits, on his side by an exacting and censorious attitude.



No. 27 EXETER STREET, DERBY.

CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

(April, 1820—November, 1837.)

THE house in which George Spencer and his wife began their married life, and in which their son first saw the light on April 27, 1820, was 12, Exeter Row, now 27, Exeter Street, the fourth entry from the Exeter Arms. In the baptism and naming of the child his father was not a man to be led by custom. Yet he was alive to the bearing of his non-conforming attitude on the future of his son. When it was suggested by his brother Thomas that the baptism should take place in church, as it might be of importance to the boy hereafter to be in the Parish Register, he wrote: "I almost feel inclined to ask S— [the incumbent of St. Peter's Church] if it would be allowed to register the birth of a child in the Parish Register, without having him baptized. And so to have him baptized at the chapel." The ceremony was performed on June 19 by John Kershaw, birth and baptism being registered at the Methodist Register Office, 66, Paternoster Row, London, on July 1. The name "Herbert" had been suggested by lines written in a churchyard of Richmond, in Yorkshire, by Herbert Knowles, forming the conclusion of an article on "Cemeteries and Catacombs in Paris," in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1819.

Of the early years of the boy's life little is known; but one may infer that they were lacking in positive enjoyments. His parents were in ill-health and full of anxiety, nor was he himself robust. He was, moreover, without the companionship of brothers and sisters. For though four brothers and four sisters succeeded him, none of

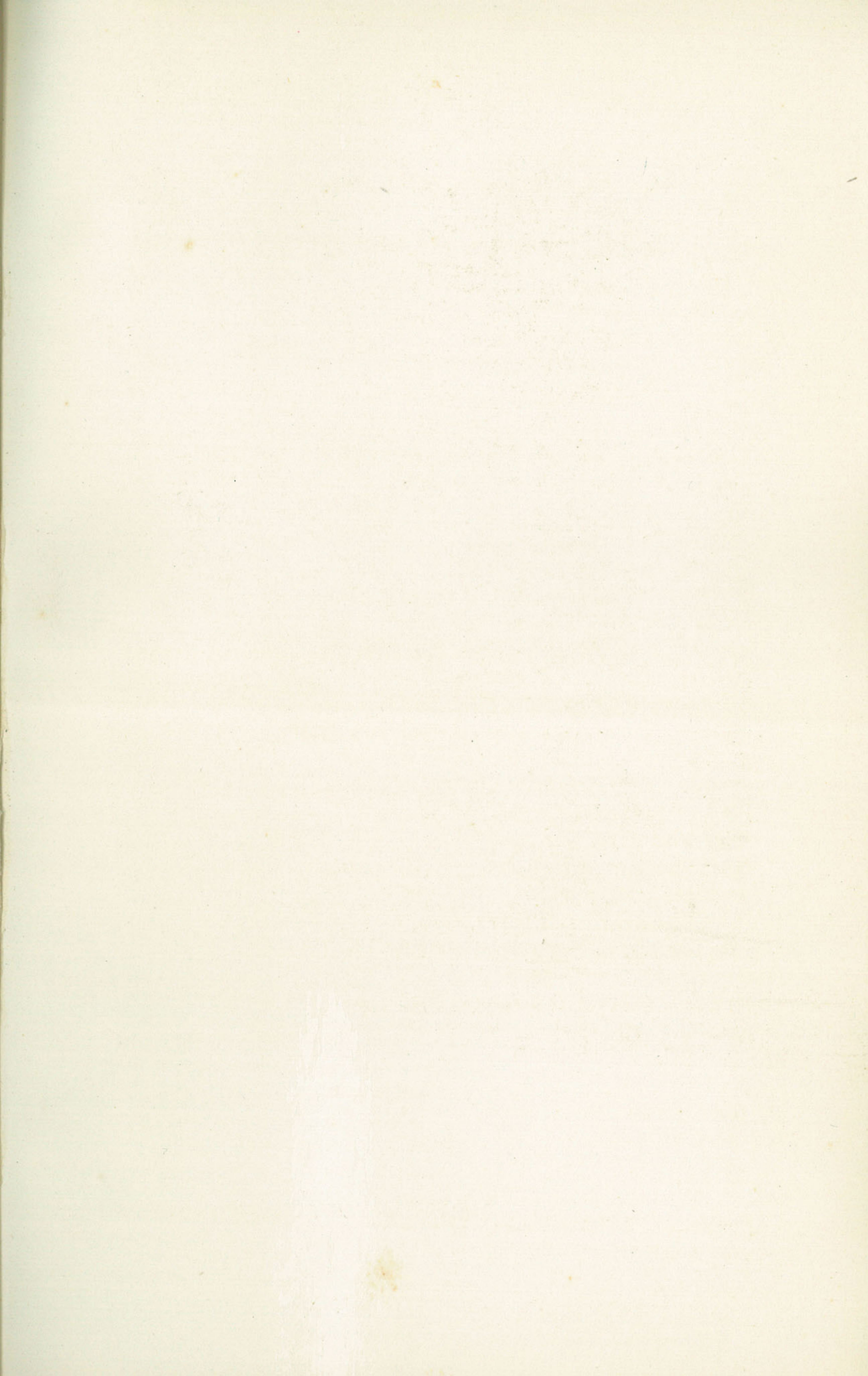
them lived more than a few days, except a sister, Louisa, a year younger than himself, who died at the age of 2 years and 9 months.¹ How depressing the boy's surroundings were may be gathered from his father's letters.

This appears an important crisis in my life (he writes to his brother in 1823). I shall either from this time be tolerably comfortable in my circumstances and health, or else I shall soon be reduced by ill-health to a state of wretchedness bordering on insanity.

January, 1824.—I am still more convinced than ever that I shall never continue healthy with my present employment—the stooping, the confinement, the sameness, the trial of temper and patience that it constantly affords, have a bad effect. . . . Our children were well when we got home. Harriet appears much more happy now that I am better. She is very kind—too kind—and I don't sufficiently return it—it appears to be my temper to expect too much.

The choice of a new occupation, important as a means of livelihood, was even more important as giving him something to think about other than his troubles. Among the employments suggested were land-surveying, tanning, and an agency in the South of France. Mrs. Mozley urged him to enter the Church. "She thinks I am the most adapted to that of anything." But what he was most inclined to was lace manufacture, for which there was at that time a mania, and which had the further attraction of calling his inventiveness into play. When in London in 1823 inspecting patents, he wrote to his wife: "I shall examine particularly whether there is any machine of the kind you and I are about to invent." What came of this invention does not appear; but in the spring of next year he tells Thomas that he and the other brothers had purchased a machine. "At present we have it in contemplation to convert the schoolroom into a shop for lace frames and learn to work the frames ourselves. . . . I do not intend to teach any more if I can obtain a living in any other way. . . ."

¹ In the *Autobiography* (i., 64, note †) he says there were five other children. This is a mistake. Five were born after Louisa's death and two while she was alive.





No. 31 WILMOT STREET, DERBY.

I have several plans in my head that you may possibly think are visionary, but it is one way I take to keep up my spirits under my heavy trials."

This venture proving a failure, the family moved about the middle of 1824 to Nottingham, mainly on account of its advantages as a centre for the lace industry. Commercially the move was not a success; but in other respects it was beneficial. His own health, as well as that of his wife, improved, and with better health his spirits rose. How it fared with their son the few letters that exist help one little to understand, but the passing references are such as to rouse one's sympathies for the fair-haired, lonely child. Nevertheless, he enjoyed more of a country life than he could have had in Derby, wandering, for the most part by himself, over the neighbouring common.¹ Not being pressed by lessons, he was behind children of his age in book knowledge. At seven his writing and drawing are referred to approvingly by others as well as by his father, who kept his first drawing book, consisting "of drawings of his own choice and chiefly of his own imagination." But nowhere is there the smallest word of praise of his reading.

Early in 1827 the family returned to Derby, settling in the house No. 8 (afterwards 17, now 31) Wilmot Street. His father resumed teaching. For some three years Herbert attended Mr. Mather's school, afterwards going to one kept by his uncle William. Tangible evidences of his attainments are (1) a copybook written in 1828, of which a teacher, whose opinion was invited by the present writer, says, "we can get nothing like it even from boys several years older"; (2) two books—*Hymns for Infant Minds* and *Watts' Divine and Moral Songs*. At the end of each hymn is written the date in 1828 or 1829 when it was committed to memory. From the number thus dated one may infer that his memory was not below the average. The tendency to set authority at nought was more than usually strong: the fitful nature of his father's discipline and the gentleness of his mother's sway exerting no efficient check on his self-will. Out of

¹ One of his memoranda says: "Spread Eagle, Aspley Terrace, Alfreton Road, Nottingham—the house (now changed into an inn) where we lived in my childhood."

doors he was allowed to follow his bent—a liberty which on one occasion would have cost him his life but for the presence of mind and courage of George Holme, then a lad some years his senior. Fishing was already a favourite pursuit, the Derwent as it flowed through the town being easy of access. One day, when fishing from the roadway that crossed the stream near the canal and weir, he lost his balance, fell into the stream just where the water rushed out with considerable force from beneath the roadway, and was carried rapidly down. Hearing a shout among the bystanders, George Holme, who was on the other side, looked up and saw a boy being swiftly carried away. Instantly he ran along the right bank, throwing off his jacket as he ran, plunged into the stream and swam across to intercept the struggling boy, whom he seized and with difficulty brought safely to the bank. Thus began an acquaintanceship which in due course ripened into a warm and life-long friendship. On a specially bound copy of his works presented to Mr. Holme in 1893 one may read on the fly-leaf of the first volume the grateful inscription:—

FROM
HERBERT SPENCER
TO HIS OLD FRIEND
GEORGE HOLME
WITHOUT WHOSE COURAGEOUS AID
RENDERED IN BOYHOOD
NEITHER THIS WORK
NOR ANY OF THE ACCOMPANYING WORKS
WOULD EVER HAVE EXISTED.

For the years from seven to thirteen one is dependent mainly on the *Autobiography* and on memoranda by his father. Written late in life, the father's reminiscences could not fail to reflect in some measure the consciousness of the eminence the son had attained to, and Spencer's own recollections could not but be coloured by interpretations derived from subsequent experience. Little progress was made in routine school lessons, yet he acquired an unusual amount of miscellaneous information. When barely eleven he attended Dr. Spurzheim's lectures on Phrenology. Before thirteen he assisted his father in preparing experiments in physics and chemistry for teaching purposes.

With insect and plant life he had an acquaintance far in advance of other boys, and was skilled in sketching from Nature. Works of fiction were perused with zest. Left much to himself, the tendency to dwell with his own thoughts was strengthened. On the intellectual side one of the chief results of his father's training was the habit it fostered of ever seeking an explanation of phenomena, instead of relying on authority—of regarding everything as naturally caused, and not as the result of supernatural agency. On the moral side its weakest feature was the encouragement it gave to the inherent tendency of a head-strong boy to set authority at defiance. When taking account of the formative agencies that shaped the boy's character one must bear in mind that he shared little in games with those of his own age, so that the influences which the young are usually subjected to by association with one another were in his case comparatively slight. He was much with grown-up people, most of them of marked individuality. From his reminiscences of his grandparents one may infer that, with one exception, they excited in him a feeling of awe, such as would be a barrier to close and affectionate intercourse. His grandfather Spencer was a "melancholy-looking old man." "I never saw him laugh." In an ordinary boy, the impression produced by the failing faculties or oddities of aged relatives is counteracted by the buoyant, objective spirits of youth. In the case of a thoughtful boy, living mostly with grown-up people, listening to and taking part in their serious conversation, it is different. As regards the influence, both moral and intellectual, of his uncles and his father, it is hardly possible to overestimate it. Towards current opinions their attitude was invariably critical, their conclusions being reached by reference to underlying principles, not to authority. Rarely were their discussions enlivened by lighter touches of wit or humour. Terribly in earnest, they did not debate for debating's sake or for victory. Literature, history, and fine art concerned them less than scientific, religious, and social questions, which were discussed in the boy's hearing from day to day. Thus early were sown the seeds of that interest in social, political, and religious topics which he retained to the last.

Meanwhile, his education in the scholastic sense was daily becoming a more pressing matter. He was now thirteen; independent and self-willed; with a decided predilection for certain subjects not included in the school curriculum of those days, and a still more decided aversion to certain other subjects then deemed important for every boy to know; fonder of things than words; more inclined to think for himself than to acquaint himself with the thoughts of others. How to deal with such a boy was calculated to rouse serious reflections in the father and the uncles. As Huxley said on reading the account of Spencer's boyhood and youth in the *Autobiography*: "Men of that force of character, if they had been less wise and less self-restrained, would have played the deuce with the abnormal chicken hatched among them."¹

A letter from the parsonage of Hinton Charterhouse suggested a way out of the difficulty. Rev. Thomas Spencer and his wife had "several times wished to have one of our little nephews with us, and as we know you cannot spare Herbert, who is a great help to his mother and a comfort to you both, I have considered little Henry the next one we would like to fix upon." Herbert's parents at once proposed to send him, they taking Henry—"a nice arrangement for all parties" it was thought. The "nice arrangement" was soon to be disturbed. Nothing had been said about it to Herbert, who accompanied his parents on what he thought was a pleasant holiday. A few days after his arrival his uncle set him to learn Euclid. That was bad enough. But when, about a month later, he was told that he was not to return home with his parents, his feelings were very bitter. Accustomed as he had been to take part in the discussion of family affairs, here was a matter in which he had the best right to take part, settled two months ago without his knowledge! Distaste for study and dislike to restraint, both pretty strong feelings, had a powerful ally in this sense of unfair treatment. The consequences were soon to appear. Early one morning, within two weeks of his parents' return, without a hint of his intention, he left the house and set out for Derby. Of his adventures on that

¹ *Life of Professor Huxley*, ii., 146; *Autobiography*, i., 78-90.

and the two following days—graphically depicted by himself in the *Autobiography* (i., 95-7)—many will share the opinion expressed by Mr. Francis Galton: “Great as is the wonder and admiration excited by your later achievements, they hardly exceed that I felt at the account of the thirteen-year-old boy, when heart sick and starving, walking 48 miles on one day, 47 on the next, and the balance of the distance to be travelled on the third. It is marvellous.”

No attempt was made by uncle or aunt to overtake the run-away—a neglect explained though not justified by the indignation felt at the insult he had heaped upon them. His mother was “ashamed and mortified at Herbert’s misconduct,” and his father passed “the whole of the night without sleep, ruminating on the character and prospects of my untoward son.” Both tried to enlist the sympathies of the uncle and aunt on behalf of the boy, who “seemed almost distracted.”

I asked him (wrote his father), how he could act so unkindly to you. . . . He replied “I know it is very wrong, but I felt as I could not help it”; or else, “all the way that I was coming, I kept on crying and thinking what would become of me.” “I am sure,” says he, with much emphasis, “I don’t know what will become of me. . . . I know my uncle and aunt wish me well and I should have many advantages in my learning if I had stopped. But everything is so different. I can’t bear it, and if you will but let me stop at home I mean to work harder than I ever did before.” “But,” said I, “you know your uncle understands Latin much better than I do, and that is very desirable for you.” “Aye, it was the Latin that made me think so of home, for I thought I should never be able to bear staying in my bedroom by myself all the winter studying my Latin Grammar. It was different with my Geometry, I was beginning to be very fond of Euclid. . . . Everything is so different, I never knew what home was till now, and if you will only try me I’ll be a very different boy from what I was before I went.”

Within a fortnight he was again at Hinton. “His manner ever since his arrival,” his uncle wrote, “has been particularly pleasing. There is a quietness about him and an evident desire to be satisfied.” About Latin he tells his father: “You will perhaps be surprised when I tell you that I begin to like it better.” French was taken up with

the New Year, and Greek in March. That he had no aptitude for the classics, but studied them from a sense of duty, is shown by a letter to his uncle during a visit home in the autumn. "As I now see that the dead languages are so useful in almost every science, I have made a determination to conquer them if possible." Notwithstanding this determination, the task was eventually given up as hopeless.

The importance of a correct, clear, and forcible style was frequently touched upon in letters from his father. Yet it is surprising how little stress was laid by either father or uncle on general reading. His letters, though not unfrequently marred by mis-spelling, faulty grammar, and hasty composition, are, nevertheless, in both matter and form, remarkable productions for a boy of from thirteen to sixteen. "You said in your last letter you would have sent me a list of the words I spelt wrong, only that you thought it would be unwelcome; do not think so, as I am very desirous of improving in my spelling." Not that his father was remiss in fault-finding, for he was a constant and unsparing critic. Shortly after the run-away adventure, Algebra had been taken up with zest. Presently his uncle wrote: "His talents for Mathematics, I should say, are of a very high order." For Trigonometry he expressed "delight," "for that is my feeling towards it." The sixth book of Euclid he did not like so well as the first four books, "because I do not think the demonstrations are so palpable as in those books." As for arithmetic "I am principally deficient in the rudimental parts; and as it will be a great inconvenience to me if ever I become a teacher to be deficient in those parts, I intend to practise these when I have convenient opportunities." Under his father's guidance he began Perspective, and "was much surprised to find that the principle was so very simple, and the only difficulty that I have yet had is in the application of this principle, which requires to be different in almost every problem, which will be a very good thing to rouse the powers of invention, which in me are rather dormant." Early in May, 1835, he had said: "I am able to do problems much better than equations for two reasons: first, because I take a greater interest in problems as being

something that requires ingenuity and not merely mechanical exertion of the mind ; and secondly, because in problems there are seldom such complicated equations as those that are given as equations."

"Be sure to place the *art of sketching from nature* first" was his father's repeated advice. In 1834 he made a sketch of his uncle's house, in which he thought he had "succeeded pretty well." A year later he sent home a plan of the parsonage and grounds, "as I think it may be pleasing to my grandmother and amusing to Henry [whom he was wont to call 'the usurper' for having taken his place], and perhaps improving to myself."

From home he wrote to his uncle in the autumn of 1835 :

Since I wrote you I have been chiefly studying chemistry. . . . I found the subject of crystallization very interesting indeed. Since I have been at home I have had many interesting discussions with my father on natural and moral philosophy. On one occasion I asked him his opinion on that subject which we were discussing one day at Hinton, I mean the theory of friction in some instances being caused by attraction.

The time not given up to mental improvement was occupied by pursuits, few of which could be called recreations. Though not insensible to its value, his uncle's view of life was too serious to leave much room for play as now understood. The future preacher of the gospel of relaxation was brought up to seek relaxation in doing something useful. And, indeed, he was always ready to work in the garden or in the house. In painting the gates his "everyday clothes were so soiled that my uncle has purchased me another pair, the jacket and waistcoat of which are of middling priced blue cloth and the trousers of corduroy." Here was a chance for his father. "There was an expression in your letter 'a pair of clothes' we thought remarkable. What should it have been?" With the household he identified himself. Certain alterations in the house "we" found to be great improvements. "We have been very busy buying and distributing the clothes for the clothing club, so that I have hardly any time to myself." Opportunities for fishing or riding were seldom missed.

"I have been learning to skait, and although I have not skaited more than seven hours I have made great progress and shall soon be able to skait well ; indeed, my uncle says I ought to do so as you were so good a skaiter." His uncle bought him a pair of quoits. "But I hope it will be, as I feel it ought to be, my great aim to sacrifice the pleasure of playing with them when I can be of any use to you."

His temperament brought him into frequent collision with those about him. His deep-seated disregard of authority was held in check by the strong rule of his uncle, who wrote towards the close of 1833 : "His conduct the last few months is quite changed from what it was formerly ; he is quite tractable, and I have scarcely seen an instance of bad temper showing itself for a long time." Again : "My authority over him is great and I am quite satisfied with his obedience to me, but I fear he would not submit himself in like manner to any other person." During his uncle's frequent absences from home he was apt to become "very unmanagable." Just before he left Hinton his uncle wrote : "There is a more becoming deference to the opinions of others. . . . A residence with his mother will soon bring back the self-will which marked his character so strongly when he came here. . . . He must part with some of his confidence in his own judgment."

Confidence in his own judgment—the other side of his disregard for authority—was apt to show itself in a dictatorial tone towards other young people ; not accompanied, however, by any desire to tyrannize over them. Had he been sent to a large school, this feature would have been toned down ; the application of a wider standard to his own achievements would have diminished his superabundant self-confidence. Satisfaction with himself is shown in the early stages of almost every new acquirement. He prided himself on his rapidly acquired proficiency in skating. As for chess, "I am become so skilful as to sometimes beat my uncle with an equal number of pieces." "I have now become acquainted with all the etiquette of dinner parties, having been at five or six large ones since I came here." Soon after taking up Trigonometry he wrote : "I believe I am now thoroughly master of it, and

I could do any question in it." He needed his father's reminder: "Your faults arise from too high an opinion of your own attainments." This self-confidence was the natural accompaniment of a powerful intellect working freely. When a mind of remarkable originality is set to acquire knowledge at fixed times and in accordance with prescribed methods, not only is the result often meagre and the exercise distasteful, but confidence in itself is liable to be shaken. And, indeed, now and again we do meet with a diffidence contrasting strangely with his wonted complacency.

I have been very much concerned lately at finding myself so liable to forget what I have learned, and have often tried to account for it, but have never been able. My father says it is because I do not sufficiently live in the subject, as he expresses it; that is, that I do not continually employ my mind in thinking upon what I have learnt; and I begin to think that he is right.

Again: I intend to apply to my studies with greater vigour than I have yet done, and I hope my resolution will not fail me. I think that a great obstacle to my getting on fast is a want of a certain degree of energy in pursuing my studies, and I hope that when I have overcome my repugnance to hard study I shall be able to become in most respects what you and my father desire.

And in 1836: I have not yet been able to overcome that feeling that I was mentioning in my last letter of an inability to apply myself diligently to any subject; I do not seem to have strength of mind enough to overcome my idle inclinations, and I begin to be fearful that I shall forget a great part of what I have learned.

To this want of energy he often recurs, confessing himself "at a loss to account for it." His good intentions are quaintly expressed in some of his letters during 1833 and 1834, in which he subscribes himself "Your intended obedient son," or "Your affectionate and improving son." Too much both morally and intellectually was expected of a boy of from thirteen to sixteen, and too little account was taken of his striking individuality, but for which he could not have held his own against the superabundance of exhortation and advice to which, in season and out of season, he was subjected.

Writing about his own father Sir Leslie Stephen says¹ : " My father's fine taste and his sensitive nature made him tremblingly alive to one risk. He shrunk from giving us any inducement to lay bare our own religious emotions. To him and to our mother the needless revelation of the deeper feelings seemed to be a kind of spiritual indelicacy." Not so Herbert Spencer's father. To earnest entreaties that he would lay bare his innermost feelings, Herbert was far from being responsive ; but in one letter (October, 1833) he expresses gratitude for his father's solicitude. " I can only attribute it to his sincere desire for my welfare, of which I am convinced from the good advice given, and hope with the help of the Almighty to follow it." Such a response went to his mother's heart. His father wished to know " the reigning principle " that caused him to behave well during his uncle's absence at Christmas, of the same year. " I hope you will examine yourself closely and tell me without reserve what the motive was." Herbert's reply is not forthcoming, but in a letter from his father mention is made of it and of the pleasure it gave to his sick mother. In February, 1835, after insisting on " the great necessity of examining the nature and state of your own mind," his father appears to lose patience with his son's reticence. " Talk to me upon these subjects, either say that you can or you can not understand what I mean." To this he replies :

You ask me whether I can understand the feelings of returning life and apply them to my own case which you mention. I can, and I see that it applies very well to my case ; but, however, I must conclude, as I have not much more time, and I will tell you more about my feelings in my next.

P.S.—Send me word how you like Dash, and whether you perceive the faculties in him that you expected.

His " next," (at any rate the next letter that has been preserved) not having given the promised account of his " feelings," his father expresses dissatisfaction. " I don't think so well of your letter-writing as I did. I hope in your next you will answer all the questions that you are behind.

¹ *Life of Sir James Fitz-James Stephen*, p. 62.

You have now had abundance of time." His reluctance to unbosom himself on religious matters was not due to lack of affection for and confidence in his parents. Except religion, which few boys care to expatiate upon, there was no subject which he did not write about in the frankest manner. In the sayings and doings of his parents he ever took a lively interest. "I was very much pleased," he wrote to his father, "when I received your letter, and still more so when I read the news it contained, and I am very anxious to hear whether this little sister of mine is still alive and is likely to continue with us, and also to know how my mother is going on." When the baby died he expressed his sorrow, both on his parents' account and on his own. "I should be much delighted to have had a little sister to amuse when I came home."

Towards the end of 1835 he made his earliest attempt to write for the press. His description of his feelings on first seeing himself in print may be compared with what he wrote sixty years later on completing the *Synthetic Philosophy*.¹

TO HIS FATHER.

January, 1836.

But now for the subject that has been so much engrossing my mind of late ; you must know that what with my uncle writing his pamphlet, and articles in the newspapers, &c., &c., I began to think of trying my hand at writing something. Just at this juncture a new magazine² was started. . . . After some consideration I sent *an article* on those little boats which we discovered when I was trying to crystallize salt. I did not tell this to my uncle and aunt for fear that *my article* would not appear in the magazine, but now it is published, and after a little search as soon as I could get hold of the magazine, I found *my article* looking very pretty. You may imagine my delight when I first saw it. I began shouting and capering about the room until my uncle and aunt did not know what was amiss ; but they were very much surprised and pleased when I showed them *my article*. . . . And now that I have started I intend to go on writing things for this magazine now and then, and in the next number will be my second attempt. In this same number that mine was in there was a very ignorant and pre-

¹ *Principles of Sociology*, iii., preface dated August, 1896.

² *The Bath and West of England Magazine*, started in January, 1836.

judiced article on the Poor Laws, which I intend to reply to. I suppose I shall be getting quite proud very soon; indeed upon reading the above over I find that it savours a good deal of it, but I must try to strive against it as well as I can.

In his letter on the Poor Laws, which appeared in the March number, he says of the "very ignorant and prejudiced article":

There are many assertions without a proof; these I pass over; but there are also assertions directly opposed to the truth of Scripture, and to these I shall briefly allude. . . . The whole system of Man's responsibility, and of his future reward or punishment, depending upon his being "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," seems completely set aside by your reasoning.

He was getting anxious to return home and had written about it in a way his father did not like, as being discourteous to his uncle. "I think you must have misunderstood my letter and have thought that I meant more than I did; all I did mean in what I had written was that as I should have my time more at my own disposal, it would be better for me to be at home. I own that in some parts I said stronger things than I ought to have done, and that on the whole I made the thing appear more than it really was, and I am very sorry for it."

Reaching home about the middle of 1836, he lost no time in settling down to regular study, mainly in arithmetic, hand-writing, and composition. He was now between sixteen and seventeen, and the choice of a profession was becoming a matter of urgency. This had often been talked about during the preceding three years. As early as March, 1834, he had written to his father: "Aunt has been thinking that the medical profession would suit me as well as anything, and as to myself, either that or following in your steps would be what I should prefer. . . . Send me your opinion, which would be the best of the two, in your next letter." His uncle William strongly favoured teaching. His father's reply showed the characteristic want of decision when face to face with an important practical question. "After all it is a subject that more immediately concerns yourself than any one else. . . . It is a difficult ques-

tion, and one which should not hastily be answered." It was not hastily answered—remained, in fact, unanswered when he left Hinton for good. Shortly after he went home a friend suggested engineering, about which he wrote to his father, then absent on holiday: "I had not thought of it before, but since I have thought of it [I] think it would be a very eligible profession for me . . . since it is just the kind of thing for which my past studies have fitted me." He had to wait sixteen months before the opportunity arose for giving effect to the suggestion. Meanwhile, in accordance with his father's wishes, he assisted in his uncle William's school, and afterwards in that of Mr. Mather. In the *Autobiography* (i., 122-4) he discusses the probability of success or of failure had he taken to teaching. From the fact that he heads the chapter "A False Start" it may be gathered that he did not think success very probable.

CHAPTER III:

ENGINEERING.

(November 1837—April 1841.)

SPENCER had not been long on the staff of the London and Birmingham Railway, which he joined in November, 1837, before he showed that he was not to be an unthinking follower of routine. "An improvement in the colouring of the drawings of cast-iron," is mentioned in an early letter home. Within a few months he was put in charge of the approaches to the Harrow Road bridge, with about eighty men under him. It is interesting to note how, after experience in the measurement of brickwork at this bridge, the future opponent of the metric system resolved "to have a foot-rule made divided into decimals instead of into inches." "I am trying to bring decimal arithmetic into use as much as possible." What spare time he had was not idled away. "I always find myself much more comfortable and my head much clearer when I have spent part of the day in studying mathematics, so that I have made it an invariable rule lately to employ part of my time each day in that way."

His ability and conscientiousness, joined to the long-standing friendship between the Fox and Spencer families, stood him in good stead when the construction staff came to be reduced. He was offered an appointment on the Gloucester and Birmingham Railway. "The advantages of my new situation would be increased salary, great chance of promotion, having a good master to serve, and, to crown all, Mr. Fox says, if I do not like it I may come back to him. I want to have your opinion and advice about it; write as soon as possible." As usual, his father shirked the responsibility on the plea of being busy, leaving his uncle

William to send a reply, which was in favour of acceptance. When he entered upon his duties at Worcester in September, 1838, he was exercised about the wisdom of the step he had taken. "Do I stand the best chance with a downright clever man like Mr. Fox or with one more in the common way, as I understand Captain Moorsom to be?" Though annoyed to find "that, if there is much work to be done in a short time, we are obliged to remain till late in the evening," yet "the more I see of engineering the more I like it; no other profession would have suited me so well." His old drawings seemed "very rubbishing things now: I should be quite ashamed to show them as my drawings." "I believe I am considered the neatest draughtsman in the staff, though perhaps not the quickest." "We have had a controversy in the office of which I was the origin, about the proper form of a shadow," in a given case. Controversies were likely to arise among officers one of whom was so intellectually keen, so wanting in reticence, and so argumentative as Spencer. Mr. Mosse, perhaps in 1904 the only survivor of those who served with him at Worcester, writes to me: "For some eighteen months I worked with him at the *same table*. . . . Spencer's office comrades found him an agreeable man, though we thought him a little bumptious, and we chaffed him somewhat on his forthcoming book." The world presented too many serious questions to his active mind to allow of interest being taken in the frivolities of his brother officers. Discussions with his father were among his greatest pleasures, full advantage being taken of every opportunity. As if in revenge for the way he had been badgered in the Hinton days, he again and again calls his father to account for not answering his questions. His letters home were full of reflections on the problems of scientific, professional, or human interest that occupied his thoughts. "I do not know what my mother will say to such a mathematical letter as this," was a remark he might have made regarding more letters than one.

TO HIS FATHER.

19 January, 1839.

I have found out the grand principle of the projection of shadows. . . . I feel almost certain of its correctness. To

make myself still more satisfied I have made a model in paste-board and I find that the real shadow is as exactly as possible what I had made it by projection.

18 *November*, 1839.—The last drawing I have made was one for a double swing bridge of about 50 feet span from centre to centre of turnplate. . . . You may imagine that I had some difficulty in constructing it in such a manner that the two sides should remain in equilibrium on their centres; I discovered, however, a very simple and satisfactory mode of doing it which I will explain to you at Christmas. I am just about to commence another drawbridge, which is to be upon the lifting instead of the swinging plan.

4 *March*, 1840.—I am going on swimmingly with this affair of the Worcester bridge; some time after I had finished the rough drawing from the measurements I took, I received Captain Moorsom's directions to get out drawings after a certain design of his own. I, not exactly liking this plan of his and thinking that a much stronger and more economical might be adopted, was so bold as to write to him and propose a plan of my own. I rather expected that he might be angry at my being so impertinent, but, however, he took it very kindly and seems almost to prefer my plan to his own; at any rate he has desired me to get out drawings for both plans and leave it to be subsequently decided which is to be adopted.

Captain Moorsom had asked his opinion on a design for protecting the retaining wall of the old castle of Shrewsbury. This "I pretty much approved of, not seeing any better method with the same outlay of money. This evening, however, I was strolling along the banks of the Teme, making sundry observations on the effects of the stream under various circumstances, and, noting all the phenomena with the *eye of an engineer*, it struck me in connection with some of the results I then came to that a more efficient and I believe a more economical plan might be adopted in the case of Shrewsbury." Captain Moorsom, however, liked his own plan better and set Spencer to write a specification for it. "This was the first thing of the kind I had ever done, and I had no data to go by, so that I was left entirely to my own resources (just what I like)."

Towards official superiors, not less than towards fellow-officers, his critical attitude exhibited itself. Their professional ability "elicits but little praise from me or from

any one who is behind the scenes." On more than one occasion he mentions what he sarcastically calls, "a pretty bit of engineering," due, as he points out, to miscalculation or to ignorance of physical principles. His scrupulous conscientiousness made it impossible for him to take things easily. On being sent to complete sundry works that had been left undone, he tells his father: "I do not expect to have a very pleasant time of it; taking up other people's jobs is not the pleasantest thing in the world. I hear that there is a great deal to do, and if I find that there is more than I can manage or that the confusion makes me over-anxious (as I think it very likely will) I shall give it up." His anxiety in connection with the rebuilding of the bridge carrying the railway over the river Avon at Defford gave rise to the nickname "Defford" being given him by his brother officers.

"My inventive faculties" he tells his father in May, 1840, "are considerably on the increase. I have two very nice little contrivances to explain to you." One of these was called the "Velocimeter," the other the "Dynamometer"—the former for measuring the velocity and the latter for measuring the tractive force of an engine. In November he writes: "I have just invented another little instrument. . . . It is another application of that grand principle of similar triangles which I seem to be rather felicitous in making use of. The object is to reduce any quantities of one denomination to the equivalent values in another."¹ Another matter to which his inventive powers were directed was an application of electro-magnetism his father had thought of. In May, 1840, he writes: "If I have not a prospect of a good berth when my present engagement expires, I think it would be worth while to set about it in earnest." In sacrificing railway engineering for this he was of opinion that there was "very little to lose, and a great prospect of a great gain." Early in 1841 he busied himself with the apparatus for the experiment, his father urging secrecy.

For Art he had little time, but in October, 1840, he writes: "Do you know that I have been attempting to take

¹ *Autobiography*, i., Appendix D, p. 525.

profiles lately, and with much greater success than I expected." Again: "You may laugh at my taking profiles, but I can assure you that I have had considerable success."

Writing for the press was in abeyance. Soon after joining Mr. Fox's office, to an enquiry from his father whether he had sent anything to the *Mechanic's Magazine* he replied: "I have had my attention so much drawn off by other things that I had never thought of it until you mentioned it in your letter. Since then I have turned the thing over in my mind, and I think, with your approval I shall send an account of a little discovery I have made since I have been in London." The account of the "little discovery" was not sent, however; and, indeed, by 1840 he had come to think the pages of the *Mechanic's Magazine* hardly suitable for the contributions of a promising young engineer. "I do not half like the *Mechanic's Magazine*; for although it may contain some good things it has also the universal character of publishing a considerable portion of trash, which practically deducts from the credit of the sensible articles." Besides an article on "Skew Arches" in the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* for May, 1839, there was one on a "Geometrical Theorem," in the same journal for July, 1840.

His health, although occupying more of his thoughts than is usual with young men, was, on the whole, satisfactory. The interaction of body and mind is already a frequent topic. Thus, after a spell of hard work: "The effect of the over-exertion showed itself in depression of spirits and a constant feeling of dissatisfaction with myself, and a more than usual repetition of the fear (which I have occasionally felt for the last four or five years) that my mind was not so vigorous and acute, nor my memory so retentive as it once was." Early in 1840 he is convinced that increase in weight "is the cause of my having been so stupid for the last half year."

This self-depreciation is difficult to reconcile with the self-confidence he usually showed. His Dynamometer "would leave Dr. Lardner and his experiments quite in the back ground." "I don't know what Carr's is, but I can back mine for accuracy and convenience." Of his essay

1877-78
The following is a copy of the letter of the
Honorable Member that I saw in the most complete
form that has been read since the institution has been
organized. Again: "I believe that the little piece
of knowledge of the general character of the
the to manage the res. of the institution
is done in either of the following ways:

1. The first way is to have a
committee of the members of the
institution to be elected by the
members of the institution. This
committee should be authorized
to do all the business of the
institution. This is the best
way to manage the institution.
2. The second way is to have
a committee of the members of
the institution to be elected by
the members of the institution.
This committee should be
authorized to do all the
business of the institution.
This is the best way to
manage the institution.



H.S. when 19.

3. The third way is to have
a committee of the members of
the institution to be elected by
the members of the institution.
This committee should be
authorized to do all the
business of the institution.
This is the best way to
manage the institution.

4. The fourth way is to have
a committee of the members of
the institution to be elected by
the members of the institution.
This committee should be
authorized to do all the
business of the institution.
This is the best way to
manage the institution.

on the setting out of curves, read to the Engineers' Club, he flattered himself that "it was one of the most complete papers that has been read since the institution has been originated."¹ Again: "I believe that had I a little more knowledge of the general routine of business, I should be able to manage the resident engineership quite as efficiently as is done in either of the divisions of this line."

TO HIS FATHER.

11 March, 1839.

Do you know I have lately observed that in many of those things in which you always said I was deficient I am rather superior to others; for instance, you always thought I explained my ideas badly, but whenever any in the office want to have anything made clear to them they come to me because they say they can understand me best.

15 April, 1840.—Notwithstanding I am progressing on the whole pretty prosperously, I do not feel entirely satisfied with myself. I know that I might have made better use of my time in the way of study and that there have been many opportunities of improvement or of gaining information that I have let slip; and the worst part of it is that this feeling of dissatisfaction that I allude to does not seem to produce any beneficial effect.

18 January, 1841.—How often I wish now that I had made more diligent use of my former opportunities of acquiring information. Comparatively little is to be done after once entering into active life. The fatigue of body and mind and want of energy generally unfit for study even [in] the leisure moments. It is a great pity that a just estimate of the value of knowledge is only made after the means of gaining it are lost. I have about come to the conclusion that it is better that studies should be completed before entering the world, and let such entrance be made later, rather than leave much to be learned afterwards.

5 April, 1841.—My mind has been for some time past in a torpid condition, and I am looking forward to the time when I shall shake off the feeling by a vigorous course of study.

This self-depreciation does not reflect the estimate in which he was held by those with whom he worked. Captain Moorsom's opinion was given in a letter to his father,

¹ Compare *Autobiography*, i., 153.

dated 31st May, 1840, across a copy of which Spencer has pencilled: "I have sought in vain for the original of this letter among my father's papers."¹

Your son Herbert has been well brought up, which which he owes, I presume, to you, and he seems likely to make proper use of the advantage and to carry it on by carefully improving himself as he proceeds in life. He has a quick but clear and decided way of grappling with his subject so as to get the precise points carefully, and then he does not lack ability or energy to carry this subject out to its result. . . . I trust you will write to him to keep him in mind that all these matters are but secondary to the great object here, namely the provision for an endless life. . . . Herbert's domestic and gentlemanly habits appear to remove him from many temptations, and I hope the temptation of a mind trusting *on its own* strength will not be allowed to assail him.

In his father's letters during this period religious exhortation does not bulk so largely as during the Hinton period. Ready to discuss religion as a general question, Spencer continued to be proof against appeals to write about his own spiritual condition. And while there is no lack of evidence that he was inspired by a high moral ideal and endeavoured to realise the serious purport of life, there is nothing to indicate that he looked to any of the creeds for his moral standard, or to the religious emotions for the moral sanction. During his first year at Worcester he also eschewed political discussion, partly because it interfered with his work and partly because he was "quite satisfied that whatever temporary stoppages there may be in the progress of Reform, we shall continually advance towards a better state." That there were natural processes of rectification in society, was already an idea familiar to him. When, at about the age of twenty, he did take up religion and politics, his treatment of them was marked by the same disregard of convention and the same desire to get at fundamental principles as was his treatment of scientific and professional matters. His opinions are to be gathered only indirectly—from letters written by his friends, in reply to letters of his which, unfortunately, were not preserved.

¹ *Autobiography*, i., 162.

His views about an over-ruling Providence may be inferred from the letter from Miss — printed in the *Autobiography* (i., 169). E. A. B—chaffs him as to the failure of his theories of life to help him to face with equanimity the worries incident to his profession. "I am, however, very glad to find that you are not yet become quite a misanthrope in addition to your turn for hypocondriacism."

How he came to interest himself in political, social, and religious questions in 1840 can only be conjectured. In some respects it may be called a revival of an interest awakened during his boyhood at home, and kept alive at Hinton. As his prospects in engineering declined, the hereditary interest in man and society re-asserted itself; and during the last year on the railway, he was constantly discussing these questions with his brother officers and friends. It was in vain that Captain Moorsom hoped that a troublesome bit of work he had set him would do him good "by taking some of the philosophy out of him." The social and political state of the country afforded ample food for reflection. The "few remarks on education," which he wished to make public, referred, probably, to the scope and aim of education rather than to its machinery; but the increase in the Education grant and the formation of the Committee of the Privy Council, turned his attention to the relation of education to the State. In ecclesiastical matters his Nonconformist instincts and training led him to watch, here with sympathy and there with disapproval, the movements which were convulsing the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, as well as the measures proposed for dealing with ecclesiastical affairs in Ireland.

Conscious of the family failing, his father was ever warning him against outspoken opinionativeness. When the three months' notice of the termination of his engagement was received in January, 1841, it was entered in his diary: "Got the sack—very glad." In such a mood he curtly declined an offer of a permanent appointment in the locomotive service. "I refused it . . . without asking what it was"—a remark which called forth reproof from his father for his want of good manners. In these later months a change had come over his feelings towards his

chief, from whom he had received much kindness, and with whom he had been on excellent terms. This was a matter of much concern to his parents, and Spencer himself in after life regretted it.¹ The fact was that the set-back in railway enterprise injuriously affected the whole staff, and it was characteristic that he should espouse the cause of his brother officers as eagerly as if the evil had befallen himself. That he personally had little or no ground for complaint is clear from the following extract from a letter asking for a testimonial :—

TO CAPTAIN MOORSOM.

WORCESTER, 24 April, 1841.

I beg to express my sincere thanks for the uniform kindness, and consideration for my welfare, with which you have always treated me—and if at any time I have not appeared sufficiently sensible of your good wishes, I hope you will ascribe it [rather] to the want of facility of expression than to the absence of the proper feeling. I shall consider myself very fortunate if in after life I meet with so much disinterested attention to my prosperity and happiness as I have experienced during my service under you.

His circle of acquaintances was small, hardly going beyond his brother officers, with only three or four of whom he formed a friendship. Of lady friends he may be said to have had none until he met Mrs. Moorsom. He has told us in the *Autobiography* (i., 167-70) how, with the advent of a niece of Captain Moorsom's there came "an experience which was quite new to" him. Writing to her after his return to Derby, he says :—

Accept my thanks for the great kindness and good will that you have shown me during the term of our acquaintance, and believe me when I say that I shall always continue to look back upon the friendship you have shown to me as an honour, and upon the time that I have spent in your society with a mixture of pleasure and regret.

In spite of his argumentativeness, his unsparing criticisms, and the unpalatable nature of some of his opinions, his "domestic and gentlemanly habits"—to use an expression

¹ *Autobiography*, i., 157, 161, 183-5.

of Captain Moorsom's—secured him the esteem of those who knew him intimately. If not very ready to make new friends, he did not for light reasons cast off the old. He was not made to be alone. Left to himself at Harrow in 1838 he came to the conclusion that he would “never do for a hermit.” At Worcester his spirits were “apt to get low for want of society,” and he often felt “a longing for a little stirring life.” While he lived at Powick it was different. With Captain and Mrs. Moorsom's children he was a great favourite. “Since I have been at Powick I have proved the truth of that maxim ‘the way to the mother's heart is through her children’; for, in consequence, I believe, of my being a favourite with the Captain's little ones, I have become so with Mrs. Moorsom.” At no previous period had there been any opportunity of revealing that fondness for children which remained with him through life. Like the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, he was fonder of girls than of boys.

He returned home in time for his 21st birthday. Since he left it three and a half years before he had gone through a variety of experiences, which had not been lost upon him. His character had developed in numerous ways. He had secured a grasp of mathematical and physical principles, his inventive powers had enjoyed scope for exercise, he had gained a fair knowledge of certain branches of engineering and an acquaintance with the routine of important undertakings, had become accustomed to the management of men, and learnt business habits which could not fail to be useful. His official duties had cultivated his power of consecutive thinking and given him fluency and directness of composition. While affording him opportunities for theoretical speculation, his work did not divorce him from practical interests. On the contrary, it fostered that power of uniting abstract thought with concrete exemplification and illustration so noticeable in his books. Several stages of mental growth had yet to be gone through before he would be qualified to enter upon his life's work; but already the main features of his intellectual and moral character had begun to develop and the faint outlines of a few of his most pregnant ideas had appeared amid much that was yet in a chaotic condition. How the change

came about from his lack of interest in social, political and religious questions in 1839 to his absorption in them in the latter part of 1840 and the spring of 1841, does not appear. It may be that, like Cobden, his character widened and ripened quickly. Perhaps it would be too much to say that "we pass at a single step from the natural and wholesome egotism of the young man who has his bread to win, to the wide interests and generous public spirit of the good citizen";¹ but it is clear that a change did take place which was to alter the whole course of his life.

¹ Morley's *Life of Cobden*, i., 25.

CHAPTER IV.

LITERATURE WOODED BUT NOT WON.

(April, 1841—December, 1844.)

WHEN he left Worcester in the spring of 1841, Spencer had no fixed intention of giving up engineering. His immediate purpose was to assist his father in the electro-magnetic invention which was to pave the way to fortune, but which had presently to be abandoned as unworkable. To literature he was not drawn by its inherent attractiveness. Rather he was urged towards it by the need of finding utterance for a ferment of ideas "upon the state of the world and religion," his interest in which, favoured by leisure and congenial surroundings, gathered strength after his return home. His uncle Thomas was in the full tide of his reforming propaganda; and whatever energy his father could spare was devoted to work of public moment. The economical condition of the country was deplorable, and the ecclesiastical atmosphere was charged with the elements of violent disturbance. And all the time that influences were thus drawing him aside from engineering, the check to railway enterprise was rendering that profession less and less attractive.

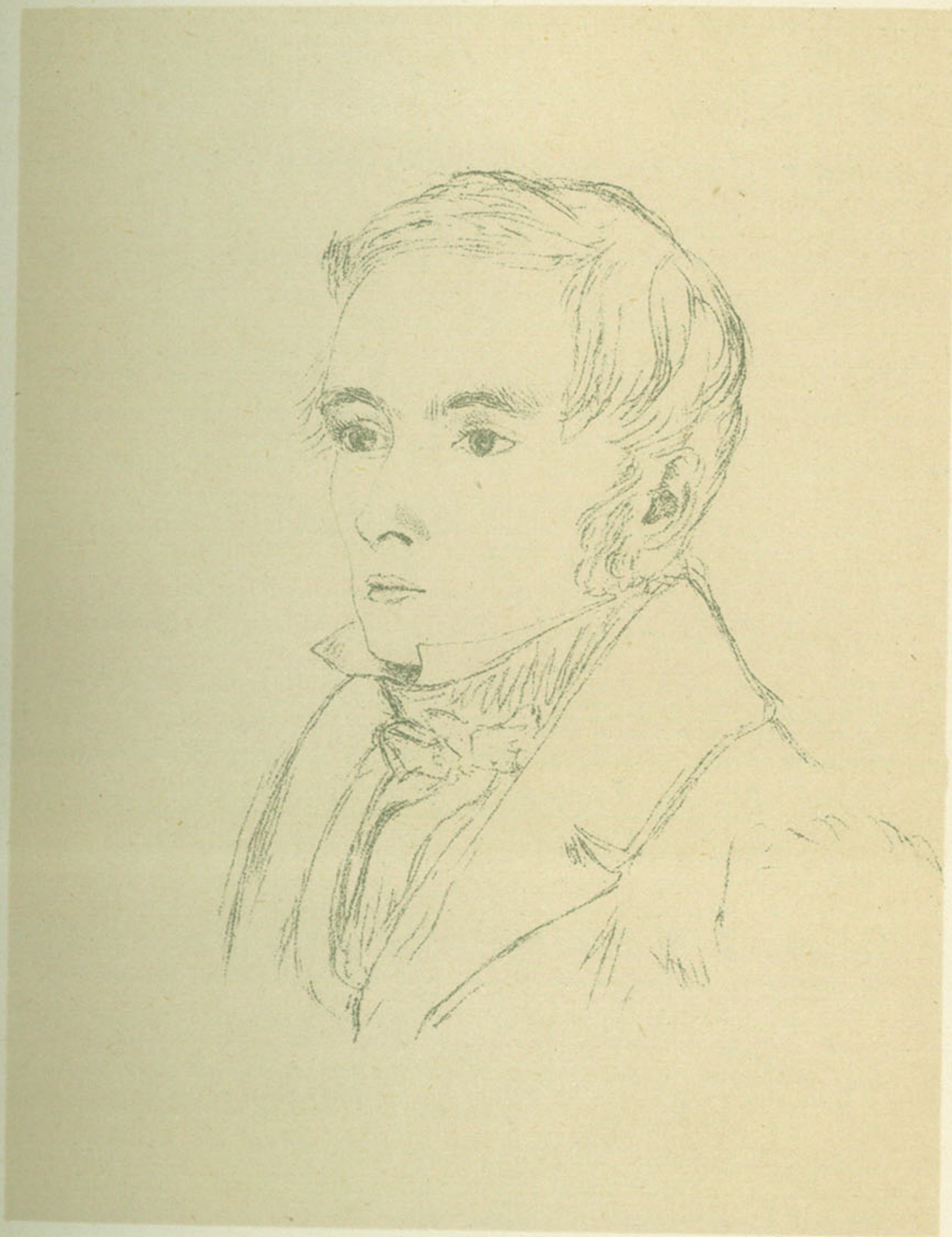
For guidance in his studies he had drawn up a "daily appropriation of time." "Rise at 5; out taking exercise from 6 to 8; sketching or any like occupation till breakfast; mathematics from 9 to 1; electro-magnetic experiments, 2 to 3; geometrical drawing, 3 to 4; French, 4 to 6; walking out, 6 to 7; tea and conversation on some fixed subject; reading history or natural philosophy, 8 to 9; writing out diary, 9 to 10.30." This was an ideal scheme, rarely, if ever, carried out in full. The electro-magnetic experiments,

NOTE.—*Autobiography*, i., chaps. xiii., xiv., xv., xvi., xvii., xviii.

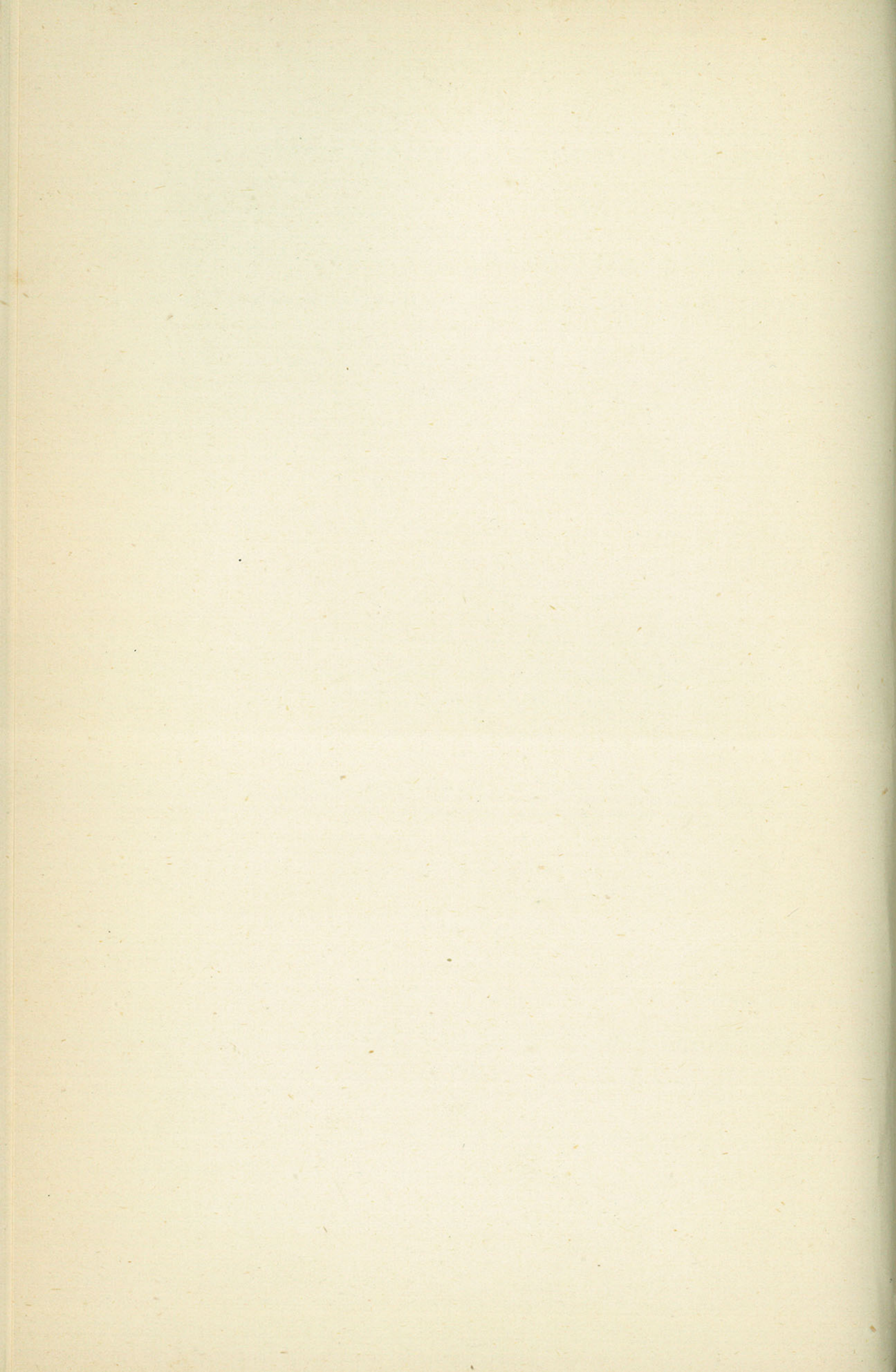
for example, almost ceased on the failure of the machine which was to work such wonders. Experiments in electro-typing and electro-chemistry were continued into the following year. At first promising, they led to nothing. Besides mathematics, geology and natural science were studied more or less fitfully. Neatly executed pen and ink drawings of some fifty different forms of leaves bear witness to his interest in botany. Carpentry, French, sketching (mostly portraiture), glee-singing, boating (generally in company with his newly-acquired friend, Mr. Lott), and fishing, were among his lighter pursuits. The portraits of Mr. Holme, Mrs. Ordish, and Mr. Lott bear witness to his skill with the pencil. His design for an economical bridge was elaborated into an article "On a new form of Viaduct." Of the article "On the Transverse Strain of Beams," his friend Jackson said: "I confess that your paper, with 'Herbert Spencer, C.E.' at the head of it, almost paralyzed me with emotion; your strides are so gigantic that they leave me far behind." As to the letters "C.E.," which do not appear in Spencer's manuscript but were inserted by the editor, E. A. B—— wrote: "I was very glad to get your explanation of the 'C.E.' in the *Engineer's Journal*, for on reading it I remarked, 'What a fool Spencer has grown!'" To guard against a repetition of the mistake Spencer told the editor: "I should prefer my name appearing in future without any professional distinction, although I have perhaps much better claim to the title of civil engineer than many who make use of it." Ambitious attempts were made in architectural design, displaying in Mr. Jackson's opinion "inventive genius rather than judicious, well-formed taste." In a paper on "Architectural Precedent," in the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, for January, 1842, "Veneration for antiquity," is described as "one of the greatest obstacles, not only to the advancement of architecture, but to the progress of every species of improvement." The cause "exists in the present system of classical education." In the July issue of the same journal appeared his paper on the "Velocimeter."¹

Into the social, political and religious discussions of the

¹*Autobiography*, i., 522, Appendix C.



GEORGE HOLME,
*from a Sketch made by Herbert Spencer,
between 1841 and 1844.*



day he threw himself with a fearless courage and a radical thoroughness characteristic of a powerful theorizing intellect untrammelled by considerations of expediency. From the letters of his friends Jackson and E. A. B—— one gathers that he was in favour “of abolishing the forms of baptism, the sacrament, ordination, &c., &c., as being unsuited to the times we live in now, and as having been only intended for the people to whom they were immediately addressed.” One learns also that he was dissatisfied with the political situation—the interests of the monarch being “not those of the people,” and the aristocracy being able to “frustrate all the attempts of the people to administer justice.” A communication criticizing the clergy of the Church of England draws from E. A. B—— the retort: “I never in all my life read such a tirade of scurrilous abuse.” Spencer had been roused to anger by the unscrupulous attacks on his uncle Thomas, some of the calumnies having been retailed in a letter from E. A. B——. He was accustomed to plain speaking from his two friends, and their criticisms never offended him, however unpalatable. “You talk,” wrote E. A. B,—— “of your power of writing a long letter with very little material; but that is a mere trifle to your facility for building up a formidable theory on precious slight foundations.” Their verdict on the phrenological examination of his head was probably what he looked for; and if not then, yet later, he would have admitted that “the 5s. might have been better spent.” E. A. B——’s characterization of him as “radical all over” was no exaggeration. His non-conformity in dress comes out in a letter to Miss —— (January, 1842).

Having patiently persisted in patronizing the practice of cap-wearing, notwithstanding the surprise exhibited by the good people of Derby at such an outrageous piece of independence and the danger of being mistaken for a Chartist leader, as I have frequently been, I have at last had the gratification of witnessing the result of my good example in the adoption of the cap as a head-dress by a good number of the young men of Derby. So that it appears that I may actually claim the high honour of *setting the fashion*.

During a visit to Hinton in May and June, 1842, he began the series of letters to the *Nonconformist* “On the

Proper Sphere of Government." However significant these letters may be in relation to his future work—however true it may be that the reception accorded them strengthened the pre-existing inclination to abandon engineering for literature—they did not in the smallest degree help to answer the question of how to make a living. A momentary gleam of hope came from a proposal to enlarge the *Nonconformist*, as well as to bring out a new periodical under the auspices of the Complete Suffrage Union; of which Mr. Joseph Sturge was at that time one of the leading spirits. The starting of a periodical on his own account was also thought of, but Mr. Sturge urged caution. Encouraged by his uncle Thomas and his father he identified himself with most of the reform movements of the day. One of these was the abolition of bribery at elections. Among his contributions there is an "Address to the Magistrates of Derby," also two drafts of an "Anti-bribery Declaration," both dated September 24, 1843. The one is put into the mouth of the Aldermen and Town Councillors of the Borough of Derby; the other is a declaration of the individual voter in parliamentary, municipal or other elections. Another product of his pen was "An Address from the Municipal Electors of the Borough of Derby to the Authorities of the Town," signed by 600 electors, protesting against the alleged interference of the magistrates in preventing a meeting advertised to be held in the theatre to hear a lecture by Mr. Henry Vincent.¹ His father was one of the deputation which presented the address, and he himself afterwards drew up a letter signed "By authority of the Committee," justifying the action of the deputation. A little later, over the name "Common Sense" he wrote a letter headed "Magisterial Interference," animadverting on the action of the magistrates with reference to a meeting to be held by Mr. Sturge in the Assembly Rooms. There is also in his handwriting copy of a Memorial from the Electors and Non-Electors of Derby, to Edward Strutt, Esq., M.P., and the Hon. J. G. B. Ponsonby, M.P., requesting them "as representatives of the Electors of this Borough in Parliament to survey the condition and prospects of our country

¹ *Autobiography*, i., 218.

with the seriousness befitting men who necessarily contribute by their position to influence its weal or woe." For a time he was secretary of the Derby branch of the Complete Suffrage Union, being also sent as a delegate to the Birmingham Conference of December, 1842. On a Draft Bill, drawn up by the Union, he has written: "I preserve this draft copy partly because of my name written on it. It was written in a state of high excitement, and is, I think, the boldest I ever wrote."¹ Here is the signature.



His mental activity may be gathered from memoranda on education, morals, politics, religion, &c., some of which were probably intended to be expanded into articles or tracts. The formation of a natural alphabet and a duodecimal system of numeration was also thought of.² A series of papers on "the machinery outcry" was projected, a draft of part of the introductory article being extant.

There is perhaps nothing that has been the origin of so many theories and conjectures as the question—What is the cause of our national distress? . . . We are perhaps the more inclined to judge thus leniently [of the many theories] because we too have our particular notions respecting this same national distress, and probably also our favourite crotchet for its removal. We conceive that the great family of ills that have been for so long preying upon the national prosperity, wasting the resources and paralyzing the energies of the people, are all the offspring of the one primary and hitherto almost unsuspected evil—over-legislation. . . . We can discover no radical remedy for our social maladies but a stringent regulation which shall confine our governors to the performance of their primitive duty—the protection of person and property. [By way of clearing the ground, he would start] by pointing out what *are not* the causes of distress. And first we propose to combat the popular notion that machinery is the main cause of our national evils.

¹ *Autobiography*, i., 219-21.

² *Ibid.*, i., 215, and p. 528, Appendix E.

Early in May, 1843, he entered on what he calls "a campaign in London," resolved to give literature a fair trial, and "not without good hopes of success," as he wrote to his mother soon after arriving in town. "You are probably aware," he writes to Miss —, "that I have pretty nearly decided to cut engineering, because, as the saying is, it has cut me—that I am directing my attention to another profession, namely, the literary, and am in a fair way of becoming one of that class eloquently termed 'the press gang.'" His first task was the publication as a pamphlet of the letters "On the Proper Sphere of Government." Towards the end of June he says: "I have been this evening 'traipsing' (as my mother would say) about London, leaving copies at the offices of the weekly Liberal papers. I also called at the publisher's and found that they were going off pretty fairly." What a serious undertaking the publication was, with his slender resources, may be inferred from the fact that the printer's account was finally settled only in April, 1845.

Within a few days of his arrival he had called on Mr. Miall.

TO HIS FATHER.

14 May, 1843.

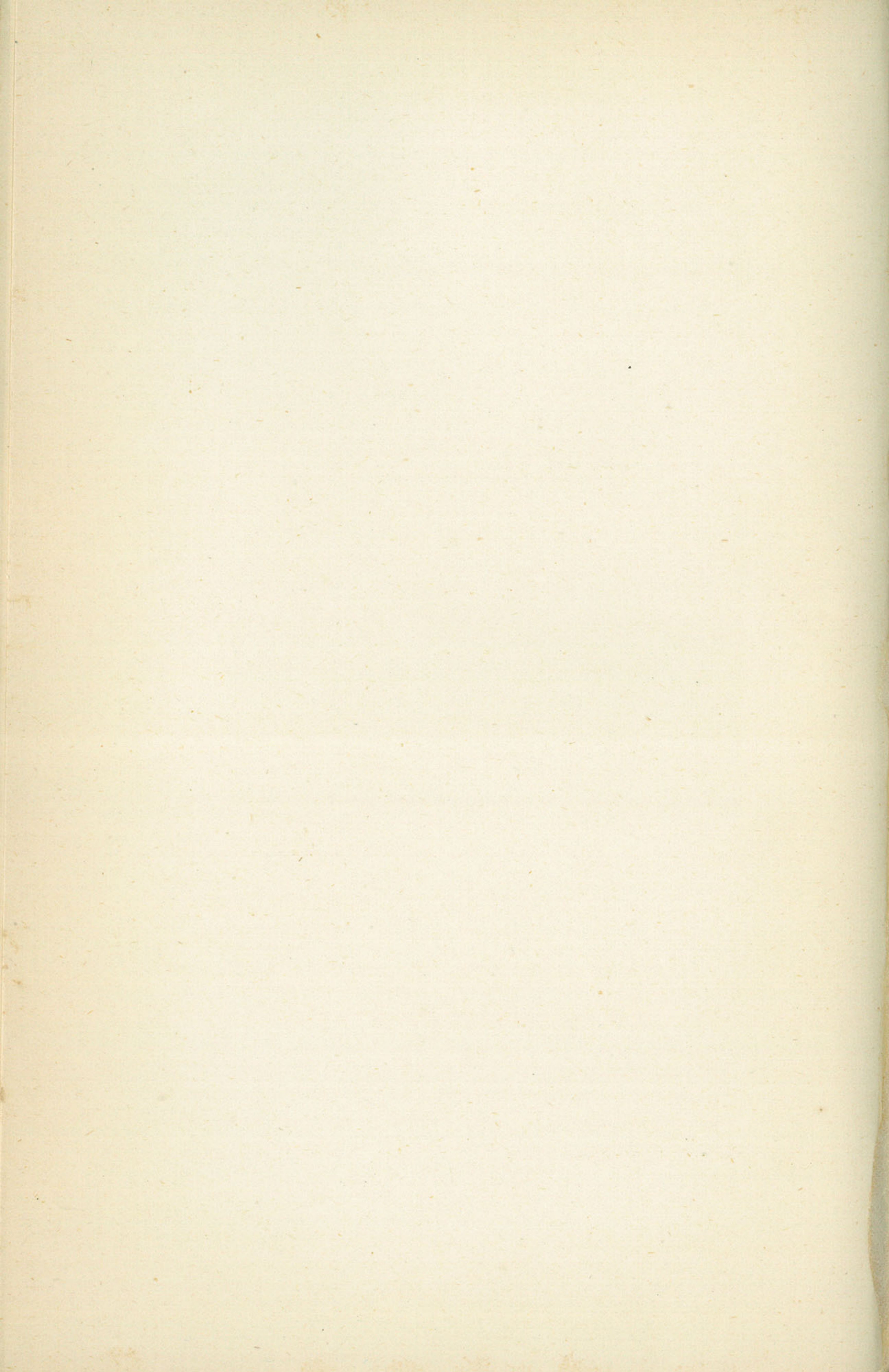
He entered into my views with a very friendly interest, and expressed himself as desirous of doing all that he could to forward my wishes. He even went so far as to say that if the *Nonconformist* had had a more extensive circulation he should have been happy to have offered me a share in the editorship. . . . He wrote me a letter of introduction to Dr. Price, the editor of the *Eclectic Review*, telling him my views and proposing me to him as a contributor to his magazine. . . . In answer to Mr. Miall's question what subject I was thinking of taking for my first article, I told him—Education.

2 June.—I do not know exactly what to think of it [the Education article] myself. It is, I think, pretty completely original, but whether it will suit the readers of the *Eclectic*, I hardly know.

28 July.—I am somewhat disheartened at the aspect which my affairs have at the present time. I see by the advertisement in the papers that my article will not appear in the *Eclectic Review* this month.



MRS. ORDISH,
*from a Sketch made by Herbert Spencer,
between 1841 and 1844.*



30 October.—I have never had any decisive answer from Dr. Price, and I must say that he has treated me rather shabbily; for of two notes I have written to him . . . he has never taken any notice of either. I intend to call in a day or two to request the return of my MS. It may after all be the best as it is, for there are ideas in it which, if I write this essay, will be of great advantage to me, and if they had been previously published it would not have been so well. . . . [A prize had been offered for an essay on Education, the judges being Dr. Venn and several Wesleyan ministers. Of the latter he was doubtful.] If they have the usual character of Wesleyan ministers, I expect that my style of treating the subject would find little favour with them. If they are men of philosophical minds I think I should stand a very fair chance, for I think there are but few that have taken the same broad views of the question, . . . many of which are new even to you.

31 October.—I found, much to my chagrin, that I had quite mistaken the character of the work, for instead of its making the question of State education the main object of the essay, it puts it in a comparatively secondary position, and directs the attention chiefly to the investigation of the American and Continental systems and other like matters of detail. I had forgotten this and had imagined that it would afford scope for a philosophical examination of the great principles of education.

His experiences with *Tait's Magazine* were not more encouraging. "I am about to commence my article for *Tait's Magazine*," he told his father (2 June): "The title is to be 'The Free-Trade Movement and what we may learn from it.'" In the course of writing he changed the title into "Honesty is the Best Policy." "The object of the essay is to show that this is equally true of nations as of individuals. There is, I believe, a better selection of illustration, figures, and simile in it than in anything I have yet written."¹

The article was not accepted, but one with the same title appeared in the *Birmingham Pilot*, during his brief sub-editorship of that paper.

His inexperience of the world comes out in a letter to his mother written soon after reaching London. "I can't

¹ In the *Autobiography* (i., 225) he says the article for *Tait* was afterwards developed into the article on "The Philosophy of Style." Perhaps he wrote a second article for *Tait*, but it is not mentioned in the correspondence.

get on in engineering without *patronage*. In literature *talent* only is required." He was soon to learn that this dictum regarding literature was by no means true.

TO HIS FATHER.

7 July, 1843.

I have had a letter from *Tait*, acknowledging receipt of my paper, but wishing to know *who I am*. I gave him some account of my circumstances and mentioned my relationship to Mr. Spencer of Hinton. I was very near saying amongst other things that I was myself in the habit of judging of things by their intrinsic merit without regarding the name of the party by whom they were written, and that I wished other persons would do the same; but I thought it might unnecessarily offend, and so I refrained.¹

His letters show that he approached the study of mental functions through the avenue of phrenology, his conclusions being reached, as he more than once is careful to mention, not theoretically only, but by observation. While writing an article for the *Phrenological Journal* on his "New Theory of Benevolence and Imitation" he began "another article in conjunction with it" on Wonder. The *Phrenological Journal*, like the *Eclectic* and *Tait*, declined his contributions. Probably he was now convinced that talent without patronage was no more powerful in literature than in engineering.

Occasionally he wrote for the *Nonconformist*. The Rebecca riots furnished the text for an article entitled "Effervescence—Rebecca and her Daughters." The incendiaries in the eastern counties suggested one on "Local Inflammations and their Causes." In "The Non-Intrusion Riots" he deals with the disturbances in Scotland, arising from "the determined opposition given by the State party to the erection of edifices for the Free Church." In an article on "Mr. Hume and National Education" he opposed the doctrine "that it is the duty of the State to educate the people."

¹ This reminds one of the "pungent little note" Carlyle thought of writing to Jeffrey on hearing nothing about his first contribution to the *Edinburgh Review*.

The pamphlet "On the Proper Sphere of Government" he describes to Mr. Lott as "political pills," or "Spencer's National Specific." "They are very good remedies for Tyranny and Toryism, and when duly digested are calculated to drive away crude notions and brace the system. So at least pretends the inventor." Replying to words of caution from his friend, he writes (14 October):—

Your remarks in reference to the inexpediency of administering "my specific" to the nation at the present time are derived from a code of moral conduct which I do not recognize. I think you have heard me say that whenever we believe a given line of conduct to be a right one, it is our duty to follow it without confusing our fallible minds respecting the probable result, of which we are rarely capable of judging. The fact that it is right should be sufficient guarantee that it is expedient; and believing this, I argue that if any proposed course of national conduct is just, it is our duty to adopt it, however imprudent it may appear. No doubt many will consider this a very silly doctrine, and perhaps yourself among the rest. When, however, you consider the changes that must take place before the *general reception* of such principles as those advocated in the "Proper Sphere of Government," and the length of time that must elapse before they can be put into practice, I think you will see that your objection respecting the unfitness of the nation will vanish. Such principles, it must be remembered, are to be carried out by moral agency. . . . Such being the case they can never be acted upon until the majority of the people are convinced of their truth; and when the people are convinced of their truth, then will the nation be fitted for them. . . . It is in this light also that I viewed the question of complete suffrage. I admit that were the people placed by some *external* power in possession of the franchise at the present moment, it would be deleterious. Not that I believe it would be followed by any of the national convulsions that are prophesied by some; but because it would put a stop to that development of the higher sentiments of humanity which are necessary to produce permanent stability in a democratic form of government. I look upon despotisms, aristocracies, priestcrafts, and all the other evils that afflict humanity, as the necessary agents for the training of the human mind, and I believe that every people must pass through the various phases between absolutism and democracy before they are fitted to become *permanently* free, and if a nation liberates itself by physical force, and attains the goal without passing through these *moral ordeals*, I do not think its freedom will be lasting.

Although taking an active part in the Anti-Corn Law, Anti-Slavery, and the Anti-Church and State agitations, he seldom spoke at meetings. Writing was more in his line.

TO HIS FATHER.

11 October, 1843.

The address which I have written for the Anti-State Church Association is now printing. The reason that it has been so long about is that although asked along with the other members of the committee to write one I could not, although I tried several times, make anything to please myself, so I left it to rest. None of those that were brought forward were liked, however, and the end of the matter was that the committee put them all into my hands, and asked me to make one from them. When I came to set about this I found, however, that this plan would not do, and so I was obliged to write an entirely new one, which was unanimously adopted. I am not by any means satisfied with it myself, however, and in fact I am getting so fastidious in matters of that kind that I hardly ever feel satisfied with what I write.

This address to the Nonconformists of England, dated October, 1843, is signed by the Honorary Secretaries, George Simmons and Charles S. Miall. Spencer's name does not appear; but on a printed copy he has pencilled: "Written by myself during my indignation phase."¹ Regarding facility in composition he tells his father: "If I improve in composition at the rate I have done I shall soon make something out. I have lately got in my head a theory of composition by the aid of which I expect to be able to write more effectually than I could [formerly do.]" This was probably the germ of the essay on "The Philosophy of Style."

His hope of succeeding in literature enabled him to bear up for a time against discouragement. At the end of the second month, though he had not made a farthing by his pen, he felt "but little doubt about succeeding in some way or other. At any rate I shall not give it up without a good struggle." Meanwhile, he accepted an engagement with Mr. W. B. Prichard to make drawings of a design for a dock at Southampton. This was finished early in October; and while waiting for the directors to decide

¹ *Autobiography*, i., 237.

about the dock, he worked on a "design for a landing pier at Dover. . . . I had a good share in the design myself, and my arrangements were in every case adopted." The temporary nature of this engagement did not disquiet him. "I have myself no desire for its continuance further than may be necessary to occupy my time until I get launched in the literary world."

He had little time for lighter pursuits or general reading. "Do you get to see *Punch*?" he asks his father. "It is a most capital publication, and I have no doubt is doing a great deal of good, seeing that it disseminates right sentiments amongst those who would never obtain them from any other source. It has lately concluded a series of most excellent articles entitled, 'The Labours of Hercules,' embodying very moral views."¹ Again: "I have been lately reading Pope's *Homer*. . . . To my taste there is but little real poetry in it. . . . it is not to be compared to Milton." He himself suffered about this time from a short attack of "the verse-making disorder, which seems to be escaped by but few of those who have any intellectual vivacity." About fifty lines of a poem on "The Cloud Spirits" are probably among the verses referred to in the *Autobiography* (i., 226).

His circumstances were unfavourable to mechanical inventiveness; but in preparing his pamphlet he "introduced a new plan of stitching." A design for an improved goods wagon was not registered because, he says, "I saw Charles Fox the last time I called, and he told me that my invention was not new." As to the success of his plan of using a steel plate for the soles of boots and shoes he had "very strong hopes."

It is pathetic to trace the disillusioning process which changed the fair picture of literary success into a dull canvas unrelieved by light or colour. A day or two after his arrival in London he wrote: "Altogether I feel very much inclined to be hopeful, and believe there is but little question as to my ultimate success." When he wrote two months later, "I feel well convinced that if I can only stand my ground for a short time I shall do," there was

¹ *Punch*, May to August, 1843.