

Reminiscences of Herbert Spencer

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THE Executors of the late Mr. Herbert Spencer desire to intimate that his remains, which in accordance with his express directions are to be cremated, will be removed from his Brighton residence early on **Monday next** the 14th inst., and be conveyed to the Crematorium at **Golder's Green, Hendon**, where the cremation will take place at **half-past twelve o'clock** the same day. Friends and others who desire to be present should assemble there at that time.

In fulfilment of Mr. Spencer's recorded wishes, it is requested that no flowers be sent; and further, that those present will not wear mourning for the occasion.

The nearest Stations to Golder's Green are the Finchley Road Stations on the Metropolitan, Midland, and North London Railways (distant about $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles); and the Child's Hill Station on the Midland Railway (distant about $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles).

As the accommodation at the Crematorium is limited, it is desirable that those who propose to attend should notify the intention without delay to the Executors, Mr. Charles Holme and Mr. Francis Lott, 5 Percival Terrace, Brighton.

10th December, 1903.

Mr H. Spencer's magnificent intellect ^{had limitations & oddities} was combined with

peculiarities of character and with ~~other limitations~~ ^{that it is almost} scarcely possible to present ^{in their due proportions}. ^{My knowledge of him was chiefly} due to a habit of spending ^{himself} ^{habitually} ^(during some years) an hour or two ^{of the afternoon} in

the then smoking room of the Athenaeum Club, where ^{quiet} we conversed ^{much}. He was always interested in my various ^{hobbies} ~~ideas~~ and I ^{received} ~~felt~~

general great benefit ^{from} his criticisms, though I did not always accept them. Let me say parenthetically, that the diminishing

number of friends who ^{care for} ~~would take interest in~~ my work and ^{fearlessly} ~~freely~~ speak their views, is to me one of the ~~chief~~ ^{chief} disadvantages of age.

~~At one time~~ ^{long ago} I could go into the Club and talk with that man on the subject in which he was expert, & with that

man on that; now it is all changed. Moreover the ^{relatively} young are ^{too} diffident in ~~speaking freely~~ ^{commenting} ~~on~~ ^{as freely} ~~their views~~ ^{holding & giving the arguments} of ~~them~~ ^{much more elderly} ^{friends} ~~conversing~~, so ^{wholesome correction} ~~much~~ is lost to him.

H. Spencer had assuredly no diffidence in criticizing others, ^{though he} ~~was~~ was very ~~sensitive~~ ^{thin skinned} ^{under} the converse process. He ~~disliked~~ ^{hated} ^{being} ^{argued with}, and wicked

friends ^{asserted} said, not without ~~some~~ ^{grounds} of reason, that when he began

F. 2v



felt worried, he ~~put his~~ ^{the fool} fingered his pulse and said ^{chaffly}
 "I must ~~not~~ ^{no} talk ~~any~~ more", for he was far too ⁱⁿ opinionated
 for candid argument. ^{collegial story} ^{then} I think characteristic. Some
 year ago when I was actively engaged in meteorology, he said
 to me that we were all wrong ^{though} not taking ^{carefully} ⁱⁿ ^{sufficient} account,
 preceding temperatures ^{in forecasting weather} that the earth became chilled by ⁱⁿ long
 continued frost & ^{the} store of cold ought to be recognized, in ^{weather}
^{and conversely the effect of} forecasts, ^{the} He said he would write me a letter on the
 subject, which he did, ^{and} at length. My reply was to the effect
 that the influence ^{was not wholly neglected; that it} in question, was a vera causa, but far
 less important than that of change ^{of wind}, from a cold to a warm
 wind, or vice versa as shown by the suddenness ^{with rapid} of ^{thaw} &
 frosts, ^{often set in} ^{thaw}, & especially by the well known effects
 of the ^{growth of} ~~first~~ wind on Alpine snow. He was clearly
^{imperfectly acquainted with the subject,} ^{stuck rigidly to his preconceived} ^{conclusion} ^{afterwards} ^{the contents of}
^{uninformed} but for all that he published his letter (at the
 moment I forget where) without any recognition of the ^{facts that led to} ^{arguments}
 against his ^{insert Jan. 14} ^{was} ^a most impracticable ^{administration} when put to the
 test. Thus, there were great complaints at the Athenaeum Club of
 the way in which the dining room was managed. He, I, and one of

the chief ^{of the} malcontents happened to be members of its Committee at the time. ^{Spencer} ^{is dealing with kind matters} he argued that ^{his} experience, was of ^{comparatively little} ~~more~~ less importance than ability, adducing ~~some interesting~~ ^{in confirmation} ~~examples~~ ^{of three} and finally carried his proposition that a Sub Committee should be appointed with large powers, ^{that of the} to consist of himself & the malcontent, ^{that I ought to be telling} and ~~myself~~ ^{as the third} ^{personally} being ~~presumably~~ unfettered ^{by} and presumably ^{having} ~~with~~ ^{I did not much like the look} ~~kindness~~ ^{but accepted}. We met, and a most comically inefficient group we proved to be. There was ~~something~~ ^{always} ~~to what~~ ^a I may call ^{continual} ~~any~~ ^{opinions} ~~pervercity~~ ^{views} with reason in it and yet it was a defensible perversity (in Spencer's ^{He} ~~that~~ ^{view}), that gave what seemed to myself, a disproportionate weight to small ^{questions} ~~matters~~ treating them as ~~matters~~ ^{to be discussed at length with ponderous words} questions of deep principle, with the result that we hardly got on at all. ^{I recalled one} ~~There were some amusing scenes too,~~ ^{Our butcher} ~~but the purpose of meet,~~ a very gentlemanly looking well dressed butcher, was summoned to be admonished, ^{by the chairman} as to the quality of ~~the~~ ^{his} beef. ~~He~~ I forget exactly the words of the charge ^{of the committee} preferred against him by Spencer, to which ^{the butcher} ~~he~~ ^{rebutted in a very} ~~he~~ ^{satisfactory} ~~to himself~~ ^{with a show of} ~~in a~~ ^{fair} ~~to which~~ ^{Spencer} ~~Spencer~~ ^{with severity,} ~~you seem not to have understood the~~ ^{replied,} ~~you seem not to have understood~~ ^{what are the} ~~the~~ ^{nature of} ~~our~~ ^{complaint,} ~~that~~ ^{your} ~~beef~~ ^{beef} has too large a proportion of cellular tissue. ~~At the~~ ^{At the} ~~butcher~~ ^{fairly} ~~collapsed~~ ^{under the weight} ~~of this~~ ^{unjust} ~~accusation,~~ ^{that he could not comprehend} ~~but~~ ^{obviously} ~~believed~~ ^{that it might} ~~to be~~ ^{obscure} ~~in some way~~ ^{justified}.

Another ^{meteorological} view to which he clung, which in a narrow sense is right but in a broader sense is wrong, was that ~~the fact of~~ ^{the fact} the weather having been, say, ^{dry} ~~being~~ ^{average} beyond the ^{in some particular place,} for some months, was no justification for the ^{popular} belief that the deficiency ^{in rain} would be made up later. He insisted on treating the past and future weather as independent variables, which they are not. Local ^{deficiencies in one place} ~~disturbances~~ ^{in other} ~~show that~~ testify to local excesses ~~elsewhere~~ and as the whole atmosphere travels on there is ~~some~~ ^a tendency for the ~~one~~ ^{one} to ~~take the place of~~ ^{replace} the other. ^{and for averages to be maintained} Again another instance. One day he spoke with ^{surprised} concern to me about ^{his learning that} the ~~current~~ weight of scientific belief being ^{was} opposed to the inheritance of acquired faculties, ^{for} if ~~that were true~~ ^{they were not inherited} much of his scheme of evolution would be invalidated. ~~which he seemed to treat as an impossibility~~ I spoke of many observations, by which ~~that inheritance of acquired faculties~~ ^{it seemed to be} ~~was~~ disproved, but he never I believe consented to go thoroughly ^{or with plain mind} into this question. ^{although it is} ~~He took serious confidence in his theory.~~ I am inclined to think that he ^{unconsciously} gave almost as much logical weight ^{one of his own} to deductions as he would to a well observed fact. His over tendency to a priori reasoning ^{has been} ~~is~~ fully recognised. ~~An~~ amusing instance was that He came to me one day, to have impressions taken of his fingers, I being ^{at that time} ~~then~~ ^{being} much occupied with

with finger prints. I ~~reverted~~^{spoke} in our ignorance of the
 object of the ^{papillary} ridges, which form the peculiar patterns on the bulbs
 of the fingers & which ~~are~~^{are} closely connected with the ^{ducts of the} sudoriferous ^{glands} glands. He said, you ~~set to work to study~~^{did not} the subject in the
~~wrong way~~^{wrong way}. You should consider the ^{being and delicate, they therefore require the protection of} function of the ~~and delivery~~^{and delivery} of
 the mouths of the ducts, and the necessity of their being guarded
 by the ridges, and ^{he} enlarged with ^{much} elaboration on ^{the consequences of their necessity} their point. I ^{widely}
 allowed him to finish, and then replied, your argument ^{was} most
 convincing but ^{it} unfortunately ~~for~~^{it} happens that the mouths ~~are~~^{do}
~~not~~^{open out} ~~situated~~^{in the valleys}, ^{where they might be protected but} ~~but~~^{are} open out along the crests
 of the ridges in the most exposed position possible. He burst
 out a good humoured fit of laughter & then ^{repeated} ^{upon well knowing} told me the following
 story about himself, which curious enough I had also heard
 from the other two persons present at the time. ^{My version is more dramatic than that in the facts themselves} They were
 three, Huxley ^{as his target}, being me, dining at the Club. In course of
 conversational banter Spencer said, you would little think ~~that~~
~~that~~ when I was young I wrote a tragedy. Huxley ^{instantly} ~~instantly~~
^{cried out with} I know its plot. Spencer indignantly decried the possibility
 of his ^{knowing} it. ^{He} ~~said~~^{had} never shown the tragedy to any one, ^{before then} ~~and~~^{had not}
 (even spoken ~~before~~^{of its existence}). Huxley persisted, and being ^{challenged} ~~asked~~

with finger prints. I expressed to him I remarked on the
importance hitherto of discovering the reasons of the several patterns
formed by the ridges, what caused them in this case to form a loop,
* in that a whorl, & so on. He said, you ought to begin by
considering -



to tell ^{the plot of} ~~it~~ ^{the} ~~long~~ ^{the} ~~thing~~ ^{large} was of a beautiful deduction
 being killed by an ugly little fact. ^{He} ~~He~~ had never seen a race, so I trusted
 with him to ~~Spencer~~ ^{see the} ~~Derby~~ ^{and the} ~~clerk~~ ^{clerk}, but large headed Don of
 a college, ~~Don~~ ^{Don} ~~to go to~~ ^{rather a} ~~It was an insignificant~~ ^{Spencer} ~~Spencer~~ ^{wanted} ~~light~~
~~darkness~~ ^{at the end} ~~he~~ ^{after careful thought} ~~summed up~~ ^{under three heads} ~~his impressions~~
 First that it was just what he had expected; Secondly that ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~crowd~~ ^{crowd} was a
 nasty object, like flies on a plate; thirdly that he could never go again, - but
 that he did ^{as I was assured} ~~and~~ ^{the} ~~very~~ ^{next} ~~year~~ I thought him a
 man of naturally a very strong constitution, ruined by overwork. When about
 to utter ~~unfavourable~~ ^{unfavourable} remarks he was apt to ^{clear his throat} ~~preface~~ ^{them} by a deep cough or ~~hew~~
 that testified to a powerful chest. ^{His natural strength is shown} ~~His~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~
intestines by the account of his extraordinary walk, when a boy of 13, ^{while he was} ~~and~~ ^{half}
 staid, of more than 40 miles the first day, 40 the second, and 20th the third, which
 took him to his destination.

The ^{mental process} ~~process~~ that I most admired in him was that of his by which he
 proceeded. It is too common for persons to arrive at general conclusions
 through ^{unchecked} ~~unchecked~~ ^{unchecked} steps, so that when asked for evidence they cannot give it.
 Dr. Spencer had always a store of facts at hand whenever he wished to justify
 himself. His wealth of ready illustration was marvellous. The ~~the~~

Notwithstanding my admiration of his intellect and my sense of incompetence
 to treat subjects in the wide manner that he did so easily, I cannot say that
 I have profited much ^{or benefited in them} by his writings. I never rarely felt any "forwarded"
 for reading them, least so in subjects with which I was ^{so much} familiar and ^{fully} capable
 of criticizing his results. In this I am far from being singular. In saying
 this, ^{as far as} those with whom I have talked on the matter ~~admitted~~ do not
 seem to ^{admit} his work whole-heartedly and ^{may have then expressed} seem to wonder how far their own
 opinion will be justified by the judgement of posterity.

1. Limitation my knowledge of his with English word. (disadvantage of age)
2. Distorted argument - Chilled Soil
3. Howell Chiles 1
4. Accuracy, exactitude of results
5. Foreign phrase - a tragedy
6. The body - Has naturally a strong and. Power of generalization
7. I have not profited much through his writings

Reminiscences of H. Spencer

Wrote first draft of

What I afterwards sent to W. Duncan

