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HERBERT SPENCER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.*

THE autobiography of a great man, the publication of which during his lifetime is expressly interdicted by him, unavoidably raises the question as to the possibility of disinterested action. Mr. Spencer has, indeed, in his 'Autobiography' discussed the motives that prompted his work, and has shown that egoism and altruism are inextricably mixed in the composition of these motives. But he speaks only of his philosophical works, all of which appeared during his lifetime, and in which he may, therefore, be supposed to have a personal interest. But here is a work of no mean proportions, in which he knew he could take no interest after it appeared. In many cases the motive may be explained by the belief on the part of the authors that they will continue to exist and remain cognizant of all that is to take place, and will, therefore, know just what the effect of their action is to be upon the world at large. But no such motive can be alleged in the present case, for he himself says: 'as I have no belief in anything to be gained in another world, it can not be otherworldliness that moved me'; and again: 'with death there lapses both the consciousness of existence and the consciousness of having existed.' This is not the place to discuss such a question, but in the minds of many it can not be suppressed.

The 'Autobiography' of Herbert Spencer must not be regarded as a mere pastime and incidental episode in his career, but as

* Two volumes. New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1904, 8°.