

## FIRST PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION.\*—II.

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THE fundamental principle of Mr. Spencer's theory of Education, as we have already said, consists in a special application to that subject of the general principle of evolution, which has guided his fruitful investigations and governed his far-reaching speculations in other and higher fields of thought. It is, to say the least, doubtful how far we shall advance the object which we now have in view, of bringing his work on Education more generally into notice among those who are most concerned in its subject in this country, by making this avowal at the outset. We are only too well aware of the unpleasant, if unreasonable associations which, even at this late date, cling in Canada around both Mr. Spencer's name and the philosophical hypothesis with which it is inseparably connected. Into the merits of such a vast and perilous question as whether the prejudice which undoubtedly exists is justified or unfair, we should not consider this a fit place for entering, even had we less limited space at our command. We would merely suggest that, however strong the prejudice may be in Canada, it has been and will be quite powerless to prevent Mr. Spencer's book exerting a very remarkable influence elsewhere; that however much his work may be neglected here, it is being rapidly sold and eagerly read at this moment in England, as it has been in

the United States ever since its first publication there, and as translations of it have been in most of the countries of Europe.† It is to be hoped, therefore, that Canadian educators will not suffer a mere prejudice against a name to isolate them from the most advanced of their fellow-workers in other quarters of the globe, or to debar them from participation in the results of perhaps the most profound thought, and the most philosophical treatment, which have been brought to bear on the subject of education for many years.

Having in our last paper outlined the first chapter of Mr. Spencer's work, in which he demonstrates that the knowledge of most worth is Science, we will now resume our summary at the second chapter, which deals with Intellectual Education.

Mr. Spencer considers that the common characteristic of all the most prominent improvements in education during the last fifty years, is an increasing conformity to the methods of nature. "We are on the highway," he thinks, "towards the doctrine long ago enunciated by Pestalozzi, that alike in its order and its methods, education must conform to the natural process of mental evolution; that there is a certain sequence in which the faculties spontaneously develop, and a certain kind of knowledge which each

\* "Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical." By Herbert Spencer, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1871.

† The *London Academy*, of Dec. 28th, says that within a couple of months almost all the copies of the cheap edition recently published in England have been sold off, and that a fresh issue is contemplated.