The life of George Combe, author of "The constitution of man"

Gibbon Charles
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Author: Gibbon Charles

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THE LIFE

OF

GEORGE COMBE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN."

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

IN TWO VOLS.

VOL. I.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1878.

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ERRATA.

Vol. I., Page 32, twelfth line from top, for "persume," read presume.

          "2, eighth line from foot, for "£2," read £20.

          "216, fifteenth line from top, for "mers," read mere.

          "229, fifteenth line from foot, for "Abraham," read Abram.

Vol. II., Page 371, fifteenth line from foot, for "Peterkin," read "Dr James Browne."
Few men have left such ample materials for a biography as George Combe; and if the whole man is not revealed in the following pages, the fault is entirely due to the biographer. Profound faith in the importance of Phrenology and in the philosophical and educational theories he evolved from it,—which constituted the chief interests of his life,—induced Mr. Combe to preserve all letters addressed to him in relation to these subjects. He made no selection, but preserved with equal care those containing praise and those containing blame. From 1820 he kept copies of all his own letters; these occupy eleven large quarto volumes of 700 to 800 pages each, and six smaller volumes which he used when travelling. In addition, he left thirty journals, in which he recorded the chief events of his life, the ideas that occurred to him for use in his works, and, occasionally, extracts from the books he read which had any bearing on the subjects of his thought. My endeavour has been: first, to tell the story of his life as nearly as practicable chronologically and in his own words; second, to show the growth of his mind and character with as few repetitions as possible; and third, to keep the
exposition of the mass of materials presented to me within moderate bounds, without sacrificing anything characteristic of the man or his principles.

I am greatly indebted to Sir James Coxe, the nephew of Combe, familiar with his ways and doctrines, and editor of the last edition of his works; to Mr John Ritchie Findlay, who was an intimate friend; and to Dr Arthur Mitchell,—three of Mr Combe’s Literary Trustees,—for their assistance in revising the proof sheets, and for their valuable corrections and suggestions.

For the convenience of readers, a brief explanation of the Phrenological terms used in the work is given in the Appendix, No. II.

CHARLES GIBBON.

GROVE HOUSE, CHAMPION HILL,
LONDON, 14th January 1878.