

ESSAYS  
SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE

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# ESSAYS

## SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

*εἰρητικὸν εἶναι φασὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν.*

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TO  
**Miss Margot Tennant,**  
IN MEMORY  
OF LONG DARK WINTER NIGHTS  
AT DAVOS,  
MADE LUMINOUS  
BY WITTY CONVERSATION.

## PREFACE.

THE epithets, speculative and suggestive, have not been given to these Essays without due consideration. Written in the isolation of this Alpine retreat, they express the opinions and surmisings of one who long has watched in solitude, "as from a ruined tower," the world of thought, and circumstance, and action. To such an one it may, perhaps, be pardoned if he prove a trifle whimsical in speculation and fantastic in suggestion. I am aware that the first, second, and sixteenth Essays will be judged, by many who may read them, to exceed the bounds of that critical common-sense which is recommended in the third. Possibly my prolonged seclusion from populous cities and the society of intellectual equals—a seclusion which has lasted now, with short and occasional interruptions, through twelve years—the renunciation of ambitious aims and active interests implied in such a life, and the peculiar influences to which those are subjected who spend a seven months' winter, year after year, among white snow-drifts and inhospitable, storm-swept mountains, have bred in me a mystical habit of regarding man's relation to the universe. In these conditions, and forced by broken health to meditate upon the problem of approaching death, a student comes insensibly to think more of nature and the world, less of humanity and self, than when he is swimming down the stream of competitive existence. The particular