

tion, but drifted into it naturally from the necessity of the situation. And, as afterwards transpired, it was fortunate that this was true.

(To be continued.)

BOOKS

CARPENTER ON WHITMAN.

Days with Whitman. By Edward Carpenter. Published by the Macmillan Company, New York, 1906. Sold by The Public Publishing Company, Chicago. Price \$1.50, net.

It is nearly ten years since there appeared in the "Progressive Review" of London, an admirable magazine which survived for only a twelvemonth, two articles by Edward Carpenter describing two visits to Walt Whitman at Camden. I read them at the time and carefully filed them away, for they seemed to me to give the best account that I had seen of the old poet. I have often wondered that they did not make their reappearance in more permanent form, and now at last this has happened, and in "Days with Whitman" Mr. Carpenter has printed not only these two essays but a number of other new ones giving his impressions of Whitman and his work.

Edward Carpenter ranks among the first few admirers, friends and disciples of Whitman. No one has more fully felt the influence of the good, grey poet; no one has fallen more deeply under the sway of his magic, but notwithstanding all his ardent appreciation, he is distinguished from other panegyrists of his subject by the fact that he never loses his critical faculty nor his sense of humor. Whitman is for him one of the half-dozen greatest names in the history of human thought, but he does not for that reason raise him above the region of fallibility, nor does he deem it *lèse-majesté* to consider his faults. It is Carpenter's insight and sanity that give to this book of his a value quite out of proportion with its length and pretensions.

Whitman has suffered a good deal from his commentators, including himself. Disciples must be a sore trial to a man with a sense of the comic, but Whitman was his own disciple and commentator, and never was there a man who gave a less coherent account of his own greatness than he did. The oracle at Delphi has wisely left no explanation of the divine afflatus, and Whitman, I think, instead of pressing ever forward, was induced by the atmosphere of adoration which surrounded him, to dwell a little too much upon himself and his work, and to try to explain what he could not explain. A man should never be his own disciple. He should always be advancing beyond himself. Above all, he should not analyze his inspirations. Whitman's declaration, for instance, that but for the Civil War, "Leaves of Grass" would never have been written, when as a matter of fact the first edition, containing all his essential message, appeared a year before the war began, is an example of the inadequacy of his comment, and Carpenter very plausibly shows how the old poet was mistaken, too, in his minimizing the influence of Emerson upon himself. I think it

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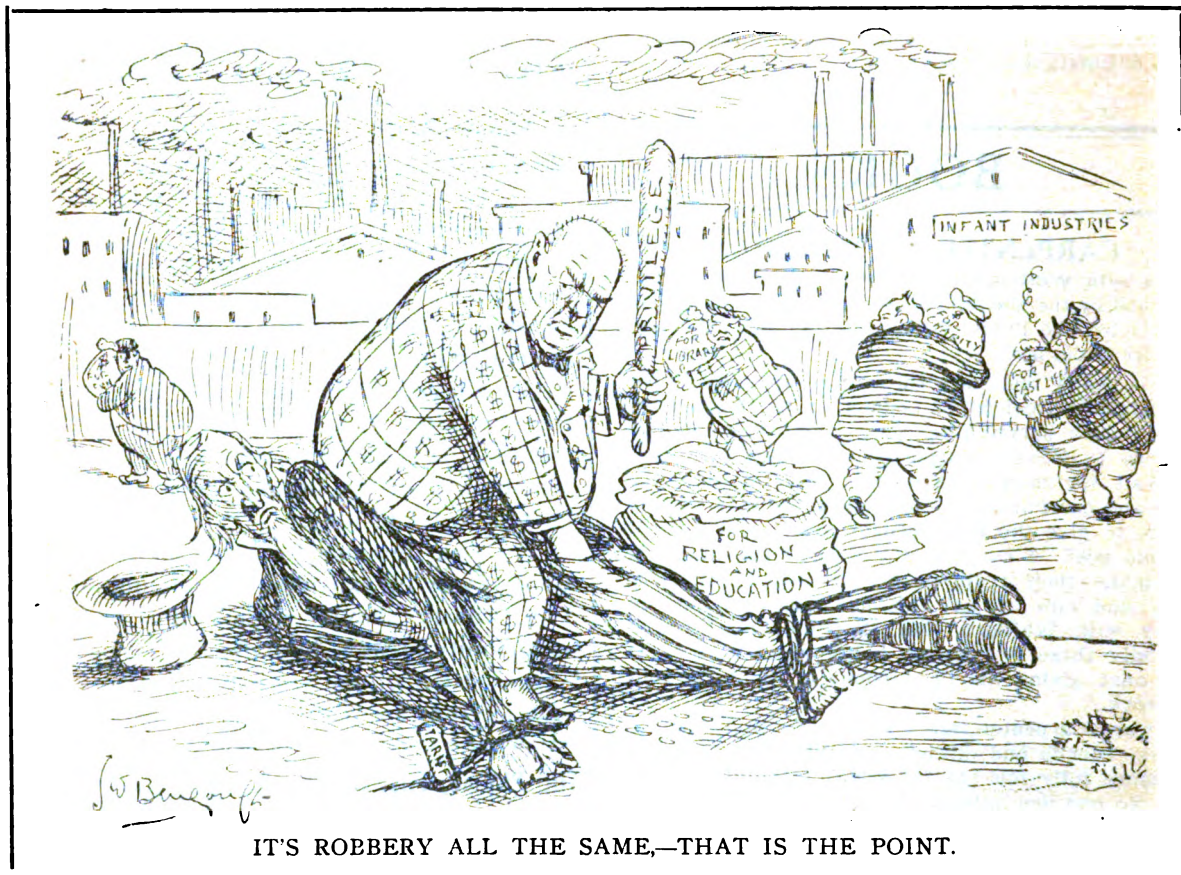
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IT'S ROBBERY ALL THE SAME,—THAT IS THE POINT.

is a safe general rule, even for men of great genius, not to talk about themselves, unless indeed the self-dissection is intended to have a pathological interest as in the cases of St. Augustine, Rousseau and Amiel; and Whitman was the least introspective of men,—thoroughly normal and healthy in mind.

Some of Carpenter's explanations are perhaps a little forced. In excusing Whitman's use of Emerson's famous letter, he insists that we are much looser in such matters in America than in England. It is certainly a most disagreeable habit, that of printing private letters, and it adds a new penalty to the art of correspondence; but when I try to remember typical instances of bad taste in this regard, I am at once reminded of Froude's treatment of Carlyle and the publication of the Browning love-letters, and can call to mind no American case whatever. It will not do to attribute Whitman's idiosyncrasies to American customs. A recent German writer, referring to Whitman's habit of kissing men, says that this is the ordinary practice in the United States and that it must not be judged from European standards!

Carpenter lays special emphasis upon the contradictions in Whitman's character, showing the results of vast internal conflicts, his "imperious craving for human love and fellowship" contending with his natural aloofness and wilfulness. It seems to me that this "tragic element" is one of the chief keys to the understanding of Whitman and that it has been

missed by many of his expositors. And it is natural that Carpenter should give a more rational and complete account of Whitman than most of his predecessors, for the reason that like Whitman he is a mystic with all that the name implies, and, unlike Whitman and most of his admirers, he is also a man of scientific training, a former lecturer on science in University-extension work, and enjoying a distinct appreciation of the comic aspects of life. I sometimes wonder if this sense of the comic is compatible with the highest type of mind. There is no trace of it in the Gospels nor in the great literature of India nor in "Leaves of Grass." Tolstoy shows no signs of it nor does Emerson. But my bull-terrier, Bobs, is full of it, and enjoys a joke as well as anyone. The sense of the comic may be a vulgar animal trait, but it is some consolation for the lack of the highest genius, and I heartily wish that men who write about great men were always supplied with it.

ERNEST CROSBY.

PAMPHLETS

Socialism and Christianity.

In "Socialism the Physical Form of Christianity" (Minneapolis), Harry M. Wagner, makes Swedenborgianism the basis of his socialism. While he therefore condemns the materialistic hypothesis of so-