

## THE LAST YEARS OF EDWARD CARPENTER†

By CHUSHICHI TSUZUKI\*

In the autumn of 1921 Henry S. Salt prepared a short biography of Edward Carpenter at the request of the editor of *The Times* 'for use "eventually"'. 'I told the sub-editor', he wrote in a letter to his friend Bertram Lloyd: 'that there was no hurry, as there was a prediction that E.C. would live 200 years, and he said that he hoped he would, esp. if he has a life-annuity'.<sup>1</sup> Certainly there was no hurry, for Carpenter was in good health for his age (77 at the time), and it was nearly eight years after it had been written that his obituary article was printed in *The Times* of 29 June 1929, though inevitably 'touched a little, it would seem, towards the end'.<sup>2</sup>

Carpenter, one of the few outstanding personalities in the revival of Socialism in England in the eighteen-eighties, had a long span of life behind him, glimpses of which would provide a useful clue in appreciating the tangled issues in his last years that were now anxiously watched by the one who awaited his end. Apart from his volume of Whitmanesque poems *Towards Democracy*, Carpenter as a Socialist will be remembered largely for his daring assertions in his 'Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure'. In a lecture and a book under the same title (1889) he attacked property-based civilisation as 'a disease' that destroyed unity of man and nature and shocked George Bernard Shaw the Fabian and H.M. Hyndman the Marxist who both believed in civilisation and its inevitable growth into Socialism. 'To-day it is unfortunately perfectly true', declared Carpenter, 'that Man is the only animal who, instead of adorning and beautifying, makes Nature hideous by his presence'.<sup>3</sup> He expanded a theory of man's alienation under the influence of property: alienation from nature, from his true self and from his fellows. The two remedies he suggested were 'a return to nature and community of human life', and he advocated 'two movements - towards a complex human Communism and towards individual freedom and Savagery . . . balancing and correcting each other'.<sup>4</sup> He sought to inspire local Socialist bodies in the North with the gospel he had thus formulated, and contributed to the great upsurge of their evangelicalism that brought into existence the Independent Labour Party in 1893. He as ever shunned national politics as he preferred 'personal politics' or direct democracy in action in a small local community, in his chosen havens of Sheffield and Millthorpe. At a time when Keir Hardie and his associates in the ILP seemed to make the new party another sect in the Socialist movement, Carpenter began to plead for 'larger Socialism' in which all the unions and co-ops, all the Socialist sects and parties would endeavour 'to carry on the life of the

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† The following article has been prepared as a sort of Appendix to my study of the subject, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Prophet of Human Fellowship*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

<sup>1</sup> H.S. Salt to B. Lloyd, 1 Nov. 1921, Henry Salt Papers, Hitotsubashi University.

<sup>2</sup> H.S. Salt to B. Lloyd, 29 June 1929, Salt Papers.

<sup>3</sup> E. Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (London, 1906 ed.), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 35, 49.

People, by & for the People' and 'to render Labor free, pleasant & useful'.<sup>5</sup> His 'larger Socialism' in fact meant an idealistic and evangelical form of united front of the whole labour movement, but he rather despaired of its immediate success in view especially of an isolated position that was forced upon him as a result of his naturalism which was not popular among the 'Philistines' and also of his courageous but lonely defence of the Walsall Anarchists in 1892 who had been driven into an attempt to manufacture bombs by an *agent provocateur*.

He now identified himself increasingly with the Humanitarian movement that was launched by Henry S. Salt and his wife Catherine (Kate). The Salts shared Carpenter's naturalism and his advocacy of the simple life, and this was the reason for Henry's resignation from Eton College where he had taught and had come to regard his fellow masters as 'cannibals in cap and gown'. Kate was the sister of J.L. Joynes, a fellow master, who had lost his job at Eton for his sympathy with Henry George and had done much work in the early SDF. In 1891 Henry Salt founded the Humanitarian League which took up such seemingly faddist causes as anti-vivisection and anti-vaccination, vegetarianism and anti-cruel sports, and conducted serious campaigns for prison reform and for the abolition of capital punishment. Carpenter assisted the League, preparing pamphlets and speaking at its meetings to promote its aims. Humanitarianism, indeed, appeared to him to provide a practical approach to overcome civilisation by regaining the unity of man and nature in an effort to rescue dumb animals as well as human outcasts.

Carpenter felt that next to hunger, sex was the most primitive and imperative human needs and that the time had come to liberate sex from the inhuman restraints of law and custom, especially male homosexuality from the legal enactment of 1885 which made it wholly criminal. In the course of 1984-5 he flung on 'waiting heads' what Edith Ellis, the wife of Havelock Ellis, called 'sex bombs', a series of four pamphlets, on sex-love, woman, marriage, and 'homogenic love' respectively in a free society. These were really pioneering works at a time when in the words of John Addington Symonds 'we have no theory which is worth anything upon the differentiation of the sexes, to begin with'.<sup>6</sup> Carpenter's study, as it was amplified and reissued under the title of *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) and again republished in a volume called *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), had a profound seminal influence upon some of the notable literary figures such as Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster.

In 1913 he met E. Bertram Lloyd, an ILP member. Lloyd had once taught literature at Toynbee Hall and had spent some years on the continent, visiting among other places Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin. Carpenter himself had by now acquired an international fame through publication of his works in Germany and America. Lloyd, a keen naturalist and a vegetarian, was also helping Henry Salt in the Humanitarian movement.<sup>7</sup> He now assisted Carpenter in founding the British Society for the Study of Sex-Psychology which continued to meet during the Great War, dealing with such topics as 'War and the Objects of the BSSP' and 'Soldiers & Sex Trouble'. On the progress of its work, he wrote to Carpenter, saying that Mary Stopes, 'a bit obsessed by the importance

<sup>5</sup> Quoted Tsuzuki, *Carpenter*, p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 128.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel J. Looker, *Bertram Lloyd, Humanitarian and Pioneer (1881-1944)* (Leicester, 1960), pp. 2-3.

of her position in the "scientific world", was 'becomingly patronising about the B.S.S.P.'<sup>8</sup> Lloyd was also instrumental in organising the 'Conference upon Pacific Philosophy of Life' which was held in London in July 1915 with Bertrand Russell, J.A. Hobson and Carpenter among its chief speakers. He worked for Fenner Brockway and Clifford Allen in the No Conscription Fellowship for which he enlisted Carpenter's co-operation. Indeed, Lloyd was one of the 'Peace Cranks', the name given to the Conscientious objectors, on whose plight he wrote moving letters to Carpenter.<sup>9</sup> When Lloyd himself was harrassed by the military and got 'conditional exemption' from active service, it was the Salts who looked after his welfare.

Henry Salt, in his memoirs *Company I have Kept* ventured to demolish two myths or legends about Carpenter. One was the view that Millthorpe, 'the Mecca to which his pilgrims turned their steps', was a co-operative experiment in farming, for Carpenter was 'the last person who could have carried on a new Brook Farm'. The other was the idea that 'he lived like a rustic among rustics': he was in fact impatient of the slowness of the country folk and his own courseness was only 'a sort of affectation'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Salt was right on both accounts, but his inclination for an exposé of this kind had deeper reasons behind it. Kate, herself a lesbian, refused to consummate the marriage with Henry, and went on eulogising Carpenter, the champion of the homosexual cause. Henry had grave doubts about the character of George Merrill, Carpenter's protégé, who lived with him as a servant and comforter, having replaced George Adams, a married man, who had skilfully managed his farms at Millthorpe. The Salts were very fond of George Adams and admired what they felt to be his artistic nature in sandal-making and water-colour painting. Adams, who apparently had not got on well with Merrill, was kicked out of the Carpenter household. Later, when the Salts came to live at a near-by cottage at Millthorpe, they felt, they were rather rudely treated by Merrill and Carpenter. These were the circumstances that inevitably coloured their mutual relationships in Carpenter's last years.

Meanwhile, Kate died in February 1919, and the Humanitarian League which had been torn by the internal feuds between pro-war elements and Pacifists was finally dissolved in 1919. 'Its views', read a recent study of Salt, 'had been rejected by most societies during the holocaust of war, with its political hatreds, indiscriminate violence and cruelty, military despotism, and general barbarism'.<sup>11</sup> Lloyd became ever more valuable an asset to Henry Salt in his bereavement, as he shared with him many sympathies, Socialist and humanitarian as well as naturalist, sympathies with mountains, with flowers, and birds. To him sent Salt a series of letters, revealing his hidden views and sentiments on Edward Carpenter, their common friend and erstwhile source of inspiration.

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In spite of a set-back he had suffered in the Socialist movement or perhaps because of it, Carpenter emerged as a prophet of human fellowship, and as a prophet he appeared as

<sup>8</sup> B. Lloyd to E. Carpenter, 24 June 1916, Carpenter Collection MSS 368-20, Sheffield City Library.

<sup>9</sup> Tsuzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>10</sup> H.S. Salt, *Company I have Kept* (London, 1930), pp. 54-5.

<sup>11</sup> George Hendrick, *Henry Salt* (Urbana, 1977), pp. 83-4.

hopeful as ever of the eventual or even imminent salvation of man from the doleful effects of civilisation. He advocated a programme of Guild Socialism and wrote in favour of a miners', a policemen's, and a soldiers' guild, no doubt a faint echo of the Russian Revolution. When the war ended, he found himself still actively engaged in the work of the BSSP, reading a paper, for instance, on sex-taboo at London Day Training College with Lawrence Housman in the chair.<sup>12</sup> He gave lectures on 'rest' and on 'art and beauty' in London. He was robust for his age, but seemed somewhat depressed probably because so many of his personal friends passed away in those years: Edith Ellis, Kate Salt, George Hukin his dearest friend in Sheffield, Bruce Glasier and Olive Schreiner. He sometimes stayed with Bertram Lloyd when he was in London. 'I wonder if E.C. is with you now', wrote Henry Salt to Lloyd: 'If so, my greetings to him. I decline to believe that he is "less depressed" . . . . There is no such thing as a "depression" in his weather-chart: it is always anti-cyclone there. But though he cannot be less depressed, he might be more optimistic, perhaps uproariously so'.<sup>13</sup> Carpenter for his part encouraged Salt to publish his first memoirs, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, which insisted that Carpenter's 'Civilisation' was 'little less than an ancient Savagery in a more complex and cumbrous form'.<sup>14</sup>

Salt, living as he was at Brighton in those days, still welcomed a visit from Carpenter whom he found 'very gracious'.<sup>15</sup> Carpenter was then moving his household from Millthorpe in order to satisfy George Merrill's fancy for the life of a town. In the summer of 1922 they settled at Guildford and sometime afterwards paid a visit to Brighton. 'Edward . . . stayed till the next day', wrote Salt: 'Merrill also appeared but returned to Guildford same day . . . . He (Edward) looks pretty well, though inclined to drop off into slumbers. But it is rather a dreadful situation - his Millthorpe sold to that beast of a Millionaire, so that he will only be able to visit it on sufferance . . . . I see nothing in the future for him, except your reserve room, for which he too prematurely removed the carpet'.<sup>16</sup>

Carpenter's estrangement from Lloyd or vice versa took place about this time. Salt was surprised at Lloyd's exclusion from the coterie of Carpenter's literary executors.<sup>17</sup> The publication in 1921 of *The Great Kinship*, Lloyd's 'great animal compilation',<sup>18</sup> did not elicit any noticeable response from Carpenter who apparently shared the humanitarian love for animals. Salt, however, kept on informing Lloyd of Carpenter's whereabouts as far as possible. 'E.C. turned up unexpectedly in Brighton a few days ago', he wrote in December 1922, 'and I had two evenings' talk with him. (G.M. was with him in lodgings, but did not call here.) He seemed well physically, though he had a fall in alighting from the train; but in spirits rather depressed, and ready to recant his terrible optimism of the past'.<sup>19</sup> Was it his optimism about the fate of Civilisation that now suffered a reverse, or was it his faith in human nature and human relationships? The collapse of the Triple Alliance of the miners, railway men and transport workers convinced Carpenter that the labour movement was 'rent with jealousies and dissensions'<sup>20</sup> and was a long way from

<sup>12</sup> E. Carpenter, Diary, 17 July 1919, Carpenter Collection MSS 265.

<sup>13</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 28 April 1920, Salt Papers.

<sup>14</sup> H. Salt, *Seventy Years among Savages* (London, 1921), p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 1 March 1922, Salt Papers.

<sup>16</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 12 May 1922, Salt Papers.

<sup>17</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 12 Oct. 1922, Salt Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Looker, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 10 Dec. 1922, Salt Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Tsuzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

tackling the sores of Civilisation squarely. His faith in his friends, too, seems to have suffered. 'I was not impressed by E.C.'s pessimism', wrote Salt, 'any more than by his former optimism. It's just a changing mood with him: not a real good & lasting conviction, like Thomson's in the one direction, and Thoreau's in the other. Really the Sages are a trying party! I have half a mind to write a book about them (Carlyle, Ruskin, Tolstoy, E.C. &c).'<sup>21</sup>

Salt began to pity and even distrust the sage at Guildford. The cause of the trouble was George Merrill who sometimes became unmanageable as he took to heavy drink and whom Carpenter was no longer able to protect. 'Did you know', wrote Salt to Lloyd,

that he (E.C.) had brought the invalid G.M. (rheumatic fever, of a mild type) to this pleasant watering or beering place? He announced himself at an address in Farm Rd, a central but rather inferior locality, known to me (usefully) as having a 'Here it is'. There they both are, at a *beer-shop*, which E.C. says was 'recommended' to George. When I left a note for him this morning, a big man rolling an empty beer-barrel to a cart, from which I gathered that G.M. had got early to work. Perhaps rheumatic fever (of that type) can be cured by potatoes. E.C. & I had ices together in a public garden. He was mild & pathetic; said of several of his friends (Dickinson & -(nothing to induce me to reveal this name) included) that they are 'difficult to get hold of'; of me, nothing worse than that he supposed I made many friends among the flowers, almost more than among humans.<sup>22</sup>

Early in 1924 Salt was really worried about Carpenter's health as the latter was suffering from heart, though he felt there was no need for him to 'go on last visits (which I detest) to Guildford'.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the fate of the old Millthorpe house had not been settled, and there was a scheme mooted to make it a memorial place for Carpenter. 'I only got the Millthorpe letter this morning', wrote Salt: '... The scheme does not at all appeal to me, as I never feel any interest in the show place, or memorial, such as Wordsworth's at Grasmere, or Shelley's at Horsham. The reality seems gone'.<sup>24</sup> He was pleased to learn that Carpenter soon got better, but was unhappy about the latter's new literary ambition which was to enlarge upon what he took to be the bisexual aspect of the life of Shelley. 'It is a pity', wrote Salt,

E.C. is hauling Shelley into his net. It is all such nonsense; and based merely, I presume, on a passage describing a tender affection he had when a child for a schoolfellow. I am always annoyed at the lack of judicial balance in E.C. on *that* subject: he is really quite dotty about it.<sup>25</sup>

Carpenter's study, nevertheless, came out in 1925 as *The Psychology of the Poet Shelley* (in collaboration with G.C. Barnard).

<sup>21</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 22 Dec. 1922, Salt Papers. James B. V. Thomson was described as a 'poet of pessimism' in Salt's *Company I have Kept*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 11 July 1923, Salt Papers.

<sup>23</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 9 March 1924, Salt Papers.

<sup>24</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 23 Feb. 1924, Salt Papers.

<sup>25</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 23 May 1924, Salt Papers.

The death of Isabella Ford, an old ILP Socialist from Leeds, reminded Salt of the remarks she had made after her latest visit to Carpenter: 'She said she did not feel any visit to see him again. Her sister Emily felt the same, but that was because she was so shocked at his sex-writings, whereas all that Isabella felt on that subject was utter boredom. There, I think, she anticipates the future verdict. Whatever they are, they are very dull!<sup>26</sup> Salt reacted overhastily and indeed frigidly to the old man's passions for matters relating to sex. He was ready to pour cold water on those who would go out of their way to celebrate Carpenter's eightieth birthday! Yet Carpenter was handsomely rewarded on that occasion by the first Labour Government sending a message of greetings to him, the 'grand old man of Socialism', and the TUC also sending him a message of congratulations. Salt remained unsympathetic, and refused to comply with his requests for a visit. 'I suppose you have not been to Guildford yet', he wrote to Lloyd:

I am quite 'off' now; for the reason (in brief) that when E.C. bothered me to death about going there, and wrote in the old Merrill style that he was much 'hurt' at my 'curt refusal' . . . and that he could not help remembering about a great part Kate and I had been in his life, &c. &c. - I hinted that I should have to remind *him* of the treatment which Kate and I had received from him at Holmesfield [the parish which included Millthorpe]! Silence fell immediately.<sup>27</sup>

At Carpenter's household at Guildford there was a third person, Edward Inigan, who looked after his master, as Merrill was often found incapable. A young Norwegian named Illit Gröndahl, who translated some of Carpenter's works, also joined the curious ménage. 'That new addition to the Millthorpe [Guildford] mixture is a strange one', commented Salt: 'it seems as if he tried the queerest ingredients, I should think, judging from the Norwegian literature I used to receive, that Gröndahl would add to the *dryness* of the party'.<sup>28</sup> Salt, however, came to have a liking for Inigan, and it was Inigan who accompanied Carpenter on his visits to Brighton:

We have had E.C. & Inigan here for four nights: they returned to Guildford yesterday. The visit was very successful; but I was concerned to see how feeble Edward has become in the last three years. We got to the Dyke one afternoon, but he needed a lot of help. Your report of G.M. is confirmed by what Sixsmith has written and what Inigan has told me. Inigan says Guildford is a bad place for him, as he has many boon-companions there, & they are thinking of getting him elsewhere if possible. Ed. asked me to write to him: see his reply. Apparently he does nothing now: and Inigan is a good deal overworked.<sup>29</sup>

In June 1927 Salt married Catherine Mandeville, his former housekeeper, and with her he visited Guildford shortly afterwards. 'We returned from Guildford', he wrote:

<sup>26</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 20 July 1924, Salt Papers.

<sup>27</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 15 Oct. 1924, Salt Papers.

<sup>28</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 3 Feb. 1926, Salt Papers.

<sup>29</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 4 June 1927, Salt Papers.

E.C. very kind, & Ted Inigan quite charming; but G.M. is a terrible bore. He was very polite to us; but his noisy and foolish talk is almost intolerable. I fancy they are having a difficult time with him, as he does no work at all, and Ted is consequently overdone with various duties. E.C. is only shaky now; needs an arm when walking, even in the garden. The Norwegian was away. Edward seems to take to Catherine: it was touching to see him piloting her about, and leaning on her arm.<sup>30</sup>

George Merrill certainly became a problem at the Guildford household. Many of Carpenter's former allies and friends avoided him on account of Merrill who was not only a bore but was a nuisance, a wild creature not tamed but made more resentful after many years of Carpenter's indulgent protection. Alf Mattison, one of Carpenter's old pals in the 1890's, later gave an account of how Carpenter came to be alienated from his former friends:

It seems that many of E.C.'s northern and working-class friends were a good deal hurt and offended by Edward's treatment of them, at (it is presumed) Merrill's instigation; and some of the stories about G.M., at Millthorpe, are truly awful; worse than I ever imagined. At Guildford he seems to have drunk more and more heavily. Darrow found him quite drunk when he called on E.C. two years ago, & towards the end he got to a bottle of whisky a day.<sup>31</sup>

'Towards the end G.M. treated E.C. with much rudeness', added Salt.<sup>32</sup>

In January 1928 Merrill died in his early sixties. The faithful Inigan later reported: 'He [Carpenter] was very devoted to George Merrill and felt the loss of him . . . very much. They had lived together for nearly forty years, and I think that the loss of George hastened on Mr. Carpenter's death'.<sup>33</sup> Carpenter died of senility on 28 June 1929. When Salt received the news, he at once wrote to Lloyd: 'Edward! How strange it seems, though long expected!<sup>34</sup> He was besieged by a lot of letters enquiring about Carpenter, including one from May Morris, 'asking information about E.C. for use in her résumé of William Morris's life. *He* [Morris] called Edward "a dreary cove"'.<sup>35</sup> And 'May Morris wants to do him justice in a new edition of her father's life'.<sup>36</sup>

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It was time for Salt to evaluate Carpenter's life and work with a greater degree of detachment. 'G.M. and E.C.', he wrote to Lloyd, 'I have long thought that E.C. was the more to blame. "Sage and Fool together dwelt"; and Sage did not seriously try to keep Fool from his folly. I don't envy the writer who launches on a life of E.C. He will either

<sup>30</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 28 July 1927, Salt Papers.

<sup>31</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 11 Oct. 1929, Salt Papers.

<sup>32</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 7 Feb. 1930, Salt Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert Beith (ed.), *Edward Carpenter in Appreciation* (London, 1931), p. 120.

<sup>34</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 29 June 1929, Salt Papers.

<sup>35</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 4 Sept. 1929, Salt Papers.

<sup>36</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 4 Oct. 1929, Salt Papers.

lie, by suppression, or give a shock to the worshippers'.<sup>37</sup>

Salt's obituary of Carpenter, however, was the last thing to be called shocking. Carpenter 'has been called the Whitman and the Thoreau of the English democratic movement', it read, 'but he was more than that; he was himself an adept in the serene "wisdom" of the East, and dreamed of a reconciliation of the intellectual faculty with the intuitive, of the restless energies of the western world with the oriental self-knowledge and repose'.<sup>38</sup> Salt was right so far as he was reviewing Carpenter's literary works such as *Towards Democracy*, *Civilisation*, and *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta*, the record of his spiritual journey to the East. Of his other works the obituary added:

The essays most likely to arouse controversy (and they are certainly open to criticism) are those on sex questions; for his mind, like Shelley's, was of that guileless and primitive character which shrinks from no discussion; but even here he was well served, as he himself used smiling to admit, by his aptitude for propounding dangerous themes with a suavity that had a reassuring effect.<sup>39</sup>

Here on this 'dangerous' subject the obituary article sounded unexpectedly friendly. The writer was perhaps at his best when he dealt with his subject's personality which was 'of the kind known as magnetic':

and this quality seemed to be inherent also in his 'Towards Democracy', which brought him communications, and in many cases pilgrims and disciples, from many parts of the world. He was essentially the comrade, the counsellor, and the friend. 'For this most of all we thank you', so concluded the address presented to him on his seventieth birthday, 'the spirit of comradeship which has endeared your name to all who know you, and to many who to yourself are unknown'.<sup>40</sup>

Things have changed since Salt's days, and the life of Carpenter has become the subject of serious studies in recent years. It is true, Salt predicted a shock such a study would give to the readers, but when it did come, it greatly softened its impact and lost much of its relevance, for a great deal of the stuffiness of English society, to which Carpenter objected, had largely disappeared.

<sup>37</sup> H. Salt to B. Lloyd, 14 Oct. 1929, Salt Papers.

<sup>38</sup> *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1929.

<sup>39</sup> *The Times*, 29 June 1929.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*,