MARY CARPENTER
OF BRISTOL

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By Ruby J. Saywell

The fame of Mary Carpenter is based on the fact that she was the founder of the first Reformatory for Girls in England. The pioneering work which she began in 1854 at the Red Lodge in Park Row, Bristol, proved remarkably successful and provided a model for many of the institutions which were later established in other parts of the country. This short study of a remarkable woman is designed to give some impression of the kind of person she was and of the influences that shaped a Victorian reformer.

Women with a good education combined with moral fervour have been able to find an outlet for self-expression in most periods of history, and some of them have had that kind of genius which has enabled them to leave a permanent legacy. In the age of Queen Victoria philanthropy was fashionable and social needs became increasingly obvious. The work which Florence Nightingale carried out for reform of the nursing profession was but one illustration of what could be done, and the under-privileged condition of slaves, women, children and the criminal classes provided plenty of opportunities for others to contribute in a greater or lesser degree to social improvement.

Mary Carpenter was brought up within the climate of philanthropy which characterised the Unitarians, who were distinguished by their interest in education and their liberal attitude to social problems. In 1817 Dr. Lant Carpenter, Mary’s father, received an invitation to become minister of Lewin’s Mead Meeting in Bristol, and so his daughter came to the city in which she was to find her great opportunity of helping the poor. Her object was to save “the perishing and the dangerous classes”, and she was one of those remarkable individuals whose efforts anticipated the task which was ultimately to be tackled on a collective basis by the Welfare State.

Mary Carpenter was born in Exeter on 3 April, 1807. She was the first child of the Reverend Lant Carpenter and of his wife Anna. Both parents came from sound Nonconformist stock; both were teachers and both were inculcated with the doctrines of the Unitarian sect. In 1808, as a member of the Western Unitarian Society, Lant Carpenter was invited to preach at the Lewin’s Mead Meeting in Bristol and the impression he made was so lasting that nine years later he was asked to be the minister there. Meanwhile his eldest daughter, Mary, had already given some indication of the character that was forming in her. She had been for some years the only child and she thus received that attention
from her parents which remained for her both a shining memory
and an abiding influence. Her early doings and habits were noted
down not only by her mother, but also by her father for use in
his essays and lectures on the education of the young. Her mother's
journal refers to Mary as "the young doctor with her funny ways
and serious speeches". As a small child she repeated often that she
wanted "to beooseful". When Mary was between five and six
years old, her father was compiling the material that was to be
published in 1820 as The Principles of Education and although
Mary is not mentioned by name in this book, there is evidence
that repeated reference is made to her behaviour and character.
It was Mary who was described at the age of five or six years
as having "a degree of mental and moral regulation...seldom
witnessed in so young a child, united to great sweetness of
disposition and activity of mind, and altogether rendering her as
happy as a child can be."1 It was the same child who at three and
a half years old preferred "a baby horse of cut paper to a rocking
horse" which had been the object of her desires, "because it cost
nothing and Mama would have more money to give to the poor".
The young, according to Lant Carpenter, "should be early accus­
tomed to consider the education of the poor as an object of delight,
of wisdom, and of duty; and should be encouraged to contribute
their efforts towards it, with a view to their own moral improve­
ment, as well as to the benefit of their services in the cause of
benevolence." Mary had from her earliest years been trained in con­
cern for the poor. Her father while stressing her liveliness and
happiness showed his concern for her over-sensitive reactions when
he wrote "... from different circumstances in her situation and early
habits and also perhaps from her natural temperament (which
originally manifested too much of what may be termed physical
sensibility and which her parents endeavoured to lessen or at least
to regulate) this child has peculiar tendencies and opportunities
for the religious cultivation of her mind."2 Thus it would seem
Mary showed very early that character which shapes a reformer.
Concern for the poor became a habit and it was linked with the
delight of pleasing her father, who was probably the dominant
influence in her life. That concern was to give Mary a career
and a claim to fame as impressive as any of the great company
of outstanding women who were her contemporaries.

James Martineau, whose sister Harriet had in her youth admired
the preaching of Dr. Lant Carpenter, was first a pupil and then a
master in the school at No. 2 Great George Street. In 1877 he
recorded his memories of Mary Carpenter as a child. He described
"the sedate little girl of twelve who looked at you so steadily
and always spoke like a book; so that in talking to her what you
meant for sense seemed to turn into nonsense on the way... she
seemed no longer a child... With a somewhat columnar
figure and no springiness of movement, she glided quietly about
and was seldom seen to run, and a certain want of suppleness and
natural grace interfered with her proficiency in the usual feminine
accomplishments with the needle, at the piano, and in the dance.
It occasioned a pleasant surprise, when, taking her pencil and
colour box in hand, she revealed the direction in which her sense
of beauty could conquer difficulties and enable her really to excel
... there were traces upon that grave young face, if my memory
does not mislead me, of an inward conflict for ascendency between
the anxious vigilance of a scrupulous conscience and the "trust­
ful reverence of a filial heart, tender alike to the father on earth
and the Father in Heaven."

Another famous man, Benjamin
Jowett, Master of Balliol, on being shown a portrait of Mary
Carpenter in middle age is reported to have said "This is the
portrait of a person who lives under high moral excitement."

As a girl Mary studied with her brothers and sisters in the school
in Great George Street. The curriculum included Latin, Greek,
Mathematics, Physical Science and Natural History. The last
subject interested her most for she had a love of nature and a
practical enquiring mind. She already had firmly held opinions,
and these, together with the influence of her father, made her mind
somewhat rigid on theological questions. Her Unitarianism and
her practical and realistic outlook kept her mind open to con­
temporary thought, but she never allowed this to alter her abiding
faith in the fatherhood of God.

While she was still learning, she had already embarked on the
career of teaching that was to be the most zestful occupation of
her life. The Sunday School attached to the Meeting became her
special concern, and in taking over the management of the Girls' Branch,
she made her first contribution to the organisation of
education for the poor.

Mary was given opportunities of meeting a wide circle of friends
and acquaintances and she stayed in London and in Paris. She
discussed politics and books and was fond of attending lectures.
After hearing a talk on Mesmerism, she wrote "I cannot but
think that the effects we saw must be caused by some laws of
nature at present quite unknown to us". Much of her
thought at this time was introspective. In 1830, possibly

2 Ibid. p. 244.
3 Ibid. p. 324.
as a result of difficulties of relationship with her mother and sister, she wrote in her journal: "If I have performed any service well, I profess not to think myself deserving of praise, but I have a secret consciousness of having performed it better than others would have done. I also feel a very unchristian satisfaction in imagining my own feelings of a superior caste to those of others. Besides this, I am not careful enough to avoid irritating the weak side of others, particularly when I imagine myself strong on that very point. These things seem very bad when distinctly expressed. Are they not equally so when imperceptibly mingling with the constant habit of the mind?"

In 1831 Miss Carpenter became Superintendent of the Lewin's Mead Sunday School and she included in this work the duty of visiting the homes of some of the pupils. The background and needs of the poor in the area became clear to her. The consequences of poverty and of ignorance was made even more obvious by the Bristol Riots of 1831 and the outbreak of cholera in 1832.

In 1840 Dr. Lant Carpenter died and for the next five years Miss Carpenter assisted her mother and sister in keeping a school for girls, but her work for the poor continued. In 1846, after collecting money from her Unitarian friends, she set up a Ragged School. The first room proved too small and so she established the school finally in St. James' Back, "a place swarming with ragamuffins", and there it remained for twenty-five years. An account written by Mrs. Carpenter, dated August 7th 1846, described the school at its inception: "Nearly twenty boys had assembled. The seven which Mr. Phelps (the master) had collected brought in a dozen more in the afternoon... it is literally a Ragged school. None have shoes or stockings, some have no shirt and no home, sleeping on casks on the quay or on steps, and living... by petty depradations, but all appear better fed than the children of the decent poor are." Towels and soap were provided by Miss Carpenter and "some sort of approach to cleanliness" was insisted upon. Extensions developed; a night school was opened, to the annoyance of the neighbours, but some working men helped the school to maintain discipline at night. During the day a friendly policeman kept an eye on it; he was on one occasion reported to the local magistrate for neglect of duty, "having been two hours in the Ragged School setting copies to the boys." The daily average attendance rose to 160 and Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Mr. J. F. Fletcher, reported that he did not know "of any other school where there was so large an amount of intellect and well directed effort to train up self acting beings."

1 R. L. Carpenter, *Life and Work of Mary Carpenter*, p. 27.
Miss Carpenter taught in the school and used the contents of her Geological Cabinet to interest the children. She wrote a paper on Ragged Schools outlining her method: "I always begin with the known, carrying them on afterwards to the unknown." An essay on "Ragged Schools, their Principles and Modes of Operation" outlined the ideas behind her work. These were "Religious and Moral Training, intellectual and Industrial training, self respect and cleanliness." In a later work in which she referred to her experience in St. James's Back Miss Carpenter wrote "I have always treated my class with courtesy and have always received from them respectful courtesy in return." Frances Power Cobbe, who assisted in the school between 1858 and 1859, described the outbursts of hooliganism and uproar in the class while Miss Carpenter waited in quiet dignity for these to subside and then proceeded with the lesson with those who would attend. Her patience was inexhaustible and she was glad of small successes: "only to get them to use the school comb is something."

Practical as always, Miss Carpenter persevered to extend the amenities of the school. She bought the court where the school was situated and had dwellings built there with washhouses, water pipes and a playground for the children. Such things might help to combat the evils of dirt and crime before they could get a stranglehold, but what of those already embroiled in crime? These last were to be Miss Carpenter's chief concern; to help to save them from destruction became her life work.

The problem of delinquency was already being recognised in the cities of the world. The hope was to give some kind of training to the delinquents before they turned into hardened criminals. Matthew Davenport Hill, Recorder of Birmingham and later Commissioner for Bankruptcy in Bristol, was an outstanding figure amongst the many who desired to establish Reformatory Schools to deal with delinquents and he was to prove a staunch ally of Miss Carpenter in her work. In 1844 it was recorded that 11,348 persons between 10 and 20 years of age had been committed to prison. Various experiments on Pestalozzian lines had been carried out on the Continent and in England, but these Industrial Communities relied on voluntary contributions and had many weaknesses of organisation. It was becoming recognised that a wider effort must be made. In 1851, Davenport Hill took a house in Bristol and there, probably at a Unitarian Meeting, he encountered Miss Carpenter. His biographer describing this meeting wrote: "His large experience as a criminal judge and her practical familiarity with the class whence criminals spring made the knowledge which each had acquired the complement of the 1 Autobiography of Francis Power Cobbe, p. 278.
Mr. Hill wrote to his sister, Mrs. Francis Clark, that he had found "an admirable coadjutor in Mary Carpenter. We are going to hold a conference at Birmingham to obtain legislative powers of coercion over criminal children and for enforcing pecuniary responsibility on their parents." Lord Lyttleton was asked to preside at the first meeting and the other meetings were held under the chairmanship of Davenport Hill to develop a plan to place before Parliament and to arouse public interest and sympathy. Three types of school were envisaged: first, free day schools for elementary education and industrial training; second, Day Industrial Schools with more work than learning, where children were to be fed and contributions were to be made by the parents; and third, Reformatory Schools for young persons convicted of crimes. For this last group the parents of the young persons were to be compelled to contribute to their maintenance. Mary Carpenter, in an essay entitled "Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes," published in 1851, stressed the responsibility of the parents for their children but added that in the absence of parents, "Society is bound to discharge this duty (for a child) so as best to fulfill the end for which God sent him into this world, namely that he may become a useful member of society and prepare for another Vale of existence." The plan was presented to the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey; a Committee was formed and a national movement started. It was however too late in that session for the report to be placed before Parliament in the form of a bill, so the conference was revived and meetings were organised in Manchester, Liverpool, Preston and London.

Meanwhile Miss Carpenter was attending to the practical work. With financial aid from Mr. Russell Scott of Bath, she organised an Industrial School at Kingswood, taking for this purpose John Wesley's old school building. Furniture for this building came from a school in Ealing founded for similar purposes by Lady Noel Byron, the widow of the poet. She gave generously of her time and money and from 1851 she became a patroness of Miss Carpenter. Wealthy patronage remained a necessity if the movement was to continue, for divergences in policy quickly appeared amongst those who were endeavouring to get government support. The main difference lay in opposing conceptions of the significance and purpose of punishment. Miss Carpenter and her allies stressed the need for reformation, others demanded an element of retribution. Kindliness versus corporal punishment became a subject of debate in press and pamphlet.

In one of her rare speeches to the committee in London, Miss Carpenter described the moral condition of reform: "There should be," she said, "that degree of confidence shown to the children which will make them feel that they are workers together with the teachers. Upon such principles was the Kingswood school founded." On September 11, 1852, Mary Carpenter wrote in her Journal: "Kingswood entered." At first the school was for boys and girls. By 1853, Miss Carpenter was desirous of establishing a school for girls only. Sir John Pakington and Lord Shaftesbury were known to be agreeable to the Reformatory Scheme and hopes were high of starting a Girls' Reformatory in Birmingham. Miss Carpenter pinned her hopes on the efforts of women. In a letter to Lady Byron at this time, she wrote: "I see that women may do more than men if they will only know their true measure, but everything depends on whether ladies are judicious. I fear that such are rare!"

Meanwhile the school at Kingswood had made a good start. It had an enthusiastic Committee and a housekeeper, and Miss Carpenter was in supreme control. Discipline was the greatest problem. One day in 1853 at 11 a.m. Miss Carpenter was informed by a policeman that six girls were then at the station. They had run away, had been caught and then locked up, kicking and screaming. Of this episode Miss Carpenter wrote: "Had I felt any doubt before of the useless or injurious effect of physical coercion and the force of kindness and moral influence on these poor children, all doubt would have vanished." However, so wild was the behaviour of some of the children that they were caught and locked up in the cellars of neighbours' houses until Miss Carpenter could be called in to deal with them. There were 16 boys and 13 girls at Kingswood. By 1854, they were "keeping rabbits, fowls and pigs" and "in general were under control". On 10 August, 1854 the Youths Offenders Act became law. Reformatory Schools could be set up with voluntary managers under the sanction of the Home Secretary. Each offender sent to such a school must have had fourteen days of imprisonment before transfer. Such was the compromise made between opposing theories of punishment. The school at Kingswood was reorganised as a Boys' Reformatory. Miss Carpenter while maintaining interest in Kingswood was now set on establishing a Girls' Reformatory under the Act.

Lady Noel Byron gave financial help towards the purchase of a house and property in Park Row known as Red Lodge. This was put into the sole charge of Miss Carpenter who was assisted as

的生命和工作，Mary Carpenter，1879，p. 185.
before by a voluntary Committee of Management and this organisation persisted from 1854 until Miss Carpenter’s death in 1877. In 1857, Lady Byron bought another house in Park Row and gave this to Miss Carpenter for her own use. In 1860 when Lady Byron died Miss Carpenter received a legacy sufficient for the absolute purchase of the Red Lodge property. This included a cottage for the training in domestic service of those girls who had established their trustworthiness. The Industrial Reformatory had emerged. Since it owed its being to voluntary effort no one pattern was established and diversity rather than uniformity characterised the development of this branch of educational reform.

Davenport Hill continued his work for the juvenile poor. He gave an annual entertainment at Heath House for the children of Miss Carpenter’s Ragged School and became the President of the Kingswood Reformatory Committee. When Miss Carpenter moved on to her next concern, that of the treatment of adult convicts, she dedicated to her old friend and helper the contribution on “Reformatory Prison Discipline” which she prepared for the International Prison Congress of 1872. By that time the Red Lodge Reformatory, the first of its kind in England, had become a famous institution.

Miss Carpenter’s Journals and Reports and the Minutes of the Red Lodge Reformatory Committee are the main sources for the early history of this first Reformatory for Girls. The institution is seen, as it were, through her eyes, and we can watch with fascination the way in which she faced the day-to-day problems which confronted a pioneer in social reform. The Journals of 1854-1858 relate exclusively to Red Lodge and there is but scanty reference in them to any other part of Miss Carpenter’s life. Of the beginning of this period she wrote. “On October 10, 1854 I entered the deserted house! Those stairs I had often in former years trodden with mingled feelings of respect and pleasing anticipation when going to visit Dr. Ritchard, whose society I always esteemed a high privilege and an intellectual treat . . . there I had been present at a grand soirée of men of high position in the scientific world assembled at the meeting of the British Association in 1836.” After the death of Dr. Ritchard his house had become somewhat derelict and the magnificent oak drawing room had been for many months left desolate . . . I entered it,” continued Miss Carpenter, “with the prayer that this house might be holy to the Lord. I had not the warm hopes and vivid feelings which animated me when entering Kingswood in 1852; two years of unweaned labour, severe disappointments, horrifying trials of various kinds have quenched the pleasurable excitement at the anticipated development of principles in which I had perfect confidence. Yet they had not in any way cooled my ardent devotion to the work, but had given me increased confidence in the principles and a degree of experience which could have been gained in no other way . . .” The journal continues with a reference to the first Matron and the first of the girls. Mrs. Phillips, the matron, was “a woman of enterprise and an energetic spirit calculated for emergencies like this”. One of the earliest minor emergencies was the discovery of a human foot in an out-house and this was removed by a scavenger “privately, lest it should engender ghosts in the minds of the children.” Within a month the reformatory was ready for inspection and Her Majesty’s Inspector certified it in the year of the Act itself:

“I hereby certify that Red Lodge Reformatory School at Bristol in the County of Gloucester, the conditions and regulations of which have been examined and reported upon by one of H.M. Inspectors of Prison, appears to my satisfaction to be useful and efficient for its purpose and fit to be a Reformatory under the provision of the schedule 17:18 Victoria Caput 86.

1854 in the 18th year of H.M. Reign, Palmerston.”

The aim of the school was to reform and to restore to society girls cut off from it by dishonest practices, and to help children who were considered to be morally destitute. Girls over fourteen could be sent there by sentence of the magistrates; they were not penitentiary cases and they had to be free from infection and scrofula. Their sentences could extend to five years, but they were not necessarily to be kept at Red Lodge for the whole of their sentences. Each girl was expected to bring two suits of underclothing as well as shoes and stocking or to be prepared to pay £1 for the purchase of these articles of clothing. Miss Carpenter setting down her aims of reform considered that the girls would be “devoid of good principles, accustomed to uncontrolled exercise of will . . . deceitful and violent in action, sensitive to imagined injury but sensible to kindness.” The school was intended to awaken a feeling of confidence in the girls by showing anxiety for their welfare. People of virtuous character should be available as examples to these girls and “every opportunity should be taken to act on the child’s inner nature and rekindle the divine nature in her.” Religious instruction of a non-sectarian kind was to be given and Divine Service was to be attended at the nearest convenient place.

The educational curriculum included regular weekly instruction in religion, reading, writing and simple rules of arithmetic. Some
knowledge of geography and of general affairs was to be encouraged as well as the practice of singing. Industrial training was to be from 2 to 3 hours daily in household work, 3 Hours in needlework, and part of the day was to be spent knitting. The older girls were to do washing, ironing and cookery in preparation for domestic service. The regulations included arrangements for exercise for at least one hour a day, a walk once a week for those engaged in industrial work and three times a week for those under fourteen who were at school. Clothing was to be “simple, neat and suitable for any girl in the labouring classes of society.” The food was to be wholesome, sufficient and simple. A small weekly allowance from the profits of work done was to be used at the discretion of the matron or was to accumulate for the provision of a leaving outfit. On arrival at Red Lodge a girl was segregated until it was considered that she could mix with the others without doing any injury. Girls were to respect the rules and to avoid swearing. Teachers were to set a good example and not to punish arbitrarily. These practical regulations were for the most part carried out. Miss Carpenter had no desire for the school to become a show place like some of the Pestalozzian institutions abroad, but she welcomed visitors who might further the aims of the school.

In 1855 there was a public examination of the pupils. The examining body included William Miles, M.P., the Mayor of Bristol, the Dean of Bristol, the Principal of the Baptist College, the Director of the Kingswood Reformatory School, and Mrs. Sawyer, founder of Park Row Asylum. Of this examination Miss Carpenter wrote: “Generally speaking, the faces of boys and girls in charities and institutions for the humblest orders are inexpressive and lumpish. A row of heavy, contented countenances is the most you expect to meet. Here it was different. Quickness and acuteness, occasionally of a sinister and even repulsive character, were evident along the three lines of forms; and the only drawback upon the intelligence of the features was a certain archness and boldness, revelation of precocious vice and audacious thievery.”

The report on the first ten years refers to the difficulties of staffing and to the unsuitability of some of the girls who had to be sent away as unmanageable. The first entrant, Annie Woolhouse, was sent off to America after a short period at Red Lodge; she had become “too audacious to be borne with.” But there were successes. Members of the public, it was noted, had given work to a number of the girls and several had been satisfactory in domestic service. Miss Carpenter’s own household was staffed by “one honest girl, Marianne, and two little convicted thieves.” The experience of ten years’ work in the Reformatory showed Miss Carpenter that “delinquency of girls is not owing to orphanage or poverty as was popularly supposed but to neglect or untoward domestic circumstances arising generally, though not always, from a low moral state of one or both parents.”

Problems of discipline were inevitable. There were periods of quiet and orderly behaviour followed by outbreaks of what Miss Carpenter invariably called audacity. Difficulties with staff aggravated the problem of control. The first matron after beginning well “showed power of control but want of order and regularity.” The teachers might be induced, found work in Red Lodge hard and often unrewarding. Of one, Miss Carpenter commented: “I knew her to be inefficient as a teacher, but I believed her faithful to duty and persevering; in fact, inefficiency prevailed.” In 1856, the second matron to be appointed was described as “a baneful influence.” “I have discovered,” wrote Miss Carpenter, “that she certainly drank both brandy and porter—I clearly see that her great object was to secure herself a comfortable home by getting rid of all persons who could not be made her tools and blinding me by flattery.” Miss Carpenter decided that in future she would part with any individual who showed signs of unprincipled conduct or who interfered with her own authority. In April 1856, Mrs. B. the matron was again at cross-purposes with the teaching staff and so Miss Carpenter got rid of her.

Some details emerge from the Journal of the behaviour problems faced by Miss Carpenter and her staff. A girl called Ackroyd, whose conduct was such that she was never allowed the privilege of being called by her Christian name, was a compulsive thief. In January, 1855, she acknowledged stealing the front door keys and burying them in the garden, but she was not “as much ashamed and distressed as she should have been.” She was segregated from the others after further acts of pilfering, but there was no improvement. Dr. King, a phrenologist of the locality, was called in and he “felt her head and found large secretiveness and acquisitiveness, little reverence, and more conscientiousness than I should have expected,” wrote Miss Carpenter. She talked to the girl after a further bout of pilfering and discovered that she had “lied and pilfered as long as she could remember.” In spite of observation and entreaties the stealing went on, until Ackroyd was called before the Committee. She was described as having “a peculiar look,” and a knife, which had been stolen, was discovered in her pocket. It was considered likely that she had had too much leisure for evil thought, so she returned to the normal routine. A further relapse brought her to the cell and a bread and water diet. The teacher Miss S. considered that she was insane, but Miss Carpenter...
believed her to be “devoid of desire to do right and determined to endeavour to dare her way as far as possible.” A further entry indicated that Ackroyd had behaved improperly with a younger girl and that although she knew that Miss Carpenter “could see through her”, yet she continued to pilfer. Miss Carpenter began to doubt whether her intent was criminal but as it was impossible to give special treatment, it seemed necessary to treat her behaviour as wrongdoing. Finally Miss Carpenter concluded that the girl suffered from “absolute mania, but she showed such deep laid craft that she appeared quite sane—punishment did her no good, while such things could not be passed over without notice and she was by her superior education doing much mischief in the school.” So Miss Carpenter arranged for her removal and in February 1857, the girl was on her way to Australia, loaded with presents from the other girls and with the good wishes of Miss Carpenter who wrote after her departure: “I cannot but have hopes of her.”

The conduct of the girls varied from good to bad, largely, it may be said, in relation to the presence or absence of Miss Carpenter or the arrival of visitors or inspectors. In 1856 Miss Carpenter noted in her journal that the children wished that she could come and live with them “but admitted the claims of my aged mother.” “I doubt however,” the entry continued, “whether I should better discharge my duty as steward of my talents if I had not that claim, by residing at Red Lodge. I have other children whom I love besides these.” She enjoyed the affection of the younger children, visiting them when they were in bed when they “begged to be kissed”; “but,” she wrote, “girls do not bear the same friendly freedom as boys.”

Reference was made to the pleasure felt by Miss Carpenter when the older girls showed interest in her Sunday Lesson. One called Sims was questioned by Miss Carpenter who discovered that “the poor girl has never known what love is, placed as an orphan in Plymouth Union at a fortnight, and at 11 placed in a farmhouse as a servant, where she set fire to a bed. She was tried and sentenced to nine months’ separate confinement before coming here. I felt a real opening of this poor girl’s heart towards me.” The entry concluded “in the evening I was for the first time quite pleased with my life and with the girls of whom about twenty are now above fourteen.”

In October 1857, there was an inspection of the cells. These had been built for “violent, refractory and noisy girls”, and Miss Carpenter believed that their existence would check the necessity of their use. At this time one of the teachers came under criticism for “her harsh and unloving tone”. “Miss R. does not seem to perceive that the constant necessity for punishing children shows that she is managing them badly.” A working party of nearly forty ladies visited the school and it was recorded that “the girls were much gratified at coming in and singing a hymn”, after which “they went to bed with great order.” But a few days later came complaints and bad behaviour increased to such a degree that the local magistrates held a petty session in Red Lodge. Rowdy behaviour was not controlled even in the presence of the magistrates, so the worst offenders were sent to gaol and peace was restored. In making her report about this to the Committee, Miss Carpenter wrote “there is a great want of moral force in the staff.”

It was decided that matters might improve if Miss Carpenter had a colleague who could take command in her absence. So Miss Bathurst joined Miss Carpenter in 1858, but the teaching staff remained weak. A break away of girls during a walk on the Downs was described by Miss Carpenter as due to a desire to have “the eclat of being brought back by the police.” Lack of control encouraged the children to show their temper and Miss Carpenter complained that she was spending her strength and spiritual force in doing things that the house officials should have done. One child, Mary Clayton, was so insolent and defiant that Miss Carpenter summoned the teacher Miss S. who was told to cane the girl This was done in Miss Carpenter’s presence and she held the girls hands “while several sharp blows were given.” “The result was most satisfactory in the general support of discipline . . . the child herself seeming ashamed to look at me for some time. When I once more treated her with ordinary affection she was more loving to me than before.”

Miss Bathurst proved most valuable during the crisis until a new teacher was appointed, and “after serious reflection” Miss Carpenter gave the newcomer authority to use the cane. The girls were now under greater control, but there was “evidently much wickedness in them.” Two girls ran away, but they were brought back and punished by “having their hair cut quite close and caning them and leaving them the night in the cellars. They submitted most humbly.”

With improvement in behaviour, the friendly relationship revived and the children became more susceptible to kindness. So Miss Carpenter brought the younger ones seven rabbits from Kingswood. “They were received with the greatest delight and all were...
most anxious to buy them at 3d. each.” Five of the rabbits died, probably from over-feeding, to the great grief of their owners who showed Miss Carpenter where they had buried their pets in graves “arranged tastefully”. By July 1858 the general tone was described as good.

Miss Bathurst died in 1858. Her place was taken by Miss Frances Power Cobbe, famous in her time as an anti-vivisectionist and as a woman of advanced views. Having read Miss Carpenter’s book on juvenile delinquency and having heard through Harriet St. Leger and Lady Byron that Miss Carpenter wanted an assistant, Miss Cobbe offered her services and was accepted. She paid Miss Carpenter 30/- per week for board and lodging in her house adjoining Red Lodge and was provided “all day long with abundant nourishment” and with few of the amenities of life. She had hoped to meet and work with one who like herself was “completely outside the pale of orthodoxy”, but although she found Miss Carpenter worthy of respect, she did not find in her a kindred spirit with “her plain and careworn face, her figure angular and stooping, alive with feeling and power, her large, light blue eyes holding one like an amiable ancient mariner, yet with humour.” Miss Cobbe remarked upon Miss Carpenter’s firmness of manner, her “high and strong resolution, her path much like that of a plough in a well-drawn furrow.” Miss Carpenter was a stoic; her main pleasure was derived from her work and its authority. She was indifferent to most of the physical pleasures, including that of the table. Miss Cobbe after vainly entreating her colleague to spend a longer time over meals and to enjoy a greater variety of food, including vegetables, at last made some impression by asking for potatoes not only to allay the monotony of salt beef or ham but to prevent the onset of gout. So, it was reported, “six little round radishes” were placed on the table at the next meal. Apart from references to the school, there was no conversation at meal times or indeed at any other time, but some of Miss Carpenter’s opinions were noted down by Miss Cobbe. They included a lasting hostility to Catholics, whose ritual and teaching she considered hypocritical, and she “had no use for cant” as she called the uncouth tone used by some members of other religious sects. To one who said that a certain charitable institution was supported Miss Carpenter tartly rejoined that her institution was supported by annual subscriptions. Children rather than institutions aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. She said on one occasion that the magistrates had lapsed into their usual apathy and so aroused Miss Carpenter’s strong feelings. 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Davenport Hill. “They have found by painful experience,” she added, “that I cannot be made to rest while justice is not done to these poor children.”

Miss Cobbe did not find a congenial colleague in Miss Carpenter for, she wrote, “her overwrought and nervous temperament could ill bear the strain of perpetual companionship or even the idea that anyone in the house might expect companionship from her.” No opinion was expressed by Miss Carpenter, but the relief may well have been mutual when the two parted in 1859. Miss Cobbe remained on good terms with Miss Carpenter whose name was added from time to time to memorials for anti-vivisection.

Miss Carpenter uttered some words of cordial approval on a platform at a Women’s Suffrage Meeting—but such causes did not arouse her to action. In 1867 John Stuart Mill wrote to her at length to gain the support of her name for his cherished cause of women’s enfranchisement, which support, he said, “would not be in any way injurious to the work you have chosen”. But Miss Carpenter knew better; for her there was one objective, that of redeeming the poor, the ignorant and the vicious by good training. She would do this cause no good service by involving herself in the cause of Women’s Rights. Miss Carpenter herself had always had the support of politicians of all parties and this was power enough for her needs.

After twenty years, in 1874, Miss Carpenter reported on the Red Lodge Reformatory with a calm satisfaction and perhaps rather more optimism than the general picture of the criminal classes in England at that time would have justified. She stressed the need for care in looking after the health of delinquent girls for “a morbid mental condition often arises from a morbid physical one.” She reported four deaths, each due to the onset of disease before admission to Red Lodge, and such disease was generally tuberculosis. In spite of some set backs Miss Carpenter expressed satisfaction with the general picture of reform in her field for, she wrote, “Juvenile crime such as it was at the beginning of Reformatory work, no longer exists. Vicious girls are sent to the Reformatory before they are thoroughly hardened.” Such important work, she went on, had the added advantage of being cheap. The management was gratuitous and the subscriptions and donations were saved annually and funded for neglected and destitute children. By 1874 there had been 417 girls in the school. This venture had proved its value and would continue.

In 1861 the Third Conference of the National Society met to urge the claims of the Free Days Schools and the Ragged Schools to aid from the State, but it was not until 1876 that recognition for Day Industrial Schools was granted. Such recognition was due

1 Autobiography of F. P. Cobbe, chapter X.
in large measure to the work of Miss Carpenter. In 1857 an Educational Conference was held in London under the presidency of the Prince Consort. One of the papers read there was Miss Carpenter's "Juvenile Delinquency and its Relation to the Educational Movement." Her argument, though not original, was clearly established and it appealed to a wide range of opinion. It stressed the long and continuous effort to improve the education of the working class, but even where this had been done children of respectable working class parents suffered from the proximity and the bad example of lawless and untaught children. "The perishing and dangerous classes" needed a special type of education if society was to be spared from their depredations. "Book learning," wrote Miss Carpenter, "is not an antidote to crime." "Children likely to become criminal cannot endure the regular constraint and control of any school." The Ragged Schools had done much to cause a decrease in prison sentences amongst children, but much more was required. The teacher needed for such children was one in whom the spirit of religion was deep enough in his heart to infuse itself in his teaching. For the children "the intellectual training will be such as rather to aid in the moral discipline, to excite a desire for knowledge and to give the power of reading and enjoying books of a healthy and interesting character rather than in the communication of ordinary school details; and industrial occupation must form a prominent part of the day's routine. These and provisions for cleanliness and sanitary discipline, for innocent amusement and exercise, the aiding to obtain work on leaving school ... must form part of the Ragged School." Since such schools formed "the only barrier to the country against the continual increase of ignorance and degredation," there was great need for financial aid and government recognition. The regulations that had been framed for Reformatory and Ragged Schools on June 2, 1856, would have fully supported these aims, but a recent test case had restricted the application of financial assistance to schools for convicted or vagrant children, and not all Ragged School children belonged to these categories. Considerable support in government circles was forthcoming to aid the development in this educational field and the Royal Family in the person of the Prince Consort was of considerable influence. In 1863 after the death of the Prince Consort, Miss Carpenter wrote to Queen Victoria referring to his interest and describing the tree and the tablet which had been placed in the grounds of Red Lodge Reformatory as a memorial to him.

By 1863 Reformatories and Ragged Schools were receiving nationwide support and Miss Carpenter felt free to turn her attention to wider but long standing interests—the condition of...
prisons and of women in India, the Anti Slavery Campaign and the Conditions of Prisons in Great Britain. She visited India and America, seeing conditions for herself and suggesting improvements and reforms. She wrote a two-volume account of prison conditions entitled *Our Convicts* as well as a number of reports on the needs of the depressed classes in India. She edited the Journal of the National India Association and saw to it that editions of this were sent to government officials. The Mary Carpenter Hall attached to the Brahma Girls’ School in Calcutta was a memorial to her support for the education of women in India. Her correspondence with members of the British government and of the provincial governments in India indicate the great respect that was paid to her work. Letters from Lord Salisbury, Lord Shaftesbury, Lord Napier, Sir John Pakington and the Earl of Halifax testify to the appreciation of her efforts. Lack of money rather than lack of goodwill hampered the movement for reform in India as elsewhere and it may be that with increasing age Miss Carpenter became a little obsessive and one or two letters from government departments indicate that some of the officials thought it was time for her to retire from this field of work. She was persuaded not to visit Ireland to report on the conditions of prisons there by a kindly reference to her age and declining health.

In 1868 following her first visit to India Miss Carpenter was invited to Windsor to give some account of her observations to Queen Victoria. She wrote an article on this for the Bristol Press, expressing her appreciation “that so noble a woman as she certainly is . . . sympathises in this work, and I believe that the knowledge of the interview will have an effect . . . so I am thankful for this added talent.” Between 1870 and 1873 she was actively concerned in arousing opinion to reform prison conditions and she was kept informed of parliamentary opinion on her projects and especially on her main interest, that of children. In 1874 Sir Walter Crofton wrote: “You will have observed the debate of the night before last on the education of pauper children . . . the entire Liberal party voted to compel these children to be educated up to the fifth standard. The Conservatives had altered the standard to the third, i.e. the three Rs., in the grounds that they should have some time to contribute to preserving food and that it was no use to goad hungry children to the fifth standard.”

Rather more personal detail than usual is available for the last part of her life. The death of her sister Anna brought letters of sympathy from Florence Nightingale and Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell. In 1876 there is evidence of considerable domestic happiness. She

1 Collection of Letters in the Bristol Archives Office.
had brought back from India two small boys and she had considerable pleasure in educating them. Also at this time, a lifelong need was satisfied when she found someone both dependent and loving to be her companion. In 1858 Miss Carpenter had adopted a child of five, an orphan whose parents had been missionaries. This child, Miss Carpenter had sent abroad to be educated and in 1876 she returned to live with Miss Carpenter “and the desolation of loneliness came near her no more.”

In 1877, Miss Carpenter wrote to an old friend, Mrs. Richards, who was then in her 80th year.

“I am thankful that though I cannot do much walking, I can get through really as much as ever, in intensity if not in quality, often in the latter. I am also very happy to have enough money to do everything I want! Few people can say that. I am not obliged to stint myself and I can indulge myself in making my place and things very nice, and binding books and making presents and subscribing to good objects and taking journeys! I am only stingy in things which I do not like spending money about. So I am rich. And I have, after thirty years, got the Government to attend to the miserable children! And so we both thank God.

Your Affectionate Friend,
Mary C.

In March 1877 Miss Carpenter wrote to Miss Cobbe on a religious issue; she was not willing to believe “that a wise, all powerful and loving father could create an immortal spirit for eternal misery.” So in the mellowness of achievement Miss Carpenter quietly went on with her work until in June 1877, after a day spent normally and an evening in writing letters, she went to bed and died peacefully in her sleep.

In the same month the Hon. Caroline Norton (Lady Stirling Maxwell) died. She had spent a great part of her life in supporting women’s legal rights. *Punch* commemorated both ladies in verse:

“One lived for grace; one lived for good
Not on the heights of England’s proud estate
Where its spoilt children keep their giddy round
The other learned to weigh man and man’s fate
Studied life’s lesson and life’s labour found.”

In a letter of sympathy to Miss Carpenter’s brother, Lord Landon wrote from the Privy Council Office giving information of “the overcoming of very serious Parliamentary opposition to the Act establishing Day Industrial Schools” and referring to the benefit of Miss Carpenter’s “invaluable assistance in many of the most important works for the improvement and elevation of our people.” By 1877 authority had been granted for the setting up of Day Feeding and Industrial Schools. Thus the Industrial School for Boys in Park Row was certified. A Girls’ Industrial School had already been set up with the support of Miss Carpenter. The Ragged School at St. James’s Back was merged into a Day Industrial Feeding School with a Children’s agency, a boys’ home and a Workman’s Hall and Library. The Boys’ Reformatory at Kingswood and the Red Lodge Reformatory were to continue for many years. The latter was removed to a better situation and finally was replaced by an Approved School under the Children and Young Persons Act of 1933. A Working Girls’ Hostel was subscribed for by Miss Carpenter’s friends and a memorial tablet was unveiled in Bristol Cathedral in recognition of her services to Bristol. Mary Carpenter had indeed fulfilled her childhood ambition to be useful.

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1 When Red Lodge proved too small and uneconomical for the Reformatory, the inmates were removed to Liverpool and the house itself became somewhat derelict, until in 1919 it was purchased by the Bristol Savages Club. In 1948 it became a Bristol Museum and it has a room set up as a memorial to Miss Carpenter.
SOURCE MATERIAL AND BOOKS
FOR FURTHER READING

The Journals of Mary Carpenter, 1854—1858, and various manuscript letters and Reports are to be found in the Red Lodge, Park Row, Bristol, and in the Bristol Archives Office.

Mary Carpenter's own writings include The Last Days in England of Rajah Rammohun Roy (1850); Ragged Schools (1850); Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes and for Juvenile Offenders (1851); Juvenile Delinquents: Conditions and Treatment (1853); On Reformatory Schools (1855); Juvenile Delinquency and its Relation to the Educational Movement (1857); Red Lodge Girls' Reformatory School, Bristol, Its History, Principles and Working (1875).

Her father published his Principles of Education in 1820. In 1875 Mary wrote a Memoir of the Reverend Lant Carpenter.

Other relevant works include The Life and Work of Mary Carpenter by R. L. Carpenter (1875); Autobiography of Francis Power Cobbe (1894); Recorder of Birmingham: M. Davenport Hill by his daughter (1878); Unitarianism by W. G. Tarrant (1912); Life of Lady Byron by E. Colburne Mayne, 1929; The Unitarian Movement by H. MacLachlan (1934); and Religion and Learning by O. M. Griffith (1935).

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

1. The Bristol Hotwell by Vincent Waite.
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