

GORDON VERO CAREY

1886-1969



It is with the very greatest regret that we have to record the passing, on 21 November, 1969, of our first President, Gordon V. Carey. Although by those who knew him best, the news was not altogether unexpected, it none the less came as a profound shock; only six months earlier he had come from Lewes to London to attend the memorial service to his far younger successor, James C. Thornton.

Gordon Carey's career was closely linked with two educational institutions—Cambridge University and Eastbourne College. At Cambridge, starting as a chorister at King's College, he later became a Scholar of Caius and a Fellow of Clare (1919-25). For two years running he was a Rugged Blue,* and never thereafter, if he could help it, would he miss watching the Varsity match at Twickenham. From 1913 to 1922 he was Assistant Secretary of the University Press and from then to 1929 its Educational Secretary. It was the C.U.P. that published virtually all his works.

At Eastbourne College Gordon won a scholarship from King's College Choir School and he subsequently taught there on coming down from Caius (1909-11). In 1929 he was appointed Headmaster; to quote Mr. Robert Storrs, who was a Housemaster under his rule: 'He was Headmaster for nine years only, but those few years showed prodigious development in every possible way. Music; Art; Scholarship; Games; everything flourished under him.' One of the entrances to the College grounds bears a plaque in his honour 'as boy, governor, benefactor and headmaster' of the school which he served with the utmost devotion and loyalty for seventy out of the little more than one hundred years of its existence.

Gordon Carey served with distinction in both World Wars. In 1914 he was commissioned in the 8th Battalion, the Rifle Brigade and was wounded in Flanders the following year. This was during the Battle of Hooge, where he and the rest of his battalion literally received their baptism of fire when the Germans for the first time used flame-throwers against the British trenches (30 July, 1915). In 1917 he was promoted Lieut.-Colonel and was attached to the Royal Flying Corps. He was Mentioned in Despatches and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Shortly after this war he was one

* He played for the Varsity against the 'Springboks' during their first tour of this country in 1907; his menu for the subsequent dinner, signed by all 30 players, is now in the proud possession of the Rugby Football Union. Gordon had been greatly touched by the R.F.U.'s invitation to attend the dinner after the England match against the Springboks last December.

of the original members of Toc H and became a life-long friend of its great founder, the Rev. 'Tubby' Clayton.

In World War II, at the age of 54, he was commissioned in the R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve in 1940 and was promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader next year. From 1942 to 1945 he was employed as Librarian to the R.A.F. Staff College.

From then onwards Gordon Carey mainly devoted himself to literary pursuits of many kinds—writing, editing, proof-reading, indexing. He had already, in 1928, written *An outline history of the Great War*, undoubtedly the finest short account of that conflict. In its compilation he had two collaborators, the late Hugh Sumner Scott, whose name appeared on the title-page, and a convicted murderer, the late Colonel Norman Rutherford, whose name could not because he was (at the time of the first edition) still serving his sentence. This was followed, in 1939, by *Mind the stop*, a delightful guide to punctuation, in the preface of which appears the following sentence, so typical of Gordon Carey: 'The mind of one who happens to have an eye for a comma is not necessarily incapable of comprehending larger issues and embracing wider interests.'

Next came in 1951 the work that most interests our readers: *Making an index*. The author himself referred to it as a 'measly pamphlet of mine'. But it has already attained a third edition and has in fact become a classic in its field. When the original edition appeared, the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer (who had dubbed the author 'The Prince of Indexers') suggested that it might have been better with an index of its own; whereupon the author (with his 'tongue in both cheeks') devised a four-column index, which contains at least one entry for each letter in the alphabet and is a joy to read. Thus there is an entry:

Jehu (son of Nimshi), 12-13

Wondering what on earth can be the biblical furious driver's connexion with indexing,

we hasten to the text, to light upon the following, used as an example:

Nimshison, J., accused of speeding offences, 97, 102, 111

His remaining works included *American into English* (1953), which he described as 'a handbook for translators', and *Punctuation* (1957). Both are written with his customary authority, wit and literary skill.

In 1957 he became a founder-member of the Society of Indexers and five years later was elected its first President, which office he held until 1966 when, owing to advancing age and infirmities, he felt obliged to retire. He was always active in furthering the Society's interests and, whenever his health permitted, would attend its meetings, and his contributions to *The Indexer* (whose biennial volumes he more than once indexed himself, while in recent years every number underwent his scrupulous proof-reading) were notable for their distinguished literary quality. They included: his own talk to the Society in 1961 (p. 120), called 'No Room at the Top', in which he took a tilt at a common failing among indexers who grossly overload the entry for the subject of the book they are indexing; a further talk in 1966 (p. 78) on 'The Society of Indexers as a Servant of the World of Letters', in which he mildly rebuked the assumption of any 'grandiose notions' on the part of a young society; and finally, his extraordinarily fascinating 'Skims, Ancient and Modern' (1969, p. 92), being extracts, largely concerned with his own indexing and proof-reading experiences, from his autobiography, alas! hitherto unpublished yet surely deserving of that recognition.

Gordon Carey had always taken an interest in the art of indexing since his early days in the office of the C.U.P. During his life he must have compiled the indexes of over sixty books, including the autobiographies of Lords Attlee, Brabazon, Ismay and Maugham, as well as Reginald Pound's *Arnold Bennett*, Montgomery Hyde's *Carson*, Sir Travers Humphreys' *A book of trials*, Noel Coward's

Future indefinite (regarding which he told a delightful story in *The Indexer* of 1966, p. 80, about his entry of 'Tadpole, encounter with a'), and *Assignment to catastrophe*, by General Sir Edward Spears, all of them published by Heinemann. His last undertaking was Robert Henriques's biography of *Sir Robert Waley Cohen* (Secker & Warburg, 1966). All the above were also proof-read by him.

Probably his greatest hobby was music and he would sing up to the last at the annual gatherings of the wonderful King's College Choir, in which he had sung as a choirboy some seventy-five years ago.

The Times Rugby Correspondent wrote that he found Gordon 'an upright, courteous, affectionate and meticulously-minded friend'. To these qualities members of the Society of Indexers would certainly wish to add one or two more, because for a number of years they basked in his wisdom, his scholarship, and his unfailingly sympathetic attitude.

Chorister and Scholar and College Fellow; member of the Cambridge University Rugby XV and Harlequin player; soldier and airman in two world wars; headmaster; librarian; man of letters; man of faith; a founder-member of Toc H; President Emeritus of the Society of Indexers—Gordon Carey was all of these. Who else can claim to have had so many facets to his career? He was a truly remarkable, a truly great man.

*He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.*

To his widow, Dorothy, who tended him so devotedly in his illness, and their son Nicholas, as well as to his two sons by his first marriage, Adrian and Hugh, *The Indexer* offers on behalf of its readers deepest sympathy in their irreparable loss.

G.N.K.

A sizeable congregation thronged the beautiful chapel of Eastbourne College for the Memorial Service on December 6. The Society of Indexers was represented by Mr.

Norman Knight and the flowers sent by the Society were well in evidence. In the words of the Bidding Prayer, written by the Rev. Adrian Carey: 'It is characteristic of his [G.V.C.'s] own peculiar blend of confidence with diffidence, of gaiety with gloom, that he should have both expressed doubt as to whether a memorial service would be called for, and also placed on record his choice of psalm and hymns for such a service, if it were held.' The psalm was No. CXXI ('I will lift up mine eyes'); the hymns ('The King of love'; 'Father, hear the prayer'; and 'The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended') and the anthem (Samuel Wesley's 'Blessed be the God and Father') all had associations for him in the chapels of King's, Cambridge, and Eastbourne College.

The lesson was read by the Chairman of the College Council, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Baker. Then Mr. Storrs delivered a most impressive address, which has already been referred to above. It closed fittingly with this tribute to Gordon Carey:

'There is a delightful little memorial to him in the *Old Eastbournian war record 1939-1945*, the volume he compiled so lovingly and so carefully . . . It seems suitable to end with the words from Bunyan* chosen by Gordon to head the Roll of Honour.

"My Sword, I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars, I carry with me, to be Witness for me, that I have fought his Battles who now will be my Rewarder."

'When the Day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the River side, into which, as he went, he said, "Death, where is thy Sting?" As he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy Victory?"'

'So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded on the other side.'

*The death of Mr. Valiant-for-Truth in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress*, 1678.