

# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the  
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

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FRANCESCO CRISPI

[1819-1901]

*Frontispiece to The Open Court*



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## CARNERI, THE ETHICIST OF DARWINISM.

BY THE EDITOR.

AUSTRIA is a land of political dissensions, and its factions are divided by national not less than religious strifes. There are not only the Germans, the Hungarians, the Chechs, the Siebenbürgen Saxons, the Poles, the Servians, the Italians, but also the Roman Catholics, the Protestants, the Jews, the Greek Catholics, the unchurched, and large numbers of religiously indifferent or even fanatically antireligious and irreligious people. No one knows what the final destiny of the empire will be, and its history since the days of the Austro-Prussian war has been the most intricate play of contrary contentions, rendering it almost impossible to outsiders to form any opinion on the merits of the aims and aspirations of the contending parties. Among all this hopeless confusion of political turmoil Chevalier Carneri lived and did his best to fight the battle of justice without expectation of personal gain or party interest, but solely on behalf of a conservative progress along the lines of a scientific and rational conception of life; and now, approaching as he is on the third day of the present month his eightieth birthday, his countrymen and the friends of liberal thought have united in doing him honor by making the anniversary of the psalmist's four score years as man's greatest share of life, a day of rejoicing and congratulation. We join them in extending our sympathies to the noble octogenarian and in wishing that the evening of his life may be bright and cloudless like a glorious sunset, or like a harvest festival after the completion of a fruitful and prosperous year.

Bartholomew von Carneri, the descendent of an Italian aristocratic family with the title Chevalier or *Ritter*, is one of the pioneers

of the new world-conception which dawned upon mankind when the comprehension of the law of evolution spread and affected both religion and philosophy. Carneri was one of the very first authors who grasped at once the moral significance of Darwinism, giving a clear and prophetic expression to his faith in his first great work *Sittlichkeit und Darwinismus, drei Bücher Ethik*, which continued to form the programme of his literary and political career. Prior



BARTHOLOMÄUS VON CARNERI.

publications (such as *Modernes Faustrecht, Neu-Oesterreich, Demokratie, Nationalität und Napoleonismus, Pflug und Schwert*) breathe the same spirit and find their explanation and philosophical basis in his greater work, where he attacks the problem of ethics for the first time in its general and broadest significance. He followed up the solution of the moral problem in subsequent books discussing some of its phases and considerations, all of which received

due attention in the philosophical and scientific circles of Germany, bringing him into intimate relation with the foremost spirits of the age, all of whom cherish a high regard for the ethical teacher of the new world-conception which is based upon the unprecedented progress of the natural sciences. Carneri's later writings are *Gefühl, Bewusstsein und Wille*; *Der Mensch als Selbstzweck*; *Grundlegung der Ethik*; *Entwicklung und Glückseligkeit*; *Der moderne Mensch*; *Empfindung und Bewusstsein, monistische Bedenken*, and finally *Sechs Gesänge aus Dante's göttlicher Comödie*. To produce a good translation of the famous Italian poet, free from the harshness of the old versions, has been Carneri's ambition in his later years, and he is still engaged in the work.

Carneri's writings are serene and pervaded by a sentiment of harmony which is apt to make one believe that his lot in life must have been an extraordinarily happy one; and so it was. His spirit is as clear as a bright autumn morning; yet the materials out of which he built his life are not at all those of a man that has been favored by birth, talents, health, and other good conditions. Carneri's lot is wanting in the most essential element needed for happiness and serenity—viz., health. He was born a cripple and most of his days have been passed in great sufferings caused through physical pain. He had no joyous childhood, and the favors sometimes bestowed upon mortals by Fortune were in his case scanty enough, his inherited title being of little use to him under the circumstances; in fact he was not the man to take any pride in such externalities.

Carneri's life is a moral lesson worthy to be noted and appreciated. Having given up his belief in a heaven above us, he grasped the ideals of the living present and insisted upon man's moral duty of building a heaven here upon earth, in seeking a happiness based upon moral endeavor. And he clung to his conviction in spite of the continued and increased sufferings of his fate. He was married and then the sunshine of a paradise was a real presence with him for a few years when death separated him from his wife and left him a lonely widower with the care of his children and nothing else save the sweet recollection of the happy past and the melancholy contemplation of what his life might have been. Carneri bore his fate with fortitude and succeeded in his active career in setting an example to others; proving to them that in spite of great accidents and sufferings we can be happy, and it is our duty to spread the sunshine of happiness.

Carneri took an active part in the political life of his country,

and here, too, he remained faithful to his convictions, and though his struggles sometimes seemed hopeless, the figure of the courageous Chevalier with a strong mind but a weak and disabled body is one of the redeeming features of modern Austrian politics.

When the writer last year while on a tour through Europe passed through Austria he could not forbear visiting the venerable Chevalier in his home at Marburg on the Dur in the mountains of Styria. He found the hermit philosopher, though weak in body, in comparatively good health and cheerful—more so than many who have better reasons to be so.

<sup>1</sup> The photograph which accompanies this sketch is the only portrait that can be obtained. was taken about twenty years ago when Carneri was still in the prime of life.