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| Carpenter, Edward (1844-1929) |
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| Edward Carpenter was a British poet, essayist, philosopher, social activist, and early advocate for the social acceptance of same-sex relationships. Born in Brighton, East Sussex, the son of Charles Carpenter and Sophia Wilson, he was educated at Brighton College and studied mathematics at Cambridge. In 1868, Carpenter earned a fellowship at Cambridge and reluctantly took Anglican orders. When Leslie Stephen, later the father of Virginia Woolf, resigned his appointment at Cambridge due to religious doubt, he suggested Carpenter as his replacement. The reformist movement promoted at Cambridge by F. D. Maurice, Professor of Moral Philosophy and disciple of Henry Sidgwick, influenced Carpenter’s outlook. But Carpenter could not reconcile his clerical duties with his religious doubt and in 1873 resigned his fellowship.  By this time Carpenter had become aware of his homosexuality. He acquired a copy of William  Michael Rossetti’s bowdlerized edition of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, and in 1874 wrote to the elder poet initiating a relationship that lasted until Whitman’s death in 1892. Following Whitman’s lead, Carpenter wrote his poem *Towards Democracy* (1883). Like Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, the poem would grow in volume over the next two decades. |
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| Further reading:  (Rowbotham) |