

## ALBERT SCHWEITZER

A great and noble figure, that was Albert Schweitzer who died some days ago at the ripe age of 90. A philosopher and humanist the civilized world called him. He spent about 60 years of his life as a medical worker in a primitive community in Africa where sickness, poverty, and ignorance made havoc on the lives of its Negro population.

His talent as a musician and scholar was such that he could have established himself in any country in Europe in peace and comfort among the famous figures of this century. But he chose to devote his energies and abilities to the lonely and forgotten inhabitants of a neglected region of the earth.

He built his own simple hospital and quarters in the forests without any financial assistance from governments, foundations, or wealthy patrons. It was his theory that people are best served right in their own surroundings without unnecessarily introducing strange practices which they would not be able to follow to advantage.

Forgetting himself in his humanitarian mission, he nevertheless received universal acclaim in the role he took. He did not go around looking for medals, decorations and honorary degrees as do men of lesser breed and picayunish minds in their egoistic struggle for fame and reputation. Without expecting it, he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

In one of his works, "The Philosophy of Civilization," we read these transcendent ideas which are worth pondering:

"The disastrous feature of our civilization is that it is far more developed materially than spiritually. Its balance is disturbed. Through the discoveries which now place the forces of Nature at our disposal in such an unprecedented way, the relations to each other of individuals, of social groups, and of States have undergone a revolutionary change. Our knowledge and our power have been enriched and increased to an extent that no one should have thought possible. We have thereby been enabled to make the conditions of human existence incomparably more favourable in numerous respects, but in our enthusiasm over our progress in knowledge and power we have arrived at a defective conception of civilization itself. We value too highly its material achievements, and no longer keep in mind as vividly as is necessary the importance of the spiritual element in life. Now come the facts to summon us to reflect. They tell us in terribly harsh language, that a civilization which develops only on its material side, and not in corresponding measure in the sphere of the spirit, is like a ship with defective steering gear which gets out of control at a constantly accelerating pace, and thereby heads for catastrophe."

In his life and work he proved that a man can find fulfillment in a pursuit after the spiritual side of civilization by making use of material factors derived from discoveries of the forces of Nature. His life-long career supported the sincerity of his words. The admiration, reverence, and respect he received from different corners of the earth indicate the great value of his thoughts which he translated into noble deeds. — V.G.S.