

AN AMERICAN IDYLL

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CARLETON H. PARKER

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By

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*Yet, O stricken heart, remember, O remember,
How of human days he lived the better part.
April came to bloom, and never dim December
Breathed its killing chill upon the head or heart.*

*Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being
Trod the flowery April blithely for a while,
Took his fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile.*

*Came and stayed and went, and now when all is finished,
You alone have crossed the melancholy stream,
Yours the pang, but his, O his, the undiminished,
Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream.*

*All that life contains of torture, toil, and treason,
Shame, dishonor, death, to him were but a name.
Here, a boy, he dwelt through all the singing season
And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came.*

Written for our three children.

Dedicated to all those kindred souls, friends of Carl Parker whether they knew him or not, who are making the fight, without bitterness but with all the understanding, patience, and enthusiasm they possess, for a saner, kindlier, and more joyous world.

And to those especially who love greatly along the way.

PREFACE

It was a year ago to-day that Carl Parker died — March 17, 1918. His fortieth birthday would have come on March 31. His friends, his students, were free to pay their tribute to him, both in the press and in letters which I treasure. I alone of all, — I who knew him best and loved him most, — had no way to give some outlet to my soul; could see no chance to pay *my* tribute.

One and another have written of what was and will be his valuable service to economic thought and progress; of the effects of his mediation of labor disputes, in the Northwest and throughout the nation; and of his inestimable qualities as friend, comrade, and teacher.

“He gave as a Federal mediator,” — so runs one estimate of him, — “all his unparalleled knowledge and understanding of labor and its point of view. That knowledge, that understanding he gained, not by academic investigation, but by working in mines and woods, in shops and on farms. He had the trust and confidence of both sides in disputes between labor and capital; his services were called in whenever trouble was brewing. . . . Thanks to him, strikes were averted; war-work of the most vital importance, threatened by misunderstandings and smouldering discontent, went on.”

But almost every one who has written for publication has told of but one side of him, and there were such countless sides. Would it then be so out of place if I, his wife, could write of all of him, even to the manner of husband he was?

I have hesitated for some months to do this. He had not yet made so truly national a name, perhaps, as to warrant any assumption that such a work would be acceptable. Many of his close friends have asked me to do just this, however; for they realize, as I do so strongly, that his life was so big, so full, so potential, that, even as the story of a man, it would be worth the reading.

And, at the risk of sharing intimacies that should be kept in one's heart only, I long to have the world know something of the life we led together.

An old friend wrote: "Dear, splendid Carl, the very embodiment of life, energized and joyful to a degree I have never known. And the thought of the separation of you two makes me turn cold. . . . The world can never be the same to me with Carl out of it. I loved his high spirit, his helpfulness, his humor, his adoration of you. Knowing you and Carl, and seeing your life together, has been one of the most perfect things in my life."

An Eastern professor, who had visited at our home from time to time wrote: "You have lost one of the finest husbands I have ever known. Ever since I have known the Parker family, I have considered their home life as ideal. I had hoped that the too few hours I spent in your home might be multiplied many times in coming years. . . . I have never known a man more in love with a woman than Carl was with you."

So I write of him for these reasons: because I must, to ease my own pent-up feelings; because his life was so well worth writing about; because so many friends have sent word to me: "Some day, when you have the time, I hope you will sit down and write me about Carl" — the newer friends asking especially about his earlier years, the older friends wishing to know of his later interests,

and especially of the last months, and of — what I have written to no one as yet — his death. I can answer them all this way.

And, lastly, there is the most intimate reason of all. I want our children to know about their father — not just his academic worth, his public career, but the life he led from day to day. If I live till they are old enough to understand, I, of course, can tell them. If not, how are they to know? And so, in the last instance, this is a document for them.

C. S. P.

March 17, 1919

And I said, innocence itself, "*I'm* going to Idaho on my honeymoon!" And he said, "I'm not going to marry till I find a girl who wants to go to Idaho on her honeymoon!" Then we both laughed.

But the deciding event in his eyes was when we planned our first long walk in the Berkeley hills for a certain Saturday, November 22, and that morning it rained. One of the tenets I was brought up on by my father was that bad weather was *never* an excuse for postponing anything; so I took it for granted that we would start on our walk as planned.

Carl telephoned anon and said, "Of course the walk is off."

"But why?" I asked.

"The rain!" he answered.

"As if that makes any difference!"

At which he gasped a little and said all right, he'd be around in a minute; which he was, in his Idaho outfit, the lunch he had suggested being entirely responsible for bulging one pocket. Off we started in the rain, and such a day as we had! We climbed Grizzly Peak, — only we did not know it for the fog and rain, — and just over the summit, in the shelter of a very drippy oak tree, we sat down for lunch. A fairly sanctified expression came over Carl's face as he drew forth a rather damp and frayed-looking paper-bag — as a king might look who uncovered the chest of his most precious court jewels before a courtier deemed worthy of that honor. And before my puzzled and somewhat doubtful eyes he spread his treasure — jerked bear-meat, nothing but jerked bear-meat. I

never had seen jerked anything, let alone tasted it. I was used to the conventional picnic sandwiches done up in waxed paper, plus a stuffed egg, fruit, and cake. I was ready for a lunch after the conservative pattern, and here I gazed upon a mess of most unappetizing-looking, wrinkled, shrunken, jerked bear-meat, the rain dropping down on it through the oak tree.

I would have gasped if I had not caught the look of awe and reverence on Carl's face as he gazed eagerly, and with what respect, on his offering. I merely took a hunk of what was supplied, set my teeth into it, and pulled. It was salty, very; it looked queer, tasted queer, *was* queer. Yet that lunch! We walked farther, sat now and then under other drippy trees, and at last decided that we must slide home, by that time soaked to the skin, and I minus the heel to one shoe.

I had just got myself out of the bath and into dry clothes when the telephone rang. It was Carl. Could he come over to the house and spend the rest of the afternoon? It was then about four-thirty. He came, and from then on things were decidedly — different.

How I should love to go into the details of that Freshman year of mine! I am happier right now writing about it than I have been in six months. I shall not go into detail — only to say that the night of the Junior Prom of my Freshman year Carl Parker asked me to marry him, and two days later, up again in our hills, I said that I would. To think of that now — to think of waiting two whole days to decide whether I would marry Carl Parker or not!! And for fourteen years from the day I met him, there was never one

small moment of misunderstanding, one day that was not happiness — except when we were parted. Perhaps there are people who would consider it stupid, boresome, to live in such peace as that. All I can answer is that it was *not* stupid, it was *not* boresome — oh, how far from it! In fact, in those early days we took our vow that the one thing we would never do was to let the world get commonplace for us; that the time should never come when we would not be eager for the start of each new day. The Kipling poem we loved the most, for it was the spirit of both of us, was “The Long Trail.” You know the last of it: —

The Lord knows what we may find, dear lass,
And the Deuce knows what we may do —
But we're back once more on the old trail, our
 own trail, the out trail,
We're down, hull down, on the Long Trail — the
 trail that is always new!

CHAPTER II

AFTER we decided to get married, and that as soon as ever we could, — I being a Freshman at the ripe and mature age of, as mentioned, just eighteen years, he a Senior, with no particular prospects, not even sure as yet what field he would go into, — we began discussing what we might do and where we might go. Our main idea was to get as far away from everybody as we could, and live the very fullest life we could, and at last we decided on Persia. Why Persia? I cannot recall the steps now that brought us to that conclusion. But I know that first Christmas I sent Carl my picture in a frilled high-school graduation frock and a silk Persian flag tucked behind it, and that flag remained always the symbol for us that we would never let our lives get stale, never lose the love of adventure, never “settle down,” intellectually at any rate.

Can you see my father's face that sunny March day, — Charter Day it was, — when we told him we were engaged? (My father being the conventional, traditional sort who had never let me have a real “caller” even, lest I become interested in boys and think of matrimony too young!) Carl Parker was the first male person who was ever allowed at my home in the evening. He came seldom, since I was living in Berkeley most of the time, and anyway, we much preferred prowling all over our end of creation, servant-girl-and-policeman fashion. Also, when I married,

according to father it was to be some one, preferably an attorney of parts, about to become a judge, with a large bank account. Instead, at eighteen, I and this almost-unknown-to-him Senior stood before him and said, "We are going to be married," or words to that general effect. And — here is where I want you to think of the expression on my conservative father's face.

Fairly early in the conversation he found breath to say, "And what, may I ask, are your prospects?"

"None, just at present."

"And where, may I ask, are you planning to begin this married career you seem to contemplate?"

"In Persia."

Can you see my father? "*Persia?*"

"Yes, Persia."

"And what, for goodness' sake, are you two going to do in *Persia?*"

"We don't know just yet, of course, but we'll find something."

I can see my father's point of view now, though I am not sure but that I shall prefer a son-in-law for our daughter who would contemplate absolute uncertainty in Persia in preference to an assured legal profession in Oakland, California. It was two years before my father became at all sympathetic, and that condition was far from enthusiastic. So it was a great joy to me to have him say, a few months before his death, "You know, Cornelia, I want you to understand that if I had had the world to pick from I'd have chosen Carl Parker for your husband. Your marriage is a constant source of satisfaction to me."

I saw Carl Parker lose his temper once, and once only. It was that first year that we knew each other. Because there was such a difference between his age and mine, the girls in my sorority house refused to believe there could be anything serious about our going together so much, and took great pains to assure me in private that of course Carl meant nothing by his attentions, — to which I agreed volubly, — and they scolded him in private because it would spoil a Freshman to have a Senior so attentive. We always compared notes later, and were much amused.

But words were one thing, actions another. Since there could be nothing serious in our relationship, naturally there was no reason why we should be left alone. If there was to be a rally or a concert, the Senior sitting at the head of the dinner-table would ask, "How many are going to-night with a man?" Hands. "How many of the girls are going together?" Hands. Then, to me, "Are you going with Carl?" A faint "Yes." "Then we'll all go along with you." Carl stood it twice — twice he beheld this cavalcade bear away in our wake; then he gritted his teeth and announced, "Never again!"

The next college occasion was a rally at the Greek Theatre. Again it was announced at the table that all the unescorted ones would accompany Carl and me. I foresaw trouble. When I came downstairs later, with my hat and coat on, there stood Carl, surrounded by about six girls, all hastily buttoning their gloves, his sister, who knew no more of the truth about Carl and me than the others, being one of them. Never had I

seen such a look on Carl's face, and I never did again. His feet were spread apart, his jaw was set, and he was glaring. When he saw me he said, "Come on!" and we dashed for the door.

Sister Helen flew after us. "But Carl — the other girls!"

Carl stuck his head around the corner of the front door, called defiantly, "*Damn* the other girls!" banged the door to, and we fled. Never again were we molested.

Carl finished his Senior year, and a full year it was for him. He was editor of the "Pelican," the University funny paper, and of the "University of California Magazine," the most serious publication on the campus outside the technical journals; he made every "honor" organization there was to make (except the Phi Beta Kappa); he and a fellow student wrote the successful Senior Extravaganza; he was a reader in economics, and graduated with honors. And he saw me every single day.

I feel like digressing here a moment, to assail that old principle — which my father, along with countless others, held so strongly — that a fellow who is really worth while ought to know by his Junior year in college just what his life-work is to be. A few with an early developed special aptitude do, but very few. Carl entered college in August, 1896, in Engineering; but after a term found that it had no further appeal for him. "But a fellow ought to stick to a thing, whether he likes it or not!" If one must be dogmatic, then I say, "A fellow should never work at anything he does not like." One of the things in our case which

brought such constant criticism from relatives and friends was that we changed around so much. Thank God we did! It took Carl Parker until he was over thirty before he found just the work he loved the most and in which his soul was content — university work. And he was thirty-seven before he found just the phase of economic study that fired him to his full enthusiasm — his loved field of the application of psychology to economics. And some one would have had him stick to engineering because he started in engineering!

He hurt his knee broad-jumping in his Freshman year at college, and finally had to leave, going to Phoenix, Arizona, and then back to the Parker ranch at Vacaville for the better part of a year. The family was away during that time, and Carl ran the place alone. He returned to college in August, 1898, this time taking up mining. After a year's study in mining he wanted the practical side. In the summer of 1899 he worked underground in the Hidden Treasure Mine, Placer county, California. In 1900 he left college again, going to the gold and copper mines of Rossland, British Columbia. From August, 1900, to May, 1901, he worked in four different mines. It was with considerable feeling of pride that he always added, "I got to be machine man before I quit."

It was at that time that he became a member of the Western Federation of Miners — an historical fact which inimical capitalists later endeavored to make use of from time to time to do him harm. How I loved to listen by the hour to the stories of those grilling

days — up at four in the pitch-dark and snow, to crawl to his job, with the blessing of a dear old Scotch landlady and a “pastie”! He would tell our sons of tamping in the sticks of dynamite, till their eyes bulged. The hundreds of times these last six months I’ve wished I had in writing the stories of those days — of all his days, from early Vacaville times on! Sometimes it would be an old Vacaville crony who would appear, and stories would fly of those boy times — of the exploits up Putah Creek with Pee Wee Allen; of the prayer-meeting when Carl bet he could out-pray the minister’s son, and won; of the tediously thought-out assaults upon an ancient hired man on the place, that would fill a book and delight the heart of Tom Sawyer himself; and how his mother used to sigh and add to it all, “If only he had *ever* come home on time to his meals!” (And he has one son just like him. Carl’s brothers tell me: “Just give up trying to get Jim home on time. Mamma tried every scheme a human could devise to make Carl prompt for his meals, but nothing ever had the slightest effect. Half an hour past dinner-time he’d still be five miles from home.”)

One article that recently appeared in a New York paper began: —

“They say of him that when he was a small boy he displayed the same tendencies that later on made him great in his chosen field. His family possessed a distinct tendency toward conformity and respectability, but Carl was a companion of every ‘alley-bum’ in Vacaville. His respectable friends never won him

away from his insatiable interest in the under-dog. They now know it makes valid his claim to achievement."

After the British Columbia mining days, he took what money he had saved, and left for Idaho, where he was to meet his chum, Hal Bradley, for his first Idaho trip — a dream of theirs for years. The Idaho stories he could tell — oh, why can I not remember them word for word? I have seen him hold a roomful of students in Berlin absolutely spellbound over those adventures — with a bit of Parker coloring, to be sure, which no one ever objected to. I have seen him with a group of staid faculty folk sitting breathless at his Clearwater yarns; and how he loved to tell those tales! Three and a half months he and Hal were in — hunting, fishing, jerking meat, trailing after lost horses, having his dreams of Idaho come true. (If our sons fail to have those dreams!)

When Hal returned to college, the *Wanderlust* was still too strong in Carl; so he stopped off in Spokane, Washington, penniless, to try pot-luck. There were more tales to delight a gathering. In Spokane he took a hand at reporting, claiming to be a person of large experience, since only those of large experience were desired by the editor of the "Spokesman Review." He was given sport, society, and the tenderloin to cover, at nine dollars a week. As he never could go anywhere without making folks love him, it was not long before he had his cronies among the "sports," kind souls "in society" who took him in, and at least one strong, loyal friend, — who called him "Bub,"