

THE
COLLECTED
STORIES
OF
DOROTHY
PARKER

WITH A FOREWORD BY
FRANKLIN P. ADAMS



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This volume contains all of Dorothy Parker's short stories excepting a few which she did not wish to retain among her collected prose.



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DOROTHY PARKER

(1893-)

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

To be compared to Dorothy Parker has become the highest form of praise that can be paid almost any professional or strictly amateur wit of our time. Such flattery through imitation has only served to emphasize the qualities of the original and to create a legend which has grown more and more fabulous. That legend has been spread all over the United States and has been responsible for the injustice of attributing to Dorothy Parker much that is quite scintillating but far more that is spurious in American humor. The genuine article is to be found in the pages of this book.

Born Dorothy Rothschild in West End, New Jersey, she received a mixed elementary education in a private school in Morristown and the Blessed Sacred Convent in New York. Her first literary job was on *Vogue*, where she tried to amplify her salary of \$10 a week by writing occasional verses. From 1917 to 1920 she acted as drama critic for *Vanity Fair* and became a frequent contributor

to many magazines, particularly *The New Yorker*. In 1917 she was married to Edwin Pond Parker.

When Dorothy Parker's first book of poetry, *Enough Rope*, was published in 1927, it achieved the unprecedented distinction, for a volume of light verse, of becoming a best seller overnight and established a national reputation for its author. In 1927 she joined the staff of *The New Yorker*, and in 1928 her second book of verse, *Sunset Gun*, appeared. Two years later, her first venture in the field of the short story, *Laments for the Living*, was published, and was followed by her third and last book of poems, *Death and Taxes. After Such Pleasures*, a second book of prose, was issued in 1934.

Following a divorce from Edwin Parker, she married Alan Campbell, with whom she has worked in Hollywood on many distinguished motion pictures. No note on her career can omit mention of her tireless labors and heartfelt devotion in behalf of the victims of Fascist tyranny.

FOREWORD

by Franklin P. Adams

Poets often write good prose; but never a writer of excellent prose who is not, or has not been, a poet. That goes from Dryden to Parker. Conversely, the verbose, turgid, pretentious, confused poets write prose that is thus qualified.

Dorothy Parker's stories are as tightly and compactly written as her verse—the gay and the dismal-yew-garlanded. More lasting than brass is the monument she has builded with her verse. My fame will rest, and rest safe, because in *The Conning Tower of The World* and the *New York Herald Tribune* I printed the best as well as the most quoted of her poems.

I wish I had published some—even one—of these stories. Short stories they are, but only technically. Each is a novel, and in the unbridled hands of some of the wordier novelists—and I could name you plenty—would have become a novel of at least 500,000 words. And a book of that length gets, if not always great and

widespread praise, at least many long and respectful reviews.

It seems foolish of me to write a foreword to the stories, the satires, the concentrated hatreds of stupidity, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy contained in this volume. Nobody can write such ironic things unless he has a deep sense of injustice—injustice to those members of the human race who are the victims of the stupid, the pretentious, and the hypocritical. These victims, my mathematics assures me, are in the majority. Therefore Dorothy Parker likes more people than she hates. . . . It occurs to me, for the first time, that one who hated the same things, and would have hated the same persons, was Abraham Lincoln.

I never was one to rank poets in one of those What-Is-Your-Favorite-Poem symposia. Nor could I tell which is my favorite story in a collection like this. (Not that there is a collection like it.) But picking one is like choosing a favorite season of the year; my favorite time is now, regardless. My favorite Dorothy Parker story is the one I am reading at the time, though I have reread them all often. I can't reread a novel. The first of these stories I remember to have read was "Big Blonde," back in the days of *The Bookman*. And "Soldiers of the Republic" is the recentest. There are no second-raters. Dorothy Parker is one of that tiny group I once described as the Dudless Authors.

I don't know you, beloved reader, but if you don't like these stories, you are some of those things that the author of these stories wouldn't care much for.

If you like *The Collected Stories of Dorothy Parker*, and this Modern Library book is your first introduction to these stories, tell her so. If you don't, tell me, whose fault, among others, this republication is.

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*THE COLLECTED STORIES
OF DOROTHY PARKER*

Arrangement in Black and White

THE woman with the pink velvet poppies twined round the assisted gold of her hair traversed the crowded room at an interesting gait combining a skip with a sidle, and clutched the lean arm of her host.

"Now I got you!" she said. "Now you can't get away!"

"Why, hello," said her host. "Well. How are you?"

"Oh, I'm finely," she said. "Just simply finely. Listen. I want you to do me the most terrible favor. Will you? Will you please? Pretty please?"

"What is it?" said her host.

"Listen," she said. "I want to meet Walter Williams. Honestly, I'm just simply crazy about that man. Oh, when he sings! When he sings those spirituals! Well, I said to Burton, 'It's a good thing for you Walter Williams is colored,' I said, 'or you'd have lots of reason to

be jealous.' I'd really love to meet him. I'd like to tell him I've heard him sing. Will you be an angel and introduce me to him?"

"Why, certainly," said her host. "I thought you'd met him. The party's for him. Where is he, anyway?"

"He's over there by the bookcase," she said. "Let's wait till those people get through talking to him. Well, I think you're simply marvelous, giving this perfectly marvelous party for him, and having him meet all these white people, and all. Isn't he terribly grateful?"

"I hope not," said her host.

"I think it's really terribly nice," she said. "I do. I don't see why on earth it isn't perfectly all right to meet colored people. I haven't any feeling at all about it—not one single bit. Burton—oh, he's just the other way. Well, you know, he comes from Virginia, and you know how they are."

"Did he come tonight?" said her host.

"No, he couldn't," she said. "I'm a regular grass widow tonight. I told him when I left, 'There's no telling what I'll do,' I said. He was just so tired out, he couldn't move. Isn't it a shame?"

"Ah," said her host.

"Wait till I tell him I met Walter Williams!" she said. "He'll just about die. Oh, we have more arguments about colored people. I talk to him like I don't know

what, I get so excited. 'Oh, don't be so silly,' I say. But I must say for Burton, he's heaps broader-minded than lots of these Southerners. He's really awfully fond of colored people. Well, he says himself, he wouldn't have white servants. And you know, he had this old colored nurse, this regular old nigger mammy, and he just simply loves her. Why, every time he goes home, he goes out in the kitchen to see her. He does, really, to this day. All he says is, he says he hasn't got a word to say against colored people as long as they keep their place. He's always doing things for them—giving them clothes and I don't know what all. The only thing he says, he says he wouldn't sit down at the table with one for a million dollars. 'Oh,' I say to him, 'you make me sick, talking like that.' I'm just terrible to him. Aren't I terrible?"

"Oh, no, no, no," said her host. "No, no."

"I am," she said. "I know I am. Poor Burton! Now, me, I don't feel that way at all. I haven't the slightest feeling about colored people. Why, I'm just crazy about some of them. They're just like children—just as easy-going, and always singing and laughing and everything. Aren't they the happiest things you ever saw in your life? Honestly, it makes me laugh just to hear them. Oh, I like them. I really do. Well, now, listen, I have this colored laundress, I've had her for years, and I'm devoted to her. She's a real character. And I want to tell

you, I think of her as my friend. That's the way I think of her. As I say to Burton, 'Well, for Heaven's sakes, we're all human beings!' Aren't we?"

"Yes," said her host. "Yes, indeed."

"Now this Walter Williams," she said. "I think a man like that's a real artist. I do. I think he deserves an awful lot of credit. Goodness, I'm so crazy about music or anything, I don't care *what* color he is. I honestly think if a person's an artist, nobody ought to have any feeling at all about meeting them. That's absolutely what I say to Burton. Don't you think I'm right?"

"Yes," said her host. "Oh, yes."

"That's the way I feel," she said. "I just can't understand people being narrow-minded. Why, I absolutely think it's a privilege to meet a man like Walter Williams. Yes, I do. I haven't any feeling at all. Well, my goodness, the good Lord made him, just the same as He did any of us. Didn't He?"

"Surely," said her host. "Yes, indeed."

"That's what I say," she said. "Oh, I get so furious when people are narrow-minded about colored people. It's just all I can do not to say something. Of course, I do admit when you get a bad colored man, they're simply terrible. But as I say to Burton, there are some bad white people, too, in this world. Aren't there?"

"I guess there are," said her host.

"Why, I'd really be glad to have a man like Walter Williams come to my house and sing for us, some time," she said. "Of course, I couldn't ask him on account of Burton, but I wouldn't have any feeling about it at all. Oh, can't he sing! Isn't it marvelous, the way they all have music in them? It just seems to be right in them. Come on, let's us go on over and talk to him. Listen, what shall I do when I'm introduced? Ought I to shake hands? Or what?"

"Why, do whatever you want," said her host.

"I guess maybe I'd better," she said. "I wouldn't for the world have him think I had any feeling. I think I'd better shake hands, just the way I would with anybody else. That's just exactly what I'll do."

They reached the tall young Negro, standing by the bookcase. The host performed introductions; the Negro bowed.

"How do you do?" he said.

The woman with the pink velvet poppies extended her hand at the length of her arm and held it so for all the world to see, until the Negro took it, shook it, and gave it back to her.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Williams," she said. "Well, how do you do. I've just been saying, I've enjoyed your

singing so awfully much. I've been to your concerts, and we have you on the phonograph and everything. Oh, I just enjoy it!"

She spoke with great distinctness, moving her lips meticulously, as if in parlance with the deaf.

"I'm so glad," he said.

"I'm just simply crazy about that 'Water Boy' thing you sing," she said. "Honestly, I can't get it out of my head. I have my husband nearly crazy, the way I go around humming it all the time. Oh, he looks just as black as the ace of—Well. Tell me, where on earth do you ever get all those songs of yours? How do you ever get hold of them?"

"Why," he said, "there are so many different——"

"I should think you'd love singing them," she said. "It must be more fun. All those darling old spirituals—oh, I just love them! Well, what are you doing, now? Are you still keeping up your singing? Why don't you have another concert, some time?"

"I'm having one the sixteenth of this month," he said.

"Well, I'll be there," she said. "I'll be there, if I possibly can. You can count on me. Goodness, here comes a whole raft of people to talk to you. You're just a regular guest of honor! Oh, who's that girl in white? I've seen her some place."

"That's Katherine Burke," said her host.