

SIR GILBERT PARKER DISCUSSES WRITING

Is of a Romantic Tendency Himself and His Characters Were Long With Him.

HOW HE MET CHARLEY STEELE

Whom He'd Not Been Able to Visualize - American Literature Lacks Vitality, He Thinks.

Two glances are not necessary to identify Sir Gilbert Parker as an Englishman, with his heavy build, his grizzled Van Dyke beard, his manner reserved, courteous and with a hint of ceremony. Yet when he talks of his writing, the reserve, the touch of ceremony dissolves in a glow of enthusiasm. He becomes dramatic even and recalls by his intense emotional attitudes the remark frequently made by his friends that when he became a writer the stage lost a chance of getting another great actor.

He talks easily, vividly, in a voice low, with a slight natural huskiness. He gestures in a large, significant way, as if all forms of expression were a necessity to him. His dark blue eyes occasionally flash under their thick white lids with a touch and go of wit, after which he scratches his ear and makes sure that the subtlety was caught. Then his eyes resume their settled expression of weariness and melancholy and he tells you that his health is frail.

Something in his glance recalls his books, with their twist away from reality, and of this he himself begins to speak. "I appreciate," he says, "the talent of the writer who takes a skill of life, who anatomizes it as a skilled surgeon would a body, who brings out its details even though they may be hideous, but there is no urge in me for such dissection. I have the romantic tendency, the same characteristic most of us show in ordinary social intercourse. We do not, for instance, treat the people we meet as we know they are in reality. The man



SIR GILBERT PARKER.

We meet at a dinner may be known by us to be a blackguard, but we do not treat him as such. We shake hands with him and put on a certain decent show of courtesy. "We are, strictly speaking, not quite honest in our conduct. With those we love we carry this dishonesty still further. We may recognize that someone of whom we are very fond is untruthful or mean, but we refuse to acknowledge it. Among those we love we do not call a liar a liar. Even in our own minds we gloss over the defect. So it is with me in my writing. I make my characters a little better, a little more adventurous, a little more superlative in all their qualities than they would be possibly in real life.

It is obvious from the way in which he discusses the people of his imagination that they are as real to him as are the people of his actual life. He speaks of them intimately, gazing at their tangible presences were there, and he tells graphically of their little peculiarities, their hidden motives, their ways of life that were left unmentioned in his written stories of them. They are his familiars, and after a short talk with him about them you are not surprised to learn that all of the main people in his books were in his mind at least fifteen years before he wrote about them. A few years with him twenty years; Charley Steele, the paradoxical, companioned him for seventeen years before Sir Gilbert wrote a line about him.

Although he had known the man who was Charley Steele's prototype, he was never able to visualize the Charley Steele who finally became the hero of "The Right of Way." "I know what he was like," said Sir Gilbert, slipping the table with his open palm, "but for all those years I was never able to see him. I was about to start for America, and the day before I sailed I went to my father's to get a suit I was to take with me. When I tried it on I saw that it was an abominable fit, the lines were all wrong, simply it would not do." I said to my father, "I must have it by to-morrow. Also, I don't want to go to America without it."

"He said, 'You shall have it. I'll put extra workmen on it. I'll send the foreman down for you to direct about the alterations.' The next day the suit came. The door opened and there before me stood Sir Gilbert, his body leaning forward, his open palm pressed downward on the table, his gaze intent. "Charley Steele" I was struck. I said to myself without a moment's hesitation, "That is Charley Steele." It was Charley Steele as I had never been able to see him and yet as I knew he was. The man who was the father's foreman, as it were, a caricature in person and manner of my hero. He had the same warm complexion, the same golden tint of the skin, the same curling brown hair. "The next day Charley Steele, who seventeen years before this incident of the father's foreman, had by his mysterious disappearance furnished Sir Gilbert with the first impression of his hero, in all probability died, but Sir Gilbert's thinking over his whimsical hero's sudden disappearance saw that he did not do

NEW BOOKS.

A Scientific Marriage.

Dr. Drax in Arabella Kohn's story of "The Mating of Althea" (John Lane Company) had his views regarding disease and its treatment. He snorted at the name of Pasteur and charged that distinguished pathologist with being guilty of "drivelling, mansuetudo, medieval piffle" and of "dirty, disordered French nastiness" in dealing with mad dog bites. Drax was more violent than the Tammany Alderman who refused to vote money for the vaccination of public school children because "scratching people's arms" was a "fad." It is not to be doubted that Drax knew how to head off hydrophobia, for when Faversham, the hero of the tale, was bitten by Lady Paston's little Pekinese dog, an animal that was indubitably mad as well as astonishingly grotesque, Drax took him in hand and soon had him so that he was playing bridge with the heroine and safe from the rabies as though the Pekinese had never foamed and raged and nipped him in the thumb.

One of the chapters in this interesting story considers the inability of vampires, that is to say, "the abnormal power which some persons possess of absorbing the vital forces of others." Dr. Drax was once called to the child of a hard working widow who kept a small shop. The mother was a vampire without knowing it. She had innocently caused the serious trouble that needed the doctor's attention. The story tells us "The child was suffering from appendicitis. And the grave disease Drax knew to have resulted from a slow depletion of its constitutional strength by its meritorious, hard working mother. Appendicitis was very commonly caused by this vampire depletion, he knew." Lady Paston was another vampire. Her husband, a progressively drooping figure, believed that she was poisoning him.

A thoroughly disturbing chapter tells us of Sir Wilfrid Paston's revenge after his discovery of the faithfulness of Lady Paston. In the Oak Room, drawn up to the fire, stood a curious high backed chair that had been a piece of furniture in an ancient fortress chamber. Sir Wilfrid had seated himself on the stool. "Not in the fortune chair," she protested nervously. "The spikes have been removed," he said. She sat down, some hidden machinery was heard to rattle and two circular steel bands lifted themselves from the footpiece of the chair and clasped her shapely ankles. She screamed, but the doors of the Oak Room were thick and nobody heard her. Sir Wilfrid sat down at a table and began to write. "I am making my will," he observed. She knew well that he would leave nothing to her. He finished the will, took a razor from a drawer and made an end of himself. All this is related in inspiring detail in the story. It was plainly the author's intention to make the reader's flesh creep, and we think likely it will. We are told that Lady Paston "could feel her hair turn gray." Who can prove that this is an exaggeration?

Althea, the heroine, had been brought up strictly according to a plan. It was the intention of her guardian, who was Dr. Drax, that she should become the mother of a great physician. To this end she was preserved from the knowledge of how to read and write and from the pleasures of love and of play. Up to a certain point all went well with the plan. She was married to a young doctor, who also had been carefully selected and prepared, and everybody was happy except Faversham, who wanted to marry her himself. But now nature stepped in. Dr. Drax may have been right about hydrophobia and appendicitis, but he had not counted upon the heart of Althea. That young woman coming from her husband almost before the minister who married them could have counted his fee and had his supper. Faversham's Irish terror set up a nervous bark and scratched at the surface of Althea. Althea was discovered in the garden. Quite innocently and very plainly she let it be known that she should have married Faversham.

We made note here of an interesting figurative passage. The story speaks of "Faversham, his blood suddenly pounding in his brain like an angry thundering upon a gate, while at the call his every avenue filled with the hurrying feet of all his faculties and forces." The abandoned husband died of an African fever and Faversham and Althea were married. The story does not say whether their son became a great physician, very likely he did it Drax got hold of him, but it is told that Althea learned to read and write, and this is pleasant information. With such equipment she could read novels and perhaps write them.

Another Scientific Marriage.

In Nettie Syrett's readable and clever story of "Brender" (Daughters) John Lane Company, a thoughtful and serious gentleman, Leonard Chelwood of Chestwynd Hall, built a model village on his estate and resolved to marry Nancy Brender. Nancy was only 7 years old when this resolve was taken, but Leonard was a patient man and felt that he could wait. His reflections ran in effort. She was a child of the people, strong and healthy and extremely good looking. "She can be cultivated and brought up to be a lady. There is no reason why she should not be ready then to become the mother of fine children. She will be grateful to me for her advantages. It is not likely that she will ever be up to the contrary or otherwise disagreeable. Probably she will be pleased, it will not be objectionable if she proves to be in a slight measure bovine. She will honor and respect her husband and benefactor. Undoubtedly she will have good health. The children will have a good maternal home and for her a very fortunate matrimonial state. The children are the main thing; they should be extremely creditable. The world can be made a very different place if we conscientiously regulate it."

BOOK ABOUT THE BAGPIPE.

A Very Ancient Instrument Which Was Once Fashionable at Court.

The story of the bagpipe is told in a book of the name of William H. Crahan of the National University of Ireland, which has just been brought out in this country by the Scribners. "To most people," says Mr. Crahan, "the bagpipe is associated with the strident shriek of an instrument inseparably bound up with memories of 'bonnie Scotland.' But when it is remembered that the genesis of the pipes goes back to the remotest antiquity, and that the instrument can rightly be claimed as the precursor of the organ, the raud on floor of a work like the present stands in need of no apology. A strange to say it was also the subject of the story of the Bagpipe, which volume has hitherto been considered dealing with the history of the bagpipe, though of course various phases of the instrument have been from time to time treated by foreign and British authors."

"Mr. J. F. Rowbotham would have us believe that the drum is the oldest of all instruments, but I see no reason in the why the pipe cannot claim a similar antiquity. The primitive form of reed blown by the mouth must date back to a very early period in the world's history, and Mr. St. Chad Boswell assures us that there are Chaldean sculptures of about 3000 B. C. with a representation of the pipe."

Egypt and Persia gave the lead to Greece and Rome, and as a matter of fact, beating reeds have been discovered within the pipes found in Egyptian mummy cases. The Pandeian pipe was merely a development of the simple reed pipe, and it is now ascertained that the ancient Egyptians employed the bagpipe drone. "Coming down to modern times, the bagpipe was the fashionable instrument at the French court under Louis XIV. It will probably surprise some Philistines of our day who scoff at the bagpipe to hear that the titled dames of France at the close of the seventeenth century proudly carried round their pipes in elaborate cases with pink ribbons, and played on the musette. "And surely those who have read the histories of the Highland regiments will admit that the martial order inspired by the pipe contributed not a little to the many victories on record. The Highland pipes were in evidence at Assaye, the battle of Waterloo, at the Battle of Brno, Waterloo, and other engagements. Similarly the Irish pipes were effectively heard at Fontenoy."

NEW BOOKS.

A Scientific Marriage.

she did and invent theatricals. Very likely she derided her mind from Henker. I find it painful to think of the deciffling of her remarkably good looking mother. She should have told me. Inasmuch as the model village has gone to pot and Nancy has found me intolerable, there seems to be no reason why I should not accept Althea's courageous offer to elope with me. Althea, is it not very robust, but she has sympathy. She is rich in that virtue; she was intensely affected by the misfortunes of the model village. The more I reflect upon the matter the more does it seem to me reasonable that I should avail myself of the solace of Althea.

Campier Versus Wally.

The pride exhibited by Horace Campier as related in Guy Stealy's story of "Wally" (Dodd, Mead and Company), was lamented by a man and most arrogant forefinger at the venerable Parson's. It is painful to think and difficult to understand that a father, a parent not only having means but actually rolling in wealth, should be able to pronounce his daughter a pauper and mean it. But this is what Campier did. His beautiful daughter Marion and the good parson went bravely forth together. The story says: "The door closed behind them. The night swallowed them into its black fury. The rain beat sharp against them. The wind pressed like a mighty wall. They struggled through it, blindly seeking the other. Neither spoke, but close to each other they frantically stumbled on. The water lay in pools over the grass. The trees snapped. The bushes brushed stinging branches across their faces." The stage coach came along and they got in.

The story persuades us that riches ossify the heart and desiccate and shrivel up the nobler feeling in some extreme cases. The good parson had been over-reached and impoverished by the campier. This was wrong, even from the point of view of "business." The blameless and attractive Marion had been disinherited and cut out of the house in stormy weather. There is no doubt that Campier was carrying matters with a high hand. But the devoted and unselfish Wally Edgerton was on his way along the Sierra Nevada. "His wild ride," says the story, "will never be recorded in heroic metre nor traced on enduring canvases." He was modest and would never care. He "madly plunged from the porch of Marion Campier's home." He forged through the darkness. "The very heavens charging in furious opposition" did not deter him. With a stone he knocked over the unhappy Hallowick and seized his horse. The bullet and the curse of Hallowick missed him as he sped away. Down the blissful trail he thundered and lashing winds, rolling clouds, the letting rains smote upon his cheeks like the symphony of hell. "Notwithstanding the rumpus of the elements, Wally Clark heard the dynamite explosion that blew up the bridge. Then it was impossible for Tom Bishop to get to Bulls-eye."

"Wally was the boy to get ahead of Campier." "I was he blew up the bridge and brought Tom Bishop back to Marion. Wally loved Marion, but he knew that she loved Tom. Campier owned the bridge."

The Passionate Letter Writer.

Marguerite Moore, Marshall's small book, called "The Drift" (D. Appleton and Company), consists of love letters, supposed to be written by a young woman to a man who is married to somebody else. The letters are full of passion. The idea of an intense feeling is somewhat lost under the literary flow, but we may credit its existence since the last letter announces the writer's intention to make an end of herself. "Please don't worry about the how." It will be all done, you know, when you are reading this, and it's not going to hurt. I know an easy way."

Perhaps easy and painless, but pitiful. How different in one of the early letters. "No, I don't live on fudge and sodas, and I do like beefsteak as much as you do, but I don't mind if it's on the menu in plain English instead of silver framed French. Wherefore and therefore I loved you, I pray you to take my thought for this young woman's material state, and don't that you have driven her into the bosky wilds of Gotham's pond on delivery literature."

Happy times then, though literature often comes hard. But we notice that the letter writer constantly addresses her lover as "John" and "Johnnie." She should have looked again at the gender tables in her German study book. She might have tried a little variety, too, if she likes the German words of endearment. "Algot" is a powerful expression in the mouth of the affectionate. Still we do not consider that it is any better than "schätzchen."

Historical and Descriptive.

A series of connected studies on "The President's Cabinet" by Henry Barrett Leavens is published by the Yale University Press (Henry Frowde). The author treats of the origins rather than the history or functions of the cabinet officers. He begins with the discussions that preceded the adoption of the Constitution in so far as they concern providing the President with a council. He gives a sketch of the Executive offices before Washington's administration, passes over rapidly the three oldest secretariats and tells in full detail how the other offices, from the Attorney-Generalship on, were drawn into the Cabinet or came into existence. The stress is on the offices that have a comparative importance rather than on their relative importance. It is a thorough and useful piece of historical investigation. "What is in substance a history of the Presbyterian Church in the South has been written by Prof. Henry Alexander White, D. D., in "Southern Presbyterian Leaders" (The Neale Publishing Company, Washington). The author gives the biographies of all men of importance in his denomination from the beginnings to the generation that has just passed away. He joins to these brief connecting chapters explanatory words in the church which the biographies do not cover entirely. At the end he sums up briefly the present state of affairs. The book is illustrated with portraits. A useful compilation that will be of assistance to all students of the civil war is Gen. Marcus J. Wright's list of "General Officers of the Confederate Army" (The Neale Publishing Company).

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Excerpts From American History.

An interesting set of little books has been put together by Francis W. Halsey in "Great Epochs in American History" (ten volumes) (Funk and Wagnalls Company). Many events, usually of importance, are told in the words of the actors or of eye witnesses; others are taken from the narratives of later historians. In his choice of the latter the compiler has not been overcritical. There seems to be a disproportionate amount of space devoted to the period between the end of the Revolution and the civil war, four volumes out of ten in all, but this may be because popular collections of the sources have already been made for some periods. The set is very attractive in form and will be instructive and entertaining to readers who wish to graduate from school text books.

Other Books.

"The American Year Book" for 1912, edited by Francis G. Wickware (Appleton), has all the characteristics of the volume for the year before, with no sign of improvement. It has a large staff of college professors as contributors and an equally academic board of supervisors. Few of these gentlemen are awake to the truth that in a book of reference a summary of definite facts is required; they

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