

Mrs. Parlbly Resigns

Ill-health Makes Pause in Brilliant Career

By Mary P. McCallum

LAST week's Guide Post was a message from Miss Spiller, secretary of the United Farm Women of Alberta, announcing the resignation of the president of the U.F.W.A., Mrs. Walter H. Parlbly. This announcement has come as a shock to the thousands of Mrs. Parlbly's friends throughout Canada, but more particularly to those persons who have been more or less closely associated with her in her work during the past three years. Last March Mrs. Parlbly underwent a serious operation, and since that time has never regained her normal good health.



Irene Parlbly

It was because of continued ill-health that Mrs. Parlbly felt compelled to withdraw from public life for a time. It is the earnest hope of all that a complete rest will shortly restore Mrs. Parlbly to health, and to the work to which she has in the years just been so devoted and faithful and in which she was so well fitted for leadership by training and outlook.

It was in 1916 that Mrs. Parlbly was elected president of the United Farm Women of Alberta. At that time the organization was in its infancy. Today it is one of the most influential organizations in that province, and perhaps no one person has contributed more to its growth and progress than has its president since February, 1916. While its growth has at no time been spectacular it is built firmly on sound economic and social foundations, and is destined to fill no small place in the life of the women of Alberta.

Mrs. Parlbly was Irene Marryat before her marriage to Mr. Parlbly. She was born in "good old London" in 1868. From the time she was 13 until she was 16 she lived at Rawalpindi in the Punjab in India. Her winters were spent there and her summers in the beautiful Himalayas. During this time a governess was engaged who had charge of the Marryat children's education, but Mrs. Parlbly remarked recently that at that time her chief business in life was to evade any form of school work. "Reading and writing were my manias at that time," she said. "Four of us girls ran a magazine which we printed on those soap-tablets, and many and wonderful were the poems and the penny dreadfuls we evolved."

On returning to England Colonel Marryat and his family retired to Surrey, and there another governess gave Miss Irene a taste for good literature. This governess remained a year, and Irene's education was completed except for some lessons in music, singing and elocution.

Shortly after, she went to Germany, and stayed there for six months with friends in "dear little Freiburg at the edge of the Black Forest. How I loved it—the beautiful old cathedral and market place. I can smell the roses and things at the market now—our walks in the Black Forest, and the music, and the quaint people everywhere. I liked the southern Germans so much—I just hate to think of their turning out as they are."

A few years later Irene Marryat spent another six months in Germany, and again has nothing but pleasant memories of Germany. Speaking at one time of her girlhood she said she was afraid it was spent in having a good time, for she did a great deal of dancing, and acting in private theatricals, and helped get up many entertainments. She loved all outdoor games, cricket, skating, hockey and tennis. "In fact," she says, "I enjoyed everything."

Later, because of ill-health, she was

ordered to the Engadine, in Switzerland, for a winter. She went there with a girl friend and spent the winter at St. Moritz. Here again she has a delightful memory of beautiful mountains and lakes, and quaint Swiss chalets, and delightful friendly peasant folk speaking their queer Romanish gibberish, a mixture of French, German and Italian.

A year or so after, in 1896, she came to Alberta for a visit with some friends who had a ranch there. Her descriptions and reminiscences of those pioneer days in Alberta are full of romance and the joy of living in a country in the making. She said, "Calgary was a little rollicking cow-boy town, and the old sports of those times would not recognize it today. Polo and broncho-busting and general hilarity, were its chief features. My first drive from Lacombe, which was the nearest station, 30 miles away, was a thing of vivid memories—tumbling out of one mud hole into another, doubling up teams to get through, dropping into a creek and praying the bridge of poles was somewhere under the water and we might be lucky enough to hit the middle of it in the waning light of a summer evening, arriving at the ranch about 11.30 p.m., tired out but thrilled with a feeling of adventure, to find a roaring fire of logs in the living room to welcome us, and a hired man, who, to me, fresh from England, seemed a character straight out of Brete Harte."

She did not go back to England in the spring as she had intended, but elected to make her home in Alberta. She says many of her friends in the Old Country thought she was crazy, and pictured her in buckskin clothes, riding bronchos, and being generally tough. There were very few neighbors in those days, but Mrs. Parlbly never felt lonely. She loved the life, and the bigness of everything, the absence of conventionalities, and worries and pettiness. Learning to cook and keep house were a game to her. "Everything was fresh," she once said, "and the world seemed so young and interesting. Seeing a country in the making is an interest not given to everyone. We just hated seeing the railway coming, and the mushroom shacks springing up, and the fences shutting off all the nicest bits of range. But it had to come, and the pioneer days seem far away now. But oncoming civilization has its compensations, and water laid on, and electric light make up for all one has lost as one grows older."

Among the first things Mrs. Parlbly did in her new home was to make a flower garden, when flower gardens were little known in the great ranch country. It has always been her special hobby. Her home is a little bit of England. To visit Mrs. Parlbly there is to be taken into a quaint English garden, and into enchanting English living-room, to chat with a charming English hostess over afternoon tea. Mrs. Parlbly has one son, 18 years of age. "If this hideous war goes on I suppose it will claim him—but I try not to think of it. He is delicate, otherwise he would have gone before, because he felt he should from the beginning, but until he is older and stronger he is of more use here for he is a good farmer."

Mrs. Parlbly's public work began in 1913. The women of Alix organized a "Country Woman's Club" and Mrs. Parlbly was the secretary. Mrs. Parlbly disclaims any credit for organizing the club, but it afforded to women of that community many good times. In 1915 the club became a U.F.W.A. when the organization was first formed in Edmonton. In 1916, when she became provincial president of the U.F.W.A., Mrs. Parlbly resigned her position as secretary of the Alix Club and gave her whole time to the provincial work. Under her hands the organization has prospered and grown, and the best wishes of her large circle of friends are extended to her in the hope that she may soon again take her place in public life.

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