

THE WATERDOWN REVIEW

Issued Every Thursday morning from the office, Dundas Street, Waterdown

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Editor and Publisher
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Sir Gilbert Parker

Canadian Novelist Has Also Succeeded in British Politics.

As Archibald Lampman is hailed as Canada's foremost poet, so we may at least place Sir Horatio Gilbert Parker in the forefront of Canada's novelists. It is said that most writers, either of prose or poetry, at one time in their careers turn from their first endeavors and try their hand at the other style of writing, either poetry or prose. Parker was no exception to this and even went farther, in that he commenced his literary career as a playwright, and then turned his attention to novel writing, now and then devoting some time to poetry. Here then is another alumnus of Trinity, who has brought great credit to his Alma Mater. He is truly a great author and deserves to be classed as a first rate novelist.

Sir Gilbert was born on November 23, 1860, at Camden East, near Belleville, Ontario. He was a son of the late Capt. Joseph and Samantha Jane (Simmons) Parker, people of United Empire Loyalist descent. His father had been a British Artillery officer, who first came to Canada a very young man and took his place in the army in the rebellion of 1837. He returned to England but came out again before the troops were finally withdrawn and decided to settle in this country.

Sir Gilbert was educated privately and later on at Trinity College. He had decided to study for the church, but later gave up this idea and decided to devote his time to literary pursuits. He tutored, and lectured while attending the university. He was then about 20 or 21 years of age. He once said of himself that he could speak better then than at the time the remark was made.

In 1881, when he was 21 years old, he went out to Australia for his health. He says that he landed there with £60 in his pocket—possibly not quite so bad then as it sounds now. Thus there opened out for him a very profitable experience in that distant continent. When he was 22 years old he was lecturing in the chief cities and amassing a great fund of knowledge. He did not confine his touring to the cities of Australia, but went into the interior also. A little later on, when on the eve of departing for England, he was offered the position of associate editor on the Sydney Morning Herald, at a substantial salary, which offer he accepted. While in the service of this newspaper he made many special trips to several parts of the South Seas.

As was remarked above, he began his literary efforts by writing plays, three of which were successfully produced by George Reynolds. These were financially successful, beyond his greatest expectations, and thus his future was assured. Later on he traveled more extensively still, visiting many parts of Europe and Asia and Egypt, getting material for his future works. He says that he worked fifteen hours daily while in Australia, and he still is a hard worker.

In 1889 Sir Gilbert retired to England and has made his home in London ever since. In 1895 he married Amy E. Van Tine. He was made the honorary colonel of the 1st Kent Royal Garrison Artillery in 1901. He organized the first Imperial Universities Conference, held in London in 1893. In 1909 he was elected president of the Sir Walter Scott Society, of Edinburgh. He sat in the Imperial House of Commons for Gravesend from 1900-1918. He was knighted in 1902, made a baronet in 1915, and a Privy Councillor in 1916. It will be remembered that he visited Canada last year with the Imperial Press delegation.

"Pierre and His People" is his first book of fiction, produced in 1892, after a visit to Quebec and the Canadian Northwest. This work was quite a success. "The Seats of the Mighty," one of his best known books, is an historic romance of old Quebec. "Wild Youth" is another thrilling tale, having a brutal, bigoted and a mysterious Chinaman in the plot. This story is full of movement. Other well-known Parker stories are "Trail of the Sword," "When Valmond Came to Pontiac," "Right of Way," "The Judgment House," "Northern Lights," "Donovan Fasha," "The Battle of the Strong," "The Weavers," and "No Defence." This last is a most absorbing tale, the scene of which commences in Ireland and finishes in the West Indies (Jamaica), with a naval battle between British and French warships off the coast of Jamaica.

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