

Parnell

Charles Stewart Parnell, His Love Story and Political Life, by Katherine O'Shea (Mrs. Charles Stewart Parnell). New York: George H. Doran Company. \$5.00 net.

MARRIED in her twentieth year or thereabouts to a cornet in a sporting regiment, Katherine O'Shea had lived thirteen years with Willie O'Shea and borne him three children before she met Charles Stewart Parnell. Her relations with O'Shea had long been unsatisfactory. Handsome, gay, sarcastic, self-assured, O'Shea was a spoiled and rather dictatorial specimen of the petty aristocracy. Already bankrupt through mismanagement of his racing stable, he spent a great deal of his time away from Mrs. O'Shea engaged in patching up his fortunes, being absent as long as eighteen months at a time on mining ventures in Spain. When they were together O'Shea was rather jarring and possessive, easily made jealous, insisting on visits, visitors and entertainments his wife disliked, with which he alternated periods of undependability and neglect. His wife's impulsiveness and mettle he did not understand, and before the entry of Parnell into their lives "the wearing friction caused by our totally dissimilar temperaments began to make us feel that close companionship was impossible, and we mutually agreed that he should have rooms in London, visiting Eltham to see myself and the children at weekends."

Mrs. O'Shea's father was an English clergyman, Sir John Page Wood. She was the youngest of a family of thirteen. Brought up in a household where men like Trollope, the older Cunninghame Graham, John Morley came to visit, she spent a great deal of her life with an august aunt at a Georgian lodge in Eltham, to whom George Meredith used to come almost every week for a stipulated two hours of "the classics and their discussion." Mrs. O'Shea knew George Meredith well, and I dare say he, behind his badinage and "effectiveness," knew that flashing spirit rather better.

In 1880 Willie O'Shea was urged to stand for an Irish constituency. "I wrote back strongly encouraging him," says Mrs. Parnell, "for I knew it would give him occupation he liked and keep us apart—and therefore good friends. Up to this time Willie had not met Mr. Parnell."

At this time Parnell was thirty-four years of age. The actual leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, he had already broken away from the "fine reasonableness" of Isaac Butt at which "the English parties smiled and patted the Irish indulgently on the head," and he had initiated his policy "of uncompromising hostility to all British parties and of unceasing opposition to all their measures until the grievances of Ireland were redressed."

Because he disliked all social intercourse with Saxons, Mrs. O'Shea's attempts to secure Parnell for her dinners were repeatedly unsuccessful, but, a determined lady, she eventually decided to deliver her invitation in person at the House. "He came out, a tall, gaunt figure, thin and deadly pale. He looked straight at me smiling, and his curiously burning eyes looked into mine with a wondering intentness that threw into my brain the sudden thought: 'This man is wonderful—and different.'" Mrs. O'Shea planned a theater party for his distraction, and "he and I seemed naturally to fall into our places in the dark corner of the box." "I had a feeling of complete sympathy and companionship with him, as though I had always known this strange, unusual man with the thin face and pinched nostrils, who sat

of his broken health . . . and his eyes smiled into mine as he broke off his theme and began to tell me of how he had met once more in America a lady to whom he had been practically engaged some years before."

A few months later, when Mrs. O'Shea was in great distress over the death of Lucy Goldsmith, her lifelong friend and nurse, the tenor of Parnell's notes from Dublin revealed the truth. "I cannot keep myself away from you any longer, so shall leave to-night for London." They did not meet, but Mrs. O'Shea pictures the subsequent weeks. "And my aunt would doze in her chair while I dropped the book I had been reading to her and drifted into unknown harmonies and color of life . . . and I was conscious of sudden gusts of unrest and revolt against these leisured, peaceful days where the chiming of the great clock in the hall was the only indication of the flight of time."

"In the autumn of 1880 Mr. Parnell came to stay with us at Eltham." There he fell ill, brought near to death's door by "his exertions on behalf of the famine-stricken peasants of Ireland," and Mrs. O'Shea nursed him back till he was nearly strong. Hovering over him as he slept, "pulling the light rug better over him," she recalls his murmur: "Steer carefully out of the harbor—there are breakers ahead."

Next year Captain O'Shea came to Eltham without invitation, found Parnell's portmanteau there, sent it to London and left declaring he would challenge Parnell to a duel. The challenge was accepted but "Willie then thought he had been too hasty." Parnell's real emotions seem to have centered on his portmanteau. "My dear Mrs. O'Shea," he wrote, "will you kindly ask Captain O'Shea where he left my luggage? I inquired at both parcel office, cloak room, and this hotel, and they were not to be found." But the incident cemented the fate of O'Shea. "From the date of this bitter quarrel Parnell and I were one, without further scruple, without fear, and without remorse."

In 1881 Parnell was arrested for his Land League activities, and was in Kilmainham at the will of Gladstone until the following May. It was a period of unrelenting agony for Mrs. O'Shea, and for him on her account. In February, 1882, she bore Parnell a daughter whom he saw for the first and last time for a day in April. "My little one's paternity was utterly unsuspected by the O'Sheas."

From that time till 1890, the year of the divorce case, Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea lived their double life. A "volcano capped with snow," Parnell endured secrecy and deception, and she with him, for the sake of the Home Rule bill. When the crash came Mrs. O'Shea was afraid, but his mind was clear. "Put away all fear and regret for my public life. I have given, and will give, Ireland what is in me to give. That I have vowed to her, but my private life shall never belong to any country, but one woman. There will be a howl, but it will be the howling of hypocrites; not altogether, for some of these Irish fools are genuine in their belief that forms and creeds can govern life and men; perhaps they are right so far as they can experience life. But I am not as they, for they are among the world's children. I am a man, and I have told these children what they want, and they clamor for it. If they will let me, I will get it for them. But if they turn from me, my Queen, it matters not at all in the end . . . You have stood to me for comfort and strength and my very life. I have never been able to feel in the least sorry for having come into your life. It had to be, and the bad times I have caused you and the stones that have been flung and that will be flung at you are all no matter, because to us

Between O'Shea and Mrs. O'Shea there were friendly relations till the end of 1886. She induced Parnell to work for his parliamentary candidacy in 1886, and while O'Shea was willing to use Parnell to further his own necessities (he seems to have been a tool of Joseph Chamberlain) he hated and railed against the imperturbable Parnell. All during their intimacy, Mrs. O'Shea acted as an intermediary between Parnell and Gladstone in negotiations which she vividly recounts. Whenever Gladstone sought Parnell in an emergency he sent for him to Mrs. O'Shea's house. The pious surprise of Gladstone when the crash came was characteristic hypocrisy.

Mrs. O'Shea was married to Parnell in June, 1891. Worn out by his campaign against his own former adherents, now under the dictation of Gladstone and the priests, Parnell succumbed in October. He died October sixth, less than four months after his marriage, in his forty-seventh year.

Now a woman of nearly seventy, Mrs. Parnell has been induced to reveal her intimate life for the sake of Captain O'Shea's child, her eldest son. That young man, whose psychology is not worth discussing, is "jealous for his father's honor," and it is ostensibly to prove that Captain O'Shea was not a willing beneficiary of her relations with Parnell that these two volumes were written. The real motive, however, is the deep human motive of self-vindication. Mrs. Parnell loved one of the great men of his generation. She loved him purely, passionately, consumedly. Possessing the great treasure of his love in return, she has been unwilling to die without rebutting all the slander, all the contumely, all the belittlement and reproach and vilification that were the price she paid for seeming to have cheated Ireland of her uncrowned king. Writing these two volumes "without scruple, without fear and without remorse," she has brought to her aid all the resources of imagination, keen intelligence and vivid memory, and she has produced a work of consummate significance and touching humanness. Defiant of convention, she has given full reality for her reader to the extraordinarily powerful and fascinating personality to whom she dedicated her life. Exposing for this purpose much that is painfully private and sacredly naïve, dwelling on facts that belong, if anything belongs, to that inner life to which Parnell asserted his right so implacably, she has, at this great cost, succeeded in asserting the quality of their personal relation. It was true love, if ever love was true, and it honored human nature. If Captain O'Shea was "deceived," it was the fruit of his own mean inadequacy, determined as he was to keep Mrs. O'Shea in bond, to enforce a legal advantage that flattered his vanity at the expense of everything generous, noble and free. He struggled, as small people always struggle, to keep the springs of life from finding their level, but they were too strong for him. After many years' effort to reconcile herself to insuperable limitations, Mrs. Parnell found an adequate, a complete, an immeasurable appeal to every power and sympathy she possessed. She answered that appeal heroically, failing to conform with the written law in order to conform with what may curtly be called the unwritten law of her own and Parnell's being.

When these volumes were published in London, they were dismissed in twenty lines by the *British Weekly* as an outrage against decency, a "glorification of adultery . . . the foulest treachery and vice." It is quite in keeping with the Gladstone tradition and, indeed, with English righteousness in general, that this work, which the *British Weekly*

Sincerity in the Making

The Congo and Other Poems, by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.25 net.

General William Booth Enters Into Heaven, and Other Poems, by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. \$1.25 net.

Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty, by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. \$1.00 net.

YOU must hear Mr. Lindsay recite his own "Congo," his body tense and swaying, his hands keeping time like an orchestral leader to his own rhythms, his tone changing color in response to noise and savage imagery of the lines, the riotous picture of the negro mind set against the weird background of the primitive Congo, the "futurist" phrases crashing through the scene like a glorious college yell,—you must hear this yourself, and learn what an arresting, exciting person this new indigenous Illinois poet is. He has a theory of his work, which Miss Monroe has supported in "Poetry," that he is carrying back the half-spoken, half-chanted singing of the American vaudeville stage to its old Greek precedent of the rhapsodist's lyric, where the poet was composer and reciter in one. After hearing the now so well-known "General Booth Enters Into Heaven," and the "Santa-Fé Trail," and "The Firemen's Ball," one's imagination begins to run away with the idea of this Greek rhapsodist-vaudeville stage, where one could get the color and the smash of American life interpreted on a higher and somewhat more versatile plane than is now presented. One finds one's self beginning irresistibly, "Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room," or "Booth led boldly with his big bass drum," and whirling along to rhapsodic improvisation of one's own. The explicitly poetical stage directions which accompany these poems "to be read aloud or chanted," initiate the reader at once into the art, and rather spoil him for the tame business of reading. One hopes that these verses must have come in sweeps of improvisation as the poet swung along on one of his vagabond walks through the interminable prairies of the West. They sound as if they had been shouted to the winds and the clouds, their gaudy rhythms marking time for the slow roll of the sun over the blistering sky.

These later poems represent Mr. Lindsay's finding of his own sincerity. Like most undistinguished and unendowed young Americans of talent, born into an atmosphere without taste and without appreciations, he had to flounder in a tangled maze of "trial and error" before he could even touch his own quality. Born thirty-five years ago in that Springfield which he idealizes with a certain pathetic unconvincingness, he found himself very early with a talent for making verses and illustrating them. Three years at a small Illinois college, a desultory art-training picked up in Chicago and New York, a long tramp as a vagabond poet through the South, wanderings about countless European art-museums, a campaign for the Anti-Saloon League among the farmers of Illinois, and his long walk through the Southwest in 1912, the incidents of which make up the very prosaic "adventures," compose this quite typical enterprise of finding one's place in the world. With almost too facile a fluency of rhyme and metre, Mr. Lindsay has tried every variety of verse from children's poems to political and up-to-date war poems. The "other poems" of the two volumes suggest that he has seized and developed every ingenious idea that came to him pleasantly regardless of its recon-