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Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis  
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane  
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne  
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**You Never Know Your Luck,  
being the story of a matrimonial  
deserter. Complete**

Gilbert Parker

# Imprint

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**YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK**

**[BEING THE STORY OF A MATRIMONIAL  
DESERTER]**

**By Gilbert Parker**



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### YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

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## INTRODUCTION

This volume contains two novels dealing with the life of prairie people in the town of Askatoon in the far West. 'The World for Sale' and the latter portion of 'The Money Master' deal with the same life, and 'The Money Master' contained some of the characters to be found in 'Wild Youth'. 'The World for Sale' also was a picture of prairie country with strife between a modern Anglo-Canadian town and a French-Canadian town in the West. These books are of the same people; but 'You Never Know Your Luck' and 'Wild Youth' have several characters which move prominently through both.

In the introduction to 'The World for Sale' in this series, I drew a description of prairie life, and I need not repeat what was said there. 'In You Never Know Your Luck' there is a Proem which describes briefly the look of the prairie and suggests characteristics of the life of the people. The basis of the book has a letter written by a wife to her husband at a critical time in his career when he had broken his promise to her. One or two critics said the situation is impossible, because no man would carry a letter unopened for a long number of years. My reply is: that it is exactly what I myself did. I have still a letter written to me which was delivered at my door sixteen years ago. I have never read it, and my reason for not reading it was that I realised, as I think, what its contents were. I knew that the letter would annoy, and there it lies. The writer of the letter who was then my enemy is now my friend. The chief character in the book, Crozier, was an Irishman, with all the Irishman's cleverness, sensitiveness, audacity, and timidity; for both those latter qualities are characteristic of the Irish race, and as I am half Irish I can understand why I suppressed a letter and why Crozier did. Crozier is the type of man that comes occasionally to the Dominion of Canada; and Kitty Tynan is the sort of girl that the great West breeds. She did an immoral thing in opening the letter that Crozier had suppressed, but she did it in a good cause—for Crozier's sake; she made his wife write another letter, and she placed it again in the envelope for Crozier to open and see. Whatever lack of morality there was in her act was balanced by the good end to the story, though it meant the sacrifice of Kitty's love for Crozier, and the making of his wife happy once more.

As for 'Wild Youth' I make no apology for it. It is still fresh in the minds of the American public, and it is true to the life. Some critics frankly called it melodramatic. I do not object to the term. I know nothing more melodramatic than certain of the plots of Shakespeare's plays. Thomas Hardy is melodramatic; Joseph Conrad is melodramatic; Balzac was melodramatic, and so were Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott. The charge of melodrama is not one that should disturb a writer of fiction. The question is, are the characters melodramatic. Will anyone suggest to me the marriage of a girl of seventeen with a man over sixty is melodramatic. It may be, but I think it tragical, and so it was in this case. As for Orlando Guise, I describe the man as I knew him, and he is still alive. Some comments upon the story suggested that it was impossible for a man to spend the night on the prairie with a woman whom he loved without causing her to forget her marriage vows. It is not sentimental to say that is nonsense. It is a prurient mind that only sees evil in a situation of the sort. Why it should be desirable to make a young man and woman commit a misdemeanor to secure the praise of a critic is beyond imagination. It would be easy enough to do. I did it in *The Right of Way*. I did it in others of my books. What happens to one man and one woman does not necessarily happen to another. There are men who, for love of a woman, would not take advantage of her insecurity. There are others who would. In my books I have made both classes do their will, and both are true to life. It does not matter what one book is or is not, but it does matter that an author writes his book with a sense of the fitting and the true.

Both these books were written to present that side of life in Canada which is not wintry and forbidding. There is warmth of summer in both tales, and thrilling air and the beauty of the wild countryside. As for the cold, it is severe in most parts of Canada, but the air is dry, and the sharpness is not felt as it is in this damper climate of England. Canadians feel the cold of a March or November day in London far more than the cold of a day in Winnipeg, with the thermometer many degrees below zero. Both these books present the summer side of Canada, which is as delightful as that of any climate in the world; both show the modern western life which is greatly changed since the days when Pierre roamed the very fields where

these tales take place. It should never be forgotten that British Columbia has a climate like that of England, where, on the Coast, it is never colder than here, and where there is rain instead of snow in winter.

There is much humour and good nature in the West, and this also I tried to bring out in these two books; and Askatoon is as cosmopolitan as London. Canada in the West has all races, and it was consistent of me to give a Chinaman of noble birth a part to play in the tragicomedy. I have a great respect for the Chinaman, and he is a good servant and a faithful friend. Such a Chinaman as Li Choo I knew in British Columbia, and all I did was to throw him on the Eastern side of the Rockies, a few miles from the border of the farthest Western province. The Chinaman's death was faithful in its detail, and it was true to his nature. He had to die, and with the old pagan philosophy, still practised in China and Japan, he chose the better way, to his mind. Princes still destroy themselves in old Japan, as recent history proves.



## YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

### PROEM

Have you ever seen it in reaping-time? A sea of gold it is, with gentle billows telling of sleep and not of storm, which, like regiments afoot, salute the reaper and say, "All is fulfilled in the light of the sun and the way of the earth; let the sharp knife fall." The countless million heads are heavy with fruition, and sun glorifies and breeze cradles them to the hour of harvest. The air-like the tingle of water from a mountain-spring in the throat of the worn wayfarer, bringing a sense of the dust of the world flushed away.

Arcady? Look closely. Like islands in the shining yellow sea, are houses—sometimes in a clump of trees, sometimes only like bare-backed domesticity or naked industry in the workfield. Also rising here and there in the expanse, clouds that wind skyward, spreading out in a powdery mist. They look like the rolling smoke of incense, of sacrifice. Sacrifice it is. The vast steam-threshers are mightily devouring what their servants, the monster steam-reapers, have gleaned for them. Soon, when September comes, all that waving sea will be still. What was gold will still be a rusted gold, but near to the earth—the stubble of the corn now lying in vast garner by the railway lines, awaiting transport east and west and south and across the seas.

Not Arcady this, but a land of industry in the grip of industrialists, whose determination to achieve riches is, in spite of themselves, chastened by the magnitude and orderly process of nature's travail which is not pain. Here Nature hides her internal striving under a smother of white for many months in every year, when what is now gold in the sun will be a soft—sometimes, too, a hard-shining coverlet like impacted wool. Then, instead of the majestic clouds of incense from the threshers, will rise blue spiral wreaths of smoke from the lonely home. There the farmer rests till spring, comforting himself in the thought that while he waits, far under the snow the wheat is slowly expanding; and as in April, the white frost flies out of the

soil into the sun, it will push upward and outward, green and vigorous, greeting his eye with the "What cheer, partner!" of a mate in the scheme of nature.

Not Arcady; and yet many of the joys of Arcady are here — bright, singing birds, wide adventurous rivers, innumerable streams, the squirrel in the wood and the bracken, the wildcat stealing through the undergrowth, the lizard glittering by the stone, the fish leaping in the stream, the plaint of the whippoorwill, the call of the blue-bird, the golden flash of the oriole, the honk of the wild geese overhead, the whirr of the mallard from the sedge. And, more than all, a human voice declaring by its joy in song that not only God looks upon the world and finds it very good.

## CHAPTER I. "PIONEERS, O PIONEERS"

If you had stood on the borders of Askatoon, a prairie town, on the pathway to the Rockies one late August day not many years ago, you would have heard a fresh young human voice singing into the morning, as its possessor looked, from a coat she was brushing, out over the "field of the cloth of gold," which your eye has already been invited to see. With the gift of singing for joy at all, you should be able to sing very joyously at twenty-two. This morning singer was just that age; and if you had looked at the golden carpet of wheat stretching for scores of miles, before you looked at her, you would have thought her curiously in tone with the scene. She was a symphony in gold — nothing less. Her hair, her cheeks, her eyes, her skin, her laugh, her voice they were all gold. Everything about her was so demonstratively golden that you might have had a suspicion it was made and not born; as though it was unreal, and the girl herself a proper subject of suspicion. The eyelashes were so long and so black, the eyes were so topaz, the hair was so like such a cloud of gold as would be found on Joan of Arc as seen by a mediaeval painter, that an air of faint artificiality surrounded what was in every other way a remarkable effort of nature to give this region, where she was so very busy, a keynote.

Poseurs have said that nature is garish or exaggerated more often than not; but it is a libel. She is aristocratic to the nth degree, and is never over done; courage she has, but no ostentation. There was, however, just a slight touch of over-emphasis in this singing-girl's presentation—that you were bound to say, if you considered her quite apart from her place in this nature-scheme. She was not wholly aristocratic; she was lacking in that high, social refinement which would have made her gold not so golden, her black eyelashes not so black. Being unaristocratic is not always a matter of birth, though it may be a matter of parentage.

Her parentage was honest and respectable and not exalted. Her father had been an engineer, who had lost his life on a new railway of the West. His widow had received a pension from the company insufficient to maintain her, and so she kept boarders, the coat of one of whom her daughter was now brushing as she sang. The widow herself was the origin of the girl's slight disqualification for being of that higher circle of selection which nature arranges long before society makes its judicial decision. The father had been a man of high intelligence, which his daughter to a real degree inherited; but the mother, as kind a soul as ever lived, was a product of southern English rural life—a little sumptuous, but wholesome, and for her daughter's sake at least, keeping herself well and safely within the moral pale in the midst of marked temptations. She was forty-five, and it said a good deal for her ample but proper graces that at forty-five she had numerous admirers. The girl was English in appearance, with a touch perhaps of Spanish—why, who can say? Was it because of those Spanish hidalgos wrecked on the Irish coast long since? Her mind and her tongue, however, were Irish like her father's. You would have liked her, everybody did,—yet you would have thought that nature had failed in self-confidence for once, she was so pointedly designed to express the ancient dame's colour-scheme, even to the delicate auriferous down on her youthful cheek and the purse-proud look of her faintly retrouse nose; though in fact she never had had a purse and scarcely needed one. In any case she had an ample pocket in her dress.

This fairly full description of her is given not because she is the most important person in the story, but because the end of the story would have been entirely different had it not been for her; and be-

cause she herself was one of those who are so much the sport of circumstances or chance that they express the full meaning of the title of this story. As a line beneath the title explains, the tale concerns a matrimonial deserter. Certainly this girl had never deserted matrimony, though she had on more than one occasion avoided it; and there had been men mean and low enough to imagine they might allure her to the conditions of matrimony without its status.

As with her mother the advertisement of her appearance was wholly misleading. A man had once said to her that "she looked too gay to be good," but in all essentials she was as good as she was gay, and indeed rather better. Her mother had not kept boarders for seven years without getting some useful knowledge of the world, or without imparting useful knowledge; and there were men who, having paid their bills on demand, turned from her wiser if not better men. Because they had pursued the old but inglorious profession of hunting tame things, Mrs. Tyndall Tynan had exacted compensation in one way or another—by extras, by occasional and deliberate omission of table luxuries, and by making them pay for their own mending, which she herself only did when her boarders behaved themselves well. She scored in any contest—in spite of her rather small brain, large heart, and ardent appearance. A very clever, shiftless Irish husband had made her develop shrewdness, and she was so busy watching and fending her daughter that she did not need to watch and fend herself to the same extent as she would have done had she been free and childless and thirty. The widow Tynan was practical, and she saw none of those things which made her daughter stand for minutes at a time and look into the distance over the prairie towards the sunset light or the grey-blue foothills. She never sang—she had never sung a note in her life; but this girl of hers, with a man's coat in her hand, and eyes on the joyous scene before her, was for ever humming or singing. She had even sung in the church choir till she declined to do so any longer, because strangers stared at her so; which goes to show that she was not so vain as people of her colouring sometimes are. It was just as bad, however, when she sat in the congregation; for then, too, if she sang, people stared at her. So it was that she seldom went to church at all; but it was not because of this that her ideas of right and wrong were

quite individual and not conventional, as the tale of the matrimonial deserter will show.

This was not church, however, and briskly applying a light whisk-broom to the coat, she hummed one of the songs her father taught her when he was in his buoyant or in his sentimental moods, and that was a fair proportion of the time. It used to perplex her the thrilling buoyancy and the creepy melancholy which alternately mastered her father; but as a child she had become so inured to it that she was not surprised at the alternate pensive gaiety and the blazing exhilaration of the particular man whose coat she now dusted long after there remained a speck of dust upon it. This was the song she sang:

"Whereaway, whereaway goes the lad that once was mine?  
Hereaway I waited him, hereaway and oft; When I sang my  
song to him, bright his eyes began to shine— Hereaway I  
loved him well, for my heart was soft. "Hereaway my heart  
was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes, Held my hand, and  
pressed his cheek warm against my brow, Home I saw upon  
the earth, heaven stood there in the skies— 'Whereaway,  
whereaway goes my lover now?' "Whereaway goes my  
lad— tell me, has he gone alone? Never harsh word did I  
speak, never hurt I gave; Strong he was and beautiful; like a  
heron he has flown— Hereaway, hereaway will I make my  
grave. "When once more the lad I loved hereaway, hereaway,  
Comes to lay his hand in mine, kiss me on the brow, I will  
whisper down the wind, he will weep to hear me say —  
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

There was a plaintive quality in the voice of this russet maiden in perfect keeping with the music and the words; and though her lips smiled, there was a deep, wistful look in her eyes more in harmony with the coming autumn than with this gorgeous harvest-time.

For a moment after she had finished singing she stood motionless, absorbed by the far horizon; then suddenly she gave a little shake of the body and said in a brisk, playfully chiding way:

"Kitty Tynan, Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" There was no one near, so far as eye could see, so it was clear that the words were addressed to herself. She was expressing that wonder which so many people feel at discovering in themselves long-concealed characteristics, or find themselves doing things out of their natural orbit, as they think. If any one had told Kitty Tynan that she had rare imagination, she would have wondered what was meant. If anyone had said to her, "What are you dreaming about, Kitty?" she would have understood, however, for she had had fits of dreaming ever since she was a child, and they had increased during the past few years—since the man came to live with them whose coat she was brushing. Perhaps this was only imitation, because the man had a habit of standing or sitting still and looking into space for minutes—and on Sundays for hours—at a time; and often she had watched him as he lay on his back in the long grass, head on a hillock, hat down over his eyes, while the smoke from his pipe came curling up from beneath the rim. Also she had seen him more than once sitting with a letter before him and gazing at it for many minutes together. She had also noted that it was the same letter on each occasion; that it was a closed letter, and also that it was unstamped. She knew that, because she had seen it in his desk—the desk once belonging to her father, a sloping thing with a green-baize top. Sometimes he kept it locked, but very often he did not; and more than once, when he had asked her to get him something from the desk, not out of meanness, but chiefly because her moral standard had not a multitude of delicate punctilios, she had examined the envelope curiously. The envelope bore a woman's handwriting, and the name on it was not that of the man who owned the coat—and the letter. The name on the envelope was Shiel Crozier, but the name of the man who owned the coat was J. G. Kerry—James Gathorne Kerry, so he said.

Kitty Tynan had certainly enough imagination to make her cherish a mystery. She wondered greatly what it all meant. Never in anything else had she been inquisitive or prying where the man was concerned; but she felt that this letter had the heart of a story, and she had made up fifty stories which she thought would fit the case of J. G. Kerry, who for over four years had lived in her mother's house. He had become part of her life, perhaps just because he was

a man,—and what home is a real home without a man?—perhaps because he always had a kind, quiet, confidential word for her, or a word of stimulating cheerfulness; indeed, he showed in his manner occasionally almost a boisterous hilarity. He undoubtedly was what her mother called "a queer dick," but also "a pippin with a perfect core," which was her way of saying that he was a man to be trusted with herself and with her daughter; one who would stand loyally by a friend or a woman. He had stood by them both when Augustus Burlingame, the lawyer, who had boarded with them when J. G. Kerry first came, coarsely exceeded the bounds of liberal friendliness which marked the household, and by furtive attempts at intimacy began to make life impossible for both mother and daughter. Burlingame took it into his head, when he received notice that his rooms were needed for another boarder, that J. G. Kerry was the cause of it. Perhaps this was not without reason, since Kerry had seen Kitty Tynan angrily unclasping Burlingame's arm from around her waist, and had used cutting and decisive words to the sensualist afterwards.

There had taken the place of Augustus Burlingame a land-agent—Jesse Bulrush—who came and went like a catapult, now in domicile for three days together, now gone for three weeks; a voluble, gaseous, humorous fellow, who covered up a well of commercial evasiveness, honesty and adroitness by a perspiring gaiety natural in its origin and convenient for harmless deceit. He was fifty, and no gallant save in words; and, as a wary bachelor of many years' standing, it was a long time before he showed a tendency to blandish a good-looking middle-aged nurse named Egan who also lodged with Mrs. Tynan; though even a plain-faced nurse in uniform has an advantage over a handsome unprofessional woman. Jesse Bulrush and J. G. Kerry were friends—became indeed such confidential friends to all appearance, though their social origin was evidently so different, that Kitty Tynan, when she wished to have a pleasant conversation which gave her a glow for hours afterwards, talked to the fat man of his lean and aristocratic-looking friend.

"Got his head where it ought to be—on his shoulders; and it ain't for playing football with," was the frequent remark of Mr. Bulrush concerning Mr. Kerry. This always made Kitty Tynan want to sing, she could not have told why, save that it seemed to her the equiva-

lent of a long history of the man whose past lay in mists that never lifted, and whom even the inquisitive Burlingame had been unable to "discover" when he lived in the same house. But then Kitty Tynan was as fond of singing as a canary, and relieved her feelings constantly by this virtuous and becoming means, with her good contralto voice. She was indeed a creature of contradictions; for if ever any one should have had a soprano voice it was she. She looked a soprano.

What she was thinking of as she sang with Kerry's coat in her hand it would be hard to discover by the process of elimination, as the detectives say when tracking down a criminal. It is, however, of no consequence; but it was clear that the song she sang had moved her, for there was the glint of a tear in her eye as she turned towards the house, the words of the lyric singing themselves over in her brain:

"Hereaway my heart was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes, Held my hand, and pressed his cheek warm against my brow, Home I saw upon the hearth, heaven stood there in the skies' Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?"

She knew that no lover had left her; that none was in the habit of laying his warm cheek against her brow; and perhaps that was why she had said aloud to herself, "Kitty Tynan, Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" Perhaps — and perhaps not.

As she stepped forward towards the door she heard a voice within the house, and she quickened her footsteps. The blood in her face, the look in her eye quickened also. And now a figure appeared in the doorway — a figure in shirt-sleeves, which shook a fist at the hurrying girl.

"Villain!" he said gaily, for he was in one of his absurd, ebullient moods — after a long talk with Jesse Bulrush. "Hither with my coat; my spotless coat in a spotted world, — the unbelievable anomaly —

"For the earth of a dusty to-day Is the dust of an earthy to-morrow."