

Jack K. Campbell

Colonel Parker's New Woman and the New Education

The marriage in 1882 of Mary Frances Stuart and Colonel Francis W. Parker symbolized the union of the feminist movement with that of educational reform. History has somehow overlooked the impact of the woman's movement on the progressive transformation of the schools during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the liberation of women and children from the bondage of tradition was a common struggle. Some of the educational and social theories of Colonel Parker, acknowledged father of the movement which would be called Progressive Education, were inspired by his New Woman. Moreover, the refinement of his ideas rested largely on Mrs. Parker's artistic genius, and the political support so necessary for their implementation depended to a considerable degree on her connections with women's organizations. As queen of such clubs, Mrs. Parker was the trump in the power play for the Colonel's educational aims. She represents the forgotten half, and perhaps the better half, of the conception and birth of Progressive Education.

I

To be sure, the Colonel had made his mark on educational reform with the "Quincy System" before he met his New Woman, but the "new education" was only half conceived and poorly articulated. Parker himself said there was no Quincy method or system unless one agreed to call it a method or system of everlasting change.¹ When he began his work as superintendent of schools in Quincy, Massachusetts on April 20, 1875, the day after the Centennial Celebration of the shots for independence at nearby Lexington, his revolution was just beginning. The great grandsons of John and Abigail Adams — John Quincy Adams, II and Charles Francis Adams, Jr. — smoothed his way and heralded his work. A political change in the School Committee of Boston led to Parker's appointment in the Spring of 1880 as supervisor of its primary schools. The *Annual*

Report of the Committee for that year did not reveal any controversy over the advent of Parker. It simply stated that it was the year of the "new departure" in education, and that the new system could be identified as the "Quincy System," which treated the pupils less like machines and more like children.²

That summer, the Colonel was introduced at the American Institute of Instruction in Saratoga Springs, New York, as "the best-known educator in the United States." The great theme of the meeting was the "probable effect of engrafting Colonel Parker on Boston." Parker's talk was woven around the word "freedom." He said his system meant freedom for teachers as well as for children. He insisted his methods were not tricks but ideals, that teachers must know their subject matter and also the mind, and how to adapt the two. Nevertheless, William T. Harris, who followed Parker to the platform, implied that the Colonel's practices really neglected the world of the mind. Then opposition to Parker burst forth on the convention floor, where the traditional Boston teachers were out in full force, and it was reported that Parker's words and arms flew in all directions, that his actions were remembered but not his thoughts.³

Colonel Parker had just completed his first full year in Boston, where he had evoked tears from the primary teachers and taunts from the masters of the grammar grades, when he reluctantly agreed to give three weeks of his much needed summer vacation to a series of lectures on "didactics" at the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute. Mrs. Stuart had also been engaged to lecture there on elocution, and the New Woman and the New Education met on the piazza of the Sea-View Hotel.⁴

The Colonel, described as a "splendid, big boy, and a wise, good man in one skin," was a widower and nine years her senior. He could not help but appreciate the charms of this woman in her early thirties. She was vigorous, regal in carriage, trim in body and dress. She was said to have large eyes, a sensitive mouth, all overshadowed by a broad, intellectual brow. Her voice was low, rich, and mellow, having a "brilliant quality that haunts the ear." The Colonel kept calling this lovely divorcee, "Miss Stuart," even though she insisted she had one daughter taller than herself and another who would attend one of Parker's schools in the fall. She also let him know that she did not like to be called a "yell-ocutionist," which the playful Colonel attributed to her elocution skills.⁵ There is no doubt that he was under her spell as they discussed the "spelling question." At least, Mrs. Stuart wrote her daughter, Mabel, that the Colonel had interesting ideas on the teaching of spelling and that her younger daughter would no doubt benefit from them.⁶

II

Mrs. Stuart was already a liberated woman, successfully competing

with men in the realm of higher education as head of the Department of Voice and the Delsarte System of Gesture at the Boston School of Oratory.⁷ Born in the Boston of 1847, a little more than a year before the first convention of the woman's movement at Seneca Falls, she had grown up with the movement.⁸ Perhaps she intuitively rejected the feminine name of Mary which had been fostered upon her. At least she always disliked it and preferred to masculinize her middle name of Frances into Frank. She was known to her teachers as Frankie by the time she was seven or eight, and she had been introduced to the Colonel as Frank.⁹ The only daughter of Calvin and Dorothy Furbush Stuart, she acquired her artistic temperament from them, as well as the breeding which was said to have made her "intensely feminine," and "aristocratic to the fingertips."¹⁰ Though bred a woman of quality, it was as a woman of equality that she would achieve her identity.

One of her teachers remembered her as a slender, light-haired girl, who was more mature and brilliant by far than her classmates. She had a gift for rendition and could enliven school exhibitions with literary pieces for any occasion. Next to literature, flowers delighted her.¹¹ As she blossomed into womanhood, she attracted many bright young people to her parents' City Point house and one can only speculate as to the circumstances which led her into an early marriage with a man whose surname was Glazier. All that is known is that she had a daughter by the time she was eighteen, and another before she was twenty-one. It was the second daughter, Edna, who confided to the author of this paper that her mother's marriage was unfortunate and ended in divorce.¹² Mrs. Glazier resumed her maiden name and began a new life as Mrs. Stuart, mother of two daughters. (Edna retained the name Glazier until adopted many years later by Colonel Parker, but the oldest daughter, Mabel, apparently carried her mother's name of Stuart until her marriage to George William Rolfe, son of the president of Martha's Vineyard Institute.¹³)

Mrs. Stuart's life as a New Woman may have been forged on the anvil of divorce, or she may have been too much of a New Woman for Mr. Glazier, but in any event she had gained her freedom as well as the custody of her daughters. She would experience the problems of an emancipated woman, tainted by divorce, as she tried to compete in a man's world during that post Civil War era. There is no record of her struggles during the next few years while she raised her infant daughters, but at the age of twenty-nine, she entered the Boston University School of Oratory where she studied elocution and the Delsarte System with Lewis B. Monroe, articulation and visible speech with Alexander Graham Bell, Shakespeare with Henry N. Hudson and Robert R. Raymond. It must have been something of a feminine triumph when she was appointed an assistant teacher at the

Boston University School of Oratory. After Monroe's death, Professor Raymond established the Boston School of Oratory (sometimes called the Monroe School of Oratory) as an independent institution. Mrs. Stuart was given the chairmanship of the Department of Voice and the Delsarte System of Gesture.¹⁴

While establishing herself as a career woman, she was also beginning her crusade to reform woman's rights through correct dress. Steeped as she was in the Delsarte System of bodily grace and strength as a means of freer expression, she brewed a bitter attack on conventional dress. She sought to free women from the foundations of steel and staff which warped their bodies as well as their spirits.

She credited Lewis B. Monroe for suggesting the importance of physical culture and took as her text for a lifelong sermon on dress reform a verse from Delstarte, "Not soul helps body more, than body soul."¹⁵ While studying with Monroe, she had taken his words to heart, gone home, and stripped off the corset which seemed to her "partially enlightened mind the root of all body evil." Then, her troubles began. Removal of the corset deprived her weakened muscles of their customary support, and she said "muscular anarchy ensued." This could be corrected by physical culture, which gymnastics at the Boston University School of Oratory provided, but the convention of fashion was not so easily overcome. When she designed clothes which were more healthful, her dressmaker refused to comply. Womankind having failed her, she turned to a male tailor, but his price was unreasonable if not outright exploitation. Furthermore, the courage to face the world in unconventional style was even more costly. She later recalled those days when the "imprisoned dress" was worn by so many and the first departure from it was fraught with difficulties.¹⁶

Conventional dress, as well as conventional cultural patterns for women, had to be changed if womankind would be freed from the physical and social bondage of fashion. Before she was matched with the movement for progressive education, which would attempt to tailor the curriculum to the child, she was arguing for clothes that would fit the woman rather than the fashion. She called for *individualization*, a style that would characterize the new education as well. Clothes should fit the body and the personality. Form should follow function. The trouble with women's clothes, aesthetically, she wrote, is that they completely ignore the true form of the body, much less its functional use.¹⁷ So, too, was traditional education neglecting the functional relation of school and a changing society.

In Mrs. Stuart's day, the only tolerated mistress was the schoolmistress, and like the oldest profession, it was tainted. Teaching, at the elementary level at least, was a lowly business as well as a woman's business. Susan B. Anthony had once tried to explain why the teaching profession attracted so little respect. It was because

“society says woman has not brains enough to be a doctor, lawyer, or minister, but has plenty to be a teacher.”¹⁸ It would be questionable for a New Woman to lower herself into the ranks of elementary teaching and slavishly serve the dictates of male directors and the male dominated society which the schools preserved. How much better to serve the interests of womankind by concentrating on direct political action, such as the vote, which had come to mesmerize the woman’s movement! But the schoolhouse, as much as the statehouse and courthouse, had to be stormed and taken before the *ancien régime* of sexist aristocracy could be overthrown. Whether Mrs. Stuart realized this or not when she met Colonel Parker is purely speculative, but she would soon be carrying her feminist colors to the top of the new education.

III

No sooner was that summer at Martha’s Vineyard over than the Colonel found an excuse to seek out his new acquaintance at the Boston School of Oratory. He said he wanted to smooth out his “rough” voice which had troubled him since the Petersburg Campaign of the Civil War, when a Confederate minie ball cut through his chin and crushed his windpipe. He complained that when he lectured his voice would break off into a “hoarse whisper.”¹⁹ That he made progress in his manner of speaking was soon noticed by educators, and it was observed that, after Mrs. Stuart came into his life, at least his necktie was kept straight. Mrs. Stuart thus helped take the rough edges off the New Hampshire farm boy who had never completed a formal education. Bostonians had previously made fun of his untutored manners, and gossip had it that he was mistaken for the plumber when he made his tours of the schools.²⁰

The summer of 1882 brought Parker and Mrs. Stuart together for a return engagement at the Martha’s Vineyard Summer Institute, and Alice H. Putnam, of the Chicago Froebel Society, attended the Colonel’s lectures and submitted his name to the committee searching for a principal of the Cook County Normal School in Illinois.²¹ The call to this principalship would come to him that fall as he resumed his work in Boston and continued his courtship of Mrs. Stuart. Her view of marriage must have been dim, though she would later have the argument of a grandchild as its chief inducement.²² In the meantime, they both must have come to realize that their careers could be mutually beneficial. Marriage was in the offing when the Colonel was negotiating with the Board of the Cook County Normal School. He said he would be married in a short time to a “lovely woman. She is called (and of course I think she is) the best teacher of elocution (the Delsarte system) in this country . . .”²³

It seemed to Parker that he could best pursue the revolution in

teaching at a normal school than in the supervision of teachers in a hostile Boston, but he also had to consider the wishes of his New Woman. She encouraged the move, though it would mean the sacrifice of her own career at the Boston School of Oratory.²⁴ She earned nearly as much as the Colonel and he used the loss of her income as an argument for a five-thousand-dollar salary. It was an unheard of amount for an educator, but the Board submitted. On November 29, 1882, the Colonel married Mrs. Stuart, a week after resigning his position in Boston, and it was reported that they left the same afternoon for a honeymoon in Virginia.²⁵

The Parkers took up residence in the town of Englewood, near Chicago, in January 1883 as he assumed the position of principal in the Cook County Normal School. They purchased an acre of property and, under her supervision, built a two-storey frame house.²⁶ It became the social center for his corps of teachers, the base of their devotion and loyalty, the headquarters for planning educational strategy, and it was Mrs. Parker who charmed all with her poetic renditions and satirical lampoons of traditional education.²⁷

Many of the Colonel's New Hampshire nephews and nieces were brought to their home for the completion of their educations. Wayland Parker Tolman, son of Parker's younger sister, reported that Mrs. Parker was more of a career woman than a homemaker.²⁸ No young male, however, could appreciate the effort of keeping a house. In later life, Mrs. Parker confided in Flora Cooke, her "Dear Cookie," who would carry on the Colonel's work as principal of Chicago's Francis W. Parker School, that neither the cellar nor the attic was ever done, but she had gotten the habit which would keep a house straight and in good working order, though at the expense of organizing her pencil and pen.²⁹

She did organize her pencil and pen to write *Order of Exercises in Elocution*, published in 1887 and republished in 1889.³⁰ In 1892 she was elected first vice-president of the Illinois Association of Elocutionists at its founding.³¹ It was in pencil and pen that she aided her husband, who had a mental block when it came to writing. In 1894, his book, *Talks on Pedagogics*, received her assistance, page by page, as affirmed by its dedication, with love, to his wife, Frank Stuart Parker. Its "Theory of Concentration" was not only penned by her talented hand but stitched together by her theories of Delsarte.

IV

Parker's *Talks* set forth on the discovery of a unifying principle of education which would unite democratic ends with democratic means. Traditional education separated. It separated the social classes, the races, the sexes. It separated leisure and labor, man and nature,

thought and action, mind and body. It isolated separate subjects. It isolated school from society and from life. Unity was Parker's passion, unity of the classes, races, sexes, unity of body, mind, soul, and unity of educational effort. He said his first intimation of such a principle of unity came from Delsarte's doctrine of the reaction of physical expression on the mind.³² Then Parker built his Theory of Concentration around the child, the "central subjects" growing out of the child's interests. There is not the slightest suggestion that the male or the female child differed in interests. Modes of attention, such as observation, were added to reading, as the child's interest led to the study of the physical and social environments. These modes were united with those of expression, including gesture, voice, speech, music, modeling, painting, and drawing, as well as writing.

Parker was probably one of the first to introduce manual training into the elementary grades. He insisted it was not vocational, but educational, joining the hand and the head.³³ The Course of Study at the Normal School did not suggest carpentry for boys and sewing for girls, as some of the manual training advocates later developed.³⁴ Body and mental strength, originating in muscular effort, must be developed in girls as well as boys.

The Parkers had long advocated physical training as essential for thought and expression. In 1895, Mrs. Parker joined her husband and twenty-three others to petition for a Department of Physical Education in the National Educational Association.³⁵ The Colonel rejoiced at the success of their efforts, and again, there was no hint that boys would monopolize the physical education program. Parker told the new department that it should center its work around the "relation of mind and body — mind to body and body to mind."³⁶

The soul was as important to the Parkers as mind and body. One cannot read a page of Parker without sensing the unity of all things in God, the creator of all things. His Baptist origins has mellowed into a nondenominational Christianity, culminating in his work for the promotion of the Young Men's Christian Association.³⁷ Both the Parkers found religious solace in the unconventional Christianity of Universalism,³⁸ and morality was a central purpose of their new education. These sentiments caught the attention of women, long the moral vessels of all Western virtues. Women's clubs, mostly conservative, could support an education which sought to raise such moral standards in an age of industrialization, immigration, and family breakdown, but even liberal women could identify with it. Miss Margaret J. Evans told the American Educational Association in 1898 that more attention should be given to morality. Speaking for Women's Clubs, she argued that their purposes, too, were largely educational, and that morality was surely as pressing as any subject which had come before the National Educational Association's committees of ten or fifteen.³⁹ If women were the depositories of all

Western virtues, either free them from the burden of holding up civilization, or share that burden with men. The Parkers would fight for the great central principle of democracy, which they believed was "mutual responsibility."⁴⁰

In 1894, Parker's *Talks on Pedagogics* had told its readers that the United States was not really a democracy because half its citizens could not vote. Parker asked, "Why should boys and girls be taught together from the kindergarten to the university, inclusive?" He answered, "Because they are to live together, to help each other. The isolation of sexes in school has begotten mistrust, misunderstanding, false — nay even impure — fancies. The separation of sexes in school is a crime against nature. . . ."⁴¹

As leading spokesman for the new education, his position was clearly on the side of the New Woman, just as spokeswomen of the day were lining up on his side in the struggle to reform education. Mrs. Parker helped organize these spokeswomen, even as she continued her own work. In 1895 she published *Expression of Thought Through the Body*.⁴² Two years later, her book, *Dress, and How to Improve It*, came out as a response to women's question, "What shall we do to be saved from the bondage of clothes?"⁴³ Dedicated to the teachers of America, "whether in the Pulpit, the Home, or the School," this volume provided theory and practice of dress reform. She sought to alter the foundations of dress and to individualize the outer styles through variations. "It is universally conceded that women are the weaker sex," she wrote, and "that their bodies are tenderly organized, and need greater care and protection than a man's. . . ." But she added: "That woman has so long survived her clothes furnishes a most striking illustration of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest."⁴⁴

There is no mistaking her implication that women are the stronger sex, that the "protection" of women in dress, as well as in social fashion, was a contrivance to weaken and inhibit their natural strengths and abilities. Dress reform, she insisted, was not only socially liberating in itself, but it was in obedience to natural law. It would save doctor's bills.⁴⁵ As a member of the dress committee of the National Council of Women, she was able to appeal to a national audience for a more rational dress which would give freedom and beauty to the body.⁴⁶ She also appealed for a freer educational system. It was in women's organizations, often dubbed "Amazon Clubs" by the Chicago press, where she found her strength.

V

When first coming to Illinois she had joined the Chicago Society for the Promotion of Physical Culture and Correct Dress. There she learned the value of organization and the inspiration which comes

from many working together for one desired purpose.⁴⁷ She then helped organize the Englewood Woman's Club and assisted her husband in the innovation of mothers' clubs and parent-teacher associations to help explain the new education to questioning parents.⁴⁸ In 1889, when Englewood was annexed to Chicago, she turned to the Chicago Woman's Club. It was then changing from a literary society of prominent women to a political force for social justice. It would soon be claiming that the only "true woman" was a "new woman."⁴⁹ The secretary wrote large and clear in the minutes of March 4, 1891 that "The 19th Century woman is outgrowing her old environment. She has burst the chrysalis of tradition and ignorance and is beginning to try her strength — independently — to think and act for herself and to use her influence to form a more elevated public sentiment." The ladies had recently been outraged by the dismissal of women from public offices by the Chicago Federal Collector of Internal Revenue. He argued that such places belonged only to voters as a reward for party work, but he had to be restrained by President Harrison after he received a petition from the Chicago Woman's Club. At the same time, the women were agitating for places on the Chicago Board of Education, fighting for reform in "tenement houses," combating the "sweating system" in industry. They were advocating that the charitable institutions of the city should be taken out of the hands of "lower class politicians," and put in the careful trusteeship of responsible boards. Jane Addams was addressing them on the social settlement movement and Mrs. Henrotin on equal rights. Mrs. Parker was admitted to this select group about this time and carried the gospel of the new education to it. Called an "Essayist," she addressed the club on December 2, 1891 with a paper called "More Pedagogy in Our Normal Schools and Colleges." As Chairman of the Department of Education, she served during their support of compulsory education legislation, trade schools, working girls' clubs. She organized an "entertainment" to raise money for destitute children when the Truant Aid Association ran out of funds. She supported the controversial study of evolution, added Comenius and Froebel, as well as Darwin and Spencer, to their reading lists.⁵⁰

At the same time, she was an active member of the Association for the Advancement of Women as Chairman of its Committee on Topics and Papers. Julia Ward Howe, its "Battle Hymn of the Republic" founder, acknowledged Mrs. Parker's contributions in the movement to make women free.⁵¹ When Susan B. Anthony wrote to Mrs. Potter Palmer in 1892 about delegates for the forthcoming Columbian Exposition in Chicago, she mentioned that Mrs. Parker had asked for names of speakers and titles, presumably in her capacity as Chairman of Topics and Papers for the Association for the Advancement of Women.⁵² At that time, Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Palmer of the Chicago Woman's Club were advancing plans for women's exhibitions at the

Chicago Fair which would honor the discoverer of America, but which would help America discover women.

Mrs. Potter Palmer, wife of the tycoon who had made State Street that "great street," was the acknowledged arbiter of Chicago's "Society."⁵³ As president of the Board of Lady Managers for the Columbian Exposition, she made the opening address at the dedication of the Woman's Building (called *The Home* by the *Chicago Tribune*) when the Fair opened on May 1, 1893. She railed out against the prevailing notion that woman's sphere was in the home and advocated the thorough education of women.⁵⁴ A veritable Who's Who in the the woman's movement was present at the Chicago Woman's Club reception later in May, at which time Mrs. Parker's presence was reported by the *Chicago Tribune*.⁵⁵ It is probably about this time that Susan B. Anthony visited the Parker home which she would remember with a great deal of pleasure. She said Mrs. Parker was a "marvel of a woman to meet," and that she was a "good worker in the suffrage cause, as well as in every reform for the uplifting of humanity."⁵⁶

Mrs. Parker also had a dress exhibit at the Woman's Building, and Illinois women and schools shared space in the Illinois State Building opposite the exhibitions of rural husbandry. The Parker school exhibit attracted international recognition.⁵⁷

VI

By the time the electric arcs of the Midway dimmed and the pillored spaces of the Exposition were dismantled, a depression had set in and Federal troops would be visiting the Chicago Pullman strike. Parker's school was the first public institution to feel the blade of budget cuts. Even before the depression, revenues for the Cook County Board of Education had dwindled as Chicago kept incorporating its towns. The burgeoning city, sometimes hailed as "hog butcher of the world," or reviled as "porkopolis," was not so keen on the slaughter of educational sacred cows at its Cook County Normal School. It did not even recognize this school as a fit place to train its teachers. By December of 1895, the Cook County Board of Commissioners resolved to transfer its normal school properties to the Chicago Board of Education. Furthermore, it resolved not to pay its teachers another cent, but the Chicago Board of Education delayed accepting the gift until the controversial Colonel and his staff would resign.⁵⁸

Parker and his teachers refused to comply. They continued to teach without pay. The Colonel had long opposed teacher strikes, preferring to make teachers indispensable to the public.⁵⁹ At that time, however, the women grade school teachers of Chicago were striking in protest against wage cuts, and although the Parkers remained out

of that battle, Jane Addams believed the Colonel sympathized with the strikers.⁶⁰ It was probably Mrs. Parker, through her club associations with Miss Addams, who conveyed such an impression. While Parker and his staff were teaching without pay, his feminist supporters carried their cause to the public. The Chicago Woman's Club appointed Mrs. Marion Washburne as its "Educational Editor," and called the education of the child woman's highest duty.⁶¹

Mrs. Washburne, whose son Carlton would be the Colonel's student and exponent in the Winnetka System, began to make news and fight "like a tiger." She managed to make herself school editor of the Chicago *Evening Post* and the Chicago *Herald*, even though she told the club ladies that journalists did not think school affairs newsworthy. Soon the papers, however, were carrying articles of political "sandbagging" of Parker's school. Mrs. Washburne wrote human interest stories of teachers going without pay. She got interviews from William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Nicholas Murray Butler, William R. Harper, all praising the Colonel and his staff. The "educational crisis in Chicago," she wrote for national consumption in *The Arena*, was a crisis for the nation. The conflict between the old and the new education, she claimed, was really a struggle between despotism and democracy.⁶²

Not only the Chicago Woman's Club was mobilized. Perhaps more exclusive and influential was the Fortnightly Club, of which Mrs. Parker was a member.⁶³ The new federation of Women's Clubs, whose president was Mrs. Parker's friend, Ellen M. Henrotin, would also rank as a powerful ally. Mrs. Henrotin believed popular education and the woman's movement were both interdependent, but that the new education was most consistent with the aims of women's clubs.⁶⁴ Mrs. Henrotin's husband, Charles, also happened to be a prominent Chicago millionaire and banker, member of the Chicago Board of Trade, and a dominant voice in the political party which then controlled City Hall.⁶⁵ Mrs. Potter Palmer, of course, could also pull strings in high society. Mrs. Emmons McCormick Blaine, who had sought the Colonel for the education of her son, represented the "McCormick Reaper" fortune, and she could be counted on to bring pressure in high places, especially in calling off a hostile reporter from the Chicago *Tribune*.⁶⁶

Women of all ranks came out in force, just before the Chicago Board of Education met to reconsider the Normal School transfer from the County. Members of the Chicago Board were kept busy receiving feminine delegations protesting the delay in accepting the Normal School. "I have two hundred women after me today," said one Board member to reporters. "I want the school, and I want it quick, and I'll do all I can to please 'em. Any man who wants to be popular with the ladies would better join the board of education these days."⁶⁷

Parker's opposition was crushed. He, his teachers, and the Cook County Normal School were taken over by the Chicago Board of Education. Parker's school then became the Chicago Normal School and could carry the new education into the classrooms of that city.⁶⁸

VII

All the while she organized the support for her husband's school, Mrs. Parker was carrying on the fight for women's rights. On May 16, 1894, an adjourned meeting of the Chicago Woman's Club brought the Board of Managers together in resolution for an organization to secure the full benefits of legislation in their behalf. The Chicago Political Equality League was then formed in 1894 as a separate organization by the Chicago Woman's Club, and Mrs. Parker was placed on the board of directors. She was then suffering from what she thought was grippe but promised to double her efforts as soon as she was able.⁶⁹ Able she was, and she was twice elected president of the organization in its formative years, during which time of office it affiliated with the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association and the National American Woman's Suffrage Association.⁷⁰ The League would remember her as a "radical thinker, a woman of original, progressive ideas, with the full courage of her convictions, which her talent as a platform speaker enabled her to present in the most convincing and pleasing way."⁷¹ The *Woman's Tribune* noted her early activity in the suffrage conventions.⁷² The *Educational Journal of Western Canada* recognized her as the "well-poised womanhood — the new woman in the highest and finest sense, the true teacher."⁷³

It was her husband, however, who had the reputation as the fighter for the new education. Military in bearing, balding, mustached, generally bronzed, and monumental in his five-foot-nine frame that bulged with two-hundred-fifty pounds, he could produce gigantic fists that would pound down his points on speakers' platforms across the country. He shook at the bars of political corruption and rattled the dry bones of academic tradition. He had made himself unpopular with powerful politicians by attacking the spoils system which made the schools, like the sewers, street railways, gas, and water works, subject to corrupting patronage. All the while he ran the political gauntlet of what he called "political sharks of the rum hole and ward caucus," he had to take the slings of academicians who hurled "mudpie" education at him, in reference to the sandtables where his pupils modelled relief maps. Everywhere he went on his national tours he made headlines. (Eleven large scrapbooks, full of newspaper articles clipped and pasted by Mrs. Parker, are now in the Archives of the University of Chicago.) The Colonel was a great promoter and fighter, but in the end, he admitted that it was not he, but "she," who was the real fighter.⁷⁴

But by 1898, Mrs. Parker was failing in health and the fight was going out of the Colonel. Mayor Harrison of Chicago had taken a personal interest in controlling the Chicago Board of Education and had dragged party lines into the battle. There was considerable doubt that the Colonel would survive a scalping this time by the "Democratic Tribe," which then controlled City Hall. Even Parker himself felt the cause was hopeless as he and his wife prepared for a summer series of lectures in Hawaii.⁷⁵ But he had not counted enough on the women he left behind. Mayor Harrison complained that his social life was ruined. Dinners, teas, and receptions became a perfect terror for him.⁷⁶ And Parker was retained in the June elections of the Board, though the superintendent of schools, a firm supporter of the Colonel, failed to be reelected.⁷⁷

Parker's ability to keep surviving the annual renewal of his contract must have given John Dewey courage to attempt enlisting some of Parker's teachers for his laboratory school. He invited Flora Cooke in August of 1898 to join him. Miss Cooke had taught the Dewey children at Parker's Normal School when the Deweys first came to Chicago, and little Evelyn was especially captivated by her. Dewey said he appreciated the loyalty of the teachers to Parker but believed his ideas would be safer "by taking root in new soil."⁷⁸

Flora Cooke, of course, refused to abandon the Parkers, but the Colonel himself was beginning to entertain the thought of new soil for cultivating the new education. Mrs. Emmons Blaine, the McCormick heiress and young widow of the son of Republican stalwart, James Blaine, offered to relieve the Colonel of his public battles by setting him up in a private school.⁷⁹ (It is possible that Mrs. Blaine had first become interested in the Colonel for her own son's education through association with Mrs. Parker in club activities. At least some people thought the private school she projected was to be a tribute to Mrs. Parker.⁸⁰)

The Colonel was tempted, but his new education for a new democratic society had always been based on public rather than private schooling. It was Mrs. Parker, however, according to Mrs. Blaine, who convinced her husband that he should give up his political distractions and concentrate on educational reform in the safety of a private foundation.⁸¹ He dreamed of a slum school, in affiliation with Jane Addams, as well as a normal school which would be a model for public education to follow, but he did not resign his beleaguered position at the Chicago Normal School until May 31, 1899, four months after death robbed him of his wife's support.⁸²

Mrs. Parker had been slowly dying for several years. During those crucial days of 1898, when Parker's reelection was in grave jeopardy, the Colonel withdrew from the battle to spend a week with his wife at a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan.⁸³ She seemed to be gaining strength and they went ahead with their lectures in Hawaii, but

the Colonel knew her days were numbered. It was a specialist in Minneapolis who confirmed the "dreadful truth." She had cancer. The Colonel wrote Mrs. Blaine, who had recommended the specialist, that he would do his best to "prolong her precious life."⁸⁴

Near the end, when Mrs. Parker wrote Mrs. Blaine to thank her for flowers, she said all she could do was think of *his* plans.⁸⁵ Indeed, when the Fortnightly Club paid her a last tribute as belonging with the "moderns," there was complaint of her self-effacement as she had worked behind the scenes for her husband.⁸⁶ Yet, his plans were also her plans. One might argue that she was not the Colonel's lady but that he was the lady's Colonel. The point is, however, that they were partners. They were equals in the same cause, and this is what she had been fighting for — the equality of the sexes in the common causes of humanity.

When she was gone, dying peacefully on April 1, 1899, the editor of the *Journal of Education* worried about the impact of her death on the Colonel. "There has been no instance in our American history," he wrote, "in which the wife of an educator has been so widely recognized as an essential factor in his progress."⁸⁷ John Dewey wrote the Colonel that "Her memory is a deep inspiration to many, who share to some degree in your loss, and it is in this community of loss and hope and love that we must hope to find our strength."⁸⁸ The Chicago Woman's Club resolved to recognize "the conspicuous position which she occupied in the outposts of all educational and progressive movements," as it mourned the loss of a friend and sister.⁸⁹

Some said the Colonel died a few years later of a broken heart.⁹⁰ It is certain that he never quite recovered, nor did his work. The Chicago Institute, which he founded with Mrs. Blaine, failed to materialize the dream of a slum school, and Parker's other dreams were making millionaires begin to count the cost. The Institute was absorbed by the University of Chicago and the Colonel left his work to John Dewey while his ashes were mixed with those of his wife in a lonely cemetery plot in Manchester, New Hampshire.⁹¹

VIII

Now revisionists have rewritten the history of progressive education so that it was not really progressive. It may be significant that much of the support for the Parkers' progressive reforms came from the higher levels of society, but the distaff side of that support, the side which society had previously suppressed as much as the lower classes, should be recognized. Even the movement for coeducation has not been interpreted as liberating for women.⁹² This may be true, if women needed a female community in which to find their identity. The Parkers sought to liberate the human condition, not male or

female conditions. They may have been prisoners of their class and culture, but they appeared uncompromising in their attacks on the social realities and power centers of their time. Let such historical chips of revisionism fall where they may, but let not the trunk of a movement be chopped down because there is an axe to grind. It would seem that the Parkers' motives were sincere and progressive in the liberal sense of the word. To the extent that subsequent events may have undone or misdirected their efforts, there remains the challenge to revive the spirit of woman and man working together to improve society for their mutual benefit.

notes

1. Francis W. Parker, "The Quincy Method," *American Journal of Sociology*, 6 (1900) 117. For a full biographical treatment, see Jack K. Campbell, *Colonel Francis W. Parker, The Children's Crusader*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1967.
2. *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston*, 1880, p. 17.
3. "Educators in Council at Saratoga," *Journal of Education*, 12 (1880), 77, 84; "From the Boston Traveller," *Quincy Patriot* (Quincy, Mass.), July 17, 1880.
4. Alice H. Putnam, "A Reminiscence," *Frances Stuart Parker. Reminiscences and Letters*, Chicago: C. L. Ricketts, 1907, p. 36.
5. *Ibid.*; "Our Superintendent," *Quincy Patriot*, December 13, 1879; Cora Wheeler, "Early Life, Boston," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 18; Martha Fleming, "Family and Home Life, Chicago," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 26.
6. Letter from Frank Stuart to Mabel, August 7, 1881, *Francis Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, pp. 13-14.
7. Cora Wheeler, p. 14.
8. There is some contradictory evidence as to the exact date of her birth in 1847. Cora Wheeler, p. 11, who was a close associate for many years, cites April 19, 1847. The Undertaker's Report of the Death of Mrs. Frances Stuart Parker, Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Chicago, Illinois indicates that she was fifty-one years, eleven months, and nineteen days old as of her death on April 1, 1899.
9. Cora Wheeler, p. 12; George R. Hall, Administrator of Parker's estate, testified to her dislike of the name Mary and to the use of the name Frank. In the "Matter of the Estate of Francis W. Parker, Deceased," dated April 23rd, A.D. 1902, in the Probate Court of Cook County, File 17-1379, Docket 65, Chicago, Illinois.
10. Martha Fleming, p. 26.
11. Cora Wheeler, p. 12.
12. Interview with Edna Parker Shepard (Mrs. Thomas H. Shepard), 89 Rawson Road, Brookline, Mass., Oct. 14, 1962; Cora Wheeler, p. 12.
13. In the "Matter of the Estate of Francis W. Parker." It is not known why Parker did not officially adopt both step-daughters. In his application for a government pension, filed July 14, 1892, later revised on January 15, 1898, he claimed to have adopted both of his wife's children. Francis W. Parker, Soldier's Certificate, Can No. 17835, Bundle No. 22, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; "George William Rolfe," *Who*

- Was Who in America*, II, Chicago: A. M. Marquis Co., 1963, p. 456, was said to have married Mabel Stuart, February 28, 1888.
14. Cora Wheeler, p. 14.
 15. Frances Stuart Parker, *Dress, and How to Improve It*, Chicago: Chicago Legal News Company, 1897, p. 3.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 18. Constance Buel Burnett, *Five For Freedom*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968, p. 212.
 19. Martha Fleming, p. 22. Parker still complained about his voice when making claim for a disability pension in 1894, Francis W. Parker, Soldier's Certificate.
 20. Martha Fleming, pp. 22-23. She quoted several newspaper accounts of his improved manners and public speaking; "Mistake in the Person," *Quincy Patriot*, May 9, 1880.
 21. "A Memorial Letter from Alice H. Putnam," *Kindergarten Review*, 12 (1902), 501-502.
 22. Mrs. Parker, postscript to a letter from Francis W. Parker to Zonia Baber, dated February 25, 1897, Flora Juliette Cooke, General Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
 23. F. W. Parker letter to A. H. Champlin, dated September 27, 1882, as published in "The History of Col. Parker's Normal Connection," *Chicago Sun*, July 5, 1887.
 24. A. E. Winship, "Mrs. Frank Stuart Parker," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1899, p. 246.
 25. F. W. Parker, letter to A. H. Champlin, dated October 5, 1882, and A. H. Champlin, letter to F. W. Parker, dated October 10, 1882, as published in "The History of Col. Parker's Normal Connection"; F. W. Parker, letter to Phineas Bates, dated November 22, 1882, as published in "Resignation of a Supervisor," and newspaper notice of marriage and honeymoon in Parker Scrapbook, 1882, Archives, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Marriage Certificate, Francis W. Parker to Mary F. Stuart, November 29, 1882, Boston, Mass. Division of Vital Statistics Vol. 336, p. 205, no. 3677, State House, Boston, Mass.
 26. In the "Matter of the Estate of Francis W. Parker"; Amalie Hoffer, "The Chicago Normal Training School — A Dream Come True," *Kindergarten Magazine* 9 (1896), 174-175.
 27. Flora J. Cooke, "Sunday Evenings," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, pp. 31-33.
 28. Interviews with Newton F. Tolman, Francis Wayland Tolman, and Sadie French Tolman, Tolman Pond, Nelson, New Hampshire, October 12, 1962.
 29. Frances Stuart Parker, letter to Flora Cooke, September 8, 1897, Flora Juliette Cooke, General Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
 30. See Frank Stuart Parker, *Order of Exercises in Elocution*, Chicago: Donahue and Henneberry, 1889.
 31. "Illinois Association of Elocutionists," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 119.
 32. Francis W. Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics*, New York: E. L. Kellogg and Co., 1894, p. i. Parker's difficulty with writing was attributed to his early school experiences in New Hampshire. Francis W. Parker, "Autobiographical Sketch," appendix in William M. Giffin, *School Days in the Fifties*, Chicago: A. Flanagan Co., 1906, p. 113. It should be recalled that his earlier book, *Talks on Teaching*, was based on his lecture notes

- but was written by Lelia E. Patridge. Lelia E. Patridge, "Introduction," *The Quincy Methods*, New York: E. L. Kellogg and Company, 1885, p. xiv.
33. Francis W. Parker, "An Account of the Work of the Cook County and Chicago Normal School from 1883 to 1899," *Education Report*, 1901-1902 (U.S. Office of Education, Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1902), p. 254; Francis W. Parker, "Discussion on Manual Training," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1901, p. 269; *Biennial Report of the County Superintendent of Schools from July 1, 1882 to June 30, 1884*, p. 64.
 34. See, for instance, Judson E. Hoyt, "Manual Training in the Public Schools of the Smaller Cities," and the discussions which preceded it, *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1896, pp. 767-777.
 35. "The Creation and Organization of a Department of Physical Education," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1895, pp. 43-44.
 36. Francis W. Parker, "The New Department," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1895, p. 949.
 37. Edwin Burrill Smith, John C. Grant, and Horace Mann Starkey, *Historical Sketch of the Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago, 1858-1898*, Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, Co., 1898, p. 74.
 38. Martha Fleming, pp. 29-30. Reverend R. A. White, who officiated at the funeral services, was pastor of the Stewart Avenue Universalist Church in Chicago.
 39. Margaret J. Evans, "Women's Clubs As An Educational Factor," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1898, p. 243.
 40. Francis W. Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics*, p. 420.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 420-421.
 42. Mrs. Frank Stuart Parker, *Expression of Thought Through the Body*, Chicago: Physical Culture Extension Society, 1895.
 43. Frances Stuart Parker, *Dress, and How to Improve It*, p. 3.
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
 46. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 47.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 48. Alice D. Hoswell, "Englewood Woman's Club," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, pp. 60-61; Helen M. Hefferan, "Col. Francis Wayland Parker," *Chicago Schools Journal*, 18 (1936), 7.
 49. Board Minutes, May 20, 1896, Chicago Woman's Club, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
 50. Board Minutes, March 26, April 16, May 7, May 14, Nov. 19, Dec. 17, 1890, Jan. 7, Feb. 18, Feb. 25, March 4, Sept. 30, Oct. 8, Oct. 28, Dec. 9, 1891, Nov. 2, 1892.
 51. Julia Ward Howe, "Association for the Advancement of Women," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, pp. 57-58.
 52. Susan B. Anthony, letter to Mrs. Potter Palmer, dated April 11, 1892, Susan Brownell Anthony Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
 53. Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City. Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 29.
 54. "Dedicate the Home," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1893.
 55. "Noted People There," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1893.

56. Susan B. Anthony, letter to Francis W. Parker, n.d., *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 123.
57. Annie White Johnson, "Society for the Promotion of Correct Dress," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 59; "Illinois State Building is to be Dedicated," *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1893; "Once More in Peril," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, January 29, 1894.
58. *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, July 1895 to June 30, 1896*, p. 220; "Healy Sends a Letter, Asks Conference with the Board of Education," and "Halle Afraid of Col. Parker," newspaper clippings, Parker Scrapbooks, 1895, Archives, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
59. "Editorial," *School Journal*, 31 (1886), 308. Colonel Parker was then one of the editors for that Journal.
60. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, New York: New American Library, 1961, p. 231.
61. Board Minutes, May 20, 1896.
62. Carleton Washburne, letter to Mr. Bartky, September 18, 1940, in which was included a letter from his mother. Historical Files, Chicago Teachers College South, Chicago, Illinois; Marion Foster Washburne, "The Educational Crisis in Chicago," *The Arena*, 15 (1896), 611, 614.
63. Helen E. Starrett, "Interest in Club Life," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, pp. 53-55.
64. Ellen M. Henrotin, "The Co-Operation of Woman's Clubs in the Public School," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, National Educational Association*, 1897, pp. 73-74.
65. "Charles Henrotin," *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960, p. 545.
66. F. W. Parker, letters to Mrs. Blaine, dated June 12, 1896, June 4, 1898, June 5, 1898, Papers of Anita McCormick Blaine, McCormick Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
67. "Rally for a School," *Chicago Evening Post*, January 29, 1896.
68. *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, July, 1895 to June 30, 1896*, p. 262.
69. Board Minutes, May 16 and November 14, 1894; Frances Stuart Parker, letter to Ellen A. Martin, dated January 5, 1895, *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 61; *First Annual Announcement of the Chicago Political Equality League Organized in 1894 by the Chicago Woman's Club*, Chicago: Chicago Political Equality League, 1895-1896, p. 12.
70. *Second Annual Announcement of the Chicago Political Equality League*, Chicago: Chicago Political Equality League, 1896-1897, p. 3; *Third Annual Announcement of the Chicago Political Equality League*, Chicago: Chicago Political Equality League, 1897-1898, pp. 5, 7, 12.
71. "The Chicago Political Equality League," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 177.
72. "Newspaper Editorials," *Ibid.*, p. 127.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.
74. Martha Fleming, p. 22.
75. "As Chicago Sees Herself," *Journal of Education*, 51 (1900), 312; "Col. F. W. Parker Is to Go," *Chicago Daily News*, October 14, 1897; F. W. Parker, letter to Mrs. Blaine, dated June 29, 1898, Papers of Anita McCormick Blaine.
76. "Fight for Colonel Parker," *Chicago Times-Herald*, June 23, 1898.
77. *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago from July 1897 to June 30, 1898*, p. 587.

78. John Dewey, letter to Flora Cooke, dated August 10, 1898, Flora Juliette Cooke, General Papers.
79. For a detailed account, see Jack K. Campbell, "The Tactical Move from Public to Private Education," *op. cit.*, pp. 199-210.
80. "Colonel Parker's Great Opportunity," *Journal of Education*, 51 (1900), 232; "Colonel Parker's Change," *Journal of Education*, 49 (1899), 360.
81. Anita McCormick Blaine, "The Chicago Institute," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 38.
82. F. W. Parker, letter to Mrs. Blaine, dated June 29, 1898, Papers of Anita McCormick Blaine; *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, July 13, 1898 to June 28, 1899*, p. 649.
83. Francis W. Parker, letter to Zonia Baber, dated 15 May 1898, Flora Juliette Cooke, General Papers.
84. Francis W. Parker, letter to Mrs. Blaine, dated June 23, 1898, Papers of Anita McCormick Blaine.
85. Frances Stuart Parker, letter to Mrs. Blaine, dated November 25, 1898, Papers of Anita McCormick Blaine.
86. "The Fortnightly Club of Chicago," *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 116.
87. "Colonel Parker's Change," *Journal of Education*, 49 (1899), 360.
88. John Dewey, letter to Francis W. Parker, n.d., *Frances Stuart Parker: Reminiscences and Letters*, p. 121.
89. "Chicago Woman's Club," *Ibid.*, p. 116.
90. A. E. Winship, "Colonel Parker as a Leader," *Journal of Education*, 55 (1902), 314.
91. See Jack K. Campbell, "Retreat from the Chicago Institute to the University of Chicago," and "The Parker Burial," *op. cit.*, pp. 214-240.
92. Jill K. Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. XIV (1974), No. 10.