

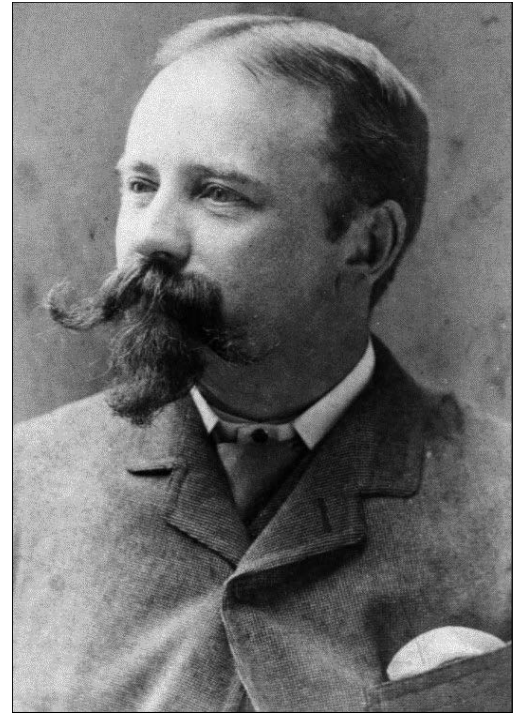
Louis Napoleon Parker (1852-1944) F.R.A.M.

The Master of the Pageant.

Louis Napoleon Parker described the role of the Master of the Pageant in his autobiography, *Several of My Lives* (London, Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1928), p.284: 'The Master of the Pageant, who is ultimately responsible for everything. He must know what he wants and see that he gets it. And in order to get it he must exercise absolute autocracy: an autocracy tempered by commonsense. If I were asked to indicate the idea Master of the Pageant I should unhesitatingly point to Signor Benito Mussolini.'

He wanted the Pageant to include everyone and announced:

'The participants must include every class of the community, both male and female: peers and ploughboys; dignitaries of the Church and all the clergy; ministers of every denomination; young men and maidens; old men and children; the beautiful and the less beautiful; youth is no hindrance, and age no bar; nobody is too good to be in a Pageant and almost everybody is good enough.'



Parker was born at Luc-sur-Mer in Calvados, France. His mother, Elizabeth Moray was English and his father, Charles Albert Parker an American. His mother spoke no French and, as his father was absent at the time of his birth, he was christened with the names then looming large in France.

From the age of seventeen, Parker studied at the Royal Academy of Music under the direction of Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875). In 1873, Sir William sent Parker for a six week stint to Sherborne School to help his son, J.R. Sterndale Bennett, with the teaching of music. Parker ended up staying for nineteen years, during which time he composed the music for many of the School songs, including 'The Carmen'. In 1877, he succeeded J.R. Sterndale Bennett, as Organist and Director of Music.

On 7 August 1878, the first day of the school holidays, Parker was married in Sherborne Abbey to Georgiana Bessie Calder (c.1853-1919) the daughter of Charles Calder, a wine merchant in Cheap Street, Sherborne. They had two daughters, Elsa (1883-) and Dorothy (1885-). Dorothy became a professional actor and appeared as 'Sherborn USA' in the 1905 Sherborne Pageant.

On 4 May 1892, Parker left Sherborne and headed for London where he enjoyed a successful career as a dramatist and translator for the stage. In 1904, a former Sherborne pupil of Parker's, the Rev. Arthur Field of Greenhill House, tempted Parker back to Sherborne to help celebrate the 1,200th anniversary of the founding of Sherborne, with the result that Parker staged here his first historical pageant. The success of the Sherborne Pageant led to Parker staging six further pageants in Warwick, Bury St Edmunds, Colchester, York and Dover. In 1925, Parker returned again to Sherborne, this time to unveil a memorial slab in the Pageant Gardens.

Louis Napoleon Parker died at Bishopsteignton in Devon on 21 September 1944, aged 91.

In 1945, a memorial plaque was unveiled in Sherborne School chapel. It reads 'To the memory of LOUIS NAPOLEON PARKER FRAM FR Hist S/ Officier de L'Academie Francaise/ Organist and Choirmaster of the School 1873-1892/ Composer of the Carmen and many School songs/ Author and Master of the Sherborne Pageant 1905/Who died at Bishopsteignton 21 Sept. 1944 aged 91/This tablet is erected in gratitude by old pupils'