PARROT & CO.

By HAROLD MACGRATH

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SYNOPSIS.

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Warrington, an American adventurer, James, his servant, with a caged parrot, the trio known up and down the Irrawaddy as Parrot & Co., are bound for Rangoon. Elsa Chetwood, rich American tourist, sees Warrington and asks the captain to introduce her. He tells her that Warrington has beaten a syndicate and won all claims for £20,000. Warrington, Rajah, the parrot, through his tricks amuses Elsa and they pass two golden days on the river. In Rangoon, Warrington interferes in a row over cards and is hurt by an enemy, Newell Craig. Elsa is annoyed by Craig and stabs him with a hatpin. Warrington discovers Elsa on the Penang steamer. He avoids her. Craig comes aboard and is warned by Warrington to avoid Elsa. Craig stirs up trouble. Elsa tells Warrington of the incident and he hunts up Craig, on mischief bent. He finds him stretched out on deck and turns the hose on him. Penang Mallow, who drove Warrington from his plantation when he learned his story, comes aboard. Warrington tells Elsa that Mallow and Craig both will tell her he spent money that did not belong to him over the gambling table to Craig. He asks her not to speak to him again. Mallow baits Warrington, who keeps his temper.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

She straightened her lips with some difficulty. She possessed the enviable faculty of instantly forming in her mind pictures of coming events. The swelling veins in the colonel's neck were as plain to her mind's eye as if he really stood before her. "Have him take me in to dinner," she suggested.

"Just what I was thinking of," declared the unsuspecting man. "If anyone can draw out the colonel, it will be you."

"I'll do my best." Elsa's mind was full of rollicking malice.

Contemplatively he said: "So you've been doing the Orient alone? You are like your father in that way. He was never afraid of anything. Your mental makeup, too, I'll wager is like his. Best man in the world."

"Wasn't he? How I wish he could have always been with me! But why is it everyone seems appalled that I should travel over here without male escort?"

"The answer lies in your mirror. Your old nurse Martha is no protection."

"Are men so bad, then?"

"They are less restrained. The heat, the tremendous distances, the lack of amusements, are perhaps responsible. By the way, here's a packet of letters for you."

"Thanks." Elsa played with the string, somberly eying the superscriptions. The old disorder came back into her mind. Three of the letters were from Arthur. She dreaded to open them. "I must be going, then. I'm not sure of my tickets to Hongkong."

"Go straight to the German Lloyd office. I'll have my boy show you the way. Chong!" he called. A bright-eyed young Chinese came in quickly. "Show lady German Lloyd office. All plenty quick."

In the outer office she paused for a moment or so to look at the magazines and weeklies from home. The office boy, grinning pleasantly, gazed curiously at Elsa's beautiful face. She heard someone enter, and naturally glanced up. The newcomer was Mallow. He stared at her, smiled familiarly and lifted his helmet. Elsa, with cold unflickering eyes, offered his greeting no recognition whatever. The man felt that she was looking through him, inside of him, searching out all the dark corners of his soul. He dropped his gaze, confused, and Elsa calmly turned to the boy. "Come, Chong."

There was something in the manner of her exit that infinitely puzzled him. It was the insolence of the well-bred, and he did not know it. To offset his chagrin and confusion, he put on his hat and passed into the private office. She was out of his range of understanding.

Mallow was an American by birth and had grown up in the Orient, hardened. In his youth he had been beaten and trampled upon, and now that he had become rich in copra (the dried meat of cocoanuts from which oil is made), he in his turn beat and trampled. It was the only law he knew. Ordinarily, when in Penang and Singapore, he behaved himself, drank moderately and shunned promiscuous companions. But when he did drink heartily, he was a man to beware of.

He hailed the consul general cordially and offered him one of his really good cigars, which was accepted.

"Say, who was that young woman that just went out?"

The consul general laid down the cigar. The question itself was harmless enough; it was Mallow's way of clothing it he resented. "Why?" he asked.

"She's a stunner. Just curious if you knew her, that's all. We came down on the same boat. Hanged if I shouldn't like to meet her. Do you know her?" eagerly.

"I do. More than that, I have always known her. She is the daughter of the late General Chetwood, one of the greatest civil engineers of our time. When he died he left her several millions. She is a remarkable young woman, a famous beauty, known favorably in European courts, and I can't begin to tell you how many other accomplishments she has."

"Well, stump me!" returned Mallow. "Is she a free-thinker?"

"What the devil is that? What do you mean?"

"Only this, if she's all you say she is, why does she pick out an absconder for a friend, a chap who dare not show his phiz in the states? I heard the tale from a man once employed in his office back in New York. A beach-comber, a dock-walloper, if there ever was one."

"Mallow, you'll have to explain that instantly."

"Hold your horses, my friend. What I'm telling you is on the level. She's been hobnobbing with the fellow all the way down from the Irrawaddy, so I'm told. Never spoke to anyone else. Made him sit at her side at table and jabbered Italian at him, as if she didn't want others to know what she was talking about. I know the man. Fired him from my plantation, when I found out what he was. Can't recall his name just now, but he is known out here as Warrington; Parrot & Co."

The consul general was genuinely shocked.

"You can't blame me for thinking things," went on Mallow. "What man wouldn't? Ask her about Warrington. You'll find that I'm telling the truth, all right."

"If you are, then she has made one of those mistakes women make when they travel alone. I shall see her at tea and talk to her. But I do not thank you, Mallow, for telling me this. A finer, loyaler-hearted girl doesn't live. She might have been kind out of sympathy."

Mallow bit off the tip of his cigar. "He's a handsome beggar, if you want to know."

"I resent that tone. Better drop the subject before I lose my temper. I'll have your papers ready for you in the morning." The consul general caught up his pen savagely to indicate that the interview was at an end.

"All right," said Mallow good-naturedly. "I meant no harm. Just naturally curious. Can't blame me."

"I'm not blaming you. But it has disturbed me, and I wish to be alone to think it over."

Mallow lounged out, rather pleased with himself. His greatest pleasure in life was in making others uncomfortable.

The consul general bit the wooden end of his pen and chewed the splinters of cedar. He couldn't deny that it was like Elsa to pick up some derelict for her benefactions. Women had no business to travel alone. It was all very well when they toured in parties of eight or ten; but for a charming young woman like Elsa, attended by a spinster companion who doubtless dared not offer advice, it was decidedly wrong. And thereupon he determined that her trip to Yokohama should find her well guarded.

"I beg your pardon," said a pleasant voice.

The consul general had been so deeply occupied by his worry that he had not noticed the entrance of the speaker. He turned impatiently. He saw a tall blond man, bearded and tanned, with fine clear blue eyes that met his with the equanimity of the fearless.

CHAPTER XIII.

After Ten Years.

The consul general saw before him an exquisite, as the ancient phrase goes, backed by no indifferent breed of manhood. He believed that here was a brief respite (as between acts) in which the little hypocrisies could be laid aside. The pleasant smile on his high-bred face was all his own.

"And what may I do for you, sir?" He expected to be presented with letters of introduction, and to while away a half hour in the agreeable discussion of mutual acquaintance.

"I should like a few minutes' private talk with you," began the well-dressed stranger. "May I close the door?" The consul general, with a sense of disappointment, nodded. The blond man returned and sat down. "I don't know how to begin, but I want you to copy this cablegram and send it under your own name. Here it is; read it."

So singular a request filled the consul general with astonishment. Rather mechanically he accepted the slip of paper, adjusted his glasses, and read—

The Andes Construction company, New York: A former employee of yours wishes to make a restitution of $8,000, with interest to date. He dares not give his name to me, but he wishes to learn if this belated restitution will lift the ban against his coming to America and resuming his citizenship. Reply collect.

"This is an extraordinary request to make to me, sir."

"Could I possibly offer that to the cable operator? Without name or address? No; I could not do it without being subjected to a thousand questions, none of which I should care to answer. So I came to you. Passing through your hands, no one will question it. Will you do this favor for a poor unfortunate devil?"

Oddly enough, the other could not get away from his original impression. The clothes, the way the man wore them, the clarity of his eyes, the abundant health that was expressed by the tone of the skin, derided such a possibility as the cablegram made manifest.

He forced the smile back to his lips. "Are you sure you're not hoaxing me?"

"No. I am the victim of the hoax," enigmatically. "If one may call the quirks of fate by the name of hoax," the stranger added. "Will you send it?"

The years he had spent in the consular service had never brought before him a situation of this order. He did not know exactly what to do. He looked out of the window, into the hotel court, at the sky which presently would become overcast with the daily rain clouds. By and by he remembered the man waiting patiently at his elbow.

"What is your name?"

"I'd rather not give that until I hear from New York. I am known out here by the name of Warrington."

Warrington. The puzzlement vanished from the older man's face, and his eyes became alert, renewing from another angle their investigation of the stranger. Warrington. So this was the man? He could understand now. Who could blame a girl for making a mistake when he, a seasoned veteran, had been beguiled by the outward appearance of the man? Mallow was right. He was a handsome beggar.

"I promise to send this upon one condition."

"I accept without question," readily.

"It is that you must keep away from Elsa Chetwood, now and hereafter. You made her acquaintance under false pretenses."

"I deny that. Not under false pretenses." How quickly things went about! "Let me tell you how I met her."

The consul general listened; he listened with wonder and interest, and more, with conviction that the young man had been perfectly honest. But the knowledge only added to his growing alarm. It would not be difficult for such a man to win the regard of any young woman.

"And you told her what you had done?"

"Yes."

"Your first misstep?" touching the cablegram.

"My first and only misstep. I was a careless, happy-go-lucky young fool." The sky outside also had attraction for Warrington. A thousand times a fool!

"How long ago did this happen?"

"Ten years this coming April."

"And now, after all this time, you wish to go back?"

"I have wished to go back many times, but never had money enough. I have plenty now. Oh, I made it honestly," smiling. "In oil, at Prome. Here's a cutting from a Rangoon paper."

The other read it carefully. It was romance, romance such as he liked to read in his books, but which was mighty bewildering to have at his elbow in actuality. What a life the man must have led! And here he was, with no more evidence of the conflict than might be discerned in the manliness of his face and the breadth and depth of his shoulders. He dropped the cutting, impatiently.

"Don't you believe it?"

"Believe it? Oh, this? Yes," answered the consul general. "What I cannot believe is that I am awake. I cannot quite make two and two equal four. I cannot . . . Well, you do not look like a man who would rob his employer of eight thousand dollars. . . . Parrot & Co. It's odd, but I recollect that title. You were at Udaipur during the plague."

Warrington brightened. "So that's got about? I happened to be there, working on the prince's railway."

"I will send the cable at once. You will doubtless hear from New York in the morning. But you must not see Miss Chetwood again."

"You will let me bid her good-by? I admire and respect her more than any other woman. She does not know it, for as yet her soul is asleep; but she is one of those few women God put on earth for the courage and comfort of man. Only to say good-by to her. Here in this office, if you wish."

"I agree to that."

"Thank you again." Warrington rose.

"I am genuinely sorry for you. If they say no, what will you do?"

"Go back just the same. I have another debt to cancel."

"Call in the morning. I'll let you know what the charges are."

"I forgot. Here are twenty pounds. You can return the balance when I call. I am very grateful."

"By the way, there is a man here by the name of Mallow," began the consul general.

"Yes," interrupted Warrington, with a smile which was grim and cruel. "I expect to call upon him. He owes me something like fifty pounds, and I am going to collect it." Then he went out.

The consul general dropped Mallow's perfecto into the wastebasket and lighted his pipe. Once more he read the cablegram. The Andes Construction company. What a twist, what an absurd kink in the skein! Nearly all of Elsa's wealth lay bound up in this enormous business which General Chetwood had founded thirty odd years before. And neither of them knew!

"I am not a bad man at heart," he mused, "but I liked the young man's expression when I mentioned that bully Mallow."

He joined his family at five. He waved aside tea, and called for a lemon-squash.

"Elsa, I am going to give you a lecture."

"Didn't I tell you?" cried Elsa to the wife. "I felt in my bones that he was going to say this very thing." She turned to her old-time friend. "Go on; lecture me."

"In the first place, you are too kind-hearted."

"That will be news to my friends. They say I have a heart of ice."

"And what you think is independence of sprit is sometimes indiscretion."

"Oh," said Elsa, becoming serious.

"A man came into my office today. He is a rich copra grower from Penang. He spoke of you. You passed him on going out. If I had been twenty years younger I'd have punched his ugly head. His name is Mallow, and he's not a savory chap."

Elsa's cheeks burned. She never would forget the look in that man's eyes. The look might have been in other men's eyes, but conventionality had always veiled it; she had never seen it before.

"Go on;" but her voice was unsteady.

"Somewhere along the Irrawaddy you made the acquaintance of a young man who calls himself Warrington, familiarly known as Parrot & Co. I'll be generous. Not one woman in a thousand would have declined to accept the attentions of such a man. He is cultivated, undeniably good looking, a strong man, mentally and physically."

Elsa's expression was now enigmatical.

"There's not much veneer to him. He fooled me unintentionally. He was quite evidently born a gentleman, of a race of gentlemen. His is not an isolated case. One misstep, and the road to the devil."

The consul general's wife sent a startled glance at Elsa, who spun her sunshade to lighten the tension of her nerves.

"He confessed frankly to me this morning that he is a fugitive from justice. He wishes to return to America. He recounted the circumstances of your meeting."

"Uncle Jim, I have traveled pretty much over this world, and I never met a gentleman if Warrington is not one." There was unconscious belligerency in her tone.

"Ah, there's the difficulty which women will never be made to understand. Every man can, at one time or another, put himself upon his good behavior. Underneath he may be a fine rascal."

"Not this one," smiling. "He warned me against himself a dozen times, but that served to make me stubborn. The fault of my conduct," acidly, "was not in making this pariah's acquaintance. It lies in the fact that I had nothing to do with the other passengers, from choice. That is where I was indiscreet. But why should I put myself out to gain the good wishes of people for whom I have no liking; people I shall probably never see again when I leave this port?"

"You forget that some of them will be your fellow passengers all the way to San Francisco. My child, you know as well as I do that there are some laws which the Archangel Michael would have to obey, did he wish to inhabit this earth for a while."

"Poor Michael! And if you do not obey these laws, people talk."

"Exactly. There are two sets of man-made laws. One governs the conduct of men and the other the conduct of women."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

New shackles for convicts permit a man to walk as usual but lock should he bend his knees far enough to run.

More Than a Stranger.

Manager Hughey Jennings of the Detroit Tigers makes it a rule to give a tryout to everyone claiming to be a ball player who comes seeking a place with him. One day at morning practice, as Jennings tells the story, a chap wandered in and asked for a chance.

"You're an experienced player?" questioned Jennings.

"Oh, yes," replied the candidate.

"Can you hit and field pretty good?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"What do you usually play?"

"I'm a right fielder."

"Well, go out in right," instructed Jennings, "and we'll see what you can do."

Jennings instructed one of the pitchers to hit a few flies to the new man in right and turned to other affairs. He was back in a few moments and, greatly to his surprise, found the candidate still beside the plate.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "I thought I sent you out in right field!"

"Yes, Mr. Jennings," was the reply. "You'll have to excuse me, but you see I'm a stranger here, and which is right field in this park?"—American Boy.

Prize Definition of Money.

What is regarded as one of the best definitions of money was given by Henry E. Beggs of Sheffield, England, who was awarded a prize offered by a British weekly for the following philosophical wisdom:

"An article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven and as a universal provider of everything except happiness."

Whenever You Need a General Tonic Take Grove's

The Old Standard Grove's Tasteless chill Tonic is equally valuable as a General Tonic because it contains the well known tonic properties of QUININE and IRON. It acts on the Liver, Drives out Malaria, Enriches the Blood and Builds up the Whole System. 50 cents.—Adv.

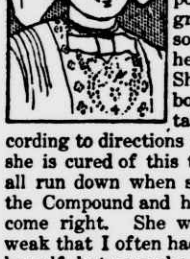
The Terrible Turk.

There are no old maids in Turkey. No wonder, then, that country has so many unhappy men.—Detroit Times.

MOTHER OF SCHOOL GIRL

Tells How Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Restored Her Daughter's Health.

Plover, Iowa.—"From a small child my 13 year old daughter had female weakness. I spoke to three doctors about it and they did not help her any. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had been of great benefit to me, so I decided to have her give it a trial. She has taken five bottles of the Vegetable Compound according to directions on the bottle and she is cured of this trouble. She was all run down when she started taking the Compound and her periods did not come right. She was so poorly and weak that I often had to help her dress herself, but now she is regular and is growing strong and healthy."—Mrs. MARTIN HELVIG, Plover, Iowa.



Hundreds of such letters expressing gratitude for the good Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has accomplished are constantly being received, proving the reliability of this grand old remedy.

If you are ill do not drag along and continue to suffer day in and day out but at once take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a woman's remedy for woman's ills.

If you want special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidential) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

Make the Liver Do its Duty

Nine times in ten when the liver is right the stomach and bowels are right.

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS gently but firmly compel a lazy liver to do its duty.

Cures Constipation, Indigestion, Sick Headache, and Distress After Eating.

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