PARROT & CO

By HAROLD MACGRATH

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

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He eyed indecisively the stairs and then glanced toward the brilliant night outside. It would not be possible to sleep in that room again. So he tiptoed out to the cafe veranda and dropped into a comfortable chair. He would hunt them up some time during the day. He would ask Mallow for fifty pounds, and he sincerely hoped that Mallow would refuse him. For he was grimly resolved that Mallow should pay for those half-truths, more damning than bald lies. It was due to Mallow that he was never more to see or speak to Elsa. He emptied the ash from his cutty which he stowed away.

The great heartache and the greater disillusion would not have fallen to his lot had Elsa been frank in Rangoon, had she but told him that she was to sail on the same steamer. He would have put over his sailing. He would have gone his way, still believing himself to be a Bayard, a Galahad or any other of those simple dreamers who put honor and chivalry above and before all other things.

Him! He covered his face with his hands and remained in that position for a long while, so long indeed that the coolies, whose business it was to scrub the tilings every morning at four, went about their work quietly for fear of disturbing him.

Elsa had retired almost immediately after dinner. She endeavored to finish some initial work on old embroideries, but the needle insisted upon pausing and losing stitch after stitch. She went to bed and strove to sleep, but that sweet healer came not to her wooing. Nothing she did could overcome the realization of the shock she had received. It had left her dull and bewildered.

The name echoed and re-echoed through her mind: Paul Ellison. It should have been an illumination; instead, she had been thrust into utter darkness. Neither Arthur nor his mother had ever spoken of a brother, and she had known them for nearly ten years. Two men, who might be twin brothers, with the same name; it was maddening. What could it mean? The beautiful white-haired mother, the handsome charming son, who idolized each other; and this adventurer, this outcast, this patient, brave and kindly outcast, with his funny parrakeet, what was he to them and they to him? It must be, it must be! They were brothers. Nature, full of amazing freaks as she was, had not perpetrated this one without calling upon a single strain of blood.

She lay back among her pillows, her eyes leveled at the few stars beyond her door, opened to admit any cooling breeze. Her head ached. It was like the computations of astronomers; to a certain extent the human mind could grasp the distances but could not comprehend them. It was more than chance. Chance alone had not brought him to the crumbling ledge. There was a strain of fatalism in Elsa. She was positive that all these things had been written long before and that she was to be used as the key.

Paul Ellison.

She drew from the past those salient recollections of Arthur and his mother: First, the day the two had called regarding the purchase of a house that her father had just put on the market—a rambling old colonial affair, her own mother's birthplace. Sixteen; she had not quite been that, just free from her school days in Italy. With the grand air of youth she had betrayed the fact almost instantly, while waiting for her father to come into the living room.

"Italy!" said Arthur's mother, whom Elsa mentally adopted at once. The stranger spoke a single phrase, which Elsa answered in excellent if formal Italian. This led from one question to another. Mrs. Ellison turned out to be a schoolmate of her mother's, and she, Elsa, had inherited their very room. What more was needed?

The Ellisons bought the house and lived quietly within it. Society, and there was a good deal of it in that small Kentuckian city, society waited for them to approach and apply for admittance, but waited in vain. Mrs. Ellison never went anywhere. Her son Arthur was a student and preferred his books. So eventually society introduced itself. Persons who ignored it went to interesting. When it became known that Mrs. Ellison had been the intimate of the beautiful and aristocratic wife of General Chetwood; when the local banker quietly spread the information that the Ellisons were comfortably supplied with stocks and bonds of a high order, society concluded that it could do very well without past history. That could come later.

With her father dead, Elsa became as much at home in the Ellison house as in her own. But never, never anywhere in the house, was there indication of the existence of a brother, so like Arthur that under normal conditions it would have been difficult to tell them apart. Even when she used to go up to the garret with Mrs. Ellison, to aid her in rummaging some old trunk, there came to light none of those trifling knickknacks which any mother would have secretly clung to, no matter to what depth her flesh and blood had fallen. Never had she seen among the usual amateur photographs one presenting two boys. Once she had come across a photograph of a smooth-faced youth who was in the act of squinting along the top of an engineer's tripod. Arthur had laughingly taken it away from her, saying that it represented him when he had had ambitions to build bridges.

To build bridges. The phrase awoke something in Elsa's mind. Bridges. She sat up in bed, mentally keen for the first time since dinner. "I have built bridges in my time over which trains are passing at this moment. I have fought torrents, and floods, and hurricanes, and myself."

He was Paul Ellison, son and brother, and they had blotted him out of their lives by destroying all physical signs of him. There was something inhuman in the deliberateness of it, something unforgivable.

They had made no foolish attempt to live under an assumed name. They had come from New York to the little valley in order to leave behind the scene of their disgrace and all those who had known them. Arthur was an inveterate traveler. Half the year found him in Europe, painting a little, writing a little less, frequenting the lesser known villages in France and Italy. He did not care for horses, for hunting, for sports of any kind. And yet he was sturdy, clear-eyed, fresh-skinned. He walked always; he was forever tramping off to the pine-hooded hills, with his painting kit over his shoulders and his camp stool under his arm. Later, Elsa began to understand that he was a true scholar, not merely an educated man. He was besides a linguist of amazing facility, a pianist who invariably preferred as his audience his own two ears. Arthur would have been a great dramatist or a great poet, if . . . If he had fought for prizes coveted by mankind, if he had thrown aside his dreams and gone into the turmoil, if he had taken up a man's burden and carried it to success. Elsa, daughter of a man who had fought in the great arena from his youth to his death, Elsa was not meant for the wife of a dreamer.

Paul Ellison. What was his crime in comparison to his expiation of it? He had built bridges, fought torrents, hurricanes, himself. No, he was not a scholar; he saw no romance in the multifarious things he had of necessity put his hand to; these had been daily matter-of-fact occupations. A strange gladness seemed to loosen the tenseness of her aching nerves.

Then, out of the real world about her, came with startling distinctness, the shriek of a parrot. She would have recognized that piercing cry anywhere. It was Rajah. In the next room, and she had not known that Warrington (she would always know him by that name) was stopping at the same hotel! She listened intently. Presently she heard muffled sounds; a clatter of metal. A few minutes later came softer tinkle, scurry of pattering feet, then silence.

Elsa ran to the door and stood motionless by the jamb, waiting, ethereally white in the moonshine. She should have gone back to bed, but a thrill of unknown fear held her. She saw Warrington, fully dressed, issue forth cautiously, glance about, then pass down the gallery, stepping with the lightness of a cat.

She returned hastily to her room, threw over her shoulder a kimono, and went back to the door, hesitating there for a breath or two. She stepped out upon the gallery, walked as far as Warrington's door, and paused there.

The gallery floor was trellised with moonlight and shadow. She saw something lying in the center of a patch of light, and she stooped. The light was too dim for her to read; so she reentered her own room and turned on the light. It was Warrington's letter of credit. She gave a low laugh, perhaps a bit hysterical. There was no doubt of it. Someone had entered his room. There had been a struggle in which he had been the stronger, and the thief had dropped his plunder. (As a matter of fact, the Chinaman, finding himself closed in upon, had thrown the letter of credit toward the railing, in hope that it would fall over to the ground below, where, later, he could recover it.) Elsa pressed it to her heart as another woman might have pressed a rose, and laughed again. Something of his; something to give her the excuse to see and to speak to him again. Tomorrow she would know; and he would tell her the truth, even as her heart knew it now. For what other reason had he turned away from her that first day out of Rangoon, hurt and broken? Paul Ellison; and she had told him that she was going home to marry his brother!

CHAPTER XVII.

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The Battle.

Next morning, when it became known among the bankers and foreign agencies that a letter of credit for ten thousand pounds had been lost or stolen, there was more than a ripple of excitement. They searched records, but no loss as heavy as this came to light. Even the managing director of the Bank of Burma came in for his share of annoyance. He was obliged to send out a dozen cables of notification of the loss, all of which had to be paid out of accrued dividends. Thus Warrington had blocked up the avenues. The marvelous rapidity with which such affairs may be spread broadcast these days is the first wonder in a new epoch of wonders. From Irkutsk to Auckland, from St. John's to Los Angeles, wherever a newspaper was published, the news flew. Within twenty-four hours it would be difficult to draw against that letter as it would be to transmute baser metals into gold.

At half past ten Warrington, apparently none the worse for a sleepless night, entered the private office of the consul general who, gravely and with studied politeness, handed to him an unopened cablegram.

"I rather preferred to let you open it, Mr. Warrington," he said.

Warrington noted the lack of cordiality, but with passive regret. The consul general recovered his pen and pretended to become absorbed in the litter of papers on his desk. But in truth he could see nothing save the young man's face; calm, unmoved, expressing negligent interest in what would be the most vital thing in his existence, next to life. A fine specimen of a man, incredibly wholesome despite his ten years' knocking about in this ungodly part of the world. It was a pity. They had evidently refused to compromise.

"Bad news?"

Warrington stood up with sudden and surprising animation in his face. "Read it," he said.

"If Ellison will make restitution in person, yes. ANDES."

The consul general jumped to his feet and held out his hand. "I am glad, very glad. Everything will turn out all right now. If you wish, I'll tell Miss Chetwood the news."

"I was going to ask you to do that," responded Warrington. The mention of Elsa took the brightness out of his face. "Tell her that Parrot & Co. will always remember her kindness, and ask her to forgive a lonely chap for having caused her any embarrassment through her goodness to him. I have decided not to see Miss Chetwood again."

"You are a strong man, Mr. Warrington."

"Warrington? My name is Ellison, Paul Warrington Ellison. After all, I'm so used to Warrington, that I may as well let well enough alone. There is one more favor; do not tell Miss Chetwood that my name is Ellison."

"I should use my own name, if I were you. Why, man, you can return to the States as if you had departed but yesterday. The world forgets quickly. People will be asking each other what it was that you did. Then I shall bid Miss Chetwood good-by for you?"

"Yes. I am going to jog it home. I want to travel first class, here, there, wherever fancy takes me. It's so long since I've known absolute ease and comfort. I wish to have time to readjust myself to the old ways. I was once a luxury-loving chap. I sail at dawn for Saigon. I may knock around in Siam for a few weeks. After that, I don't know where I'll go. Of course I shall keep the Andes advised of my whereabouts, from time to time."

"Another man would be in a hurry." It was on the tip of his tongue to tell Warrington what he knew of the Andes Construction company, but something held back the words, a fear that Warrington might change his mind about seeing Elsa. "Well, wherever you go and whatever you do, good luck go with you."

"There are good men in this world, sir, and I shall always remember you as one of them."

"By the way, that man Mallow; have you met him yet?"

The quizzical expression in his eyes made Warrington laugh. "No."

"I was in hopes . . ." The consul general paused, but Warrington ignored the invitation to make known his intentions.

He shunted further inquiry by saying: "A letter of credit of mine was stolen last night. I had a tussle in the room, and was rather getting the best of it. The thug slipped suddenly away. Probably hid the letter in his loin cloth."

"That's unfortunate."

"I have sent out a general stop-order. No one will be able to draw against it. The sum will create suspicion anywhere."

"Have you any idea who was back of the thief? Is there any way I can be of service to you?"

"I really suspect Mallow and a gambler named Craig, but no court would hold them upon the evidence I have. It's my belief that it's a practical joke which measures up to the man who perpetrated it. He must certainly realize that a letter so large will be eagerly watched for."

"I shall gladly take charge of the matter here for you. I suppose that you will eventually meet Mallow?"

"Eventually suggests a long time," grimly.

"Ah . . . Is there . . . Do you think there will be any need of a watch holder?"

"I honestly believe you would like to see me have it out with him!"

"I honestly would. But unfortunately the dignity of my office forbids. He has gone up and down the settlements, bragging and domineering and fighting. I have been given to understand that he has never met his match."

"It's a long lane that has no turning. After all," Warrington added, letting go his reserve; "you're the only friend I have. Why shouldn't I tell you that immediately I am going out in search of him, and that when I find him I am going to give him the worst walloping he ever heard tell of."

"I ought not to want to see you at it, but, hang it, I do!"

"Human nature. It's a pleasurable sensation to back up right by might. Four years ago I vowed that some day I'd meet him on equal terms. I may not see you again. If the letter of credit turns up, you know what to do with it. I'm keen to get started. Good-by, and thank you."

A handclasp, and he was gone.

"I wish," thought the consul general, "I could have told him about the way the scoundrel spoke of Elsa."

And Warrington, as he sought the cafe veranda, wished he could have told the basic truth of his fighting mood; the look Mallow had given Elsa that day in Penang. Diligently he began the search. Mallow and Craig were still in their rooms, doubtless sleeping off the debauch of the preceding night. He saw that he must wait. Luncheon he had in town.

At four o'clock his inquiries led him into the billiard annex. His throat tightened a little as he discovered the two men engaged in a game of American billiards. He approached the table quietly. Their interest in the game was deep, possibly due to the wager laid upon the result; so they did not observe him. He let Mallow finish his run. Liquor had no effect upon the man's nerves, evidently, for his eyes and stroke were excellent. A miscue brought an oath from his lips, and he banged his cue upon the floor.

"Rotten luck," said Warrington sympathetically, with the devil's banter in his voice.

Mallow spun around, stared for a moment, then grinned evilly. "Here's our crow at last, Craig."

"Speaking of birds of ill-repute, the crow passes his admiration to the kite and the vulture." Warrington spoke coolly.

Mallow looked at Craig, who scowled back. He was beginning to grow weary at the sight of Warrington, bobbing up here, bobbing up there, always with a subtle menace. He chalked his cue, got the balls into a corner and finished his string.

"That'll be five pounds," he said.

"And fifty quid for me," added Warrington, smiling, though his eyes were as blue and hard as arctic ice.

"I'll see you comfortably broiled first," replied Mallow, as he tossed five sovereigns to Craig. "Now, what else is on your mind?"

Warrington took out the cigar band and exhibited it. "I found that in my room last night. You're one of the few, Mallow, who smoke them out here. He was a husky Chinese, but not husky enough. Makes you turn a bit yellow; eh, Craig, you white-livered cheat? You almost got my money belt, but almost is never quite. The letter of credit is being reissued. It might have been robbery; it might have been just deviltry; just for the sport of breaking a man. Anyhow, you didn't succeed. Suppose we take a little jaunt out to where they're building the new German Lloyd dock? There'll be no one working at this time of day. Plenty of shade."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Nature Supreme.

Not all the product of artificial greeneries are so lovely as that of the fields, the country garden, the fence rows, the first roses, the daffodils, the arbutus which hides under the hillside leaves, the first buds of the rhododendrons and the other forms telling of the life blood drawn direct from the earth, while poor mankind has to take all second hand.

Libby's Vienna Sausage and Sliced Dried Beef

Both contain less heat producing properties than heavy meats.

Try them for summer luncheons and picnic tidbits.

Libby, McNeill & Libby
Chicago

Insist on Libby's at your grocer's

When Pat Scored.

An Irishman was one day looking at the notice, "Your King and Country Need You." A delicate-looking Englishman happened to be passing by, and thinking to have a joke at Pat's expense, started the following:

Englishman—Well, Pat, will you volunteer for the front?

Irishman—Begob, I will if you come.

Englishman—Why do you want me with you?

Irishman—Sure, when the kaiser sees you he will look for peace. He'll think the British are rising from the dead.

Great Musician.

Two Lancashire boys were expatiating on the relative merits of their fathers as musicians.

"My father is the greatest musician in town," said one.

"Oh!" the other said. "When my father starts his music every man stops work."

"How's that?" said the other. "What does he do?"

"He blows the whistle for meals up at the mill."

Always Cool.

Mrs. Lightfeede (the landlady)—I am sorry to say that the drinking water is a trifle warm for this evening's dinner. The iceman is very irregular about his calls of late.

Mr. Fillup—Oh, that's easily remedied, Mrs. Lightfeede. Just draw us a pitcherful from the hot water faucet in the bathroom.—Judge.

Naturally.

"What were you doing so long at the photographer's?"

"Merely awaiting developments."

Direct sunlight by its chemical effects disintegrates the backing of mirrors in a comparatively short time.

IT SLUGS HARD.

Coffee a Sure and Powerful Bruiser.

"Let your coffee slave be denied his cup at its appointed time! Headache—sick stomach—fatigue. I know it all in myself, and have seen it in others. Strange that thinking, reasoning beings will persist in its use," says a Topeka man.

He says further that he did not begin drinking coffee until he was twenty years old, and that slowly it began to poison him, and affect his hearing through his nervous system.

"Finally, I quit coffee and the conditions slowly disappeared, but one cold morning the smell of my wife's coffee was too much for me and I took a cup. Soon I was drinking my regular allowance, tearing down brain and nerves by the daily dose of the nefarious beverage.

"Later, I found my breath coming hard, had frequent fits of nausea, and then I was taken down with bilious fever.

"Common sense came to me, and I quit coffee for good and went back to Postum. I at once began to gain and have had no returns of my bilious symptoms, headache, dizziness or vertigo.

"I now have health, bright thoughts, and added weight, where before there was invalidism and the blues.

"My brother quit coffee because of its effect on his health and now uses Postum. He could not stand the nervous strain while using coffee, but keeps well on Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Postum comes in two forms:

Postum Cereal—the original form—must be well boiled. 15c and 25c packages.

Instant Postum—a soluble powder—dissolves quickly in a cup of hot water, and with cream and sugar, makes a delicious beverage instantly. 30c and 50c tins.

Both kinds are equally delicious and cost about the same per cup.

"There's a Reason" for Postum.

—sold by Grocers.