

PARROT & CO

HAROLD MACGRATH

Author of *The Carpet from Bagdad*,
The Place of Honeymoons, etc.

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SYNOPSIS.

Warrington, an American adventurer, and 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 girl tourist, sees Warrington and asks the purser to introduce her. He tells her that Warrington has beaten a syndicate and sold his oil claims for \$20,000. Warrington puts Rajah, the parrot, through his tricks for Elsa and they pass two golden days together on the river. In Rangoon, Warrington interferes in a row over cards caused by an enemy, Newell Craig. Elsa is annoyed by Craig and stabs him with a hatpin. Warrington discovers Elsa on the Singapore steamer. He avoids her. Craig is aboard and is warned by Warrington who ceases to avoid Elsa. Craig stirs up evil gossip. Elsa tells Warrington of the hatpin incident and he hunts up Craig on murder bent. He finds him stretched out drunk on deck and turns the hose on him. At 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 that he spent money that did not belong to him over the gambling table to Craig, and asks her not to speak to him again. Mallow baits Warrington, who keeps his temper. At Singapore Elsa calls on her father's old friend the American consul general. Mallow calls and relates the steamship gossip about Elsa. Warrington also calls and sends a cable to the Andes Construction company, offering to restore the stolen money if they will lift the ban. Elsa defends Warrington to the consul general, who is dubious. Elsa dines at the consul general's and meets the old English colonel who cut her on the ship. He apologizes, talks with her about conventional society rules and tells her that Warrington's real name is Paul Ellison.

CHAPTER XV.

A Bit of a Lark.

Mallow gave Craig one of his favorite cigars. The gambler turned it over and inspected the carnelian label, realizing that this was expected of him. Mallow smiled complacently. They might smoke as good as that at the government house, but he rather doubted it. Trust a Britisher to know a good pipe-charge; but his selection of cigars was seldom to be depended upon.

"Don't see many of these out here," was Craig's comment, and he tucked away the cigar in a vest pocket.

"They cost me forty-three cents apiece, without duty." The vulgarian's pleasure lies not in the article itself so much as in the price paid for it. On the plantation Mallow smoked Burma cheroots because he really preferred them. There, he drank rye whisky, consorted with his employees, gambled with them and was not above cheating when he had them drunk enough. Away from home, however, he was the man of money; he bought vintage wines when he could, wore silks, jingled the sovereigns whenever he thought someone might listen, bullied the servants, all with the childish belief that he was following the footsteps of aristocracy, hoodwinking no one, not even his kind. "I'm worth a quarter of a million," he went on. "Luck and plugging did it. One of these fine days I'm going to sell out and take a whack at that gay Paris. There's the place to spend your pile. You can't get your money's worth any place else."

Paris, Craig's thought flew back to the prosperous days when he was plying his trade between New York and Cherbourg, on the Atlantic liners, the annual fortnight in Paris and the Grand Prix. He had had his diamonds, then, and his wallet of yellow-backs; and when he had called for vintage wines and choice Havanas it had been for genuine love of them. In his heart he despised Mallow. He knew himself to be a rogue, but Mallow without money would have been a bold predatory scoundrel. Craig knew also that he himself was as soul too cowardly to be more than despicably bad. He envied Mallow's absolute fearlessness, his frank brutality, his strength upon which dissipation had as yet left no mark; and Mallow was easily forty-five.

"When you go to Paris, I'd like to go along."

"You've never let on why they sent you hiking out here," Mallow suggested.

"One of my habits is keeping my mouth shut."

"Regarding your own affairs, yes. But you're willing enough to talk when it comes to giving away the other chap."

"You can play that hand as well as I can." Craig scowled toward the dining room doors.

"Ha! There they come," said Mallow, as a group of men and women issued out into the cafe veranda. "By gad! she is a beauty, and no mistake. And will you look at our friend, the colonel, toddling behind her?"

"If you could get a good look at her when she's angry, you'd change your tune."

Mallow sighed audibly. "Most women are tame, and that's why I've fought shy of the yoke. Yonder's the sort for me. The man who marries her will have his work cut out. It'll take a year or two to find out who's boss; and if she wins, lord help the man!"

Craig eyed the group which was now seated. Two Chinamen were serving coffee and cordials. Mallow was right; beautiful was the word. He poured out for himself a stiff peg and drank it with very little soda.

"Haven't seen the crow anywhere, have you?"

"No, nor want to. Leave him alone."

"Afraid of him, eh?"

"I'm truthful enough to say that I'm damned afraid of him. Don't mistake me. I'd like to see him flat, beaten, down and out for good. I'd like to see him lose that windfall, every cent of it. But I don't want to get in his way just now."

"Rot! Don't you worry; no beach-comber like that can stand up long in front of me. He threatened on board that he was going to collect that fifty pounds. He hasn't been very spry about it."

"I should like to be with you when you meet."

Mallow grinned. "Not above seeing a pal get walloped, eh? Well, you get a ringside ticket. It'll be worth it."

"I don't want to see you get licked," denied Craig irritably. "All I ask is that you shelve some of your cock-sureness. I'm not so dead broke that I must swallow all of it. I've warned you that he is a strong man. He used to be one of the best college athletes in America."

"College!" exploded Mallow. "What the devil does a college athlete know about a dock-fight?"

"Ever see a game of football?"

"No."

"Well, take it from me that it's the roughest game going. It's a game where you put your boot in a man's face when he's not looking. Mallow, they kill each other in that game. And Ellison was one of the best, fifteen years ago. He used to wade through a ton of solid, scrapping, plunging flesh. And nine times out of ten he used to get through. I want you to beat him up, and it's because I do that I'm warning you not to underestimate him. On shipboard he handled me as you would a bag of salt; damn him! He's a surprise to me. He looks as if he had lived clean out here. There's no booze sign hanging out on him, like there is on you and me."

"Booze never hurt me any."

"You're galvanized inside," said Craig, staring again at Elsa. He wished he knew how to hurt her, too. But he might as well throw stones at the stars.

"How would you like to put one over on this chap Ellison?"

"In what way?"

Mallow smoked for a moment, then touched his breast pocket significantly.

"Not for mine," returned Craig. "Cards are my long suit. I'm no second-story man, not yet."

"I know. But supposing you could get it without risk?"

"In the first place, the bulk of his cash is tied up in letters of credit."

"Ah, you know that?"

"What good would it do to pinch those? In Europe there would be some chance, but not here where boats are two weeks apart. A cable to Rangoon would shut off all drawing. He could have others made out. In cash he may have a few hundreds."

"All gamblers are more or less yellow," sneered Mallow. "The streak in you is pretty wide. I tell you, you needn't risk your skin. Are you game to put one over that will cost him a lot of worry and trouble?"

"So long as I can stand outside the ropes and look on."

"He has a thousand pounds in his belt. No matter how I found out. How'd you like to put your hand on it if you were sure it would not burn your fingers?"

"I'd like to, all right. But it's got to be mighty certain. And the belt must be handed to me by someone else. I've half a wonder if you're not aiming to get rid of me," with an evil glance at his tempter.

"If I wanted to get rid of you, this'd be the way," said Mallow, opening and shutting his powerful hands. "I'm just hungering for a bit of a lark. Come on. A thousand pounds for taking a little rickshaw ride. Ever hear of Wong's? Opium, pearls, oils and shark fins?"

"No."

"Not many do. I know Singapore like the lines on my hands. Wong is the shrewdest, most lawless Chinaman this side of Canton and Macao. Pipes, pearls and shark fins. Big money. Wong's the man to go to. Want a schooner rigged out for illicit shell hunting? Want a man shanghaied? Want him written down missing? Go to Wong."

"See here, Mallow; I don't mind his being beaten up; but what you say doesn't sound good."

"You fool, I don't want him out of the way. Why should I? But there's that thousand for you and worry for him. All aboard!"

venge. I'll take it on as a bit of good sport. Wong will fix us out. Now look alive. It's after nine, and I'd like a little fun first."

The two left the cafe veranda and engaged a pair of rickshaws. As they jogged down the road, Warrington stepped out from behind the palms and moodily watched them until the night swallowed them up. He had not overheard their interesting conversation, nor had he known they were about until they came down the steps together. He ached to follow them. He was in a fine mood for blows. That there were two of them did not trouble him. Of one thing he was assured: Somewhere in the dim past an ancestor of his had died in a Berserk rage.

He had been watching Elsa. It disturbed but did not mystify him to see her talking to the colonel. Table-chance had brought them together, and perhaps to a better understanding. How pale she was! From time to time he caught the flash of her eyes as she turned to this or that guest. Once she smiled, but the smile did not lighten up her face. He was very wretched and miserable. She had taken him at his word, and he should have been glad. He had seen her but once again on board, but she had looked away. It was best so. Yet, it was as if fate had reached down into his heart and snapped the strings which made life tuneful.

And tomorrow! What would tomorrow bring? Would they refuse? Would they demand the full penalty? Eight thousand with interest was a small sum to such a corporation. He had often wondered if they had searched for him. Ten years. In the midst of these cogitations he saw the group at the table rise and break up. Elsa entered the hotel. Warrington turned away and walked aimlessly toward town. For hours he wandered about, seeing nothing, hearing nothing; and it was long past midnight when he sought his room, restless and weary but wide awake. He called for a stiff peg, drank it, and tumbled into bed.

He was whirled away into broken dreams. He was in the Andes, toiling with his girders over unspeakable chasms. A shifting glance at the old billiard room in the club, the letter, and his subsequent wild night of intoxication, the one time in his life when he had drunk hard and long. Back to the Indian deserts and jungles. And he heard the shriek of parrots.

The shriek of parrots. He sat up. Even in his dream he recognized that cry. Night or day, Rajah always shrieked when someone entered the room. Warrington silently slid out of bed and dashed to the door which led to the gallery. A body thudded against his. He caught hold. The body was nude to the waist and smelled evilly of sweat and fish oil. Something whiplike struck him across the face. It was a queue.

Warrington struck out, but missed. Instantly a pair of powerful arms wound about him, bearing and bending him backward. His right arm lay parallel with the invader's chest. He brought up the heel of his palm viciously against the Chinaman's chin. It was sufficient to break the hold. Then followed a struggle that always remained nightmarish to Warrington. Hither and thither across the room, miraculously avoiding chairs, tables and bed, they surged. He heard a ring of steel upon the cement floor, and breathed easier to learn that the thief had dropped his knife. Warrington never thought to call out for help. The old fear of bringing people about him had become a habit. Once, in the whirl of things, his hand came into

contact with a belt which hung about the other's middle. He caught at it and heaved. It broke, and the subsequent tinkling over the floor advised him of the fact that it was his own gold. The broken belt, however, brought the fight to an abrupt end. The oily body suddenly slipped away. Warrington beheld a shadow in the doorway; it loomed there a second against the skyline, and vanished. He ran to the gallery railing, but it was too dark below to discern anything.

He returned to his room, breathing hard, the obnoxious odor of sweat and fish oil in his nose. He turned on the lights and without waiting to investigate, went into the shower room and stood under the tepid deluge. Even after a thorough rub-down the taint was in the air. The bird was muttering and turning somersaults.

"Thanka, Rajah, old sport! He'd

have got me but for you. Let's see the damage."

He picked up the belt. The paper money was intact, and what gold had fallen he could easily find. He then took up his vest . . . and dropped it, stunned. The letter of credit for half his fortune was gone. He sank back upon the bed and stared miserably at the fallen garment. Gone! Fifty thousand dollars. Someone who knew! Presently he stood up and tugged at his beard. After all, why should he worry? A cable to Rangoon would stop payments. A new letter could be issued. It would take time, but he had plenty of that.

Idly he reached for the broken cigar that lay at the foot of the bed. He would have tossed it aside as one of his own had not the carnelian band attracted his attention. He hadn't smoked that quality of tobacco in years. He turned it over and over, and it grew more and more familiar. Mallow's!

CHAPTER XVI.

Who Is Paul Ellison?

For some time Warrington sat upon the edge of the bed and studied the cigar, balanced it upon his palm, as if

striving to weigh accurately Mallow's part in a scrimmage like this. The copra grower assuredly would be the last man to give a cigar to a Chinaman. Mallow, rich, was Mallow disposed of, at least logically; unless indeed it was a bit of anticipatory reprisal. That might possibly be. A drunken Mallow was capable of much, for all that his knowledge of letters of credit might necessarily be primitive.

Yet Mallow was no fool. He would scarcely take such a risk for so unstable and chancy a thing as revenge of this order. Craig? He hadn't the courage. Strong and muscular as he was, he was the average type of gambler, courageous only when armed with a pack of cards, sitting opposite a fool and his money. But Craig and Mallow together. . . . He slipped off the label. It was worth preserving.

With an unpleasant laugh he began to get into his clothes. Why not? The more he thought of it, the more he was positive that the two had been behind this assault. The belt would have meant a good deal to Craig. There were a thousand Chinese in Singapore who would cut a man's throat for a Straits dollar. Either Mallow or Craig had seen him counting the money on shipboard.

He looked at his watch; quarter after two. If they were not in their rooms he would have good grounds for his suspicions. He stole along the gallery and down the stairs to the office, just in time to see the two enter, much the worse for drink. Mallow was boisterous, and Craig was sullen. The former began to argue with the night manager, who politely shook his head. Mallow grew insistent, but the night manager refused to break the rules of the hotel. Warrington inferred that Mallow was demanding liquor, and his inference was correct. He moved a little closer, still hidden behind the potted palms.

"All right," cried Mallow. "We'll go back to town for it."

"I've had enough," declared Craig sullenly. "Let's cut out booze and play a little hand or two."

"Fine!" Mallow slapped his thigh as he laughed. "Nice bird I'd be for you to pluck. Think of something else. The billiard hall is open."

Craig shook his head. When Mallow was argumentative it was no time to play billiards.

"Bah!" snarled Mallow. "Since you won't drink like a man nor play billiards, I'm for bed. And just as the fun was beginning!"

Craig nudged him warningly. Mallow stalked away, and Craig, realizing that the night was done, followed.

Warrington had seen and heard enough. He was tolerably sure. It might have been out of pure devilry, so far as Mallow was concerned; but Craig had joined in hope of definite profits. A fine pair of rogues!

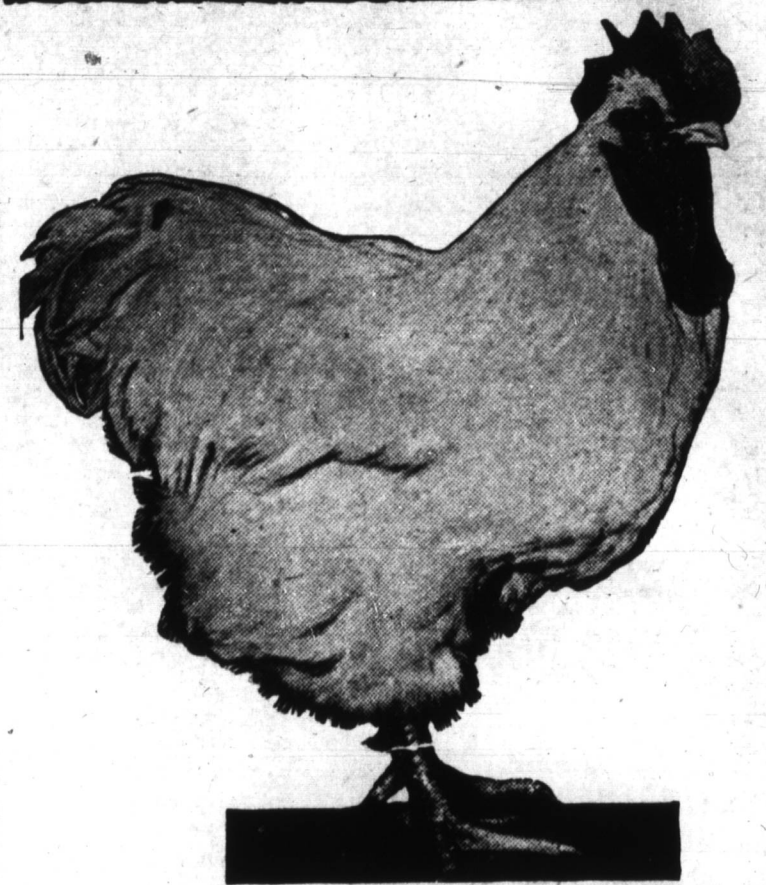
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Quite Small.

"Young Dobson seems quite proud of the fact that his employer has not reduced his salary because of the financial stringency."

"I daresay that's because he's already getting a salary which might be called an 'irreducible minimum.'"

PROBLEM OF BREAKING UP BROODY HEN



Pure-Bred Orpington Cock.

Broody hens seem to be a serious problem for many, and some people have objected to the Orpingtons because of this. One man says he has kept both Buff Orpingtons and White Orpingtons and has never had much trouble with either of them. Of course they will become broody, but it is not a hard matter to break up a broody hen if the right methods are pursued.

The principle on which all methods for stopping broodiness must be based to succeed without real cruelty to the hens, is to have something under them that it will be impossible for them to warm up. The easiest way to provide this is by having the coop open beneath that the air will circulate up around them. A hen will sit on a board and persist, but she will not sit on a nest with a cavity under it and a screen wire bottom. She will sit anywhere without eggs under her so long as the conditions are right so eggs would hatch if they were under her, but instinct seems to warn her when conditions are not right, and she will soon quit.

Another thing noticed is that where hens have been shut up for broodiness there is a tendency to

take them outside and away from the others and often in the open, covering them over with something to keep the rain off them. This method provides the seclusion and darkened place just to suit a hen, and then if the coop rests on the ground the conditions are ideal to her mind, and she cannot be blamed for preparing for a three weeks' stay. Hens will break up sooner if they are kept in the lot where the others are scratching and feeding and are shut in a coop that will not permit their sitting down and warming up a nest. A slatted bottom located in the scratching shed, with nests under it, has been used, and three days was the average time required to stop them, and they sometimes began laying in a week.

Do not let hens sit on the nests a week or two and then try to break them up. It is much easier to break them at once the first time they remain on the nests at night, for they are not very determined, and often will not persist if kept up one day. Then hens that are broken up at once will go to laying sooner after being broken up than those that are left to sit a week first, and you get the week of extra work also.

HOW TO OPERATE INCUBATOR

Temperature of Place Where Machine Is Kept Should Not Vary—Use Only Fresh Eggs.

Care should be taken that the temperature of the place where the machine is kept does not vary. To secure an even temperature it is a good plan to place the incubator in an outhouse, which should be locked up, thus preventing the opening and closing of the door as much as possible. The building should be well ventilated at the top and be free from drafts. In the middle of the house is the best place for the machine, as this allows the air to circulate around it. It should never be put in a corner or against a wall, as fresh air is essential during the process of incubation.

The machine should stand either on a low form or on the floor, as this allows the heat inside to be regular. If the egg drawer is but half an inch lower at the front than the back, the front will not be as warm as the back.

Fresh eggs, of course, must be used. Where it can be managed, they should be put into the incubator the same day they have been laid. They may be two or three days old, but the most successful results are obtained from new-laid ones. All the eggs should be of as near the same size as possible. And very small or very large ones should not be chosen, as they often prove unfertile.

HINTS FOR POULTRY RAISERS

Insure Uniformity of Product by Keeping Standard-Bred Stock—Gather Eggs Twice Daily.

To Producers—Keep standard-bred stock, thus insuring uniformity of products. Sell only full-sized (two ounce) fresh, clean, uniform eggs.

Keep nests clean; confine broody hens; gather eggs twice daily. Keep in a cool place, free from odors of all kinds.

Do not offer for sale small, dirty, checked, stained or doubtful eggs. Most of these may be consumed at home at full market value.

Fatten all surplus poultry, bringing stock up to standard weight.

To Shippers—Pack eggs only in standard cases, with medium fillers, using excelsior, cork shavings, cut straw or corrugated board.

Store case in cool, dry place, only free from odors, avoiding heat, droughts and dampness.

Ship eggs often, at least twice a week in warm weather, by express or in refrigerator cars.

Ship live, healthy poultry in large standard coops; dressed poultry neatly wrapped and packed in boxes or barrels, to reliable dealers.

FEEDING HENS AND PULLETS

Profits Decrease Where Young and Old Stock Are Kept Together—Provide Separate Yards.

A good many people who might otherwise be successful with their poultry have their profit decreased because they allow the young and old stock to remain undivided in the same house or pen or both during the growing period.

At this particular time the young stock needs a great deal of food and needs to be protected from the old ones, which, if allowed to do so, will abuse them more or less. If free range is impossible, provide separate yards and always keep the young in separate buildings, if possible, or in a separate room at least. If you haven't a separate building you can very easily provide an extra room of some sort for them to roost in.

Pullets getting ready to lay need more feed as a rule than hens which have molted out well, because the pullets need to finish their growth and maturity, as well as make eggs. This is another reason why the young stock and the old should be kept separate. The feed question should also be considered as the young hen often needs different rations than the old in order to produce certain qualities which the one has and the other has not.

PROVIDE SHADE AND WATER

Two Important Factors With Poultry During Hot Days of Summer—Not a Difficult Task.

These two factors are all important with the poultry these days and should be always at hand.

Watering but once a day will not suffice. Even if supplied in sufficient quantity, it soon becomes warm and unpalatable, for the poultry appreciate a cool drink on hot days as well as we do ourselves. If you don't think so, try it.

Keep the water dishes in shady places and so arranged that the water will not become readily fouled with dirt.

No shade is so acceptable to poultry as the shade of trees, bushes, growing corn or other plants. Every farmer almost can provide this easily and it is nearly a sin to fence the flocks from it. But any shade is better than no shade and if no other can be given a shelter from the sun of old boards or any material at hand will answer.

Water, shade and plenty of feed are the three absolute essentials for the growing chicks these hot days as well as for the balance of the flocks. See to it that your flocks lack none of them.