

PARROT & CO.

BY HAROLD MACGRATH AUTHOR OF "THE CARPET FROM BAGDAD," "THE PLACE OF HONEYMOONS," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

East is East.

It began somewhere in the middle of the world, at a forlorn landing on the west bank of the muddy, turbid Irrawaddy, remembered by man only so often as it was necessary for the flotilla boat to call for paddy, a visiting commissioner anxious to get away, or a family homeward bound.

Between the landing and the settlement itself there stretched a winding road, arid and treeless, perhaps two miles in length. It announced definitely that its end was futility. The dust hung like a fog above it, not only for this day, but for all days between the big rains.

Along the road walked two men, phantolike. One saw their heads dimly and still more dimly their bodies to the knees; of legs there was nothing visible. Occasionally they stepped aside to permit some bullock cart to pass. One of them swore, not with any evidence of temper, not viciously, but in a kind of mechanical protest.

The other wayfarer, with the inherent patience of his blood, said nothing and waited, setting down the heavy kit bag and the canvas valise (his own). When the way was free again he would sling the kit bag and the valise over his shoulder and step back into the road. His turban, once white, was brown with dust and sweat. His khaki uniform was rent and the ragged canvas shoes spurred little spirals of dust as he walked.

Warrington was an American. He was also one of those men who never held misfortune in contempt, whose outlook wherever it roamed was tolerant. He had patience for the weak, resolution for the strong and a fearless amiability toward all. He was like the St. Bernard dog, very difficult to arouse. It is rather the way with all men who are strong mentally and physically. He was tall and broad and deep. Under the battered pith helmet his face was as dark as the Eurasian's; but the eyes were blue, bright and small, as they are with men who live out of doors, who are compelled of necessity to note things moving at distances. The nose was large and well defined. All framed in a tangle of blond beard and mustache which, if anything, added to the general manliness of his appearance.

the tang of the smoke on his tongue was not to be denied.

Under his arm he carried a small iron cage, patterned something like a rat trap. It contained a Rajputana parakeet, not much larger than a robin, but possessor of a soul as fierce as that of Palladin, minus, however, the smoothing influence of chivalry. He had been born under the eaves of the scarlet palace in Jaipur (so his history ran); but the proximity of Indian princes had left him untouched; he had neither chivalry, politeness, nor diplomacy. He was, in fact, thorough and consistently bad. Round and round he went, over and over, top side, down side, restlessly. For at this moment he was hearing those familiar evening sounds which no human ear can discern—the mutterings of the day birds about to seek cover for the night. In the field at the right of the road stood a lonely tree. It was covered with brilliant scarlet leaves and blossoms, and justly the natives call it the Flame of the Jungle. A flock of small birds were gyrating above it.

"Jah, jah, jah! Jah-jah-ja-a-h!" cried the parrot, imitating the Burmese bell gong that calls to prayer. Instantly he followed the call with a shriek so piercing as to sting the ear of the man who was carrying him.

"You little son of a gun!" he laughed; "where do you pack away all that noise?"

There was a strange bond between the big yellow man and this little green bird. The bird did not suspect it, but the man knew. The pluck, the pugnacity and the individuality of the feathered comrade had been an object lesson to the man, at a time when he had been on the point of throwing up the fight.

"Jah, jah, jah! Jah-jah-ja-a-h!" The bird began its interminable somersaults, pausing only to reach for the tantalizing finger of the man, who laughed again as he withdrew the digit in time.

For six years he had carried the bird with him, through India and Burma and Malacca, and not yet had he won a sign of surrender. There were many scars on his forefingers. It was amazing. With one pressure of his hand he could have crushed out the life of the bird, but over its brave, unconquerable spirit he had no power. And that is why he loved it.

Far away in the past they had met. He remembered the day distinctly and bitterly. He had been on the brink of self-destruction. Fever and poverty and terrible loneliness had battered and beaten him flat into the dust, from which this time he had no wish to rise. He had walked out to the railway station at Jaipur to witness the arrival of the tourist train from Ahmadabad. The natives surged about the train, with brassware, antique articles of warfare, tiger hunting knives (accompanied by perennials fairy tales), skins and silks. There were beggars, holy men, guides and fakirs.

Squatted in the dust before the door of a first-class carriage was a solemn, brown man, in turban and clout, exhibiting performing parrots. It was Rajah's turn. He fired a cannon, turned somersaults through a little steel hoop, opened a tiny chest, took out a four-anna piece, carried it to his master, and in exchange received some seed. Thereupon he waddled resentfully back to the iron cage, opened the door, closed it behind him, and began to mutter belligerently. Warrington haggled for two straight hours. When he returned to his sordid, evil smelling lodgings that night he possessed the parrot and four rupees, and sat up the greater part of the night trying to make the bird perform his tricks. The idea of suicide no longer bothered him; trifling though it was, he had found an interest in life. And on the "morrow" came the Eurasian, who trustfully loaned Warrington every coin that he could scrape together.

Often, in the dreary heart-achy days that followed, when weeks passed ere he saw the face of a white man, when he had to combat opium and bang and laziness in the natives under him, the bird and his funny tricks had saved him from whisky, or worse. In camp he gave Rajah much freedom, his wings being clipped; and nothing pleased the little rebel so much as to claw his way up to his master's shoulder, sit there and watch the progress of the razor, with intermittent "jawing" at his own reflection in the cracked hand mirror.

Up and down the Irrawaddy, at the resthouses, on the boats, to those of a jocular turn of mind the three were known as "Parrot & Co." Warrington's amiability often misled the various scoundrels with whom he was at times forced to associate. A man who smiled most of the time and talked Hindustani to a parrot was not to be accorded much courtesy; until one day Warrington had settled all distinctions, finally and primordially, with the square of his fists. After that he went on his way unmolested, having soundly trounced one of the biggest bullies in the teak timber yards at Rangoon.

idences to exchange; nor did he offer to become the repository of other men's pasts. But he would share his bread and his rupees, when he had them, with any who asked. Many tried to dig into his past, but he was unresponsive as granite. It takes a woman to find out what a man is and has been, and Warrington went about women in a wide circle. In a way he was the most baffling kind of a mystery to those who knew him; he frequented the haunts of men, took a friendly drink, played cards for small sums, laughed and jested like any other anchorless man. In the East men are given curious names. They become known by phrases, such as, The Man Who Talks, Mr. Once Upon a Time, The One-Rupee Man, and the like. As Warrington never received any mail, as he never entered a hotel, nor spoke of the past, he became The Man Who Never Talked of Home.

"I say, James, old sport, no more going up and down this bally old river. We'll go on to Rangoon tonight, if we can find a berth."

"Yes, sahib; this business very piffle," replied the Eurasian without turning his head. Two things he dearly loved to acquire—a bit of American slang and a bit of English silver. He was invariably changing rupees into shillings, and Warrington could not convince him that he was always losing in the transaction.

They tramped on through the dust. The sun dropped. A sudden chill began to penetrate the haze. The white man puffed his cheroot, its wrapper dangling; the servant hummed an Urdu lullaby; the parrot complained unceasingly.

Warrington laughed and shook the dust from his beard. "It's a great world, James, a great, wonderful world. I've just two rupees myself. In other words we are busted."

"Two rupees!" James paused and turned. "Why, sahib, you have three hundred thousand rupees in your pocket."

"But not worth an anna until I get to Rangoon. Didn't those duffers give you anything for handling their luggage the other day?"

"Not a pice, sahib. "Rotters! It takes an Englishman to turn a small trick like that. Well, well; there were extenuating circumstances. They had sore heads. No man likes to pay three hundred thousand for something he could have bought for ten thousand. And I made them come to me, James, to me. I made them come to this god-forsaken hole, just because it pleased my fancy. I believe I'm heaven born, after all. The Lord hates a quitter, and so do I. I nearly quit myself, once; eh, Rajah, old top? But I made them come to me. That's the milk in the cocoanut, the curry on the rice. They actually had me. Two rupees! It truly is a great world."

"Jah, jah, jah! Jah-jah-ja-a-h!" screamed the parrot. "Chaloo!"

"Go on! That's the ticket. If I were a praying man this would be the time for it. Three hundred thousand rupees!" The man looked at the far horizon, as if he would force his gaze beyond, into the delectable land, the Eden out of which he had been driven. "James, I owe you three hundred rupees, and I am going to add seven hundred more. We've been fighting this old top for six years together, and you've been a good servant and a good friend; and I'll take you with me as far as this fortune will go, if you say the word."

"Ah, sahib, I am much sorry. But Delhi calls, and I go. A thousand rupees will make much business for me in the Chandney Chowk."

Presently they became purple shades in a brown world.

CHAPTER II.

A Man With a Past.

The oriental night air was stifling. It was without refreshment; it became a labor and not an exhilaration to breathe it. A pall of suffocating dust rolled above and about the Irrawaddy flotilla boat which, buffeted by the strong, irregular current, strained at its cables, now at the bow, now at the stern, not dissimilar to the last rocking of a deserted swing. This sensation was quite perceptible to the girl who leaned over the bow rail, her handkerchief pressed to her nose, and gazed interestedly at the steep bank, up and down which the sweating coolies swarmed like Gargantuan rats. A dozen torches were stuck into the ground above the crumbling ledge; she saw the flames as one sees a burning match cupped in a smoker's hands, shedding light upon nothing save that which stands immediately behind it.

She choked a little. Her eyes smarted. Her lips were slightly cracked, and cold-cream seemed only to provide a surer resting place for the impalpable dust. It had penetrated through wool and linen and silk, intimately, until three baths a day had become a welcome routine, providing it was possible to obtain water. Water. Her tongue ran across her lips. Oh, for a

drink from the old cist pure spring at home! Tea, coffee, and bottled soda; nothing that ever touched the thirsty spots in her throat.

She looked up at the stars and they looked down upon her, but what she asked they could not, would not, answer. Night after night she had asked, and night after night they had only twinkled as of old. She had traveled now for four months, and still the doubt beset her. It was to be a leap in the dark, with no one to tell her what was on the other side. But why this insistent doubt? Why could she not take the leap gladly, as a woman should who had given the affirmative to a man? With him she was certain that she loved him, away from him she did not know what sentiment really abided in her heart. She was wise enough to realize that something was wrong; and there were but three months between her and the inevitable decision. Never before had she known other than momentary indecision; and it irked her to find that her clarity of vision was fallible and human like the rest of her. The truth was, she didn't know her mind. She shrugged, and the movement stirred the dust that had gathered upon her shoulders.

"A rare old lot of dust; eh, Miss Chetwood? I wish we could travel by night, but you can't trust this blooming old Irrawaddy after sundown. Charts are so much waste-paper."

"I never cease wondering how those poor coolies can carry those heavy rice bags," she replied to the purser.

"Oh, they are used to it," carelessly. The great gray stack of paddy-bags seemed, in the eyes of the girl, fairly to melt away.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the purser. "There's Parrot & Co.!" He laughed and pointed toward one of the torches. "Parrot & Co.? I do not understand."

"That big blond chap behind the fourth torch. Yes, there—Sometimes I'll tell you about him. Picturesque duffer."

She could have shrieked aloud, but all she did was to draw in her breath with a gasp that went so deep it gave



"Two Rupees!" James Paused and Turned.

her heart a twinge. Her fingers tightened upon the teak rail. Suddenly she knew, and was ashamed of her weakness. It was simply a remarkable likeness, nothing more than that; it could not possibly be anything more. Still, a ghost could not have startled her as this living man had done.

"Who is he?"

"A chap named Warrington. But over here that signifies nothing; might just as well be Jones or Smith or Brown. We call him Parrot & Co. He's always carrying that Rajputana parrot. You've seen the kind around the palaces and forts; saber-like wings, long tail-feathers, green and blue and scarlet, and the ugliest little rascals going. This one is trained to do tricks."

"But the man!" impatiently. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

FOUR PERIODS OF TRANSITION

George's Looks, From the Introduction to Adored One to the End of the Honeymoon.

"He is a remarkably plain young man," she wrote in her diary the first day she met him. "He has rather an interesting face," she said to her mamma a month later as she decked her apricot-colored tea gown with the William-Alien-Richardsons that he had just sent her.

"When she wrote to her best friend to give the news of her engagement she expressed herself thus: 'He has not the regular featured drollish good looks I have always hated in men. He has a strong, characterful face and magnificent eyes.'

"'You loveliest one!' she sighed, as she poured out his tea at the third breakfast of the honeymoon. 'I could sit and look at you forever.'

"Six months later, she observed to her husband: 'I don't know whether you're aware of it, George, but your hair's getting most frightfully thin on the top, and you're just about the last man in the universe that can afford to go bald.'

"A man's looks must not be judged by appearances."—From "Stories Without Tears," by Barry Pain.

Knew His Business. "George," she asked, as they rounded the bend, "is your watch correct?" "Yes," replied George, with a merry laugh. "It is keeping better time since I put your picture inside the case." "Oh, you fatterer! How could that be?" "Well, you see, when I placed your picture inside the case I added another jewel!"

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Calomel is mercury or quicksilver, which causes necrosis of the bones. Calomel crashes into your bile like dynamite, breaking it up. That's when you feel that awful nausea and cramping.

Listen to me! If you want to enjoy the nicest, gentlest liver and bowel cleansing you ever experienced just take a spoonful of harmless Dodson's Liver Tone. Your druggist or dealer sells you a 50 cent bottle of Dodson's Liver Tone under my personal money-

back guarantee that each spoonful will clean your sluggish liver better than a dose of nasty calomel and that it won't make you sick.

Dodson's Liver Tone is real liver medicine. You'll know it next morning, because you will wake up feeling fine, your liver will be working, your headache and dizziness gone, your stomach will be sweet and your bowels regular.

Dodson's Liver Tone is entirely vegetable, therefore harmless and cannot salivate. Give it to your children. Millions of people are using Dodson's Liver Tone instead of dangerous calomel now. Your druggist will tell you that the sale of calomel is almost stopped entirely here.

Incidental Advertising. "I suppose you think that if you abandon your old party you will deal it the finishing blow?"

"Not necessarily," answered Senator Sorghum. "My leaving it may help a little by calling attention to the fact that it still exists."

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Cuticura Soap and Ointment Will Banish Them. Trial Free.

These fragrant supercreamy emollients do so much to cleanse, purify and beautify the skin, scalp, hair and hands that you cannot afford to be without them. Besides they meet every want in toilet preparations and are most economical.

Sample each free by mail with Book. Address postcard, Cuticura, Dept. XY, Boston. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

Famous Feats of Archery. In the days when the buffalo was found in vast herds on the western plains there were Indians who, while riding at a gallop, could send an arrow through a buffalo's body. Remarkable as this archery was, it did not equal that reached by the archers of ancient times. It is of record that the MacReas of Gairloch, Scotland, were such skilled archers that they could hit a man at the distance of 500 yards. In 1794 the Turkish ambassador at London shot an arrow in a field near that capital 415 yards against the wind. The secretary of the ambassador on hearing the expressions of surprise from the English gentlemen present, said the Sultan had shot 500 yards. This was the greatest performance of modern days, but a pillar standing on a plain near Constantinople recorded shots ranging up to 800 yards. Sir Robert Ainslie, British ambassador to the Sublime Porte, recorded that in 1798 he was present when the Sultan shot an arrow 972 yards.—Washington Star.

High-Browed Help. "I see where there is a plan on foot to make every servant girl an educated household scientist."

"Do you think that is practicable?" "It's hard to say. My experience and observation is that a 'scientist' in the kitchen means a dyspeptic in the dining room."

Before starting on the right track, be sure you are headed the right way.

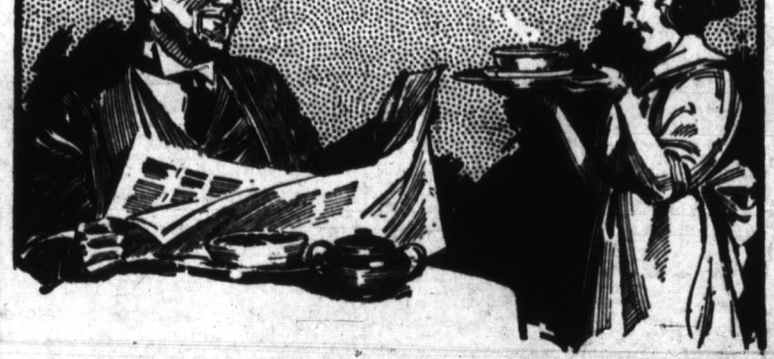
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A Warning. Doctor—You've had a terrible shock. Patient—It's up to you to see that I don't have another when I get you bill.

The Exception. "Two is company," quoted the Sage. "Unless they happen to be husband and wife," corrected the Fool.



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