

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 to cash a draft for 200,000 rupees. Elsa Chetwood, rich American girl tourist, sees Warrington and asks the purser to introduce her. He tells her that Warrington has been 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. Martha, Elsa's companion, warns her that there is gossip in Rangoon. Warrington banks his draft, pays old debts, and overhears and interferes in a row over cards, finds that the row is caused by an enemy, Newell Craig, and threatens to shoot him unless he leaves town. Elsa is annoyed by Craig and stabs him with a hatpin. Warrington bids Elsa good-by.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

That there was real danger in her interest in Warrington did not occur to her. The fact that she was now willing to marry Arthur, without analyzing the causes that had brought her to this decision, should have warned her that she was dimly afraid of the stranger. Her glance fell upon the mandarin's ring. She twisted it round undecidedly. Should she wear it or put it away? The question remained suspended. She saw Craig coming aboard; and she hid her face behind her magazine. Upon second thought she let the magazine fall. She was quite confident that that chapter was closed. Craig might be a scoundrel, but he was no fool.

A sharp blast from the tender's whistle drew her attention to the gangplank. The last man to come aboard was Warrington. He immediately sought James; and they stood together chatting until the tender drew up alongside the steamer of the British-India line. The two men shook hands finally. Warrington added a friendly tap on the Eurasian's shoulder. No one would have suspected that the white man and his dark companion had been "shipmates," in good times and in bad, for nearly a decade. Elsa, watching them from her secure nook, admired the lack of effusiveness. The dignity of the parting told her of the depth of feeling.

An hour later they were heading for the delta.

Elsa amused herself by casting bits of bread to the gulls. Always they caught it on the wing, no matter in what direction she threw it. Sometimes one would wing up to her very hand for charity, its coral feet stretched out to meet the quick back-play of the wings, its cry shallow and plaintive and world-lonely.

Suddenly she became aware of a presence at her side.

A voice said: "It was not quite fair of you."

"What wasn't?" without turning her head. She brushed her hands free of the crumbs.

"You should have let me know that you were going to call on this boat."

"You would have run away, then."

"Why?" startled at her insight.

"Because you are a little afraid of me." She faced him, without a smile either on her lips or in her eyes.

"Aren't you?"

"Yes. I am afraid of all things I do not quite understand."

"There is not the least need in the world, Mr. Warrington. I am quite harmless. My claws have been clipped. I am engaged to be married, and am going home to decide the day."

"He's a lucky man." He was astonished at his calm, for the blow went deep.

"Lucky? That is in the future. What a lonely thing a gull is!"

"What a lonely thing a lonely man is!" he added. Poor fool! To have dreamed so fair a dream for a single moment! He tried to believe that he was glad that she had told him about the other man. The least this information could do would be to give him better control of himself. He had not been out in the open long enough entirely to master his feelings.

"Men ought not to be lonely," she said. "There's the excitement of work, of mingling with crowds, of going when and where one pleases. Woman's lot is wondering and waiting at home. When I marry I suppose that I shall learn the truth of that."

"Perhaps it was because he had been away from them so long and had lost track of the moods of the feminine mind; but surely it could not be possible that there was real happiness in this young woman's heart. Its evidence was lacking in her voice, in her face, in her gestures. He thought it over with a sigh. He felt sorry for the girl, sorry for the man; for it was not possible that a girl like this one would go through life without experiencing that flash of insanity that is called the grand passion.

He loved her. He could lean against the rail, his shoulder lightly touching hers, and calmly say to himself that he loved her. He could calmly permit her to pass out of his life as a cloud passes down the sea-rim. He hadn't enough, but this evil must befall him. Love! He spread out his hands unconsciously.

"What does that mean?" she asked, smiling now. "An invocation?"

"It's a sign to ward off evil," he returned.

"Are you expecting evil?"

"I am always preparing myself to meet it. There is one thing that will always puzzle me. Why should you have asked the purser to pick out such a tramp as I was? For I was a tramp."

"I thought I explained that."

"Not clearly."

"Well, then, I shall make myself clear. The sight of you upon that bank, the lights in your face, struck me as the strangest mystery that could possibly confront me. I thought you were a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yes. So I asked the purser to introduce you to prove to my satisfaction that you weren't a ghost. Line for line, height for height, color for color, you are the exact counterpart of the man I am going home to marry."

She saw the shiver that ran over him; she saw his eyes widen; she saw his hands knot in pressure over the rail.

"The man you are going to marry!" he whispered.

Abruptly, without explanation, he walked away, his shoulders settled, his head bent. It was her turn to be amazed. What could this attitude mean?

"Mr. Warrington!" she called.

But he disappeared down the companionway.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Woman's Reason.

Elsa stared at the vacant doorway. She recognized only a sense of bewilderment. This was not one of those childish flashes of rudeness that had amused, annoyed and mystified her. She had hurt him. And how? They had been together three days on the boat, and once he had taken tea with her in Rangoon. She could find nothing save that she had been kind to him when he most needed kindness, and that she had not been stupidly curious, only sympathetically so. He interested her and held that interest because he was a type unlike anything she had met outside the covers of a book. He was so big and strong, and yet so boyish. He had given her visions of the character which had carried his manhood through all these years of strife and bitterness and temptation. And because of this she had shown him that she had taken it for granted that whatever he had done in the past had not put him beyond the pale of her friendship. There had been no degrading entanglements, and women forgive or condone all other transgressions.

And what had she just said or done to put that look of dumb agony in his face? She swung impatiently from the rail and began to promenade the deck, still cluttered with luggage over which the Lascar stewards were mulling. Many a glance followed the supple pleasing figure of the girl as she passed round and round the deck. Other promenaders stepped aside or permitted her to pass between. The resolute uplift of the chin, and the staring dark eyes which saw but inner visions, impressed them with the fact that it would be wiser to step aside voluntarily. There were some, however, who considered that they had as much right to the deck as she. Before them she would stop shortly, and as a current breaks and passes each side of an immovable object, they, too, gave way.

The colonel fussed and fumed, and his three spinster charges drew their pale lips into thinner paler lips.

"These Americans are impossible!"

"And it is scandalous the way the young women travel alone. One can never tell what they are."

"Humph! Brag and assertiveness. And there's that ruffian who came down the river. What's he doing on the same boat? What?"

Elsa became aware of their presence at the fifth turn. She nodded absently. Being immersed in the sea of conjecture regarding Warrington's behavior, the colonel's glare did not rouse in her the sense of impending disaster.

The first gong for dinner boomed. The echoing wall spoke in the voice of the East, of its dalliance, its content to drift in a sargasso sea of entangling habits and desires, of its fatalism and inertia. It did not hearken to or excite hunger. Elsa would rather have lain down in her Canton lounging-chair. The dining-saloon held two long tables, only one of which was in commission, the starboard. The saloon was unattractive. A punka stretched from one end of the table to the other, and swung idly to and fro, whining mysteriously, sometimes subsiding altogether and then flapping hysterically and setting the women's hair awry.

Elsa and Martha were seated somewhere between the head and the foot of the table. The personally-conducted surrounded them, and gabbled incessantly during the meal of what they had seen, of what they were going to see, and of what they had missed by not going with the other agency's party. Elsa's sympathy went out to the tired and faded conductor.

There was but one vacant chair; and as she saw Warrington nowhere, Elsa assumed that this must be his reservation. She was rather glad that he would be beyond conversational radius. She liked to talk to the strange and lonely man, but she preferred to be alone with him when she did so.

She began as of old to study carefully the faces of the diners and to speculate as to their characters and occupations. Her negligent observation roved from the pompous captain down to the dark picturesque face of the man Craig. Upon him her glance, a mixture of contempt and curiosity, rested. If he behaved himself and made no attempt to speak to her, she was willing to declare a truce. But on the Irrawaddy boat he had been sober enough. Craig kept his eyes directed upon his food and did not offer her even a furtive glance.

He was not in a happy state of mind. He had taken passage the last moment to avoid meeting again the one man he feared. For ten years this man had been reckoned among the lost. Many believed him dead, and Craig had wished it rather than believed. And then, to meet him face to face in that sordid boarding house had shaken the cool nerve of the gambler. He was worried and bewildered. He had practically sent this man to ruin. What would be the reprisal? He reached for a mango-stein and ate the white pulpy contents, but without the customary relish. The phrase kept running through his head: What would be the reprisal? For men of his ilk never struck without expecting to be struck back. Something must be done. Should he seek him and boldly ask what he intended to do? Certainly he could not do much on board here, except to denounce him to the officers as a professional gambler. And Paul would scarcely do that since he, Craig, had a better shot in his gun. He could tell who Paul was and what he had done. Bodily harm was what he really feared.

He had seen Elsa, but he had worked out that problem easily. She was sure to say nothing so long as he let her be; and with the episode of the hatpin still fresh in his memory, he assuredly would keep his distance. He had made a mistake, and was not likely to repeat it.

But Paul! He finished his dessert and went off to the stuffy little smoke-room, and struggled with a Burma cheroot. Paul was a smoker, and

sooner or later he would drop in. He waited in vain for his man that night.

And so did Elsa. She felt indignant at one moment and hurt at another. The man's attitude was inexplicable; there was neither rhyme nor reason in it. The very fact that she could not understand made her wonder march beside her even in her dreams that night. She began to feel genuinely sorry that he had appeared above her horizon. Just before she retired she leaned over the rail, watching the reflection of the stars twist and shiver on the smooth water. Suddenly she listened. She might have imagined it, for at night the ears deceive. "Jah, Jah!" Somewhere from below came the muffled plaint of Rajah.

Next day, at luncheon, the chair was still vacant. Elsa became alarmed. Perhaps he was ill. She made inquiries, regardless of the possible misinterpretation her concern might be given by others. Mr. Warrington had had his meals served in his cabin, but the steward declared that the gentleman was not ill, only tired and irritable, and that he amused himself with a trained parakeet.

All day long the sea lay waveless and unrippled, a sea of brass and lapis-lazuli; brass where the sun struck and lapis-lazuli in the shadow of the lazy swells. Schools of flying-fish broke fan-wise in flashes of silver, and porpoise sported alongside. And warmer and warmer grew the air.

Starboard was rigged up for cricket, and the ship's officers and some of the passengers played the game until the first gong. Elsa grumbled to Martha. There was little enough space to walk in as it was without the men taking over the whole side of the ship and cheating her out of a glorious sunset. Martha grew troubled and perplexed. If there was one phase of character unknown to her in Elsa it was irritability; and here she was, finding fault like any ordinary tourist.

"Where is Mr. Warrington?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since yesterday." Elsa dropped her book petulantly. "I am weary of these gabby-pabby stories."

Martha's eyes had a sopsical look in them as she asked: "Elsa, what is the matter?"

"I don't know, Martha. I believe I should like to lose my temper utterly. I'm irritable because I do not know my own mind. I hate the stuffy stateroom, the food, the captain. Nothing seems to disturb his conceit. Tonight we sleep on deck, the starboard side. At five o'clock we have to get up and go inside again so they can hoist-sonde the deck. And I am always soundest asleep at that time. Doubtless, I shall be irritable all day tomorrow."

"Sleep up here on deck? But the men?"

"They sleep on the port side," Elsa laughed maliciously. "Don't worry. Nobody minds."

"I hate the East," declared Martha vindictively. "Everything is so slack. It just brings out the shiftlessness in everybody."

"Perhaps that is what ails me; I am growing shiftless. When I came on board I decided to marry Arthur, and have done with the pothole. Now I am at the same place as when I left home. I don't want to marry anybody. You noticed that fellow Craig?"

"What will you do if he speaks?"

"I have half a dozen good hatpins left," dryly.

"I hate to hear you talk like that."

"It's the East. . . . There goes that hateful gong again. Soup, chicken, curry, rice and piccalilli. I am going to live on plantains and mango-steins. I'm glad we had sense enough to order that distilled water. Come; we'll go down as we are to dinner, and watch the ridiculous captain and his fan-bearer. The punka will at least give us a breath of fresh air. There doesn't seem to be any on deck. One regrets Darjeeling."

Martha followed her young mistress into the dining-saloon; she was anxious and upset. Where would this mood end? With a glance of relief she found Warrington's chair still vacant.

The saloon had an air of freshness tonight. All the men were in drill or pongee, and so receptive is the imagination that the picture robbed the room of half its heat. To and fro the punka flapped; the pulleys creaked and the ropes scraped above the sound of knives and forks and spoons.

Elsa ate little besides fruit. She spoke scarcely a word to Martha, and none to those around her. Thus, she missed the frown of the colonel and the lifted brows of the spinsters, and the curious glances of the tourists. The passenger list had not yet come from the ship's press, so Elsa's name was practically unknown. But in some unaccountable manner it had become known that she had been making inquiries in regard to the gentleman in cabin 78, who had thus far remained away from the table. Ship life is a dull life, and gossip is about the only thing that makes it possible to live through the day. It was quite easy to couple this unknown aloof young woman and the invisible man, and then to wait for results. It would have amused Elsa had she known the interest she had already created if not inspired. Her beauty and her apparent indifference to her surroundings were particularly adapted to the romantic mood of her fellow-travelers. Her own mind was so broad and generous, so high and detached, that so sordid a thing as "an affair" never entered her thoughts.

As she refused course after course, a single phrase drummed incessantly through her tired brain. She was not going to marry Arthur; never, never in this world. She did not love him, and this was to be final. She would cable him from Singapore.

That night Craig found it insupportable in the cabin below; so he ordered his steward to bring up his bedding. He had lain down for half an hour, grown restless, and had begun to walk the deck in his bath slippers. He had noted the still white figure forward, where the cross-rail marks the waist. As he approached, Craig discovered his man. He hesitated only a moment; then he touched Warrington's arm.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DAINGEROUS GAME WITH BULL

Popular Pastime That Marks the Celebration of Feast Days in South America.

In the interior of Venezuela and Colombia toro coleado is a feature of fiesta days. A principal street of the town is roped off and a wild bull is liberated. From eight to ten mounted horsemen enter the improvised arena, their only defense against attacks of the bull being their superb horsemanship and a knowledge of how to twist the bull's tail in such a manner as to cause him to tumble over. While the attention of the bull is attracted by some of the party a horseman dashes from the rear at full speed, gives a dextrous twist, and over rolls the bull. This sport is not without its danger, and almost every coleado festival adds to the hospital list. The honor of being champion bull-tail twister develops keen competition, for the winner is crowned with flowers by the prettiest girl in the village. Some performers become so expert as to be sure of their twist at a specified point, the great achievement being to bring the animal to the dust just in front of the balcony of one's ladylove.

New Enemy of Prairie Dog. In South Dakota the automobile has been found a great success as a prairie dog exterminator. A piece of hose slipped onto the exhaust conducts the gases into the dog hole for a few minutes, when the hole is covered with earth. That is enough for the dog.

Paraguay and its Resources

In order to study the trade situation in Paraguay, M. Drew Carrel, commercial representative of the Buenos Aires branch of a New York bank, recently made a trip through that country, and in the Americas he writes entertainingly of what he saw there. His article is thus summarized in the bulletin of the Pan-American Union:

The only practical routes of access to the country, the heart of one of the richest agricultural regions of South America, are the river and the railway running from Buenos Aires, a thousand miles away, if Asuncion, the capital and chief city of the republic, be taken as the traveler's destination. There is direct connection between Buenos Aires, via the Argentine Central, Entre-Rios, and Paraguayan Central railways, and Asuncion. Through trains leave once a week each way.

Off from Buenos Aires betimes, the train arrives at Zarate early in the evening, some sixty miles up country where the expanse of the River Plate has narrowed into the Parana. Here all except the engine is run on to a huge iron ferryboat for a four-hour voyage up and across the river to Ibicuy on the eastern shore. Nearly all day Saturday is spent journeying through the flat country of Entre-Rios. The orange groves increase, with here and there tobacco fields, giving way as the tropics are neared to numerous royal palm trees.

Posadas, the last station in Argentina, is reached and the train is again run upon a large ferryboat and carried across the upper part of the Parana river to Encarnacion in the Republic of Paraguay. The level of the deck of the ferry is some fifteen feet below the level of the roadbed, on both sides of the river, and it is necessary to lower and raise the trains down and up an incline by means of cables and steam winches to the proper level. After running over a switch-back on the Paraguay side, Encarnacion is reached, some 150 feet above the level of the river.

Room for Many Immigrants. All through Paraguay to Asuncion

by the great rivers Parana and Paraguay or their tributaries, which furnish transportation to many interior parts of the country and provide abundant irrigation and adequate drainage. The soil is typically fertile, consisting for the most part of red clay mixed with sufficient sand to make it porous, and covered with rich alluvial deposits. The area of the country is estimated at about 170,000 square miles, and it is divided into two parts by the Paraguay river. The southeastern part, which is inclosed by the rivers Paraguay, Parana, and Apa, contains most of the white population. The northwestern part, known as the Gran Chaco, is inhabited mostly by nomadic tribes of Indians, and contains vast expanses of grazing land and immense forests awaiting exploitation. The resources of the southeastern section alone, however, are sufficient to engage the attention of the inhabitants for many years to come. It is estimated that the country has about 1,000,000 inhabitants, and the government has been encouraging immigration as much as possible. Immigrants who have settled in the country have done well, especially those from Europe.

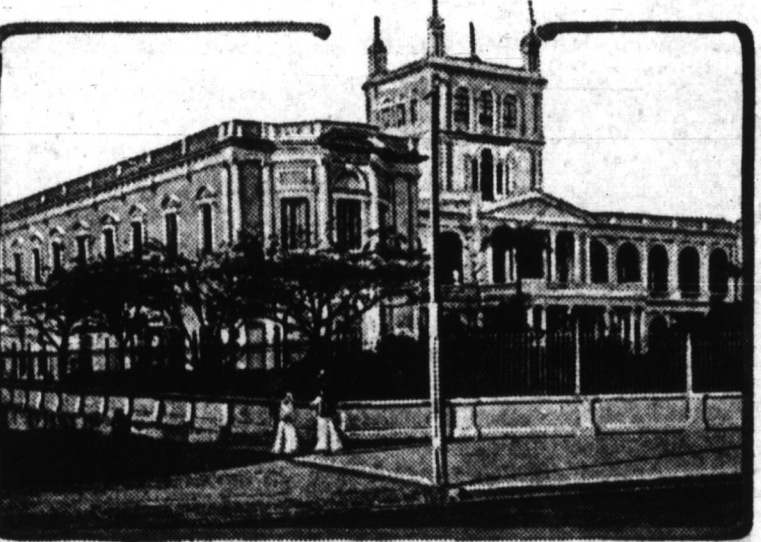
The climate is a happy medium between temperate and tropical, the average temperature being 79 degrees Fahrenheit. Summer begins in October and lasts until March; winter starts in April and lasts until nearly the end of September, with an average temperature of 64 degrees. Rarely have there been frosts and on few occasions has the thermometer registered as low as 24 degrees.

Asuncion a Busy City. Asuncion, with about 80,000 inhabitants, is the capital and principal business city of the Republic. It is about 850 miles north of Buenos Aires, and is located upon a bay-shaped enlargement of the Paraguay river, about two and a half miles long and one mile wide, which affords ample shelter and accommodation for many vessels. Being at the head of river navigation for the larger river steamers, and the place of transshipment for points

farther north, as well as the place from which the principal highways and trails into the interior diverge, it is a center of commercial activity. It is the terminus of the railway from the south. It has four banks, numerous industrial plants, including sawmills, ship repair and building yards, soap and candle factories, shoe and cigar-making establishments, two breweries, and many pretentious wholesale and retail mercantile houses.

Most of the larger cities and towns of the country are located either on the Central Paraguayan railway or on the Paraguay river. The most important of these is Encarnacion, at the southern boundary of the republic, where the railway trains are ferried across from Argentina. It has about 18,000 inhabitants. The principal industries of the district are grazing, timber-cutting and the preparation of yerba mate. Encarnacion is a port of entry and is the distributing point for the southern portion of Paraguay. The town of Paraguay, north of Encarnacion of the railway, has a population of about 11,000, and is located in a rich cattle and timber region. Luque, a town of 14,000 inhabitants, a short distance from Asuncion, is in a district from which tobacco and miscellaneous agricultural products and alcohol come. The other places along the railway range in size from shipping points for large estates to small communities more or less interested in grazing, agriculture and timber cutting.

On the Paraguay river from south to north among the places of importance may be mentioned Pilar, with about 7,000 inhabitants. North of Asuncion is Villa Hayes, with a population of 39,000. It is on the west side of the river in what is known as the Gran Chaco country. The principal industries are grazing and agriculture, including a cane-sugar mill and a distillery. Farther north on the river is another cattle district in Concepcion, having about 15,000 inhabitants.



THE GOVERNMENT PALACE, ASUNCION

the road runs across vast tracts of luxurious grazing land, broken here and there by lines of low, timber-covered hills. Buildings and other evidences of development are few and far between, compared with the extent of the country, and one is impressed with the fact that there is ample room there for thousands of home-seeking immigrants from the congested districts of Europe, who would find an agreeable climate and soil fertile and extensive enough to feed not only themselves but many of the other inhabitants of the world.

Timber is so plentiful in the Paraguayan country that the railways use it for fuel. At every railway station are huge logs and squared timbers ready for shipment. On the hillsides where clearings have been made, as well as in the bottom lands, besides the rich grass, the corn, the alfalfa, and the tobacco, healthy sugar cane is seen.

Arriving at Asuncion at 8 p. m. Sunday, the train runs into a large terminal station which, though modern in appearance, is said to be the first railway station built in South America. A British engineer constructed it about fifty years ago, and the girders and other parts of the framework, which at a hasty glance one would say are iron, are in fact wood that is as sound today as when the building was erected.

Asuncion is an important port for river movements. The larger vessels from the River Plate bring their cargoes to Asuncion, whence merchandise is taken overland or transhipped in smaller boats for points farther up the river. Although it is a river port, over a thousand miles from the seacoast, the size and number of large vessels at the dock, or at anchor awaiting their turn to go to the docks, and the many smaller craft, as well as the large and commodious harbor, give it much the appearance of a seaport.

Enclosed by Big Rivers. The Republic of Paraguay is almost completely surrounded by water, being bounded on nearly all sides