

THE RING AND THE BIRD.

BY C. G. FURLEY.

CHAPTER IV.

I hurried home with the desecrated ring in my pocket. The first thing that met my ear was the screaming of the parrot, which seemed more violent than I had ever known, and from other sounds I guessed that he was throwing the weight of his body against the wires of the cage.

"Can't you stop that creature?" I asked the servant who opened the door to me.

"No, sir. I've covered it up and done all I could; but ever since the ladies went up-stairs it has been screaming like mad."

"The ladies are up-stairs?"

"Yes, sir, in the drawing room, and the Colonel is with them."

A wild scream came from the parrot.

"Let Polly out, Jane," I said; "that is the only way to keep it quiet, and my head is aching."

They were all in the drawing-room; they had moved there in something like military order, and all the time of my absence the other three had watched poor Agatha as cats might an unfledged sparrow. Louisa and the Colonel had gazed unflinchingly—I heard all this afterwards; but Mrs. Gretton had shed tears as every moment their prisoner grew more exhausted and more deathly pale.

They had given her a cup of tea, which now stood untasted by her work-basket on the small table by her side. There their charity had ended; none had spoken a word to her. She looked half-dead as I entered, but she turned her sad eyes despairingly to me. I answered her look by clasping her in my arms.

"It's all right, my darling; I know all about it now," I cried.

"And Will?" she asked; "what about him?"

"I have made it all right for him in the meantime. We'll talk about that afterwards."

Then turning to the others, I said: "It's all right; you made a mistake. It was her own ring—my ring—that Agatha gave her brother."

I took the diamond from my pocket, and put it again on her hand, the hand she had kept concealed—I could guess why, now—under the folds of her shawl.

"Oh Agatha, I'm so glad," cried Mrs. Gretton; but Louisa said: "It may be all right about Agatha, but it doesn't explain what has become of Colonel Farrer's ring."

The Colonel took up the strain. "Oh yes, it does," he said contemptuously. "That precious pair of lovers are in collusion, that's all. They know where my ring is well enough; and I shouldn't wonder if that brother of Miss March's has it in his possession. He seems to be a scapegrace at the best; and it wouldn't injure his character so much as it would that of the estimable and affectionate couple here if stolen property were found in his possession. That, I take it, is the whole mystery."

This was too much for me. I had, I think, kept my temper fairly well up to this moment; but the Colonel's who's-accusation, and the strain in which he worded it, stung me past patience.

"I have known one thief in my life, Colonel Farrer, one receiver of stolen property," I cried, "and that one is you! I have not got your ring; I should be ashamed to possess a thing that had such a history. My hands are clean; I possess nothing I have not honestly won. But you became the owner of the ring you have now lost by means of robbery and murder. It is a ruby in your eyes; it is a great blood-stain in mine, and I hope you will never know a moment's peace in possessing it. If you had any sense of honor, your chief desire would be not to get that ring back for yourself, but to restore it to its rightful owner."

"Its rightful owner! And supposing I don't own that ring, may I ask you to tell me, in that fine eloquent way of yours, who it belongs to?"

"To Ram Asoka."

"And where am I to find him?"

The Colonel had me there. "I—I can't say, but that parrot seems to know, and"—

The Colonel actually smiled, so pleased was he with his advantage. "The idea of referring to a parrot for information as to the abode of a departed spirit seems—well"

"I don't care," I burst in impatiently. "The parrot knows something; he knows everything; and I believe that the soul of Ram Asoka, the man you killed, is imprisoned in that bird's body."

"Mr. Laurence, I am a Christian," said the Colonel with all imaginable dignity. "I don't believe in the transmigration of souls or any such heathenish doctrine. And if I did, I couldn't make restitution to a parrot. It couldn't wear a ruby ring."

"I don't know; I'd give it a chance. It evidently wants the ring."

"And he won't be happy till he gets it," sang a shrill voice behind me. I turned, and there was the parrot—I had almost said Ram Asoka—hopping in at the door. He looked at me in a confidential manner, and with the courteous comment of "Right you are, says Moses," sprang upon the back of a chair and surveyed the company.

We all laughed, even poor pale Agatha, even the indignant Colonel. With the parrot's opinions most of us sympathized; but there was no denying that his manner of expressing them partook of the language common to Ratchiff Highway or Seven Dials, or wherever was situated that dreary retreat from which Mrs. Gretton had rescued him. Like a good many Indians who pick up our language from conversation, he used our colloquialisms with more aptness than dignity.

But when our brief outburst of amusement was past, we were still left face to face with the question, Where was the ring? Indeed, Polly's entrance had, after all, brought it back from those cloudy regions where my bewilderment, my superstition, perhaps, had taken it.

"This is very amusing," said the Colonel, "and no doubt Mr. Laurence appreciates the valuable support his opinions have received. But even he must admit that before I give the ring to his learned parrot I must get it back myself; and that," he added truculently, "will, I think, be best managed by giving Miss March into custody."

We all exclaimed; but the parrot's cry of grief rang high above all. I began to suspect, inarticulate, blustering; but Agatha, turning to the parrot, said in a piteous tone: "O Polly, can't you save me?"

No stronger proof could well be given of our growing faith in the mystic connection

between the ring and the bird than this appeal of Agatha's. It sounds absurd when set down here, but at that moment it seemed most reasonable and just.

And Polly came to the rescue. He fluttered on to the little table which held Agatha's work-basket. There he pushed with all his might against the slim wicker-case till he thrust it and, as it chanced, the half-cold cup of tea as well, on to the drawing-room floor. And there, among the cotton bobbins and balls of worsted it lay, flashing its crimson gleams, that outshone the red light of the sunset, the ruby of Ram Asoka. Somehow at that moment I began to understand how the greed of possessing such a gem as that might tempt a man to sin. I made some allowance for the Colonel.

We all rushed to the ring; but the parrot was ahead of us. He picked the ring up in his beak, and flying to Agatha's arm, dropped it into her hand. Then he retired to his chair-back as one who has done his work.

Agatha went up to the Colonel. "I am very pleased," she said with a cold smile, "to be the person who hands you the ring which had so miraculously disappeared."

He took the ring from her; but it was to the parrot that he directed his reply. "I," he said "am much obliged to you for discovering the ring, which, by some means or another, had got hidden in Miss March's work-basket."

The sarcasm of his tone roused me once more; but as my voice was raised in protest, Agatha interferred. "Oh Frank, let him alone," she cried. "For my sake, don't quarrel with him. I can't stand more to-night."

So, most unwillingly, I held my peace, and before long we separated, weary with the strain of the day.

A few words more will end this brief eventful history. Next morning, the Colonel heard a tapping at his door. He thought it was Jane, who had brought his hot water. After a minute he opened the door; but there, on the mat, there stood, not the harmless water-can, but—more dreadful to him than Edgar Poe's raven to the gloomy bard—our magically gifted parrot. (We found out afterwards that he had managed to unfasten the door of his cage and so make his way out.) With an exclamation that had better be left unrecorded, the Colonel started back, and Polly hopped into the room. He made straight for the dressing-table on which lay the ruby ring, still too small for the Colonel's injured hand. He seized it, while the human claimant stood helpless and amazed at this latest development. Holding it in his claw, he bent his eyes on the Colonel, and again said, as he had so often done, "Who killed Ram Asoka?" Then, the ring still tightly grasped, he flew out of the open window, and was lost to view among the surrounding chimney-pots. And that was the last any of us saw or heard of Ram Asoka.

Was the spirit of the murdered priest indeed confined beneath the bird's green feathers, and did he come thus to claim the gem of which he had been robbed? Or was the whole thing a chapter of accidents, and our parrot no more than a mischievous thievish bird, to whom chance gave an appearance of reason in his deeds? I cannot venture to say. I think—what I think!—and Agatha agrees with me. But for yourself, reader, answer the question as you will, and as you are the more akin in mind to Horatio or to Hamlet.

[THE END.]

SHARP POINTS.

Give a woman your confidence, and she's got you.

The world never sits down twice on a man who has any point about him.

Cloves are responsible for the first breath of suspicion in many happy families.

Marriages are called "matches" because they are sometimes followed by scratching.

"Have you a large staff of reporters to gather the news for you?" Country editor: "No; we have a wife."

Don't laugh at your wife when she tries to stone the hens. She may ask you to help her stone the raisins.

What is the difference between the first sergeant and the tenor drummer? One calls the roll and the other rolls the call.

"Did you know that Skinner has pneumonia and is not expected to live?" "No; how did he take cold?" "He got his feet wet going around trying to find where he could buy a pair of rubbers cheapest."

SOME ODD FACTS.

The Chinese cultivated an odorless onion.

The area of Hawaii is 6,670 square miles.

In the language of flowers the mushroom means suspicion.

New York now has a larger area and mileage of asphalt pavements than has either London or Paris.

An Australian photographer is reported to get excellent pictures of objects at a distance of sixteen miles.

A Rochester, N. Y., teacher having occasion to use a portrait of George Washington at school exercises was unable to find one on sale anywhere in the city.

There are 3,985 paper-mills in the world, turning out 1,904,000,000 pounds of paper annually, half of which is used for printing, 600,000,000 pounds being required for newspapers alone.

Prof. Elihu Thomson says that the arc electric light results from the vaporization of carbon. It is estimated from the optical grounds that to produce this over 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit is required.

A colored man at Coushatta, La., charged with disturbing the peace, went into court, pleaded not guilty, declined to employ counsel, asked for trial by jury, conducted his own case, and was acquitted.

The Arab ponies which the Sultan recently presented to the three elder of the German Emperor's six sons are said to have a pedigree which dates back to the "sacred mare" on which the prophet fled from Mecca to Medina.

A special kind of paper has been invented which, it is alleged, is absolutely impervious to water, and will even stand boiling. The water-proofing can be carried out either after the paper is made or during the operation of making it.

RUSSIAN NEWS AND VIEWS.

Several district assemblies of the Government of Volodga have closed their public schools. In some places they were obliged to do so for want of funds; in other places they did it because the Government agents assumed the positions of school inspectors and principal managers, and this was not to the liking of the population. Where the latter was the case the assemblies voted to turn their public schools into parish schools. But as according to the existing laws the parish schools must hold their sessions in the church building, and the churches of those districts are prepared to accommodate such institutions, the schools are practically closed.

In a hospital of Odessa an experiment was made recently with Brown-Sequard's lymph which may prove of great significance to the medical science. On a patient suffering from scurvy the superintending physician resolved to try the injection of Brown-Sequard's lymph. After one week's trial the patient's condition had improved. The injections were stopped, and his condition grew worse again. Then the medicine was applied again without intermission, and within three weeks his recovery was complete. The lymph was produced, at the laboratory of the physician who tried it, from the organs of domestic rabbits.

On Feb. 11 the smokeless powder factory, which the Government began building in St. Petersburg in last June, was opened. After the religious ceremonies, customary on such occasions, the machinery of the establishment was put in motion, and work began at once. Between noon until 6 o'clock p.m. eight poods (320 pounds) of smokeless powder of an excellent quality were manufactured. The working capacity of the factory amounts at present to twenty poods a day, but this will be considerably increased when the annex, now in course of erection, is ready for the manufacture of pyroxyline on the premises.

The Society for the Protection of Animals has awarded a medal to Mr. S. A. Khroostokoff of St. Petersburg for the considerable manner in which he keeps the horses which have done service for him. That gentleman is a member of the brandy distilling firm of Keller & Co. He has caused a special hospital to be built for horses which have grown old in the service of the distillery. There are at present three horses there. One of them, named Selim, is twenty-two years old, and has been at work in the distillery about seventeen years. The other inmates of the institution are Maltchik, twenty-nine years old and retired for the last six years, and Starik Syeday, 30 years old, and kept on charity for the last seven years. His head has grown to abnormal proportions in some parts; of his teeth only the roots are left. He spends the greatest part of the day lying in his stall, and when the latter must be cleaned he is helped to get up with an appliance made specially for the purpose. When he is put on his legs he is led about in the yard for some time, two men walking by his side to support him. He is fed on oats, flour, and chopped hay.

Grachdanin of St. Petersburg is quite despondent about the religious state of the Russian people. "In the higher spheres of the Russian society," the editor moans, "there is a constant and successful propaganda of all sorts of heresies going on, from the oldest heresies down to those which are promulgated by Tolstoi. Among the intelligent people religion has ceased to be a subject of earnest consideration, and among the lower classes of society many millions can be found upholding false doctrines and adhering to false beliefs. Whether we go to preach religious fateful powers stand in our way. We went to enlightened Bulgaria and behold dark and bloody shadows covered that land! We carried religious truth to Abyssinia and the waves of the sea drove our vessels back from the African shores. We desired to spend our religious solicitude on Jerusalem, on the very tomb of our Saviour, and trouble and contention among our own foiled our efforts. Alas! it seems that the hand of the Almighty Himself inflicts such painful wounds on the bleeding Russian heart." The illustrious editor of Grachdanin Prince Mestchersky, writes an editorial two columns long in this heartrending strain.

Ever since the Crimean war many of the populous thoroughfares of Odessa have been undermined. In 1884 a law was framed by the municipal council (dooma), making it obligatory upon every landlord to fill up the mine which opens from his premises. But obedience to that law was never insisted upon, and the house owners ignored its existence. Of late several accidents have occurred where the ground on the streets and sidewalks caved in and fell into the mines. The municipal council contemplated the enforcement of the law, but the house owners presented a petition against this measure on the plea that the mines are used as cellars for the storage of goods, and if they should be filled up, their properties would deteriorate in value. Hereupon the city council adopted a resolution obliging the landlords to line the mines which open into their houses with cemented walls so that the ground above them should not cave in. In cases where this cannot be done the mines must be filled up. The landlord who fails to do one thing or the other will be responsible for all accidents that may be caused by his negligence, and be liable to an "administrative fine" for disobedience. The Board of City Architects, moreover, drew up a plan of all the mines in the city, marking those which can be made secure, and those which must be closed up.

The Governor of Ekaterinoslav has issued an order that a sufficient number of boats, rafts, and similar apparatus be kept in readiness in all towns and villages of his government lying below the water mark. In 1874 and 1878 those towns and villages were inundated by the melting snow in the spring, and many lives were lost. This winter the snowfall was much heavier than previously. A sudden thaw may again bring an inundation. The Governor, therefore, desires his people to have such means of escape at hand if such trouble occurs. He has also issued strict orders to all police agents to warn the people as soon as the meteorological stations predict the coming of a warm wave.

The Commander of the St. Petersburg police has issued orders to the police force to keep close watch over the scribblers who write all sorts of foolish petitions to the authorities for illiterate persons. Such scribblers install themselves in restaurants, saloons, and other places of the kind and incite the unsuspecting and the illiterate to petition the authorities for all possible and impossible things, to present unjustifiable complaints, and to go into unnecessary

litigations. Beside the money which such persons lose, their missives give an untold amount of unnecessary trouble for the authorities. The commander of the police proposes to end this practice of the "professional" petition writers.

"Among the saloon keepers of Vilna the superstitions belief prevails that if a piece of rope whereon a person has hanged himself be put in a barrel of brandy, those who taste of that brandy will be possessed of an indomitable desire for drinking. As soon, therefore, as they hear of a suicide by hanging, they come in large numbers to the house where the misfortune occurred, and offer large sums for the rope which is taken from the neck of the unfortunate." This is the latest canard published in *Noroye*, *Preruya* for anti-Semitic purposes.

In the Sistine Chapel.

A correspondent writes from Rome: We have just returned from the grand mass celebrated in the Sistine Chapel on the anniversary of the death of Pious IX., for which we were so fortunate as to obtain tickets through Count C., one of the Pope's guard of nobles. Only two or three such services are held in the Sistine Chapel during the year, and very few beside the clergy and officials can be admitted, so we considered ourselves exceptionally favored. We were cautioned to go early, and at 9.30 o'clock we were on the Scala Regia, waiting to ascend to the Chapel.

The Swiss guard were on duty, standing on the stairway, dressed in a wonderful combination of red, blue and yellow, designed for them by Michael Angelo, which defies description. They carry spears about six feet long, which look as if they might have come out of the Tower of London, and are altogether quite unique.

We found quite a crowd already waiting, the ladies in black with black lace veils on their heads, the men in dress coats and white cravats. When the signal was given there was a grand rush up the staircase, and as we were among the first we got excellent places in the chapel on benches directly behind those reserved for the diplomatic ladies.

We had a long time to wait, as the Pope was late, and mass did not really begin until 11, but we were well entertained watching the celebrities arrive and learning who they all were, and enjoying the beautiful chapel. The sunshine could not have been brighter and we had a fine chance to study the beautiful paintings. An Italian lady next to us knew all the people and told us who they were. The diplomats were simply gorgeous. Some in blue and gold, others in brilliant scarlet with various orders and decorations; some in blue and silver, altogether a dazzling collection of uniforms. Then to add to the picture, the aisle was lined with the Swiss guard and many of the Pope's own guard were on duty. Of these latter there seem to be three grades; the lowest wear dress suits, with the white expanse of shirt front covered with very beautiful gold chains, fastened together in a curious way, almost like a harness, also a broad red ribbon. Then come the camerinia in black short clothes, black silk stockings, and pumps with buckles; black cloth coats, with a great deal of black velvet let in, the tops of the sleeves large puffs of black velvet, plain cloth below, and deep cuffs of old lace; a velvet belt with silver buckle and sword and a black velvet cape gracefully draped over the left shoulder. Heavy gold chains around the neck, or rather around the shoulders; then above a red ribbon and above that a very full white ruff, most picturesque and becoming. Then come those who are nearest the Pope. They look more like soldiers, wearing tightly buttoned coats with gold epaulets, a great band of gold across the chest and helmets of gold and silver, very very magnificent, but not so becoming as the dress of the Camerinia. Soon the church dignitaries began to arrive. Between thirty and forty cardinals in long purple, each with a train-bearer, ermine capes and scarlet caps. Many bishops, and all the orders of monks were represented. The chapel is so small, and it was soon crowded—a wonderful mass of color, to which the ladies, all in black, made a good contrast. Just before the Pope arrived the servants of his household came in. They were all in red of a splendid color; silk stockings; knee breeches of velvet brocade, all the same shade of red; long coats of same, back and front and sleeves of plain red silk; at the collar two long lace tabs, pieces about three inches wide and seven or eight long.

Now to the service. The Pope entered through a small door attended by some of his guard and a number of cardinals. They all knelt in front of the altar; and the Pope, surrounded by cardinals, bearing his train ascended his throne. He was dressed in white with a very magnificent red cape. I think it is something like the one Father Brown wears only very, very long. On his head a silver mitre. As soon as he was seated mass was said by four bishops all in green and gold, then came the music, the finest we have heard—only voices, no instruments. The Pope took a small part of the service and his voice rang out clear and strong but he looks frail and feeble. He is 80. When the host was raised every one in the building knelt and there was profound silence—a most impressive moment.

The service lasted about an hour and then the Pope left as he came. It was a beautiful sight in the ante-room as we passed out; a company of the Pope's soldiers were drawn up on either side, presenting arms, and many of the diplomats and clericals standing about—such a picture as only this old world could give us.

Four Fits of Laughter.

At ten a blithesome little maid,
Restrained by naught but nature's law,
Went rumping o'er the grassy glade
And laughed a merry Haw, Haw, Haw.

At twenty she was bright and fair,
But now restrained by fond mamma,
She only tossed her golden hair
And laughed a rippling Ha, Ha, Ha.

At thirty she was more sedate,
And, still from wedded bondage free,
She saw her time was growing late,
And laughed a yearning He, He, He.

At forty she despaired of joy,
For none had come her heart to woo;
She sighed for either man or boy
And laughed a doleful Who, Who, Who.

Probably Satisfactory.

Sharpson—"Phlatz, what makes your nose so red?"

Phlatz—"It glows with pride because it never pokes itself into other people's business."

JUST FOR FUN.

When is a window like a star?—When it's a skylight.

An ice bill may be cool, but it is not always collected.

Early to bed and early to rise, makes little boys very tired.

The world never sits down twice on a man who has any point about him.

You may doubt a man's Christianity who is always complaining of his dinner on wash-days.

The professional oarsman is an influential fellow, for his business gives him a great pull.

By the time a man realizes that he is a fool it is usually too late to realize on his realization.

She—"You don't mind my talking so much, do you?" He—"No, indeed; but (facetiously) I may mind after we are married." She—"But I shan't mind then if you do."

Woman is a theory, and man makes no more serious mistake than when he attempts to deal with her as he would with a fact. Men are facts, and facts are stubborn things.

Aged Husband—"I understand you were engaged to him before we were married?" Young Wife—"Yes, but he's single yet, and there's certainly no harm in his asking how your cough is getting along."

He (feeling his way)—"I—I wish we were good enough friends for you to—to call me by my first name." She (helping him along)—"Oh, your last name is good enough for me."

Ninety-nine men out of every hundred believe in their hearts that a day of judgment will come, and ninety-eight of them secretly believe that somehow they will be overlooked in the jam.

"The face of the returns," said the chairman of the meeting, "shows sixty-seven ayes and no noes." "What a queer looking face that must be," remarked an old lady in the back row.

Small Boy—"Grandpa, the robins are singing this morning. Is that a sign that Spring is here?" Grandpa (who has been deceived too often)—"No. It's a sign that robins aint got no sense."

The world consists principally of two classes—those who deceive and those who are deceived. It is more advantageous to belong to the former, but much more decent to belong to the latter.

The Squire—"Good morning, Miss Violet. Bent on an errand of mercy?" Miss Violet (the rector's daughter)—"Oh, no! I am just taking a few little pies of my own making round to the cottagers."

Intelligence has just reached me," began Mr. Blodger, as he sat down to the dinner table. "Thank heaven if it has at last," exclaimed Mrs. Blodger and the food was partaken of in silence.

She—"So you are tied fast, for good and all, to the beautiful heiress, Miss MacShiners, with the golden locks." He—"Yes; but it was the government bonds, and not the golden locks, that I was after."

"Has she no pride—no self-respect? How can she permit that fellow to smoke while they are promenading on the avenue?" "Oh, that's Charley Van Nimy, and she's afraid people wouldn't know it's a man."

"That old maid of a Miss Skenkins is still fishing for Mr. Kichem." "You should not say that," remarked her elder sister, severely; "considering dear Miss Skenkins' general physique, you should rather say angled for him."

Gadsby—"Those three dude sons of Van Nostrand cost him about \$5,000 a year." Miss Canstique—"Then he has been putting a good deal of money into real estate." How's that?" "He is spending \$5,000 a year on a vacant lot."

A gentleman had just succeeded in saving a big-clothing merchant from drowning. "Ah," remarked he, gratefully. "I see, in rescuing me, you have ruined your clothes. Permit me to hand you my business card. Ten thousand of the best suits in the city from \$10 upwards."

Miss Sharp—"Ah, Mr. Dullard, you are looking the part of the Black Prince to perfection." Mr. Dullard—"Ye-es; but do you know, Miss Sharp, I feel like a perfect idiot." Miss Sharp (earnestly)—"Now, that will never do, Mr. Dullard. At a masquerade, as on the stage, one must forget his real character entirely."

Butter from Cocoanuts.

Cocoanut butter is a new food stuff, which seems to have a useful future before it. According to a report by the British vice-consul at Berlin, the production of an edible fat from the marrow of the cocoanut has been carried on for the last two years by a firm at Mannheim, the process having been discovered three years before by Dr. Schlink. Factories having the same object are about to be established at Paris and at Amsterdam. The nuts come from the South Sea islands and also from certain places on the African and South American coasts. The butter, which is sold at less than half the price of ordinary butter in London, contains from 60 to 70 per cent of fat and 23 to 25 per cent of organic matter. Its color is white; it is of an agreeable taste, is suitable for cooking purposes, and is being purchased by the poor, who prefer it to margarine. Being free from acid, it digests with greater ease than dairy butter, and is preferable in other ways to the bad butter which too often finds its way to market. It is also a more attractive compound than the various preparations called margarine, some of which have such very questionable origin.

Treasure Lying Idle in India.

It is estimated in the Allahabad *Pioneer* that the treasures lying idle in India in the shape of hoards or ornaments amounts to \$1,350,000,000. A competent authority guesses that "in Amritsar city alone there are jewels to the value of £2,000,000." As regards some other districts the figures that have been furnished are not less astonishing. The miserly waste of Montgomery is estimated to possess about 50 lakhs in ornaments. The hillsides and valleys of Kulu are put at 3½ lakhs. In Jhelum two-fifths of the wealth of the district is said to be vested in property of this nature, and in Kohat, "probably one of the poorest districts of the province in this respect the estimate is taken at 800 rupees for each Hindoo family, and 10 rupees for each Mussulman family, and a lakh in the aggregate for the Nawab and other Rases, making a total for the district of 75 lakhs." A lakh is worth about \$35,000.