

MR. JERVIS

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Mr. Jervis by B. M. Croker

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MR. JERVIS

PARCBLAS
V. ARBERT

MR. JERVIS

BY

B. M. CROKER

AUTHOR OF

"PRETTY MISS NEVILLE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "A BIRD OF PASSAGE,"
"A FAMILY LIKENESS," ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1894

“ Lord of himself, though not of lands ;
And having nothing, yet hath all.”

SIR H. WORTON.

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MR. JERVIS.

CHAPTER I.

A GIRL IN A THOUSAND.

“I suppose I must write, and say she may come. Personally, I shall be delighted to have her; but I’m afraid Granby will think a girl in the house rather a bore. There is such an awkward number in India!”

“And sometimes in other places,” added a lady who sat on the fender-stool, blowing a great wood fire, with a preposterously small pair of bellows.

“You know what I mean, Milly,” retorted her companion, a handsome, indolent-looking woman, who reclined in an easy-chair, with an open letter in her lap. “Houses out here are only built for two, as a rule—especially in cantonments. A victoria or

pony-cart holds but two, and two is a much more manageable number for dinners and tiffins. Still, I shall be glad to have a girl to chaperon; it will give me an object in life, and more interest in going out."

"Could you take more?" asked the lady with the bellows, casting a sly smile over her shoulder.

"To be sure I could, you disagreeable little creature! When a woman is no longer quite young, and her days of romance are at an end, the hopes and prospects of a pretty companion give her another chance in the matrimonial lucky-bag—a chance at second-hand, but still sufficiently exciting. Alas! life after a certain age is like a bottle of flat soda-water."

"I do not think so," rejoined the lady with the bellows, stoutly.

"No; I should be surprised if you did. You are so sympathetic and energetic. You throw yourself heart and soul into Dorcas meetings, bazaars, nurse-tending, and other people's joys or afflictions. Now,

my sympathies and energies rarely extend beyond Granby and myself. I am becoming torpid. I can scarcely get up the steam for a ball; even the prospect of cutting out old Mother Brande fails to rouse me. However, when I have a charming niece to marry—and to marry well—things will assume a different aspect. How amusing it will be to eclipse the other girls and their scheming mothers; how gratifying to see all the best *partis* in the place grovelling at her feet! Her triumphs will be mine.” And Mrs. Langrishe slowly closed her heavy eyelids, and appeared—judging from her expression—to be wrapped in some beatific vision. From this delicious contemplation she was abruptly recalled by the prosaic question—

“How old is she?”

“Let me see—dear, dear me! Yes,” sitting erect and opening her fine eyes to their widest extent, “why, strictly between ourselves, she must be twenty-six. How time flies! She is my eldest brother’s