

The RAGGED EDGE

by
Harold MacGrath

"I have relatives not far from Hartford. I may prevail upon them to take you in until you are full-fledged, providing you do not find this aunt. You say you have twenty-four hundred in your letter of credit. It will not cost you more than six hundred to reach your destination. The pearls were really yours!"

"They were left to me by my mother. I sometimes laid away my father's clothes in his trunk. I saw the metal box a hundred times, but I never thought of opening it until the day I fled. I never even burrowed down into the trunk. I had no curiosity of that kind. I wanted something alive." She paused.

"Go on."

"Well, suddenly I knew that I must see the inside of that box, which had a padlock. I wrenched this off, and in an envelope addressed to me in faded ink, I found the locket and the pearls. It is queer how ideas pop into one's head. Instantly I knew that I was going to run away that night before he returned from the neighboring island. At the bottom of the trunk I found two of my mother's dresses. I packed them with the other few things I owned. Morgan the trader did not haggle over the pearls, but gave me at once what he judged a fair price. You will wonder why he did not hold the pearls until Father returned. I didn't understand then but I do now. I was partly to pay a grudge he had against father."

"And partly what else?"

"I shall never tell anybody that."

"I don't know," said the doctor, dubiously. "You're only twenty—not legally of age."

"I am here in Canton," she replied, simply.

"Very well. I'll cable to-night, and in a few days we'll have some news. I'm a gray-beard, an old bachelor; so I am accorded certain privileges. Sometimes I am frightfully busy; and then there will be periods of dullness. I have a few regular patients, and I take care of them in the morning. Every afternoon, from now on, I will teach you a little about life—I mean the worldly points of view you're likely to meet. You are queerly educated; and it strikes me that your father had some definite purpose in thus educating you. I'll try to fill in the gaps."

The girl's eyes filled. "I wonder if you will understand what this kindness means to me? I am so terribly wise—and so woefully ignorant!"

CHAPTER XII

The doctor shifted his books and magazines to the crook of his elbow. He had done this a dozen times on the way from his office. Books were always sliding and slipping, clumsy objects to hold. Looking at this girl, a sense of failure swept over him. He had not been successful as the world counted success; the fat bank-account, the filled waiting room of which he had once dreamed, had never materialized except in the smoke of his evening pipe.

And yet he knew that his skill was equal to that of any fashionable practitioner in Hong-Kong. He wasn't quite hard enough to win worldly success; that was his fault. Anybody in pain had only to call to him. So, here he was, on the last lap of middle age, in China, having missed all the thrills in life except one—the war against Death. "It rather astonished him. He hadn't followed this angle of thought in ten years: what he might have been, with a little shrewd selfishness. This extraordinary child had opened up an old channel through which it was no longer safe to cruise. She was like an angel with one wing. The simile started a laugh in his throat.

"Why do you laugh?" she asked gravely.

"At a thought. Of you—an angel with one wing."

"Meaning that I don't belong anywhere, in heaven or on earth?"

"Meaning that you must get off the wing or grow another to

mate it. Let's go up and see how the patient is doing. Wu may have news for us. We'll get those books into your room first. And I'll have supper with you."

"If only . . ." But she did not complete the thought aloud. If only this man had been her father! The world would have meant nothing; the island would have been wide enough.

"You were saying—?"

"I started to say something; that is all."

"By the way, did you read those stories?"

"Yes."

"Worth anything?"

"I don't know."

"Silly love stories?"

"No; love wasn't the theme. Supposing you take them and read them? You might be able to tell me why I felt disappointed."

"All right. I'll take them back with me. Probably he has something to say and can't say it, or he writes well about nothing."

"Do you believe his failure caused . . .?"

"What?" he barked. But he did not follow on with the thought. There was no need of sowing suspicion when he wasn't really certain there were grounds for it. "Well, you never can tell," he continued, lamely. "These writer chaps are queer birds."

"Queer birds,"

He laughed and followed her into the hotel. "More slang," he said. I'll have to set you right on that, too."

"I have heard sailors use words like that, but I never knew what they meant."

Sailors, he thought; and most of them the dregs of the South Seas, casting their evil glances at this exquisite creature and trying to smirch with innuendo the crystal clearness of her mind. Perhaps there were experiences she would never confide to any man. Sudden indignation boiled up in him. The father was a madman. It did not matter that he wore the cloth; something was wrong with him. He hadn't played fair.

"Remember; we must keep the young fellow's thoughts away from himself. Tell him about the island, the coconut dance, the wooden tom-toms; read to him."

"What made him buy that singing-girl?" Regarding this, Ruth had ideas of her own, but she wanted the doctor's point of view.

"Maybe he realized that he was slipping fast and thought a fine action might give him a hand-hold on life again. You tell me he didn't like the stuff."

"He shuddered when he drank."

"Well, that's a hopeful sign. I'll test him out later; see if there is any craving. Give me the books. I'll put them in your room; then we'll have a look-see."

The patient was asleep. According to Wu, the young man had not opened his eyes once during the afternoon.

So Ruth returned to her room and sorted the books and magazines the doctor had loaned her, inspected the titles and searched for pictures. And thus it was that she came upon a book of Stevenson's verse—her first adventure into poetry. The hymnal lyrics had never stirred her; she had memorized and sung them parrot-wise. But here was new music, tender and kindly and whimsical, that first roved to and fro in the mind and then cuddled up in the heart. Anything that had love in it!

The doctor comprehended that he also had his work cut out. While the girl kept the patient from dwelling upon his misfortunes, whatever these were, he himself would have to keep the girl from brooding over hers. So he made merry at the dinner table, told comic stories, and was astonished at the readiness with which she grasped the comic side of life. His curiosity put itself into a question.

"Old Morgan the trader," she explained, "used to save me Tit-Bits. He would read the jokes and illustrate them; and after a

time I could see the point of a joke without having it explained to me. I believe it amused him. I was a novelty. He was always in a state of semi-intoxication, but he was always gentle with me. Probably he taught me what a joke was merely to irritate my father; for suddenly Father stopped my going to the store for things and sent our old Kanaka cook instead. She had been to San Francisco, and what I learned about the world was from her. Thank you for the books."

"You were born on the island?"

"I believe so."

"You don't remember your mother?"

"Oh, no; she died when I was very little."

She showed him the locket; and he studied the face. It was equally as beautiful but not quite so fine as the daughter's. He returned the locket without comment.

"Perhaps things would have been different if she had lived."

"No doubt," he replied.

"Mine died while I was over here. Perhaps that is why I lost my ambition."

"I am sorry."

"It is life."

There was a pause. "He never let me keep a dog or a cat about the house. But after a time I learned the ways of the parakeets, and they would come down to me like doves in the stories. I never made any effort to touch them; so by and by they learned to light fearlessly on my arms and shoulders. And what a noise they made! This is how I used to call them."

She pursed her lips and uttered a whistle piercingly shrill and high; and instantly she became the object of intense astonishment on the part of the other diners. She was quite oblivious to the sensation she had created.

The picture of her flashed across the doctor's vision magically. The emerald wings, slashed with scarlet and yellow, wheeling and swooping about her head, there among the wild plantain.

"I never told anybody," she went on. "An audience might have frightened the birds. Only in the sunshine; they would not answer my whistle on cloudy days."

"Didn't the natives have a name for you?"

She blushed. "It was silly."

"Go on, tell me," he urged, enchanted. Never was there another girl like this one. He blushed, too, spiritually, as it were. He had invited himself to dine with her merely to watch her table manners. They were exquisite. Knowing the South Seas from hearsay and by travel, he knew something of that inertia which blunted the fineness, innate and acquired, of white men and women, the eternal warfare against indifference and slovenliness. Only the strong survived. This queer father of hers had given her everything but his arms. "Tell me, what did they call you?"

"Well, the old Kanaka cook used to call me the Golden One, but the natives called me the Dawn Pearl."

"The Dawn Pearl! Odd, but we white folks aren't half so poetical as the yellow or the black. What did you do when your father went on trips to other islands?"

"Took off my shoes and stockings and played in the lagoon."

"He made you wear shoes and stockings?"

"Always."

"What else did you do when alone?"

"I read the encyclopaedia. That is how I learned that there were such things as novels. Books! Aren't they wonderful?"

The blind alley of life stretching out before her, with its secret doorways and hidden menaces; and she was unconcerned. Books; an inexplicable hunger to be satisfied. Somewhere in the world there was a book clerk with a discerning mind; for he had given her the best he had. He envied her a little. To fall upon those tales for the first time, when the mind was fresh and the heart was young!

He became aware of an odd phase to this conversation. The continuity was frequently broken in upon by diversory suppositions. Take the one that struck him at this moment. Supposing that was it; at least, a solution to part of this amazing riddle? Supposing her father had made her assist him in the care of the derelicts solely to fill her with loathing and abhorrence

for mankind?

"Didn't you despise the men your father brought home—the beachcombers?"

"No. In the beginning I was afraid; but after the first several cases, I had only pity. I somehow understood."

"Didn't some of them . . . try to touch you?"

"Not the true unfortunates. How men suffer for the foolish things they do!"

"Ay to that. There's our young friend upstairs."

"There's a funny idea in my head. I've been thinking about it ever since morning. There was a loose button on that coat and I want to sew it on. It keeps dangling in front of my eyes."

"Ah, yes; that coat. Probably a sick man's whim. Certainly, there wasn't a thing in the pockets. But be very careful not to let him know. If he awoke and caught you at it, there might be a set-back. By the way, what did he say when he was out of his head?"

"The word 'Fool.' He muttered it continually. There was another phrase which sounded something like 'Gin in a blue-serge coat.' I wonder what he meant by that?"

"The Lord knows!"

The patient was restless during the first watch of the night. He stirred continually, thrusting his legs about and flinging his arms above his head. Gently each time Ruth drew down the arms. There was a recurrence of fever, but nothing alarming. Once she heard him mutter, and she leaped down.

"Ali Baba, in a blue-serge coat! . . . God-forsaken fool!"

CHAPTER XIII

One day Ruth caught the patient's eyes following her about; but there was no question in the gaze, no interest; so she pretended not to notice.

"Where am I?" asked Spurlock.

"In Canton."

"How long have I been in bed?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

U. S. Exports Few Tires

In 1922 the production of casings for motor cars and motorcycles in the principal tire manufacturing countries of the world reached an estimated total of 54,520,000. The United States, which has 80 per cent. of the world's motor cars within its borders, produced about 48,000,000. The United States exports of casings numbered 1,325,753 in 1922, and increased to 1,362,741 in 1923, but the percentage of the total export trade supplied by the United States declined from 33.5 per cent. in 1922 to 29.1 in 1923.

Although the United States did this creditable share of the export tire trade of the world in 1923, the number of casings shipped abroad was only about 3 per cent. of the tire production of the country. The answer lies in the fact that there are more than 13,200,000 motor cars in the United States, while the rest of the world has about 2,230,000.

PROPOSE TO CURTAIL OLYMPIC PROGRAM

Stockholm, August. —A radical change in the programs of Olympic games to a pattern more resembling that of the original Olympics in ancient Greece, involving a reduction of the number of contests to 29, is urged by Erik Bergvall, director of the Olympic stadium in Stockholm, and a well known leader in Swedish athletics.

Mr. Bergvall attaches paramount importance to the power of the Olympic games to strengthen the feeling of the solidarity among nations, as the Olympics in ancient Greece helped to bind together the states, but he points out that it is becoming increasingly difficult for smaller nations to participate on the large scale which the modern games demand. The ancient games lasted only five days and there were only 15 or 16 events on the program, while the modern games last for months and have had all the way from 108 to 390 events.

The Swedish expert grants that climate and other physical circumstances make it necessary for various nations to develop sports more or less peculiar to themselves, and in which they would naturally be expected to win the highest prizes, hence it would not be fair to cut the program down to the ancient limits. Yet, allowing for this variety, he thinks the number of events could be reduced to 29.

The ideal program, according to Mr. Bergvall, is as follows: Running, 100, 400, 1,500, and 5,000 meter races; hurdles one event; high jump, broad jump, pole vault, javelin, discus, shot, hammer, pentathlon, decathlon, wrestling, in five classes, gymnastic drill, swimming, 100, 200, 500, 1,500 meter races; boxing in five classes.

Mr. Bergvall objects to team contests for economic reasons. This would eliminate football, relay teams, etc. He would omit rowing and sailing contests because it is virtually impossible to find a place for performance which would offer fair conditions to all competitors. He recommends leaving out all winter sports, a line in which the Swedes themselves excel, and further thinks that motor races, bicycle races, golf, shooting, tennis and weight lifting have no proper place in an Olympic program.

Should Say No!

From Life.

Ratus-Aain't you 'shamed fer yo' wife to take in washin'?

Rutus-No, not so long as she does expert work.

There is Much to See

David Grayson

Often as I work I stop to see, really see, see everything, or to listen, and it is the wonder of wonders how much there is in this old world which we never dreamed of, how many beautiful, curious, interesting sights and sounds there are which ordinarily make no impression upon our clogged, overfed and preoccupied minds. I have also had the feeling—it may be unscientific but it is comforting—that any man might see like an Indian or smell like a hound if he gave to the senses the brains which the Indian and the hound apply to them. And I'm pretty sure about the Indian! It is marvelous what a man can do when he puts his entire mind upon one faculty and bears down hard.

TODAY

BY ARTHUR BRISBANE.

H. G. Wells says, "Communism will die in 25 years." He refers to the effort at communism in Russia, which really isn't communism, and to the theorizing about communism in other countries.

Communism will not die, because it has never really existed except perhaps on south sea islands. Even there they probably quarrel about the best coconuts and finest ladies.

Original man, standing on this planet with a sharp flint in his hands, and no other earthly possession relied on acquiescence, polite name for selfishness, to push him ahead.

We have a long distance to go, and selfishness still has much work to do.

The time is coming when human beings, will solve their problems of production and distribution and no longer need to hate, envy, or oppress each other, or store up special treasures for themselves. But that condition won't be called communism.

Eighty years ago, when the late Albert Brisbane suggested that people should build great apartment houses, with central heating plants, to save trouble for housewives, he was told by clergymen and others that this was "pure socialism" and that Americans would never be "herded like beasts in one big house." That's how they live now however, and they pay as high as \$30,000 a year rent to be "herded."

Henry Ford is nominated for the Senate in Michigan by petitions containing enough signatures to put his name on the ballot.

It was done without Ford's knowledge or consent, and his name may be taken off, but he might better let it go through.

The Senate is an interesting club, and it would be worth Mr. Ford's time to take a look at it, and find out for himself how the inside machinery works. He would have one advantage over other young statesmen, they would listen to his first speech and newspapers would print it.

Public parks, better than the richest could afford, open to the poor, magnificent steamships, eclipsing in comfort and safety any millionaire's private yacht, golf clubs, all these would have been called, "socialism" a few years ago. But when we accomplish and accept a thing we change its name.

Ford isn't a public speaker, but says extremely well what he has in mind. It might do some senators good to learn from Ford what the power of organized money is in this country, how earnestly it tried, and how nearly it came to success in a scheme to wipe him out, and take possession of his plant.

Ford could tell the Senate many things that it needs to know about wasted water power, the power of graft, the possibility of improving farm conditions. Ford ought to go to the Senate, for one term anyhow, Michigan would gladly send him.

Disease is one of earth's mysteries. And most mysterious is the trouble that nature takes to protect disease germs against their enemies, including man.

For instance, the tubercular bacillus, which kills millions, lives encased in "a heavy capsule of fat" which gives it elasticity and protects it from its enemies in our blood.

Sir Leonard Rogers, who has specialized in fighting leprosy, noticed the resemblance between the germs of leprosy and of tuberculosis and tried on his consumptive patients injections of "sodium morrhuate" that worked well in leprosy. It is the salt obtained from the body of codfish, and has shown extraordinary results in leprosy and tuberculosis.

Sir Leonard predicts "there will be no more tuberculosis in 25 years." He may be too optimistic, but man is slowly conquering all diseases, and tuberculosis and epilepsy will yield as others have yielded.

Some fear that the human race will deteriorate when disease germs are no longer allowed "to kill off the unfit." But nature and Providence will probably take care of that worry.

When anesthetics were first discovered many clergymen denounced it because it meant interfering with God's will, to save people from pain. We no longer worry about that.

Sure Proof.

From Boston Transcript.

"He looks like a fool."

"But, papa, he has asked me to be his wife."

"He has? Well, don't ever tell me that I can't size up people."

A Facetious Patient

From the Kansas City Star

The doctor entered the patient's room in the morning and, according to habit, read the chart first thing. He was not a little surprised to read:

"3 a. m. Patient very restless; nurse sleeping soundly."

Recovery From Influenza

Hastened by

PE-RU-NA



Mr. C. A. Allen, R. R. No. 2, Bondurant, Iowa, gives testimony to the healing power of Pe-Ru-na. Influenza left him much run down in health with catarrh of the nose, throat and bronchial tubes punctuated with attacks of asthma. He writes:

"While recovering from the influenza I was so weak I could not gain any strength for two months. The latter part of the winter, I bought six bottles of Pe-Ru-na and began taking it. My weight increased to 175 pounds, the most I ever weighed.

My usual winter weight is 155. If you can use this letter for any good, you are perfectly welcome."

Such evidence cannot fail to convince the rankst unbeliever of the merits of Pe-Ru-na.

Insist upon having the old and original remedy for catarrhal conditions.

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Light and Power

at Small Expense

A new type of windmill enables residents in the country to obtain electric light and power at practically no cost for upkeep and maintenance. The wheel is supported by a single spar, which is pivoted at the lower end. Erection is very easy, and also repairs, etc., as the whole structure and wheel can be swung down to the ground, says the Scientific American. The construction of the wheel is novel; a wire wheel similar to a cycle wheel forms the backbone, to which curved steel blades are attached.

The dynamo is housed in a weather-proof casing and mounted close to the wheel, a chain drive effecting the connection. The entire top is pivoted on a vertical spindle and swings around as the wind alters its direction. The supporting spar is a light lattice girder and held by three stays.

The bracing pieces of the spar form a ladder, by means of which the top can be reached for inspection, etc. The bottom bolt, to which the mast foot is pivoted, is anchored in a small concrete block. By means of a special hand-control, the wheel can be stopped, started or regulated from the ground.

Cuticura Soothes Baby Rashes

That itch and burn, by hot baths of Cuticura Soap followed by gentle anointments of Cuticura Ointment. Nothing better, purer, sweeter, especially if a little of the fragrant Cuticura Talcum is dusted on at the finish. 25c each.—Advertisement.

Popular Proverb

The expression, "Out of the frying pan into the fire," means that in trying to extricate yourself from one evil, you fell into a greater. The ancient Greeks used to say, "Out of the smoke, into the flame," and the French say, "Tombe de la poêle dans la braise," that is, to fall from the stove into the hot coals.

Who upon earth could live were all judged justly?—Byron.

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