

The RAGGED EDGE

by
Harold MacGrath

Ruth's eyes began to glow. She had often wondered if Hoddy would ever go back to it. She knew now that he never would.

"Sometimes a cup of lies is a cheering thing," replied the trader. In wine there is truth. What about that?"

"It means that drink cheats a man into telling things he ought not to. And there's your liver."

"Ay, and there's my liver. It'll be turning over tomorrow. But never mind that," said McClintock grinning as he drew the dish of bread-fruit toward him. "Tomorrow I shall have a visitor. I do not say guest because that suggests friendship; and I am no friend of this Wastrel. I've told you about him; and you wrote a shrewd yarn on the subject."

"The pianist?"

"Yes. He'll be here two or three days. So Mrs. Spurlock had better stick to the bungalow."

"Ah," said Spurlock; "that kind of a man."

"Many kinds; a thorough outlaw. We've never caught him cheating at cards; too clever; but we know he cheats. But he's witty and amusing, and when reasonably drunk he can play the piano like a Paderewski. He's an interpretive genius, if there ever was one. Nobody knows what his real name is, but he's a Hollander. Kicked out of there for something shady. A renaissance man. A check arrives in Batavia every three months. He has a grand time. Then he goes stony, and beats his way around the islands for another three months. Retribution has a queer way of acting sometimes. The Wastrel—as we call him—cannot play when he's sober; hands too shaky. He cannot play cards, either when he's sober. Alcohol—would you believe it!—steadies his nerves and keens his brain; which is against the laws of gravitation you might say. He has often told me that if he could play sober, he would go to America and reap a fortune."

"You never told me what he is like," said Spurlock.

"I thought it best that you should imagine him. You were wide the mark, physically; otherwise you had him pat. He is big and powerful; one of those drinkers who show it but little outwardly. Whisky kills him suddenly; it does not sap him gradually. In his youth he must have been a remarkable hand-some man, for he is still handsome. I don't believe he is much past forty. A bad one in a rough-and-tumble; all the water-front tricks. His hair is oddly streaked with gray—I might say a dishonourable gray. Perhaps in the beginning the women made fools of themselves over him."

"That's reasonable. I don't know how to explain it," said Spurlock, "but music hits women queerly. I've often seen them storming the Carnegie Hall stage."

"Aye, music hits them. I'm thinking that the Wastrel was one day a celebrated professional; and the women were partly the cause of his fall. Women! He is always chanting the praise of some discovery; sometimes it will be a native, often a white woman out of the stews. So it will be wise for Mrs. Spurlock to keep to the bungalow until the rogue goes back to Copley's. Queer world. For every Eden, there will be a serpent; for every sheepfold, there will be a wolf."

"What's the matter, Ruth?"

"It has been . . . rather a hard day, Hoddy," Ruth answered. She was wan and white.

So, after the dinner was over, Spurlock took her home; and worked far into the night.

The general office was an extension of the west wing of the McClintock bungalow. From one window the beach was always visible; from another, the stores. Spurlock was invariably at the high desk in the early morning, poring over ledgers, and giving the beach and the stores an occasional glance. Whenever McClintock had guests, he loafed with them on the west veranda

in the morning.

This morning he heard voices—McClintock's and the Wastrel's. "Sorry," said McClintock, "but I must ask you to check out this afternoon before five. I'm having some unexpected guests."

"Ah! Sometimes I wonder I don't run amok and kill someone," said the Wastrel, in broken English. "I give you all of my genius, and you say—'Get out! I am some kind of a dog.'"

"That is your fault, none of mine. Without whisky," went on McClintock, "your irritability is beyond tolerance. You have said a thousand times that there was no shame in you. Nobody can trust you. Nobody can anticipate your next move. We tolerate you for your genius, that's a fact. But underneath this tolerance there is always the vague hope that your manhood will someday reassert itself."

The Wastrel laughed. "Did you ever hear me whine?"

"No," admitted McClintock.

"You've no objection to my dropping in again later, after your guests go?"

"No. When I'm alone I don't mind."

"Very well. You won't mind if I empty this gin?"

"No. Befuddle yourself, if you want to."

Silence.

Spurlock mused over the previous night. After he had eaten dinner with Ruth, he had gone to McClintock's; and he had heard music such as he had heard only in the great concert halls. The picturesque scoundrel had the true gift; and Spurlock was filled with pity at the thought of such genius gone to pot. To use it as a passport to card-tables and gin-bottles! McClintock wasn't having any guests; at any rate, he had not mentioned the fact.

Spurlock had sensed what had gone completely over McClintock's head—that this was the playing of a soul in damnation. His own peculiar genius—of a miracle key to the hidden things in men's souls—had given him this immediate and astonishing illumination. As the Wastrel played, Spurlock knew that the man saw the inevitable end—death by drink; saw the glory of the things he had thrown away. And, decently as he could, McClintock was giving the man the boot.

There was, it might be said, a double illumination. But for Ruth, he, Howard Spurlock, might have ended upon the beach, inescapably damned. The Dawn Pearl. After all, the Wastrel was in luck; he was alone.

These thoughts, however, came to a broken end. From the window he saw the Tigrress faring toward Copley's! Then Somebody was coming? Some political high muckamuck, probably. Still, he was puzzled because McClintock had not spoken.

Presently McClintock came in. "General inspection after lunch; drying bins, stores and the young palms south-east. It will be hot work, but it must be done at once."

"All right, Mr. McClintock," Spurlock lowered his voice. "You are giving that chap the boot rather suddenly?"

"Had to."

"Somebody coming?"

"Yes. Top-side insurance people. You know all this stuff is insured. They'll inspect the schooner on the way back," McClintock lied, cheerfully.

"The Wastrel seemed to take it all right."

"Oh, it's a part of the game," said McClintock. "He knows he had to take it. There are some islands upon which he is not permitted to land any more."

At luncheon, preoccupied in thought, Spurlock did not notice the pallor on Ruth's cheeks or the hunted look in her eyes. She hung about his chair, followed him to the door, touched his sleeve timidly, all the while striving to pronounce the words which refused to rise to her tongue.

He patted the hand on his sleeve. "Could you get any of

the music last night?"

"Yes."

"Wonderful! It's an infernal shame."

"Couldn't . . . couldn't I go with you this afternoon?"

"Too hot."

"But I'm used to that, Hoddy," she said, eagerly.

"I'd rather you went over the last four chapters, which I haven't polished yet. You know what's what. Slash and cut as much as you please. I'll knock off at tea. By-by."

The desperate eagerness to go with him—and she dared not voice it! She watched him until McClintock joined him and the two made off toward the south. She turned back into the hall. Rollo began to cavort.

"No, Rollo; not this afternoon."

"But I've got to go!" insisted Rollo, in perfectly understandable dog-talk.

"Be still!"

"Oh, come along! I've just got to have my muck bath. I'm burning up."

"Rollo!"

There were no locks or panelled doors in the bungalow; and Rollo was aware of it. He dashed against the screen door before she could catch him and made the veranda. Once more he begged; but as Ruth only repeated her sharp command, he spun about and raced toward the jungle. Immediately he was gone, she regretted that she had not followed.

Hidden menace; a prescience of something dreadful about to happen. Ruth shivered; she was cold. Alone; not even the dog to warn her, and Hoddy deep in the island somewhere. Help—should she need it—from the natives was out of the question. She had not made friends with any; so they still eyed her askance.

Yes; she had heard the music the night before. She had resisted as long as she could; then she had stolen over. She had to make sure, for the peace of her mind, that this was really the man. One glance through the window at that picturesque head had been sufficient. A momentary petrification, and terror had lent wings to her feet.

He had found her by the same agency her father had; native talk, which flew from isle to isle as fast as proas could carry it. She was a lone white woman, therefore marked.

What was it in her heart or mind or soul that went out to this man? Music—was that it? Was he powerless to stir her without the gift? But hadn't he fascinated her by his talk, gentle and winning? Ah, but that had been after he had played for her.

She had gone into Morgan's one afternoon for a bag of salt. One hour later she had gone back to the mission—without the salt. For the first time in her life she had heard music; the door to enchanted sounds had been flung wide. For hours after she had not been sensible to life, only to exquisite echoes.

Of course she had often heard sailors hammering out their ditties. Sometimes ships would stop three or four days for water and repairs; and the men would carouse in the back room at Morgan's.

Day after day—five, to be exact—she had returned to Morgan's; and each time the man would understand what had drawn her, and with a kindly smile would sit down at the piano and play. Sometimes the music would be tender and dreamy, like a native mother's crooning to her young; sometimes it would be like the storms crashing, thunderous.

On the fifth day he had ventured speech with her. He told her something about music, the great world outside. Then he had gone away. But two weeks later he returned. Again he played for her; and again the eruption of the strange senses that lay hidden in her soul. He talked with his manner gentle and kindly. Shy, grateful in her loneliness for this unexpected attention, she had listened. She had even confided to him how lonely it was in the island. He had promised her some books, for she had voiced her hunger for stories. On his third visit to the island she had surprised him, that is, she had glanced up suddenly and caught the look of the beast in his eyes.

And it had not shocked her! It was appalling absence of indignation that had put terror into her heart. The same look she had often seen in the eyes of the drunken beachcombers

her father had brought home, and it had not filled her with horror. And now she comprehended that the man (she had never known him by any name) knew she had surprised the look and had not resented it.

Still, thereafter she had avoided Morgan's; partly out of fear and partly because of her father's mandate. Yet the thing hidden within her called and called.

Traps, set with peculiar cunning; she had encountered them everywhere. By following her he had discovered her secret nook in the rocks. Here she would find candy awaiting her, bits of ribbon, books. She wondered even at this late day how she had been able to hold her maddening curiosity in check. Books! She knew now what had saved her—her mother's hand, reaching down from heaven, had set the giver's flaming eyes upon the covers of these books. One day she had thrown all the gifts into the lagoon, and visited the secret nook no more.

And here he was, but a hundred yards away, this wastrel who trailed his genius through the mud. Hoddy! All her fears fell away. Between herself and yonder evil mind she had the strongest buckler God could give—love. Hoddy. No other man should touch her; she was Hoddy's, body and soul, in this life and after.

She turned into the study, sat down at the table and fingered the pencils, curiously stirred. Lead, worth nothing at all until Hoddy picked them up; then they became full of magic. She began to read, and presently she entered another world, and remained in it for two hours. She read on and on, now thrilled by the swiftly moving drama, now enraptured by the tender passages of love. Love . . . He could imagine it even if he could not feel it. That was the true miracle of the gift; without actual experience, to imagine love and hate and greed and how they would react upon each other; and then, when these passions had served their temporary purpose, to cast them aside for new imaginings.

She heard the bamboo curtain rattle slightly. She looked up quickly. The Wastrel, his eyes full of humorous evil, stood inside the room.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

FEW SLAYERS HANGED IN U. S.

Only One Person Pays Death Penalty in 146 Homicides

Chicago.—Out of every 146 homicides in the United States, only one person pays the death penalty, according to Frank E. Hand, supreme vice-chief ranger of the Independent Order of Foresters, in an address here.

"In a recent survey of 116 typical homicide cases," said Mr. Hand, whose society has 165,000 members in the United States and Canada, "32 were classified as 'justifiable.' In the other 114 instances, cases of unjustified murder, indictments were returned in only 69 cases, or 60.5 per cent. Of the 45 undictated cases one-third of the assailants remained at large, 22 committed suicide, and in eight the evidence was insufficient to warrant indictment.

"Among the 69 indictments, 11 were 'no trial' cases. In the remaining 58 trials, verdicts of 'not guilty' were rendered in 16 cases, or 27.5 per cent. Of the 41 adjudged 'guilty,' 35 served time, with appeal pending in six cases; three were held for new trial, one was paroled and one was executed."

METHUSELAH MERE STRIPLING OF 80, PROFESSOR SAYS

Berkeley, Cal.—That Methuselah isn't even the oldest man in the annals of history is the firm belief of Professor R. T. Crawford, of the astronomy department of the University of California.

"According to Genesis, Methuselah attained the improbable age of 969 years," he said.

"However, the people of that era reckoned time by cycles—a term which many of us have misinterpreted as being the equivalent of one of our years, whereas in all probability the Biblical term 'cycle' means a lunar cycle, or a period of time about equal to one of our months.

"Figured in this way Methuselah's age comes to about eighty years."

A Transposed Age.

From the Edinburgh Scotsman. Maggie—How old are you? Nollie—I've just turned 23. Maggie—Oh, I see 32!

Three American race horses are to be shipped abroad next fall to meet the best in England and France.

Elements of Bad Taste in Proposal For Applying Dawes Plan to Allies

From the New York Times

The funding of Poland's debt to the United States, on terms generally similar to those used in the funding of the British debt, reduces by \$178,000,000 the amount of unsettled claims of the country against governments of Europe. Poland is the fifth nation thus to come to a formal agreement, the others being Great Britain, Hungary, Lithuania and Finland. The largest remaining unsettled debts are those of France, Italy and Belgium. It has been the consistent policy of the present and the preceding administration to consider the debt of each nation separately. In particular have they resisted efforts to bring about a global settlement of all foreign debts arising out of the war. At the same time they have firmly refused to admit the principle of cancellation.

The latest contribution to the discussion of the debt question comes from Mr. Ronald W. Boyder, formerly American unofficial observer on the reparations commission, who at a dinner of the Academy of Political Science advocated the application of the general principles of the Dawes plan to the debtor nations of Europe. The difficulties in the way of such a proposal are obviously enormous. First and foremost are those of a political and sentimental nature. It is easy to imagine the just indignation of the people of Italy, France and Belgium at the thought that, like Germany, they should be put in the hands of receivers. The very suggestion implies a failure to distinguish between the case of a reluctant defeated enemy, bent on evading her debts, and a willing ally, ready to pay when she is able. Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage the United States, so much more partial to observing than to participating in Europe's affairs, having a supervising hand in the finances of Europe's governments.

There is merit, however, in the suggestion that the problem of how much the debtor nations can pay be thoroughly and impartially studied. In doing this some of the precedents of the Dawes commission will undoubtedly prove useful. But it must not be forgotten that the question of the "should" as well as of the "can" still remains unsettled. Despite the attitude of the government that no cancellation is possible or desirable, the fact must be faced that there is an overwhelming sentiment abroad, supported by a small group in this country, that a great portion of the loans made by the United States to France, Belgium and Italy was in the common behalf, and that those sums which were spent in the common defense should be considered as separate from those spent for the particular interests of the borrowing nation. How much the nations ought to pay, therefore, is still a question to be debated, and is determinable by considerations wholly different from those which help to show what they are able to pay. The one is a question of ethics and politics, the other of financial fact.

CURING THE PESSIMIST

Once upon a time a delegation of bees came to the queen and through their chairman this is what they said: "The flowers are plentiful, there is an abundance of honey to be gathered, but all the bees in our hive seem to be discouraged and go about their work in a half-hearted way." "Do you know what the trouble is," said the queen. "Yes," said the chairman. "I know at least, and that is what we have come to talk over with you. There is one bee in our hive who is a disturber. He isn't lazy, as a matter of fact he works hard; but he is always borrowing trouble, always telling us that now it happens that many in our hive who do not reason for themselves believe him and the rest of us are kept so stirred up by his continual and constant evil forebodings, that we are producing just about one-half the honey we might." "Well," said the queen, "My advice to you is this: If you can't laugh this chap out of his wrong mental attitude, sting him and sting him proper until he wakes up and reforms. If this does not do the business, however, my further advice is to form a new hive and allow him to brood himself to death."

Jay Gould's Advice

From the New York American.

How long is the bull market in stocks likely to continue?

To a young man who asked that question many, many years ago, Jay Gould answered:

"A bull market usually lasts about sixty days."

Undoubtedly what he meant was that a period of constant advance in prices without any pronounced retrogression is generally limited to a period of about sixty days. He could not have meant so definitely to restrict those wide swings in the stock market which—made up of a series of periods of climbing prices with less protracted reactions—have sometimes continued an upward price trend for a year or more.

Nevertheless, that estimation offered so long ago by the master of the market in his day is still remembered and still venerated. Many warm friends of the glass-headed man, as they scrutinize the figures on the tape, recall that answer of Jay Gould's and ponder possibilities.

The present bull stock market may be said to have started November 5, the day after election. The first week in January, then, applying the Gould calipers, is likely to mark its temporary culmination. Speculators see more reason for this possibility than the mere pronouncement of the voice out of the past. That reason is the income tax.

Fortunate buyers of stocks who have large profits on paper do not want actually to take those profits until after the first of the year. Thus, they think, they may save money; for who knows but that before 1925 wears itself away the income tax will be modified and surtaxes greatly reduced?

We answer, no one knows; and to those gentlemen who neglect their

The Clergyman's Farewell.

From "The Sands of Time," by Walter Stichel.

A village clergyman, on the eve of his departure to take up the post of chaplain to some prison, opened his farewell sermon by saying that he was going to make another and less tangible departure. He was going to reserve his text till the end.

"All these years," he proceeded, "you have taken little interest in the parish, in the services, and, I fear, none in me. As you know, I have reluctantly accepted the post of a prison chaplain. And now for my text: I go to prepare a place for you."

KNOWLEDGE AND ENJOYMENT

John Burroughs. What we love to do, that we do well. To know is not all; it is only half. To love is the other half. Wordsworth's poet was contented if he might enjoy the things which others understand. This is generally the attitude of the young and of the poetic nature. The man of science on the other hand, is contented if he may understand the things that others enjoy; that is his enjoyment. Contemplation and absorption for the one; investigation and practical application for the other. We probably all have, in varying degrees, one or other of these ways of enjoying Nature; either the sympathetic and emotional enjoyment of her which the young and the artistic and the poetic temperament have, or the enjoyment through our knowing faculties afforded by natural science, or it may be, the two combined, as they certainly were in such a man as Tyndall.

real business and go without luncheon daily to stand beside the glass-headed man and study the figures he chatters forth, we offer another bit of market lore provided in a famous answer of another famous market master of the vague past, Russell Sage:

Said he glibly when asked how he made money in stocks: "By not trying to buy them at the bottom, and not trying to sell them at the top."

The Brookhart Contest.

From the New York World.

Under the constitution, the Senate is the sole judge of the qualifications of its members. This moved Maurice Spain, famous Washington correspondent, once to say that the Senate could unseat a man because he had red hair. But even granting that extreme privilege, it is neither desirable nor likely that the Senate will ever allow personal or political prejudice to affect its consideration of contests. Which brings us to the Iowa case:

On the face of the returns Senator Brookhart was narrowly elected. His margin being about 700 votes. His democratic opponent, Major Stock, intends to contest on the ground that over 4,000 ballots cast for him were thrown out by election officials because they were defaced with arrows, drawn in by zealous partisans. In due time the Senate will be asked to judge of the truth and the effect of these varying claims.

There are laws and courts in Iowa. These are responsible directly to the voters of Iowa. If these laws and these courts sustain Mr. Brookhart's title and validate the casting out of defaced ballots—even though sufficient to change the result—then that decision is the decision of Iowa and cannot fairly be undone by the Senate. If, however, the Senate believes or proves that frauds against Major Stock have been committed in Senator Brookhart's interest, the senator should and probably will be unseated. But the Senate should not undertake to interpret the laws of Iowa or to review the decisions of its courts and election officials.

Fraud committed by state officials and compounded by state courts is the only fair basis for refusal by the Senate to accept election certificates from sovereign states.

Pick the Winning Colors.

From the Philadelphia Public Ledger. Automobile license plates for 1925 display a wider range of fancy than ever in their color schemes. The modest blue and gold of Pennsylvania contrasts with Louisiana's seven various color combinations for cars of different kinds. Tennessee has four combinations, and Minnesota has the same number with "robin's egg blue and black" for dealers' cars.

Of the total registration at Harvard this year, 24 of the students come from foreign countries. European students lead with a total of 10; 21 are Japanese; 22 Latin American; 5 East Indian, and 17 miscellaneous.