The RING and the MAN

WITH SOME INCIDENTAL RELATION TO THE WOMAN

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

Illustrations by Jessmore Fiske

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SYNOPSIS.

A foolish young bondsman becomes fractious under the load, settles with one of his creditors and leaves the city in disgrace. There people of shape in a thriving but blighted but are confronted by the Hendrix brothers. He is shot by the wife, but the circumstance but gains a reputation for bravery. The young woman upon whom he took flight to the railroad station the woman's home falls exhausted. The youth goes for on his own and follows hanging to the rear platform of the train. At the junction north the woman turns her escort into a snow drift and rides on. Half-frozen he stumbles into the railroad station just as the train leaves the woman away. Gormly is a political boss of Greater New York. He meets Eleanor Haldane, a beautiful and wealthy settlement worker and co-operates with her in her work. Gormly rescues her of a automobile line and finds himself frustrated in gun play by Haldane's chauffeur, Jack Anderson, discharged by the Gotham Traction Company. An automobile accident on a country road throws Gormly and Haldane in his country home. Gormly realizes the unbalanced party combination.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

"Never!" said Gormly. "And I confess to you that of late I have had similar thoughts. I want to do something for humanity," he went on slowly. "There are certain people who stimulate us to achievement, who awaken our ambition, who quicken our hope. Who—Don't you comprehend? You have put something into my life which it lacked. Now I want to do something for you, Miss Haldane."

"For me, Mr. Gormly?"

"For you and my fellow men, for your approval and theirs. You see you have brought me in touch with a whole set of ideals to which I have—that I was not born into your society. I'm glad I am. I wish I had no desire to belong in it. I have not taken a vacation, except those trips abroad, for twenty-five years. For instance, this is the first time in all that long period that I have stood alone in a room and talked socially. I've let grasping men lego on terms of outward equality, with a firm grip on actualities underneath. Can't you understand how you exert a new influence, how you have brought a new force into my life, and that from my acquaintance with you results are certain to come?"

He sat down on a chair on the other side of the fireplace as he spoke, bringing himself on a level with her. She looked at him in calm, critical scrutiny.

She saw his smooth shaven face seemed and lined with thought and care. Her instinct of the strength, the intelligence, the resolution, in his countenance, behind considerable fourfoldness of tenderness. It lacked the woman's intuition, but could see that it was altogether admirable, virile and strong.

"I want to do something," he said "to make me worth his voice ceased, she respect of" he looked at her and paused like you, he said on, and I am going to do something, too."

"You flatter me," said the girl appalled as we often are by the grandeur of our motives, the acceptance of our suggestions, the realization of our power to influence for good those who are going to for—for—"

"Say it, Miss Haldane. For you—"

"I can't assume such a responsibility," she answered, and with a smile "I am not the highest, the best."

"Nonsense," said the man almost roughly. "The best things in life are done by the aid of good women, and there is not a human being in the world who possesses your power and capabilities who does not thrill to responsibility. I know from what I've learnt you are glad—for you will be glad if higher and imaginative motives thing is accomplished by whatever way or instrument it may be—even by me—for mankind."

And the woman knew that the words were true, that the thrill went thru to the strength of his protestation.

"You see I know humanity. I don't know exactly why you observed that by my awkward reception of you all here tonight."

"Indeed," said the girl, it was hard—perfectly kindly hospitality, and we deeply appreciate it."

It is good of you to say so. Those things I could learn," he hesitated, "I had been one who knew to teach me, but other things I know myself. I am at a disadvantage with women, but I can handle men and I know men. Every human being is glad to slip willingly into success. If you and I together do something, you will be happy if we succeed."

And miserable if we fail?" queried the girl with a nervous laugh.

"We will not fail."

"You are proposing a partnership?"

"There is a quasi-partnership existing between us now in the settlement house. Your decision, your generous thought for those people, with my business back of you—for it is back of you, Miss Haldane, in that or anything else to the last limit—is going to produce results there that nobody dreams of."

"Are you going to devote yourself to that?"

No," said the man quickly. "I have something higher and greater in view. That's your part of the partnership, mine is to help you, and—"

And what are you going to do?" asked the girl, intensely interested, leaning forward, her breath coming quicker.

"I am going to be mayor of New York, for one thing, Miss Haldane."

"Yes. And then?"

It touched him humorously to see the matter of fact way with which she accepted his stupendous declaration.

"And then, I am going to be the best mayor New York ever had, an honest mayor. The administration shall be conducted on business lines, and business with me doesn't spell vicious. There isn't a dishonest dollar in my fortune. You will forgive my personal talk? I don't often resort to it, but you make me tell whatever you want to know."

How did this man divine that these things were things she wanted to know? thought the girl, as she nodded gravely to him.

"Go on."

"I am going to suppress graft. I am going to break up the gangs that rob the city; I am going to bring the traction companies, the freight and the others, to terms. I am going to make them give the people good value for the franchises they enjoy. I am going to reform the police force and stop its taking toll of crime. Its connivance with sin! New York is going to be free, and I am going to tell it the truth and make it so!"

He stopped and, not trusting himself to look at her, stared into the fire again. There was a long pause.

"Well," said he, flashing a direct look at her, "what do you think of it, Miss Haldane?"

"It is the greatest dream that ever entered a human brain," said the girl slowly.

"It is my business it has been my highest aim in life, Miss Haldane, to make dreams come true, and I am doing something more and greater than to me than that I have outlined before you."

"What could be meant? She strove to meet his glance fairly, but her own eyes fell before his own direct gaze.

"I Want to Do Something for You, Miss Haldane."

"Do you think I can do it, make my dream come true?" he asked.

Which dream, Mr. Gormly?"

"Both of them."

"That you can be mayor of New York, that you can redeem the city; that you can restore to the people their liberties—I don't know. Other men have tried it and have failed."

"And I may fail, too," answered Gormly very quickly. "Such achievements are not the results merely of one man's efforts. The people them selves must assist me. Whether I can make them do that or not will determine the issue."

"I think you can, Mr. Gormly. You have made me respond."

"And will you help me?"

What can I do?"

Do what you have done tonight; listen to me, believe in me, inspire me, be my silent partner in my endeavor as I have been your silent endeavor."

And after you have succeeded?"

"That's the other dream, and—"

Mr. Gormly," she said resolutely, if you make that dream come true, you will have done more service to humanity than has ever been done by a citizen of this republic, and you will be the greatest man on this side of the water."

And if any other dream comes true," said Gormly, "I will be the happiest."

"May they all come true!" said the girl as she rose, her face flaring and giving him her hand.

Do you mean that?" eagerly asked the man, gratefully taking her proffered hand in his own firm, resolved clasp.

I don't know," she faltered, "what your other dream is, but if it corresponds with the one you have told me, I repeat the prayer."

"At the proper time," said the man, "you shall know. Meanwhile, tomorrow we shall get to work."

"Tomorrow will be Christmas," said the girl, smiling.

"My Christmas present to you, Miss Haldane, will be the beginning of the campaign."

"And mine to you, Mr. Gormly," she returned laughing, "will be my good wishes and hearty encouragement in your labor."

"I could wish nothing better," he went on lightly, glad and relieved at this change from the intensity of the interview. "I shall announce myself as a candidate for the mayoralty at the next election. Renominated, the minority party have already approached me on that subject."

"And what did you say to them?"

"Nothing yet. You see this is all new work to me, and I must consider it very carefully."

Have you ever made a public speech?"

"Never in my life."

Well, if you run talk to the people as you have talked to me tonight, I am sure you will win."

The girl said it artlessly, carelessly; but his heart leaped to the assurance.

"That is the difficulty," he said. "Most men would say it was easier to talk to one woman than to a dozen and people. I have had experience with neither. As I told you, it has been a quarter of a century since I talked alone with a woman."

Was that in the west of which you spoke?"

I am glad to tell you. It was in the west that I made a good woman's acquaintance," said Haldane blandly. "I have never seen her since that night."

Didn't you know that she was not a good woman?" asked the girl.

She had no right whatever to consider this conversation interesting, but something impelled her. He had been very kind to her father and she was not matched by hers in him.

Not at that time," he said quietly, that is, I was only a boy of nineteen.' And is it because of that reason that you have seen no others until I met you?"

Yes, Miss Haldane—"

Poor man," said the girl half to herself.

Not at all," answered Gormly; "you were quite worth waiting for."

Flatter," said the girl, but I'm sure that you have my hand! I want to talk to our host a little myself."

"Do you think I can do it, make my dream come true?" he asked.

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