



"She is Gone, Then?" Gasped the Boy.

The RING and the MAN

WITH SOME INCIDENTAL RELATION TO THE WOMAN

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DERBORN MELVILL

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SYNOPSIS.

A foolish young tenderfoot becomes fascinated with the bold, artful wife of a drunken prospector in a western mining town. They prepare to elope in a blinding blizzard but are confronted by the muddin' husband. He is shot by the wife, but the chivalrous boy puts a note to the body taking the crime upon himself.

PROLOGUE—Continued.

The Storm Without.

The woman's first thought when she stepped outside the door was that at all hazards they must go back. The wind almost swept her away; only the steady grasp of the boy, better prepared than she for the attack of the storm, enabled her to keep her feet. Yet the presence of that ghastly thing on the floor which was affecting even her iron nerve, prevented their return. Whatever happened they must go on! The door of that shelter was closed to them forever by the dead or dying tenant. She realized however, that their chances of escaping freezing to death in this mad endeavor were so small as to be practically none. Well, fate had forced her into this position. She would follow the path she had chosen, whatever might be at the end of the way.

Speech was well nigh impossible. The boy staggered on past the window, and she followed until the lee of the house was reached. Between a great drift and the wall, in a little open space the horses were tied.

The boy was a natural horseman. He had picked out the best two broncos in the camp. If any animals could take them to safety, these could. Not yet chilled by the fierce cold, they untied the shivering, reluctant, terrified horses from the wooden pins driven into the chinks between the log walls of the house to which they had been hitched, mounted them, and threading their way round the drift started southward on their awful ride. They left death behind them—and lo! death loomed before and on either hand.

Except where the storm was broken by houses, drifts had not yet formed. The wind was too terrific; it swept the level prairie clean. But away from the shelter of the house they got the full force of it. Although they were thickly clad in wool and fur, the pressure of the storm drove their garments against their bodies, and soon filled them with icy cold. There was no help for it, no relief from it. They had to bear it. They could only bend their backs to it and keep on, trusting to the endurance of their horses.

The woman judged that it had been about one in the morning when they had started. The Overland Limited ran through the station at three. No horses that lived could have made that 15 miles in two hours under those conditions. It was more than probable, however, that the limited would be greatly delayed by the storm, and if they kept going steadily they would be likely to catch it. At any rate, when they reached the station, they would find food, fire and shelter.

If their horses did not give out, if they were not turned adrift on foot

in the storm and snow, and left to plod on until they fell and slept, and froze, and died, they would perhaps get away.

More experienced than the boy, all these possibilities were present to her. She did not pray, she could ask nothing of God; but she went warily and carefully, helping the horse where she could.

As for her companion, he did not give these matters very much consideration. He kept going toward the south to the railroad station because that was the only thing to be done.

Another, however, rode with him, if not with her. Before his eyes was ever present that gory, grizzly spectacle of a human form, the red blood welling from its breast, redder still from the white snow with which he was surrounded. That awful figure beckoned him on. He was younger, finer, better, than she. He was more fool than knave; she was all knave. Her thoughts went forward to what was before her; but his went backward to what was behind.

After a long time it seemed to them that the fierceness of the storm was somewhat abated. The wind was certainly falling; but the drifts were steadily rising, and their progress was more difficult every moment for that cause. Their very souls were numb with the awful cold. Still they went forward, slower now, and more slowly ever.

How far they had come, what time it was, where they were, neither he nor she could tell. It seemed to them both that they had been hours on the way. The woman was sure that they must have compassed the greater part of the journey, when her horse suddenly stumbled and fell. Her broncho's matchless endurance had at last been exhausted by the terrible struggle of their journey. He lay dying where he fell, and nothing she could do could get him up again. The boy had stopped, of course, when her horse had fallen. He had dismounted and helped her to rise. He had assisted her vain efforts to get her own played out horse on its feet. The two now stood staring at each other in dismay.

"You must take my horse," said the boy at last.

The woman nodded. With his assistance she climbed slowly and painfully into the saddle, took the reins from the boy, and started on. Her companion caught hold of the stirrup leather and staggered forward by her side. The going was now infinitely harder for the remaining horse. The woman immediately realized that with this almost dead weight plunging through the deep drifts and dragging heavily at the stirrup leather, the remaining bronco would soon be exhausted.

She had meant to play fair with him but it could not be. And so for a long time the trio plodded on in this way, the woman nursing herself to a frightful action as best she could. She hesitated to do it. She was reluctant—

But no horse that ever lived could stand such a strain. She knew that it would be a matter of minutes now

when the animal she rode on would also fall, and lie when he had fallen like his dead brother back on the trail, and then she and the boy would inevitably perish.

Well, it was his life or hers! The decision was forced upon her. And perhaps after all it was just as well to get rid of them both and have done with it. She reached over, and before the boy realized what was happening she caught his hand, tore his fingers from the saddle strap, and thrust him violently backward. Unprepared, unsuspecting, half-dazed, he could offer no adequate resistance. He reeled and fell supine in a deep and overwhelming drift. She struck the horse heavily with the whip that hung from the saddle bow, and the animal plunged forward wildly. She knew that she was safe unless he should try to shoot her; for he was too weak and too exhausted to catch her.

The boy's senses were quickened in to instant action by her conduct. After the first moment of surprise, he knew at once that she was deliberately abandoning him to die in the snow. A hot rush of blood, in spite of the cold, swept over him. He thrust his hand within his coat and dragged out a weapon. He raised it and trained it on the woman's back, and for the moment his hand did not tremble. Then there rose before him that other gory figure. Though he had lived some months on the wild frontier and had seen more than one man killed there, he had never been connected with the murder before, even as an accessory after the fact, and the horror of it was still upon him. He lowered the pistol, though he could easily have shot her dead.

Such treachery on the part of a woman would have killed some men; not so this boy. In that moment he became a man. He saw himself a fool; he determined that he would not also see himself a coward. Clenching his fists and summoning his strength, he followed southward afoot in the woman's wake.

He walked—if that be the word for his progress—with his head down and his body bent lower and lower. He took long rests between the steps. By and by he fell forward on his face. The sensation of delicious rest and drowsiness that swept over him wooed him to lie still and die; but there were still sparks and remnants of manhood and courage in him. He shook off his desire to sleep at last and strove frantically to rise. Finding that he could not, he crawled forward on his hands and knees, slowly working himself over the snow covered ground, round the drifts like a great animal.

There was no use. Humanity could not stand the strain any longer. One more movement he made, and just as he was about to sink down forever he heard a long, deep hollow, mournful sound. He stopped, interested, dimly wondering what it could be.

Whatever it was, it meant life of some kind. It came from directly in front of him. It nerved him to further effort. Summoning the last vestige of his strength, he advanced a little farther.

He knew what it was now. It was a locomotive.

He lifted his head and saw lights faintly. He divined that it was the station, the train, the Overland Limited! She would get on it and go away! What mattered it?

And what of himself? There was help; there was life! He actually rose to his feet and wavered on. By happy chance the contour of the ground had caused the space between him and the lights to be swept comparatively bare of snow. It was not now difficult walking, yet he staggered like a drunken man.

Ah! the lights were moving before his eyes, they danced and flickered. The train was going! He broke into a reeling run, hoarse whispers on his frozen lips. Too late!

He stumbled and fell across the car tracks, dimly conscious of the lights, of the departing train. He had just sense enough and strength enough to cry out as he did so. Some one on the station platform heard his voice. Men came toward him; he was lifted up and carried into a warm room. Something burning yet deliciously reviving was poured down his throat.

"The woman!" he gasped out, looking up in the faces of the station agent and his helper bending over him.

"She took the limited not five minutes ago," said the man staring at him curiously. "The train was two hours and a half late or she'd never have got it."

"She's gone then?" gasped the boy.

"Yes."

"Thank God she got away!" he murmured as he lapsed into complete unconsciousness.

They were good stuff in the boy. He was glad the woman had escaped in spite of all. He did not want another human being's life on his hands.

CHAPTER I.

The Loneliness of Mr. Gormly.

To his great surprise, George Gormly sometimes found himself feeling lonely, and the oftener so as he grew older. Every man who has a natural liking for women—and what true man has not?—yet who has no intimate friendships with or relations to the other sex, is likely to find himself in that state of mind sooner or later. Gormly was sufficiently aged; he was forty-four although he looked much younger. He was sufficiently experienced; he had dealt with women for a straight quarter of a century although he had never loved nor married one. He was sufficiently self-reliant; he had built up by his own unaided efforts the greatest retail merchandise business of his day and gen-

eration. He was sufficiently independent—for he had done it alone—to have been above the ordinary feeling of loneliness. Nevertheless, he was temperamentally lonesome, and at this particular moment desperately so.

He had drifted into New York some 25 years before, utterly unheralded, unnoticed. He had begun by filling a small clerkship in a little dry goods store. He kept at it until he owned the store, and after that a larger store on a better street. He had developed a genius for trade, and an executive ability in accord, until the original little shop had expanded into a 15-story building covering a block on the principal thoroughfare of New York city, and its owner had become a power in finance—a merchant prince. Such was George Gormly.

He was, too, a scrupulously honest man. He sold good goods, without deceit. Things were as he represented them. He established principles of accommodation in his dealings that were unique when they were first instituted in New York. He made no dishonest dollars. His money was good everywhere because it was untainted. He prospered exceedingly, one expansion following another. Eschewing speculation of any kind and devoting himself strictly to the business, he found himself in middle life the head, the foot, the sole owner, of the greatest enterprise of the kind that the world had ever seen.

This had not been achieved lightly. He had brought it about because, with absolute singleness of heart, he had put every ounce of strength and time and talent, which in him amounted to genius, at the service of his affairs. Time, talent, and genius do not always produce such results; fortune still must be considered in the game. Opportunity had favored Gormly. He had succeeded in everything beyond his own or anyone's wildest dreams.

He might have gone on indefinitely in his mercantile operations without attracting special attention to himself personally, had it not been for one fact. That momentous happening was his meeting with Miss Haldane.

It had come about in a commonplace way enough. Miss Haldane, deeply interested in social settlement work and being brought in contact thereby with some of the poorer employees of the great Gormly establishment, had concluded to call on the proprietor thereof to see if she could not induce him to make some adequate contribution to the work she had so much at heart. Like every other business man in New York, Gormly was overwhelmed by charitable demands. His business was one thing; his charity another. He employed a special secretary to look after the eleemosynary end of his affairs.

There were two reasons why the secretary felt himself unequal to deal with Miss Haldane and her demands. The first reason was Miss Haldane herself. She was a member of the oldest and most exclusive circle in New York society. Her family was one of the richest and most esteemed in that hive of multi-millionaires, would-be-sos, also-rans, and other people. The second was the magnitude of Miss Haldane's demand. She wanted something like a million dollars. This amount appalled the secretary. She realized that a man like Gormly, indeed most men if they had the power, would much rather give a million than a dime to an undertaking that appealed to them. Still, Gormly, having devoted his attention so exclusively to his business heretofore, was rather staggered by the magnitude of the amount. He would have been more staggered by it had he been less so by Miss Haldane herself.

Miss Haldane had beauty. Thousands of people—women, that is, and some few men—have that. She had more; she had presence and personality. Hundreds of men, and some few women, have these.

Those who have all three in either sex are rare and come to view infrequently. Whether it was Miss Haldane's undoubted beauty, or Miss Haldane's exquisite breeding and manner, or Miss Haldane's force of character and determination, that most impressed him, or whether his instant subjugation was due to the influence of all three, Gormly could not tell.

He was given to self-analysis, as lonely people usually are. By analyzing himself he learned to analyze others. Introspection and observation had been great factors in his success. Here again his experience was at fault; for Miss Haldane defied analysis, as the breath of summer compounded of a thousand balmy scents cannot be resolved into its elements, save by the hard scientist who is insensible to its fragrance.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Wonders About Us.

Let not care and humdrum deaden us to the wonders and mysteries amid which we live, nor to the splendors and glories. We need not translate ourselves in imagination to some other sphere or state of being to find the marvelous, the divine, the transcendent; we need not postpone our day of wonder and appreciation to some future time and condition. The true inwardness of this gross visible world hanging like an apple on the bough of the great cosmic tree, and swelling with all the juices and potencies of life, transcends anything we have dreamed of superterrestrial abodes.—John Burroughs.

Friend Indeed.

Harker—I hear your friend Markley was married last night?
Parker—Yes.
Harker—I suppose you witnessed the ceremony?
Parker—Not I. I don't believe in gloating over a friend's misfortune.

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POOR RETURN FOR CHIVALRY

Incident That Probably Has Forever Discouraged Kind-Hearted Mr. Jones.

Chivalrous Mr. Jones purposely dropped a fifty-cent piece at the foot of a poorly dressed woman who passed through the Subway turnstile loudly lamenting that the ticket agent had cheated her out of a half dollar, then he picked the money up and gave it to her.

"Excuse me, madame," said Mr. Jones, "I think you dropped this."

"Oh, no," she said, "it can't be mine. Perhaps you dropped it, yourself."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Jones. "It is yours, I am sure. I picked it up just as you passed."

She took the money, and hurried after another man who had passed at the time the money dropped.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, "I think you lost this."

"Thanks," said the other man, and jumped aboard a train that was ready to start.

"—!" said chivalrous Mr. Jones.—New York Times.

Publicity Law Badly Needed.

Connecticut, District of Columbia, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont, have laws which provide specifically for the reporting of tuberculosis and which make provision for the proper registration of living cases of this disease. In fourteen other states, laws or regulations of the state boards of health require that tuberculosis be reported simply as one of a list of infectious diseases. The following 28 states and territories have no provision whatever for the reporting or registration of tuberculosis cases:—Arizona, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Philippine Islands, Porto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Kissing Breach of Peace.

The better half of a respected citizen of New Jersey recently had the temerity to hale her lord and master before the court on a charge of having kissed her against her will. For this heinous offense this shameless Jersey benedict was bonded over in \$100 bail to keep the peace, and, moreover, was warned by the judge never again to kiss his wife without first obtaining her consent in due form. If he is any kind of a man, probably he will never want to kiss her again.—Washington Herald.

His Instinct.

"I see the family dog slinking out of the room. What's the matter with him?"

"Presence. Presently there will be a tremendous family row on."

"But how did the dog know that?"

"Well, so to speak, his nose is something of a storm scenter."

Ungracious Drops.

Stella—Did they give the bride a shower?

Bella—Well, all her friends threw cold water on the bridegroom.

COMES A TIME

When Coffee Shows What It Has Been Doing.

"Of late years coffee has disagreed with me," writes a matron from Rome, N. Y.

"Its lightest punishment being to make me 'loggy' and dizzy, and it seemed to thicken up my blood.

"The heaviest was when it upset my stomach completely, destroying my appetite and making me nervous and irritable, and sent me to my bed. After one of these attacks, in which I nearly lost my life, I concluded to quit the coffee and try Postum.

"It went right to the spot! I found it not only a most palatable and refreshing beverage, but a food as well.

"All my ailments, the 'loginess' and dizziness, the unsatisfactory condition of my blood, my nervousness and irritability disappeared in short order and my sorely afflicted stomach began quickly to recover. I began to rebuild and have steadily continued until now. Have a good appetite and am rejoicing in sound health which I owe to the use of Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

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