

# The Ring and the Man

WITH SOME INCIDENTAL  
RELATION TO THE WOMAN

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## CHAPTER III.

Society bursts upon Mr. Gormly. Enter at last, Miss Haldane, accompanied by her father, her mother, her brother, Miss Louise Van Vleck Stewart (one of her intimate friends and a possible sister-in-law), Dr. Warren Deveaux (a retired physician, an old bachelor and an old and intimate friend of the family). The newcomers were all dressed in winter automobile garments. It was young Haldane who broke the somewhat awkward pause consequent upon their entrance.

"Mr. Goodrich," he began unbuttoning his coat and slipping it off as he advanced

"Your pardon, sir," said Gormly, "but Mr. Goodrich is no longer the owner of this place."

"Why, Mr. Gormly," burst out Miss Haldane impetuously, as she turned at his voice and recognized him, "this is a great surprise! We didn't know that you were to be one of our neighbors."

She had been in the background and had not observed their host until she heard him speak. As she spoke, she stepped forward impulsively with outstretched hand.

"Eleanor," exclaimed her father in great surprise, surveying Gormly as he spoke, with a stare as cold as the winter weather, "do you—ah—know this gentleman?"

"Certainly I do," returned the girl. "It is Mr. George Gormly of the Gormly store, you know."

"Ah, indeed," began her father. "I have known him for—" she paused uncertainly.

"Seven months yesterday, Miss Haldane," answered Gormly, who was nothing if not accurate.

"We have—er—bought things at your shop for a longer time than that, I fancy," here interposed Mrs. Haldane vaguely with an air of great condescension.

"You have been on my books, madam, as one of my most valued customers ever since I moved to Broadway twenty-one years ago," returned Gormly, who was by no means ashamed of his business, else he would not have continued in it.

"Yes," said Haldane at this juncture, "I have been making out checks with monotonous regularity to your firm ever since."

"My good man—" began Mrs. Haldane still somewhat vaguely, and evidently rather at a loss how to place this irreproachably clad and fine appearing gentleman who had soiled his hands with trade and yet did not seem to be at all embarrassed or ashamed of it.

"Mother!" exclaimed the daughter, blushing with vexation. "Mr. Gormly, forgive me, I forgot that you did not know my family."

"I have seen them often in the store, Miss Haldane, and have ever waited upon some of them in other days myself," replied Gormly, quite at cold and formal in his manner as any one in the room.

"Nevertheless I want the pleasure of presenting you to my mother. Mr. George Gormly, mother, my very good friend."

Mrs. Haldane drew herself up Gormly bowed himself down in a bow most carefully calculated to express a proper degree of appreciation of the honor and nothing more.

"My friend, Miss Stewart; my father, and my brother, Mr. Livingston Haldane; Dr. Deveaux."

The persons mentioned bowed coolly, except that Livingston Haldane infused a little more cordiality in his recognition than the others did, while Dr. Deveaux actually stepped forward and extended his hand.

"My dear sir," he said genially, his old face beaming with good nature and genuine admiration, "I am delighted to have the privilege of shaking you by the hand. Anybody who has the courage to attack the Gotham Freight Traction company as you have done in the papers may be regarded as a public benefactor whom it is an honor to know."

"Thank you," said Gormly, grateful for this recognition.

"Sir," began Haldane, "an unfortunate accident to our machine has thrown us upon your hospitality. I do not know that my friend Goodrich has sold this place or—"

"Let that give you no concern, sir," answered Gormly; "I pray that you will consider the place and all in it as your own. I beg you will take of your wraps and make yourselves as comfortable as you can."

"That's very handsome of you, I am sure," continued the elder Haldane slowly removing his coat; "but my own place lies but six miles beyond here, and if you will permit us to telephone my stables, I think we shall have to trouble you but little."

"The telephone is in the library, yonder, Mr. Haldane, and is at your service as is everything in the house. I regret that my own stables are not yet furnished. The small station

wagon and pair which brought you up are the only horses I have on the place just now."

"And jolly well crowded we were!" said young Haldane.

"Meanwhile," continued Gormly, "may I ask have you had dinner? Can I offer you anything to eat, or—"

"We thank you," answered Mrs. Haldane, "but we dined at the Braddons—a place five or six miles back—before we started."

"A cup of tea or a glass of wine after your cold ride, then?" said Gormly.

"That would be very nice indeed," said Miss Haldane. "Louise, aren't you simply dying for a cup of tea?"

"Perishing for lack of it," answered Louise promptly.

Gormly summoned the butler, gave the necessary directions, showed Haldane where the telephone was, invited the other men into the library also where there was a well stocked buffet and excellent cigars; after which he showed the women into a small reception room on the other side of the hall, and left them to divest themselves of their wraps.

The men refreshed themselves according to their fancy at the buffet, lighted their cigars, which, as Chaloner had been careful to send a supply of Gormly's favorite and private brand, they found excellent, while Haldane vainly endeavored to get in communication with his own house. Such was the severity of the storm for a country ill prepared for it, however, that the wires were broken in every direction. Even that to the lodge was found to be out of order at last.

Gormly had not waited in the library to hear the result of the telephoning. As soon as he had the men comfortably provided for, he had gone back to the great hall, which was more of a living room than anything else. The first of the women of the party to present herself was Miss Haldane. She was in full evening dress. Her noble head rose grandly from her exquisite shoulders. In her dark hair she wore a diamond coronet. Her dress, soft, shimmering stuff of white, trailed behind her.

He had never seen her except in the quiet conventionalty of a street dress. He had imagined her in all sorts of guises. When she burst upon him that way however, the sight dazzled him. It was so far beyond any dream he had ever indulged that he could scarcely comprehend it. He stopped and stared at her. For once his iron control deserted him. There was that frank, open admiration in his glance of which no one could mistake the meaning.

"You must pardon my surprise," said Gormly; "I have never seen you in an evening gown, and I confess my imagination unequal to—"

"Do you like it?" said the girl nervously.

"I am scarcely conscious of it, Miss Haldane," he returned directly. "I see only you."

"How singularly unobservant," she said lightly, recovering her equilibrium, "for a man whose business it is to buy and sell such things not to notice them."

"In your presence tonight, Miss Haldane, business is as far from me as if it was on the other side of the world," he continued swiftly; "for this is a different world from any in which I have ever moved, and—"

His speech was broken by the entrance of Mrs. Haldane and Miss Stewart. The latter was a fragile, graceful, charming girl, who would have attracted instant attention and notice anywhere, except beside her regal companion and friend, Mrs. Haldane was a not unworthy complement to the other two. These two also were wearing elaborate dinner gowns.

At this moment Haldane, followed by the two other men, came in from the library.

"Mr. Gormly," began Haldane, senior, "I am unable to get anybody over the telephone."

"I am sorry to hear that. I suppose that the wires are down on account of the storm."

"Exactly. Meanwhile, I scarcely know what to do. Could you send a man on a horse over to my place?"

"I should be glad to do so, did I possess the horse."

"The pair that brought us up from the lodge?"

"Neither is broken to saddle, I believe, and—but I can send a man over on foot. I have no doubt—"

"I hardly think that would be possible," interposed Dr. Deveaux. "I should not like to be responsible for any man on foot in such a storm as this."

"I'll go myself," said Gormly quickly.

"You, Mr. Gormly!" exclaimed Mrs. Haldane. "Why, we couldn't think of such a thing. The danger!"

"Madam, I have been afoot in worse storms than this," he answered, "when I was a mere boy in the far west."

It was the first intimation anybody from New York had had as to any period of Gormly's life outside of New York, and one of the company at least pricked up his ears at this remark and listened attentively.

"We couldn't think of allowing you to do so," said Miss Haldane.

"I suppose that pair you have could hardly take us over!" questioned Livingston Haldane.

"I am afraid not," answered Gormly. "They have been driven rather hard today, and they are a light pair at best, as you notice."

"Well, we are thrust upon you, then, marooned as it were."

"I hope you won't find my house the typical desert island," answered Gormly, smiling. "Indeed, I scarcely know what the resources of the establishment are, having entered into possession only today; but whatever they are, they are at your service."

"There's no help for it, I suppose."

answered Haldane somewhat gloomily. "I guess you will have to keep us until morning."

"Think how happy you make a lonely old bachelor," returned Gormly, "by being his Christmas guests. And if you will accept this situation, as indeed I fear you must, I shall make arrangements so that you can be taken to your own place on Christmas morning. Let me consult my butler, who was Mr. Goodrich's major domo before I bought the place, and see what can be done."

A brief conversation with that functionary threw some little cheer over the situation. Gormly's own wardrobe, which had been sent down, would amply supply the men with whatever they needed, and the butler imparted the cheering news that the lodgekeeper was a married man with two grown daughters, and he had no doubt that such things as the women required might be secured from them.

"Send at once," said Gormly quickly, "and ask Mrs. Bullen to come up to the house and be of what service she can to the ladies. How are we off for bedrooms?"

"Plenty of them, sir, and all ready for guests."

"Well, see that they are prepared, and have Mrs. Bullen here immediately."

As the butler went off to attend to these orders, Gormly re-entered the room and found the whole party comfortably gathered about the fire. He explained that he had found a woman on the place, the lodgekeeper's wife; that he had sent the station wagon for her; and that she would be present doubtless within a half hour with such indispensable articles of attire as might serve to make the women guests at least comfortable.

"If you were only in communication with your shop, Mr. Gormly," said Mrs. Haldane—and whether she meant to be offensive or not, Gormly could not tell—"we would lack nothing."

"I am sorry for your sake, madam, that I am not. As it is, we shall have to do our best with the limited resources at hand."

Conversation ran on desultorily this way for a short time, when the butler announced the arrival of Mrs. Bullen. As he did so, the tall clock musically chimed out the hour of nine.

"Now that your woman is here, Mr. Gormly," said Mrs. Haldane, rising, "as I am somewhat fatigued from the ride and the experience, I shall retire to my room. I suppose you young people won't think of going to bed at this unearthly hour?"

"No, indeed," answered Miss Stewart. "I think I'll stay awake until Christmas."

"Will you go, Beekman?" said Mrs. Haldane, addressing her husband.

"Why—er—my dear—"

"I was about to propose a table of bridge," said Dr. Deveaux.

"An excellent idea," returned Haldane quickly; "but there are six of us here and—"

"I don't play," said Gormly quickly. "I'll stay out also," said Eleanor. "I



There Was Frank, Open Admiration in His Glance.

don't care much for bridge at best."

"Good night," said Mrs. Haldane, moving away, escorted by the butler, and met outside presently by Mrs. Bullen.

"Mr. Gormly and I will watch your game," said Eleanor.

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Haldane is Charmed and Charming.

"Mr. Gormly," began Miss Haldane, "I have not seen you for some time."

"Not for two months and eleven days, Miss Haldane," answered Gormly quietly.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the astonished girl. "How pat you have the time! Do you keep a calendar of my visits to your office?"

"I have a marvelous memory for details which I wish to remember," said the man.

"And I am so much interested in the settlement house that—How does it progress, by the way?" he continued, gravely as if his recollection of anything connected with her was a mere matter of course.

"Oh, beautifully. You see, there is nothing to consult you about now. It is all in the architect's and builders' hands. You have been so helpful to me I really don't know what I should have done without you."

"And you have, of course, respected my confidence? No one knows anything about my connection with the enterprise?"

"No one at all."

"Not even your father?"

"Certainly not. I never discuss business with my father, nor does he discuss business with me."

"And yet," said Gormly quickly, "I

should think he might discuss business with you to advantage."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl.

"I am a business man, Miss Haldane, accustomed to deal with men and women in a business way, and much depends upon my ability to estimate the capacity of those with whom I work. I have not often seen a woman, or even a man, with a better head for business than you have."

It was the dearest thing the man could have said to her. Women, she knew, were not naturally business-like, and to have such qualities attributed to her was the subtlest kind of flattery. It came, too, from a man who was a power in the business world, and was therefore the more valuable.

"It is very good of you to say that," said the girl, smiling pleasantly in appreciation, "and I am more proud of it because everybody says you are such a fine business man yourself."

"I should like to do something really worth while," said the girl after a little pause. "I like people who do something worth while."

"So do I," said the man, with obvious meaning.

"Mr. Gormly," she exclaimed impetuously, "why don't you do something worth while?"

Gormly smiled. "My dear young lady," he answered—really, he was old enough to be her father, he thought half sadly, as he noted his form of speech—"I have the largest store in the world. I have agents in every civilized country and many that are uncivilized. I own and control a fleet of steamers. I have my private woolen mills, and silk mills and factories. I suppose there are ten thousand people in my employ. I can give you a check for another million for your settlement work as often as you wish it, and—"

"These are all very well, Mr. Gormly," said the girl gravely. "They spell tremendous material success; they show your ability and acumen; in the eyes of the world they count for a great deal; indeed, I find lately that they are counting more and more; but they don't really amount to anything after all. What is money, what are power and influence? My father, for instance, was born with more than he could possibly spend, more than he knew what to do with, inherited from thrifty ancestors who had the wit to buy land when it could be bought for a song. He has influence, power. What does it amount to? I want him to do something, really to do something in the world for the good of mankind. I am preaching to you just as I preach to him."

"Do you look upon me as you would a father?" asked Gormly quickly.

"Why, no, not exactly. Certainly not," answered the girl.

"I am forty-four, you know."

"No, I didn't know; but what if you are? You are still a young man. My father is fifty-five, and I don't call him old."

"Wonderful consideration from twenty-two!" said Gormly smiling.

"Well," resumed the girl, "I was saying that you ought to do something in life. You have made yourself. You started with little or nothing, if I may believe the newspaper accounts of you."

"Have you been reading them?"

"Every word," answered the girl. "I was quite proud of being able to say to my friends that I knew you and what they said about you was true."

Never in his life had Gormly been happier than at this frank, spontaneous expression of approval.

"You ought to put these great talents of yours at the service of your fellow men; not in buying and selling, but in doing something for them," she ran on.

"Don't you think that in selling them honest goods at a fair profit, in telling them the strict and only truth about what you have to sell, in allowing them the utmost freedom of return and exchange, in providing generously for employees, in doing service to your fellow men?"

"Certainly, it is. It is doing service to the little world which you touch, a larger world perhaps than most of us can touch. But I want you to do something, I want every man and every woman who has the ability to do something, in a great, splendid way."

"But what would you have me do?"

"I don't know," answered the girl. "I don't know what I would have anybody do; but there are so many things to be done, so many wrongs to be righted, so many things to be achieved. The great man goes out and makes opportunities. Part of his greatness, I take it, consists in seeing what there is to do. Ruskin says somewhere that the greatest thing anybody can do is to see something. If I were a great woman, I could answer your question better; but I am only—"

"I think you are a great woman," said Gormly softly, "and I would be perfectly willing to take your answer and abide by it."

"I would not have it that way," answered the girl dreamily. "When my father asks me what I would have him do, I say to him, 'Go and see.' He laughs at me; most people laugh at me. You don't, Mr. Gormly."

"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 I 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 state of being of which I knew little."

I was not born into your society. Until I saw you, I had no desire to mingle in it. I have not taken a vacation, except business trips aboard, 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, by her gracious privilege, on terms of outward equality, with a fine, high bred, capable woman. 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 with curious intensity.

She saw his smooth shaven face seamed and lined with thought and care. She marked the strength, the intelligence, the resolution, in his countenance. It lacked completing touches of tenderness, it lacked the woman's influence; but aside from that it was altogether admirable, virile, and strong.

"I want to do something," he said, "to make me worth," his voice trembled, "the respect of," he looked at her—"of people like you," he went on, "and I am going to do something, too."

"You frighten me," said the girl, appalled as we often are by the granting of our prayers, the acceptance of our suggestions, the realization of our hopes. "I don't like to feel that what you are doing is for—for—"

"Say it, Miss Haldane. For you."

"I can't assume such a responsibility," she protested; "and such a motive is not the highest, the best."

"Nonsense!" said the man almost roughly. "The best things in life are done for the sake of good women, and there is not a human being in the world who possesses your powers and capabilities who does not thrill to responsibilities. In your heart of hearts you are glad—or you will be glad if through your inspiration something is accomplished, by whatever way or means it may be—even by me—for mankind."

And the woman knew that the words were true. She thrilled even then to the strength of his protestation.

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

"Indeed," said the girl; "it was most graceful and kindly hospitality, and we deeply appreciate it."

"It is good of you to say so. These things I could learn," he hesitated, "if I had some one who knew to teach me; but other things I know myself. I am at a discount with women; but I can handle men and I know men. Every human being is glad to ally himself with 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 devotion, 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 immensely 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 chicanery. 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 quietly.

"It is my business, it has been my business all my life, Miss Haldane, to make dreams come true, and I am dreaming now a greater dream, dearer to me than that I have outlined before you."

What could he mean? She strove to meet his glance fairly; but her own eyes fell before his own direct gaze.

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

"Which dream, Mr. Gormly?"

"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 quietly. "Such achievements are not the results merely of one man's efforts. The people themselves must respond. 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?"

"I! 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 yours in your 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 world."

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

"May they all come true!" said the girl impulsively rising 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 majority at the next election. Representatives of 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 my way carefully."

"Have you ever made a public speech?"

"Never in my life."

"Well, if you can 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's to be determined," he said. "Most men would say it was easier to talk to one woman than to a thousand 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. She wasn't a good woman, Miss Haldane," he said simply, "and 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 continue this conversation; but something impelled her.