



Then at Last He Understood.

The RING and the MAN

WITH SOME INCIDENTAL RELATION TO THE WOMAN
By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY
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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 maudlin husband. He is shot by the wife, but the chivalrous boy pins the net to the bodice taking the crime upon himself. In their flight to the railroad station the woman's horse falls exhausted; the youth puts her on his own and follows hanging to the strap. Seeing he is an impediment, the woman thrusts her escort into a snow drift and rides on. Half-frozen he stumbles into the railroad station just as the train bears the woman away. Twenty-five years later, this man, George Gormly, is a multi-millionaire in New York. He meets Eleanor Haldane, a beautiful and wealthy settlement worker, and co-operates with her in her work. Gormly becomes owner of a steamship line and finds himself frustrated in pier and track extension plans by grafting aldermen, backed by the Gotham Traction company. An automobile accident brings Haldane to his country home. Gormly announces that he will be mayor of New York and redeem the city from corruption. The police offer ten million dollars for the franchise. Miss Haldane runs the merchant prince produced a tremendous sensation. The whole machinery of the city's detective force is to be used to dig up something damaging to Gormly. The press heretofore unanimously favorable to the merchant candidate, under pressure, divides and the campaign warms. A resolution is introduced granting a gratuitous renewal of the traction franchise. Gormly offers ten million dollars for the franchise. Miss Haldane congratulates Gormly on what she terms a new Declaration of Independence, and she makes an unexpected declaration of love. He is shocked by the confirmation of his suspicions that her father is the head and backbone of the notorious traction company which he is attempting to overthrow. Young Haldane discovers his father's connection with the Gotham Traction company, and is incensed. In an interview between Gormly and Haldane the latter practically offers his daughter's hand as a bribe for Gormly to withdraw. Gormly refuses. In an interview with Gormly, Miss Haldane learns of her father's business through Gormly, vainly tries to hide it. Members of the Gormly family for whose sake she decides to force him to withdraw under threat of prosecution. The chief of police visits Gormly, who makes a full confession of the truth. Young Haldane runs the gauntlet of the police and carries the confession to the newspapers for publication. By accident the newspapers find Hamilton, one of the men who were at "Camp Hill Devil" and know the truth about Gormly. The Planet publishes Hamilton's story, and New York goes wild with enthusiasm for Gormly.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"Don't you want to hear what they say about you?"

"I had rather hear what you have to say than anything in the world, and I want to tell you first of all what comfort, what pride, what satisfaction, I take in your presence here. I know you read the miserable story. Your brother had my permission to tell it to you last night, if you were awake."

"I was awake and waiting for him."

"Your interest does me much honor," continued the man, "and that you have come to me now this morning is, as I say, the greatest thing that could happen to me. I don't really care now what the world thinks. You have given me evidence enough that you still respect me."

"You don't know all the evidence yet," said the woman faintly. She forced herself to look at him.

she had consulted her inclinations, she would have run away; but that could not be.

"Yes," said Gormly vaguely, scarcely noting her low voiced statement. "Now that it is all over and now that I have lost you, if indeed it is proper to say I had lost what I had never possessed and never could have possessed, you will understand that it was this incident to which I alluded when you said you respected me because I had been a perfectly straight, square man. Your words cut me to the heart; not because I wasn't straight or square now or that I had not made what amends I could for the actions of a boy and a fool since I had become a man, but because after this I could never persuade you or any one that I had not always been so, and because I could not bear to have even your respect on a false pretense. I wanted to tell you many times, and you know of course that if things had shaped themselves differently and you could have cared for me, I should have told you the whole story before I allowed you to say you would become—my wife."

"I am sure that you would have done so, Mr. Gormly," said the girl.

"And that you have come here to give me that assurance, to show me that you have not lost confidence in me in spite of the frightful tangle in our affairs, my antagonism to you—to the Gotham Freight Traction company and then—this. That I take it was your purpose in coming?"

"Yes," faltered the girl, "that, and—"

"What more?" asked the man.

"Whatever it is, if it is in my power to give it, it is yours. What is it that you want?"

The woman opened her mouth to speak. She moistened her lips. Words apparently were difficult, perhaps impossible.

"What is it that you want, Miss Haldane?" asked Gormly again.

"I want you!" she said in her low, clear voice.

Gormly lifted his hand and stared at her.

"You want—me!" he faltered.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to be your wife," was the direct answer.

"My wife!"

"Yes. That is, if you—still—want me."

Gormly stared at her in amazement.

"Do I understand right?" said the man, shutting his teeth together.

"After all that is in the paper this morning, do you mean to say that you will marry me?"

"I do mean just that," was the answer.

"But," said the man, "you said you did not love me, and—"

"Must I do all the wooing?" cried the girl passionately.

"You offered yourself to me once before," went on Gormly relentlessly.

"And you refused me. Will you do so again?"

"Why do you come to me now?"

"Can't you think of the reason?"

"I don't want to think; I want to hear."

"I love you then," said the girl resolutely. "You are the bravest, noblest, most splendid man on earth. If you will take me, I will be the happiest, proudest, thankfulest woman that the sun shines on."

"Take you!" repeated Gormly. "But I can't understand—"

"Will you understand this?" asked the girl.

She walked slowly toward him. She laid her hand on his shoulder. She lifted her face to his. His arm went around her waist. What she had begun, he finished. He swept her to him. She gave herself up yieldingly to his embrace. When his lips sought hers, there was no avoidance. Her arm slipped round his neck and tightened there. And then at last he understood. After awhile she drew away from him.

"You don't ask me what I have done?" she said.

"I neither know nor care since you are here and you are mine."

"Perhaps I should not have been here," she returned, "if we had not been already engaged and the engagement already announced."

"I am very stupid this morning," said Gormly in some bewilderment.

"You certainly are," was the answer. "For a man who aspires to be mayor of New York, you are quite the stupidest and dearest person imaginable."

"I have wit enough at least to know where I can get correct information upon all points."

"And where is that?"

"Here!" said Gormly, pressing with his own the loveliest lips in the world, which smiled at him and were not refused his touch. "What have you done and how has our engagement, which, so far as I know, was not entered into until a moment since, been announced?"

"Read that!" she cried, releasing herself from his grasp and handing him the neglected copy of The Planet. She turned to the editorial page and pointed to a postscript to the leader of the morning, which was a discussion highly eulogistic of Gormly's action and character. The postscript was in the form of a belated communication which had been received at the office of The Planet at the last moment, and had been forced into the paper because it furnished the final and completing touch to the other revelations it contained. It had been printed in heavy black capitals, double spaced. Coming closer to her, so that he held her with one arm, Gormly took the paper with the other and read:

"The engagement of Mr. George Gormly to Miss Eleanor Haldane is authoritatively announced. The future mayor of New York is to be congratulated upon having won for his promised wife the young woman, who not only from her beauty of mind and person, but because of her lively and practical interest in the poor, the oppressed and suffering, is easily first among the daughters of our great city. The Planet feels that this announcement supplies the completing touch to the other admirable qualifications which Mr. Gormly possesses for the great office to which he has aspired and to which the people mean to see him elected tomorrow."

"Who did it?" asked Gormly.

"I did."

"But why?"

"First of all, because I found out that I loved you."

"Why did you do it last night?"

"Because I believed that such an announcement this morning, with its implication of trust, and honor, and affection, would do more to establish you in the public confidence than almost anything that could be imagined."

"You have made my election certain. But whether you have or not, I could almost believe that winning you I don't care."

"I told you not to say that," said the girl to her lover.

"Now read the paper, and then we'll go uptown."

"What more is there to tell? Miss Haldane, in view of the new relationship between them, boldly rode up to the auditorium in the great store by the side of Gormly in the tonneau of her brother's big car. The enormous crowd that filled the great hall to overflowing, that packed the streets outside, that suspended all traffic; the addresses that Gormly made; the frantic cheering that greeted him as he stood overlooking the greatest multitude that had ever filled that section of Broadway, Miss Haldane on one side and his old friend of a quarter of a century back, Col. Bill Hamilton, on the other, with Haldane, Whitefield and a great galaxy of supporters in the background, including Abbott, the cub reporter, scribbling like mad on the greatest story of the day—these have all passed into history. The result of the election, which occurred next day, is of course known to everybody."

"It is over," he said, "and we have won!"

"Yes. No one congratulates you as I."

"I have a great deal to live up to," was the slow answer.

"As mayor of New York?" she questioned softly.

"As your husband," he replied.

"Don't say that," interrupted the woman, delighted nevertheless at this splendid declaration.

"Your father and mother, do they know?"

"Certainly. I told them at breakfast this morning."

"How did they take it?"

"You can imagine what my mother thought and said," answered the girl, smiling faintly.

"And your father?"

She sighed deeply.

"My father, I imagine, is not unwilling to have a friend at court. What are you going to do when you are elected?"

"Marry you the first thing."

"I mean after that."

"Live to make you happy."

"Do be reasonable! I mean what are you going to do with the opposition?"

"I am going to do justly and fairly by all men, whoever they are, whatever they may have done. Mine shall be no policy of ruin. Some things must be broken down; but my aim shall be to upbuild."

"I thought so," returned the girl. "And what are you going to do with the one woman?"

"I am going to love her as no woman was ever loved before in this world."

How long this might have continued can never be told. Young Haldane interrupted them.

"Mr. Gormly," he said, "I see you have heard the news."

"I have heard the essential part of it from your sister."

"Do you mean to tell me that you haven't read the paper yet? Well, sit down and read it, or I'll withdraw my influence and vote against you. I suppose all Eleanor told you was the news of her engagement?"

"Well, wasn't that enough?"

"Enough!" cried the young man. "Why, you want to read the interview with Col. Bill Hamilton. It's the finest thing that ever appeared. Everybody knows that you didn't shoot the man, but that the woman did. They know, too, that you gave her your horse in the snow and that she abandoned you. Why, man, you're a hero!"

"To be perfectly frank with you, Haldane, this is all most interesting and gratifying. How on earth Bill Hamilton turned up at the right moment and told the truth, I don't know; but as a matter of fact, I do truly care more for your sister's action and I get more satisfaction out of the fact that I am going to be married to her immediately after the election than I will in winning, if we win."

"You are sure to win," said Haldane.

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There are many who recite their writings in the middle of the forum.

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as wage earners in professions in which failure is inevitable—American Medicine.

The Hampton Court Maze. Ninety-eight thousand persons have paid a penny each for admission to the famous maze at Hampton Court palace this summer, the largest number for some years. It is estimated that about 25 per cent. of these were foreigners, mostly French and German. During August 24,000 people passed through the turnstiles. For a number of years the takings at the maze were the perquisites of one of the palace attendants, upon whom the right to collect and retain them was conferred by the late Queen Victoria. Since his death a few days ago the takings have gone to his majesty's office of works.—London Standard.

Accommodating. "Mrs. Weeds," said Mr. Binks, "I asked your daughter to marry me, and she referred me to you."

"I'm sure that's very kind of Susie, but then she always was a dutiful girl. Really, Mr. Binks, I hadn't thought of marrying again at my time of life, but since you insist, suppose we make the wedding-day the twentieth of this month."