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### CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY'S "THE FETTERS OF FREEDOM"\*

Dr. Cyrus Townsend Brady is known to be a most prolific and versatile writer, as well as an entertaining one; and he himself would probably be among the first to acknowledge that there is an uncommonly wide divergence of merit between the different classes of his productions. Yet even those who most cordially give him credit for the best of his past achievements must be pleasantly surprised at the earnest purpose, the dramatic strength, the inherent bigness of his latest volume, *The Fetters of Freedom*. The shortest way to place and define the book is to say that it belongs to the type established by *Ben Hur* and *Quo Vadis?*—historical novels of imperial Rome, and based partly upon the biblical record and church traditions. But within the limits of this type there is a wide range of possibilities and abundant opportunity for blunders and errors of judgment. The principal characters may be all of them purely fictitious, as is mainly the case with General Lew Wallace's familiar volume, with just enough of the historical element to fix the period; or the leading parts may be assigned to the big figures of recorded history, as in the work by the great Polish novelist. Dr. Brady has followed the latter method, and has chosen as his central character no less a personage than St. Paul himself,—a venturesome experiment, because in handling figures which are seen by the popular mind surrounded with a halo of sanctity it is so easy to make some slip, throw in some

\**The Fetters of Freedom*. By Cyrus Townsend Brady. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

incongruous word, fall just short of the sustained dignity of treatment that is imperative. It is only fair to Dr. Brady to say at once that he commits no such errors. From first to last, his St. Paul is a personage of commanding presence, strongly individualised, consistent, an embodiment of the apostolic spirit. It is not too much to say that the author has so far succeeded in reincarnating the manners and conditions of ancient life and the mental, moral and spiritual standards of the period as to make the recorded life of St. Paul more actual, more comprehensible to many a reader than it has ever been before. Furthermore, without taking any undue liberties with the biblical narrative or with tradition, he has woven around accepted facts the clever embroidery of a fiction story, the specific interest of individual human lives; and all this he has portrayed through a series of vivid, tragic, compelling scenes, vibrant with the storm and stress of physical danger and spiritual anguish.

To retell the story of *The Fetters of Freedom* would be in part to repeat inadequately facts familiar to every Bible student, and for the rest, to divulge unfairly the element of surprise which so largely forms the lure of Dr. Brady's volume. Of one fact there can be no mistake: *The Fetters of Freedom* belongs to the class of books which simply insist upon being written; it was the product of the author's compelling love of his subject. You cannot miss his own honest joy in the achievement of each succeeding chapter, his justifiable pride in sterling workmanship, his zealous care to make none of these fatally easy blunders in archæology and classic lore. And in the latter respect, he is to be congratulated upon having steered a safe middle course: his volume neither bristles over-much with the terminology of a dictionary of classical antiquities, nor is it so modernised as to rob the reader of a proper sense of the remoteness of the scene in point of time; and the result is that the setting of the book is just what it ought to be, ever present

yet ever in the background. Without wishing to assign an inflated value to Dr. Brady's book, the present reviewer does wish, in conclusion, to repeat that it is a book possessing the element of business, and with all the better chance of public recognition because its strong theme is handled with the assured touch of the practiced craftsman.

*Calvin Winter.*

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