

CHAPTER 7. DIAMOND JIM BRADY

IN 1912 a big, burly man with a huge head and a strong face appeared at my office. With him was a Baltimorean. "I have with me Mr. James Buchanan Brady," said the latter, and as I seemed quite ignorant, he added: "The celebrated Diamond Jim Brady. He has been to surgeons in Boston and New York. They have all refused to operate, because his case is said to be too complicated, and he has come here as a last resort. He's a rough diamond, but a fine fellow." Brady wore a neat, well-fitting morning coat, but in his tie was a huge diamond, and diamonds also sparkled from his vest, watch chain, cuff links, and the head of his cane. He looked his nickname.

Brady's case did indeed present a formidable series of complications: diabetes, Bright's disease, generalized urinary infection, inflammation and obstruction of the prostate gland, difficulty and frequency of urination, in addition to an old cardiac disease (angina pectoris) and high blood pressure. Examination showed a chronic inflammation of the prostate, which formed a bar at the neck of the bladder and obstructed the outflow of urine.

I told Mr. Brady that this great difficulty in urination could be cured by an operation. He said he had been told that on account of his heart disease and diabetes he could not stand an operation. I explained that I had recently invented an instrument with

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JAMES BUCHANAN BRADY
After a portrait by George B. Shepherd

which the operation could be done entirely through the urethra, and without making any external cut, and that he would not have to have general anesthesia, which was considered dangerous in his case.

I showed him the instrument, which consisted of a tube with a short, curved inner end. On the under surface of the straight tube was a large hole or window into which the obstructing prostatic bar would drop as the instrument was withdrawn. An inner cutting tube would then be pushed in, cutting through and removing the entrapped bar. This simple instrument, which I called a prostatic excisor or punch, had already been used in many cases, as has been noted before (see Fig. 28, page 119).

Mr. Brady was delighted to hear that he would not have to take a general anesthetic, that the operation could be done in such a simple way without any external cut, and he readily agreed to enter the hospital. I explained to him that, unfortunately, I was preparing to go to London to present a paper to a medical congress and would have to leave in four days. Brady said that after I had done the operation, he would trust himself to my assistants.

I am giving the operation performed on Mr. Brady in intimate detail because some newspapers claimed that I cut out his over-worked stomach and gave him a new one; other accounts credited me with having removed his gall bladder.

On April 7, 1912, after injecting cocaine into the urethra, the punch instrument was passed, the prostatic bar caught in the window and cut out by pushing the inner tube home (Fig. 29). Two more cuts were made and in a few minutes Brady was off the table, pleased that the operation had been carried out so quickly and without pain. Owing to the infection present, his convalescence was stormy. He had a chill and fever, his temperature increased each day, and when I went over to tell him good-by on the morning of the fourth day, his fever was high and I was not sure but that a severe sepsis would develop, or even blood poisoning. I told him how much I hated to leave him, but he said he understood and expressed his

gratitude. I left him with many misgivings, uncertain whether he would recover.

When I left Baltimore, Brady knew nothing about my plans or who was to accompany me. We were greatly surprised when his secretary met me at the station in New York and insisted on conducting Bessy and me, three children, a French maid, and an Irish nurse to the Vanderbilt Hotel, where the secretary said Mr. Brady wished me to stop. On our arrival at the hotel we were met by the manager and other functionaires and conducted to the royal suite, consisting of drawing-room, sitting-room, and a series of bedrooms, with maids in attendance. The matron was there to arrange our clothes. We were assured that as friends of Mr. Brady everything would be at our disposal. His secretary then presented us with eight tickets for the all-star performance of *Robin Hood*, which was to be given that night as a benefit for The Lambs club. It was to be a gala performance, and I noted that the tickets cost \$25 apiece. He said that Mr. Brady thought we might like to take some friends. The secretary then said that Mr. Brady wanted him to take the children to see "The Great White Way" after sundown, and that he would return in the morning with motors to take us to our ship.

On board ship, Mrs. Young found her stateroom almost filled with flowers and candy. In mine was a case of champagne, Scotch, rye and Irish whisky, red and white vintage wines, various liqueurs, Havana cigars—small, medium, and large—cartons of cigarettes of several makes, most of the month's magazines, and the New York newspapers—all this from a man whom I had known only a few days and who was in Baltimore so sick that I was not sure he would recover.

While in Europe I was glad to receive cables announcing his continued improvement, and his final discharge from the hospital with a perfect result from the operation. The other conditions of long standing required my attention off and on during the five years Mr. Brady lived. I frequently went to New York on this account, and enlisted the services of one of my assistants, Dr. Oswald S. Lowsley, then an intern at Bellevue Hospital.

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Brady was born on the Bowery, of a drunken father and a mother who ran a saloon and tended bar. His mother never drank; she impressed her son with the evils of drink, and made him promise never to touch liquor. He went to work at the age of twelve as a messenger boy in the Grand Central Station. He soon made up his mind that there was a great future in railroad equipment, and it wasn't long before he became a traveling salesman for a supply house. He determined to be the best-dressed man in the business. As he traveled all over the country, he carried with him well-tailored business suits, cutaways, dinner suits, and dress clothes. He wore a large diamond pin, which he had bought with the first money he saved. He usually dressed for dinner, even in the West, where his frequent appearance in tails, white waistcoat, and white tie created a sensation. He became a marked man, and this pleased him. His stylish business suit and diamond pin gave him an entree, and often led to a discussion about jewels. He bought more and more diamonds. When he found a businessman keen to talk about stones, he would casually pull out a chamois bag and toss out a dozen or so large sparklers. The name "Diamond Jim," which he soon acquired, went before him, and when he arrived at a new town, railroad men upon whom he called had all heard of him, and his welcome was enthusiastic. His personality was ingratiating, and he was a free spender. His prospective clients were treated to champagne dinners and their wives received candy and flowers. Brady prospered, and before long he became one of the best-known railroad men. His success was such that he rose rapidly in the great house of Manning, Maxwell and Moore.

The Mellons of Pittsburgh then became interested in him, and his prodigious salesmanship won for him the head of the sales department for their great corporation, which had an output eventually of one hundred standard steel cars a day. To sell these was Brady's job.

The men who let the contracts were the chief purchasing agents and the presidents of great railroads. Brady set about to make these his devoted friends. Through scouts he kept tab on their move-

ments, and when they arrived in New York, Brady arranged to meet them with a Rolls Royce with two liveried men on the box, and this motorcar was at their beck and call as long as they were in the city. Rooms, usually at the Waldorf, had been reserved for them by Brady, often the royal suite, already stocked with wines and liquors and decorated with flowers. Mr. Brady's secretary would appear in the afternoon with front-row tickets for the principal shows. The secretary would quietly inform the visitor that if he wished either a dinner or a supper party he would be glad to arrange it at Mr. Brady's expense, and have present dancing girls and, after the shows, almost any of the stars of the footlights that struck his fancy. If he had a penchant for dancing, a small orchestra would be on hand. Brady discreetly kept away, but after a week or so, when the railroad executive left New York and found all the bills had been paid, he did not forget James Buchanan Brady.

This was not all he did for the railroad executives and also for the scores of his friends with whom he had no ax to grind. He bought so much candy that he finally purchased a large interest in Page & Shaw. On all the holidays—national, state, and religious—multitudes of presents were sent out from Brady: cravats, scarfs, and gloves from Budd's; jewels from Tiffany's; glass and china from Ovington's; flowers from numerous florists; and candy by the cartload. The wives and lady friends were not forgotten, and through his astute agents he found out what people liked and what gifts would be the most acceptable.

The stories of Brady's experiences are numberless. One with the president of the Reading Railroad seems worthy of recording. Mr. Baer well deserved his name; he was so unapproachable that no salesman ever got into his private office. Brady's firm had never been able to accomplish anything with Mr. Baer, or to make any sales to his railroad. Brady was sent to Reading to see what he could do. When he presented his card, Mr. Baer's secretary politely informed him that it was useless for him to expect to meet Mr. Baer, as no one was admitted to his private office unless the caller had been requested to come. Brady casually remarked: "Well, I have

nothing to do. I'll simply sit here and wait. This is a nice place to read the newspaper." In a little while Mr. Baer came in. Brady remained until midday, when Mr. Baer went out for lunch. Brady did the same, but soon returned, although the secretary again told him that it was useless for him to wait. At five o'clock Mr. Baer went home for the day. Brady also left, but was back bright and early the next morning and again on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The secretary each day had expostulated at the folly of Mr. Brady's remaining when it would be impossible to see Mr. Baer, but Brady answered, "I have nothing to do." Saturday morning came. The secretary was called to Mr. Baer, who asked: "Who is that big, burly man sitting in my office? I've seen him every day this week. What does he want?" "He is James Buchanan Brady, vice-president of the Standard Steel Car Company, and he hopes to have an interview with you." "Didn't you tell him," said Mr. Baer, "that I never see salesmen, that I buy from whom I wish and never admit anyone to my office unless I call for him?" "Yes, Mr. Baer, I have told him that at least a dozen times." "He's a damned impudent chap," said Mr. Baer. "Send him in here. I'll give him a dressing-down." Whereupon Brady was admitted to the office of Mr. Baer, who turned fiercely upon him and said: "I understand your name is Brady. Don't you know I never see salesmen? Why the hell have you been waiting this entire week in my office?" With a broad smile, Brady remarked, "I have been waiting to tell you, Mr. Baer, that you can go straight to hell." It is not difficult to picture the scene that followed. The ultimate result was that when Brady left the office an hour later, he had with him a signed contract for \$5,000,000 worth of steel freight cars.

After I returned from Europe, Mr. Brady gave a large dinner in my honor at the Vanderbilt Hotel, to which he had invited a number of railroad presidents and other men prominent in business affairs. Raymond Hitchcock was toastmaster and it was a rollicking evening. They poked a lot of good-natured fun at Diamond Jim, and he enjoyed it immensely.

Mrs. Young and I frequently saw Mr. Brady when we went to

New York, and found him remarkably generous and self-effacing. He would never come to the hotel to dine when Mrs. Young was with me, nor accompany us to the theater, remarking, "I am not of your class; I don't want to embarrass you." Although a large man, he was a fine dancer, employed the best of teachers to give him all the fancy steps, and at night clubs would occasionally do a tango with the première danseuse while all other dancers stood aside and applauded.

Wherever Brady went he was a marked man. At the theater the spotlight would be turned on him. He always occupied the center seat in the front row, and actors and actresses, as they came upon the stage, would usually salute him. Not infrequently most of their remarks and actions would be directed to him as the play progressed. He was recognized as the greatest patron of the stage and as the best friend the actors had; many of them owed their start and success to him. Brady's opinion of a play was taken by the critics to be one of the best. If he approved of it, they knew it would succeed; if he disapproved, the producers often took it off.

Brady's jewels were his greatest passion and interest. They were taken care of by the firm on Maiden Lane who made his jewelry. They had a huge safe filled with Brady's collection. There were some thirty-five sets, a different one for each day of the month, and then some. Each set filled a small morocco case and consisted of about twenty-five pieces. For example, his pearl and diamond set. There was a large pear-shaped pearl pin with a row of diamonds around the stem; five buttons for his waistcoat, each with a large pearl surrounded by diamonds; cuff links of a similar design; a gold pencil with a huge pearl in the end and diamonds festooned around its shaft; an eyeglass case with a large pearl surrounded by diamonds; a similar design on his pocketbook and his watch, and in the head of his cane. The largest jewel of all consisted of a huge pearl surrounded by diamonds that was the top button of his drawers, which Brady smilingly said was "only seen by his best girl." Each evening at six o'clock his jeweler would arrive with several cases for

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Brady to choose from for the following day and also his jewels for the evening. I have often been with Brady when he had at least \$250,000 worth of jewels on his person, and yet he never had a guard. He did, however, take the precaution, when he arrived at his home in the early hours of the morning, to send his chauffeur to open the door and see that no one lurked in the entrance hall or adjacent areaways. The lady in whom Brady happened to be interested for the moment was usually bedecked with pearls, diamonds, or emeralds, but as far as I could observe he gave little concern to their safekeeping. When he left her at her home she was not required to divest herself of the gorgeous string of pearls, the bracelets or rings.

Brady had in his sets some remarkable jewels. He had given much attention to their collection for many years and was constantly improving their quality and size. In his portrait he is wearing his diamonds set in onyx. The ring was one inch square and had a \$20,000 stone in it. This portrait was painted for me by George Shepherd, in whom I became interested while he was a student at the University of Virginia and sent to Paris to study. Brady's diamond set contained some of the loveliest stones I have ever seen. The star-sapphire set was exquisite, as was his ruby set. There was a beautiful cat's-eye set that he loved very much. Another remarkable one he called his transportation set. Here almost every form of locomotion was illustrated. The stickpin was an airplane; the waistcoat buttons, carwheels; the cuff links, cars of various types; his watch was decorated with an automobile, his wallet and eyeglass case with other forms of locomotion, many of considerable size. When he burst forth with his "transportation set," he created a sensation. Brady's love for his jewels was no more astonishing than that of a bibliophile for his old, uncut first editions or manuscripts in some dead language that he cannot read. I believe he had as much justification for his hobby as many other collectors have for theirs.

One of his friends who objected seriously to Brady's galaxy of

jewels finally persuaded him to give them up. Brady did so, but every day went down and had them paraded before his eager gaze by the jeweler who kept them. His friends noticed a tremendous change in his temperament. His gaiety had disappeared, and his friend who had persuaded him to give up his jewels came to him and begged him to put them on again. Immediately Diamond Jim was his old gay self. While his jewels, his motorcars, his famous dinners, his dependent actors and actresses, and his intimate acquaintances among the great heads of railroads of the entire United States were sufficient to mark Brady as an extraordinary man, he was at heart simple and retiring, and one of the most considerate and generous men I have ever met.

Although Brady interested women greatly and had many affairs, I believe there was only one with whom he was greatly in love—a beauty of the stage, Edna McCauley, a reigning stage favorite. Brady had her installed in a lovely South Branch bungalow and she lived in great style. On one of his visits Brady brought down with him one of the Lewisohns, who repaid Brady's hospitality by running off with the beautiful Edna and disrupting Brady's happy home. He was disconsolate for a long time, and his attachments in the future were transitory. Only once did Brady refer to it to me, and then with fire in his eyes and anger in his voice. His long and intimate friendship with Lillian Russell has been described at length in the biography of Diamond Jim by Parker Morell. Mr. Brady never spoke of this to me.

Brady had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on actors and actresses and in lavish entertainments. He admitted that often this had been mistaken generosity. Thinking of the money Brady had squandered, it occurred to me that he might be persuaded to build a hospital as a monument to himself. I had already prepared the plans of a urological hospital several years before, when Mr. William H. Grafflin offered to give me \$200,000 for that purpose. The plan fell through when the trustees were persuaded that as there was no endowment, the building would have to contain too many private

rooms to make it self-supporting. The plans were far from perfect, but they gave me a talking-point.

Mr. Brady had come again to me for a check-up. I pointed out to him the great need of an institute devoted to urology that would contain not only wards for public and private patients but laboratories for clinical and research work. Such a hospital would carry Mr. Brady's name forever. From it would come a great series of clinical and scientific papers that would reach all quarters of the earth and carry on each publication the name of James Buchanan Brady. I contrasted this with the ephemeral character of the fame and pleasure he got from the plays he backed, the actors and actresses he supported, and the sportsmen he banqueted. Here was an opportunity for him to hand his name down to posterity by this institute as Rockefeller's was by the institute that bore his name and Hopkins's was by the Johns Hopkins University and Hospital. I saw that Brady was greatly impressed, and having used every argument, I left him to think it over.

In the same ward a short distance away was Mr. George Stephens, president of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. He had come to see Brady a few days before. Brady told me that Mr. Stephens was suffering with pain in the bladder; I looked in with a cystoscope, discovered a stone, crushed and removed it. Mr. Stephens was convalescent and very grateful. I told him about the proposal I had made to Brady and asked him to help me. Quitting the ward, I absented myself for an hour and then came back. I went first to see Mr. Stephens, and he told me that immediately after I had left the ward Brady had come to his room. "I think he is going to do it." I then went to see Mr. Brady and he immediately told me that he was greatly impressed by the opportunity offered to build an institute that would perpetuate his name, and that he would do it. It is needless to describe my joy. Elsewhere I tell in detail the design and construction of the James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute on the grounds of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and its dedication in 1915. Brady often sent patients to be treated at his institute—

some intimate friends, others poor people who had won his sympathy. The fact that they all were taken care of without expense was greatly appreciated by Brady, who often said that the pleasure he got from building the institute was great and that he was sorry he had not done it years before.

For four years he enjoyed comparatively good health, continuing his active direction of the sales department of the great Standard Steel Car Company. He dressed every evening, generally in full dress, and was to be seen dining with friends or at the theaters and night clubs afterward. He got to bed late, but being a sound sleeper, he woke at nine o'clock ravenously hungry and "polished off" a huge breakfast. I have seen him eat six cantaloupes and quantities of eggs. At his other meals large steaks or many chops would disappear rapidly. His principal libation was orange juice, of which I have seen him consume two quarts. At a small dinner at my home one of my guests said: "Mr. Brady, I have always heard you were a great 'sport,' but you refused a cocktail, sherry, Sauterne, champagne, and cognac, and took neither cigarettes nor cigars. I don't believe you're much of a sportsman." Whereat Brady shyly remarked, "No, I don't drink or smoke, but there's one other little thing I'm very fond of."

Although our operation had removed his obstruction to urination and given him comfort, his heart continued to disturb him, and eventually the angina became so serious that he was put to bed. Tired of the excitement in New York, in the spring of 1917 he moved to Atlantic City, and at the Shelburne, in apartments decorated with flowers, overlooking the busy boardwalk he loved so well, he died on April 13, 1917.

Brady's funeral was one of the most notable in New York. Both St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church on East Forty-second Street and the streets surrounding it were crowded. The railroads were represented by their presidents and great officers, the theaters by leading stars. More impressive were the crowds of poor who wept as his coffin passed by, and told near-by onlookers of the kindnesses that Brady had bestowed upon them.

He was indeed one of the most extraordinary men I have known—a rough diamond, it may be said, brought up on the Bowery, self-educated, with unusually flashy tastes, but one of the most persuasive men in America. His affection for me and gratitude for what I had done for him, and his pride in the Urological Institute built in his memory, were always great, and to me it is a huge satisfaction to have known him so well.