

The Man, the Mission and the Maid

By George Randolph Chester

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When Hal Gilman got home from college he had left all such things as youth and folly behind him. He was more conscious of this than when, after the welcome home had quieted down a bit, he strolled out and glanced at the Blanchard porch. A dazzling young lady over there was arranging her fluffy summer gown picturesquely as she sat down in one of the big rocking chairs. She was supplied with a pink book, the color of which matched her gown and her cheeks perfectly, but before she opened the book she gave the neighborhood a satisfied inspection and so saw the young man looking out upon his boyhood surroundings with the new eyes of extreme serious maturity.

"Welcome to our beautiful city!" called the girl gaily, rising from her chair.

It was Miss Blanchard after all. He had been in some doubt about it. "Pickles" he had used to call her. He shuddered at the memory of the dreadful word. A year ago, too, he would have vaulted over the picket fence that separated the two lawns, and in an instant more would have been sprawling upon the Blanchard steps. He remembered this also with a pang as he lifted his hat and made a dignified bow to her; then he walked sedately down the Gilman path and out at the Gilman gate; he walked sedately over to the Blanchard gate and opened it; he walked sedately up the Blanchard path and upon the Blanchard porch, where he deposited himself and his rigid Prince Albert carefully upon a chair, after having shaken hands most politely with the Blanchard young lady. "How you have blossomed!" he observed with a fatherly gravity that forbade any suspicion of gallantry. "I should scarcely have known you."

"We all change," she solemnly replied through lips that were full and red and most deliciously curved. "We bud, we blossom, we ripen and decay. Life—ah, life is merciless!"

"Yes," he admitted pensively, "we are always growing older."

He was twenty-two and feeling for a mustache; so the weight of advancing years lay heavily upon him. Alice Blanchard reached over to lay her pink book upon the tabourette at her right hand, and the book-mark fell out. It was a large, square, cream-tinted envelope and very fat. The address was in a man's bold chirography, and Mr. Gilman frowned as he noted it. This sort of thing was a part of the folly he had left behind him forever. Miss Alice picked up the letter, but she did not do it hastily, nor blush. She put it carefully back in the book; it was too sacred a thing to be treated flippantly. Already Alice Blanchard had met her Fate. She was a woman, now, with all the responsibilities and cares that come to a mature woman of nineteen.

Silence ensued. They looked out upon the pretty suburban street with thoughtful eyes.

"It must be fine to be a man," presently sighed Miss Blanchard; "to be able to go out in the world and fight for fame and fortune."

He turned reproachful eyes upon her.

"Fame!" he expostulated. "Fortune! There are too many of the world's greedy host after those empty honors."

Miss Blanchard was startled, but gave him instant comprehension. She, too, was just back from college.

"True," she sighed. "How true."

"As for myself," he went on, "my die is cast. I have already engaged to devote myself, after a short period of repose with the good grandparents who raised me, to the uplifting of humanity. Settlement work is to occupy my time henceforth."

His eye was calm but stern. He did not glow with enthusiasm. The cause was not one for mere boyish fervor. It was a man's serious, sober, solemn mission that he was undertaking.

"How noble!" breathed the girl.

"No!" he protested. "It is merely a debt that our family owes to humanity. Oh, you do not know, Miss Blanchard, you cannot conceive of the misery that abounds in this world!"

Miss Blanchard turned upon him large wide eyes that were deep and somber with sudden sorrow.

"Perhaps I do, though," she replied, softly. "Our own burdens teach us sympathy and understanding."

Her eyes turned from him, in explanation, to the fat envelope where its edge peeped out from the book. The envelope did not interest him much and he returned to the eyes. They were remarkably pretty eyes, very blue, indeed, and full of expression. The lashes above them were long and curved. The hair clustering about her white brow was of the exact golden shade that had let him stretch a point to call it red when he was a boy. Below its shining waves the tip of a pink ear was revealed. Her cheeks were rounded and creamy. Her neck was a firm white, beautifully modeled column that supported her small head most gracefully. Pickles! To think that he had ever called her Pickles! Grandfather and Grandmother Gil-

man were looking out of the side window at them.

"Look at that, now!" said Grandfather Gilman. "Honestly, I feel like I wanted to paddle that boy! There he sits, as stiff as a poker, talking to the prettiest girl in Oakdale with no more life in him than if she was a sack of potatoes. Did I, at his age, ever sit like a tailor's dummy on any girl's front porch?"

"Adam," retorted Grandma Gilman, "my distinct recollection is that at twenty-two you were the biggest fool in the county."

The mail-man came up the street. Miss Blanchard ran down to the gate and he handed her a large, fat, square, cream-tinted envelope. Mr. Gilman had followed her.

"Have you anything for me?" he asked the mail-man. Mr. Halfred Joyce Gilman?

The mail-man looked up with a start.

"Why, hello, Harry!" he cried heartily and held out his hand. "I didn't recognize you. How you have grown."

Mr. Halfred Joyce Gilman was too dignified to wince.

"There's scarcely any change in you, Mr. Powell," he said with lofty graciousness. "The years treat you very kindly, indeed."

"Getting gray—gray at a rat." And the mail-man jerked off his hat a moment. "Let me see. You asked about a letter. I got one here, but I hadn't any idea that Halfred Joyce Gilman could be you."

The letter he hunted out was a long, legal envelope. It bore, printed in one corner, the address of the Tenement House Sunshine League. Mr. Gilman took it with reverence, while the deep frown of concentration creased his brow.

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me," he said briskly to Miss Blanchard. "I have been waiting with some anxiety for this delayed communication. It is—well—the call of duty." He glanced at the fat envelope. "You, too, will be naturally anxious to see what Uncle Sam has brought you."

"I know beforehand," she said. "These envelopes bring me no surprises. They are my only rays of sunshine."

He smiled sadly and shook his head. He intended to devote himself solely and undividedly to humanity, and if he ever married at all it would be to some good woman who could aid him in his settlement work; even then only if he was convinced that they could do more together than they could separately.

"You must come over often," invited Miss Blanchard. "I am interested in your work."

"I should be glad indeed if I could interest you seriously in it," he assured her. "I shall consider it my duty to do so if I can."

In the pursuit of this duty he came over nearly every day and most of the evenings. Miss Blanchard did not go out much. The fat, square, cream-tinted envelopes kept her at home; made her refuse many invitations that she might have been glad to accept had she been the unsettled, frivolous girl she used to be when she was young—say, seventeen or eighteen.

It was not long until Mr. Halfred Joyce Gilman knew all about the envelopes. She told him one evening when the family had gone out and they were alone on the Blanchard porch in the moonlight.

"Mr. Gilman," she observed tremulously. "I may trust you. We have known each other all our lives, and I never knew you to betray a confidence, even when we had our worst spats. Mr. Gilman—"

"You may call me Halfred," he interrupted with quite elderly gentleness, laying his hand protectingly upon hers, where it rested upon the arm of her chair. "You have no brother. You need one."

"Thank you, Halfred," she gratefully replied. "I am going to confide in you. Halfred, my parents are bent on ruining my life. I have an attachment, a deep and lasting attachment, and they frown upon it. I have never met him but twice, but we have corresponded ever since. At first it was only the ordinary boy and girl correspondence, of course; but as it grew it deepened and ripened into something far too precious for them to understand. You, however, are a man of the world. You can, perhaps, appreciate how vital an attachment like this becomes." And she quoted four verses from the "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam to prove it.

"Yes, I know, I know," replied Halfred, with dreamy emphasis. "I had also, when I was younger, an attachment that might have altered the course of my entire life, but it was nipped in the bud. She—" he choked up a little bit very successfully—"she proved faithless."

"I am sorry, brother," she said, turning her hand palm upward to clasp his strong and supple fingers with a grip of understanding. "I would not have re-opened your wound for worlds."

"It is nothing," he replied in a hollow voice, leaving his hand in hers. "Nothing whatever. The same devo-

tion I would have poured out for her I now intend to pour out for the weak and the fallen."

"I am so proud, so proud, of my brother," she murmured.

After that they were no longer Mr. Gilman and Miss Blanchard; they were Halfred and Alice, and they were more together than ever, if possible. They were an ideal couple for mere brother and sister. They found so much to talk about that they scarcely needed other companionship, and even when they were with gay parties they could always be found by themselves some place, discussing the glory of self-abnegation as evidenced in settlement work, or the callousness of parents who frowned upon providentially ordained attachments.

Meanwhile, there was peace on Oak street. Grandfather Gilman became almost reconciled to Hal's stiffness, and the Blanchards began to rest somewhat easier about the cream-tinted envelopes. One evening at dinner, however, Mr. Blanchard ventured to banter his daughter about Hal.

"Father," the fair young girl sternly reproved him, "how blind you are; how utterly mistaken! Mr. Gilman—Hal—and I are brother and sister, as we have always been. You must have but little respect for your daughter if you think she can be so fickle as your remarks would seem to indicate. Only one heart, father, is attuned to each other in this world. There is but one such harmony for me."

"I didn't like his looks," replied Mr. Blanchard in a weak attempt at self-defense.

"Exactly! And you do not like him now!"

From her corsage peeped the corner of the latest fat, cream-tinted letter, and Mr. Blanchard eyed it with extreme disfavor.

"No," he admitted. "I do not like him; but I think that if I were a young man and knew this I would make it a point to come around and display my better side often enough to win confidence."

"And he insulted again," was the retort. "No, father, he will not come. I shall not permit him to do so."

And that night the sad, fair young girl wrote him that he must not come

at the Wheatherlys, and her brother was her escort. About nine o'clock Grandfather Gilman and Mr. Blanchard who were chatting together, noticed Miss Alice put on her wraps and slip out of the front door. Five minutes later Hal came to bid them good-by, and Mrs. Weatherly went to the door with Hal and his grandmother. Grandfather Gilman looked at Mr. Blanchard. Mr. Blanchard looked at Grandfather Gilman. Half an hour later Alice had not come back. Grandfather Gilman and Mr. Blanchard were still talking.

"By George!" said Mr. Blanchard, "I wonder where Alice has gone!"

"Possibly to the depot with Hal," replied Grandfather Gilman with a curious hesitation. "He has gone to New York to arrange for his fool settlement work; he will be back in about ten days, he says."

"Hum," said Mr. Blanchard, and he fidgeted for just a few minutes longer. "Say, Adam, there is a train due to leave within five minutes. Suppose we hurry down to the depot. I-I scarcely like to have her come home alone."

In the meantime Mr. Halfred Joyce Gilman had telephoned for a cab to be at his door and had hurried over home to get his suit-case. He threw it in the cab and was just about to follow in when a figure flew down the Blanchard path and a voice called out to him to wait. It was Alice. He gripped her hand tensely when she came running up to him.

"You didn't come over here to say good-by again?" he asked.

"No, I am going along," she half-laughed and half-sobbed. "I'll tell you in the cab."

He noticed for the first time that she carried a suit-case. Time, however, was pressing. He handed her in and sat beside her.

"Now, tell me about it," he said, bewildered, but she had changed her mind. She could not tell him now. She only clung to his arm, herself gasping at the audacity of what she was doing. At the depot he tried to persuade her to go back home, knowing that something was wrong. She immediately became the sad, fair young friendless girl.



"I Pass," Replied the Young Man, Suddenly and Briskly, Losing all the Dignity That Had Weighted Him Down.

to Oakdale. Her father did not wish him to do so. In this she was not prevaricating; she merely wished to be oppressed. It was so sorrowfully and so fully grand.

Strange enough, she did not confide in this latest oppression to Brother Halfred. Of late they had referred less and less often to the cream-tinted envelopes, talking more about settlement work in place of it. It was very pleasant to discuss the hardships and distasteful features of living in slums while walking with a dear brother in the moonlight on balmy summer evenings. It was very pleasant to tuck this dainty blood-relative protectingly under an arm and take her, radiant in her beauty, to receptions and dinners and theaters.

They were very, very proud, indeed, of each other, almost more so than if they had been actual brother and sister; but, nevertheless, in the fall, just before Hal was to go away, a change came over Sister Alice. She grew abstracted, and sometimes when the square envelopes came she seemed to hesitate about opening them. Sometimes she put them away for a full half-day before she read them, and her answers to them were always delayed and always most painstakingly and laboriously written.

The result of this, at the other end of the correspondence, was but natural and logical. One day came a letter that threw her into a flutter of excitement. It made her gasp and hold her breath and turn pale and pink by turns. This thrilling letter—why, it was the very apotheosis of her carefully built-up romance! The stern demand it laid upon her was a call to heroism.

They were going to Hal's last function that night, an anniversary dinner

been coming on this train. Never! She snuggled closer to him and wanted to cry. She didn't know why.

It was only about a three hours' ride to the city, and she grew more and more nervous as they approached it. When they had alighted from the train a young man, though considerably older than Hal, came toward them. He was not a very prepossessing young man. There were pouches beneath his eyes and his lips were thick and wide. He wore a loud tie, and a suit and overcoat of wondrously checked pattern. Alice saw him first, and she gripped Hal's arm more tightly. She did not experience the bounding joy to which she had so long looked forward when she should greet this Prince of the World. She had it upon the tip of her tongue to cry out to Hal that she did not want to elope, that she wanted to go back home, but the pride which had made her keep up the romance she had builded, even after it had lost its interest to her, and which had made her plunge into this daring escapade in spite of both her judgment and her inclination, now held her silent to meet her devouring fate.

She glanced half in terror from the approaching young man to Hal. She was startled at the change in her quasi-brother. He had stiffened himself to his full five-foot-seven of athletic height. His nostrils were dilated and his eyes were glaring, but he smiled, actually smiled, as if in the glee of coming battle. The approaching young man suddenly caught sight of young Gilman and stopped short, as if startled. Then he came on slowly, hesitatingly, looking from one to the other.

"Why didn't you tell me this fellow's name? Why didn't I ask?" demanded Hal; but he really was pleased.

There was no time for reply. The young man had come up to them. Hal turned on him savagely.

"Well, Person?" he inquired.

"How do, Gilman?" said Mr. Person with a jerky nod, and then held out his hands to Alice, with an evident intention to ignore her escort from that moment on.

Hal stepped between them.

"Person, I'll give you just two minutes to get out of sight," he pleasantly observed. "If you'll remember, we gave you 24 hours at college. You had things to pack up there. You haven't here!"

Mr. Person looked at him curiously for an instant and moistened his lips, then he suddenly wheeled, and a moment later they saw him worming his way through the crowd.

"I'm sorry, Alice, that I can't tell you the details about him," Hal said. She was standing very stiff and straight herself.

"I don't care to hear. I know enough. I am just praying my gratitude that I am not to be linked for life to any man whom another man could make run without an explanation."

Hal scarcely heard her. Already he was consulting a timetable. It had taken them three hours to make the trip. They had started at 9:30, and it was now 12:30. There was not another train back until three o'clock in the morning, and it would not land her in Oakdale until daylight. She had not comprehended to the full phase of it as yet. But Hal swiftly decided that whatever they did and wherever they went they could not stand there, and he bundled her into a cab.

It was not until they were rolling away from the depot that she thought with a gasp of the possible consequences of her act, and cried: "What are we to do?"

"I pass," replied the young man, suddenly and briskly losing all the dignity that had weighted him down when he got his sheepskin, and reverting once more to the slang of early college days. "It looks to me as if we were in a jam. Never your mind, though. Rely on your Uncle Dudley. He'll put rouge and cold cream and violet talcum on the face of this thing, and don't forget it. Do you know anybody here that you could visit?"

"Not a soul," she wailed. "I only know one family, and they are abroad."

"Never mind," he said, patting her hand where it lay trembling on his arm. "You just keep your eye on Little Willie. First of all we are driving over to my hotel, where I shall leave my suit-case and send a couple of telegrams. Then we'll do a real quick-thinking stunt. Did you ever see me think? It will be a positive joy to you."

She nestled confidently up to him. His voice sounded so good and strong, and she liked him so much better since he had dropped his age. She was glad, oh! so glad, that he had happened to come with her!

At the hotel Hal jumped out with his suit-case. He left her in the cab, but presently he came out, chuckling. He had two telegrams in his hand. One of them he had not opened, but the other he read and re-read with evident appreciation.

"You'd better open this one before I show you mine," he said, handing the unopened telegram to her.

She looked at the inscription. It was addressed to Mrs. Halfred Joyce Gilman. She handed it back demurely.

"It certainly isn't for me," she said with a laugh that had a suspicion of a tear or two in it.

"It doesn't seem to be for anybody," he retorted, laughing a bit nervously himself, and tore it open. It was from her father.

"My dear girl," it read, "you are a very, very foolish child, but it is no trouble at all to forgive you. Come back home as soon as you can. He handed them both to her.

"You precious young rascal," read Grandfather Gilman's message, "if you

are already married when you get to remember there's got to be a ceremony in Oakdale."

"It looks to me as if we had better go," good, Pickles," laughed Hal. "There where there is a preacher that will overlook it." And giving a vigorous pat on his shoulder. "Pussy that you should cry when they are laid."

A London Ghost Story

A wonderful ghost story is being told in London society, according to the London Express. The principal character is the vicar of the highest social position in the city.

The vicar of a Kensington church was leaving the church after his usual practice, when a lady stopped on the aisle and asked him in a low voice to come with her to some address near by.

"A gentleman is dying there," said the lady. "He is extremely anxious about the state of his soul, and is anxious to see you before he dies."

The clergyman followed her to a waiting taxicab, and a short time later he was seated in a room in a mansion. The lady, who seemed extremely agitated, urged the vicar to hurry. He sprang out of the taxicab, and a butler appeared.

"Does Mr. — live here?" "Yes, sir."

"I hear he is seriously ill, and I am sent for me."

The butler expostulated that the master was not ill, that as a matter of fact he was in the best of health.

"But this lady"—exclaimed the vicar, as he turned round, and the expression of blank astonishment came over him.

The taxicab and the lady had completely disappeared.

The butler looked on the clergyman as either a madman or a practical joker, and was about to slam the door when his master came along the passage and inquired what it was all about.

"Are you Mr. —?" asked the clergyman. "I heard that you were seriously ill, that you were coming about your soul, and that you were sent for me."

He described the lady who had brought him, and the "dying" man said he could not identify her, that he had no such friend or acquaintance. They discussed this matter on the doorstep for a few moments, and then the clergyman was invited to come inside.

"It is very strange," said Mr. — "that you should have been sent on such an errand, in such a mysterious way. As a matter of fact, though I am perfectly well, I have been troubled lately about the state of my soul, and I have been seriously contemplating calling upon you to discuss the matter with you."

"Now that you are here let us look aside this strange incident, and if you will give me the time we will discuss what has been on my conscience."

The clergyman stayed for an hour or so, and it was then arranged that his new acquaintance should come to the church the next morning and they would continue their discussion after service.

He did not appear at the church, and the vicar, very much interested, called to see what was the matter. He was met at the door by the butler, who told him that his master had died 10 minutes after he left the house on the previous evening.

They went upstairs to the bedroom where the dead man lay, and on a table in the middle of the room stood a portrait of the lady who had brought the clergyman in the cab from the church.

"Who is that?" asked the vicar.

"That, sir," replied the butler, "my master's wife, who died 15 just ago."

First Aerial Spy.

Herr Michowski, a German Pole attached to a Leipzig firm of aeroplane manufacturers, is now languishing in a Russian prison, and is likely to become famous as the world's first spy. He was arrested early in February in the neighborhood of Warsaw, having, as he alleged, lost his way in a fog and been compelled to effect an emergency landing. The Russian military authorities were persuaded that his presence near important fortifications concerned espionage, and he is now formally indicted on that charge. The German government has so far tried in vain to secure his release on representation of Michowski at the time of his flight over Russian territory, was engaged in an attempt to win one of the long distance prizes offered by the German national flying endowment.

Life's Hardships.

A tragic case occurred recently in a court of law at Amberg, Germany. A young girl who was called as a witness begged to be spared the ordeal of having to answer the usual questions with regard to her past. She had, she said, a position as cashier and had just become engaged, and she feared that she would be utterly disgraced if she was obliged to state publicly the fact that she had when very young been punished for a small theft. The court nevertheless insisted on her answering the question, and the girl thereupon opened a vein in court. She now lies in danger of death.