

THE MASTER MAN

BY RUBY M. AYRES

Author of "The Phantom Lover," "The Girl Next Door," etc.

"But, darling, Mr. Puff is such a nice man!"



IT isn't the pipe that causes these embarrassing moments, Mr. Puff. It's the tobacco. Isn't it time you discovered Sir Walter Raleigh—patron saint of pipe smokers, who discovered how good a pipe can be? His favorite smoking mixture really is milder. It really is just about the richest, mellowest, mildest blend of choice Burleys you've ever smoked.

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PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

"But I thought," Michael began, then stopped. "She'll be home this evening, of course?" he added after a moment.

"No, sir." The girl shook her head rather sadly. "Miss Rolf said good-bye to us all, sir, and took all her luggage; she said she was not coming back to Clayton any more, sir."

"Not coming back any more!" There was utter incredulity in Michael Rolf's face and voice. He stared at the girl blankly for a moment; then he laughed.

"Oh, but that's absurd!" he said. "There must be some mistake! Why—why, she hasn't anywhere in the world to go."

The words escaped him before he was aware of it, and she hastened to retract them.

"Of course she has friends—many friends, but—oh, there must be some mistake," he said again, impatiently.

The girl shook her head. She did not think there was any mistake; she knew Patricia very well in some ways, and she could understand the impulse that had prompted this flight.

"If you were to see her room, sir, you'd know that she didn't mean to come back," she said impulsively. "It's all upset—she's taken everything that was hers—all the things Mr. Rolf gave her. 'They're mine, at least,' she said, when I asked if I was to pack them."

Michael turned his heel and went into the dining room. Where in the world could she have gone? he was asking in anger. It was like her to further embarrass him. She probably knew how he would feel about it.

Had she gone to friends? He doubted it. From what he knew of Patricia she was not the girl to risk another snubbing such as she had received from Effie Shackle; and yet—how was it possible for her to live alone? What money had she? Very little, he was sure.

The maid followed him into the room.

"Can I get you some lunch, sir, she asked diffidently.

"No—no, thanks, I don't want any." Michael swung round from the window. "How long is it since Miss Rolf left the house?"

"She went to London by the ten o'clock train, sir."

He must have passed her on the way. Why the dickens hadn't he come straight here instead of calling to see Phillips? He ought to have guessed that she had some such mad-brained scheme in her head. Of course it was all done to annoy him.

"Who drove her to the station?" he asked. "Did she have the car? Which of the men drove her?"

"Miss Rolf hired a cab from the village," the girl told him hesitatingly. "I ordered the car, but she refused to use it." There was a touch of anxiety in her voice. "I hope Miss Rolf is all right, sir," she added timidly.

"All right! Of course she's all right," Michael answered. "She'll come back in a day or two. Of course, she's all right."

"Miss Rolf said she should never come back," the girl insisted.

Michael laughed.

"She will," he said.

He went out again and drove away. He was at his wits' end, what to do or where to look for Patricia. He fully realized how difficult it would be to trace her once she had got to London.

lot of luggage. The porter looked at Michael interestedly.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, sir?" he ventured.

"No— nothing," Michael drove to London. He went straight to Mr. Phillips and told him the news.

"She's done this to annoy me," he said, pacing up and down with agitated strides. "Women are the very devil, Philips. And what in the world am I to do, I should like to know?"

Mr. Phillips regarded him quizzically.

"That depends what you want to do," he said, quietly. "What I want to do!" Michael echoed. "Well, I want to find her, of course. A nice thing for a girl like that to be roaming about the world alone! What do you suppose people will say? What do you suppose they will think of me?"

There was a little silence. Mr. Phillips was tracing an intricate pattern on his blotter.

"It should not be a very difficult task to find Miss Rolf," he said after a moment. "She is the kind of a girl whom people would notice, and you say she has a quantity of luggage?"

"Stacks of it, I should think," Michael said dryly, with a sudden cynical memory of the wonderful toilets which Patricia had worn on the house boat for the enchantment of his friend.

And at the thought of Chesney a deeper frown came to his brows. "After all, it would have been as well if she had married him, and so settled her future once and for all. He had done no good by interfering; he had got no thanks either from Patricia or from Chesney."

"How do I start to find her, for heaven's sake!" he demanded, irascibly. "It's like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay to search for anyone in London."

"If you will leave it to me—" Mr. Phillips began. He was rather entertained by his client's agitation. Privately he considered that Patricia had behaved rather cleverly if she wished to attract Michael Rolf's impartial attention. He was old-fashioned enough to still believe that the way to capture a man is to evade him.

"They might do worse—both of them," he thought as he looked at Michael's wrathful face. "And they'd make a handsome couple."

"If you will leave it to me—" he said again.

Michael cut in brusquely. "But there's no time to be lost if we're going to find her. It's hours now since she left Clayton. She may have got out of the country for all we know."

"I hardly think it likely," said Mr. Phillips, smoothly. "You will probably find that she is with friends."

Michael laughed ruefully. "She won't find she has many friends now she's lost her money," he said. "It's the same all the world over."

But he agreed to leave it in Mr. Phillips' hands, knowing all the time that he should do nothing of the sort, and as soon as he got out of the office he began evolving schemes in his own mind for means of finding Patricia.

beaten. He wished he could take Mr. Phillips' philosophical view and tell himself that Patricia would be all right, but this he could not do. He could only think of her as he had found her crying in the garden yesterday morning; only remember her with that air of unexpected helplessness.

After all, she was young, and a girl. If she had been his own sister he could not have been more worried. He hated the thought of her being alone in London.

He ate a hasty meal and started out again on a fresh search. Not that he actually had any hope of success, but it was something to do, and it was often the unexpected that happened. One frequently read in books and newspapers of extraordinary meetings, and strange coincidences.

But at eleven o'clock he was back in his rooms, tired and irritable.

When he found Patricia he would tell her exactly what he thought of her behavior. She was utterly selfish and indifferent to the anxiety of other people. He hoped something would happen to pay her out for all the worry she had caused him.

He opened the door of his sitting-room, then stood still with a smothered exclamation as Bernard Chesney rose from a chair and came forward.

"You!" said Michael blankly. "Good heavens! Why, I thought you'd gone to the States!"

Chesney flushed uncomfortably.

"I changed my mind," he paused. "I've been waiting for you since eight," he added with a touch of irritation.

Michael laughed; he knew by instinct why Chesney had not left England, and why he was here now.

"Well, I don't know where she is," he said.

The two men looked hard at one another. "I don't know where she is," Michael said again. "If you've come to ask me about Patricia—and I suppose you have?"

"Yes," Chesney fidgeted with his cigarette. "I've come to the conclusion that I behaved badly to her," he said after a moment, with disarming frankness. "After all, well, dash it, it was your fault, you know."

"You mean that if I hadn't interfered you would have married her?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Well, then I'm glad I did interfere. You'd never have made her happy—you're not suited to her. . . ."

"A week ago your argument was that she would never make me happy, and she wasn't suited to me!" Chesney said indignantly.

Michael made an impatient gesture.

though—a week ago," Chesney answered with a sneer.

Michael laughed.

"I thought I could manage her. Apparently I cannot; however, when I find her—"

"When you find her! Supposing you never do? I call it scandalous. She hasn't a friend in the world now she's lost her money. If anything has happened to her it will be your fault."

"What the deuce do you mean?" Michael looked at his friend with furious eyes.

"I've done my best for her—Philips will tell you. I offered her money—I offered her the Dower House, or any other place she might prefer."

"Proud! Well—perhaps . . . where are you going?"

But Chesney had gone, with a slam of the door.

Michael stood still for a moment; then he turned and followed. He caught his friend up at the outer door and called to him: "Don't be a fool, Chesney; we shall find her all right. I've done my best, I give you my word. Wait a minute and I'll walk along with you."

He ran back for his hat, and a moment later the two men were walking down the road.

Chesney was inclined to be sulky still. He really blamed Michael for Patricia's disappearance. If only he had gone to see her when she asked him; if only he had answered that letter in the way in which his heart longed to answer it, how different things might have been!

At the corner of the road he stopped.

"Look here," he said, doggedly. "I give you fair warning that when I find Patricia again—and I shall find her—I shall marry her if she'll have me, in spite of anything you can say. Goodnight!"

He turned, struck out across the road, and was lost in the darkness.

Michael turned and began to retrace his steps.

"Quixotic young fool!" he said, exasperatedly, under his breath.

He walked on quickly; it was nearly midnight, and it was beginning to rain a little.

He had reached the block of buildings in which his rooms were situated, when a girl came running towards him. He could hear her quick breathing as she came up to him, saw that she faltered a little and looked back hurriedly over her shoulder as if afraid of some one or something that was following her.

Then suddenly he gave a stifled exclamation: "Good heavens! Patricia!"

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Iowa's Dairy Income.
From Official Bulletin.

Iowa is exceeded only by Wisconsin and Minnesota in dairy production. Although we pride ourselves on the supremacy of the Iowa steer, both in the quality and quantity put on the market, he fell a few million dollars short of returning to the farmer in 1928 as much as the little dairy cow with her six and one-third billion pounds of milk, 90 per cent of which leaves the farm in one form or another.

Therefore, as an agricultural industry, dairying's \$120,000,000 contribution to our farm income stands second—the sale of hogs being first with a total value of close to \$262,000,000.

No one underestimates the value to the trade of the \$100,000,000 that our manufacturing plants pay out in wages each year, mostly in our larger cities. Neither should we overlook the value to all our cities, large or small, of the almost daily distribution of the cream and milk check to the value of \$120,000,000.

There is no insurance that a farmer can take out to tide him over the vicissitudes that are inherent to farming like a good herd—large or small—of dairy cows, as was well demonstrated during the years following the deflation of our farm values in 1921. Their value to the state is two-fold as they carry both the farmer and the retail merchant of our towns and smaller cities over our periods of business depression as well as the slack months between seasons.

When a comparison is made between the yearly average milk or butterfat production of Iowa's one and one-third million dairy cows and the yearly average milk or butterfat production of the 796 dairy cows owned by the state at their 17 state institutions, one begins to realize the wide spread between what we are now doing and what it is possible to do, when our farmers begin to take the interest they should in the breeding and feeding of the cows they milk.