

# THE MASTER MAN

BY RUBY M. AYRES

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

"I thought she was always very fond of him," Mrs. Smith answered wisely. "I only then together once or twice, but he was such a gentleman. I used to hope Patricia would marry him."

Michael did not answer, and presently he was walking quickly away from the house. Chesney suited to her indeed! Surely the girl's own mother should have known better than that.

He took a taxi at the corner and was driven back to Mrs. Flannagan's. It was nearly five o'clock then—Patricia would probably be back.

Patricia was back! So Mrs. Flannagan informed him in a stage whisper. "But it's not sure I am that she'll see ye!" she added. "If you'll not mind waiting I'll just find out!"

Michael stepped past her into the narrow hall.

"Thank you," he said coolly. "I'll find out for myself."

Patricia was crouching over the fire in an attitude of the deepest dejection when Michael entered the room.

She had taken off her hat, but she still wore her coat, and something hopelessly dispirited in the droop of her shoulders and the despondent manner in which her graceful head rested on her hands.

She was feeling sore and angry and miserable. She was sure that Michael had deliberately missed his appointment with her; even the fact that he had turned up late did not nullify her. She only shrugged her shoulders when Mrs. Flannagan drew an elaborate picture of his deep distress when he found that she had gone.

She had not had any lunch, and the tray of unpretentious cold meat and potatoes which Mrs. Flannagan had hurriedly brought stood unappetizingly on the table behind her.

"You can take it away, Mrs. Flannagan," Patricia said without turning as Michael entered. "I don't want anything—I'm not hungry. You can bring me a cup of tea, if you like."

"It's not Mrs. Flannagan," said Michael. He came in and shut the door behind him, looking at her with a little uncertain smile.

Patricia rose to her feet, angry waves of color beating into her pale cheeks.

"I told Mrs. Flannagan I would not see you. Who said you could come in?"

"Nobody; I just came." He moved forward. "I am more sorry than I can say about being late this morning. I met Bernard Chesney, and could not get rid of him."

"And, naturally, you did not wish to bring him to see me," she retorted. "I suppose one could hardly expect you to be proud to admit you know anyone living in a house like this."

"You are quite right about my not wishing him to see you," Michael answered calmly. "But as far as the house goes if it's good enough for you, it's a thundering sight too good for him. But we won't argue. I hope you will accept my apology."

"There is no need to apologize. I did not expect you to keep your word."

"That," said Michael, "is not the truth. You did expect me—you were very angry and disappointed when I did not come."

"How dare you!"

Michael smiled. "Come, Patricia, don't be childish. I thought we were going to be friends. I was angry and disappointed, too. I had a horrible lunch."

He stood looking down at her reflectively.

"Look here," he said suddenly.

**NOVEL WEDDING MARCH**  
London—The registrar at West-End tells this story of an unusual wedding he presided over. Ten minutes before the bride and groom arrived, six men entered the office and arranged themselves around the wall. When the wedding couple approached the six produced mouth organs and played Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," presenting a comical atmosphere to the ordinarily tragic scene.

**Tariffs of Other Nations.**  
From Minneapolis Tribune. The question is frequently raised as to what country has the highest

denly, "you'd be much easier to talk to if you wouldn't look so determinedly uncomfortable. Take off your coat and let me fetch you a cushion."

He drew the coat from her shoulders and fetched the best cushions the room could muster; then he went down on his knees and banked up the smoky fire.

"Have you given Mrs. Flannagan notice?" he asked.

"Of course, I haven't; I've got nowhere to go."

"Nowhere? With all the many friends you have?"

The ready tears sprang to her eyes.

"You seem to like taunting me about my friends," she said bitterly. "I am beginning to wonder if I ever really had any."

"I am not speaking of people like Effie Shackle," said Michael gently.

Patricia looked at him.

"You don't know Effie Shackle."

"I do. I met her on the road near Clayton one night—the very night before you ran away. I think it was something had gone wrong with her car and it was getting late and so I drove her home, and they asked me to stay to dinner."

"Yes, they would—if they knew who you were."

"They didn't know me. I told them—and I don't think Mrs. Flannagan liked it when she knew."

"I should have thought she been delighted."

A little smile crept into Michael's eyes as he recalled the dismay his announcement had caused.

Patricia was watching him with faint jealousy.

"Have you ever been there again?" she asked. "Not that I care," she hastened to add.

"I never supposed you would care," Michael answered, still intent on his fire building. "But I have not been, though they gave me a most pressing invitation and a formal one came by post this morning for dinner tonight."

He rose from his knees and turning, faced her.

"Shall I go?" he asked.

Patricia tried to laugh unconcernedly.

"Please yourself—it is no business of mine."

"That's what you say," Michael answered coolly. "And all the time you know you don't want me to go—you know you hate the idea of my going—at least . . . I hope you do," he added.

Patricia sprang to her feet.

"How dare you! As if I care—as if . . ."

"Tea and foine parcel," said Mrs. Flannagan at the door.

Michael turned away, there was a little pleased smile in his eyes.

Mrs. Flannagan's "foine parcel" turned out to be violets.

"Flowers they are, by the smelling of them," she insisted, taking a good sniff at the wrappings before she laid them down in Patricia's lap.

Patricia looked at the little bouquet.

"There is no one at all likely to send me flowers," she said, but she cut the string rather eagerly, and gave a little cry of delight when she saw the mass of violets.

She looked up at Michael.

"You sent them!" she said, breathlessly.

He was pouring out the tea and wondering why he felt so happy and at home in this comfortable room. Patricia bent her face to the flowers.

"My favorites," she said.

"How kind of you!"

trials roughly according to the height of their tariffs in 1925.

Such a table would show the following results:

- (a) Tariff indices of over 40 per cent: Spain
- (b) Tariff indices of over 25 per cent: The United States
- (c) Tariff indices between 20 and 25 per cent: Argentina, Hungary, Poland, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
- (d) Tariff indices between 15 and 20 per cent: Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Italy
- (e) Tariff indices between 10 and 15 per cent: Austria, France, Germany, India, Sweden, Switzerland
- (f) Tariff indices between 5 and

"Not at all. Do you take sugar?" He added a second knob to her cup absentmindedly. "You know there are lots of little things I could do for you, if you'd only be sensible and let me." He brought the tea over to her. "It seems to me that you're uncommonly extravagant with valuable time," he added, smilingly. "Look at the good times we might have had together already! Why, we might have got so fond of each other that you would even have consented to come to live at Clayton—if I'd asked you," he added, audaciously.

Patricia did not smile.

"If you still think that you're going to be clever and manage me—she began, slowly.

"Bless your heart, I don't!" Michael drained his cup and sat it down. "I've given that idea up—given it up so completely that if you'd like me to tell Chesney where he can find you I'll go straight off when I leave here and give him your address—there?"

Patricia bit her lip.

"You mean that you want to be rid of all responsibility of me?"

"I mean that I hate to see you unhappy, and to know that in your heart you are blaming me for it."

She sat very still. The scent of the violets filled the room and made her think of Clayton Wood, and the gardens, and the woods, and life as she had known it there, and she felt as if desolating miles lay between her and it—miles to which this man was adding with every word he uttered.

He wanted to be rid of her—he wanted her to marry Chesney and settle down, and yet not so long ago he had urged her against this very thing—had told her she would not be happy as Chesney's wife.

"Thank you," she said, coldly. "But I am quite capable of sending for Mr. Chesney if I should ever want him, which is not very likely after all that has happened."

"That disposes of Chesney," Michael said cheerily. "And now I've got another brilliant idea—that we forget all that's happened, and you come back to live somewhere near Clayton and let me make you an allowance."

"Thank you, but of the two I would sooner marry Bernard Chesney."

Michael went over to the window; the drizzling rain had begun again, and the narrow street, with its rows of houses that were all alike, save for slight variation of curtains, looked depressing and dreary.

This was no place for Patricia, he told himself angrily; and yet—what could he do for her?

"And there is nobody—no real friend, I mean," he said rather abruptly, "with whom you would rather live than—with Mrs. Flannagan?"

"There is nobody that you would approve of; not that I care if you approve or not."

"You mean that there is somebody?"

"There is somebody I thought of this morning—when you did not come . . ."

"When I came late, you mean," he corrected her.

"Very well, when you came late," she raised her dark eyes to his face with a queer little smile in them.

"And who is this someone?" Michael asked.

"She used to make some of my frocks—she used to come to Clayton sometimes and work for me."

"A dressmaker!" said Michael. He purposely spoke disparagingly the knew Patricia well enough to know that the way to drive her to do a thing was to appear to wish to prevent it.

"And what if she is a dressmaker?" Patricia flashed out at him.

"She was always kind to me, and I know she really liked me, no matter how strange it may seem to you that anyone could

like me! And she is a lady anyway—much more of a lady than your friend Effie Shackle."

Michael turned away to hide the smile in his eyes.

"Miss Shackle is not a friend of mine," he said calmly. "And as to this other lady . . ."

"Her name is Mrs. Smith," Patricia broke defiantly. "I suppose you will say the name is too common. She is quite poor, certainly; so poor that I used to send her my old clothes. If you've got anything to say against her . . ."

"My dear child! How can I possibly have? I am sure, if she is a friend of yours, that she is everything that is good and charming, but as to whether you would really be happy—living with her! Well, that's another question."

"I don't suppose she would have me, anyway," said Patricia dispiritedly. "She's only written to me once since Mr. Rolf died. I suppose, like the rest of the world, she thinks I'm no use now I haven't any money."

"You can't accuse me of sharing that idea, anyway," said Michael quickly.

Patricia flushed.

"Oh, you!" she said. "It's only pity that brings you here. I know that—pity and a sort of duty. You feel responsible for me, I know—Mr. Phillips told me so . . ."

Michael looked angry.

"I object to that," he said. "You've no earthly right to say such a thing. I've tried to undo any mistakes that I may have made in the past and I was beginning to think I had succeeded, and now you—now you go and make an—abominable statement like that. You really are enough to goad anyone beyond all endurance, Patricia."

To his dismay she broke down into tears.

"Why do you come here then?" she demanded, sobbing. "I didn't ask you to come. I went away and I should never have troubled you again if you hadn't followed me. Why can't you leave me alone?"

"Good heavens!" Michael was distressed. He paced the length of the room, coming to a standstill behind Patricia's chair. "Are you going to stop crying?" he demanded. "Mrs. Flannagan will think I am ill-treating you."

"I don't care what she thinks!"

"Well, I do, Patricia!" He waited a moment; then a little determined smile crept into his eyes. "Very well, if you will behave like a baby you must expect me to treat you like one," and, stooping, he raised her face all flushed and tear-stained as it was, and kissed her.

There was a moment of absolute silence. Patricia sat quite still; then she rose to her feet, scattering the lapful of violets all about and, turning, faced him.

Michael was very flushed and defiant.

"Well—have I offended past forgiveness this time?" he asked. "I'm not going to say I'm sorry, anyway. I wish I'd done it before. Well—are you angry?"

Patricia looked at him helplessly. She wanted to be angry. She was quite sure that she ought to be angry, and yet somehow for the life of her no emotion would rise in her heart save a little fluttering fear.

"I'm angry with you for sneering at my friends—you've no right to do it—" She broke off, releasing the feebleness of her reply. She stamped her foot at him.

"Why don't you help me pick these flowers up instead of standing there staring at me?"

Michael laughed outright as he went down to his knees to obey.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Q. Which state produces the most eggs? L. M. A. Iowa leads.

10 per cent: Bergium and Denmark.

(g) Tariff indices under 5 per cent: The Netherlands, the United Kingdom.

About all one can safely say is that the United States is decidedly among the high tariff countries, but it has not the highest tariff in the world. It is also apparent that a great many other countries have tariffs much like our own.

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Thinks Life Needs Spice

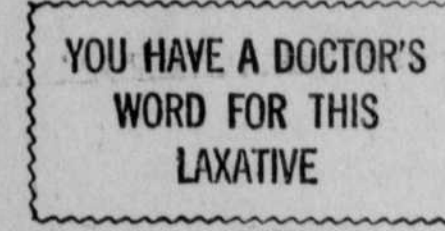
It's awfully hard for a man to get any fun out of being a model citizen.—Chicago News.

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