

# MICHAEL

HE had just returned from the crowded concert hall, where she had enjoyed a veritable triumph. Her face was flushed and smiling, and she still held in her hands the great bouquet of roses—her favorite flower—which had been given her as she left the platform. She was recalled to her surroundings by the voice of her maid, Fanchon.

"There is a telegram for madame on the table," she said. Denise picked it up; it was addressed to "Mrs. Fielden," which was unusual. She was known to the London world and her friends as "Madame Elena." She opened it sharply. It was brief and to the point:

"I think it is right to let you know that the boy is seriously ill.—Michael."

Unconsciously she crushed the message in her hand, and her thoughts flew to the Lincolnshire village where it had been written. She saw again the flat fen-land, the long stretches of empty wastes, which she had grown to loathe, almost to fear; all the grayness and barrenness which were so antagonistic to her gay, beauty-loving nature. Then the scent of the roses smote her sharply, she saw the luxury of her own surroundings, the signs of taste and money everywhere, and turning to the maid, she cried:

"Bring me an 'A. B. C.' and pack a bag. I am going into the country."

"Shall I attend, madame?"

"No, I don't know how long I shall be away. I will write." Her lips twitched as she thought of the fashionable French maid in the bare manorhouse with old Hannah for company.

"I wonder if he is really very ill?" she pondered, as she sat in the train. "I think Michael would scarcely have sent for me unless he were. The meeting will be as awkward and uncomfortable for him as for me. Poor little Michael—what a name to give a child!—I wonder what he is like now? He was not a pretty or interesting child. I remember he was always crying."

There was no one to meet her when she arrived, but that she did not expect, though the village fly had been sent to the station on the chance of her coming.

After a drive of nearly an hour she recognized a familiar gateway; she remembered the old coat-of-arms cut in the stonework, though she could not see it now, with the motto, "I live! I die!" Yes, that was all the Fieldens had been doing for generations. It was a decaying race, and they had not had the energy, or perhaps the power, to stop the ruin that was creeping on them, and the man who lived there now had grown sour and bitter with his balked life.

"Master is upstairs," old Hannah said distantly, in reply to Denise's greeting. "He hoped you would excuse him coming down, but the child is very restless to-night, and can't well be left. If you will please to sit down and take something I will tell him you are here." And she opened the door of a room where a fragrant meal was laid.

"I don't want anything, thank you," Denise said, hastily. "I will go up at once if I may," and before Hannah could raise any objection she was half way up the stairs.

She heard a murmur from the oak bedroom, where the head of the house was always born and where most of them had died, and tapping lightly on the door she went in. No one had heard her, and for an instant she stood as though arrested on the threshold. What a great room it was! And how solitary those two figures looked in it!

"I am sorry to trouble you," the man said, getting up as she moved. "I am afraid you have had a long, tiring journey; but I thought you ought to know."

"You did quite right," she said, thickly. What a pitiful, little shrunken form it was, looking almost lost in the vast oak bedstead, of which it was a tradition that each successive Fielden should carve a panel, so that it had always seemed to Denise a weird resting-place, belonging to the dead rather than the living. She had woken up more than once on a moonlight night fancying ghostly fingers had come back to finish what here and there had been left incomplete.

"Oh, you poor little soul!" she cried, a sob in her voice, and the next moment her arms were over the bed, and the little figure was gathered to her breast, where she crooned over it, calling her baby, her little Michael, whom she had treated so badly, reproaching herself and showering soft kisses on the wan face in the same breath.

"He is very weak; you must not excite him," a warning voice said. She had forgotten that any one was there, and the calm, measured tones were like a rebuff. The old feeling of restraint and fear held her for a moment, but the mother love, which had woken up for the first time at sight of the forlorn, suffering child, rose stronger than anything else.

"I shall not hurt him," she said, holding the boy close to her breast. "See, he is already more content." The little face certainly looked less tired and troubled, and one wasted arm had gone up around her neck, while he made himself at home as a matter of course in those unknown arms.

"Has he been long like this?" she asked. "You ought to have told me before."

"He was never strong, as you may remember," he answered coldly. "He does not take after my family; he pines for warmth and sunshine, as you did. I must remind you that you have never given me reason to think you took any particular interest in him. I was not

at all certain that you would come now."

"Not come!" she exclaimed. Then she remembered. "I beg your pardon," she said humbly; "you are quite right. It is I who am to blame—I who am in the wrong. But—but," her voice growing husky, "I did not know he wanted me so badly. I was so young when I went away—I am not very old now—and I did not understand many things. Perhaps if you had reasoned with me—if you had pointed out—"

"Do you think I wanted captive instead of a wife?" he asked harshly. "I saw how you fretted and pined like a caged creature; I saw the hunted look in your eyes; I knew you would wear your life out in a little if it went on."

"It was so dull—so dreary," she murmured, "and nobody wanted me, not even you, I think, after a little while. I interrupted your studies; I was restless and disturbed your routine, so when my legacy came it seemed to open a way of escape. I thought it was better for us to go our own road before we learned to hate each other. I had a gift, only one, but it would not let me rest until I had tried what it was worth. I ought not to have married."

"No doubt it was a mistake, but in justice I must say that was more my fault than yours. I was years older, and I took advantage of your youth and ignorance to fasten a bond on you of which you did not understand the import. No doubt you knew yourself best. You have the life that suits you; you were free to go your own way."

"As you yours."

"As I mine." Something in the voice made Denise move uneasily. For six years the man and the child had lived here together; her husband, her child. For six years she had nearly forgotten them both; not quite, though she had tried to do so. The man and the child had been growing old together—without love or happiness—while she had laughed and sung. There was nothing young in the house—not even the little form she held in her arms.

A week had passed, and little Michael, thinks (as the doctor plainly said) to his mother's devoted nursing and the interest she created in the child's mind, was picking up his frail life again. He was never tired of looking at her, or admiring all the pretty things that gathered about her as a matter of course; he had never seen so many flowers, so much dainty luxury in his brief existence.

"You use these every day?" he asked in an awed voice, as he amused himself with the silver pots and bottles on her dressing table.

"Yes, every day," she said with a gay little laugh. "Do you think I am very extravagant?"

"Father hasn't anything pretty in his room, I like to be here best," he said, lying back luxuriously among the bright cushions which his mother had ordered from the neighboring town. She opened her lips to speak, but closed them again without a word.

"Want me—you?" he said in a husky whisper. "Is it really true, Denise?" He held her in his arms as one holds something very precious that one is half afraid to touch. "I had almost given up praying and hoping." — Black and White.

of me in it," she said to herself bitterly. "I wonder why he hates me so much now? Once upon a time, the rose color in her cheeks growing deeper, "I am sure he cared for me more than a little in his curious restraint way."

It was still early when she went upstairs to bed, but she was tired of her own company. As she lit the candles the boy opened his eyes—he slept in a little bed in her room now—and called to her.

"I'm not a bit sleepy. Come and talk to me, mother," he said. She sat down in the low chair and laid her head on his pillow as he liked to have her.

"I've got something to tell you, sweetheart," she said, tucking one of his hands under her cheek. "What do you think has happened? You are to come with me to mother's home. How will you like that?"

A wise and more prudent mother would have hesitated to excite the child at that hour, but Denise was a creature of impulse.

"Go away with you and see all the beautiful things you have told me about? Do you really mean it, mother? How lovely!" springing up in bed with shining eyes. "And is father coming, too?"

"Father does not want to come, darling." The child face grew grave.

"It will be dull for father all alone here," he said, seriously. "You ask him to come, mother; he'll come for you."

"Not for me, for me perhaps least of all," she murmured, forgetting that she was talking to a child; but little Michael was wiser than his years.

"Go, now, mother," he said, coaxingly.

"Try. Wait, I'll tell you a secret; it can't be wrong to tell you. Father keeps a picture of you locked up, I saw him looking at it one night, and—and," in an awed whisper, "he kissed it before he put it away. People must love a person very much to kiss their picture, mustn't they, mother?" Kisses had been rare luxuries in his life.

"Kissed my picture? Are you sure, little Michael?" The child nodded, watching her intently. Denise thought of how she was going to make the desolate home more desolate, and the tears rushed to her eyes.

"I'll try, my sonny—I'll try for your sake," she cried, and she went from the room. Her heart was beating fast with fear and excitement as she hurried down the stairs before her courage failed her. What if he should be angry; what if he should repulse her? She shivered at the thought.

She softly opened the library door, where he was in the habit of sitting at night. A lamp was burning dimly on the table in the center of the room, and its light fell on the bowed head of a man; some books and papers had been overturned as he threw out his arms, and mutely emphasized that aspect of despair. Denise forgot her fears.

"Michael!" she cried in a sobbing voice, her arm round his neck, her cheek to his—"Michael; I've been a bad wife, but I want to be a better one. Will you take me back?"

He looked up, and she saw that his eyes were wet.

"Is that you?" he said, heavily. What is it—what has happened?"

"Nothing," softly, "except that I have found out that I want you. We both want you, little Michael and I. You won't send us away—or you will come, too?"

"Want me—you?" he said in a husky whisper. "Is it really true, Denise?" He held her in his arms as one holds something very precious that one is half afraid to touch. "I had almost given up praying and hoping." — Black and White.

#### WOMAN'S PRINCIPLES.

Most Suitable and Satisfactory Thing She Can Acquire.

After all that has been done for American women by legislators and educators, and college builders and reformers, it still remains true that the most valuable possessions a normal woman can acquire is a suitable and satisfactory man. Nothing else is quite so serviceable in promoting the fulfillment of her destiny and her comfort while it is in the process of fulfillment. Nothing else if she is normal—and here are very few women who are not considerably normal—quite takes a man's place with her, says Harper's Weekly. One of her most valuable privileges is that of selecting her man, of picking and choosing and taking her time about it, and possibly even of changing her mind after she had begun to think she knew it. It is observed that women who are good, and have the luck to be charming also, have great advantages in carrying this important process of selection to a successful issue. More men are available for such girls to choose from, and once the choice is made the resulting contentment is more apt to endure and to wax, instead of diminishing. The most that legislatures can do for married women is to protect them from bad husbands. Choosing good ones is a matter of personal enterprise which laws can do little to promote. But, of course, a woman who has few rights and is in complete possession of a satisfactory and competent husband is better off than if she had more rights and no satisfactory means of realizing her destiny. If the American girl ever has to choose between her rights and her privileges—including the privilege of being charming, and this invaluable privilege of selecting a man that suits her—she will undoubtedly do well, as Miss Daskam advises, to hold on to her privileges and let her rights go. But she will hardly have to make such a choice. She will retain her privileges, anyway, and all the rights she can make up her mind to want, besides.

"No, perhaps not. I have thought that you seemed attached to him."

"Attached?" she repeated again with a laugh. "I love him with all my heart. I couldn't bear to be parted from him now. But don't you mind?" looking at him with inward resentment at his indifference. "Won't you be very lonely without him?"

"It will be best for the child to be with you for a time at least, I think, as you are willing to have him. As you say, he is not strong enough to stand any shock, and he would miss you. I suppose your engagements will necessitate your returning to town soon?"

"Yes, I ought to have gone before," fusing at his evidently anxiety to get rid of her. "We will go as soon as the doctor says he can travel." Then as he was leaving the room, "I—I should like to thank you very much for trusting me—for letting me have him."

"There is no need. I have been thinking it over and it seems best for the boy," he answered, as he closed the door.

When a man doesn't use tobacco in any form, we wonder how it happened.

#### GARDEN AND FARM

#### PLANTING THE CORN CROP.

It matters not how soon corn may be planted, or how late such work may be deferred; the most important detail in the growing of corn is the plowing, as upon the preparation of the soil will depend the ability of the crop to endure drought. It is not unusual for a prolonged dry spell to injure growing corn from May to August, and the difference in the amount of moisture in a badly prepared soil and one that has received special attention will be very marked. Not only should deep plowing be practiced, but the ground should be harrowed as fine as possible. The rule of a successful corn grower, who secures good crops, is to harrow twice as long as it may seem necessary. When the work of harrowing is finished, and the seed not planted on account of the weather, or some other drawback, it is always well to harrow again just before planting, and fully as much as before. The summary of the matter is that too much harrowing cannot be given the land for corn. When the seed is planted the rows should be perfectly straight, which will be of much advantage after the plants are up. The seed should be carefully examined, and it is better to use enough seed and get too many plants (which may be thinned out), than to be compelled to replant, as replanted corn comes late to be properly fertilized with the pollen, which accounts for the lower yields of fields that have been replanted. A dull eyed cow seldom proves a good milk cow. A hollow back is a sign of poor breeding, or hastened maturity.

Heavy breathing and too quick is a sign of trouble, if not exactly in the lungs, at least along the respiratory tract. Look with suspicion on a cough. In tuberculosis, except in the last stage, the cough is very feeble—a mere hack. And often in the last stages it still remains so. A good, strong cough usually indicates some trouble that will yield to treatment. Such a cough is not, as a rule, indicative of lung disease. One test is to close the nostrils tightly with your hand, and if the cow coughs when the pressure is removed you may find inflammation or other trouble of the respiratory organs.

Good respiration is essential to a good milk flow. In making choice of a cow, see that the chest is long and the ribs set far apart to give lung capacity. Large, tortuous milk veins are always present with the good milker. A dull eyed cow is seldom a good milk cow. A hollow back is a sign of poor breeding, or hastened maturity.

The neck of a good milker is delicate in proportion to her general build, and a little out of proportion as to length. Hind quarters must be heavy and set well apart. A cow with an extra milk flow should be a hearty eater. A good milk cow is seldom a handsome cow.—Indianapolis News.

#### PUDDLING THE ROOTS.

The advice is often given to puddle the roots of trees and other plants before planting. In puddling, a quantity of soil is stirred with water until it becomes a paste of a rather thick consistency. The roots are then immersed in this and thoroughly coated over. This practice has its advantages, and yet its purpose should be kept clearly in mind. If followed blindly, as it sometimes is, bad results follow. In a puddles soil the soil particles are compacted, making it practically an impervious soil and one that excludes both air and moisture. This impervious coat of cemented soil, as it were, may serve as an excellent protection to prevent the roots of plants from drying out and being exposed to the air while in transit. However, it should always be removed before planting, especially on plants having small roots, such as the strawberry. If planted in a puddled condition the roots are bundled together in a mass instead of being properly spread out so that each one comes in contact with the moist soil. In addition to this the roots of all plants require oxygen. This coat of cemented soil is largely impervious and hence oxygen is excluded, which is not a good condition for growth. The feeders of the plant are the delicate threadlike hairs which are emitted freely on the distant ends of the roots. If the roots are planted with this puddled coat on them, especially if it has been allowed to dry out and harden, the root hairs are unable to penetrate it.

In fact, with the improved methods of packing where the boxes are first lined with a heavy paper to prevent drying out of the plants and then damp moss is used to hold the moisture to the roots, the old, puddling process is of questionable value. Better methods of shipping plants are now in vogue. At any rate, if it is used, strawberries and other plants should not be planted before it is removed.—National Fruit Grower.

Corn should be cultivated from the start. The weeder is a new implement now in extensive use; it makes sad havoc with the early weeds without injuring the young corn, and it is also a very simple contrivance. Many farmers, however, who have not changed their methods, prefer to begin with a smoothing harrow for the first working and then use the cultivator. The weeder should be used only for young weeds. The cultivator is the proper implement after the corn gets well under way, and after the spring rains are followed by dry weather, as the stirring of the surface soil is one of the surest modes of protecting the crop from the effects of drought. If the plowing is deep, and the soil harrowed fine, it will absorb and hold more water than when the work is not so carefully done, and this stored water in the soil is retained by the blanket of loose soil made by the cultivator. The cultivator also destroys the weeds and grass, and as the weeds will rob the plants of moisture, it is important that they be destroyed as soon as they come up out of the ground. Never allow weeds or grass to grow in the corn rows as long as the cultivator can be used, and never "lay by" the corn as long as a horse can be worked in the rows if weeds or grass are noticed. Shallow cultivation is better than going deeper, as the object should be to disturb the corn roots more than to complicate the plants as possible.—Philadelphia Record.

VARIATIONS IN WOOD ASHES. There is no commercial fertilizer that is more variable in composition than wood ashes, and while such ashes are valuable under certain conditions it is unsafe to buy them without first having the percentage of potash ascertained by an analysis. Experiments have shown that there is a vast range in the percentage of potash in different samples of wood ashes, hence, without the analysis, as suggested, one may easily be led into paying double the value of the ashes. There is not much variation in the phosphoric acid content, but as the chief need of the wood ashes is for the potash content, one easily sees the importance of being reasonably sure the ashes contain the desired proportion of potash. The value of this suggestion would be easily seen if the crop to be grown were potatoes, where if the ashes were used as a fertilizer at all they would be used almost wholly for the potash they contained.—Indianapolis News.

#### FARM TIMBER CULTURE.

At the present rate of consumption the timber supply of the United States in view will, according to B. E. Fenton, be exhausted within thirty years. As sixty to one hundred years are required for the production of a full crop malleable timber, and for other reasons, few farmers can engage in this business. For the production of wood for fuel purposes, however, the time required is only twenty to thirty years, and waste lands may be utilized for this purpose. It is claimed also that catalpa can be profitably grown for railroad ties and fence posts, also chestnut for the same purposes.

Physicians believe that one good turn deserves another. The doctor pays a visit and the visit pays the doctor.

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#### Opportunities In the South.

No portion of the United States has made greater progress in the past year or two than the South. Northern and foreign capital is rapidly invading that section, finding profitable investment in the various industries and factories that are being rapidly developed and built. The great influx of settlers is creating an increased demand for lands of all kinds, and prices are gradually advancing, as they will for years to come. Work is plentiful and