

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE PASTOR'S WIFE."*

Ever since the talented English author of "Elizabeth and Her German Garden" delighted us with her skill in portraiture, her descriptions of scenery, and her wit—most especially her wit, since there is all too little of it in the world, and this is of a rare quality—we have eagerly awaited new books from the same pen, and "The Pastor's Wife," just published, comes at an opportune moment to lessen the tension of life by making us smile, and to describe for us the province of East Prussia, of which, just now, we hear so much and know so little.

We meet the heroine, Ingeborg—daughter of the Bishop of Redchester, "handsome as an archangel,"—in Regent Street, tingling with life and happiness keenly sensitive to the beauty of a London afternoon.

Unexpected freedom had come to Ingeborg because the London dentist by a skilful extraction had in a few minutes relieved her of the unbearable pain in an offending tooth, which the local dentist had only tortured with tentative stopping.

So it fell out that, relieved of pain, with ten days' freedom, and a £10 note in her pocket, she succumbed to the temptation of the announcement "A week in lovely Lucerne for seven guineas."

Next morning in the train she found herself opposite a "square German gentleman." "The other excursionists were all in pairs; they thought Ingeborg was too, and put her down at first as the German gentleman's wife because he did not speak to her."

The German, whom Nature had intended for a man of science, and fate had made a Lutheran pastor, confided to her that it was a puny life. "It might not be amiss if it were not for the Sundays. . . . They interrupt one's work," he said. "But they *are* your work," she said, puzzled. "No." "Then what," she asked, "do you fill your life up with?" "Manure," said the German gentleman. The ladies leapt in their places. "I am engaged in endeavouring to teach the peasants in my parish how best to farm their poor pieces of land. . . . The infinite combinations of it! When I shut the door on myself in the little laboratory I shut in with me all life, all science, every possibility. I analyse, I synthesize, I separate, reduce, combine. I touch the stars, I stir the depths. The daily world is forgotten. I forget, indeed, everything except my research. And invariably at the most profound, the most exalted moments someone knocks and tells me it is Sunday again, and will I come out and preach."

By the time Dent's party had got to the top of the Rigi the pastor, much to his surprise, discovered that he was in love. Having so decided "He gazed very benevolently at the little figure

* By the author of "Elizabeth and her German Garden." Smith, Elder & Co., 15, Waterloo Place, S.W.

on the edge of the view. Why not marry her now, and frugally convert the tail end of Dent's Excursion into a honeymoon."

"Tell me, Little One," he said when she rejoined him, "will you marry me?"

Ingeborg was astonished. She stared at him speechless. "It's—very unexpected," she said lamely.

"Yes," he agreed, "it is unexpected. It has greatly surprised me."

That Ingeborg refused him made no difference. He had decided otherwise. Under her bedroom door that night was pushed a letter:—"Little One, I wish to tell you that before going to my room to-night I instructed the hall porter to order a betrothal cake, properly iced, and with what is customary in the matter of silver leaves, to be in the small salon adjoining the smoking-room to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock. Since no man can be betrothed alone, it will be necessary that you should be there."

But when Ingeborg—arrived at home—announced her engagement to a German pastor, not attached in any ecclesiastical capacity to the Kaiser, there was chill disapproval. She was in deep disgrace when the garden party given at the Palace in honour of her sister's betrothal arrived, and with it Herr Dremmel, animated by a single purpose, to marry Ingeborg and get back quickly to his work. He walked in with other visitors, drifted out into the garden, and stumbled upon the local Duchess, who was being embittered by a prebendary of servile habits, who insisted on agreeing with her, and secured her friendship by his expert information on the subject of fertilizers. When the Bishop discovered the identity of his guest the situation became acute.

"Why," said Herr Dremmel, without heeding him, "why—yes—why it *is*—why here at last appears the Little Sugar Lamb," and with a swiftness amazing in one of his appearance, he went down the path, and in the sight of all Redchester, and most of the county, enfolded Ingeborg in his arms. After that their wedding was inevitable.

Considering the risk of marriage after a week's acquaintance with a stranger and a foreigner, much her senior, Ingeborg was wonderfully happy, for the Pastor—when he did not slide off "into regions of reality, the regions in which his brain incessantly worked out possible chemical combinations and forgot with a completeness that sometimes even surprised himself, that he had a wife"—was kindness itself to his "little sheep," and invariably found it pleasant on re-emerging to remember her.

One realizes vividly how much the founding of a family, the begetting of the race, counts with the Teuton. The frank interest in the Frau Pastorin as a young wife, the scanning of her figure by the Baroness, the great lady of the village, indicate this, and when Ingeborg realized how greatly her husband desired a child, her zeal to meet his wishes made her run to his

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