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THE PASTOR'S WIFE

_By the Author of "Elizabeth and Her German Garden" _

_Illustrated by Arthur Litle _

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1914

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

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN ADVENTURES OF ELIZABETH IN RÄœGEN FRÄ„ULEIN SCHMIDT
AND MR. ANSTRUTHER PRINCESS PRISCILLA'S FORTNIGHT THE SOLITARY SUMMER THE CARAVANERS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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

"Then why," she asked, with the courage of curiosity, "are you a pastor?"

"Will you not, Ingeborg," said Herr Dremmel, calling her for the first time by her name, "cut the cake?"

"But—father, I've been doing it too"

He could no longer walk around his own garden without meeting an interlaced couple

"You are married to her?" asked the elder Frau Dremmel, turning her pebble eyes slowly from one to the other

Especially her gaze lingered on her feet. Becoming aware of this, Ingeborg tried to hide them

"But these are very wonderful," she said, taking up the sketches. "I wish I were really like that."

PART I

CHAPTER I

On that April afternoon all the wallflowers of the world seemed to her released body to have been piled up at the top of Regent Street so that she should walk in fragrance.

She was in this exalted mood, the little mouse-coloured young lady slipping along southwards from Harley Street, because she had just had a tooth out. After weeks of miserable indifference she was quivering with responsiveness again, feeling the relish of life, the tang of it, the jollity of all this bustle and hurrying past of busy people. And the beauty of it, the beauty of it, she thought, fighting a tendency to loiter in the middle of the traffic to have a good look--the beauty of the sky across the roofs of the houses, the delicacy of the mistiness that hung down there over the curve of the street, the loveliness of the lights beginning to shine in the shop windows. Surely the colour of London was an exquisite thing. It was like a pearl that late afternoon, something very gentle and pale, with faint blue shadows. And as for its smell, she doubted, indeed, whether heaven itself could smell better, certainly not so interesting. "And anyhow," she said to herself, lifting her head a moment in appreciation, "it can't possibly smell more alive."

She herself had certainly never been more alive. She felt electric. She would not have been surprised if sparks had come crackling out of the tips of her sober gloves. Not only was she suddenly and incredibly relieved from acute pain, but for the first time in her life of twenty-two years she was alone. This by itself, without the business of the tooth, was enough to make a dutiful, willing, and hardworked daughter tingle. She would have tingled if by some glorious chance a whole free day had come to her merely inside the grey walls of the garden at home; but to be free and idle in London, to have them all so far away, her family down there in the west, to have them so necessarily silent, so oddly vague already and pallid in the distance! Yet she had only left them that morning; it was only nine hours since her father, handsome as an archangel, silvery of head and gaitered of leg, had waved her off from the doorstep with offended resignation. "And do not return, Ingeborg," he had called into the fly where she sat holding her face and trying not to rock, "till you are completely set right. Even a week. Even ten days. Have them all seen to."

For the collapse of Ingeborg, daunted into just a silent feverish thing of pain, had convulsed the ordered life at home. Her family bore it for a week with perfect manners and hardly a look of reproach. Then they sent her to the Redchester dentist, a hitherto sufficient man, who tortured her with tentative stoppings and turned what had been dull and smooth into excitement and jerks. Then, unable to resist a feeling that self-control would have greatly helped, it began to find the etiquette of Christian behaviour, which insisted on its going on being silent while she more and more let herself go, irksome. The Bishop wanted things in vain. Three times he had to see himself off alone at the station and not be met when he came back. Buttons, because they were not tightened on in time, burst from his gaiters, and did it in remote places like railway carriages. Letters were unanswered, important ones. Engagements, vital ones, through lack of reminders went unkept. At last it became plain, when she seemed not even to wish to answer when spoken to or to move when called, that this apathy and creeping away to hide could not further be endured. Against all tradition, against every home principle, they let a young

unmarried daughter loose. With offended reluctance they sent her to London to a celebrity in teeth--after all it was not as if she had been going just to enjoy herself--"And your aunt will please forgive us," said the Bishop, "for taking her in this manner unawares."

The aunt, a serious strong lady, was engaged for political meetings in the north, and had gone away to them that very morning, leaving a letter and her house at Ingeborg's disposal for so long as the dentist needed her. The dentist, being the best that money could buy, hardly needed her at all. He pounced unerringly and at once on the right tooth and pulled it out. There were no stoppings, no delays, no pain, and no aunt. Never was a life more beautifully cleared. Ingeborg went away down Harley Street free, and with ten pounds in her pocket. For the rest of this one day, for an hour or two to-morrow morning before setting out for Paddington and home, she could do exactly as she liked.

"Why, there's nothing to prevent me going anywhere this evening," she thought, stopping dead as the full glory of the situation slowly dawned on her. "Why, I could go out somewhere really grand to dinner, just as people do I expect in all the books I'm not let read, and then I could go to the play--nobody could prevent me. Why, I could go to a music-hall if I chose, and still nobody could prevent me!"

Audacious imaginings that made her laugh--she had not laughed for weeks--darted in and out of her busy brain. She saw herself in her mouse-coloured dress reducing waiters in marble and gilt places to respect and slavery by showing them her ten pounds. She built up lurid fabrics of possible daring deeds, and smiled at the reflection of herself in shop windows as she passed, at the sobriety, the irreproachableness of the sheath containing these molten imaginings. Why, she might hire a car--just telephone, and there you were with it round in five minutes, and go off in the twilight to Richmond Park or Windsor. She had never been to Richmond Park or Windsor; she had never been anywhere; but she was sure there would be bats and stars out there, and water, and the soft duskiness of trees and the smell of wet earth, and she could drive about them a little, slowly, so as to feel it all, and then come back and have supper somewhere--have supper at the Ritz, she thought, of which she had read hastily out of the corner of an eye between two appearances of the Bishop, in the more interesting portions of the Times--just saunter in, you know. Or she could have dinner first; yes, dinner first--dinner at Claridge's. No, not at Claridge's; she had an aunt who stayed there, another one, her mother's sister, rich and powerful, and it was always best not to stir up rich and powerful aunts. Dinner at the Thackeray H[^]tel, perhaps. That was where her father's relations stayed, fine-looking serious men who once were curates and, yet earlier, good and handsome babies. It was near the British Museum, she had heard. Its name and surroundings suggested magnificence of a nobler sort than the Ritz. Yes, she would dine at the Thackeray H[^]tel and be splendid.

Here, coming to a window full of food, she became aware that, wonderfully, and for the first time for weeks, she was hungry; so hungry that she didn't want dinner or supper or anything future, but something now. She went in; and all her gilded visions of the Ritz and the Thackeray H[^]tel were swamped in one huge cup (she felt how legitimate and appropriate a drink it was for a bishop's daughter without a chaperon, and ordered the biggest size costing four-pence) of Aerated Bread Shop cocoa.

It was six o'clock when she emerged, amazingly nourished, from that strange place where long-backed elderly men with tired eyes were hurriedly eating poached eggs on chilly little clothless marble tables, and continued down Regent Street.

She now felt strangely settled in her mind. She no longer wanted to go to the Ritz. Indeed the notion of dining anywhere with the cocoa clothing her internally as with a garment--a thick winter garment,

almost she thought like the doser kinds of fur--was revolting. She still felt enterprising, but a little clogged. She thought now more of things like fresh air and exercise. Not now for her the heat and glitter of a music-hall. There was a taste in that pure drink that was irreconcilable with music-halls, a satisfying property in its unadulteratedness, its careful cleanliness, that reminded her she was the daughter of a bishop. Walking away from the Aerated Bread Shop rather gravely, she remembered that she had a mother on a sofa; an only sister who was so beautiful that it was touching; and a class of boys, once unruly and now looking up to her--in fact, that she had a position to keep up. She was still happy, but happy now in a thoroughly nice way; and she would probably have gone back in this warmed and solaced condition to her aunt's house in Bedford Square and an evening with a book and an early bed if her eye had not been caught by a poster outside an office sort of place she was passing, a picture of water and mountains, with written on it in big letters:

A WEEK IN LOVELY LUCERNE SEVEN DAYS FOR SEVEN GUINEAS THOSE WHO INTEND TO JOIN NEXT TRIP INQUIRE WITHIN

Now Ingeborg's maternal grandmother had been a Swede, a creature of toughness and skill on skis, a young woman, when caught surprisingly by the washed-out English tourist Ingeborg's grandfather, drenched in frank reading and thinking and in the smell of the abounding forests and in wood strawberries and sour cream. She had lived, up to the day when for some quite undiscoverable reason she allowed herself to be married to the narrow stranger, in the middle of big beautiful things--big stretches of water, big mountains, big winds, big lonelineses; and Ingeborg, who had never been out of England and had spent years in the soft and soppy west, seeing the picture of the great lake and the great sky in the window in Regent Street, felt a quick grip on her heart.

It was the fingers of her grandmother.

She stood staring at the picture, half-remembering, trying hard to remember quite, something beautiful and elusive and remote that once she had known--oh, that once she had known--but that she kept on somehow forgetting. The urgencies of daily life in episcopal surroundings, the breathless pursuit of her duties, the effort all day long to catch them up and be even with them, the Bishop's buttons, the Bishop's speeches, the Bishop's departures by trains, his all-pervadingness when at home, his all-engulfing mass of correspondence when away--"She is my Right Hand," he would say in stately praise--the Redchester tea-parties to which her mother couldn't go because of the sofa, the county garden-parties to which Judith had to be taken, the callers, the bazaars, the cathedral services, the hurry, the noise--life at home seemed the noisiest thing--these had smothered and hidden, beaten down, put out and silenced that highly important and unrecognized part of her, her little bit of lurking grandmother. Now, however, this tough but impulsive lady rose within her in all her might. Her granddaughter was in exactly the right state for being influenced. She was standing there staring, longing, seething with Scandinavia, and presently arguing.

Why shouldn't she? The Bishop, as she had remarked with wonder earlier in the afternoon, seemed to have faded quite pallid that long way off. And arrangements had been made. He had engaged an extra secretary; his chaplain had been warned; Judith was going perhaps to do something; her mother would stay safely on the sofa. They did not expect her back for at least a week, and not for as much longer as her tooth might ache. If her tooth were still in her mouth it would be aching. If the dentist had decided to stop it, it would have been a fortnight before such a dreadful ache as that could be suppressed, she was sure it would. And the ten pounds her father had given her for taxis and tips and

other odds and ends, spread over a fortnight what would have been left of it anyhow? Besides, he had said--and indeed the Bishop, desirous of taking no jot from his generosity in the whole annoying business, had said it, and said it with the strong flavour of Scripture which hung about even his mufti utterances--that she might keep any fragments of it that remained that nothing be lost.

"Your father is very good to you," said her mother, in whose prostrate presence the gift had been made.--"But bishops," flashed across Ingeborg's undisciplined and jerky mind, "have to be good"--(she caught the flash, however, and choked it out before it had got half-way)--"you'll be able to get yourself a spring hat."

"Yes, mother," said Ingeborg, holding her face.

"And I should think a blouse as well," said her mother thoughtfully.

"Yes, mother."

"My dear, remember I require Ingeborg here," said the Bishop, uneasy at this vision of an indispensable daughter delayed by blouses. "You will not, of course, forget that, Ingeborg."

"No, father."

And here she was forgetting it. Here she was in front of a common poster forgetting it. What the Ritz and the Thackeray H^{tel} with all their attractions had not been able to do, that crude picture did. She forgot the Bishop--or rather he seemed at that distance such a little thing, such a little bit of a thing, a tiny little black figure with a dab of white on its top, compared to this vision of splendid earth and heaven, that she wilfully would not remember him. She forgot her accumulating work. She forgot that her movements had all first to be sanctioned. A whirl of Scandinavianism, of violent longing for freedom and adventure, seemed to catch her and lift her out of the street and fling her into a place of maps and time-tables and helpful young men framed in mahogany.

"When--when--" she stammered breathlessly, pointing to a duplicate of the same poster hanging inside, "when does the next trip start?"

"To-morrow, madam," said the young man her question had tumbled on.

A solemnity fell upon her. She felt it was Providence. She ceased to argue. She didn't even try to struggle. "I'm going," she announced.

And her ten pounds became two pounds thirteen, and she walked away conscious of nothing except that the very next day she would be off.

CHAPTER II

She was collected by the official leader of this particular Dent's Excursion at Charing Cross the next morning and swept into a second-class carriage with nine other excursionists, and next door there were more--she counted eighteen of them at one time crowding round the leader asking him questions--and besides these there was a crowd of ordinary passengers bustling about with holiday expressions, and several runaway couples, and every single person seemed like herself eager to be off.

The runaway couples, from the ravaged expressions on their faces, were being torn by doubts, perhaps already by repentances; but Ingeborg, though she was deceiving her father who, being a bishop, should have been peculiarly inviolate, and her mother who, being sofa-ridden, should have appealed to her better nature, and her sister who, being exquisite, should have been guarded from any shadow that might dim her beauty, had none. She had been frightened that morning while she was packing and getting herself out of her aunt's house. The immense conviction of the servants that she was going home cowed her. And she had had to say little things--Paddington, for instance, to the taxi driver when she knew she meant Charing Cross, and had blushed when she changed it through the window. But here she was, and there was a crowd of people doing exactly the same thing whose secure jollity, except in the case of those odd, sad couples, was contagious, and she felt both safe and as though she were the most normal creature in the world.

"What _fun_," she thought, her blood dancing as she watched the swarming, surging platform, "what _fun_."

Often had she been at the Redchester station in attendance on her departing father, but what a getting off was that compared with this hilarity. There was bustle, of course, because trains won't wait and people won't get out of the way, but the Bishop's bustlings, particularly when their end was confirmations, were conducted with a kind of frozen offendedness; there was no life in him, she thought, remembering them, he didn't let himself go. On the other hand, she reflected, careful to be fair, you couldn't snatch illicitly at things like confirmations in the way you could at a Dent's Tour and devour them in secret with a fearful hidden joy. She felt like a bulb must feel, she thought, at the supreme moment when it has nosed its little spear successfully up through the mould it has endured all the winter and gets it suddenly out into the light and splendour of the world. The freedom of it! The joy of getting _clear_!

The excursionists in the carriage struggled to reach the window across her feet and say things to their friends outside. They all talked at once, and the carriage was full of sound and gesticulations. The friends on the platform could not hear, but they nodded and smiled sympathetically and shouted at intervals that it was going to be a good crossing. Everybody was being seen off except herself and the runaway couples; indeed, you could know which those were by the gaps along the platform. She sat well back in her place, anxious to make herself as convenient as possible and to get her feet tucked out of the way, a typical daughter of provincial England and a careful home and the more expensive dergy, well-dressed, inconspicuous, and grey. Her soft mouse-colour hat, as the fashion that spring still went on decreeing in the west, came down well over her eyes and ears, and little rings of cheerful hair of a Scandinavian colouring wantoned beneath it. Her small face was swallowed up in the shadow of the hat; you saw a liberal mouth with happy corners, and the nostrils of a selective nose, and there was an impression of freckles, and of a very fair sunny sort of skin.

The square German gentleman opposite her, knowing nobody in London and therefore being, but for a different and honourable reason, in her position of not having any one to see him off, filled up the time by staring. Entirely unconscious that it might be embarrassing he sat and stared. With the utmost singleness of mind he wished to see the rest of her, when he would be able to determine whether she were pretty or not.

Ingeborg, absorbed by the wild excitement on the platform, had not noticed him; but immediately the train started and the other passengers had sorted themselves into their seats and were beginning the furtive watchfulness of one another that was presently to resolve itself into acquaintanceship, she knew there was something large and steady opposite that was concentrated upon herself.

She looked up quickly to see what it was, and for a moment her polite intelligent eyes returned his stare. He decided that she had missed being pretty, and with a faint regret wondered what God was about.

"Fattened up--yes, possibly," he thought. "Fattened up--yes, perhaps."

And he went on staring because she happened to be exactly opposite, and there was nothing else except tunnels to look at.

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. There were two couples of young women, one of ladies of a riper age, and one of earnest young men who were mentioning Balzac to each other almost before they had got to New Cross. Indeed, a surprising atmosphere of culture pervaded the compartment. Ingeborg was astonished. Except the riper ladies, who persisted in talking about Shoolbred, they were all presently saying educated things. Balzac, Blake, Bernard Shaw, and Mrs. Florence Barclay were bandied backwards and forwards across the carriage as lightly and familiarly as though they had been balls. In the far corner Browning was being compared with Tennyson; in the middle, Dickens with Thackeray. The two elder ladies, who kept to Shoolbred, formed a sort of dam between these educated overflowings and the silent back-water in which Ingeborg and the German gentleman sat becalmed. Presently, owing to a politeness that could not allow even an outlying portion of anyone else's clothing or belongings to be brushed against without "Excuse me" having been said and "Don't mention it" having been answered, acquaintanceships were made; chocolates were offered; they introduced each other to each other; for a brief space the young men's caps were hardly on their heads, and the air was murmurous with gratified noises. But the two riper ladies, passionately preoccupied by Shoolbred, continued to dam up Ingeborg and her opposite neighbour into a stagnant and unfruitful isolation.

She tried to peep round the lady next to her, who jutted out like a mountain with mighty boulders on it, so as to see the three people hidden in the valley beyond. Glimpses of their knees revealed that they were just like the ones on the seat opposite. They were neat knees, a little threadbare; not with the delicate threadbareness of her own home in the palace at Redchester, where splendours of carved stone and black oak and ancient glass were kept from flaunting their pricelessness too obviously in the faces of the local supporters of Disestablishment by a Christian leanness in the matter of carpets, but knees that were inexpensive because they had to be. Who were these girls and young men, and the two abundant ladies, and the man with the vast thick head and unalterable stare? All people who did things, she was certain. Not just anything, like herself, but regular things that began and stopped at fixed times, that were paid for. That was why they were able to do frankly and honourably what she was snatching at furtively in a corner. For a brief astonishing instant she was aware she liked the corner way best.

Staggered at this, for she could in no way reconcile it with the Bishop, the cathedral, the home, nor with any of her thoughts down there while enfolded in these three absorbing influences, she tried to follow her father's oft-repeated advice and look into herself. But it did not help much. She saw, indeed, that she was doing an outrageous thing, but then she was very happy—happier than she had ever been in Redchester, plied with legitimate episcopal joys. There was a keenness about this joy, the salt freshness of something jolly and indefensible done in secret. She did look at penitence sideways for an instant, but almost, at once decided that it was a thing that comes afterwards. First you do your thing. You must of course do your thing, or there couldn't be any penitence.

She sat up very straight, her face lit with these thoughts that both amused and frightened her, her lips slightly parted, her eyes radiant, ready for anything life had to offer.

"A little fattened up," thought the German gentleman; "a _little_ even would probably suffice."

There was to be a night in Paris--no time to see it, but you can't have everything, and Paris is Paris--and next morning into the train again, and down, down, all down the slope of the map of France to BÃ¢le, the Gate of Beauty, surely of heavenly beauty, and then you got there, and there were five whole days of wonder, and then....

Her thoughts hesitated. Why then she supposed, making an effort, you began to come back. And then....

But here she thought it wisest not to go on thinking.

"Excuse me, but do you mind having that window up?" asked the lady on her right.

"Oh, no," said Ingeborg, darting at the strap with the readiness to help and obey she had been so carefully practised in.

It was stiff, and she fumbled at it, wondering a little why the man opposite just watched.

When she had got it up he undid the woollen scarf round his neck and unbuttoned the top button of his overcoat.

"At last," he said in a voice of relief, heaving an enormous sigh.

He looked at her and smiled.

Instantly she smiled back. Any shreds of self-consciousness she may have had clinging to her in her earlier days had been finally scraped off when Judith, that amazing piece of loveliness, came out.

"Were you cold?" she asked, with the friendly interest of a boy.

"Naturally. When windows are open one is always cold."

"Oh!" said Ingeborg, who had never thought of that.

She perceived from his speech that he was a foreigner. From the turned-down collar and white tie beneath his opened scarf she also was made aware that he was a minister of religion. "How they pursue me," she thought. Even here, even in a railway carriage reserved for Dent's excursionists only, one of them had filtered through. She also saw that he was of a drab complexion, and that his hair, drab, too, and close-cropped and thick, seemed to be made of beaver.

"But that's what windows are _for_," she said, after reflecting on it.

"No."

The two large ladies let Shoolbred pause while they looked at each other.

They considered Ingeborg's behaviour forward. She ought not to have spoken first. Impossible on a Dent's Tour not to make friends--indeed the social side of these excursions is the most important--but there are rules. The other end of the carriage had observed the rules. The two ladies hoped they had not joined anything not quite high-toned. The other end had carried out the rules with rigid *savoir-vivre*; had accidentally touched and trodden on; had apologised; had had its apologies accepted; had introduced and been introduced; and so had cleared the way to chocolates.

"No?" repeated Ingeborg inquiringly.

"The aperture was there first," said the German gentleman.

"Of course," said Ingeborg, seeing he waited for her to admit it.

"And in the fulness of the ages came man, and mechanically shut it."

"Yes," said Ingeborg. "But--"

"Consequently, the function of windows is to shut apertures."

"Yes. But--"

"And not to open that which, without them, was open already."

"Yes. But--"

"It would be illogical," said the German gentleman patiently, "to contend that their function is to open that which, without them, was open already."

Reassured by the word illogical, which was a nice word, well known to and quite within the spirit of a Dent's Tour, the two ladies went on with Shoolbred where they had left him off.

"The first day I was in England I went about logically, and shut each single window in my boarding-house. I then discovered that this embittered the atmosphere around me."

"It would thicken it," nodded Ingeborg, interested.

"It did. And my calling after all being that of peace, and my visit so short, that whatever happened could be endured, I relinquished logic and purchased in its place a woollen scarf. This one. Then I gave myself up unrestrictedly to their air."

"And did you like it?"

"It made me recollect with pleasure that I was soon going home. In East Prussia there are, on the one hand, drawbacks; but, on the other, are double windows, stoves, and a just proportion of feathers for each man's bed. Till the draughts and blankets of the boarding-house braced me to enduring instead of enjoying I had thought my holiday too short, and when I remembered my life and work at home--my official life and work--it had been appearing to me puny."

"Puny?" said Ingeborg, her eyes on his white tie.

"Puny. The draughts and blankets of the boarding-house cured me. I am returning gladly. My life there, I say to myself, may be puny but it is warm. So," he added, smiling, "a man learns content."

"Taught by draughts and blankets?"

"Taught by going away."

"Oh?" said Ingeborg. Had Providence then only led her to that poster in order that she should learn content? Were Dent's Tours really run, educationally, by Providence?

"But--" she began, and then stopped.

"It is necessary to go away in order to come back," said the German gentleman, again with patience.

"Yes. Of course. But--"

"The chief use of a holiday is to make one hungry to have finished with it."

"Oh _no_," she protested, the joy of holiday in her voice.

"Ah. You are at the beginning."

"The very beginning."

"Yet at the end you, too, will return home reconciled."

She looked at him and shook her head.

"I don't think reconciled is quite the--" She paused, thinking. "To what?" she went on. "To puniness, too?"

The two ladies faltered in their conversation, and glanced at Ingeborg, and then at each other.

"Perhaps not to puniness. You are not a pastor."

There was a distinct holding of the breath of the two ladies. The German gentleman's slow speech fell very clearly on their sudden silence.

"No," said Ingeborg. "But what has that--"

"I am. And it is a puny life."

Ingeborg felt a slight curdling. She thought of her father--also, if you come to that, a pastor. She was sure there was nothing in anything he ever did that would strike him as puny. His life was magnificent and important, filled to bursting point with a splendid usefulness and with a tendency to fill the lives of everyone who came within his reach to their several bursting points, too. But he, of course, was a prince of the Church. Still, he had gone through the Church's stages, beginning humbly; yet she doubted whether at any moment of his career he had looked at it and thought it puny. And was it not indeed the highest career of all? However breathless and hurried it made one's female relations in its upper reaches, and drudging in its lower, the very highest?

But though she was curdled she was interested.

"It might not be amiss," continued the pastor, looking out of the window at some well-farmed land they were passing, "if it were not for the Sundays."

Again she was curdled.

"But--"

"They spoil it."

She was silent; and the silence of the two ladies appeared to acquire a frost.

"It is the fatal habit of Sundays," he went on, following the disappearing land with his eyes, "to recur."

He paused, as if waiting for her to agree.

She had to, because it was a truth one could not get away from. "Yes," she said, reluctantly. "Of course. It's their nature." Then a wave of memories suddenly broke over her, and she added warmly "Oh _don't_ they!"

The frost of the ladies seemed to settle down. It grew heavy.

"They interrupt one's work," he said.

"But they _are_ your work," she said, puzzled.

"No."

She stared. "But," she began, "a pastor--"

"A pastor is also a man."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, "but--"

"You have no doubt observed that he is, invariably, also a man."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, "but--"

"And a man of intelligence--I am a man of intelligence--cannot fill up his life with the meagre materials offered by the practice of the tenets of the Lutheran Church."

"Oh--the _Lutheran_ Church," said Ingeborg, catching at a straw.

"Any church."

She was silent. She felt how immensely her father would not have liked it. She felt it was wicked to sit there and listen. She also felt, strange and dreadful to observe, refreshed.

"Then," she began, knitting her brows, for really this at its best was bad taste, and bad taste, she had always been taught, was the very worst--oh, but how nice it was, a little bit of it, after the swamps of good taste one waded about in in cathedral cities! She knitted her brows, aghast at her thoughts. "Then what," she asked, "_do_ you fill your life up with?"

"Manure," said the German gentleman.

The ladies leapt in their places.

"Ma--" began Ingeborg; then stopped.

"I am engaged in endeavouring to teach the peasants of my parish how best to farm their poor pieces of land."

"Oh, really," said Ingeborg, politely.

"I do it by example. They do not attend to words. I have bought a few acres and experiment before their eyes. Our soil is the worst in Germany. It is inconceivably thankless. And the peasants resemble it."

"Oh, really," said Ingeborg.

"The result of the combination is poverty."

"So then, I suppose," said Ingeborg, with memories of the Bishop's methods, "you preach patience."

"Patience! I preach manure."

Again at the dreadful word the ladies leapt.

"It is," he said solemnly, his eyes glistening with enthusiasm, "the foundation of a nation's greatness."

"I hadn't thought of it like that," said Ingeborg, seeing that he waited.

"But on what then does a State depend in the last resort?"

She was afraid to say, for there seemed to be so many possible answers.

"Naturally on its agriculture," said the pastor, with the slight irritation of one obliged to linger over the obvious.

"Of course," said the pliable Ingeborg, trained in acquiescence.

"And on what does agriculture depend in the last resort?"

Brilliantly she hazarded "Manure."

For the third time the ladies leapt, and the one next to her drew away her dress.

He showed his appreciation of her intelligence by nodding slowly.

"A nation must be fed," he said, "and empty fields will feed no one."

"Of course not," said Ingeborg.

"So that it is the chief element in all progress; for the root of progress flourishes only in a filled stomach."

The ladies began to fan themselves violently, nervously, one with The Daily Mirror the other with Answers.

"Of course," said Ingeborg.

"First," said the German gentleman, "you fill your stomach--"

The lady next to Ingeborg made a sudden lunge across her at the strap.

"Excuse me, but do you mind putting that window down?" she said in a sort of burst.

The German gentleman, stemmed in his speech, used the interval while Ingeborg opened the window in buttoning up his overcoat again with care and patience and readjusting his muffler.

When he had attended to these things he resumed his enthusiasm; he seemed to switch it on again.

"The infinite combinations of it!" he exclaimed. "It's infinite varieties! Kali, Kainit, Chilisaltpetre, Superphosphates"--he rolled out the words as though they were the verse of a psalm. "When I shut the door on myself in the little laboratory I have constructed 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."

[Illustration: "Then why," she asked, with the courage of curiosity, "are you a pastor?"]

He looked at her indignantly, demanding sympathy. "Preach!" he repeated.

"Then why," she asked, with the courage of curiosity, "are you a pastor?"

"Because my father made me one."

"But why are you still one?"

"Because a man must live."

"He oughtn't to want to," said Ingeborg with a faint flush, for she had been carefully trained to shyness when it came to pronouncing opinions--the Bishop called it being womanly--"he oughtn't to want to at the cost of his convictions."

"Nevertheless," said the pastor, "he does."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, obliged to admit it; even at Redchester cases were not unknown. "He does," she said, nodding. "Of course he does." And unable not to be at least as honest as the pastor she added: "And so does a woman."

"Naturally," said the pastor.

She looked at him a moment, and then said impulsively, pulling herself a little forward towards him by the window strap--

"_This_ woman does. She's doing it now."

The two ladies exchanged glances and fluttered their fans faster.

"Which woman?" inquired the pastor, whose mastery of English, though ripe, was not nimble.

"This one," said Ingeborg, pointing at herself. "Me. I'm living at this very moment--I'm whirling along in this train--I'm running away for this holiday entirely at the cost of my convictions."

CHAPTER III

After this it was not to be expected that Dent's Tour should look favourably on either Ingeborg or the German gentleman. Running away? And something happened at Dover that clinched it in its coldness.

The train had slowed down, and the excursionists had become busy and were all standing up expectant and swaying with their bags and umbrellas ready in their hands, except Ingeborg and the pastor. The train stopped, and still the two at the door did not move. They were so much interested in what they were saying that they went on sitting there, barbarously corking up the congested queue inside the carriage while streams of properly liberated passengers poured past the window on their way to the best places on the boat.

The queue heaved and waited, holding on to its good manners till the last possible moment, quite anxious, with the exception of the two ladies who were driven to the very verge of naturalness by the things they had had to listen to, lest it should be forced to show what it was feeling (for what one is feeling, Dent's excursionists had surprisingly discovered, is always somehow something rude), and seconds passed and still it was kept there heaving.

Then the pastor, gazing with a large unhurried interest at the people pushing by the window, people disfigured by haste and the greed for the best places on the boat, said in a voice of mild but penetrating complaint--it almost seemed as if in that congested moment he saw only leisure for musing aloud--"But why does the good God make so many ugly old women?"

It was when he said this that the mountainous lady at the head of the queue flung behaviour to the winds and let herself go uncontrolledly. "_Will_ you allow me to pass?" she cried. Nor did she give him another instant's grace, but pressed between his and Ingeborg's knees, followed torrentially by the released remainder.

"To keep us all waiting there just while he blasphemed!" she panted on the platform to her friend.

And during the rest of the time the party was together it retired, led by these two ladies, into an icy exclusiveness, outside which and left together all day long Ingeborg and the pastor could not but make friends.

They did. They talked and they walked, they climbed and they sight-saw. They did everything Dent had arranged, going with him but not of him, always, as it were, bringing up his rear. Equally careful, being equally poor, they avoided the extras which seemed to lurk beckoning at every corner of the day. Their frugality was flagrant, and shocked the other excursionists even more than the dreadful things they said. "Such bad _taste_" the Tour declared when, on the third day, after having provoked criticism by their negative attitude towards afternoon tea and the purchase of picture postcards, they would not lighten its several burdens by taking their share of an uninduded outing in flys along the lake. Even Mr. Ascough, Dent's distracted representative, thought them undesirable, and especially could make nothing of Ingeborg, except that somehow she was not Dent's sort. And the German gentleman, though in appearance a more familiar type, became whenever he opened his mouth grossly unfamiliar. "Foul-mouthed" was the expression the largest lady had used, bearing down on Mr. Ascough at Dover to complain, adding that as she had done all her travelling for years with and through Dent's she felt justified in demanding that this man's mouth should be immediately cleansed.

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