

The Minister's Wife

By MRS. HENRY WOOD

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

Later in the day she seemed a little better; it was the rallying of the spirit before departure. She knew it was deceitful strength, but it put hope into the heart of Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ryle, if he should live, you will always be kind to him?"

"Edith! Kind to him! Oh, my wife, my wife," he uttered, with a burst of irrepresible emotion, "you must not go, and leave him and me."

She waited until he was calmer; she was far more collected than he.

"You will love him?" she reiterated, faintly; "you will always protect him against the world's unkindness?"

"Ay; that I swear to you," he ardently replied. And Edith Baumgarten breathed a sigh of relief, and quietly lay back upon her pillow.

Her voice, hardly to be heard at all, was growing fainter and fainter. Her husband thought it must be the faintness attendant on death; but for a short time she seemed to sleep.

He sat on; his arm beneath her neck, his other hand held one of her hands. All was still; so still that the ticking of Edith's watch, lying on the dressing table, was audible. About ten minutes had thus passed when a slight cry from the infant in the next room, followed by the soothing hush of the nurse, fell upon Mr. Baumgarten's ear.

"Ryle! Ryle!"

"My dear?" he breathed, vexed that her sleep should have been disturbed.

"I have been in that dream again—going on my long, long journey," she said in disjointed syllables. "Oh, Ryle, I know it now; it is the journey of death."

"My dear-wife!" he cried, much distressed.

"The air is—oh, so sweet—and the light at the far end so bright and lovely—and the flowers—look at the flowers! they are the flowers of Heaven! and—and—oh, look! look!"

The tone, growing inaudible, had taken a glad sound of ecstasy; and with the last word, the spirit passed away.

After the funeral of Mrs. Baumgarten the parish flocked to Whitton Cottage to condole with their rector, and to see the baby. He received them with quiet courtesy, but the most sanguine sympathizers could not detect any encouragement for a renewal of the visit. All that could make life pleasant to Mr. Baumgarten was as yet buried in the grave of Edith.

Gradually he began to take notice of the clock; at first he had avoided him. The old servant, Dinah, who had lived with the Danes for years, took charge of him. Mr. Baumgarten would sometimes have him on his knee now, and soon loved him with an impassioned fondness. He had nothing else to love.

Thus the months glided on to winter; the rector fulfilling all his duties as of yore, but leading a very lonely life.

CHAPTER VIII.

One bright, frosty day in January, when the icicles shone in the sun and the blue sky was cloudless, the open carriage of Lady Avon drew up at the rectory gate. After the marriage of Mr. Baumgarten Lady Avon had occasionally attended Little Whitton church as heretofore, but Lady Grace never. She had always excuses ready, and her mother—who had never fathomed, or even suspected the true cause of Grace's caprice as to the living—put faith in them. The countess declined to alight, and Mr. Baumgarten went out to the gate.

"Would it be troubling you very much, Mr. Baumgarten, to come to Avon House occasionally and pass an hour with me?" began she, as they shook hands.

"Certainly not, if you wish it," he replied. "If I can render you any service I shall be very happy to come."

Lady Avon lowered her voice and bent toward him. "I am not happy in my mind, Mr. Baumgarten; not easy. The present world is passing away from me, and I know little of the one I am entering. I don't like the rector of Great Whitton; he does not suit me; but with you I feel at home. I shall be obliged to you to come up once or twice a week and pass a quiet hour with me."

"I will do so. But I hope you find nothing more than usual the matter with your health."

"Time will prove," replied Lady Avon. "How is your little boy?"

"He gets on famously; he is a brave little fellow," returned Mr. Baumgarten, his eyes brightening. "Would you like to see him? I will have him brought out."

"I should like to see him, yes; but I will come in."

He helped her from the low carriage, and gave her his arm up the path, and the most comfortable chair by the parlor fire. The child was brought in by Dinah—a pretty babe in a white frock and black ribbons, the latter worn in memory of his mother.

Lady Avon took him on her knee. "He will resemble you," she said, scanning his face; "he has your eyes exactly, deep and dark"—and she had nearly added "beautiful." The child put his hand upon her emine bo.

"My pretty boy!" she exclaimed, fondly. "What is his name?"

"Cyrus. I know it would have pleased Edith to have him named after her father."

"Ah! Poor Edith!" sighed Lady Avon, as she gave the child back to Dinah, and arose. "Not the least distressing feature of that loss was its suddenness. I wished I could have come over to say farewell."

Mr. Baumgarten sighed in answer, as he again gave his arm to Lady Avon. "By the way," she said, as he was settling her

in the carriage. "I must congratulate you upon getting into the rectory. You paid the cost of the repairs yourself, I believe."

"Yes. I had some money left me unexpectedly, and used it for the purpose."

"Well, I am glad you're in it. Good-day."

Mr. Baumgarten paid his first visit to Avon House on the following day. Lady Grace was alone in the room when he entered. Her countenance flushed crimson, and then grew deadly pale.

Mr. Baumgarten took her hand, almost in compassion; he thought she must be ill. "What has been the matter?" he inquired.

"The matter! Nothing," and she grew crimson again. "Is your visit to mamma? Do you wish to see her?"

"I am here by appointment with Lady Avon."

The countess came into the room, and Grace found that his visits were to be frequent.

From that day they saw a great deal of each other. Lady Grace strove to arm herself against him; she called up pride, anger and many other adjuncts, false as they were vain, for the heart is ever true to itself, and will be heard. It ended in her struggling no longer; in her giving herself up, once more, to the bliss of loving him unchecked.

Did he give himself up to the same, by way of reciprocity? Not of loving her; no, it had not come to it; but he did yield to the charm of liking her, of finding pleasure in her society, of wishing to be more frequently at Avon House.

The Hon. and Rev. Wilfred Elliottsen, claiming a dead earl for a father and a live earl for a brother, was not, of course, a light whose beams could be hid under a bushel, more particularly as the live earl was in the cabinet. It therefore surprised no one that when the excellent old Bishop of Barkaway was gathered to his fathers and a lucky canon, who held one of the best livings in the kingdom, was promoted to his miter, Mr. Elliottsen should step into the canon's shoes, rich living and all. This left Great Whitton vacant. As luck, or the opposite, chanced to have it, Lord Avon was on a few days' visit to his mother when Mr. Elliottsen received his appointment.

"Don't put such another as Elliottsen into Great Whitton, Henry," observed the countess to her son, "or we shall have the parish in rebellion."

"He has not succeeded in pleasing his flock yet, then?" remarked his lordship.

"Give it to Mr. Baumgarten. He is a deserving man, Henry; he will restore peace to the parish, and as a preacher few excel him."

Lord Avon laughed a little as he sat down to face the sofa.

"Why, mother, Baumgarten is the very man I had in my own mind. I thought by your preamble you must have fixed on some one else. I would rather he had it than any other person in the world. I can tell you that the smartest last contempt brought me lingers yet. Let it be Baumgarten; we owe him a recompense."

And that very day the earl, afraid, possibly, of fresh interference, personally offered Great Whitton to Mr. Baumgarten, and shook hands on its acceptance.

That same evening Mr. Baumgarten presented himself at Avon House. Grace Carmel was standing amid the rose trees; she liked to linger in the open air at the dusk hour, to watch the stars come out, and to think of him. But that she wore a white dress, he might not have distinguished her in the fading twilight. He left the open path to join her.

"It is a late visit, Lady Grace, which I must apologize for; I was called out to a sick friend as I was starting, and detained an hour," he said; "but I could not resist coming to say a word of gratitude to Lord Avon."

"Your visit will not accomplish its object, Mr. Baumgarten, for my brother is gone. He left before dinner upon some matter of urgent business in town. Mamma says she is very glad that you will be nearer to us."

"Perhaps I have to thank you for this, as much as Lord Avon," he said.

"No; no, indeed; it was mamma who spoke to Henry; or he to her; they arranged it between them. I—I—"

"What?" he whispered.

"I did not speak to him," she continued, filling up the pause of hesitation. "That is all I was going to say."

But Mr. Baumgarten did not fail to detect how agitated she was. Her trembling hands were busy with the rose trees, though she could scarcely distinguish buds from leaves. Mr. Baumgarten took one hand, and placing it within his own arm, bent down his face until it was on a level with hers. "Grace," he whispered, "have we misunderstood each other?"

She could not speak, but her lips turned white with her emotion. It was the hour of bliss she had so long dreamed of.

"Grace," he continued, in a tone of impassioned tenderness, "have we loved each other through the past, and did I mistake my feelings? Oh, Grace, my best-beloved, forgive me! Forgive my folly and my blindness!"

With a plaintive cry of satisfied yearning, such as may escape from one who suddenly finds a long-sought-for resting place, Grace Carmel turned to his embrace. He held her to him; he covered her face with impassioned kisses, as he had once covered Edith Dane's; he whispered all that man can whisper of poetry and tenderness. She was silent from excess of bliss, but she felt that she could have lain where she was forever.

"You do not speak," he jealously said;

"you do not tell me that you forgive the past. Grace, say but one word; say you love me!"

"Far deeper than another ever did," she murmured. "Oh, Ryle! I will be more to you than she can have been!"

"Grace, pardon my folly," he implored. "I am doing wrong; I have forgotten myself strangely. Forgive, forgive me! It is madness to aspire to you. I have no right to seek to drag you down from your rank to my level."

But she clung to him still. "Your own wife, your own dear wife," she whispered. "Ryle, Ryle; only love me forever."

Never had Lady Avon seen or suspected aught of the case regarding her daughter and Mr. Baumgarten.

The revelation came upon her with a blow. It was Grace who, calling up her courage, imparted it. Lady Avon went into a storm of anger; and then, finding her commands and reproaches produced no impression upon Grace for good, wrote in haste for Lord Avon.

An awful thing had happened, and he must come without a moment's delay, was what she curtly wrote; and the word "awful," he it understood, was in those days used only in its extreme sense, not, as at present, in ridiculous lightness. Lord Avon obeyed.

"Ah," he remarked, as he sat listening to his mother's tale. "I can now understand that past capricious trick Grace played. She must even then have been in love with Baumgarten."

Lady Avon sat in bitter mortification. "What is to be done?" she asked.

"The best plan, so far as I can see, will be to put a good face upon it, and let her have him."

"Do you approve of him for your brother-in-law, pray?"

"No, not altogether. My sister and your daughter ought to have made a very different match. But you know what Grace is, mother; and circumstances alter cases."

It was the plan pursued. It was the only pleasant plan, as Lord Avon had put it, that could be pursued. For Lady Grace held to her own will, and opposition would only have created scandal.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a long, red brick house, large and handsome, as many of these country rectories are; and on the spacious front lawn, one glorious morning at the end of June, might be seen the Rev. Ryle Baumgarten, his wife and children.

Lady Grace sat on a bench under the shade of the lime trees; the rector stood by, talking with her. Two little boys were running about chasing a yellow butterfly.

They were dressed alike, after the fashion of the day, in brown holland blouses, white socks, shoes and broad-brimmed straw hats.

They were wonderfully alike, these two little half-brothers, each possessing his father's face in miniature; the same pale, healthy complexion, the fine, clear-cut features, the dark eyes so deeply set within their long lashes, and the wavy brown hair, soft as silk. But in disposition they were quite different. Cyrus was bold, self-willed, masterful, Charles gentle, pliant and timid. Cyrus was tall and strong, and forward beyond his years; the younger one was yielding, childish and backward. Already Cyrus constituted himself his brother's protector, and Charles in his hands was a tender reed. The affection between them was great, rather unusually so.

Some people had prophesied that Lady Grace would repent her imprudent marriage. They proved to be wrong. Grace was intensely happy in it. She had brought with her only five hundred a year to augment Mr. Baumgarten's means; it was all she would enjoy until Lord Avon's death. She made a fairly kind stepmother to the little Cyrus, but she had not the same affection for him as for Charles. Her baby, now in Jaquet's arms, was a fair girl, the little Gertrude.

A large, low, open carriage, driven by liveried postilion, was stopping at the gate. Mr. Baumgarten hastened to assist Lady Avon from it, and give her his arm. She walked slowly to the bench where her daughter was sitting. She was just the same invalid as ever, had been so all these years; but she did not seem to grow much worse. The boys ran up to her.

"The boys are like their father, Grace," she observed, looking down at the infant; "but Gertrude is like you."

"Yes," assented Grace, with a laugh. "Well, mamma, that is just as it should be, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is, my dear. Which of you little boys will go for a drive with me? It must be you, Cyrus, I think, as it is your birthday."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the boy, eagerly; "I will go. Jaquet, fetch my best hat."

"Me, too," added little Charley.

"No, I can't manage both of you," said Lady Avon. "You shall go another day, Charley; perhaps to-morrow."

"My hat, Jaquet!" again said Cyrus, impatiently, for the girl had not stirred. Lady Grace looked at her.

"Do you hear?" she said, in her haughty way. "Master Cyrus told you to fetch his hat. Bring his little cape as well."

Now this was just what Jaquet hated. For Cyrus to order her about impatiently, and for her lady to confirm it.

"Ryle," said Lady Avon to her son-in-law, when Jaquet had gone for the things, "can you not do something or other to put down that fair?"

She spoke of a pleasure fair which was held every midsummer on Whitton Common, and lasted for a week.

The rector shook his head in answer. "Why, no; how could I, Lady Avon?"

"You have great influence in the parish. Every one looks up to you."

"But I have none over the fair. No one has. It possesses vested interests, you know," added Mr. Baumgarten, laughing, "and they are too strong to be interfered with. I try to induce my people to keep away from it, that is all I can do."

(To be continued.)



Lime and Plant Foods.

Lime enters into the composition of all plants, but its value depends more upon its tendency to hasten chemical action in the soil rather than upon its use as food for plants, and whether the soil is light or heavy, sterile or fertile, there is some change introduced by lime when applied to the land. Its tendency is to work downward, for which reason it is advantageous to apply a small quantity each year after the first application, beginning with twenty bushels per acre on light soils and thirty bushels on heavy land; but even ten bushels will show some results, as lime fits the soil for the presence of micro-organisms which perform an important function when providing plant food, an alkaline condition of the soil being sometimes necessary, especially for clover. As carbonic acid is largely generated by the decomposition of vegetable matter in the soil, the application of lime creates many changes, chemically, in which other mineral and organic substances are broken up in their combinations, rendering soluble many inert materials that could not be employed as plant food, but which exist in the soil abundantly. While lime is not, therefore, a necessary adjunct to the soil with other fertilizers, and gives but little benefit to the crop itself, yet its indirect action unlocks stores of materials, and supplies the crops with available fertilizers. The action of lime in the soil is nearly always beneficial, and farmers who have used lime seldom discard it. It gives the best results on soils that contain large proportions of vegetable matter, and it releases stores of plant foods for the use of crops.

Farmers and Poultry Fanciers.

The farmer has a real grievance against the poultry fancier, in that he has done all of his crossing and in-breeding of fathers, daughters, uncles and aunts without any regard to practical utility, says Farming. Whether the hens from which he has been breeding were producing sixty eggs a year or 200 made no difference. His whole aim has been to breed out a foul flight feather or two, or to create a better comb, or eyes of a better tint, at a sacrifice of everything else. The result is that when a farmer goes into the market to buy thoroughbreds with his money in his pocket, ready and willing to pay for the best stock, he not only often pays for qualities he does not need, but actually pays a premium for something that has been obtained at a sacrifice of the very qualities which he does need. There are a few men, however, raising thoroughbred stock that is "bred to lay," or to meet certain market demands, and those are the men that should be patronized.

Value of Sheep as Cleaners.

Turn sheep almost anywhere on the farm, in the stubble field, the corn-field, around the buildings, in the garden after everything has been harvested, anywhere else that there are weeds or feed of any kind that will be wasted if they do not eat it. The sheep will not only make satisfactory gains and return a good profit on the money invested, but they will add greatly to the appearance of the place and decrease materially the weed crop another year. Sheep will eat weeds and clean up rough feed that no other stock will, and feeder sheep make very satisfactory gains.

All-Around Values in Ashes.

Ashes are commonly valued by farmers for the potash which they are supposed to contain. According to recent experiments in Europe, it appears that the phosphoric acid in the ashes is also more valuable than its quantity would indicate, since even that part which does not dissolve in water is nevertheless easily taken up by plants. The lime in ashes is also of value, more so than generally supposed, when used on land inclined to be sour.

The Great American Hen.

Some one has figured that the American hen each year earns enough to buy all the silver and gold dug out of the mines, all the sheep in the country and their wool and leave a balance equal to the entire year's crop of rye, barley, buckwheat and potatoes. Or, as a hen enthusiast writes, "She pays the interest on all the farm mortgages, pays the entire state and county taxes of the whole Union, and then leaves a balance large enough to give every man, woman and child in the United States a dollar."

Keeping the Cider Sweet.

The keeping of cider as sweet as possible represents another important task in connection with this product. Sassafras bark, or ground cinnamon, are among the preservatives most used in rural homes. In cities the taste is often spoiled by too much preservatives. Left to itself, sweet cider soon becomes hard. Hard cider is intoxicating, and, on account of the difficulty in determining just when alcohol begins to enter into sweet cider many temperance people are inclined to put the ban on all cider.

Vinegar is Obtained by Placing Barrels of Cider in the Sun or in a Warm Cellar.

The bungholes of the barrels are always left open. Mother of vinegar is put into each barrel in small quantities, and helps in the transformation of cider to vinegar. A very large per cent of the cider that comes from the present-day cider mill is eventually turned into vinegar.

It is a fact not appreciated by every one that the quality of cider, and the other products of the cider as well, is dependent upon the kind of apples that are used.

Those people who insist on using the scrubs of the orchard for cider cannot expect the best results. In some states apples are grown especially for cider. A ripe apple and one that is particularly full of juice will make better cider, better jelly and better apple butter than ones that do not possess these qualities. Among the common varieties of apples the Baldwin is much desired for the cider mill.

Getting Down to Business Dairying.

The first Dairy Test Association in New England was organized a few days ago at Durham, N. H., under direction of the Experiment Station workers. The membership is made up of progressive dairy farmers. The object is to co-operate in getting records which show the quality of milk in the various herds and the cost of feeding. The association will engage an agent to do the testing and each member will pay his part of the expense. The plan has been found to work successfully in other parts of the country and enabled dairymen to find out just what their herds are doing and what changes are needed. The experiment stations of New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, it is understood, will encourage the formation of these associations in all dairy sections.

Keep the Hens at Work.

To prevent disease keep the hens at work by making them scratch for their grain food. Overfeeding is the cause of bowel diseases in the summer, or, rather, too much concentrated food is given, and not enough of that which is bulky. If the quarters are kept clean there is little danger of contagious disease unless an addition is made to the flock by bringing a bird from some other farm. When "new blood" is wanted procure a sitting of eggs of the breed desired, as it is very important that when the coops are clean, and the fowls free from disease, no fowls from other places be introduced, as a flock may thus be stocked with lice or infected with disease.

The Asparagus Pest.

Kindly insects help in the destruction of the asparagus pest. The lady-bug, some snake feeders, or dragon flies, and wasps and the spined and bordered soldier bug—all these eat the larvae of this beetle. Ducks and chickens are fond of them. Air slacked lime dusted on the dew wet leaves destroys the pest, or the ends of the branches where they congregate may be cut and burned. The same remedies hold good for the spotted beetle, but his favorite place of hiding is in the berry, so these should be cut and burned as fast as they form.

Cooling the Milk.

Immediately after the milk is separated the cream should be cooled down to the temperature of good cold well water. This can be done by setting the cream can in a tub of water and stirring the cream until it is of the same temperature as the water. The water must be changed occasionally to keep the cream at this temperature until ready for shipping. It does no particular good to cool the cream and then allow it to become warm again before shipping.

New Wheat Popular in West.

The exports of Durum or macaroni wheat amounted to nearly 10,000,000 bushels last year. A great part of this wheat went to ports in France and Italy, to be used for the manufacture of macaroni. The millers of the United States are gradually learning to combine this wheat with other grades in the manufacture of flour. The wheat is very hard and cannot be ground with ordinary mill machinery, but it is claimed to make a very nutritious and excellent flour.