

A CHANGED DECISION.

CHAPTER IV.

Sparle's information was only too correct. Rose was ill, was suffering from a virulent type of smallpox, and was even in this short time seriously altered for the worse. Again was the house cleared; and again was the trained nurse sent for; and it was plain that each person who saw Rose took an unfavourable view of her case.

She was beginning to wander in her mind; but she never failed to know Rodbury, smiling, after a sad, tearful fashion, when he came to her side, and kissing his hand, while she strove to say in broken words how sorry she was to find herself giving so much trouble—rather an incoherent speech, it may be; but she wished him to know it was upon his account, not her own, she was regretful.

Now, this was a terrible fix for Rodbury, to quote his own reflection. He was for the second time ready to start upon his journey, was actually on the eve of departure, and again, as on the previous occasion, a serious hindrance cropped up. He—and the nurse had said as much—"did not like the look" of Rose, and, in fact, had at once made up his mind that she would die; and so, although he had resolved to leave her—had persuaded himself that he was entirely tired of her and her associations—yet how could he desert the girl, his own wife, just as she was dying? When she was gone, there would be no one to see to the poor children; and, besides, there came with an awful force and suddenness upon him the memory of all the devotion she displayed during his illness. While thinking thus, it also swiftly flashed upon him that it might have been his illness that caused hers; another reason for showing a little more consideration for her.

A twinge of something like remorse pained him when he thought of this, and of the train of selfish unfeeling plotting by which he had repaid her. Perhaps from that moment he was conscious of a tenderer feeling for his wife than he had hitherto believed to be possible. Come what might, he resolved he would not leave London just at once; he would stay to see that his children were properly disposed of; he would see the end of Rose—and yes, he ought to do that—he would be kind and considerate to her while he was with her. It is possible, we repeat, that from that time Rodbury was less entirely wrapped up in selfishness, and his thoughts held more of tenderness for his wife than they had ever held before.

So day after day he postponed his departure, and day after day he was in the sick-room full of contagion to all but those who, like himself, were hardened by having passed through the ordeal. He was surprised, after a week or so had elapsed, to find how attentive he had grown; how it seemed no trouble to him to hold the cooling drink to poor Rose's feverish lips, to moisten her burning brow, or to shift her painful position; and it was wonderful how the girl preferred his help to all other, and how, when at the worst, she brightened at the sound of his voice; yet more wonderful than this was the happiness it gave him to be able to render these services.

But it gave more pain than pleasure to hear her, in her scarcely audible accents, thinking him, and saying how she should never, never be able to repay her dear husband for all his kindness—the best and most devoted husband in the world. It was impossible for anyone who had nourished and matured such designs as had so lately been Rodbury's, to feel otherwise than guilty—a base guiltiness—on hearing language which was more touching than the keenest reproaches.

When she was quiet, too weak to speak, but not too weak to smile as she held his hand while he sat by her side in the darkened room he would recall the time when she was a bright, healthy girl, and afterwards a happy mother, devoted to her children and to her husband; all her faults and foibles sank to insignificance then, and he began to doubt whether among the fresh scenes he was to seek he would ever be happier. He doubted, too, whether he should ever find another so entirely earnest in her love for him, one who, to use a homely phrase, would go through fire and water for him; and following up this train of thought, he doubted if she would live when she found herself deserted by him. The shock might kill her; but beyond that there was a chance that so fiery a spirit as hers, with all her love, would lead her to put an end to her own life, if nothing still worse followed.

Sparle had gone back to his district, being unable to spare any more time, so he was not to be feared. To do Rodbury justice, he was hardly likely to hold Sparle or any one else in personal fear.

At last, after much deliberation, more painful than he had expected to find the task of decision to prove, he resolved to wait a day or two longer, so as to see her through the crisis, and then he would leave her. He was angry with himself for showing such hesitation, which, indeed, surprised as well as angered him. He did not dream that it was one of the best symptoms his careless selfish nature had ever shown; nor did he properly estimate the pain which the prospect of parting with his wife and children gave him.

The proposed time elapsed; his wife seemed duly passing through the necessary stages to convalescence; she certainly was growing stronger. Her eyes, it was true, were covered by a bandage; but this, Rodbury knew, or thought he knew, was a very common incident in this terrible disease. Thus the days went on, until once again, for the third time, the eve of his departure had come. "And I wonder," he muttered as, after a short saunter in the fresh open air, he came in sight of his house, "what will happen to upset my plans to-night? There has been the worst of luck about them at present."

He was conscious, while persuading himself that he was anxious for a final success, that his heart was not so much in the scheme as it had been, and that its completion would cause in him but a moderate exultation.

He went into his wife's room. It was now the early twilight of an August evening. Everything, even in that crowded neighbourhood, happened, as he remembered many and many a day afterwards, to be hushed. No vehicles were passing; the vendors of street goods had not come out for the night, while those who plied during the day had ceased their calling; even the children on the street were quiet. How well Rodbury

afterwards recalled the unaccustomed peace and hush of that moment!

The room had hitherto been kept darkened, but the blind was now drawn up, and it was light enough; yet Rose still wore a shade over her eyes. The window was open, and the soft balmy air of summer's last days made pleasant even the confined apartment.

Rose turned to her husband as she heard his step, with a smile. He had grown used to see in her smile something very sad; but as the light fell upon her face this evening, there was then an expression which it pained him to see, and the same light showed how terribly she was disfigured by the disease. Hitherto, this unsightliness—such a dreadful calamity for Rose and her bright pretty face—had been used by her husband in his attempts to steel himself for his task; but now, he could not understand why, although he had never seen the disfigurement plainly, and though her features had never appeared so seamed and unattractive, he yet felt nothing of the repulsion such a change might have been expected to produce.

He sat down by his wife and spoke to her. She smiled again, but this time her lips quivered strangely; then, as had been her habit of late, she felt for his hand, pressed it in her own, clasped it to her for an instant, then kissed it passionately, and burst into a rain of hysterical tears, striving through her wild sobbing to say something which he could not render intelligible.

Rodbury threw his arm around her, and drawing her head down upon his shoulder, spoke soothingly to her, and asked with a solicitude he had no need to feign, the cause of this outburst—rallying her, too, on the folly of thus giving way, now that she was getting well so fast, and had passed all the dangers of her fearful illness.

"Oh Frank! my own, my dear husband!" at last exclaimed the girl, "do not speak like that, or you will kill me! I have never been fit to be your wife, I know, and always have known it; you have borne with me because you were kind, and I had, perhaps, some common pretences.—No! do not interrupt me," she said, as Rodbury began to speak; "all that is true; but do not argue upon it, for you do not know what is coming. My face, even such as it was, is utterly disfigured—I can feel it; my mere touch tells me how I must look. I shall only know it thus, for I am now less fit than ever to be your wife. I am blind, Frank! completely and hopelessly blind! I shall never see the light of day again; and worse than that, far, far worse! I shall never more look on the kind face of my dear husband, or see my darling children.—Ah! you draw from me! I knew you would. Why should a sightless, disfigured—"

"Draw from you, Rose!—shrink from my dearest wife!" exclaimed Rodbury. He had involuntarily pushed back his chair at the first shock; but now he clasped the girl in his arms and spoke with an earnestness which had the ring of truth in it. "I will hope for better than you tell me. With time—"

Poor Rose's tears burst into a fresh flood at this, and she gasped: "No, no!—never! Dr. Berge told me so to-day."

"Then I will always stay with you, Rose!" cried her husband. His words had a deeper meaning than was dreamt of by their hearer; and you shall not miss even your eyes while using mine. I have news also; but I will say only this at present: we shall always be above any need for toil, above all fear of want. You shall have no care for our living or the comfort and well-being of our children, and I need never again go out with John. My circumstances are greatly changed.—Now, dry up your tears, and tell me where you would like to live, with the children, and what they shall have to please them."

He said a great deal more, certainly in a strain which he had not intended to fall into when he entered the house; but without thoroughly knowing it, Frank Rodbury, so to call him still, had been undergoing an improving discipline for some time. He had, until that hour, persuaded himself that he was determined to carry out his plans of emancipation as ever; that is, he thought he was as selfish as ever, but his selfishness had been greatly undermined, and he was an altered man. Now, the terrible announcement made by his wife; the sight of her seamed and pitted face, which the poor girl knew was disfigured, but which she would never see; the picture which arose constantly in his mind of the children, his children, soothing and clinging to their blind, unsightly, and deserted mother, was too much for him.

He was sincere in what he said; and despite the shocking circumstances which surrounded them, he passed an hour or two by his wife's side more happily than he had passed any interval for months. After a day or two, all fear of contagion being gone, Rose was moved to a healthy northern suburb of London, and her children were brought to see her. These were in robust health. The girl could toddle about freely and talk with a very pretty tongue; while a finer little fellow than the boy never greeted a father's eyes.

Rodbury groaned when he reflected that the poor mother would never again look upon their blooming features or see their pretty curls; and then, with a still keener pang, he thought: "What could I have been dreaming of, to plan the leaving such beautiful little creatures as these children that many a lord would give half his lands to own."

This was a great change from his previous lines of reflection; but Rodbury was not conscious of an inconsistency; he only knew that his heart now seemed bound to his wife and children, and felt that he could not be happy apart from them.

It need merely be said here that the subsequent report of the doctor, and the condition of the patient herself only too strongly confirmed the painful announcement Rose had made. She was blind, hopelessly and wholly blind. Yet, as it so often happens with us in our worst afflictions, there was even with this some alleviating power, for in the increased attention of her husband—the soft tones and tenderness which she so soon recognised—Rose had an undercurrent of happiness despite her blindness; and the sad smile which was once familiar to her lips was changed for a brighter or still a subdued one.

As soon as it was safe to do so Rodbury went to his friend Ashwell and consulted as to the best plan to be pursued under his altered views. These views considerably astonished Mr. Ashwell, who was greatly affected by poor Rose's story, and honestly reproached himself for having given council

to her husband which involved so much pain to her. He had no doubt now as to the council he should give, and this exactly chiming with his friend's own views, it was immediately adopted.

A great deal might be said about the important changes which took place; but as the result must be plainly foreseen, it will not be worth while to postpone the close of our story. Rodbury—he never changed his assumed name—decided upon going to the Far West, to Manitoba, indeed; and revealing to some extent his altered position, he asked Mr. Sparle to go with him, seeing many ways in which the sound, practical sense and business habits of his brother-in-law would be valuable; but Sparle's reply was a decided negative, and—as his last utterance in our chronicle—shall be recorded.

"No, Mr. Rodbury," he said. "I am much obliged to you, but it won't do. I am not half so surprised about your money as you may expect, for I have always seen you of a different stamp from ourselves; and if I could have stopped her, Rose should not have married you—that's straight. I can see why you are taking her and the young ones to America; you will not meet any of your friends in Manitoba and I desay you will manage very well there, and bring up the girl and boy like a lady and gentleman. But you could not make a gentleman of me; and after a time I should be in the way, and be always reminding you, if it was only by my being there, of these times. We should quarrel, and Rose would be miserable. No; we are best apart, and we both feel it." In his heart Rodbury was probably pleased at this decision.

Within a fortnight from this interview he sailed for Montreal, Rose and the children travelling in such state—with four servants or nurses, these not so much for the journey as for help in their new life—as almost frightened her. This, of course, she soon got over; and her unfortunate blindness shielded her in her intercourse with the other passengers, who might otherwise have marvelled at the manner of their fellow-voyager.

Manitoba was duly reached, and a farm, which they soon learned to call a "ranche," purchased. If Sparle's prediction about bringing up the children as ladies and gentlemen was not literally fulfilled, yet all five, of which number his family eventually consisted, were brought up by Rodbury in a befitting manner, and he was as happy as a man can well be.

We close this history by telling how a friend of Mr. Ashwell, having been on a sporting tour West, called upon that gentleman on his return, and in the course of his narrative said: "While in Manitoba whom do you suppose I came across? Why, Cy Launceston! You remember him? A fellow down in Leicestershire, whom everybody expected would drop into penal servitude some day, even if he escaped the gallows. Well, there he is quite an influential settler, and a most successful one. He has a great estate, and calls himself Rodbury. I understand his name is now legally this. Anyhow, there he lives with his wife. Poor creature, she is blind; from the smallpox, I believe, and certainly I never saw any one more marked with it. However, in spite of this, she is a bright cheerful little woman, and seems to worship the very ground her husband walks on; at least, so I heard from the neighbours. He has five of the finest children I ever saw—three sons and two daughters. You should see them ride their ponies! It took away my breath—and I am a pretty fair hand across country, I flatter myself—to see some of the ground they went over! There he is, as I tell you, a regular Canadian citizen; and some day, for all I know, he will be in Parliament, so high does his character stand. Only think! Cyrus Launceston, of all persons in the world, being presented as an embodiment of the moral, social, and in fact general virtues!"

It was strange, no doubt, to one who, like the speaker, knew some of the antecedents of the person in question; but it is never too late to mend.

THE END.

JOKELETS.

Reflected lights.—Second hand witticisms. N.B.—The fruits of some joke hatchers turn out to be veritable "chestnuts."

A genuine "lusus naturæ."—A spelling-bee.

The first female on record. Eve? Oh, no, Gene sis (Jonny sis.)

A "canard" we opine is so called because it "can-ard" ly be believed.

The thing to be put down with a stern hand.—The rudder, of course.

A settler for tight lacing.—No proper young lady would care to be seen in a coarse set (cor-set.)

Trumps for unemployed labourers.—Spades.

When may a house be said to be out of the perpendicular?—When it has got a "stoop" to it. N.B. This is a stup and-house joke, not to be guessed by every stupid fellow.

PROF. LEWELIN, M. A.

A Fond Farewell.

They had come out into the hall late Sunday evening, after he had made a more than usually protracted call.

The light was dim and romantic in the richly furnished entry-way, the maiden whom he loved as he loved his life, looked doubly fascinating, and young Loverly found it exceedingly difficult to drag himself away.

"Goodby," he said at length.

"Goodby," she repeated, though she had remarked the same thing but seven times before.

"Goodby," he said again, with great hesitation.

"Goodby," she whispered softly.

"May I have one final kiss?" he pleaded.

"Why," he queried, with sudden inspiration, "is our final kiss like a duodecimo?"

"I give it up," the maiden said, after a moment of deep and hopeless cogitation.

"Because," he answered triumphantly, "it means 12 mo."

And on that basis it was interpreted.

Somewhat Puzzling.

Bobby—Pa, why can a man run faster than a boy?

Pa—Because he is bigger, of course.

Bobby (after pondering for a moment)—Well, pa, then why don't the hind wheels of a wagon run faster than the front wheels?

Two minutes later Bobby was saying his prayers.

THE HORROR OF SLAVERY.

Is the Traffic on the Increase?

It is enough. Our hearts are sick with slaughter. Let the witnesses stand down. Is the smoke of this torment to go up for ever and ever? Remember that these deeds of blood and darkness are no isolated facts, no temporary misfortunes, no mere passing accidents of the savage state. They are samples of a sustained, accepted and carefully organized system of

CRUELTY AND MURDER

which pervades and penetrates every corner of this continent. Do not let it be supposed that this horror is over, that this day of tribulation is at an end. This horror and this day are now. It is not even abating. "Slavery is on the increase." Time, civilization, Christianity, are not really touching it. No fact in relation to the slave trade is more appalling than this. The fact of this increase, for a time denied, then doubted, has at last been reluctantly admitted, even by the Government of England. In a Government Blue-book issued only the other day, Her Majesty's consul for the Somali Coast reports that "the slave-trade has been very active of late. On the 16th of September (1888), Captain Gissing captured three dhows and brought two hundred and four slaves to Aden." The consul at Zanzibar writes (September, 1888) to the Marquis of Salisbury: "There is

A MARKED INCREASE

in slave-traffic carried on under the protection of the French flag." The consul further states that dhows carrying French colors were constantly and regularly leaving for the Comoro Islands, Mayotta, and Madagascar, loaded with slaves. In June, 1888, Brigadier General Hogg, dating from the Aden Residency, wrote to the Bombay Government: "I have the honor to bring to the notice of Government that I have from time to time received reports of the activity of the slave-trade from the neighborhood of the Gulf of Tadjoura, and I deem it my duty to inform Government of this fact with a view to such action being taken as may be deemed advisable."—[Scribner's

Talking Goods Up in a Clever, Forcible Way.

"Never let a customer go away without making a purchase," said Mr. Threads to a newly engaged clerk. "Talk the goods up in a clever, forcible way and you'll be certain to make a sale every time."

"All right," replied Fearless Gall, the new clerk, who had been an auctioneer for a year out West, "I think I know just what you mean, sir, and you can rely upon me. I know the tricks of the trade."

Ten minutes later he was going on in this fashion to Mrs. Marshall Neale, one of the wealthiest and most aristocratic patrons of the house:

"Damask towels, is it, madam? Well, I should smile! If you can't get damask towels here, there's no place in this city where you can get 'em. Look at that towel, my friend! Doesn't it fairly warm your heart to look at it, eh? And just glance at this pair, marked down from four dollars to a dollar and ten cents. Doesn't it fairly make you look young again to gaze on a bargain like that? And suppose you just concentrate your intellectual capacity on this towel for a second! A-ha! makes you fairly hold your breath to gaze on it, doesn't it? Did you ever see anything more perfectly irresistible since you were born into this world of sin and sorrow? Of course, you never did. Oh, it's a cold day when this firm gets left on damask towels! Look at this one—look at it, woman; it won't bite you; now, tell me, tell me if you ever bought a towel like that for less than two dollars. Of course, you didn't! You've paid that for dish towels, and thanked Heaven for the privilege of doing so, haven't you? Course you have, sweet friend of my childhood days!"

Mr. Threads happened along just in time to have his blood curdled by this last remark, and also in time to assist the gasping and livid Mrs. Marshall Neale to her carriage, where she bade him adieu for ever, and two minutes later he was going through the same ceremony with Mr. Fearless Gall.

NEW BRUNSWICK NEWS.

The First Train Over the Short Line—City Elections—Increase in Exports.

ST. JOHN, N. B., June 6.—Twelve or fifteen hundred people were at the St. John station to witness the arrival of the first regular C.P.R. train from Montreal by the Short Line. The run from Montreal was made in nineteen hours, some delay having occurred at MoAdam. The train, which arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon, by the Short Line, corresponds to that which arrives the following forenoon by the Intercolonial, passengers being spared the journey of a night and half a day. All the St. John daily papers had representatives on the train, and the press of the city treat the opening of the line as one of the most important events in the history of the province.

The exports of St. John for May are valued at \$374,000, against \$348,000 the same month last year. There is also a slight increase in imports.

Building operations are exceedingly brisk.

A Distinguished Characteristic

"Speakin' of twins," said the old man Chumpkins, "There was two boys raised in our neighborhood that looked just alike till their dyin' days. Lem didn't have any teeth, and his brother Dave did, but they looked precisely alike all the same. The only way you could tell 'em apart was to put your finger in Lem's mouth, and if he bit yer 'twas Dave."

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The generality of men expend the early part of their lives in contributing to render the latter part miserable.—[F. M. Ramsay.

The Woman who Soubs.
A woman who ser
Overlathery tuba
Tho' not of a bibulous mino
Has no cause to faint
If folks make a complaint
Of her having "three sheets in the wind."
—Yonkers Gazette.

The fins of this year's light wools and hoesumps is softer and finer than ever.

Consumption Surely Cured.

To the Editor:—
Please inform your readers that I have a positive remedy for the above named disease. By its timely use thousands of hopeless cases have been permanently cured. I shall be glad to send two bottles of my remedy free to any of your readers who have consumption if they will send me their Express and P. O. address. Reply, T. A. SLOCUM, M.C., 164 West Adelaide St., Toronto.

A.P. 453

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After spending Ten Winters South, was Cured by Scott's Emulsion.

146 Centre St., New York,
June 24th, 1888.

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