AN ALTERED PURPOSE

CHAPTER III.

During the next few days Rodbury was from home a great deal. To his wife's inquiries he repeated his statement that he had some important affairs to attend to; and in this he was in a sense telling the truth. Among other things he visited a shipping office in the city; he saw his solicitor more than once; he arranged with the executors of his grandfather's will, and he was with his friend Ashwell every day, sometimes twice in the day.

He was with him one night just before the time he had agreed upon to join Sparle, only one clear day being left.

"You do not look well, Cyrus," said his friend; "you are letting these matters excite you to a dangerous extent."

"Perhaps I am," returned Rodbury, passing his hand over his brow. He had indeed a fagged, haggard look, which justifies his friend's remark. "It is very well to advise me not to allow these things to worry me; but just consider for a moment what 'these things" are. No one but a scoundrel could do them at all. I have had such a hardening career, but I must own I am really surprised at having enough vitality in my conscience to disturb me."

"I am sorry to hear you speak like this," replied Ashwell, who was palpably hurt by his friend's words. "You know you are releasing the girl from a union which will soon be, if it is not already, hateful to her, while to you it must be simply maddening. You provide handsomely"——

"Oh, yes, yes!—that is all right," interrupted the other; "and you must not think I intended any reflection upon you—far from it. I know that your advice has been what you felt was the best; but then, you see, you have not to carry it out. I shall be out of the way of her ravings and frenzy, I know; but I can picture them, and shall hear them as plainly as though she was by my side. Then the children too—they are helpless innocent things, who have done me no harm."

"They will certainly not be more helpless by your action," said Ashwell; "you provide for their education and their future. Do think, if only for a moment, of what they would grow up to be, with such a mother and such friends! However respectable according to their own standard, to you they would be a constant source of misery and mortification"——

"That is enough, Herbert," again interrupted the visitor. "I am going to do it; that is settled. But I am not well to-night; I shiver one moment, and feel all on fire the next. I shall not be better until the next two days are past. Everything is ready, and tomorrow night I start from Euston Square. I will tell you how I have arranged."

He went on to detail certain plans, connected, as the reader must long since have perceived, with the abandonment of his wife and children. He was going abroad for at least a year, perhaps two years—it might even be for ever; and a solicitor—not the Launceston family solicitor, we may be sure—would explain to his wife that the marriage being illegal, she was at liberty to marry again; that Mr. Robbury was gone, never to return, but that she was left independent, as were the children. This handsome mode of dealing with her would effectually allay all anger at the desertion; and long ere Cyrus returned from his tour, her wealth would have gained her an alliance in her own sphere, and all inquiry for him would have ceased.

Of course there were an infinity of details springing out of such a scheme as this; a mean dishonorable scheme, in which, but for the facility with which the best of us find arguments to justify our wrongdoing, it would have been wonderful to see such a man as Ashwell allowing himself to take an active part.

After a long interview, which was far from tending to compose his nerves, Rodbury went home, conscious that he was indeed "out of sorts,'" as he phrased it, and conscious too, once or twice, that he had forgotten where he was, and even where he was going. He rallied from this immediately; but these were ugly symptoms, and each moment he felt that he required a greater effort to throw them off. "I shall be glad when it is done," he muttered, as he turned into his own secluded street. "I shall not, I hope, then feel quite so much of the hangdog and the sneak as I do now. I can hardly bear to see the light in the window where I know Rose is waiting for me, listening for my step; and listening, too, for the slightest noise from the room where the children are sleeping. They have never done me any harm, and poor Rose has striven to the best of her power to make me happy. Egad! I am a model husband and father!'"

Then, he started to find himself wandering into a wholly different train of thought, and although his feet had mechanically, as it were, carried him to his own gate, he had for the last minute been in fancy walking over the well-remembered downs and hollows among which his youth had been passed. "Another week of this would kill me," he muttered as he opened the door; "I almost wish I had not come home."

As he had divined, Rose was awaiting his return, and had prepared some delicacy—it passed for a delicacy with her friends—for his supper. When she found he would not touch the little repast, and complained of his head, her wifely anxiety took alarm; she noted how flushed and strange he looked, and insisted upon his lying down at once, then busied herself in applying cooling lotion to his brow, and made him a cup of tea, midnight though it was.

She was a good nurse, and a loving tender wife, despite her faults and vulgarities, for which, indeed, she was in nowise responsible. She had been taught no better; and that her character was such as Rodbury well knew it to be, proved the goodness of the heart, which could not be materially affected even by such a training as hers had been.

"If you are not better in the morning, Frank," she said, as she sat by the head of the bed, and looked anxiously into his flushed face, "we must send for Dr. Berge, the first thing."

"I shall be all right in the morning," said Rodbury; but his words were hardly distinct; "only I feel so chilly now."

She knew he could not be suffering from great cold, yet laid more clothes on him, and then in a few minutes he complained of the heat, and reproached her with smothering him under so many blankets.

All his utterances wandered away into broken incomprehensible speech; and thus it continued all night, Rose never slackening in her attention, or murmuring at the irritable, often unkind remarks he made. It was a long night, yet morning came at last; but no care on the part of Rose, no change from night to day, could benefit Rodbury, and Dr. Berge had to be sent for.

By this time the invalid had ceased to speak, or, at anyrate, to speak distinctly, although he almost constantly uttered unintelligible phrases. His danger of some kind of fever coming on; there had been a deal of it in the neighborhood, and she had been very frightened on account of the children.

The doctor said she was right. Her husband was down with a fever, but not of the kind which, as he knew, better than most persons, had been so rife in the vicinity. Her husband was suffering from smallpox. So, for the present, Frank Rodbury's scheme ended in the disease which seems to inspire more terror than any other of the malignant scourges which afflict humanity.

The house was speedily cleared of all inmates save the sick man, his devoted wife, and a trained nurse; for the Rodburys were for that neighborhood wealthy people, and could afford all which might lighten or soothe such an illness. Yet such an illness was never yet passed lightly through, although in the end Rodbury recovered, and was as well as before—he used in afteryears to say he was better—and although it happened with him, as it does now and then with such patients, that he was scarcely marked by the terrible "pitting" of the disease.

Dr. Berge congratulated him, and told him that he owed his escape chiefly to his wife, "who," said the portly, genial old doctor, "is the best nurse I ever saw. Mrs. Garminger, whom I recommended, you know, is a first-rate nurse, as professional nurses go; but it is no disrespect to her to say that Mrs. Rodbury is worth half-a-dozen of her or any other paid attendant."

Rodbury agreed in this opinion. He knew, and had marked all through, without prompting, what his wife had done; and now he was out of danger and could think collectedly, he did so think of Rose, and was not satisfied with his solution of the old problem, let him study it as he might.

With regained strength he felt, and despised himself for so feeling, his previous horror of his position; and with the morbid sensitiveness of an invalid noted, even watched for, the faults and shortcomings in the woman who had risked her own life to save his, and whose pale thin features so brightened up when she saw him smile, and who was so happy when he showed symptoms of reviving strength.

He had long since written to Ashwell, at an agreed adress, and directed to a feigned name—such an arrangement would be sure to suggest itself to Frank Rodbury. This was, in a sense, to Ashwell's relief, for he fully thought that his friend had gone abroad without seeing him again, or, which was as strange, without taking full possession of his inheritance. He, Rodbury, had said that he would call on his friend as soon as it was safe for him to go out, and consult him as to what should now be done.

Never before had Rodbury known such a conflict in his mind as to what he should do and what he ought to do. What he should and what he ought to do was, it was true, chiefly considered as regarded his own welfare and comfort; but yet some minor amount of thought for others mingled with this and greatly aided to trouble him. All through his life he had been accustomed to consult only the gratification of his own desires, and to act as seemed most agreeable to himself, so that even so much wavering as this was a sign of improvement.

But he was heir to a large fortune; there was a fine home in one of the most beautiful of English counties awaiting him, or scenes of gaiety and brilliancy in foreign lands might be his, should he prefer to seek them; and despite his better but feebler self, the loathing of his present home—and horror at the idea of taking from it such a woman as Rose to show as his wife—rolled back upon him like a tide, and he determined to carry out his old resolve.

"It will be better for her as well as myself," was the ready sophistry which rose in his mind. "She will be a good deal happier in her own sphere, where she shall never want; and the children—well, she would not like to lose them." So by the time he was fairly convalescent, his plans were in much the same position as before his illness.

He had been out several times. On the first occasion Rose went with him for a ride. This was in a carriage hired from the nearest livery stable. They traversed the West End of London—Hyde Park, Buckingham Palace, Regent Street, Oxford Street, and the like being included in the tour—thus affording a treat of the highest kind to Rose, who, although a Londoner born and bred, had not seen this fashionable, this aristocratic, this fairyland district in short, half-a-dozen times in her life.

She was delighted with the excursion, and so pleased to know that her husband was able to be out again and could sit by her side, looking as handsome as ever—his beauty must be taken on Rose's estimate—that her poor eyes, weakened, it might be, by the fatigues of nursing, or perhaps by some hidden cause, filled ever and anon with tears. Yet she would not go for a second drive, and was indeed more languid and weak than even her recent fatigues would account for, or than suited her brisk, energetic temperament.

Rodbury saw this, but decided it would pass off; women were always nervous, or defiant, or excited. These, or one of these, accounted for all her symptoms to one so easily disposed to be satisfied.

Again the eve of his intended departure arrived; again he had an interview with Ashwell, when he boastfully contrasted his renovated health with the wretched state in which he was when he paid his previous farewell visit, as it was intended to be. Ashwell was less enthusiastic; he had been touched by what he heard of Rose's conduct, and had once or twice ventured upon a suggestion, or an approach to one, by which he hinted at Rodbury's taking his wife abroad with him, where nobody would know her, or be likely to find fault with her; but this was not well received, and so was not pressed.

Going home from this final interview—home for the last time! after that night he would be free from all these sordid surroundings—he was startled by coming suddenly upon Mr. Sparle, his partner, who was sauntering slowly up and down a neighbouring street, and evidently waiting for him. He was dressed respectably after his fashion; but this was a fashion which almost proclaimed his trade, and he was smoking a short clay pipe.

"I thought you were a hundred miles off, Jack," said Rodbury, overcoming a stronge impulse to shudder in disgust; "I did not dream of seeing you here."

"No, I daresay you did not," replied Sparle; "but somehow, I did not feel easy about Rose, and—and there were two or three other things weighing a good deal on my mind, so I have run up, you see.—No; I am not going in yet, nor you neither," he continued, as Rodbury was about to turn into the street in which he lived; "I want a little talk first."

"Talk away then!" exclaimed his companion, assuming a lightness and indifference he was really far from feeling.

"I came up to sew how Rose was getting on," resumed Sparle. "I was up two or three times while you were ill, as I suppose you know. But I heard from a party who lived about here some things I didn't like; and, in fact, he says he believes you are going to make a bolt of it."

This speech was enough to stagger most men. To find his secret intention so accurately divined, and by a stranger of whose very existence he had been ignorant! It required his utmost nerve to repeat his careless laugh, and to inquire: "What next? Am I going to take the stock with me, or do I mean to make you a present of it?"

"I had thought of that," said Sparle, after a pause; "and I am glad to hear you speak so easy about it. We have never been exactly chums, you know; but I did not believe you were the man for such conduct. But here is out candid and say who you are, and what your friends are? You never told us why you named your boy Cyrus; you never even told us what his right name was. I found out, however, that he was registered Launceston as well."—

"You did, did you?" interrupted Rodbury.

"Yes, I tell you straight I did," returned his companion; "and more than that, I found there was a place of that name down below Plymouth; and I sent a man as had been in the police all the way down there to inquire after any Cyruses and Rodburys what he might find. It cost me ten pounds, if it cost me a penny, and all to no good."

"That was a pity indeed," said Rodbury as the speaker paused. He was far quicker than Sparle, and had run swiftly over the probable consequences of this activity on the part of his brother-in-law.

"Now, don't sneer at a fellow's anxiety," resumed Sparle. "I have no relations in the world but my sisters, and I would do anything for them; yes and for your two children Frank. You may not think it, but I am very fond of them as well, and I want them as well as Rose to be put straight, especially now."

For a little while Rodbury said nothing; his companion had unconsciously supplied him with additional reasons for carrying out his plans without delay. Sparle's quest had luckily failed, in one instance; but some unfortunate accident might betray him—Rodbury. The knowledge of his son's second name, given when he never dreamt of the inheritance which had since become his, and the bestowal of which he now bitterly regretted, showed how dangerous such inquiries might become.

"Well, we will go in now," he began at last, "if you have quite finished all you have to say."

"All right; I understand you," retorted Sparle. "I have pretty nigh finished, so we will go in. You have not been home all day, I believe?"

"No, I have not. You are correct in that belief, as in so many other things," replied Rodbury. "Have you anything to say about that?"

"Well," Sparle began slowly, after a brief pause, "not a great deal, only you heard me say 'especially now,' when I wanted things put straight, did you not?"

"I did; and wondered why it was 'especially now,' as you seem to have been meddling in my affairs for a good while past," was the gracious answer of Rodbury.

"What I meant was just this," continued the other: "you have not been home since breakfast, so do not know everything. If I was anxious about Rose before, I am more anxious now, for while you were out, she got worse. I went for Dr. Berge, and he says she is very ill. In fact, Frank Rodbury, your wife is took with the worst kind of smallpox, and I don't think even you will sneer at that."

"Rose attacked by smallpox!" echoed Rodbury, who was almost stunned for the moment at hearing this, while a host of images instantly flashed through his mind.

"Yes, sir," replied Sparle, gravely; "your wife is took with the smallpox, and Dr. Berge says it will go hard with her."

To be continued.

LIANE'S CAREER.

When Liane de Pougy was at Ostend this summer, at least 200 people gathered nightly outside the windows of her hotel to watch her dine, and when she appeared on the beach she was followed by a long procession of idlers. To see her delicately chiseled face, crowned by a mass of golden hair, her large, wondering eyes, her graceful figure, one would little suspect her of the career she has made for herself in less than 30 years. The daughter of an army officer, and the wife of a Captain in the navy, she was, before the age of 25, one of the most notorious characters in the French capital. Her husband, however, was so infatuated with her beauty that even after she had deserted him to plunge into a life of dissipation, he still refused to get a divorce, hoping for her return, until he died of a broken heart.

WOMAN'S LAUGH.

An enthusiastic young author, who has just been going through the experience of falling in love, writes: "A woman has no natural grace more bewitching than a sweet laugh. It is like the sound of flutes on the water; it leaps from the heart in a clear, sparkling rill, and the heart that hears it feels as if bathed in the cool, exhilarating spring. How much we owe to that sweet laugh! It turns the prose of our life into poetry; it flings showers of sunshine over the darksome wood in which we are traveling; if touches with light our sleep, which is no more the image of death, but gemmed with dreams that are the shadows of immortality."

AGRICULTURAL.

WHEAT FOR LIVE STOCK.

The question of wheat as a food for live stock has been much discussed during recent years writes Thos. Shaw in Ohio Farmer. And it has been the subject of much investigation on the part of experimenters both at the experiment stations and at the farms of individual feeders. That wheat is a good food for horses, cattle, sheep and swine when judiciously fed, cannot any longer be doubted. Several millions of bushels have doubtless been fed to live stock every year since 1892, and good results have been obtained from feeding wheat pound for pound as pitted against other grains, and yet the writer has never swerved one iota from the opinion that the growth of wheat as a food for live stock should be discouraged all along the line, and in support of this view strong reasons may be offered which cannot be gainsaid.

First, it is more costly to grow wheat pound for pound than other kinds of grain that are commonly used in feeding stock. As a rule two bushels of oats can be grown for one of wheat on an equal area, and at least 50 percent more of barley. And the combined product of the straw and grain in either of these is more valuable as stock food than the combined product of the wheat crop. As pitted against peas the comparison is still more favorable to wheat, that is to say in sections favorable to the growth of peas. And we have many such sections below and near the Canadian boundary from the Atlantic right across to the Pacific.

The pea crop will yield as much per acre of grain as wheat or more, and as a food for stock it is more valuable pound for pound, and the pea straw rightly saved is much more valuable than the wheat straw. Again, the peas being leguminous gather much of their food from the air and as a result do not extract nearly so much fertility from the land. Rye also will yield more per acre than wheat under normal conditions, and it is about as valuable for feeding uses. It will also give a good return relatively from land so light that a crop of wheat could not profitably be grown upon it.

If wheat is pitted against corn the showing is still more unfavorable for wheat. The average of corn per acre is at least twice that of wheat or nearly so, even in much of the favored wheat belt in the northwestern states, and in the corn belt the contrast is still more marked. The corn stover well saved is fully as valuable acre for acre as the entire product of an average hay crop, hence there should be no comparison between wheat and corn as a food for live stock acre for acre, corn is so far ahead of wheat. And the comparison holds true when the greater labor and consequently the greater cost of growing the corn has been deducted.

Second, the comparison would be still more unfavorable for wheat if the various crops above coupared were given equal chances with wheat. Wheat is usually put upon the best of the land. Soil is oftentimes specially fitted for the growth of wheat, as for instance by manuring the land, or it may be summer-fallowing it, while it is not so fitted as a rule for the other crops named. After a crop of wheat has been grown upon a piece of land it is considered good enough for oats, or barley, or rye, or even corn. If these other crops were given equal chances with wheat they would yield much more relatively then they do. And the comparison therefore would tell more strongly against wheat.

Third, the part of the wheat usually fed to live stock is more valuable relatively for such a use than the part commonly used by man. In other words the combined product of the bran and shorts is more valuable pound for pound, than the residue of the product, viz., the flour. Of course this fact should not deter the farmer from feeding the whole wheat product to his stock when he can get more for it in meat or milk than he could get from selling the wheat, but it has a bearing upon the argument, and more especially when prices are paid for wheat that render it uncertain as to whether the wheat should be sold or fed on the farm.

Fourth. Wheat would seem to be more subject to diseases than the other foods named. It usually suffers more from rust, insects and smut. It is also more easily injured on the whole by adverse weather. It is, altogether, a more delicate plant, and because of this the hope of the husbandman is more frequently cut down when growing a crop of wheat than when growing the coarser grains. In fact it would seem to be true that the plants pre-eminently adapted as food to the needs of the human family should not be grown as food for live stock unless in exceptional instances. Potatoes may be put in the same boat as wheat. The man who grows them primarily for live stock in a region where turnips and mangels grow in good form must surely be seeking for labor to keep him busy, so vastly superior are the latter acre for acre when used as food for stock.

I would not be misunderstood, I an not arguing against the wisdom of feeding wheat when we have it, and can make more money out of it by feeding it. Under such conditions it ought to be fed. The agument is rather against growing wheat with the express intention of feeding it to live stock. The man who has demonstrated that he can feed wheat with as much advantage pound for pound as some other kinds of grain has only demonstrated one thing, and unless he can demonstrate at the same time that wheat can be grown as cheaply pound for pound as these other grains what has he proved? As soon therefore as the time comes when farmers can make more out of wheat by feeding it than by making it into flour, the danger signal should be thrown out and all along the line the farmers should slacken sail and sow something else. It is in such times as these that the good ship of agriculture is in danger of striking upon the reefs.

In one way it may be wise to grow wheat as a food for live stock, especially when it is grown as a mixed crop. In some localities it is becoming commmon to grow wheat and oats together. The arguments which sustain growth are first, the greater yield that will be obtained of the combined product as against either of these grown singly; and second, the excellence of the meal from the combined product when it has been ground. For this use a variety of spring wheat known as the "Wild Goose" would seem to be very suitable. It is a hardy rugged wheat and an immense yielder. It is large and coarse in the berry like the wheats of Barbary and Greece. It has been grown as food for live stock in Ontario and Manitoba. I have not met with it in this country. When a variety possessed of equally good yielding properties is grown along with oats, the plan may be a good one but under ordinary conditions the wisdom of sowing wheat alone as a food for live stock is certainly to be questioned.

GROWING CASTOR BEANS.

The cultivation of castor beans does not differ materially from that of corn In a country where the seasons are short the richest ground is not desirable, as it has a tendency to make too much stalk; therefore on good, rich soil, where there is no fear of chinch bugs, it is not the most desirable crop. But upon light soil, where fertility must be fostered, it is a splendid crop to raise, as it withstands dry weather and is not at all disturbed by chinch bugs. After the ground has become warm in the spring, as early as possible, to avoid all danger of frost, after the beans have sprouted, plant and cultivate in hills same as corn. When the first pods have matured, select a dry piece of ground, thirty to sixty feet square, according to the size of the crop, fully exposed to the sun, and where no water will stand in any event. Scrape it perfectly level and bare of all grass weeds. Surround it with two-foot boards, cheese muslin, or anything to keep the beans from popping out of the enclosure. The favorite way to cut is to have a one-horse sled with a box thereon as large as will slide between the rows where the stalks are not too high. A two-horse wagon is sometimes used. The stems are cut as the pods mature and are first piled upon the yard until they have dried and commenced to pop; they are then spread thinly over the ground. If there is room on the yard they may be spread at once, where they are allowed to lay until they have fully popped. They are then scraped up and cleaned with an ordinary fanning mill. They pop with considerable force, and but for the enclosure a great many would be lost. When the weather is fine they must be cut every second or third day. When they are first piled upon the yard rain does not injure them, but after they have popped rain blackens them and injures their sale.

Boards or tarpaulins must be at hand, and in the event of a rain they must be swept in piles and covered, and when the ground has dried they may be respread. Ordinarily they yield from twelve to eighteen bushels per acre. After a heavy frot, while there will be a good many yet uncut, they are of little value. Very little capital or machinery, with constant easy work is required, and the crop possesses numerous advantages in many localities.

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