

I could not live long after him. I could have told you then what Dr. Baylis has told you to-day, and I could tell you the reason, which he could not—I had nothing to live for."

"Oh, Ruth," I said, "you had your husband."

"My husband!" she replied. "Have I not told you I hated him the day I married him? Perhaps I hate him even now. Sometimes I think I do. Whenever I wanted to learn to love him I knew he would not let me. You are young, Letty; as yet your life is full of loving faces; but if ever you are left so that you have to listen dumbly for a loving word, and never hear it, you will know a little of the aching want that has been eating my heart out through all these weary years."

Her face seemed stiffening as she spoke; my heart thrilled at the awful change that had crept into it, and I sprang to my feet in dismay.—As I did so, a step sounded near, and Rupert Ray came forward into the circle of light from the fire, stood out at once like a ghost from among the shadows, and I did not even wonder that he should be there.

"You have let her talk too much to-night."

That was all he said; then he stooped, and lifting her in his arms, carried her out into the hall, and up to her own room, as if she had been an infant; and I followed, the tears frozen at my heart by sudden, terrible, overmastering fear. Were Dr. Baylis's fateful words about to become true? Was she to die ere morning.

CHAPTER III. AND LAST.

We laid her down in her death-like faint, and sent for Dr. Baylis; an hour later he was standing by her bed-side, watch in hand, counting her pulse with face grave and inscrutable.

"She has been disturbed, excited," he said. "I warned you she was not able to bear it."

He looked at her husband, as though to charge him with the neglect, but he did not see the look, scarcely seemed to hear the words even. He was standing mute at the foot of the bed, his clasped hands resting on the carved board, his eyes bent on his wife's white face.

After some time—a time that to me seemed hours long—the hands I was chafing closed on mine with a little feeble pressure; then her eyes slowly opened, but only to close again wearily. The doctor, watching keenly, seemed relieved.

"She has recovered from the faint now," he said. "All I can recommend is silence—perfect silence, and rest. Keep her lips moist with wine, and let her sleep as long as she will. I will come again in the morning."

He looked at his watch with the air of a man who had many calls on his time, and went down to his carriage attended by Rupert Ray.

When the carriage wheels had rolled away into the stillness and fog of the November night, my cousin Rupert Ray came softly back and stood at his former post in his former position almost, save that now his head was more bent, as beneath a weight of sudden grief, and his face was as white as the still face he watched so earnestly. I feared to stir. He never moved, and so the hours slipped by us, faint-hearted watchers in that weary room.

Later on, when the night was almost gone, in that awful silent hour that comes before the dawn, when the darkness was a thing to be felt,