SHIRLEY ROSS:

A Story of Woman's Faithfulness.

How pleasant it would be, she was thinking, as she leaned there, with the sharp wind reviving her wearied senses, to go away with Guy from all this misery, to be cared for and loved as he would care for and love her, to be his own forever. Dear Guy!

Presently a gay chime of bells rang out, sounding clearly on the keen frosty air, and Alice Fairholme and Ruby came in, in their dainty and very becoming *grenat* velvet dresses, to act as Shirley's tire-women. They gathered up the pretty hair high upon her head and wreathed it with fragrant orange-flowers, and robed her in the glistening white satin and filmy lace, and clasped the diamonds round her throat and on her wrists, and threw the soft lace veil over her, and no lovelier bride did mirror ever reflect than Shirley Ross, as, leaning on her uncle's arm, she walked up the aisle to where Guy stood waiting for her and watching her with his heart in his eyes.

All Shirley's senses seemed quickened in this supreme moment; it seemed to her that she saw all over the church, and that every face of the crowd assembled there was distinct and separate. She saw the pretty eager bridesmaids, Lady Fairholme stately in green velvet and chinchilla, Guy so grand-looking and stately, with the look in his eyes which made her heart thrill. She heard the opening words of the marriage-service; then the sound of galloping horses and flying wheels fell upon her ears. The next moment there was some confusion in the body of the church, and a man breathless with haste, and agitated, came up the aisle—a tall, handsome man, who looked haggard, and wore his right arm in a sling, but whom many present recognized as Sir Hugh Glynn.

"Stop!" he said haughtily and imperatively, conquering his agitation as he reached the bridal party. "This marriage must not continue."

"Hugh!" Guy exclaimed in intense surprise, while Sir Gilbert gently but firmly put him aside.

"By what right do you thus interrupt my niece's marriage, Sir Hugh?" he said, haughtily, his face pale with anger.

"By the best of all rights," was the equally haughty answer. "She is my wife!"

CHAPTER XXI.

"Shirley, for the love of Heaven speak. Contradict the story this man is telling so plausibly; let me crush back his falsehoods into his throat. For pity's sake, do not stand there and let him bring such an accusation against you!"

The words broke from Guy Stuart's lips with a force and passion which left him pale as death, and each fell like a blow on the heart of the girl to whom they were addressed, and who dared not lift her eyes to the pleading, anguish-stricken face of the man she loved so deeply, but to whom she had brought the most terrible agony that heart could know.

They were gathered in the oak parlor at Fairholme Court, while the bewildered and startled household whispered among themselves that some dreadful thing had happened, since the bridal carriages had returned almost immediately from the church, and Miss Shirley looked more dead than alive, and Miss Alice was threatening hysterics.

Sir Gilbert, his face stern and grave and full of pain, stood by the mantel-piece, resting his elbow upon it, the old wound, which had never healed, now torn open afresh. Lady Fairholme was trying to soothe Alice, who was crying and laughing alternately; and Oswald, his countenance grave and pained and wondering, had gone to Guy's side, and stood there, with earnest sympathy for the agony in Guy's pale, despairing, anguish-stricken face on his own. Shirley stood alone; but Ruby Capel had crept near her, hiding her face in her hands to still her sobs; and Sir Hugh Glynn, haughty, erect, and resolute, stood by the table, his head thrown back defiantly, his right arm in a sling.

It was a strange scene, and one which those that saw it never forgot. Shirley was the central figure, as she stood at the opposite side of the table to Sir Hugh, her long dress sweeping the floor in glistening, lustrous folds, the lace veil still falling around her, although she had thrown it back from her face, the diamonds glittering at her throat and on her wrists. Her face was white to the lips; a heavy shadow of brooding despair, almost desperation, had fallen upon it, and it had drained the blood from her cheeks, so that she stood motionless and colorless as a statue. It might have been the face of a dead woman for all the life and color which was in it, save when a sudden passionate quiver passed over it, like the quick light of a flame which flickers up ere it dies away.

"Shirley," Guy's passionate broken voice said eagerly, "only one word, dear; but no—you need not speak, you need not contradict him. I know that all he has said is false—false as himself."

"But that I pity your suffering, and that I think of our old friendship, such words would not be long unrevenged," put in Sir Hugh slowly, a flush coloring his pale haggard face, and his blue eyes turning to Major Stuart with an angry menace in their depths. "Why is she silent? If she could do so, do you think she would not refute the charge? She knows that I have right on my side, and witnesses to prove that right. Have you such faith in her," he went on scornfully, "that you will not see that she repented the bargain she had made—that she perceived that a baronet with money was better worth having than a penniless officer? Her sex is not usually noted for disinterestedness," he continued bitterly, for the mute scorn which overpowered even the pain on Shirley's pale face lashed him to fury, "You were not very long gone when she permitted me to——"

"Kiss her hand in the hall," gasped Alice Fairholme vindictively through her sobs; and a flash of indignant contempt came into Oswald's eyes as he turned them on his sister's face.

"Thank you, Miss Fairholme," said Sir Hugh. "I am glad to have my assertion corroborated. Yes; it is perfectly true; and, if my subsequent conduct has seemed treacherous to you, Stuart, it is because I believed this lady's assurance that she had written to break off her engagement to you."

Shirley's face changed then; a terrible bitterness, a great horror, an irrepressible loathing came over it, and she lifted her eyes and fixed them on Sir Hugh with an expression he could not meet.

"Shirley," Major Stuart broke out, indignation, entreaty, and pain in his ce, "this is unendurable. Love, you know I do not doubt you—not for one moment—but to satisfy these others utter just one word of denial. Darling, I do not doubt you, remember," he added with earnest tenderness. "It is not to clear yourself in my eyes; I can never doubt you!"

"No, you cannot,—you never will," Shirley said, in a voice so unlike her usual tone that every person in the room turned and looked at her, while Ruby rose quietly and drew nearer to her side.

"It would greatly simplify matters," put in Sir Gilbert sternly, "if you would deny the charge brought against you, Shirley. Where were you on the afternoon of the third of January?"

"I remember," Miss Fairholme said suddenly in the silence which followed. "She was out all the afternoon, and when she came in—quite late it was—she fainted in the hall!"

With a quick look Shirley's eyes turned upon her cousin's face; and Ruby Capel stole nearer to her side and put her arm around her. The girl made no sign that she even felt the gentle caress; she was utterly motionless—only the anguish on her face and the restless eyes showed how she was suffering.

"And I met you in the hall," Sir Gilbert said severely; "and I saw Sir Hugh take leave of you in the hall, and—and——"

His voice failed, and he turned away in great agitation. Every eye in the room was turned on Shirley now, but she did not quail.

"Shirley, why don't you speak?" said her Cousin Alice, quickly, in her clear high tones. "Why don't you deny it?"

"Because I cannot."

The words came slowly and feebly from Shirley's lips, as if her very heart-strings were torn in the utterance, and Ruby Capel felt the shudder that ran through her. For a moment her lids sunk heavily, as if she were going to faint; but the next she rallied and lifted the beautiful head which had drooped, with a gesture of the old queen-like grace.

"Do you mean that you went to Dumfife with Sir Hugh Glynn?" demanded her uncle sternly.

"Yes."

"That at the Half-Moon Inn you passed as his wife and called him your husband?"

"Yes."

"And that this story he has told us is correct?"

"Correct as to the facts," she said, in the same slow faint voice—"yes."

It was painful to hear her as the words fell from her lips; it was terrible to see the agony of scorn and horror which crushed out all the life and beauty of the fair face. Sir Gilbert turned away with a groan; the old wound was deeply probed, and it was bleeding profusely under the hand which had so rudely torn it open.

There was a short silence then, broken by Major Stuart's voice, which was deep and low and strained, from the terrible restraint he put upon himself.

"Shirley," he said, gently, "since you have told that you went to Dumfife with Sir Hugh Glynn, you will tell us now your object in doing so. Why did you go, Shirley? There must have been some pressing reason to make you take such a step."

The look of hopeless anguish deepened in the girl's eyes as they went to his face for a moment, and her lips quivered.

"I cannot tell you," she said, painfully. "Try to trust me still, Guy."

A look of distress and disappointment passed over Major Stuart's face, and his eyes, as they met hers, were full of an entreaty which pierced Shirley to the heart; but she had given a promise to Jack, and she could not tell him now before her uncle and aunt.

"If you can trust me, Guy," she said, piteously, putting out two little supplicating hands, "I will tell you—when—when we are alone."

"When you can use your blandishments to deceive him!" put in Alice Fairholme, with bitter significance. "You are a bad false girl; and I, for one, have never been deceived in you. Sir Hugh's story——"

"Mother," Oswald Fairholme interrupted, with quick earnestness, "take Alice away; she is upset by all this. She does not know what she is saying."

Oswald's tone was too significant and earnest to be disregarded; and Lady Fairholme bent over her daughter, and half led, half forced her from the room, making a sign to Ruby to follow her; but Miss Capel saw by Shirley's quick glance of entreaty that her presence afforded some consolation to the unhappy girl, and she remained and was thanked by a quick grateful look from Captain Fairholme's dark eyes.

"I can trust you without the aid of your blandishments, my darling," Guy said, moving towards Shirley, when Sir Hugh, with a quick movement, came between them.

"Pardon me," he said, haughtily. "You forget, I think, that I claim that lady as my wife."

Guy fell back, paling to his lips, a quick gleam of passion flashing into his gray eyes and a passionate execration rising to his lips. The two men stood for a moment looking at each other, and a glance of terrible menace was exchanged; then Sir Hugh moved back to his place, and turned to Sir Gilbert with perfect courtesy and composure.

"Sir Gilbert," he said gravely, "I cannot tell you how it grieves me to be the cause of so much sorrow and annoyance to you and yours, more especially as I know that this must be a particularly painful thing to you. I loved your niece from the beginning of my acquaintance with her, and I confess that her engagement to my friend gave me deep pain. Had she been satisfied with and happy in that engagement, I should have never interfered; but even in Major Stuart's presence she openly declared that her heart was not in her engagement but her dread of your displeasure made her hesitate to break it off."

"You scoundrel!" Guy cried savagely, between his teeth. "What a tissue of lies!"

"Major Stuart," interposed Sir Gilbert, with a grave dignity that became him well, "I cannot allow you to forget that you are under my roof, and that Sir Hugh Glynn is my visitor."

"Shirley's dread of your displeasure made her hesitate to break off her engagement, of which you and Lady Fairholme cordially approved. Together we devised the plan which we subsequently carried out, I being still under the impression that she had written to Major Stuart to cancel the promise she had given him. You will remember perhaps that on the day following that on which I had made your niece my wife according to the law of the country, I was called away by my mother's illness. On the day that I arrived at Cannes I met with a carriage accident which resulted in a broken arm and some slight head injuries. I could not write to my wife."

A cry of unutterable anguish broke from Shirley and silenced the smooth flow of words which sounded so plausible to the hearers—a cry sharp and sudden. She shuddered from head to foot, as though a red-hot iron had touched her flesh; and for the first time her courage failed her. Her limbs trembled and gave way, she sunk upon her knees, Ruby's arms around her and supporting her, and her head fell back against Miss Capel. But she was not unconscious; she could see and hear all that passed; and something in the helpless attitude bespoke a suffering terrible to witness. It was harrowing to Guy Stuart, to the man who loved her with such a great love, who trusted her with such a perfect faith, to see her there in all the glory of her satin and lace and diamonds, pale and drooping like a flower broken at the stem and left to die.

"I could not write to my wife myself," Sir Hugh went on, rather hoarsely—he too loved her—ay, and loved her well in her way, but selfishly and cruelly; "and I did not like to let another for me; so I waited. As soon as I could spare his attendance, I sent my confidential servant to Scotland to see Shirley. Immediately on his arrival he dispatched a telegram, telling me that my wife was about to marry another man. I left Cannes immediately—at the risk of my life, the physicians said; but that matters little, since I was in time to prevent a crime."

Sir Hugh concluded, as he had spoken, amid perfect silence, and Sir Gilbert, to whom he had addressed himself, bowed slightly. Captain Fairholme was standing with his hand upon Guy's arm, his face full of earnest sympathy and pain because of the anguish and anger upon Major Stuart's dark face; and Ruby, still supporting Shirley in her arms, was watching, with nameless fear, the miserable aching eyes so wide and desolate, the pale lips from which the quick gasping breaths came almost like sobs.

"I must thank you for the patient hearing that you have given me," Sir Hugh continued gravely. "And now let me ask you, Sir Gilbert, what your opinion is. The lawyer—a distinguished member of his profession—Mr. Duncan, of Perth—whom I consulted on the subject, gave it as his opinion that the laws of this country made your niece my wife, and that, even if I wished to do so, I could not disown the marriage."

"It is impossible!" Captain Fairholme cried, breaking in passionately. "Even the abominable law in force in this country cannot make that a marriage!"

"Less even is needed to make a marriage in Scotland," said Sir Hugh, with a slight smile. "It behooves one to be careful in this country, Captain Fairholme. Sir Gilbert will tell you so, I think; and, indeed, if Shirley and myself had done innocently what we did willingly, we should have been equally married, and we should have had to make the best of it."

"Uncle Gilbert"—Shirley's voice, faint, gasping, tremulous, broke in here—"is that true?"

"It is true," Sir Gilbert said, with grave sadness; and a moan like the moan of a man in physical pain broke from Guy Stuart.

Shirley looked at him pitifully; she had known what the answer would be; she knew that less had made her mother the wife of a man whom she had never meant to marry. She felt that all was lost; and yet the misery on Guy's face rendered her desperate. That she should have wounded him, she who loved him so madly, who would have died for him, who would willingly have crept to his feet and prayed for forgiveness as if she had brought this anguish to him wilfully. For his sake she fought against the certainty which seemed to have frozen her blood as she knelt there, inert and powerless, able only to suffer.

"Uncle Gilbert," she said, in a voice so broken with passionate agitation and bitterest pain that it was difficult to understand what she said, "are you sure? Is there no room for doubt? I know—I know my mother's story; but—another judgment! Oh, it is impossible," she cried, rising to her feet with a sudden despairing strength; "it is impossible that a few jesting words can have made me that man's wife. Uncle Gilbert, if you have any pity, tell me that all this is some horrible dream!"

She stood swaying to and fro, as she pushed back the hair from her forehead and ruthlessly swept aside the costly lace. Sir Gilbert could not look at her; she was so like her mother as she stood there, suffering as her mother had suffered, cursed as her mother had been cursed. Ah, if that mother had lived but one short hour more, how differently her child's life would have been ordered, how much anguish she would have been spared!

"Guy," she said, passionately, as Sir Gilbert remained silent, "he might listen to you. He was your friend once."

"My friend? Yes," Guy muttered bitterly, "and therefore his treachery is ten times greater, the villain!"

"Stuart—for Shirley's sake!" interposed Oswald Fairholme, hastily. "Glynn, can nothing be done? Will you not give up this claim?"

"Captain Fairholme, if I wished to back out of the marriage, I could not do so," said Sir Hugh, somewhat impatiently. "Who can tell what may occur in the future to induce your cousin to stand up for the law which she now repudiates? We cannot see into the future; nor can we tell what circumstances may arise to render it advisable in your cousin's eyes that she should claim the title and position which undoubtedly belong to her as my wife."

"His wife!" Shirley echoed, with an expression of unutterable scorn and hatred in her beautiful eyes. "His wife!"

As she uttered the words she realized for the first time what her position was. Loving one man with all her heart and soul and strength—even as Marian Fairholme twenty years before had loved Roland Ross—she was bound for life to another. All the anguish that the mother had borne the child must bear, all the pain of knowing that her present position was her own fault; that she had brought sorrow and despair to darken forever the life for which she would, oh, so gladly, have given her own! The story Latreille had told his master six weeks before had been ably acted upon.

The laws of the land in which they lived had made her the wedded wife of the man who stood watching her with eager blue eyes, in which was some tenderness perhaps, but more triumph. She was married to a man whom not only did she not love and respect, but whom she scorned and contemned and hated for his base treachery, his despicable lies. She was his for all her life, and nothing could keep her from him, no power, no love, no devotion. As the full knowledge of all she had lost broke upon her bewildered senses, her strength gave way. Without a word, without a movement to save herself, she dropped at Ruby's feet, a mass of costly satin and lace and diamonds, and her colorless face was like the face of a dead woman.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Alice, I can't understand you; you are so unlike yourself."

"On the contrary," Miss Fairholme said haughtily, "it is you, Ruby, who seem to have lost all correct judgment and all sense of what is right and wrong."

"I would rather lose all correct judgment than be utterly devoid of compassion and pity, or even common humanity," returned Ruby doggedly.

"I have plenty of compassion and pity for objects that deserve it," said Miss Fairholme scornfully—"not for a girl who by the meanest falsehoods and most despicable behavior has obtained her end and has made herself the wife of one of the wealthiest men in Scotland."

"A girl who by the meanest falsehoods and the most despicable and basest treachery has been trapped into breaking her own heart and the heart of the man whom she loves," corrected Ruby with an angry sob.

"Ah—so she says!" said Alice, sententiously.

"Alice, this is too bad!" cried Ruby passionately through the hot angry tears which rose in her eyes as she looked at Alice's pretty contemptuous face, as, in the prettiest of invalid wrappers, she lay on a couch in the oak parlor.

It was the afternoon of the day following Shirley's wedding day. Already the first terrible excitement was over, and the household had resumed its ordinary routine.

The pretty bridal robes had been folded away, Sir Jasper Stuart's regal wedding-gift had been once more placed upon its satin bed, the decorations had been taken from the walls, the wedding-favors put aside. Only Sir Gilbert's gloomy brow and Lady Fairholme's preoccupied countenance showed that something had gone wrong; and in the servants' hall the men and maids talked with bated breath of the anguish on Guy Stuart's haggard face and of Miss Alice's hysterics—but Miss Ross they did not see.

Sir Hugh Glynn had proved himself perfectly reasonable, and even considerate. He acquiesced cordially in Captain Fairholme's suggestion that legal advice should be obtained; and the same day Oswald and Guy had gone to Edinburgh, where they thought it could be best obtained. Sir Hugh had gone back to Maxwell, declining Sir Gilbert's invitation to remain at the Court. His presence there would be an intrusion, he said, in the present circumstances; he would await Major Stuart's return at his own house.

Alice, whose vanity had received a terrible blow—for she had considered Sir Hugh a captive to her own bow and spear, and was greatly mortified at having lost all chance of such a brilliant *parti*—had chosen to take what she called her cousin's "infamous behavior" so deeply to heart that she was suffering from a nervous attack which required a great deal of attention, but which did not interfere with her flirtation with her brother's friends, both of whom, at Lady Fairholme's request, remained at the Court; while Shirley had not left her room, whither she had been carried in the long death-like swoon which had followed the terrible strain she had endured for so long; and the only persons who had seen her were Ruby Capel and Delphine, Alice's maid, whose romantic heart had been touched by the girl's terrible position, and who, moreover, had all a Frenchwoman's love of intrigue; while Ruby, in her earnest sympathy, had cried till her pretty dark eyes became red and stiff.

On recovery from her long fainting fit, Shirley had behaved very quietly; she was almost too exhausted for anything else. She felt but little, and she feared but little, for all power of thought seemed gone. She pressed Ruby's hand with a faint little grateful pressure when she found her head lying on Miss Capel's shoulder and the pretty piquant face, with a tender pity unusual to it, bending over her; then she closed her eyes wearily again, and let herself drift away into a half stupor which lasted until evening.

Ruby did not leave her all that night. Under her quick impulsive exterior the little heiress hid a very loving heart, and all her pity and tenderness were aroused for Shirley. It did not matter to her that almost every one at Fairholme Court condemned Shirley, she felt it in her inmost heart that the girl was true; and she laid the aching head on her bosom, and pressed her lips to the burning brow with a tenderness which was an inexpressible comfort to Shirley in her desolation.

Toward evening, when Shirley roused up and found Ruby still watching by her pillow, her natural unselfishness asserted itself. She insisted on making Ruby rest on the couch; and, to please her, the girl acquiesced, while Shirley sat beside her, holding her hand in her little hot fingers, and speaking now and then a few words of thankful gratitude for Ruby's tenderness and consideration.

Presently Delphine brought in a tray, and Shirley made a feint of eating, to induce Ruby to have some dinner; and when the evening wore on into night, the two girls went to rest, and Ruby cried herself to sleep in Shirley's arms. But no sleep came to the other girl's wide aching eyes. It seemed to Shirley that she would never sleep again.

The next day passed very quietly. Shirley rose and dressed, looking the very wraith of her former self in the black velveteen dress that she wore; but, with a very natural shrinking from attracting attention, she remained in her own room, in and out of which Ruby flitted, trying to cheer her, and quite happy if she brought a faint smile to the pale stiff lips.

Neither Sir Gilbert nor Lady Fairholme had expressed any wish to see the unhappy girl. Her ladyship indeed thought her guilty of great deception and untruthfulness. She believed with her daughter that Shirley had done her utmost to compass a marriage with Sir Hugh, and had not scrupled to use any means to attain her end. She was, moreover, greatly incensed with Sir Hugh for having paid Alice considerable attention when his real affections were already given to her cousin; and her indignation took the form of a great deal of petting of Alice, whom she persisted in regarding as terribly ill-used, and as suffering greatly from the exhaustion resulting from the shock which such a disgraceful affair had caused her. And Alice, in the most coquettish of wrappers, her pretty hair daintily arranged, lay back upon her cushions and accepted all these attentions, and looked interesting, as Ruby declared angrily, with all her might.

But the effort to look interesting was not necessary just now, for only Ruby was with her in the oak parlor, and she was too angry with Miss Capel for her championship of Shirley to retain the sweet resigned expression which she had so successfully assumed. At present her fair face was disfigured by an expression of vindictive anger and dislike, and her thin lips were drawn down at the corners with scorn and contempt.

"My dear Ruby," she said coolly, in answer to Miss Capel's indignant exclamation, "it is very charming to see such faith as yours; but you must remember that Shirley is my cousin, and that I have known her much longer than you have. I think she is a bad deceitful girl—false to her heart's core; and, whatever the result of Major Stuart's application, I shall never hold any other opinion."

"If you were to see her," returned Ruby sorrowfully, dashing away her tears, too proud to show how much Alice's words wounded her, "you would change that opinion, Alice."

"Do you think I should have any faith in her fainting?" asked Alice contemptuously. "She is an accomplished actress; her long residence abroad taught her that; and, as for her tears, she can call them up at will."

"She has never cried at all," said Ruby sadly. "She just sits still and quiet, as pale as death, and speaks so gently and sweetly when she is spoken to, but with such a strange look in her eyes that I can hardly bear to meet it."

"It is a pity to let your tender heart be lacerated so foolishly," remarked Miss Fairholme. "But it is hardly to be expected that you would be able to fathom such a depth of depravity. People who are true themselves naturally believe in others' rectitude; but indeed your trust is singularly misplaced."

So saying, Alice took up a book which was lying on the gypsy table at her elbow, as a sign that she considered the conversation finished; and Ruby rose sorrowfully from her chair and stood looking down into the fire, with a mist between her eyes and its red glow.

"Then you will not come, Alice?" she said, after a long pause; and Miss Fairholme lifted her eyes from her book, with a puzzled expression, as if she did not understand.

"I beg your pardon?" she said, sweetly.

"You will not come with me?"

"Where, Ruby?"

"To see Shirley. It would only be kind of you, Alice dear, and I am sure it would make her less unhappy. She feels so much," Ruby added earnestly, "that this has brought sorrow on you, more especially because she fears——"

The girl hesitated and colored slightly.

"She is very good," Alice said scornfully. "What does she fear?"

"That you cared for Sir Hugh, and——"

"Her fears and her sympathy are both supertluous," said Miss Fairholme, taking up her book once more. "I will not see her, Ruby; so it is quite useless troubling me any more. I am not equal to any more of her scenes; her acting is too much for my nerves. My cousin has certainly missed her vocation."

"Alice, how cruel you are!" Ruby exclaimed, indignantly, as she turned away; and Alice laughed mockingly as she left the room, closing the door after her with a bang.

"I hope that will upset your nerves," she said, angrily, as she passed into the hall. "You may have nerves, Alice Fairholme, but you have no heart. Poor Shirley!"

She stood for a minute hesitating in the hall; the wintry dusk was gathering round, and it would soon be time for the lamps to be lighted. Just now the great blazing fire threw a red lurid light over the hall, which reached even the windows on either side of the hall door—broad low windows with wide cushioned window-seats, in one of which Ruby's quick eyes perceived a little crouching figure.

"Shirley!" she exclaimed, as she went toward the window; and Shirley turned her face toward her with a little smile which, to Ruby's eyes, seemed sadder than any tears.

She was sitting on the window-seat, resting her head against the pane of glass, and her lovely eyes so desolate and sorrowful were peering out into the gathering dusk beyond.

"What are you doing here, dear?" Ruby said, making her voice cheerful by a strong effort. "Is it not cold for you, Shirley?"

"Cold, Ruby! Feel how nice and warm my hands are."

Nice and warm! They were dry and hot and burning with fever as Ruby took them fondly in hers.

"I could not bear my room any longer," she said then, with a pitiful little attempt at playfulness. "The quiet worked on my nerves, I suppose, for I got restless; and I came here because—because——"

"The dog-cart has gone to the station," said Ruby, gently, "and you would see it first from here."

(To be continued.)