FORREST HOUSE.

BY MARY J. HOLMES.

"Married,—to whom ? Not Everard ?"

"No-o," the doctor answered contemptuously, annoyed at Josephine's manner. "I hope she has more sense than to marry that milksop, who has grown to be more like a Methodist parson than anything else. You called him a milksop yourself, once," he continued, as he saw the flash in Josephine's eyes, "and you must not blame me for taking my cue from you, woo know him better than I do. I believe, on my soul, you half feared he was going to marry, and were sorry for it. He is nothing to you. A woman cannot have two husbands ; that's bigamy."

The doctor was growing irritable, and Josephine knew it, but she could not forbear answering him tartly :

"There are worse crimes than bigamy—a great deal—and they are none the less worse because the world does not know of them."

"What do you mean ?" he asked sharply, and Josephine replied :

"Nothing in particular ; only you told me once that you had broken every commandment except the one "Thou shalt do no murder," and that you might break that under strong provocation. Of course there are sins at your door not generally known. Suppose some one should be instrumental in bringing them or the worst of them to light ?"

"Then I might break the only commandment you say I have not broken," he answered, and in the eyes bent so searchingly on Josephine's face there was an evil, threatening look, before which she quailed.

She must never let him know of the letter hidden under the carpet, and watched by her so carefully. Every day she went to the spot to make sure it was there, and every day she read it again until she knew it by heart, and had no need to read it except to see if she had not by some chance made a mistake and read it wrong. But she had not ; the proof was there, of crime, and guilt, and sin, such as made her terribly afraid of the man who fondled and caressed her now more than he had done in weeks, and who at last welcomed Agnes, when she came, even more warmly than she did herself, though in not quite so demonstrative a manner.

Agnes had gone straight to her sister's room, which Josephine had not left since the day she took the foreign letter from the office and hid it under the carpet. She had become a monomaniac on the subject of that letter and dared not leave, lest some one should find it, but sat all day in her easy-chair, which had been drawn into the bay window, and stood directly over the secret. And there she sat when Agnes came in, and then, as if all her remaining nerves had given away, she threw her arms around her neck and sobbing out, "Oh, Aggie, I am glad you have come ; I could not have borne it much longer," fainted entirely away.

CHAPTER XLVII.

AGNES FINDS THE LETTER.

If there was one thing more than another which Agnes detested, it was carpet-bugs ; those little black pests, which within a few years, have crept into the houses in certain sections of the country, carrying with them ruin to whatever they fasten upon, and dismay and wretchedness to those who will persist in hunting for them. Among the latter class was Agnes, who, from the moment the cry of carpet bugs was raised in Holburton, had spent half her time upon her hands and knees, searching for them on the edges of the carpets, and the rest of her time hunting them in bundles, and boxes, and drawers. They seemed to owe her a special spite, for they had eaten her woollen shawl, and her furs, and her best delaine dress, and life was becoming a burden to her, when she received Josephine's letter begging her to come at once to the Forrest House.

Always ready at a kind word to forgive her sister for any amount of unkindness, Agnes decided at once to go, feeling that it would be some comfort to escape from the dreadful bugs. She did not think they had yet reached Rothsay ; but she meant to make it her first business to hunt for them, and equipped herself with all the ingredients named in the category for their extirpation, Persian powder, red pepper, Scotch snuff, cut tobacco, Paris green, hellebore, and even Prussic acid formed a portion of her luggage when she reached the Forrest House, and found her sister so ill and weak that for a time she had no thought for carpet bugs, and had there been an army there they would have revelled in perfect security for all of her interference. But after a few days, when Josephine seemed better and was sleeping quietly, the desire for research and battle came upon her again, incited by the softness of the velvet carpet in her sister's room, which she thought furnished such a rich field for the marauders. As it happened, the bay window was the point at which she commenced operations, as it was farthest from Josephine's bed.

"They have been here, too," was her whispered exclamation, as she caught sight of the familiar sign, the carpet loosened from the floor ; and eager in her search she turned the carpet back further and further, until she saw the corner of the letter just protruding in sight. To draw it out and glance at the name upon it, "J. Everard Forrest," was the work of a moment, and then she wondered how it came there, and if it were some old thing received by Everard years ago, and left lying about as something of no interest to him or anybody. It looked old and worn, as if it had been read many times. Surely there could be no harm in her glancing at the contents just to see if it were of any value.

Thus reasoning, Agnes opened the letter, saw the signature and the date, and then with lightning rapidity read the whole, and Josephine's secret was hers no longer, for Agnes had it, and the effect on her at first was almost as great as it had been on Josephine. That a great wrong had been committed she was certain, just as she was certain that the letter was being withheld from its rightful owner. But by whom ? That was the question she asked herself during the morning she sat motionless upon the floor, unable to move, or scarcely think clearly, in her bewildered state of mind. She did not quite believe it was Josephine, and if not, then it must be Dr. Matthewson, and he, if the letter were true, was capable of anything wicked and bad ; and there came over her a great fear of him just as it had crept over Josephine when she first knew his sin. Agnes must not let him know what she had found, and, believing Josephine innocent, she must not disturb her, and add to her nervousness. Everard, she had heard, was out of town for a little vacation, which he usually took at that season, and Miss Belknap was therefore the only person in whom she could safely confide.

"She will know just what to do," Agnes thought, and, hiding the letter in her pocket, she arranged the carpet and curtains very carefully, put the easy-chair in its place, and was at her sewing by the window when Josephine awoke, after a sleep of near two hours' duration.

She was feeling better, and was disposed to be very kind and indulgent toward Agnes, who, she saw, was looking tired and pale.

"Why, Agnes," she said, "you are almost as white as I am. What is the matter? You have been shut up too closely with me. You have not been out since you came, and you are so accustomed to the air and exercise. Suppose you go for a walk. I am sure it will do you good." Now was Agnes' opportunity, and saying that she thought a walk would do her good, she hurried from the room, and was soon on her way towards Elm Park.

Beatrice was going to be married, and notwithstanding what Dr. Matthewson had said of her faded looks, she had never been so beautiful and sweetly attractive in her fresh girlhood as she was now at twenty-nine, with she great happiness shining in her face and showing itself in every action. Poor, nervous Mollie was not forgotten, for her memory lived in her lovely children, Trix and little Banchie ; but Theodore had felt it right to claim at last his early love, who was not ashamed to confess how dear he was to her and how glad she was to be his wife and the mother of his children.

The wedding, which was to be very private, was to take place the 15th of September, now only two weeks in the distance, and Beatrice was exceedingly busy with her preparations,—so busy that she had not found time to call upon Agnes, as she intended to do, when she heard of her arrival at the Forrest House. She always liked Agnes, and was glad when her maid came to her room, saying that she was in the parlor waiting to see her.

"Ask her to come up here," she said, and in a moment Agnes was with her, seeming so agitated and excited, that Beatrice guessed at once that something was wrong, and asked what was the matter.

It was not in Agnes' nature to keep one in suspense, and she answered by putting the letter into Beatrice's hand and saying :

"I found it under the carpet, and because I dared not show it to him,—the doctor, I mean,—who I am sure put it there, I brought it to you. Read it quick, and then we must act together ; but never let him know I had a hand in it ; he would kill me if he did ; there's murder in his nature, or he never could have done this."

Agnes was speaking to cars which did not hear what she was saying, for Bee had taken the letter, postmarked at 'Wien,' and addressed in a handwritting she knew so well, and the very sight of which made her heart throb with pain as she remembered the dear little girl whom she believed to be dead in the far-away foreign town. But, when she glanced at the date, a vague terror seized her and held her fast while she read the letter, which I give to the reader :

"HAELDER-STRAUCHSEN, Austria,
June 10th, 18—.

"DEAR EVERARD :—Are you dead ? Is everybody dead in America, that I am forgotten,—deserted,—and left here alone in this dreadful place ? Not dreadful because they are unkind to me, for they are not. Only they say that I am mad, and treat me as such, and I always have an attendant watching what I do, and I cannot get away, though I have tried so many times. Where my brother is, I do not know ; he left me here more than a year ago, to go to Vienna for a day or two, he said, and I have never seen him since or heard from him ; and the head of the house,—Dr. Van Schoisner,—says that he is undoubtedly dead ; and I might believe him, perhaps, if he did not insist that I am his niece, Myra Van Schoisner, and not Rosamond Hastings at all. He says she died last April, a year ago, and was buried by the river which I can see from my window, and that her brother, Dr. Matthewson, left soon after and has not returned.

"Oh, Everard, it is all so dreadful, and sometimes my head buzzes and feels so big that I am afraid I shall go crazy, as they say I am. I have written and written to you and Bee and Lawyer Russell, and even to my brother, hoping he might be living ; but no answer has come, and now I do not think my letters ever left this *Maison-de-Sante*, as they call the institution, which stands several miles back from the Danube. Take the boat at Lintz, and get off at ——, and come quick, and get me away from here before I die. I wonder I have not died before this, it is so awful to be shut up and called somebody else, and hear only a foreign language, of which at first I could not understand a word, and they tried not to let me learn. Only the doctor speaks English and a woman called Yulah Van Eisner, who came as attendant two months ago, and who has promised to get this letter off for me.

"I spoke brother's name to her,—Dr. Matthewson,—and she almost foamed at the mouth, and actually spit upon me because I was his sister ; but I made her know I was good, made her listen to me ; and she became my friend, and taught me to speak with her, and will help me to get away if she can. She says my brother is not dead ; he is a villain, and wants my money ; and that Myra Van Schoisner is in the grave where they say I am ; and it's all horrible, and I am so sick and frightened, and so afraid I shall go mad if you don't come quick.

"Dear, dear Everard, come to your poor
"ROSSIE."

This was all Rossie had written, but a postscript had been added in a cramped, uneducated hand, and broken English, to this effect :

"I open this paper to tell when comes come to Hotel *Rother Krebs*, in Lintz, where I is work *zu hause*, and wait for *die Amerikaner*. Asks for Yulah Van Eisner. I hates him much."

To say that Beatrice's nerves were shaken by this letter would be putting in very mild language just how she felt. With her usual quickness of perception, she saw and understood the diabolical plot which had been so long successful, and her first impulse was to rush through the streets of Rothsay, and, proclaiming the doctor's perfidy, have him arrested at once. Her next and soberer thought was to proceed in the matter more quietly and surely, and to this end she questioned Agnes minutely as to where and how she found the letter, and if she could throw any light upon the way in which it came there. But Agnes could not ; she only knew she had found it, and that she believed Dr. Matthewson himself had by some foul method obtained possession of it and hidden it away for safe keeping, though why he had not destroyed it and so made its discovery impossible, neither she nor Beatrice could guess. Her sister, she said, was in a very strange, nervous state of mind, but she could not connect her with the crime in any way, for, unscrupulous as she might be, she would not dare make herself amenable to the law by being a party to her husband's guilt.

This was Agnes' view of the matter, and Beatrice coincided with her, but bade her be very watchful at the Forrest House and see if any search was made for the missing letter, and by whom.

Beatrice's next interview was with Lawyer Russell, who, in his surprise, bounded from his chair half way across the room as he exclaimed :

"Lord bless my soul, Rossie alive ! Rossie not dead ! but bid away in a private madhouse ! It's the most hellish plot I ever heard of—ever—and it is Satan prison for him, the villain ; but we must move cautiously, Miss Belknap, very cautiously, as we have the very Old Nick to deal with in that doctor. I'm glad the boy is gone, just now, as it would have been like you to have blated it out to him, and then all creation couldn't have stopped him from throttling the wretch in the street, and spoiling every thing. This letter was written long ago, and there's no knowing what may have happened since to our little girl. She may be dead sure enough now, or, what is worse, mad in real earnest. So don't go to kicking up a row just yet, till we get more proof, and then we'll spring the trap so tight that he cannot get away. I'm honestly afraid, though, that he has done something worse with the little girl since he had this letter, which the Lord only knows how he got. He must have a key to Everard's drawer ; but we'll fix him ! and, Miss Belknap, I say, you or somebody must go to Europe and hunt up poor little Rossie. I'll be hanged if it don't make me cry to think of her shut up, and waiting and waiting for us to come. Go on your wedding trip. You and the parson will do better than Everard, whose name they have heard, and for whom they may be on the watch. Morton is new to them, and will excite no suspicion. This girl,—what's her name,—Yulah Van Eisner, must be found first, of course, if she is not already put out of the way, and with her help you'll fetch her, poor little girl. You ought to go right away, and we'll say nothing to Everard till you've found her. Suspense and then disappointment would kill him outright. And he must not go ; that hound would track him sure, and everything be spoiled. You must do it, and you can, better than anybody else.

Beatrice felt that she could, too, and had rapidly concocted in her mind a denouement both startling and novel, and highly satisfactory. But there was one difficulty to be surmounted. Theodore's people might not be willing for him to be gone so long, in that case she said :

"I'll postpone the wedding and go alone."

But this was not necessary, for, in response to the long letter which went that night to Boston, there came a telegram, "I can go ;" and then all Bee's thoughts were turned to the work she had on hand, and she grew so restless and nervous and impatient for the day when she could start that people noted and commented upon her changed looks and manners, wondering greatly what ailed her, and if her heart was not in the marriage.

Everard was in Rothsay now, and with her every evening, talking always of Rossie, whose grave he bade her be sure and find, and bring him something from it, if only a blade of grass. Once he startled her by saying he had half made up his mind to join her party, and go with her, so great was his desire to see where Rossie was buried. But Bee turned upon him so fiercely, declaring that she preferred going alone with Theo, that he abandoned the plan altogether, and felt a little hurt at the vehemence with which his company had been rejected.

The wedding was very quiet and small, and the bride very absent-minded and non-committal in her answers to their inquiries as to where she was going, and how long she expected to be gone. But whatever they might have thought of her, the bridegroom was perfectly satisfied, and seemed supremely happy as he bade his friends good-bye, and followed his impatient wife into the car which was to take them to New York, and the ship, which, on the 15th of September, sailed away for Europe, where they hoped to find poor Rossie.

Agnes was at the wedding, and, with the exception of Lawyer Russell, was the only one who had the slightest suspicion of the reason which had taken the newly-wedded pair so suddenly to Europe. But Agnes was safe as the grave, though often at her wits' end to know what to make of her sister, who grew worse instead of better, and who sometimes talked and acted as if she had lost reason. She had missed the letter from its hiding-place, and gone nearly wild in her excitement and anxiety as to who had found it. But as her husband's manner was unchanged, except as he fretted at her continued illness, she gradually grew more quiet, though there was constantly with her a presentiment of some great evil which was to be brought about by means of the lost letter.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LA MAISON DE SANTE.

Just where it was situated, how far from Vienna, how far from Lintz, or how far from the Danube, does not matter to the reader, who needs only to know there was such a place, embowered in trees, and flowers, and shrubs, and seeming to the casual passer-by like a second little Eden, where one had nothing to do but to enjoy the brightness of the Austrian skies, and the beauty of the premises around. But every door was barred, and every window had a net-work of iron in front of it, through which white, haggard faces looked wistfully, and strange, wild laughs, mingled sometimes with cries of rage, were heard to issue at all hours of the day. Frequently the inmates of that house, or those who were on the "good list," walked in the beautiful grounds, but never walked alone. An attendant was always with them, watchful, vigilant, without, however, seeming to be so ; for the rule of the house was kindness, whenever it would answer, and as much freedom as was compatible with safety. Except in extreme cases, where the patient was poor and obscure, it was not a cruelly conducted household which Baron or Doctor Van Schoisner had in charge ; but in all the world there was not, perhaps, a more avaricious, grasping man than the baron, who would have sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver, and for forty almost have consented to a murder. If, for purposes of their own, people wished to incarcerate their friends, and paid him well for it, their secret was safe with him, and the victim was insane as long as he lived, if necessary. But there his wickedness ceased, and his patients were generally made as happy and comfortable as it was possible to make them. He, alone, held the secrets of his employers. Not a whisper of the truth ever escaped his lips, and to his attendants everybody was crazy, and must be watched and treated as such, no matter what their pretensions to the contrary ; so when poor little Rossie awoke one morning to find herself deserted, she became at once a lunatic. All liberty of action was gone ; even her name was taken from her, and she was told that the Rosamond Hastings who she professed to be was dead, and lying under the grass where the wild violets were growing, while she was Myra, the niece of the baron, who had come to the house the same night with the beautiful American girl who was so sick, and who had died in a few days. No wonder if for a time her brain reeled, and she was in danger of being in reality insane.

Poor little Rossie had enjoyed much and suffered much since the day when we last saw her, waving a farewell to her friends from the deck of the steamer which bore her away. Her brother had been uniformly kind and affectionate to her, but many things had arisen to shake her confidence in him, and to make her think it possible that he was not the honorable, upright man he professed to be. Then, as the year wore on, and they got farther and farther from home, her letters were unanswered, and there began to steal over her a longing for America which she could not conceal, and which took all the color from her face and roundness from her form, until at last she was really sick with hope deferred, and an anxiety to know why none of her letters were answered.

At Florence she was very ill of a fever contracted in Rome, and from the effects of which she did not recover, although she was able at last to go on toward Vienna, their ultimate destination. At Salzburg they halted for a few days, and there her brother brought to her a stranger, whom he introduced as a friend and old acquaintance, Dr. Van Schoisner, to whom he said he owed his life, and who had a kind of Sanitarium for people diseased in the body and mind, upon the River Danube. Van Schoisner, who spoke English very well, was exceedingly kind and tender in his manner toward Rossie, whom he questioned so closely, and in such a peculiar way, that she first was annoyed, and then confused and bewildered, and finally contradicted herself two or three times in her statements with regard to her recent illness, and when he asked how she would like to go to his beautiful place on the river and stay a few weeks while he treated her, she shrank away from him, and bursting into tears said she would not like it at all—that she did not need to be treated, as there was nothing the matter with her but homesickness, and only America could cure that.

Van Schoisner laughed, and stroked her hair, and said he would soon have her all right, and then went to her brother, between whom and himself there was a long conference, during which both sold themselves, body and soul, to the Evil One, and were pledged to do his work.

"If she would only abandon that nonsense of hers about giving her fortune to that Forrest, as soon as she comes of age, and would share it with me, I wouldn't do it, for, by love, I've a kind of liking for the girl," Dr. Matthewson said, as there came a little prick of conscience, and a drawing back from the thing he proposed to do, which was nothing more or less than burying Rossie alive inside a mad-house, where, so long as the price was paid, she would be as really dead to the world as if the grass were growing over her, and where the chances were that she would either die a speedy death, or, with her temperament, become a hopeless lunatic.

Money he must have, and as he believed in neither God nor Devil, he had no scruples as to how he got it, only he would a little rather not murder one outright to get it. Every argument which he could think of had been brought to bear upon Rossie, with a view to inducing her to keep the fortune willed her, but she stood firm as a rock in her decision to make the whole over to Everard as soon as she came of age, and so he had recourse to the horrid scheme of which we have hinted.

He knew Van Schoisner well, and knew that he was the man for any deed, however dark,—provided there was money in it, with little chance of detection ; and he came for him to meet them at Salzburg to confer on important business. So Van Schoisner went and found what the business was, and talked to Rossie about her head and brain, and *cerebellum*, until she lost her wits and said she hadn't any *cerebellum*, and never had. She was homesick, and that was all. This, of course, was proof conclusive of a diseased state of mind. A girl who hadn't any *cerebellum*, and who persisted in throwing away hundreds of thousands of dollars, must be insane and dealt with accordingly. So the bargain was made, and Rossie's fate was sealed. And then arose the question of friends at home, What should be said to them to quiet all suspicion ?

"She must be dead, of course," Van Schoisner said. "Nothing easier than that. A notice in the paper ; a letter containing particulars ; crape on your hat ; a tear in your eye, and the thing is accomplished."

"Yes," returned the doctor, "but suppose that chap who is in love with her takes it into his head to come spooning after her grave, and inquires about her death, and wants to see the very room, and all that—and it would be like him to do it—what then ?"

Van Schoisner rubbed his forehead thoughtfully a moment, and then said ;

"That's the hardest part to manage, but I think I can do it, only give me time. I have a niece in the country a few miles from here, very sick with consumption—in the last stages, and poor, too, with no friends but myself. I pay her board where she is, and visit her sometimes. She was born in London, her father was an Englishman ; so she speaks English perfectly, and might be your sister. I have talked of taking her to Haelder-Strauchsen, and will do so at once, though the journey will shorten her life. But that will not matter, as she must die soon. Once at Haelder-Strauchsen she is your sister, and your sister is my niece. The attendants never ask questions nor talk. Do you comprehend ?"

Dr. Matthewson thought he did, but left the matter wholly to his ally, who had, if possible, drank deeper from the cup of iniquity than himself.

As the result of this conversation there was brought to the hotel a few days later a white-faced, fair haired girl, in whose great blue eyes and about whose mouth and nose death was plainly written. They called her Myra, and said she was Van Schoisner's niece, whom he was taking to his home for better care than she could have in the country. No one attended her. Her uncle could do all that was necessary, he said, and he seemed very kind to her, and stayed by her constantly upon the boat, when at last they started for home accompanied by Dr. Matthewson and Rossie, who was greatly interested in the sick girl. It was night when they reached the landing where they were to stop, and from the windows of the close carriage Rossie saw nothing of the country through which they passed for a few miles, but was conscious at last that they were entering spacious grounds, and stopping before a large, square building, with two wings on either side.

The room assigned her was in one of the wings on the third floor, as was Myra's also. It was very prettily furnished, and the windows looked out upon the grounds, but there was stretched before them a gauzy net-work of iron, which Rossie noticed at once, and asked for the reason. Then her brother explained to her the real character of the house, but said that as they were transient visitors it would not affect them in the least, and all she had to do was to rest and get as well as possible, so they might go on to Vienna.

And Rossie tried to rest and enjoy the beautiful place, but the occasional sight of some of the patients walking in the distance, the strange sounds, like human cries, which reached her in the night when everything was still, and, more than all, a great langour and desire to sleep which she could not shake off, wore upon her so fast that in a few days she was seriously ill again, and lost all consciousness of time or what was passing around her. How long she remained in this condition she never knew ; only this, that she awoke one morning to find Van Schoisner with her, apparently watching her as she slept, and administering some powerful stimulants. He was very kind, indeed, and told her Dr. Matthewson had been obliged to go to Vienna on business, which might detain him a few days, but he would soon be back, and she was to be as happy and quiet as possible till his return. Her next question was for the sick girl, who, he said, had died a week ago, and then he bade her try to sleep again, as perfect rest was what she needed most.

"And I went to sleep," Rossie said, afterward, when telling Beatrice of that awful time when she was kept a prisoner at Haelder-Strauchsen, with no hope of escape. "I went to sleep, and slept so heavily and long that it must have been days before I awoke, and when I did, my head ached so hard, and everything seemed so confused, and I could not understand a word the woman said, for she spoke only German, which I never could make out. I tried to make her know that I wanted my brother, but she shook her head and put her finger to her lips, and finally went out and locked the door after her. Then I got up and went to the window, and leaned my head against the bars, and cried for home and you, and Everard, till I felt so sick and dizzy that I went back to bed, and lay there till Van Schoisner came and told me nothing had been heard from Dr. Matthewson since he left the Sanitarium, two weeks before."

"I certainly expected him to return,' he said, 'and am afraid some evil has befallen him. I have written to the hotel where he intended to stop, and they have not seen him.' "

"He called him Dr. Matthewson all the time, as formal-like as if he had not been my brother, and once he called me Myra, and when I said he was mistaken, for I was Rossie Hastings, he smiled kind of pityingly, and said :

"'Poor little girl, be anything you like to yourself. To me you are Myra. Rossie died just across the hall, and is buried in such a pretty spot.' "

"I thought he was crazy, and felt afraid of him, but had no suspicion then of the real state of things. That came gradually, as days and weeks went by and I heard nothing from my brother, and seldom saw any one but the doctor and the attendant, Margotte, who never talked with me except by signs, so I had no opportunity to learn the language, which I greatly desired to do, in order to make myself understood, and convince her that I was not Myra, and was not mad, as I knew she believed me to be."

"Oh, it was so horrible that time, and my head got so confused, and I used to pray constantly, 'God keep me from going really mad!' and He did, though I was very near it. At first they would not let me have paper or ink to write to you with, but I begged so hard on my knees, clinging to that man's feet, that he consented at last, and I wrote to you, and Everard, and Lawyer Russell, and my brother, too, though I did not know where he was, and Margotte took the letters, which I know now were never sent, but were burned to ashes, for Yulah told me so,—good kind Yulah, who came to me like an angel from Heaven.

"Margotte was sick, and Yulah took her place. She had been there once as a patient, mad herself, from some great wrong done to her by one she loved and trusted. Her baby had died there, and been buried in the grounds, and she was attached to the place, and after her cure, stayed from choice, and was nurse and attendant both, and the most faithful and vigilant of them all, and the one the doctor trusted the most. So he put me in her charge, and the moment I saw her sweet, sad face, and looked into her eyes, which seemed always ready to run over with tears, I loved her, and put my tired head in her lap, and cried like a child.

"*Qu'avez vous, petite Myra ?*" she said, and then I knew she spoke French, and my heart gave a great bound, for I knew I could talk with her a little, and I mustered all my knowledge of the language and told her I was not Myra at all ; I was Rosamond Hastings, from America ; shut up, detained there unlawfully, for what reason I did not know ; that I had wrote and written home and nobody had answered me, and the doctor said my brother, who came with me, was dead, but I did not believe it ; and a great deal more, to which she listened patiently, as one might listen to the meaningless prattle of a child.

"But when I mentioned brother's name, she sprang to her feet, and shaking me off asked fiercely, '*votre frere, comment s'appelle-t-il ?*' I told her again, 'Dr. Matthewson ; Dr. John Matthewson, from America,' and for a few moments she acted as if she were perfectly insane, and glaring at me with her terrible eyes, she spit upon me and demanded, 'You are sure you are his sister ? You are nothing else to him, though that is bad enough ?'

"I made her believe at last, and then she asked me so many questions that, before I knew it, I had told her all about the Forrest House, and the will, and Everard and everything, she all the time looking straight at me with her great bright eyes, which seemed to be reading me to see if I were telling the truth."

"I see, I see, I understand. Poor child, God sent me here to be your friend, and I will !' she said, when I had finished ; and then she broke out angrily against my brother, whom she called a villain, a murderer, a rascal and said he had done her a terrible wrong, which she had sworn to avenge, and she saw a way by which she could keep her word.

"'I go to America myself, but what your friends shall know,' she said, and to my great delight she spoke to me now in English, but whispered very low. 'It is better they not to know I can talk in your tongue, and they not suspect ; and I must be very strict, watch you very much is my order, because you dangerous, you try to kill yourself, he say, and I never let you from my sight. But I fix 'em. I cheat, I have my revenge much. You will see what I do.' "

This was in part the story told afterwards to Beatrice by Rossie, who did not then know that Yulah Van Eisner was the girl who had once pleaded so piteously for justice at the hands of Dr. Matthewson, and been by him spurned with contempt, which had turned her love into bitter hatred. She saw no reason to discredit Rossie's story, and understood readily why she had been immured in a living tomb, and guessed that to her friends at home she was supposed to be dead, and that the knavish brother had the inheritance. She did not, however, communicate all her suspicions to her charge, as she did not wish to wound her unnecessarily, but she meant to get her away, and set herself steadily to that object. Through her influence writing materials were again furnished to Rossie, who, acting upon Yulah's advice, wrote two letters to Everard, one of which went into Van Schoisner's hands and was burned as usual, while the other was secreted about Yulah's person and found its way to America, but not until some time had elapsed, and Yulah had given up her situation to Margotte, with the understanding, however, that there was always a place for her in the Maison de Sante, either as attendant or nurse, when she chose to return.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE ESCAPE.

There were not as many visitors as usual that season in Lintz and those who did come were mostly English or French, who did not spend their money as freely as the Americans were accustomed to do, so that it was a matter of rejoicing to the master of the Rether Krebs when one afternoon in October the stage brought from the station two passengers whom, with his quick eye, he set down as Americans, and bustled out to meet them, deciding that they were people who would not stand for a few thalers more or less. Beatrice was very tired, for they had not stopped at all since landing in Liverpool, but had crossed at once to the Continent, and travelled day and night until they reached Lintz, where Yulah was waiting for them. She had sought and obtained the situation as chambermaid in the hotel, and, like the master, had watched impatiently for Americans, though from a very different reason. And when her Americans came, she knew them as if by instinct, taking Mr. Morton, however, for Everard, and feeling greatly disappointed when she learned that it was a Mr. and Mrs. Morton, who were occupying No.—, the great room in the house where princes had dined and slept. Still, something told her that Beatrice was the lady she was looking for, and when the latter retired to her room after dinner she found a sad faced woman pretending to be busy with something about the washstand, though everything seemed in its place. Suddenly she faced about, and the eyes of the two women met and looked into each other with an eager, questioning gaze.

"You are Yulah," Beatrice said, in German, and the girl answered with a cry of joy, "Yes, and you are Lady Beatrice she talks so much about, and he is not Mr. Everard."

"No, my husband, Mr. Morton. We were married just before we sailed. Where is she ? When did you see her last, and how soon can we have her. Will they let her go without any trouble, and what are we to do ?"

Beatrice asked her questions so rapidly as to confuse and bewilder the girl, who shook her head, and answered in English :

"You ask so many, I don't know quite all. But I go to-morrow and tell her, and see how we can do best. He will never let her go, there is too much money in her. That doctor pay big sums. We must take her, that's all, and be so careful. You stay here till I come or send some word ; not to-morrow, but next day, perhaps. I not talk more now. I be at my duties."

She left the room then, and Beatrice saw no more of her until the day but one following, when about dark she came into the room, flushed and excited, and evidently a little shaken out of her usual quiet, composed manner. She had been to Haelder-Strauchsen ; she had seen Rossie, but had not told her of her friends' arrival.

"I did not dare," she said, "she's so weak and sick, no heart, no courage, but stands by the window all the day, looking to the west, and whispering sometimes, 'Oh, Everard, why do you not come and I waiting so long ?' But we'll get her sure. God fixed it for us, and he,—the doctor I mean,—is awful with something they think is cholera and all is fright and confusion, for the nurses is afraid and leaving, and Miss Rossie's attendant is glad to have me take her place. So I am going back to-morrow, and you must go with me and stay in the town a mile away, until I send you word what to do next. You are not afraid of cholera ? Americans mostly is."

Bee was mortally afraid of it, but she would have faced death itself for the sake of recovering Rossie, and it was arranged that they should take the boat the next day for the little town near the *Maison de Sante*, where Yulah told them there was a comfortable inn, where they could remain in quiet as long as they liked. Travellers, especially Americans, often stopped there, she said, and their being there would not awaken no suspicion. Accordingly, the next afternoon found them occupants of a pleasant chamber in the inn, with an outlook to the river and another to the road which led out to La Maison de Sante. Yulah had come with them on the boat as second-class passenger, and had held no communication whatever with them, lest suspicion might in some way be aroused ; and immediately after landing had taken the road to the Sanitarium, while Beatrice tried in vain to keep composed and quiet, and await the turn of events. That she should actually see Rossie to-that night she could not realize, and when about dark a note was brought her by a little boy, her limbs trembled so violently, and she felt so faint and giddy, as to be scarcely able to read it.

The note was as follows :

"Have a big carriage at the south gate, one little ways off, at eleven to-night. Get Michael Fahen—he my friend ; this his little boy ; he keeps the carriages."

That seemed to bring Rossie very near, and Bee's face was white as ashes as she questioned the boy, who said Michael Fahen was his father, and rented carriages to people, and if she liked he would bring him to the room. Michael was a powerfully-built man, who looked as if he could keep a whole army at bay by the sheer strength of his fists, and when told what was wanted of him, or rather that he was to wait with them near the south gate of the Maison de Sante at eleven that night, shot at them a keen, quick glance of intelligence and comprehension which made Beatrice sink with fear, lest, after all, they should fail. But his words and manner were reassuring. He could guess what they wanted, and he was the man to do it, He did not believe in the place ; there were many there who ought to be out. Yes, he'd help her ; he'd drive them to Vienna, if necessary ; he knew the south gate, in the rear of the house, opening on a lonesome and unfrequented road.

"And I shall succeed," he said. "Michel Fahen never fails ; arms strong, horses fleet, and Yulah cunning as the very——"

His confidence in himself inspired them with confidence in him, and at the time appointed they were in his carriage, and entering the narrow road which lay to the rear of the Maison de Sante, and more than a quarter of a mile distant. That portion of the grounds was filled with trees and shrubbery, and was not often used either for convenience or pleasure by the inmates of the house, the chimneys of which were by daylight just perceptible through the tall, thick trees.

Bee could see nothing in the darkness except the occasional glimmer of a light moving from point to point, as she sat half-fainting with nervous fear and impatience, while the clock in the tower first told the hour of eleven, and then the quarter, and then the half, and then,—surely there was a footstep in the direction of the gate, and a voice she recognized as Yulah's called softly, "Michel, Michel, are you there ? Help me lift her ; she is dead or fainted, and I've brought her all the way."

"Can any of you hold my horses ?" Michel asked, and in an instant Beatrice was at their heads, patting and caressing, and talking to them in the language all brutes recognize, whether English or German, while Mr. Morton and Michel were at the gate, which was high and locked, and over which they lifted bodily a figure which lay perfectly motionless in the arms of Michel, who bore it to the carriage and laid it down gently, but not until Beatrice, with a woman's forethought has made sure who it was.

She had risked too much to be disappointed now, and bidding Michel wait a moment, she struck a match with which she had prepared herself, and holding it close to the inanimate form in his arms, saw the face she knew, but so white, and worn, and still, with the long, curling lashes resting on the pallid cheeks, where tears and suffering had left their traces in dark, purplish rings, that with a gasping cry she said, "Oh, Theo, it's Rossie, but dead ; I am sure she is dead."

"Now, Michel, drive for your life !" Yulah exclaimed, as she sprang to the box beside him, after having seen Rossie carefully lifted into the carriage, where she lay, supported mostly by Mr. Morton, though her head was on Beatrice's lap, and Beatrice's hands were busy unfastening the water-proof hood, and her tears were flowing like rain on her face, which, even in the darkness, looked ghostly white and corpse-like.

The manner of escape had been as follows The doctor had died that afternoon, and as his disease had undoubtedly been cholera in its most malignant form, great consternation had prevailed in the building among the employees, some of whom had left, and most of whom kept as far as possible from the wing where he had died, and where Rossie's room was situated. Yulah alone was fearless, and came and went as usual, in her capacity of attendant in place of Margotte, who had fled to the town. To prevent contagion, it was thought best to bury the body at midnight, with as little ceremony as possible, and thus everything was in confusion, of which Yulah took advantage. She was very popular in the house, and when she asked permission to go out for the evening and take one of the nurses with her, it was readily granted her, with the injunction that she should wait until her patient was asleep, or at least quiet for the night. To this she readily assented, saying that she would lock her in the room so as to prevent the possibility of her venturing into the hall while the body was being removed. This arranged, her next business was to prepare Rossie, who had recently sunk into a state of despondency amounting almost to insanity itself, and who spent most of her time sitting or standing by the window, with her face toward the setting sun, and such a hopeless, weary expression upon it as was very touching to see. She was standing thus, although it was already too dark to see more than the lights in the distant town, when Yulah came hurriedly in, and, bolting the door, went up to her and said in broken English :

"Cheer up, petite, joy and glad at last. They are come ; they here for you !"

"Not Everard ? Oh, has he come ?" and a low cry broke from Rossie's quivering lips.

But Yulah stifled it at once by putting her hand over her mouth, and saying :

"Careful, much careful. They must not hear. I fix it for you, and you be still and listen."

Very rapidly she told her that Mrs. Morton and her husband, whom she called anything but Morton, were at the inn waiting for them, and detailed her plan of escape, to which Rossie listened in a kind of apathetic way, which showed that she did not clearly comprehend what was meant, or who was waiting for her. Certainly she never thought of Beatrice, but she understood that all she had to do was to obey orders, and taking the seat which Yulah bade her take, she sat as immovable as a stone, with her great, black eyes following every movement of her nurse, who, alarmed at last at their expression and rigid attitude of the figure, which scarcely seemed to breathe, tried to rouse her to something like sense and feeling, but all in vain.

One idea and one alone had possession of Rossie. If she would escape she must be still, and she sometimes held her breath lest she should be heard by the men, who, at the far end of the long hall, were passing in and out of the room where the dead body lay. No one came near No.—, or paid any attention when, about half-past ten, two female figures emerged from the door,—one wrapped in a blue waterproof, with the hood drawn closely over the face ; the other unmistakably Yulah, who, locking the door behind her and putting the key in her pocket, hurried with her companion down the two long flights of stairs, and through a back, winding piazza, to the rear of the house, where the door she had unfastened an hour before stood partly open, and through which she went, dragging her companion after her. It was literally dragging until the safety of the thick shrubbery was reached, when Rossie gave out and sank down at Yulah's feet unconscious, and fainted entirely away. To add to Yulah's alarm, there was a sound of footsteps near. Somebody was in the wood besides herself, and she waited breathlessly until the sound ceased in the distance, as the person or persons, for there seemed to be two, hurried on. Then, taking Rossie in her arms, she made what progress she could through the dark and underbrush, as she dared not keep to the path. But the gate was reached at last, and with Michel's strong hands to help, Rossie was lifted over it and into the carriage, which was driven rapidly in the direction of the nearest railway station.

CHAPTER L.

GOING HOME.

Three weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, the City of Berlin came slowly up the New York harbor, and of all the eager, expectant faces in the crowd of people upon the deck, none was happier or more eager than that of Beatrice, who, now that her work was accomplished, and Rossie safe in her possession, had given herself up to the pleasure of her honeymoon, and been the merriest, happiest, most loving of brides, during all the voyage, except when she looked at the white-faced girl who lay in her berth so quietly, or sat so still in her chair on deck, looking out upon the sea with eyes which did not seem to see anything or take note of what was passing.

The flight from Haelder-Strauchsen to the nearest railroad had been accomplished in safety, and there they waited for the arrival of the train, which was to take them away from the scene of so much danger. And here it was that Beatrice suggested to Yulah that she go with them to America, either as Rossie's maid or her own.

"I mean to do it all the time, then I see what come to he,—the villain,—and I take much care my poor little one, who so tired and scared in her head, but who come right sure when the boy Everard is near," Yulah said, as she stroked the thin, hot hands, folded so helplessly across Rossie's breast.

Very rapidly she communicated her intention to Michel, telling him at the same time the full particulars of Rossie's incarceration in the *Maison de Sante*, and bidding him repeat it in Haelder-Strauchsen, if there was a great stir on account of the abduction.