

Back to Life and Love;

OR, WAITING THROUGH WEARY YEARS.

CHAPTER III.

Marie Serafinne lived near the small hamlet of Pine Cliffs, on the Shenandoah River.

Though her father and her mother had long passed to the spirit world, she could not be called an orphan, for she was tenderly cared for by her aged grandmother.

They were very poor and lived in a hut of one room with a loft above it, a shed behind it, and a rude fence enclosing a little bit of a garden around it;—just so much land as lay in the hollow under the lofty shelving cliff that overhung the river at that point, seeming ready to topple down and crush the little hut like an eggshell.

But as the shelving cliff had overhung the river for thousands of years without falling, its great protecting roof was trusted as a safe shelter rather than feared as a possible danger.

Here Marie and her granny lived. Here they cultivated their small garden, kept a cow, and raised poultry.

From these resources, garden, cow and poultry-yard, they got fresh vegetables and fruit, milk, butter and eggs enough for their own consumption, besides having a large surplus for sale, which Marie took in every day to the village and sold to the hotel during the whole of the summer season, when the village was full of tourists.

With the price of this produce Marie bought tea and sugar, flour and salt, and also other simple necessities such as they could not raise on their own little place.

The summer was their busy and profitable season. But it needed strict economy to enable them to lay up a little each summer for the coming winter. For in the winter their only source of revenue was from the woolen socks and mittens which they knit and sold to the villagers.

Marie Serafinne was a favorite in the village, and, indeed, in the whole neighborhood—"welcome in hall and hut."

All loved the gentle girl. But most especially children loved her, for she loved children.

Often when in summer she would return home from the village and bring empty buckets and a half-filled purse, her granny, counting the money with the avarice of age, would say to her:

"Why, Marie, you took out ten quarts of milk at ten cents a quart, and here you have brought me empty pails and only ninety cents."

"Well, but granny, I met Emma and Willy, and they asked me for milk and I gave them each a drink."

And then Granny Thompson would groan and declare it was the French blood of her father, and it was a pity her own only "darter" had "married of a Frenchman."

One time, returning with empty baskets, Marie would be arraigned with:

"Dear, dear me! Didn't I send you out with fifteen quarts of raspberries at five cents a quart, and here you have brought me only sixty-five cents. Where's the other ten?"

"Granny, I met Susy and Nelly and Fanny, and I gave each of 'em a handful of berries. I couldn't help it, granny!"

Another time:

"How is this, Marie? I sent you out with a peck of sugar pears, and here you have brought back only the price of three-quarters of a peck!"

"O, Granny! there was Jenny and Ally and Minnie and Ida saw the pears, and I gave them some! It is so natural for children to love fruit, granny! And if you had only seen them a-putting their dear little teeth into the pears, you'd a'felt as if you was paid!"

"No, I wouldn't, neither! I don't see it at all! And no more would you, only for your father's French blood! Pity your mother ever married of a Lafayette French soldier! Mind, now, it's going to be the ruin on you! You can't say no to nobody! And you'd give away your very feet, if anybody wanted them, and go on crutches all your life!"

This was strongly put, but it was nearly true of Marie Serafinne. Love of self had no place in her soul. It was filled with the love of others. To see others happy was with her, to be very happy to see

others miserable was, with her, to be very miserable. And she knew no other happiness, no other misery.

But in the innocent joy and gladness of children she became ecstatic, and in their sorrow or suffering she suffered intensely until she could relieve them.

It was from this trait of character that Maria was best known and loved.

"What a mother she will make, some day!" said her poor neighbors.

"What an excellent nurse she would be; what a treasure in a household of children!" said her rich neighbors.

But Marie's chance of being happy in the position of either mother or nurse seemed very remote.

It is true that many of the young farmers of the neighborhood were struck by her rare beauty, but partly because she was always so busily at work cultivating her garden, feeding her poultry, milking her cow, or carrying fruit and vegetables, milk, butter, and eggs to the village, that she had no time to listen to them; partly because, when she did play, she played with children only, so that she seemed to be still but a child herself; and partly, also, because she was so extremely shy, none of her young distant admirers ever approached her with words of love.

But, ah! there came a time when the child-woman loved "with a love that was her doom."

One bright summer morning she went, as usual, to the village hotel with a basket of fruit to offer for sale to the visitors there.

It was a simple, country place, and ladies and gentlemen, nurses and children, were gathered upon the front porch enjoying the morning air and the magnificent mountain scenery before them.

Marie, who went in and out the house like any pet kitten, stepped on the porch, as usual, and passed among the ladies, offering her fruit.

While doing so, she overheard a voice murmur:

"What a beautiful face! Just my idea of the Virgin before the annunciation, while she was still an unconscious child in Judea! Observe that pure, white forehead, with its aureole of golden curls like a halo around it; those clean, bright-blue eyes, full of soft splendor; that perfect mouth!"

Marie had no suspicion that the speaker was talking of her; but she involuntarily turned around, and as she did so, she met the gaze of a pair of large, dark eyes fixed in adoration upon her face.

Marie blushed deeply, and averted her head. And soon she took her basket and moved from the spot. But she carried with her a vision of a fine dark face, shaded with silken black curls and moustache, and lighted by a pair of large, soft, deeply shaded black eyes.

And without suspicion of wrong or danger, she thought of that fine dark face with innocent delight.

As she walked home with her empty basket, she wondered who the owner was, whether he was a visitor at the hotel, and how long he was going to stay, and if she should ever see him again. And then, with a slight feeling of pain for which she could not account, she tried to guess which of those rich, happy, handsomely dressed lady visitors it was whom he thought to be as beautiful as the blessed Virgin!

So deep was her reverie, that she reached home before she was aware. Indeed, she might have passed the little gate, and gone on unconsciously, had she not heard cries of distress which immediately arrested her steps.

Thinking only of her granny then, she turned hastily into the garden, and followed the sound of the cries.

It led her through the hut into the back shed, where she found the old woman uttering loud lamentations.

Marie had scarcely time to ask what the matter was when the old woman exclaimed:

"Oh, Marie! Mooley is dead! Mooley is dead! And now we too shall die!—shall starve to death!"

"How did it happen?" faltered the girl in well-founded fear, for indeed the cow was half their living.

"Oh, she fell over the cliff! She fell over the cliff! She missed her footing, and fell over the cliff and

broke her neck, and died at once! Come, look at her!" cried the old woman, sobbing and wringing her hands.

And she led Marie through the back door of the shed, and along the base of the cliff, until they came to the spot where the body of the cow lay.

Marie knelt down and tenderly stroked the face of her poor dumb friend, and saw that she was dead indeed.

"Don't cry, dear granny! I'm sorry for poor Mooley; but don't you be afraid; we shall not starve! I know they want another laundress at the hotel, and I can take in washing enough to make up for the loss of the milk and butter," she said cheerfully, as she helped the dame back to the hut.

And that same afternoon Marie went back to the village on a double errand—to engage washing from the hotel, and to get the tanner to come and take away the body of poor Mooley.

And she succeeded in both missions.

After this Marie worked harder than ever, for she found washing and ironing more laborious than milking and butter making, while it was not quite so profitable.

Yet Marie would not, for this cause, let her poor old granny suffer for the want of any of her accustomed comforts. She bought milk and butter enough for their simple meals from a neighboring farmer.

And now her busy life for a few days kept her thoughts from dwelling on the dark, handsome face that had made such an impression on her imagination, especially as she had not seen that face since it first glowed upon her.

But one day, about a week after that first accidental meeting, she went to the village to carry a basket of clean clothes, and she was returning with a basket heavily laden with soiled linen, when, feeling great fatigue, she laid down her burden for a moment, and sat down to rest in the wood.

She threw off her hat to cool her head, and as she did so she saw for the first time, a young man seated on a rock near by, with a portfolio on his knees and a pencil in his hand.

At the same moment that she perceived him, he also looked up.

And with strangely blended emotions of delight and dread, she recognized the dark handsome stranger she had seen at the hotel.

She quietly put on her hat, took up her heavy basket and arose to go.

"Pray do not leave. If I disturb you I will myself move off," said the young man rising.

"Oh, no, no, you do not disturb me, but I was afraid—I was afraid—" she stopped and blushed.

"Afraid?" echoed the young man with an interest he could not conceal.

"Afraid I might be intruding on you, I mean to say," added Marie looking down.

"If there be an intruder, it is certainly myself. I am a trespasser here on your native soil, and if you leave on my account I shall take it as a rebuke," said the stranger gravely.

The simple girl did not more than half understand him, but she gathered enough of his meaning to enable her to answer:

"You have as much right here as I have, for I have no more than the birds. The Lord lets us all come."

"Will you sit down then and rest as you meant to do? If you don't, I will go away," said the stranger, gathering up his portfolio and pencils.

For all reply, Marie put down her basket and resumed her seat, and sat there blushing and trembling—half pleased and half frightened.

And the artist resumed his seat, re-opened his portfolio, and recommenced his work.

He worked on in silence for a few minutes and then looked around at his quiet companion, and met her eyes fixed in childlike wonder and admiration upon himself.

She colored deeply and turned away her head in confusion.

The artist smiled, not without satisfaction.

"You are wondering what I am doing?" he said quietly, to reassure her. "Well, little daughter of Eve, I will satisfy your curiosity. I am sketching from nature. I am making a picture. I will show it to you and you shall tell me what you think of it, for I know you will be a competent and honest critic."

And he arose and took the sketch from his portfolio, and came and put it into her hands.

She looked at him in a sweet surprise, then fixed her eyes upon the sketch, and then raised them to the scene from which it was taken.

"How do you like it?" he enquired, taking the seat by her side.

"It is beautiful!" she murmured.

"It is magical. I wish I could do it!"

Then she stopped and flushed, and taking up her basket, she added:

"I must go now."

"What, do I drive you away after all?"

"Oh no; but I must go now, please. I must carry this basket of clothes home."

"What! this heavy basket? you will faint by the way! Let me carry it for you," he said, lifting it upon his arm.

"Oh, no, no, please! Indeed, indeed I would rather you wouldn't," she pleaded trembling.

"Child, I have a little sister at home just about your age. And I carry all her burdens. It would give me pain to see her carrying anything heavy. And it gives me pain now to hear you speak of carrying this. You would not wish to give any one, even me, pain, would you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then let me carry this for you. And see how strong I am in comparison to you!"

And so saying he carried the basket to the rock where he had left his drawing materials, and set it down there while he strapped his portfolio to his shoulders. Then he took up her basket and rejoined her.

She made no further resistance to his help. Her confidence was entirely won.

He walked by her side, conversing pleasantly on such topics as came by the way.

"I am told that there is a very picturesque scene along this road, that has never yet been sketched. It is a rock shelving far over the river, and having at its base and under the shadow of its shelf a small cottage with a garden. Do you know where it is?" he enquired as they walked on.

"Yes, sir; it is our rock and our cottage and garden that you mean. The rock is called the Anvil, from its shape, which is just like that of a blacksmith's anvil, reaching far forward and having a flat top. We live under it," answered Marie.

"Ah! indeed! Then we are on our way there now."

"We are very near it, sir."

"How near?" enquired the young man anxiously, as if he were not at all desirous to shorten the distance, but quite the reverse.

"About a quarter of a mile, sir."

"Ah!" he said, and slackened his steps, walking very slowly.

During that walk, the artist managed to become possessed not only of the girl's full confidence, but also of her whole history, even down to the calamity of the cow's death.

When they came in sight of the hut under the cliff, the artist broke out into enthusiastic praise of the beauty of the scene. "I must certainly sketch this, Marie," he said—"Will you permit me to come here every day and sit upon that bank there and work until I finish the picture?" he softly enquired.

"Oh, yes, sir; certainly. That is, I mean, I have got no right to stop you. The place is free to you as it is to all, sir."

The artist was not quite satisfied with this reply, so he enquired farther.

"But, shall I be in any way disturbing you, Marie?"

"Oh, no, sir; no indeed," she answered earnestly.

They had now reached the gate of the cottage and Marie hospitably invited her companion to come in and see her granny.

But the artist thanked her and declined the invitation.

He set down the basket, lifted his hat and bowed to her as if she had been a princess, and turned and left the spot.

Marie stood transfixed, gazing after his receding form, until he suddenly turned and looked back, when meeting his eyes, she started with some confusion and hurried into the hut.

First she threw off her hat and went into the back shed and put the soiled linen in soak, to be washed the next day, and then she went into the one room of the hut, where her granny was nodding over her knitting. She sat down beside her and told her all about the artist and his wanting to paint the cottage, and especially about his kindness in bringing home her heavy basket, even to the cottage gate.

"That's all well enough for a big man to gin a lift for a little gal. But if he wants to draw off a picture of our house, he's got to pay for it. Poor folks like us, as has lost our cow too, can't afford to give away everything, even to the very picture of our house," grumbled the dame.

"Oh! granny! You would never want to take the gentleman's money for that!" said Marie, feeling deeply ashamed.

"I would then! And I will too, before he gets a chance to steal the

picture off it for nothing! Let him up with it indeed!" growled the old woman.

Marie made no further answer, but meekly went about her little household duties, hanging the tea-kettle over the fire and setting the table for supper.

(To be continued.)

DEMAND FOR TURKEYS.

According to reports from Great Britain and to the opinions expressed by traders in the United Kingdom who are well informed regarding the progress of the poultry and game trade, there is every indication that the supplies of British-reared turkeys this season will fall short of the demand. The weather conditions in the British Isles have been against the production of turkeys, while the grouse, partridge and similar game are by no means plentiful.

In a short time there is likely to be a strong demand for Canadian turkeys, and it is to be hoped that our sources of supply in this country will be equal to the opportunity. It is advocated that twelve birds should be packed to the case, not frozen too hard, and with positions alternately reversed.

As to whether the turkeys should be shipped feather or dressed, this is of course, a matter for arrangement between the importer and exporter, much variance of opinion having arisen in the past as to what really constitutes a dressed turkey, the idea most favored in this district being that the bird should be plucked clean up to the collar of the neck, leaving the head and wings untouched.

It may be interesting to Canadian farmers to note that not only is the demand for dressed poultry, except water fowl, likely to be very heavy this season; but there is a universal shortage of eggs. In Great Britain the importation of eggs has declined within a few months fully 7 per cent., while the prices have materially advanced. It is to be hoped that increasing numbers of Canadian farmers will give more attention to poultry-raising during 1910.

A GOOD MILK TANK.

A writer tells how to make a tank in which to cool milk. These are his directions: Where milk is kept in shot gun cans it can be kept cool by having the water run through it from well to stock tank. Make wooden boxes two cans wide and high enough to shut slat lids over cans, long enough to hold all cans necessary. Make galvanized iron tank to fit inside box. Divide tank lengthwise by two sticks to make individual stalls for each can. Divide into sections by three slats up and down right distance to keep half empty can from tipping over. Hinge slat door over each can and fasten with button. Have outlet a little below top of cans and large enough to let out quite a bit of water at once when full cans are put in, otherwise the secured cans will be flooded. If in a milk house this will serve well for milk tank.

SOME GOOD ADVICE.

Nine cases out of ten where a farmer kicks about too low a test he will become reconciled if you can show him that he is getting all he is entitled to. If he is inclined to doubt your word call in a state inspector and have him make a test. If his readings are like yours (they should be) the farmer—that is the average farmer—will be satisfied and you will have no more trouble with him. It is poor policy to resent a patron's inquiry about his test by becoming angry. Explain to him as much as possible, and show him the test. He needs to be shown.

HARD-MOUTH HORSES.

An exchange is responsible for the following: Here is something of practical value to any one driving a horse that pulls on the bit. Fasten a small ring to each side of the bridle and as near the browband as possible. Pass lines through bit ring and snap them into rings at browband. This, with a common jointed bit, will enable a child to hold a "puller" or hard-mouthed horse with ease under almost all circumstances. It can be used on a fast horse, in double team or on both, as desired. It is cheap and easily applied, and it won't make the mouth sore. It is better than any patent bit.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

It is a surprise to see how many farmers neglect to keep salt in their horses' mangers. It is very inexpensive and very beneficial. A lump or chunk should be kept in every manger.