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 necessaries 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 her 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 clear 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 in 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. 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 she had met on the road, and about 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 picter 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 wery picter 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 picter offen 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 teakettle over the fire and setting the table for supper.

(To be continued.)

SENTENCE SERMONS.

Malice always miscontrues.

Long prayers often hide wrong practice.

Formation is always better than reformation.

No man can save men without suffering with men.

It is hard work growing saints in the soil of the pit.

You can measure any man's aspiration by his perspiration.

No man has a large mission who neglects the little ministries.

Religious forms easily become caskets in which faith is buried.

This is a godless world whenever the divine is all in the past tense.

When a man is ethically wabbly he is usually theologically rigid.

Real prayers and real mountains always put a pick in your hand.

You will not help the man who is looking to you by looking at yourself.

Greatness of character rises in willingness to make small beginnings.

There's nothing a lazy man enjoys better than designing "Busy" signs.

The worst fools are those who worship a God in the hope of fooling him.

Some men use the beam in their eye to pick out the mote in their brother's.

Too many measure their moral soundness by the amount of sound they make.

On the Farm

WINTER CARE OF POULTRY

Keeping fowls over winter costs money. Nothing should be kept that does not pay its debts with interest. At the fall roundup make a thorough sorting. Every fowl should stand squarely upon strong, well-developed legs, whose scales are clear and distinct, overlapping each other neatly. Next in importance is the head, which should be rather small with a compact comb of clear, healthy rose color, a firm beak and bright eyes.

Though much more rare, there are defects in the body to be looked after, such as crooked backs, clogged oil-glands, etc. The too numerous males, and the late pullets that will eat all winter and then help flood the markets with ninecent eggs in the spring, should be sorted out. If there is a swelled head or a consumptive have it killed immediately. It is the more merciful way.

With a flock of sturdy, healthy fowls, not too numerous for their quarters, poultry keeping is usually successful; but to bring best results loving care is needed. Loving is used advisedly.

Be careful of the roosting places. A cold draught all night is as dangerous as roosting in the open air; corn fodder set up around the windiest sort of a hen house will make it habitable.

As for the roof, if no water drips directly on the roosts, and holes are not large enough for the hens to fly through, it will do.

Most important of all—feed and water, water and feed continually. Feed with a liberal but judicious hand as great a variety as possible, but regularly.

A good ration is to feed whole wheat one morning and on the next a warm mash of table scraps, meat, cooked vegetables or anything obtainable mixed up with hot water and meal into a thick mash, which should be carefully seasoned with pepper and salt. This is a handy way to feed a few red peppers occasionally or poultry food, for a tonic.

Every night, half an hour before sunset, give a good ration of corn heated until some of the kernels are brown.

The fowls should have fresh water or milk slightly warmed twice a day and plenty of cracked and ground earth and bone, beside having water-slacked lime by them all the time.

If some snowy morning, the zephyrs are rather rough as you go forth broom in hand to sweep chicken paths, it may be some comfort to remember that business is business, and that profit and pains taking go hand in hand.

TELLING AGE OF CATTLE.

At twelve months, an animal should have its milk (calf) incisors in place.

Fifteen months. At this age the central pair of incisors (milk teeth) may be replaced by a pair of permanent incisors (pincers), these being through the gums, but not in wear.

Eighteen months. The middle pair of central incisors at this age should be fully up, and in wear, but the next pair (first intermediary) not yet through the gums.

Twenty-four months. The mouth at this age will show two middle (permanent broad) incisors, fully up and in wear.

Thirty months generally shows six broad permanent incisors, the middle and first intermediary fully up and in wear. The next pair (second intermediary) well up but not in use.

Thirty-six months shows three pairs of broad teeth, which should be fully up and in wear, and the corner milk teeth may be shedding with the corner permanents just appearing through the gum.

Thirty-nine months. Three pairs of broad teeth will be fully up and in wear; the corner teeth (incisors) through the gums are not in wear.

FARM NOTES.

Keep the churning-room as near 60 degrees as possible. Never fill the churn more than half full of cream. Churn at medium speed. Always use a thermometer, and in summer churn at 60 degrees.

Of the absolute necessity of potash for plant food there can be no doubt. It is essential to the life of plants, and there seems to be no end to its combinations with other component parts of the soil, which are thus dissolved and made assimilable.

It would be folly for any farmer to attempt to manufacture acid phosphate or dissolve bone fertilizer at home. The making of high-grade commercial fertilizer is a business requiring technical training, and for one who knows nothing about it, failure will almost certainly result. Before the bones are treated, they should be ground very fine, and the finer the grinding the more perfect will the acid act.

The wages may not be so high on the farm as in the city, but strong men are able to save more of them, and at the end of the month or year, the farm hand often has more money than had he been working in the city. Probably a reason why there is such an apparent antipathy to working on the farm is the false opinion men entertain that farm labor is degrading. At the present day, when farm work is performed by machinery largely, and business methods obtain to a great extent, there is no ground for such a thought. A more logical reason is perhaps the usually long hours for labor on the farm.

PLANT INTELLIGENCE.

Defensive Means Employed Against Insects.

Writing of the Italian catchfly in his essay, "The Intelligence of the Flowers," Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet and philosopher, shows how this simple little white flower goes with seemingly intelligent thought about the business of its own preservation. Apparently very timorous, very susceptible, to avoid the visits of importunate and indelicate insects the Silene Italica furnishes its stalks with glandular hairs, when ce oozes a viscid fluid in which the parasites are caught with such success that the peasants of the south use the plant as a fly-catcher in their houses.

Certain kinds of catchflies, moreover, have ingeniously simplified the system. Dreading the ants in particular, they discovered that it was enough, in order to prevent them from passing, to place a wide viscid ring under the node of each stalk. This is exactly what our gardeners do when they draw a circle of tar or other sticky substance round the trunks of the apple-trees to stop the ascent of the caterpillars.

In a popular work, "Les Plantes Originales," Mons. Henri Coupin examines some of the defensive means employed by plants. Some of these weapons are quaint and startling.

Monsieur Lothelier, a student at the Sorbonne, has made a number of interesting experiments with thorns, resulting in the conclusion that shade and damp tend to suppress the prickly parts of the plants.

On the other hand, whenever the place in which it grows is dry and burned by the sun, the plant bristles and multiplies its spikes, as if it felt that, being almost the sole survivor among the rocks or in the hot sand, it is called upon to make a mighty effort to redouble its defenses against an enemy that no longer has a choice of victims to prey upon. It is a remarkable fact, moreover, that, when cultivated by man, most of the thorny plants gradually lay aside their weapons, leaving the care of their safety to the supernatural protector who has adopted them in his fenced grounds.

Among the plats that have ceased to defend themselves the most striking case is that of the lettuce.

"In its wild state," says Monsieur Coupon, "if we break a stalk or a leaf, we see a white juice exude from it, the latex, a substance formed of different matters which vigorously defend the plant against the assaults of the slugs. On the other hand, in the cultivated species derived from the former, the latex is almost missing, for which reason the plant, to the despair of the gardeners, is no longer able to resist, and allows the slugs to eat it."

It is nevertheless right, comments Maeterlinck, to add that latex is rarely lacking except in the young plants, whereas it becomes quite abundant when the lettuce begins to "cabbage," and when it runs to seed. Now it is especially at the commencement of its life, at the budding of its first tender leaves, that the plant needs to defend itself. One is inclined to think that the cultivated lettuce loses its head a little, so to speak, and that it no longer knows exactly where it stands.

Certain plants, among others the Boraginaceae, supply the place of thorns with very hard bristles. Others, such as the nettle, add poison. Oothers, the geranium, the mint, the rue, steep themselves in powerful odors to keep off the animals.

But the strangest are those which defend themselves mechanically. Monsieur Maeterlinck mentions only the horsetail, which surrounds itself with a vertiable armour of microscopic silicae. Moreover, almost all the Gramineae, in order to discourage the gathering of slugs and snails, add lime to their tissues.

DIFFERENT.

"Mrs. Jones is different from most women."

"How do you make that out?"

"I was invited up there to dinner the other night, and she didn't once apologize for the meal she was serving."

A NEW WRINKLE.

"Thar's a sign up there, daddy, what says: 'Don't blow out the gas.'"

"Well, who blowed it out? I jest hit it a lick with my britches an' I hain't seen othin' er it sence."