

# MARIE'S CRUSADE.

BY IRMA NAUICHETTE CAREY.  
Author of "Barbara Heathcote's Trial,"  
"Queen's Wives," "The Search  
for Basil Lyndhurst."

## CHAPTER III.—THE NEW CURSE.

"I am looking back on those days, I simply wonder at my own audacity. Am I really sane at the bell at Prince's Gate, and informed the astonished footman that I was the person applying for the nurse's situation? I recall that scene now with a laugh, but I frankly own that that moment was not the pleasantest in my life. True, it had its ludicrous side, but how is one to enjoy the humor of an amusing situation alone, and to tell the truth, the six feet of plush and powder before me was somewhat alarming to my female timidity. I bear now the man's startled 'Thank you, madam, ma'am?'"

"I have come by appointment," I returned, with as much dignity as I could summon under the trying circumstances, "will you inform your mistress, Mrs. Morton, that I have come about the nurse's situation?"

"Of course, he was looking at me from head to foot. In spite of the disgusting plainness of my dress, I suppose the word gentleman was clearly stamped upon me. Heaven forbid that under any circumstances that broad, sole heritage of my dead parent, should ever be effaced. Then he opened the door of a charming little waiting-room, and civilly enough bade me wait myself, and for some minutes I was left alone. I think nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before he reappeared with the message that his mistress was now disengaged and would see me. I followed the man as closely as I could through the long hall and up the wide staircase, not for worlds would I have owned that a certain shortness of breath, unusual in youth, seemed to impede me. At the top I found myself in a handsome corridor, commencing with two drawing-rooms of papered walls, as they called them in those days, and certainly it was a privilege that I entered. A lady was seated at a small table at the further end of the room. As the man spoke to her she did not at once raise her head or turn round; she was evidently finishing a note. A minute later she laid aside her pen and came toward me.

"I am sorry that I could not attend to you at once, and yet you were very punctual," she began, in a pleasant, well-modulated voice, and then she stopped and regarded me with unfeigned surprise.

"She was a very lovely young woman, with an indescribable air about her that spoke of the mother. She would have been really quite beautiful but for a certain worn look, often seen in women of fashion; and when she spoke there was a sweetness and simplicity of manner that was most winning.

"Pardon me," with a shake of perplexity in her eyes, "but I suppose my servant was right in stating that you had come by appointment in answer to my advertisement?"

"Yes, madam," I returned, proudly for her slight nervousness put me at my ease. "I have your letter here."

"And you are really applying for the nurse's situation—the upper nurse, I mean; for, of course, there is an under nurse kept, I hope?" (coloring a little) "that you will not think me rude if I say that I was not prepared for the sort of person I was to see?"

"I could have guessed as I thought of my note. Was it possible that I had called 'advertisement' wrongly? And yet I had the paper before me; my handwriting was neat and legible; but evidently Mrs. Morton was drawing some comparison between my letter and appearance, and I did not doubt that the former had not prepossessed her in my favor.

"I became confused in my turn. "I hope to prove to you," I began, in a very small voice, "that I am a fit person to apply for your situation. I am very fond of children; I never lose my patience with them, as other people do, or think anything a trouble. I wish to take up this work from love as well as necessity—I mean, correcting myself, for she looked still more astonished; "that though I am obliged to work for my living, I would rather be a nurse than anything else."

"Will you answer a few questions?" and, as though by an afterthought, "will you sit down?" for she had been standing to keep me company, out of deference to my superior appearance.

"I will answer any question you like to put to me, madame.

"You have never been in service, you tell me in your letter. Have you ever filled any kind of situation?"

"I shook my head.

"You are quite young, I should say?"

"Two-and-twenty last Christmas."

"I should hardly have thought you so old. Will you oblige me with your name?"

"Marie Fenton."

"A half smile crossed her beautiful mouth. It was evident that she found my name somewhat incongruous, and then she continued a little hastily, "If you have never filled any sort of situation, it will be somewhat difficult to judge of your capacity. Of course you have good references; can you tell me a little about yourself and your circumstances?"

"I was fast losing my nervousness by this time. In a few minutes I had given her a concise account of myself and my belongings. Once or twice she interrupted me by a question, such as, for example, when I spoke of Aunt Agatha, she asked the names of the families where she had lived as a governess; and once she looked a little surprised at my answer.

"I knew the Curzons before I was married," she observed, quietly; "they have often talked to me of their old governess, Miss Fenton; her name is Keith now, you say; she was a great favorite with her pupils. Well, is it not a pity that you should not follow your aunt's example? If you are not clever, would not the situation of a nursery governess be more fitting for you? Forgive me, but I am only speaking for your good; one feels a little uncomfortable at seeing a gentleman desert the ranks to which she belongs."

"My face was burning by this time; of course it must all come out—that miserable defect of mine, and everything else; but raising my eyes at that moment I saw such a kind look on Mrs. Morton's face, such quietly expressed sympathy for my very evident confusion, that in a moment my reserve broke down. I do not know what I said, but I believe I must have been very frank. I could have been any to herself. "How very strange—that a misfortune," when I frankly mentioned my inability to spell, but I did not linger long on this point.

"I was seized by her strong interest. I determined to be frank. I said that I was freer from vanity than most girls of my age, but I was glad in my inmost heart to know that no one of mine would ever jar upon a human ear, but I was more than glad now when I saw Mrs. Morton's grave face relax.

"You speak confidently," he returned. "You seem to have a strange faith in your own theory, and plenty of self-reliance, but I am afraid that, like most young people, you have only regarded it from one point of view. Are you aware of the unpleasantness of such a situation? If you came to us you might have nothing of which to complain from Mrs. Morton or myself, but we could not answer for the rest of my household; the servants would regard you as a sort of hybrid, belonging to no special sphere; they might show you scant respect, and manifest a great deal of jealousy."

"I have faced all that," I returned, with a smile, "but I think the difficulties would be like Bunyan's lions—they were chained, you know. I do not believe these things will hurt me. I should never be away from the children in the nursery; I should be unmolested and at home."

"Alack!" I could hear a whole petition breathed into that softly uttered word. Mrs. Morton heard it, too, for he turned at once, and then looked at his wife.

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"Very well," he returned, brief; but he spoke in the old dry manner, as though he were not quite pleased. "When you are disengaged will you join me in the library? I have some more letters I want copied."

"I will be ready soon," she said, with a sweet, grateful glance at him, as though she had received some unexpected bounty at his hands; and as he wished me good-morning, and left the room, she continued, eagerly, "Will you come with me now and make acquaintance with the children? I have seen them already this morning, so they will not expect me, and it will be such a surprise. My little girl, always with me while I dress, I have a little time to devote to them; but I snatch every moment."

"She smiled as she spoke, and I began to understand, in a dim, groping sort of way, that Fate is not so unequal after all, that even the least favored creature had something to do in life, that it was possible that wealth and position were to her only tiresome barriers dividing her from her little ones. Her sweetest pleasures only came to her by snatches. Most likely she envied humble mothers, and did not pity them because their arms ached with carrying a heavy infant, aching limbs being more bearable than an aching heart."

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"What is my mother's name?" she asked, and then she looked at me with unfeigned surprise. "That is Mr. Morton; will you excuse me a moment?" And the next moment I could hear her say, "I was in the blue drawing-room, Alack. I have sent off the letters, and now I want to speak to you a moment," and her voice died away as they moved further down the corridor.

"I felt a keen anxiety as to the result of that conversation. I was very impulsive by nature, and I had fallen in love with Mrs. Morton. The worn look on the beautiful young face had touched me somehow. One of my queer visionary ideas came over me as I recalled her expression, I thought that if I were an artist, and that my subject was the 'Massacre of the Innocents,' that the mother's face in the foreground should be Mrs. Morton's. 'Rachel Weeping for her Children,' something of the pathetic maternal agony, as for a lost babe, had seemed to cross her face as she spoke of her little ones. I found out afterward that, though she wore no mourning, Mrs. Morton had lost a beautiful infant about four months old. It had not been more than six weeks old, but the mother's heart was still bleeding. Many months afterward she told me that she often dreamed of her little Marjorie and woke trying to stifle her sobs; that she might not disturb her husband, I sat gazarding this imaginary picture of mine, and shuddering over the sanguinary details, until Mrs. Morton returned, and, to my embarrassment, her husband was with her.

"I gave him a frightened glance as he crossed the room with rapid footsteps. He was a quiet-looking man, with a dark mustache, some years older than his wife. His being slightly bald added somewhat to his appearance of age. In reality he was not more than five-and-thirty. I thought him a little cool and critical in manner, but his voice was pleasant. He looked at me keenly as he spoke; it was my opinion at that moment that not an article of my dress escaped his observation. I had expected purposely a pair of metal gloves, and I am convinced the finger-ends were at once under his inspection. He was a man who thought no details beneath him, but would bring his masculine intellect to bear even to the point of discovering the fitness of his children's nurse."

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"Mrs. Morton tells me that you have applied for the situation of upper nurse," he began, not abruptly, but in the quick tones of a busy man who had scant leisure. "I have heard all you have told me, she seems fond of testing your abilities, but I must warn you that I distrust theories myself. My dear," turning to his wife, "I must say that this young person looks hardly old enough for the position, and you own she has no real experience. Would not a more elderly person be more suitable, considering that you are so seldom in your nursery? Of course, this is your department, but since you ask my advice," with a little shrug that seemed to dismiss me and the whole subject.

"A wistful, disappointed look came over his wife's face.

"I was too great a stranger to understand the real position of affairs, only my intuition guided me at that moment. It was not until much later that I found out that Mrs. Morton never disputed her husband's will, even in trifles; that he ordered the plap of her life as well as his own; that her passionate love for her children was restrained in order that her wife and her social duties should be carried out; that she was so perfectly obedient to him, that from fear, but from an excess of womanly devotion, that she seldom even contested an opinion. My fate was very nearly sealed at that moment, but a hasty impulse prompted me to speak. Looking Mrs. Morton full in the face, I said, a little pitifully, "Do not dismiss me because of my youth, for that is a fault that time will mend. Want of experience is a greater obstacle, but it will only make me more careful to observe every direction and try me, I am sure, neither you nor Mrs. Morton will repent it."

"He looked at me very keenly again as I spoke; indeed, his eye seemed to search me through and through, and then his whole manner changed.

"I have been told that Nature had been kind to me in one respect by endowing me with a pleasant voice. I believe that I

"I have faced all that," I returned, with a smile, "but I think the difficulties would be like Bunyan's lions—they were chained, you know. I do not believe these things will hurt me. I should never be away from the children in the nursery; I should be unmolested and at home."

"Alack!" I could hear a whole petition breathed into that softly uttered word. Mrs. Morton heard it, too, for he turned at once, and then looked at his wife.

"Do you really wish to try this young person, Violet, my dear? It is for you to decide; this is your province, as I said before."

"If she will love our children and watch over them in our absence," she whispered; "but I caught the words. Then aloud, "Thank you, Alack, I should like to try her. I think she would make Joyce happy. I can go and see Mrs. Keith this afternoon when I am out driving, and perhaps I could arrange for her to come soon."

"Very well," he returned, brief; but he spoke in the old dry manner, as though he were not quite pleased. "When you are disengaged will you join me in the library? I have some more letters I want copied."

"I will be ready soon," she said, with a sweet, grateful glance at him, as though she had received some unexpected bounty at his hands; and as he wished me good-morning, and left the room, she continued, eagerly, "Will you come with me now and make acquaintance with the children? I have seen them already this morning, so they will not expect me, and it will be such a surprise. My little girl, always with me while I dress, I have a little time to devote to them; but I snatch every moment."

"She smiled as she spoke, and I began to understand, in a dim, groping sort of way, that Fate is not so unequal after all, that even the least favored creature had something to do in life, that it was possible that wealth and position were to her only tiresome barriers dividing her from her little ones. Her sweetest pleasures only came to her by snatches. Most likely she envied humble mothers, and did not pity them because their arms ached with carrying a heavy infant, aching limbs being more bearable than an aching heart."

"A flight of broad, handsome carpeted stairs brought us to a long shut-in corridor, fitted up prettily with plants and statuettes. A rocking-horse stood in one corner; the nursery door was open. It was a long, cheerful room, with three windows, looking over the public garden, and fitted up with a degree of comfort that bordered on luxury. Some canaries were singing in a green cage, a grey Persian kitten was curled up in the doll's bosom, a little girl was kneeling on the cushioned window-seat, peeping between the bars at some children who were playing below. As Mrs. Morton said, softly, "Joyce, darling," she turned round with quite a startled air, and then I chambered down hastily and ran to her mother.

"What is my mother's name?" she asked, and then she looked at me with unfeigned surprise. "That is Mr. Morton; will you excuse me a moment?" And the next moment I could hear her say, "I was in the blue drawing-room, Alack. I have sent off the letters, and now I want to speak to you a moment," and her voice died away as they moved further down the corridor.

## How He Saved His \$9,000.

Father Malone had just put the finishing touches to one of his excellent sermons yesterday when his housekeeper announced that a couple of individuals were waiting in the adjoining room to have the marital knot tied. The task is always a pleasing one to his reverence. So, assuming a brush a few times through his hair and assuming his most pleasant smile he proceeded to perform the ceremony. On reaching the waiting room, however, there was a surprise in store for him. There sat John C. McGraw and his good wife Sophie—no one else.

"We come to be married," quoth John.

"Married, you say? Why, you must be crazy, John McGraw. This is not a matter to joke about."

"Joke, my reverence? I ain't no funny man, and you ought to know it by this time. We want to be married, and no mistake about it."

"Then where is the lady?"

"Lady! There she is," pointing to his wife.

By this time Father Malone had concluded beyond all doubt he had a couple of imbeciles on his hands, and just as he was about to dispatch a messenger for a policeman McGraw explained.

"Father, perhaps you didn't hear about it, but Sophie has been going back on me all I could say to her, she must have a divorce. Well, yer honor, she got it, had luck to her, and it cost like the—excuse me, father—but it made me hot, especially considering that the court gave her \$9,000 alimony—nine thousand dollars! father, think of that. Why, it would ruin me twice over. So I says to Sophie, sez I, 'Can't this little matter be arranged; you an' I, Sophie dear, have lived together for twelve years and surely you'd not go in to desert me now?' With that she burst into tears, and so we agreed to get married again. It isn't the \$9,000 I care about, father, but it nearly broke my heart to think I would have to live without her."

And here McGraw sobbed softly and continued to sob while the priest examined the marriage license, which was in due form. Nothing further remained but to unite the divorced couple. By becoming a party to the arrangement the lady released her \$9,000 claim on her husband's estate, and John was proportionately happy.

The parties were married in St. Louis some twelve years ago, when Mrs. McGraw was a fine-looking girl of 17. She obtained her divorce a few days ago in district court on the ground of her husband's extreme cruelty.—*Dancer News.*

THE LEGEND OF PARACELUSUS.

The Trick by Which He Became a Celebrated and Distinguished Man.

It once happened, says a book on German folk lore, that Paracelsus was walking through a forest when he heard a voice calling to him by name. He looked around and at length discovered that it proceeded from a fir tree in the trunk of which there was a spirit inclosed by a small stopper, sealed with three crosses.

The spirit begged of Paracelsus to set him free. This he readily promised on condition that the spirit should bestow upon him a medicine capable of healing all diseases and a tincture which would turn everything it touched to gold. The spirit acceded to his request, whereupon Paracelsus took his walk home and succeeded, after some trouble, in getting out the stopper. A loathsome black spider crept forth, which ran down the trunk of the tree. Scarcely had it reached the ground when it changed, and became, as if rising from the earth, a tall, haggard man, with squinting, red eyes, wrapped in a scarlet mantle.

He led Paracelsus to a high, overhanging, craggy mound, and with a hazel twig which he had broken off by the way he smote the rock, which, splitting with a crash at the blow, divided itself in twain, and the spirit disappeared within it. He however, soon returned with two small phials, which he handed to Paracelsus—a yellow one which contained the tincture which turned all it touched to gold, and a white one, holding the medicine which healed all diseases. He then smote the rock a second time, and thereupon it instantly closed again. Both now set forth on their return, the spirit directing its course toward Innsbruck, to seize upon the magician who had banished him from that city. Now Paracelsus trembled for the consequence which his releasing the evil one would entail upon him who had conjured him into the tree, and he thought how he might rescue him. When they arrived once more at the fir tree he asked the spirit if he possibly could transform himself again into a spider and let him see him creep into the hole. The spirit said that it was