# AN Old Man's Darling.

BY MRS. ALEX. McVEIGH MILLER,

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CHAPTER V-Continued.

"It is a pretty dress," she said, looking down at the soft mass of muslin and lace; "but I little thought when I put it on for dinner this evening that it would be my bridal dress. I shall always love this dress, Leslie. I will keep it always in on his garments. memory of to-night,"

Both were silent after a little while, till Leslie said, abruptly

are thinking so intently."

"I was hardly thinking at all," she said, quickly. "Some verses were running through my mind that I read this evening in Jean Ingelow's pretty poems. I hardly understood them then, but they seem to suit my feelings now."

"Let me hear them," said Leslie. "I cannot recall them, except the last

verse. The poem was called 'Divided,' and the last verse, which is all that I clearly recollect, ran thus ;

"And yet I know, past all doubting trulyknowledge greater than grief can

I know as he loved he will love me duly, Yea, better, e'en better than I love him. And as I walk by the vast, calm river,

The awful river so dread to see, Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me."

"Beautiful," said Leslie, as the full voice, tremulous with newly awakened feeling died away. "You must always recall those lines when you think of me, my little one."

The keel grated on the shore. Leslie looked at his watch in the moonlight.

"It is later than I thought," he said, hurriedly, as he helped Bonnibel out upon the shore. "I have but fifteen minutes to reach the station. Darling, I must go tonight, though it nearly kills me to leave you."

She turned quivering and weeping, to throw herself upon his breast.

"Darling, you are not afraid to go to the house alone?" he whispered. "My time is so short!"

"No, no," she said. "But, Leslie, how can I let you go?"

"'Tis but a little while," he answered, soothingly. "Be brave, my precious darling!"

He drew her to his heart with a long, despairing embrace, and kissed her passionately.

"My little love, my own sweet wife, good-bye!" he faltered, and was gone.

Bonnibel threw out her yearning arms as if she would draw him back, then turned and staggered homeward.

"I will be brave," she murmured. "I will try to bear it, but, oh. this pain at my heart."

She opened the gate and went softly up the walk. It was almost midnight, and she began to wonder if the doors would be locked.

"If they are I shall have to get in through the window," she said to herself. But as she stepped on the piazza she saw the front door open and her uncle sitting

motionless in his easy chair. "Poor dear," she thought, with a thrill of regretful tenderness, and forgetting herself entirely. "He has fallen asleep in his chair and they have all forgotten him I will wake him with a kiss."

He lay with his head thrown back, ap parently fast asleep. Gliding softly glong, she threw her arm about his neck and, hending over, pressed her sweet lips to his brow.

She started back with a shiver and looked at him. The brow she had kissed was cold as ice. Her hand fell down upon his breast and came in contact with something wet and cold. She lifted her band and saw upon it in the moonlight a dark stain.

"Uncle!" she screamed, "oh, God, uncle, wake up!"

That wild scream of agony roused the house. The servants came rushing out, but before they reached her Bonnibel had fallen fainting at her uncle's feet. The beautiful white dress she had promised to keep in memory of that night was all dabbled and stained in a pool of his life-blood that had dripped down upon the floor.

### CHAPTER VI.

Francis Arnold was dead. The soul of the proud millionaire, the disappointed busband, the loving uncle, had been hurried prematurely before the bar of Eternal Justice. In the stillness of the summer night while he rested in fancied security beneath his own roof-tree, the angel of sleep pressing down his weary eye-lids, the deadly destroyer had crept to his side, and red-handed murder had struck the cowardly blow that spilled his life blood.

They came hurrying out-the servants first, the wife next, the step-daughter last -all roused by that piercing shriek of agong-and found him sitting there dead, with Bonnibel lying lifeless at his feet, her white robes dabbled and stained in the blood upon the floor.

They brought lights and looked at him. Yes, he was cold and dead. There was a great scarlet stain on his white vest where the deadly weapon had entered his heart. The blood had dripped down in a great pool upon the floor and was fast stiffening

Mrs. Arnold shrieked aloud and went into horrible hysterics, laughing wildly and maniacelly, and tearing her hair from "Bonnibel, I wish I knew of what you its fastenings; but Felise Herbert stood still as a statute of horror, looking at the dismal scene. Her pale face was paler than ever, and her large, black eyes looked wildly about her. She made no effort to arrest her mother's frenzied cries, but stood still as if frozen into ice, while the maids lifted up the still form of poor Bonnibel and carried her through the drawing-room window, laying her down gently, and applying restoratives.

Life came swiftly back to her under their influence. She lifted her head, and opened her eyes upon the faces around her just as a shrill and piercing whistle announced the departure of the train which was bearing her young husband away from her for years-perhaps forever.

Bonnibel sprang up and went out on the piazza again. As she stepped to the I say, thy breadth and thy depth forever | side of that lifeless form, Felise Herbert, just waking from her apparent trance of horror, waved her hands in the air, and cried out solemnly and sepulchrally:

> "Oh, Heaven! It is Leslie Dane who has done this dreadful deed. That was what he meant by his dark threats this

"Leslie Dane has killed him!" echoed her mother, wildly.

"It is fa se, woman! How dare you accuse him of such a deed?" Bonnibel cried out fiercely, wild with grief and horror; then suddenly she looked at the half-dazed men-servants standing around their master nelplessly.

"Idiots!" she cried, "why do stand here idle? Why does not some one bring a doctor? Perhaps he is not dead yet-he may be revived."

They brought a physician at her bidding, but when he came his services were needed for her, not for the pale corpse downstairs that would nevermore want the physician's potent art. They had taken her by force to her room, where she was wildly walking the floor, wringing her hands and raving over her loss.

"You are dead, Uncle Francis," she cried, passionately; "you will never speak to me again. And I had left you in anger. We never quarreled beforenever! And without a good-bye kiss, without a forgiving word, you are gone from me into the darkness of death! They have killed you, my dear one! -who could have been so cruel?-and you will never know how I loved you, and that I forgave you for your cruelty so soon, or that I wished to be reconciled. Oh, God! Oh, God!"

She told her story frankly to the good old doctor when he came and questioned her. She and her uncle had quarreled because he had denied her a darling wish. She had rushed out of the house in a fit of anger, and moped about the seashore until late into the night. Then she had returned, and seeing him sitting there on the piazza she had felt her anger melting into tenderness, and stolen up to give him the kiss of reconciliation, but found him cold and dead.

She told the same story when the inquest was held next day, blushing crimson when they asked her what she and her uncle had quarreled over.

"It was a purely personal matter," she answered, hesitatingly. "Is it necessary

to reveal it?" They told her it was necessary.

"He refused to sanction my engagement to my lover, and drove him away from the house with cruel, insulting words," she answered briefly through her tears and blushes.

"And you were very angry with your

"Yes; for a little while," she answered frankly; "but when I came back to the house I was ready to forgive him and be friends with him again. He had never been unkind to me before, but indulged me in every wish, and petted me as my own father might have done had he lived. I was almost wild at first with surprise and anger at the first denial I had ever rec-ived from him; but I scon overcame my indgnant feelings, and when I came back to the house I loved him as fondly as

She left the room immediately after giving in her evidence, overcome with grief and emotion, and goin to her room, threw herself down upon the bed, from which she did not rise again for many weeks. Grief and excitement precipitated her into a brain fever, and for many days life and death fought persistently over their unhappy victim.

Had she known what would take place after she left the room she would have remained until the inquest was over. Fe- ing gown, to which her maid had adde la

lise Herbert and her mother boldly declared their belief that Leslie Dane was the murderer of Mr. Arnold. From the drawing-room windows which opened out on the piazza they had overheard the conversation between the two men relative to Bonnibel, and they detailed every word, maliciously representing Leslie Dane's indignant words so as to place the worst construction upon them. One or two the servants had heard also, and from al the testimony elicited the jury readily found a verdict of wilful homicide against Leslie Dane, and a warrant was issued for the young man's arrest.

But poor little Bonnibel, tossing upstairs in her fevered delirium, knew nothing of all this. If she had known she might easily have cleared her lover from that foul charge by proving that he had been with her during those fatal hours in which Mr. Arnold had met his death.

It remained for her to prove his innocence at a darker hour than this, and at the sacrifice of much that she held dear.

Mr. Arnold's body was carried to his winter residence in New York, and buried from thence with all the pomp and splendor due to his wealth and statson. Felise and her mother, of course accompanied the remains.

The housekeeper at the seaside home was left in charge of the hapless Bonnibel, who lay sick unto death in her luxurious chamber, tended carefully by hirelings and strangers, but with never one kiss of love to fall on her fevered brow in sympathy and tenderness.

Love had gone out of her life. With the young husband adrift now on the wide sea, and the kindly uncle lying in his gory grave, love had gone away from her.

She had no kindred now from whom to claim tenderness or care, so only hirelings were left to watch the spark of life flickering so feebly day by day, that it seemed as if it must surely go out in darkness. They were all who heard the wild, passionate appeals for Leslie and Uncle Francis that were always on the sufferer's lips as she babbled incoherently in her wild delirium.

Mrs. Arnold and Felise remained in New York for several weeks, attending to business affairs and superintending the making up of very fashionable and cumbrous mourning.

Mrs. Arnold did not provide any of this raiment for Bonnibel. She sincerely hoped that the girl would die of her fever and preclude the necessity of so doing.

But youth is very tenacious of life. Bonnibel, in ker illness and desolation. would willingly have died to please her aunt, but destiny had decreed otherwise.

There came a cool, still night in September when the nurses hung carefully around the bed waiting for the crisis that the doctor had said would come at midnight. It came, and the reaper, Death, with his sickle keen, passed by on the other side.

In the meanwhile outraged justice was on the qui vive for the escaped homicide, Leslie Dane. It was rumored that he had sought refuge in a foreign land, but noth. ing definite could be learned regarding his mysterious whereabouts.

### CHAPTER VII.

October winds are blowing coolly over the sea before Bonnibel Vere arose from her sick-bed, the pale and wasted shadow of her former rosy and bewildering self.

She had convalesced but slowly-too slowly, the physician said, for one of her former perfect health and fine constitution. But the weight of grief hung heavily upon her, paralyzing her energies so completely that the work of recuperation went on but slowly.

Two months had elapsed since that dreadful night in which so much had taken place-her secret marriage and her uncle's murder.

She should have had a letter from her young husbann ere this, but it was in vain that she asked for the mail daily. No letter and no message came from the wanderer, and to the pangs of grief were added the horrors of suspense and anxiety.

A look of weary, wistful waiting crept into the bonnie blue eyes that had of old been as cloudless and serere as the blue skies of summer. The rose forgot to come back to her cheek, the smile to her lips. The shadow of a sad heart was reflected on her beauty.

"Upon her face there was the tint of

The settled shadow of an inward strife, And an unquiet drooping of the eye, As if its lid were charged with unshed | Est. W. W. Short. tears."

The first day she sat up Mrs. Arnold came in to see her. She had only returned from the city a few days before and was making preparations to go back for the winter season. She sent the nurse away, saying that she would sit with Miss | then she was dragged for half a mile. Vere a little while herself.

It was a lovely day, warm and sunny for the season, and Bonnibel sat in her easy-chair near the window where she could look out upon the wide expanse of the ocean with its restless blue waves rolling in upon the shore with a solemn murmur. She loved the sea, and was always sorry when the family left their beautiful home, Sea View, for their winter residence in the city.

"You have grown very thin, Bonnibel," said her aunt, giving her a very scrutinizing glance, as she reclined in her chair, wrapped in a warm, white cashmere dress-

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few bows of black velvet in token of her bereavement. "It is a pity the doctor had to shave your hair. You look a fright."

Bonnibel put her hand up to her brow and touched the soft, babyish rings of gold that began to cluster thickly about her blue-veined temples.

"It is growing out again very fast," she said; "and it does not matter anyway There is no one to care for my looks now," she added, thinking of the uncle and the lover who had doted so fondly on her perfect loveliness.

"It matters more than you think, Bonnibel," said Mrs. Arnold, sharply, the lines of vexation deepening in her face. "It behooves you to be as beautiful as you can now, for your face is your fortune." "I do not understand you, aunt," said

the young girl, gravely. "It is time you should then," was the vexed rejoinder. "I suppose you think now, Bonnibel, that your poor uncle has left you a fortune?"

Bonnibel looked at her in surprise, and the widow's eyes shifted uneasily beneath her gaze.

"Of course I believe that Uncle Francis has provided for my future," said the girl, quietly.

"You are mistaken, then," snapped the widow: "Mr. Arnold died without a will and failed to provide for either you or Felise. Of course, in that case, I inherit everything; and, as I remarked just now, your face is your fortune."

"My uncle died without a will!" repeated Bonnibel in surprise.

"Yes, Mrs. Arnold answered, coolly. "Oh, but, aunt, you must be mistaken," said Bonnibel, quickly, while a slight flush of excitement tinted her pale cheeks "Uncle Francis did leave a will. I am

"Then where is it?" inquired Mrs. Arnold.

"In his desk in the library," said the girl, confidently. "He told me but a few hours before his death that he had made his will, and provided liberally for me, and he said it was at that minute lying in his desk."

"Are you sure you have quite recovered from the delirium of your fever?" inquired the widow, scornfully. "This must be one of the vagaries of illness."

"I am as sane as you are, madam," said Bonnibel, indignantly.

"Perhaps, sneered Mrs. Arnold, rustling ineasily in the folds of her heavy black crape. "However that may be, no will has been found, either in the desk or in the hands of his lawyer, where it should most probably be. The lawyer admits drawing one up for him years ago, but thinks he must have destroyed it later, as no trace of it can be found."

"I have nothing to live upon, then," said Bonnibel, vaguely.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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