

Old Man's Darling.

BY MRS. ALEX. McVEIGH MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "QUEENIE'S TERRIBLE SECRET," "JACQUELINE," ETC.

CHAPTER IV--Continued.

Bonnibel had never wept so wildly in all her life. It seemed to her that she would die of her grief as she lay panting and weeping in Leslie's tender arms.

"Do not weep so, my little love," he whispered. "We were too sanguine of success. But try to bear it bravely, my Bonnibel. We both are young. We can bear to wait a few years until my success is assured, and then I will claim you for my own in spite of all the world!"

Bonnibel did not answer. She continued to sob heart-brokenly, and Leslie could feel her little heart beating wildly against his breast as if it would burst with the strain of her grief.

So absorbed was he in trying to comfort the agitated girl that he did not hear the sound of an approaching footstep.

The next moment Wild Madge, the sibyl, stood before them, and the echo of her weird and mocking laugh blent strangely with the hollow beat of the Atlantic waves.

"Aha," she cried discordantly. "You weep, my bonny maid! Ah! said I not that the clouds of sorrow hung low over that golden head?"

Bonnibel started and clung closer to her lover, while a tremor shook her frame.

Leslie turned angrily and rebuked the old woman.

"Begone!" he said sternly. "How dare you come prowling about this lady with your croakings of evil? Never dare to address her again."

Wild Madge retreated a few steps and stood looking at him malevolently in the moonlight. Again her laugh rang out mockingly.

"Never fear, fond lover, Wild Madge would not harm a hair of that bonny head you shelter on your breast. But destiny is stronger than you or I. Her doom is written. Take the little maid in your arms and spring out into the sea there and save her from the heart-aches that are beginning now!"

"Begone, I say!" reiterated the young artist threateningly.

"I obey you," said the sibyl, retreating, with her mocking, discordant laugh still ringing in their ears.

"Bonnibel," he whispered, "look up my sweet one. The crazy old creature is gone. You need not fear her predictions—they mean nothing! Try and calm yourself and listen to me. I have much to say to you to-night for it is the last time we shall meet until I come to claim my bride. In a few hours I must leave here. To-morrow I shall be on a steamer bound for Europe."

"So soon?" she gasped brokenly, stifling her anguished sob.

"The sooner the better, darling. I must not dally here when I have so much work to do. Remember I have fame and fortune to conquer before we meet again!"

"It will be so long," she moaned, slipping out of his arms and sinking down on the pebbly beach with her face hidden in her hands.

Leslie picked up the shawl which had slipped from her shoulders and wrapped it carefully about her, for the sea-air was chilly and damp.

"It may seem long to us now, dear," he said, sitting down beside her, "but in reality it will pass very quickly. I shall work very hard with such a prize in view, and I hope the time of our separation will not be long. I shall go at once to Rome and place myself under the best masters. I have genius, for I feel it within me, and the critics already admit it. Never fear, darling, but that my success will be speedy and sure."

"But away off to Rome," said the girl. "Oh! Leslie, that seems as if you were going out of the world. Why need you go to Italy? Cannot you study here in this country?"

"Not so well, my little love, as in Italy, where I can have better masters, and better facilities for studying the paintings of the world's greatest artists in the beautiful old churches and cathedrals. I must have the best instruction, for I want to make the name you will bear an honored one."

She lifted her beautiful, tear-wet face in the moonlight, and said, gently and simply:

"We need not wait for fame and fortune, Leslie. Take me with you now."

For a minute Leslie Dane could not speak. She waited, patiently for her, laying her hands in his, and looking up into his face with eyes beautiful enough to lead a man's heart astray and bewilder his reason.

"My child," he said, presently, "I wish that I might do so, but you know not what you ask. You have been reared in the lap of luxury and pride. You could not live through the deprivation and poverty I must endure before I conquer success."

"I could bear anything better than the separation from you, Leslie," said the

poor child, who had but the faintest idea what those two words, "poverty and privation," meant.

"You think so, dear," said the artist, "because you do not know the meaning of poverty; but adversity would wither and destroy you as quickly as some hot-house blossom would die when transplanted to regions of ice and snow. No, darling, I am too proud to take you now in my obscurity and poverty. Let us wait until the name I can give you shall be an honor to wear."

"It must be so if you wish it, Leslie," she answered, sadly; "but, oh, how can I bear the long separation when I love you so devotedly?"

"It will not be for long, dearest—two or three years at best. The time will pass quickly to you in your happy home, under the devoted care of your Uncle Francis—only you must not permit him to alienate your affections from me, for that I am sure is his present intention."

She was silent, resting her head against his supporting arm, and passing her small hand wearily over her brow as if to dispel some gathering mist from her sight. The solemn, mystical sound of the foamed waves breaking silently on the shore seemed strangely pathetic to her ears. They had never sounded so sad before.

"Darling, of what are you thinking?" he asked, gently.

She started and shivered, lifting her white face up to his with a look that nearly broke his heart, it was so pitifully pathetic. He had never seen anything but happiness on that beautiful face. Why had he won her love only to plant the thorns of sorrow in that fond and trusting heart?

"Leslie, dear," she said, in a strangely altered voice, "do you believe in presentiments?"

He started at the words.

"Bonnibel," he answered, "I hardly know whether I do or not. It would be very superstitious to believe in such things would it not? And yet may not a merciful Providence sometimes vouchsafe us warnings of things, as the Scotch say, 'beyond our ken'? My darling, why did you ask me that strange question?"

He took her little trembling hand in his and looked searchingly into her face.

"Leslie," she said, "I have such a strange feeling. Perhaps you will laugh at it. I should have laughed at it myself two hours ago."

"Tell me, dear, he pleaded; 'I will not even smile.'"

She looked up with something like awe shining in her large eyes.

"Leslie, I can hardly find words to put this strong presentiment in; but I feel that if we part now—like this—that before you win the honors you covet, some terrible bar of fate will come between us and under us so widely that we shall never meet again."

The low, impressive words fell heavily on his heart, chilling it like ice. How strangely they sounded from his little Bonnibel, who but an hour ago was as gay as a butterfly in the sunshine. Now the very elements of tragedy was in her voice and face. A jealous pang struck him to the heart.

"Bonnibel," he said, quietly, "do you mean that your uncle would marry you to someone else before I came back to claim you?"

"I do not know," she said; "I hardly think my feeling was as clearly defined as that. It was a dim, intangible something I could not fathom, and took no peculiar shape. But he might try to do that, for oh, Leslie! Uncle Francis is terribly angry with us both."

"I am quite aware of that, my dearest," he answered, bitterly. "But, Bonnibel, this presentiment of yours troubles me. Perhaps I am foolish, but I have always been a half-way believer in these things."

"Leslie, I believe it firmly," she said, choking back a sob that rose in her throat; "Uncle Francis will dig some impassable gulf between us. When we part to-night it will be forever."

Hiding her face on his shoulder she sobbed aloud. Poor little bonny bird! she had been soaring in the blue ether, her fair plumage bathed in sunshine all her life. Now her bright wings were clipped, and she walked in the shadow.

"My love has only brought you sorrow," he said, regretfully.

"No, no; you must not think so," she answered, earnestly. "It seems to me, Leslie, that I have never fully lived until this summer, when I met and loved you. Life has seemed to have a fuller, deeper meaning; the flowers have been sweeter, the sunshine fairer, the sound of the sea has seemed to have a voice that spoke to me of happiness. If you had gone away from me with your love untold I should have missed something from my life forever. You do not guess what a wealth of love is in my heart, Leslie. It is not

your love that brings me sorrow; it is the dreadful, dreadful parting with you!"

He pressed her hand in silence. A terrible temptation had come to him. He was struggling mutely against it, trying to fight it down in all honor. But love and jealousy fought madly against white-handed honor.

"If you leave her now, in her beauty and youth," whispered jealousy, "some other man will see that she is fair. She will forget you and wed another."

"Make her your own now," whispered love.

He was young and ardent; the warm blood of the South, whose flame burns so hotly, fired his veins. He looked at her sitting there so angelically fair in the beautiful moonlight, and knew that he should never love another as he loved this beautiful, innocent child. If she were lost to his future life what profit could he have in wealth and fame? Love and jealousy conquered.

He drew her to his side with a passionate clasp, longing to hold her there forever.

"Bonnibel," he whispered, "do not be frightened at what I am going to say. I am afraid that they will marry you to some other while I am gone away. Your uncle may persuade you against your will, may even bring force to bear with you. But there is one way in which we can bridge any gulf they may dig between us, darling. Will you marry me secretly to-night? I can leave you more willingly, then, knowing that no power can keep us apart when I come to claim you."

"Marry you to-night?" gasped the child.

"How can I do that, Leslie?"

"Nothing easier, darling. Only a mile and a half from here is the little fishing village of Brandon. We can take your little skiff and go down, be married by the Methodist minister there, and return in a few hours, and then I can leave you without being haunted by a terrible foreboding of losing you forever. They will think you are asleep in your room at home, and no one will miss you or be the wiser for the precious little secret that we will keep sacredly until I come to claim my little wife. Bonnibel, will you make this great sacrifice for love? It will make our future happiness secure."

"Yes," she whispered, without a moment's thought.

CHAPTER V.

The fairy little bark, the *Bonnibel*, swept blithely out into the moonlight waves.

Bonnibel tied her lace handkerchief over her head, and wrapped the shawl about her shoulders.

Somehow her heart began to grow lighter. This moonlight fitting seemed so sweet and romantic.

Her dark-eyed lover sitting opposite lightly swaying the oars looked handsome as a demi-god to her partial eyes. She trusted him implicitly.

"The king can do no wrong," was her motto.

"You shall never regret this step, never, my darling," Leslie Dane kept saying to her over and over, as if to soothe his conscience, which perhaps reproached him.

And Bonnibel answered with a smile every time, "I never expect to regret it, Leslie, dear."

His rapid strokes of the oar soon brought them to their destination. Brandon was a poor little fishing village consisting only of the rude huts of the fishermen, a little Methodist chapel, and a little parsonage down by the shore rather nearer than the rest of the shanties.

Here lived the aged minister and his kind old wife. Thither the young artist directed his steps with Bonnibel clinging to his arm.

Fortunately they met no one on the way, and almost before they knew it they stood in the shabby "best room," which served the good man for study, library and parlor.

There the minister sat with his books, and the good wife with her knitting.

Leslie Dane drew the old man aside and they held a brief whispered colloquy. Apparently the young man made everything satisfactory, for in a minute he came back and led Bonnibel forward to breathe those solemn vows which are so quickly cemented but which death alone can sunder.

Bonnibel was trembling very much, though the hitherto thoughtless child did not in the least realize the magnitude of the step she was taking.

She only thought to herself how sweet it would be, to be bound by that sacred tie to Leslie Dane, and she quivered from head to foot with pleasure, and with a certain indefinable nervousness she did not begin to understand, while the two old people stared at her in surprise at her radiant beauty and costly dress.

The solemn words were soon spoken, Leslie making the responses firmly, and Bonnibel in a hushed little voice that was scarcely audible. The young man slipped a ring over her finger that he had always worn on his own, the minister blessed them, the good wife kissed the girl with tears in her eyes, for women always weep at a wedding. Then Leslie slipped a generous flee into the old man's hand, and led his blushing bride away.

"God bless you, my darling, and may you always look back to this hour as the happiest one of your life," he whispered, as he put her into the little skiff and kissed her beautiful lips with an outburst of passionate tenderness.

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"I wish you the same happiness, Leslie," whispered the happy little bride.

"In a little while now we shall be parted," said he; "oh, my Bonnibel, how much easier the parting will be when I know that I am leaving my wife behind me—my wife whom no one can keep from me when I come for her."

"It was a happy thought of yours to bind me thus," answered the young bride, softly. "Now that grim presentiment will hunt me no more, and Uncle Francis cannot hurt me with his threats or his coldness while I have this precious secret in my heart."

"Bonnibel," he said, anxiously, "in some moments of defiance you may feel tempted to taunt him by the betrayal of our marriage; but I implore you do not yield to the temptation. More serious consequences may follow than you dream of. Let our secret be a dead secret until I give you leave to proclaim it."

"I will never reveal it, Leslie, I give you my solemn word of honor," replied Bonnibel, earnestly.

"Thanks, dearest. I only asked the promise because I knew it was for the best. Darling, I shall think of you always while I am absent, and I will write to you very often. Will you write to me sometimes, and let me know that you are well and happy?"

"I will write to you often and let you know that I am well; but I can never be happy while I am separated from you, Leslie," she said, sadly.

"Bonnibel, how beautiful you look in that white dress," he said, changing the conversation abruptly, seeing that it pained her. "You were the finest bride I ever saw."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Lady Misled By a Dealer Who Loved Long Profits.

A lady residing in a flourishing Ontario town recently wrote as follows:

"Having some faded cotton goods to dye, I went to one of our stores and asked for two packages of Diamond Dye Cardinal for Cotton. The storekeeper informed me that he was out of that brand of dyes, and recommended strongly another make of package dyes. I unfortunately bought the recommended dyes and carried them home. I used them as directed on the package, but the work was not fit to look at, the color being of a brick red instead of cardinal. I was obliged to wash the goods so as to get rid of the awful color, and afterward re-dye with the Diamond Dyes which I procured at another store. I have used Diamond Dyes without a single failure for many years, and will never again accept a substitute from any merchant. The Diamond Dyes are true to promise every time."

SERIOUS SHOOTING ACCIDENT AT A WEDDING.

HALIFAX, Oct. 19.—A serious shooting affair took place at Cambridge, Kings County, last night. A wedding had just taken place at the residence of James Craig, near Cambridge, at which his daughter was married to a young man named Kinsman. A young man named Hyman, in the course of a salute for the happy couple, loaded a revolver with bullets, and in shooting at the side of a house struck a boy named Tupper, the ball penetrating the lung. The bullet is not yet extracted.

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