

# — AN — Old Man's —:-- Darling.

BY MRS. ALEX. McVEIGH MILLER,

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

## CHAPTER XXVIII—Continued.

He turned away and walked rapidly out of sight.

Lucy sighed, she could not have told why, and turned back along the hall.

"Hold, girl!" exclaimed a hoarse, passionate voice behind her.

She turned in a fright, and saw Colonel Carlyle just behind her, his features distorted by rage and passion. He caught her arm violently and tore the note from her grasp.

"I will myself deliver this note to your mistress," he said, "and as for you, girl, go!"

He dragged her along the hallway to the open door, and pushed her out violently into the street, bareheaded and with no wrapping to protect her frail, womanly form from the rigors of the wintry night.

"Go, creature!" he thundered after her, "go, false minion of a false woman, and never darken these doors again with your hated presence!"

Lucy sank down upon the wet and sleety pavement with a moan of pain, and Colonel Carlyle closed and locked the door upon her defenseless form.

Rage had transformed the courteous old man into something more fiend-like than human.

As soon as he had disposed of his wife's attendant so summarily he turned his attention to the note he had wrested from her reluctant grasp.

Retiring into a deserted ante-room he opened and read it as coolly as if it had been addressed to himself.

What he read caused the veins to start out upon his forehead like great twisted cords, and his lips to writhe, while his face grew purple, and his eyes almost started from their sockets.

Bonnibel had written:

"Leslie, forgive me if you can. Before God, I wronged you innocently! I thought you dead! If there is one spark of pity or honor in your breast keep my secret. It would kill me to have it known to the world! I will go away from here and hide myself in obscurity forever! Of course I cannot remain with Colonel Carlyle a day longer. You seemed very angry to-night—your eyes flashed lurid lightnings upon me. I pray you, do not believe me willfully guilty—do not betray me for the sake of revenge! The shame, the horror, the disgrace of our fatal secret will kill me soon enough."

BONNIBEL.

Looking at the top of the page he saw that she had dashed her pen several times through her monogram. He gnashed his teeth at the sight.

"What could she possibly mean by it?" he asked himself, as he turned the sheet and read the artist's reply:

"Do not fear for your proud position, Bonnibel. Mine is the last hand upon earth that would drag you down from it! Pursue your wonted way in peace and serenity. You need not go away—that is for me to do. God knows I would never have come here to-night had I dreamed of meeting you! But try to forget it! Tomorrow I shall have passed out of your life forever, and that most deplorable secret will be as safe with me as if I really were dead!"

LESLIE DANE.

Colonel Carlyle crumpled these strange, unfathomable notes into his breast-pocket and went out with ominous calm to bid adieu to his parting guests.

They had enjoyed themselves so much, they said, and with many regrets for Mrs. Carlyle's unfortunate accident they hastened their departure."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Bonnibel sat crouching in her chair, a prey to the most helpless misery, waiting for Lucy's return.

She was stunned and bewildered by the force and suddenness of the blow that had stricken her.

One tangible thought alone ran through the mass of confused and conflicting feelings.

It was that she must fly, at all hazards, from her humiliating position in Colonel Carlyle's house.

She did not know where she would go, or how she would manage her flight. She would leave it all to Lucy.

The girl was clear-headed and intelligent. They would go away together, and Lucy would find a hiding-place somewhere for her wretched head.

But, oh! the shame, the misery of it all! Leslie Dane was alive, yet she who was his wife in the sight of Heaven, dare not rejoice in the knowledge. His resurrection from his supposed death had fixed a blighting hand upon her beautiful brow.

"Oh, God!" she moaned, wringing her white hands helplessly, "what have I done to deserve this heavy cross?"

The minutes passed slowly, but Lucy did not return. The little French pendule on the mantel chimed the quarters of the hour three times while Bonnibel sat droop-

ing in her chair alone. Then the door was pushed rudely open and Colonel Carlyle entered.

In her dumb agony the creature failed to look up or even to distinguish the difference in the step of Colonel Carlyle.

"You saw him, Lucy?" she asked, without lifting her head.

There was no reply. She looked up in surprise at the girl's silence and saw Colonel Carlyle standing in the center of the room regarding her fixedly.

Bonnibel had seen him jealous and enraged before, but she had never seen him look as he did then.

The veins stood on his forehead like thick, knotted cords. His face was purple with excitement, his eyes glared like those of a wild animal, his hands were clenched. It seemed as though he only restrained himself by a powerful effort of will from springing upon and rending her to pieces.

Thus convulsed and speechless he stood gazing down upon her.

"Oh, Colonel Carlyle, you are ill," she exclaimed, regarding him in terror.

"Shall I not ring for assistance?"

He did not answer, but continued to gaze upon her in the same stony silence.

Fearing that he was suddenly seized with some kind of a fit, she sprang up and shook him violently by the arm.

But he shook off her grasp with such force and passion that she lost her balance and fell heavily to the floor.

Half stunned by the violence of the fall she lay quite still a moment, with closed eyes and gasping breath.

He looked at her as she lay there like a broken flower, but made no effort to assist her.

Presently the dark blue eyes flashed open and looked up at him with a quiet scorn in their lovely depths. She made no effort to rise, and when she spoke her voice startled him with its tragic ring.

"Finish your work, Colonel Carlyle," she said, in those deep tones. "I will thank you and bless you if you will strike one fatal blow that shall lay me dead at your feet."

Something in the words or the tone struck an arrow of remorse into his soul. He bent down and lifted the slight form, gently placing her back in her chair.

"Pardon me," he said, coldly, "I did not mean to hurt you, but you should not have touched me. I could not bear the touch of your hand."

She lifted her fair face and looked at him in wonder.

"Colonel Carlyle, what have I done to you?" she asked, in a voice of strange pathos.

"You have wronged me," he answered, bitterly.

Her face blanched to a hue even more deathly than before, at his meaning words. What did he suspect? What did he know?

"I know all," he continued, sternly. For a moment she dropped her face in her hands and turned crimson from brow to throat under his merciless gaze, then she looked up at him proudly, and said, almost defiantly:

"If, indeed, you know all, Colonel Carlyle, you know of a truth, that I did not wrong you willfully."

He was silent a moment, drawing her crumpled note from his breast and smoothing out the folds.

"This is all I know," he said, holding it up before her eyes. "This tells me that you have wronged me, that you have a dreadful secret—you and the man at whose feet you fainted to-night. You must tell me that secret now."

"Where did you get the note?" she panted, breathlessly.

"Perhaps the artist gave it to me!" he sneered.

"I will not believe it," she said, passionately. "Lucy—where is Lucy?"

"She is out in the street where I thrust her when I found her with this note," he answered, harshly. "It is enough that my roof must shelter a false wife, it shall not protect her false minion!"

"Out in the street!" gasped Bonnibel, hoarsely. "In the cold and the darkness. My poor Lucy! Let me go too, then; I will find her and go away with her. We will neither of us trouble you!"

She was rushing to the door, but he pushed her back into her seat, locked the door and put the key into his pocket.

"We will see if you shall disgrace me thus," he cried out. "You would fly from me, you said. And where? Perhaps to the arms of your artist-lover! You would heap this disgrace on the head of an old man, whose only fault has been that he loved you too well and trusted you too blindly."

She shivered as he denounced her so cruelly; but not one word of defiance came from her pale, writhing lips. The fair face was hidden in her hands, the golden hair fell about her like a veil.

"But I will protect my honor," he continued, harshly. "I will see that you do not desert me and make my name a by-word for the scorn of the world. You will stay with me, even though I am tempted to hate you; you shall stay with me if I have to keep you imprisoned to save my honor!"

She looked up at him wildly.

"Oh, for God's sake, let me go!" she said. "In pity for me, in pity for yourself, let me go away from you forever! It is wrong for me to stay—I ought to go I must go! Let the world say what it will—tell them I am dead, or tell them I am mad, and chained in the walls of a mad house! Tell them anything that will save your honorable name from shame, but let me go from under this roof, where I cannot breathe—where the air stifles me!"

"It must indeed be a fatal secret that can make you rave so wildly," he answered, bitterly. "Let me hear it, Bonnibel, and judge for myself if it is sufficient to exile my wife from my home and heart."

She shivered at the words.

"Oh! indeed it is sufficient," she moaned wringing her hands in anguish. "I implore you to let me go."

"Let me be the judge," he answered again. "Tell me your reasons for this wild step."

She was silent from sheer despair.

"Bonnibel, will you tell me the secret?" he urged, feverishly.

"I cannot. I cannot! Do not ask me!" she answered pleadingly.

"What if I demand it from Mr. Dane?" he said, threateningly.

"I do not believe he will tell you," she answered bitterly. "If he did you would regret that you learned it. Oh! believe me, Colonel Carlyle, that 'ignorance is bliss' to you in this case. Oh! be merciful and let me go!"

"Would you know what answer your artist lover sent to your wild appeal?" he exclaimed abruptly.

She looked at him wildly. He straightened out the sheet and read over the words that Leslie Dane had written, in a bitter, mocking tone.

"Leslie Dane," he repeated. "Leslie Dane! Why, this is the first time I have caught the villain's name aright! It seems familiar. I have heard it somewhere long ago—let me think."

In a sudden excess of excitement he dropped the note and paced furiously up and down the room. Bonnibel watched him, forlornly under her drooping lashes.

He stopped suddenly with a violent start, and looked at her sternly.

"I have it now," he said triumphantly. "My God! it is worse than I thought; but when I knew his real name it all rushed over me! Yes, Bonnibel, I know the fatal secret now, that you, oh! my God, share with that miserable wretch!"

"Oh! no, you cannot know it," she breathed!

"I do know it," he answered sternly. "I remember it all now. Leslie Dane is that guilty man who rests at this moment under the charge of murdering your uncle!"

"It is false!" she exclaimed, confronting him indignantly. "No one ever breathed such a foul aspersion upon Leslie Dane but you!"

"Great God! do you deny it?" he exclaimed in genuine surprise and amazement. "Surely your brain is turned, Bonnibel. Everyone knows that Leslie Dane was convicted of the murder on circumstantial evidence; everyone knows that he fled the country and has been in hiding ever since. But the fatal charge is still hanging over his head."

"I have never heard such a thing before, never! And I would believe that Leslie Dane was guiltless in the face of all the evidence in the world! He is the very soul of honor! He could not do a cowardly act to save his life!" exclaimed Bonnibel, springing up in a fever of passionate excitement.

Colonel Carlyle was fairly maddened by her words.

"You shall see whether he be guilty or not," he exclaimed, leaving the room in a rage.

Bonnibel heard the key grate in the lock outside, and discovered, to her dismay, that she was Colonel Carlyle's prisoner in truth.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"You went off from the ball in a hurry last night, Leslie. Why did you not stop for me?"

It was Carl Muller who spoke. He had come into Mr. Dane's rooms the morning after the ball and found him sitting over a cup of coffee, looking haggard and weary in the clear light of day.

"Excuse me, Carl," he responded. "The actual truth is, I forgot you. I was tired and wanted to come away, and I did so, sans ceremony."

"Well, you look fagged and tired out—that's a fact. I never saw you look so ill. Have a smoke; it will clear the mist from your brain."

"Thank you, no," said the artist, briefly. Carl sat down on a chair and hummed a few bars of a song while he regarded his friend in some surprise at his altered looks.

"I was sorry you went off without me last night," he said presently. "I wanted to chaff you a little. Weren't you surprised and abashed when you found that the old woman whose portrait you de-

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clined to paint was the loveliest angel in the world?"

"It was quite a surprise," Mr. Dane said, sipping his *café au lait* composedly.

"Did you ever see such a beautiful young creature?" continued Carl, with enthusiasm.

"Yes," was the unexpected reply.

"You have!" exclaimed Carl; "I did not think it possible for two such divinities to exist upon this earth. Have the goodness to tell me where you ever saw Mrs. Carlyle's equal in grace and loveliness."

But Mr. Dane, who but seldom descended to Carl's special prerogative poetry, sat down his cup and slowly repeated like one communing with himself:

"I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move; Such an one do I remember, whom to look at was to love."

"She is dead, then?" said Carl.

"She is dead to me," was the bitter reply.

And with a significant look Carl repeated the lines that came next to those that Leslie had quoted:

"Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore? No, she never loved me truly; love is love forevermore."

"Forevermore," Leslie Dane repeated with something like a sigh.

He rose and began to pace the floor with bowed head and arms folded over his breast.

"Carl," he said suddenly, "I have had enough of Paris. Have you?"

"What, in seven days? Why, my dear fellow, I have just begun to enjoy myself. I have only had a taste of pleasure yet."

"I am going back to Rome, to-day," continued Leslie.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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## CANADA.

65,826—Jacob N. Forler, Molita, Man.—Dish Washer.

65,847—Cvila Corbeil, Montreal, P. Q.—Folding Sofas.

65,856—Edmond Speer Boissevain, Man.—Propelling mechanism for vehicles.

65,906—Messrs. Wm. Evans & Neil McArthur, Sturgeon Falls, Ont.—Cattle guard.

65,902—Arthemie LeBlanc, Little Cascapedia, P. Q.—Hay Press.

## UNITED STATES.

641,749—Geo. A. Smith, Albemarle, B. C.—Night lamp.

641,674—David Pitkin Cory, Conseccon, Ont.—Card holder for freight cars.

641,720—William Keyes, Montreal, P. Q.—Car advertising device.

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