

## PART IV.

HAROLD had a boy's love of power, which he exercised continually over his sister, much to her discomfort and his own injury; for a boy cannot begin too early to hold his ruder instincts in check if he is ever to grow into that highest ideal of manhood that combines tenderness with bravery. Sometimes, in certain moods, or if pressed too far, Bee rebelled, in which case she fought her battle valiantly, and really having a stronger will than Harold, usually came off victorious. Harold perceived, however, that although she might persevere and carry her point for the time, she was always delightfully docile afterward, and he could look forward to an enjoyable period of despotism. No doubt it was because she had recently passed through one of these disagreeable conflicts, as well as for the honor of her word, that Bee submitted to the tortures he devised as a means of curing her cowardice. It is but fair to

him to say that he little realized what she suffered in the process.

At his command she would stumble in the dark up the stairs to the garret and sit there shivering with fright, while the mice *chasséed* across the floor, and she listened to the little creaking noises of the night. He forced her to cross the pasture where the bull roamed, and each morning she tremblingly patted the head of the cross mastiff.

But although, in the hope of conquering that timidity of her nature that gave such offence to her grandfather and brother, she had compelled herself to do all this, she could not see that she was growing a bit braver. On the contrary, the tremor of her heart in the presence of danger, or what seemed like danger to her, was all the greater because of the weakness of her overstrained nerves, and the effort she must make to force herself into compliance with Harold's will was greater each day.

Once in the irritability of her nervous excitement she said to him, —

“If you felt one half as afraid to do a thing as I do, you would never have the grit to go through it,” having hit upon a fact strong-nerved people often lose sight of.

Under this unhealthy excitement Bee soon began to lose her physical strength; she grew hollow-eyed and white, was listless and dull, except on rare occasions, when she would have spasms of unnatural exhilaration, ending in tears. It was observed by Francis that she even had lost her interest in the adventures of the three D's; after which discovery he called the colonel's attention to the fact that something was wrong with his granddaughter.

Colonel Stacy sent for Bee on the instant, and questioned her; but instead of the sensible, straightforward answers that would have pleased him, Bee would only say that she was tired, — tired of being Beatrix Belfast.

The colonel, no doubt thinking that this was no case for doctors, at once set about reconciling Bee to her own existence. His first prescription was a spirited little pony, called Lady Bell, which he said would soon shake her up into a better humor.

"Nothing tones one up sooner than riding," he said, as the family stood admiring the pony as they waited for Bee to put on her habit before taking her first ride.

When Bee appeared she looked pale and uncomfortable. She said the Lady Bell was a beauty, but her private thought was that she would enjoy her much more from the safe distance of terra firma than in the exciting uncertainty of a seat on her back.

As long as she could, she delayed mounting, but her grandfather was waiting to see her on the pony before starting for town, so that she soon felt obliged to conquer her reluctance and let Francis lift her into the saddle. No one imagined the heroism of that apparently simple act.

If any one suspected Bee's feeling, it was Harold; but he despised her fears, without being able to admire the effort she made to control them. No doubt he thought this experience would do her good. At all events, when he saw her really seated in the saddle, he yielded to a mischievous impulse to touch up the pony's legs. Now the Lady Bell, like her mistress, was of a highly nervous temperament, and that unexpected cut from Harold's switch started her into what seemed to Bee a perfectly frightful gallop.

As the pony took that first plunge, Bee screamed, then shut her eyes and gave her-

self up for lost. Instead of clinging to the horse she presently slipped out of the saddle, coming with a bump to the dear green earth, faint and dizzy, but unhurt. Before Colonel Stacy and Francis could reach her she picked herself up, and running toward them declared she would never again mount Lady Bell; and in this tame fashion ended her first ride.

The colonel showed his disappointment by ignoring his granddaughter, and presently forgot his chagrin in watching Master Harold, who, having overtaken the little mare, now came trotting home on her back.

"The boy shall have her," he said to Francis; "he will make a horseman."

"The elf will ride, too. You must give her time, sir, that's all," cried Francis.

The kind tone and the reassuring pat on her cheek were too much for Bee, who now put the finishing touch on the colonel's displeasure by bursting into tears.

Finding the general air of disapproval too chilly for her spirits, Beatrix crept away.

That evening the colonel was to dine with Dr. Waters, of whom he had bought the mare for Bee. The doctor was a warm friend of the elf's, and before starting, as

he stood on the piazza waiting for the dog-cart to be brought round, the colonel asked her what word she would send him about the Lady Bell.

"Tell him she looks prettier anywhere than from a seat on her back, where you can see nothing of her but her ears," she answered, laughing, determined not to betray her mortification.

"I will give you ten dollars," said her grandfather, "if you will ride Lady Bell beside the dog-cart to the doctor's."

Bee looked at him wistfully. Had she dared ride she would need no bribe to please him; but she shook her head, saying earnestly:—

"I could n't do it, grandpapa, — not for a hundred dollars. I shall never dare to ride Lady Bell again."

"Offer me five, and see how quickly I'll take you up," said Master Harold, smartly. He was standing on the step beside his sister, his hands in his pockets, and his handsome blond face flushed with the eagerness of his desire to possess Lady Bell.

The colonel guessed his thought and laughed.

"Yes, the pony is yours, you young

scamp," he said, with a light in his eyes, as he fondly tapped the round red cheek. "The Lady Bell won't go a-begging."

It was a beautiful soft summer night, with a new moon gleaming in the western sky and a south wind singing through the trees. The children were alone together; but Bee was cross, and Harold in a teasing mood, — a combination not apt to produce pleasant results.

The day had not been a happy one. Very early Bee declared that she had had enough of it and meant to go to bed; and no entreaties served to detain her. It was a wise instinct on her part; but Harold, who did not wish to be left alone, took her departure as a personal offence. Bee had been unusually disagreeable all day, he thought, without dwelling very long on the provocation he had given her. After the incident of her luckless ride on Lady Bell, when in her discomfiture she had retreated to her own room, he had followed her, and, quite unconscious of her indignation, called her to join him in a game of tennis. Bee had slammed down the window as an emphatic declaration of war, and his subsequent overtures of peace had been rejected.

Harold nursed his grievances until he thought of a scheme of revenge that promised much fun for himself. His plan was to climb up the trellis by Bee's window and give her a great fright. He amused himself by thinking how miserable she would be as she lay listening to the rustling of the leaves and the creaking of the trellis under his weight, and her greater horror when she would see a figure really climbing through the window.

But the moment Bee had laid her poor little head on the pillow she fell into a sweet, dreamless sleep, the pain of the day melting into nothingness. Usually a light sleeper, now the various sounds made by Harold failed of their cruel purpose, and she heard nothing until suddenly she was sharply aroused by a crash and the unmistakable voice of her brother crying, —

"Oh, Bee, Bee! it's not a burglar; it is I, and I've hurt myself!"

Bee jumped up, and running to the window saw Harold lying beneath it, his face turned upward and pale as death in the moonlight. She took in the situation at a glance, and hurrying downstairs, buttoning on her ulster as she went, soon leaned

anxiously over him. In falling from the trellis he must have met with some serious injury, for the slightest attempt to move caused great pain, and before Bee reached him he had fainted.

Harold's plan had failed, but after all Bee had her fright. In bewildered distress she recollected that there was not a man on the place; her grandfather would not return until late, and she remembered that Martin had gone to the village, where he would no doubt stay until it was time to go for the colonel. Francis also was away, and of the women she could only find old Phœbe in the kitchen.

Phœbe was a very stout old negress, and the task of lifting that great boy of twelve was almost beyond her strength. Each time she tried to move him he begged so piteously to be left alone that she finally gave up the attempt.

"De doctah ought ter be here right quick, Miss Bee," she said to the awestruck elf, "an' dar ain't nobody but you or me fur to fetch him, an' you be de spriest, honey."

"I'll run every step of the way," said Bee; "but, oh, Phœbe, it's a *long* way."

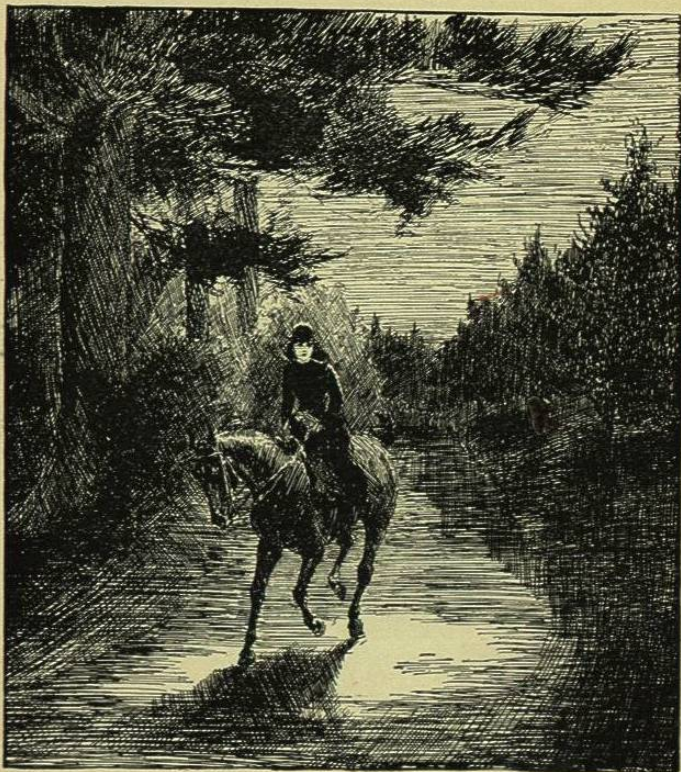
She started toward the house, then rushed back and pulled Phœbe toward the stable.

The words of her grandfather echoed in her brain and brought resolve with them.

"I will give you ten dollars if you will ride the Lady Bell to the doctor's," he had said; but now she meant to ride there for nothing.

Although too stout to ride, Phœbe knew well how to harness a horse, and before Bee could get into her habit, had the Lady Bell ready for her. In a moment more, trembling from head to foot, Bee was in the saddle, and Phœbe was listening to the thump of the pony's feet as he bore the trembling rider out into the night.

The moon was just slipping behind the hills; and the road, which lay through the woods, was almost lost in darkness. Moreover, as they flew on, the Lady Bell's feet spurning the ground, Bee experienced all the wild terror that had overcome her on the occasion of the first ride; but now her purpose was strong enough to make her cling to the mare. Happily, Lady Bell knew every step of the way, and kept the road without guidance. With Harold's moans still in her ear, Bee made no attempt to



"Lady Bell knew every step of the way."

check her speed, and so on and on flew Lady Bell, and on flew Bee.

The gentlemen were sitting with their cigars on the doctor's piazza, and the conversation had turned upon that personal courage that the colonel prized so highly; he had been contrasting the fine fearlessness of Harold with the timidity of Beatrix.

"I believe there can be no real bravery without fear," said the doctor, who had warmly defended poor Bee's character. "It's the element of self-command that makes the brave deed praiseworthy; without that, it's mere brute stupidity. I have seen little Beatrix show a self-control that's worth a thousand times more than that insensibility which so often parades under fine names."

"Courage is a matter of physical health, I take it," said one of the other gentlemen; "depends upon the circulation. The girl, in this case, is delicate, while the boy has a fine constitution."

"Well, when it comes to constitution, it's the weeds and not the finest flowers that have the advantage. Bee is a beautiful girl, Stacy; she has not that animal courage

you admire, but she has the nerve to meet emergencies."

It was an odd coincidence, that, just as the doctor stopped speaking, and as if in proof of his kind speech, Lady Bell came galloping in from the road, and the white, set face of Bee suddenly flashed upon them in the light of the lanterns.

It was a splendid triumph; but with the memory of Harold's suffering, Bee cared little for praise. Eagerly she urged them to make speed, and in an incredibly short time the little party set off.

Bee went home in the doctor's buggy, with her head on her grandfather's shoulder. Once he said, —

"You were right, doctor, about our dear girl;" and Beatrix felt that he gave the love that so long had been withheld from her, with the kiss that followed these words.

On examination, it was found that in his fall Harold had injured his back, and a period of pain and confinement would be the result. This experience of suffering had a humanizing effect upon the little monkey, who learned from it to appreciate the beauty of love and kindness, at whose hands he must now ask so much.

To say that Bee overcame her timidity, would make a pleasant ending to this little tale; but the facts of her constitution forbid. We can say, however, that she is very dear to those she loves best, because of the loving heart that makes light of self-sacrifice; and they respect her for the effort she makes to conquer her fears, and her self-mastery in real emergencies.



THE GIRL WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.