

**Bill's Best Beloved.**

By Hilda B. Morris.

It was on the opening day of the little girls' kindergarten that Bill Lawrence first met his Best Beloved. That was not her real name, of course. Her real name was Dorothy Lucretia Patterson, but it was the name that Bill's uncle, Thomas Lawrence, bestowed upon her when he first heard of Bill's devotion.

Bill's younger sister, Althea Antoinette Lawrence, went to the kindergarten class, and when in the spring they had their annual Prize Day, Bill was forced into a despised best suit and a red necktie to go and hear his sister recite a poem about "Rover and I."

It is needless to tell how Bill fought against going. His mother was unconquerable. She insisted. It was necessary for the honor of the family that he be there. It did not matter that Bill had heard "Rover and I" at home every day for the last three weeks. It did not matter that the other fellows scoffed at him for going to the girls' school. It did not matter that his time was valuable; that he had promised to help "Pirate Pete" build a den that very afternoon. It did not matter that his best knickerbockers were prickly and that red neckties were disgraceful for men of his age, when tied in enormous bows that completely concealed the shirt front. Nothing mattered. Bill must go for the honor of the family, and Bill went.

He displayed but little interest when the curtain went up, disclosing a broad stage, and he felt positive disgust when three pig-tailed maidens appeared and chanted a song about "Little Birdies." He turned his face away when another little girl lisped through a piece about "Old Mother Hubbard," and he began to make desperate plans for escape when Althea appeared with a captivating grin that displayed all the places where teeth should have been, and recited her idiocy.

Bill whispered a few pleading words in his mother's ear. She shook her head. Then Bill settled down into despondency, and the red kindergarten chair on which he sat, also into the prickly knickerbockers and the realisation of the red tie.

But with the next performer his mood changed. She was entirely different from the rest. She did not have absurd pig-tails, nor a grin and vacant jaws. Neither did she recite a poem which had flowed from an idiot's pen. Her hair was curled in beautiful auburn curls; she looked earnestly at the audience instead of grinning. Her jaws were filled with little white teeth. Her recitation was not nonsensical.

Bill was charmed. It charmed him the more that she lisped a little, a very little. That was her only flaw in Bill's eyes, and it proved that she was human. She looked at him once or twice without a smile or pause. One other little girl had grinned idiotically at him.

Bill felt a thrill of genuine pleasure. He watched her bow gracefully and depart, with a feeling of regret. He resolved to see her again. All through the rest of that intolerable programme the thought that he had not come altogether in vain sustained him.

Tim Jones and Bobby Brown, alias "Pirate Pete," had lately become enamoured of certain fair young ladies, and boasted in Bill's presence. Bill allowed hopes to arise in his heart that perhaps he, too, might one day boast.

He saw the fair object of his desires trot down the aisle, and be met by her mother and a nursemaid. Her mother patted her and smiled. The maid began to clothe her in a lawn-colored coat and a pale green hood.

Bill watched his chance. The lady walked away and began to talk with some other ladies. Bill approached with a manly air.

"What's your name?" he demanded of the little girl in rather a patronizing air, his hands in his pockets and his feet spread far apart.

The little girl looked up in surprise. Even then she did not grin or blush. She simply replied: "Dorothy Lucretia Patterson." Then

she smiled a charming little smile that revealed two little dimples, one in each cheek.

"Mine's William Preston Lawrence," he volunteered.

She smiled again, and said: "Do you like sweets, William?"

Bill thrilled all over with delight. How fine to hear her call him William!

"Yes," he said. She thrust a piece of sticky peppermint into his hand and smiled again, as her nurse led her off.

Bill yelled "Thanks!" after her, and stood looking rather rueful. He had meant to carry his courtship further than that.

Bill's devotion was all absorbing. On his way home he could think of nothing else. Dorothy Lucretia Patterson! It was a very long name. Bill thought it an important sounding name, and, of course, a beautiful name. Bill wondered why he had never fallen in love before. He had seen many other girls, more or less charming, but that strange devotion had never thrilled his heart till now.

Life holds many problems, for both young and old; but the young ponder most upon them, and so it was that Bill, pondered and thrilled with delight at the new joy which had come to him.

At the supper table Bill's mother asked him a question. Bill, roused from his absent mood, replied in confusion: "Dorothy Lucretia Patterson."

Uncle Thomas roared. He thundered.

For Bill this was another problem. Uncle Thomas, who had flushed red and angry when Bill's mother had asked him a question about "those flowers he sent to Christine Elliott." Why, then, if it was a rage provoking matter, should he laugh at mention of Bill's Beloved name? Bill, too, flushed red and angry as he put the question by to ponder on.

"Where does your fair one live, Willy?" asked Uncle Thomas cruelly.

Bill thought a moment. Uncle Thomas's words hurt him. He knew, now, how to hurt Uncle Thomas.

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Uncle Thomas saw that the tables were turned. Christine Elliott lived in Green Street.

Bill's father and mother championed him.

"That's right, Bill," his father said, "give him tit for tat."

But Uncle Thomas was on his feet again.

"Willy-boy," he said, "she does. I know how it feels to fall in love. Unburden your sad, love-stricken, heart to me perhaps I can assist you."

"Don't tease him, Tom," said Bill's mother. But Uncle Thomas did not heed.

"Stop calling me Willy-boy and I will," Bill caught himself. He had not meant to say he would.

"William, then. William, tell me the history of your love for Dorothy Lucretia Patterson."

Bill was fairly caught. He had said he would. He did not see the

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