

The Inglenook.

Lady Betty.

Elizabeth Stansfield Merton was certainly a stately name for a mite of pink and white humanity to bear. Judge Henry Barton declared it was absurd to give his grand child such a name. And, as the latter grew and developed into a laughing, dimpled lassie, the Judge assumed his most judicial aspect one day, and announced that henceforth she should be known by the name of Betty, affirming that it suited her from the crown of her head to the sole of her feet. As no one had the courage or the heart to oppose the Judge, his word became law in the matter.

There were those in the pretty village of Churchtown who nodded their heads sagely when a babe was born one morning in the house on the hill, where Judge Barton and his daughter and her husband lived—nodded their heads and wagged their tongues informing each other, with many a wise look, that the child was "sure to be spoiled by her grandfather." It was a well known fact among the townsfolk that, though Judge Barton on the bench was severe and dignified, Judge Barton at home was affable and social, ever betraying an intense love for his only child that the busy bodies predicted would extend and embrace with added fervor to his daughter's daughter.

But Betty had left babyhood behind and was enjoying girlhood, and still, to the outward eye, gave no signs of having been "spoiled." One could scour the hills for miles around to find a sweeter, rosier face, a more generous, loving disposition than were Betty's. To her mother and grandfather she was all in all. To her father? Well "Lady Betty," as Mr. Merton loved to call his blue-eyed daughter, was precious above and beyond all estimating.

Across the road from Judge Barton's and a little further down the street, stood a low, rambling house, whose ancient walls resounded to the tramp of boyish feet and the ring of merry young voices day in and day out. The Carleton boys made life sweet and burdensome alternately to their invalid mother, and to the other inmates of their home. But to Betty they were never wearisome. She commanded, she entreated them. She scolded and commended them. She was their queen; they her loyal subjects. Never queen had more faithful ones. Whether in her most imperious or gentle moods, she was alike charming, wholly irresistible to these sturdy boys, who had never possessed, yet always longed, for a sister of their own.

"I couldn't come in, could I?"

It was Betty who uttered these words one cold January morning, as she appeared at the door of the boys' workshop and peeped within.

"We'd like to have you," answered Harold, the eldest; "but we've got everything spread round in here. You may spoil your pretty dress."

"Hannah could lend her an apron," suggested Philip, next in age, looking up from the paper he was pasting together, to smile a welcome at Betty.

The latter's inquiry, however, had been a mere matter of form, as she now made ap-

parent by entering, and proceeding to make herself comfortable on the end of the carpenter's bench, Harold's especial property.

"There's nobody at home and I thought you'd like to have me," she explained, watching Gerald, the younger brother, as he struggled valiantly with the prow of a boat he was fashioning. "The toboggan slide is nearly finished. Grandpa said for you all to be sure and come to the opening on Saturday. And I've asked Tom Beecher," she added, smilingly.

"Betty Merton!" It was Harold's voice that rang out sharply. "Then I sha'n't come, if he's to be there. That's all."

The smile vanished from Betty's eyes, and she looked severely at the speaker.

"For shame, Harold!" she cried. "Why are you unkind always to Tom? Why don't you like him?"

"Tom won the prize at school that Hal ought to have had," Philip interposed. "It was when you were away, Betty. Some of the boys think he didn't get it fair."

"But he did," Betty maintained stoutly. "Wasn't my grandpapa there? I guess he wouldn't have anything to do with it if there was cheating going on. Tom's a gentleman, and honest, if he is poor. Mamma says so."

"And he pulled me on my sled clear to the top of the hill," remarked Gerald, stepping closer to Betty. He always thought and said the best of every one, this brown-eyed lad, with his father's face.

"I wouldn't be jealous of a boy that never has good times, and has to work so hard," Betty continued, looking sternly at Harold.

"He's always studying. I hate to see a fellow pegging away all the time," the latter returned, glancing out of the window, not caring to meet Betty's eyes.

"He studies hard because he's going to be a teacher and take care of his mother. He told me so," Betty replied. Then, suddenly slipping down from her perch, she stepped closer to Harold and added, earnestly: "It isn't like you, Hal, to be so unkind. He does not have things as you do. Why, he's never had a real new overcoat. And think of the nice ones that you boys have just got."

"The boys at school laughed at Tom 'cause he had his uncle's coat made over," Philip said; "and it's an old one and thin at that."

"Mother said she wished she knew some one that would take Hal's old one. It is good and warm, but too small for him," Gerald said.

"I guess it would fit Tom," said Betty.

"Tom Beecher have my coat? I think not, Betty Merton!" Harold cried, his face flushing angrily.

For a minute Betty was silent, but her lips quivered piteously. Philip saw them and cried hastily:

"Don't, Betty. Hal didn't mean to speak like that."

It was the first time that any one had spoken in that voice to Betty. Only loving tones had been hers. But she was a brave little woman and rose to the occasion, even though it was hard.

"No; he didn't mean it," she said, slipping a soft, warm hand into Harold's and looking up with sweet, wistful eyes. "It's

so easy for words to slip out when we feel cross. But you'll come on Saturday, won't you, Hal, dear, because you promised. Never mind about the coat, but just be nice to Tom."

Lady Betty imperious was charming. But Lady Betty half tearful and coaxing was irresistible.

Harold shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. Long ago he had acknowledged to himself that his dislike to Tom Beecher was unreasonable and unworthy of him. The difficulty lay now in owing to his fault and making amends. But there stood Lady Betty, clearly expecting the best of him. And then, there were his father's words, spoken just before leaving for his last trip—his tall, strong, dearly beloved father, who had said:

"Take good care of mother, Hal, and look after Phil and Gerald. You're the man of the family when I'm away, you know."

The "man of the family" should set a good example.

"Yes; I'll come," Harold said at last.

"Oh, Hal!"

Only two words, but Betty's voice in itself was enough.

"And be nice to Tom?" after a moment's pause.

"Yes. Let's go and get the cookies now that Hannah promised us," Harold answered, turning to the door, but not before Betty had seen the light of his eyes that made him appear a very different Harold from the one of a few minutes ago. So do one's feelings alter the face.

Saturday dawned clear, bright, but cold. The Carleton boys gathered at the slide early and had enjoyed two or three delightful trips when Gerald whispered mysteriously to Betty, his eyes sparkling mischievously: "There's a surprise for you, Lady Betty."

The latter was about to question, when a shout from Philip arrested her attention, and she turned to see Tom Beecher coming toward her, happy, smiling, rosy, wearing a cape overcoat that she had seen many a time before, though on a different boy.

"Hannah and Hal went down with it last night," Gerald said, busting with the importance of his knowledge, while Betty looked around for Harold. The latter, however, was half way down the slide, and as he reached the bottom, he called back, in answer to Betty's glad cry of "You dear, dear boy!"

"Oh, it's nothing to fuss about."

But later, when Harold stood beside her, and the slides were being taken more frequently and more merrily, and Tom was the happiest boy in the yard, Betty said earnestly:

"Oh Hal, I'm so proud of you."

"And you helped me," the boy answered quickly. "If it hadn't been for you, Lady Betty, I couldn't have done it."

It was nearly dusk when Mrs. Beecher heard laughing voices coming nearer and nearer to her tiny cottage. She arose and looked out of the window, and the sight she saw gladdened her heart for many an hour.

Harold, Tom, Philip and Gerald, a prancing four-in-hand, driven by Lady Betty, were coming down the hill in the grandest style.

"Bless their hearts," Mrs. Beecher murmured. And then, looking past the boys to Lady Betty's sweet, happy face, she added: "And every one said she'd be spoiled. If she is, it's in the right way. There isn't one to equal her in the land."

And then, as the turnout landed with a grand flourish in front of the door, and gay