

"Why, I can't help that. The minute grandpapa comes near me, I feel as if I was shutting up, like caterpillars when you touch 'em."

"And you say such silly things, — like that, now. He does n't like it."

Bee sat quiet for a long time, and meditated, perhaps, on this advice; for when she got up, it was with the remark that she supposed her grandfather might come to like her very much, if she would only leave off being Beatrix Belfast.

## PART II.

THE clap of distant thunder that struck such terror into Bee's heart heralded an unusually heavy storm. The lightning grew sharper and sharper as the clouds extended over the soft summer sky, until neither moon nor stars were visible. All at once the rain came down in pelting drops, and the wind tore through the trees and slammed the doors and shutters. Long before this, however, Bee had fled into the house, and curling up on the sofa in the parlor, had buried her head in the cushions. Harold was now obliged to follow her, and stood by one of the long windows, making discouraging comments on the progress of the storm, apparently enjoying Bee's agony.

"I tell you, we are going to catch it this time," he said. "Hear that clap! Ah, it's coming nearer every moment."

"Oh, Harold, *dear* Harold, *don't* stand by the window!" implored Bee, in a muffled voice. "I'm sure you'll be struck."

"If I'm going to be struck, it won't make any difference whether I stand here, or am curled up like a loon on that sofa. You won't escape by shutting your eyes, either, Miss. Ow! was n't that a crack, though!"

"Oh, Harold," panted Bee, "you were right about the squirrel; I *did* let him out just to tease you. I'm real sorry."

Harold grinned. "Thunder-showers have a first-rate effect upon your conscience, Miss Bee. There goes another crack!"

"It was I who cut the blossoms off the azalea, and tied daisies on it instead," confessed Bee. "I didn't think about grandpapa's caring, and I wanted to astonish Martin."

"Well, everybody knew right away it was you. Grandpapa was to send that azalea to the horticultural exhibition, and was cross, I can tell you."

Here another crash drowned Harold's voice, and in the ensuing silence, Bee burst out:—

"I shook pepper into the flowers cousin Frank sent to that young lady; he said she liked spicy flowers, and that's what made me think of it. He has n't found it out yet, and I'll tell him if you think I ought to."

"Oh, Bee, the La France roses? They were for Miss Sharon, and he's spoony on her!" cried Harold, chuckling. "Well, you *are* a sinner."

"I know it," answered Bee, meekly. "I know I'm weak and sinful. Would you tell him, or let him find out for himself?"

"What's the use of making him uncomfortable; he can't do anything now to help it. [Who says boys have no consideration?] We'll watch, and see if she cools off, and if she does, we'll tell him. No use spoiling the fun now. What else have you been up to?"

"Oh, different things; but I don't remember anything in particular. Do you think the storm is coming nearer?"

"It can't come *much* nearer. Just hear! it's right overhead now."

As Harold spoke, a mighty crash rent the air. The terror Bee had so long endured culminated in a piercing shriek, almost without her own will. It rang through the house, and brought her grandfather, who, with a company of gentlemen, was smoking in the library, hurrying into the room. He bent down anxiously over her, saying, —

"Are you hurt, child; are you hurt?"

Bee sat up; she was white to the lips, and she trembled. If Colonel Stacy had put his arm around her, he would have felt her heart thumping violently, but he only looked inquiringly at her.

"I'm not *hurt*," said Bee, shivering.

"Then why did you scream? What was the matter?"

"I'm afraid that I was afraid," Bee quavered.

"You're a little coward," said the colonel. "When your mother was your age, a thunder-shower was her delight, and she would stand and watch it as Harold does. 'Pon my word, I'm ashamed of you!"

He gave her a look of displeasure, then wheeled about, and went back to the library.

Bee was suffering too much with fright to be troubled at the time by her grandfather's disapproval. As the storm retreated, her spirits went up with the barometer, until she was in one of her most extravagantly mirthful moods. By bed-time she was completely tired out, and fell asleep as soon as Mary, the woman whose duty it was to wait upon the children, blew out the candle. The next morning she came downstairs

looking rather dull, and she told Harold and her cousin Francis, who were still at the breakfast table, that she had had a remarkable dream.

"I seemed to be seated," said Bee, "on the top of the chimney, and there was a storm coming. I could hear the thunder growling and growling, nearer and nearer to me, and I was dreadfully afraid. But I reflected that if I should scream there was no one to hear me, and that was rather consoling; and I reflected," she repeated, having a fondness for this word, "that, anyhow, Harold was n't about, to make everything seem worse. I thought that the thunder was n't common thunder, but it sounded like a frightful voice; and all the while it was scaring me so, it scolded me for being afraid, and it said: 'If you don't leave off being afraid, before I catch up to you, I shall blow you to smithereens!' *And the voice was grandpapa's voice.* The fact of it is," said Bee, impressively, "I've been warned in a dream that grandpapa is going to send me away."

The idea had come as she spoke; but as it was unfolded to her brother and cousin, she perceived that they looked up at her quickly,

and then significantly at each other. In truth, before she had come downstairs, the colonel had actually, although in a very indefinite sort of way, said something about sending his granddaughter to an aunt that lived in a little village called Hilton, at the farthest part of the State. The elf had an uncanny trick of anticipating other people's intentions in regard to her, and there was a belief in the household that nothing could by any possibility be done that somehow or other she did not get wind of it.

That intercepted glance carried conviction to Bee's mind, and she jumped at a conclusion, and proceeded further.

"Yes, I've been warned in a dream that grandpapa is thinking of sending me to Aunt Emily's, in Hilton; that's smithereens, because it will break me all up. There's no use in your trying to hide it from me."

"Well," confessed Harold, "he did say that perhaps it would be a good thing for you; but that's a long way off from really meaning to send you."

"It's not a safe idea for him to have in his head for a moment. Everything I do displeases him; and some time he'll spring it on me that I'm to go. Oh, Cousin Frank,

tell me what to do! I could n't be happy a single moment away from Harold; I should pine, I should pine to death!"

"If you think it's because you displease him, that he will send you away, why not try *not* to displease him?" suggested Francis.

"He is displeased because I'm a coward; but I can't help that, any more than Harold can help *not* being a coward."

Poor Bee relapsed into a mournful silence, playing with her knife and fork, and eating nothing. When Harold, having finished his breakfast, left the table, Bee followed him.

The children went into the garden, and sat down on a stone bench under a hawthorn-tree at the end of one of the walks.

The garden had been the pride of at least three generations of Stacys, who in turn had found pleasure in adding to its beauty. It had been planned after the old fashion upon which time has suggested no improvement. A high evergreen hedge enclosed it, cutting off all view of the surrounding grounds, except upon an entrance at both ends, one giving a pleasant glimpse of the orchard, and the other, which was nearer the house, looking out on the lawn and the old pines beyond.

It had narrow winding paths between high shrubbery or box-bordered beds, where the flowers grew in liberal profusion. Although carefully tended, it owed more to the gracious years than to the gardener. The shrubs required vigorous pruning to be kept within bounds, and the hawthorn-tree under which the children sat raised its white blossoms far above the arbor-vitæ hedge.

"If I only could get over being a coward," said Bee, having fidgeted about for some time in silence, "everything would come out right."

"I promise you that you'll get over it, if you will do exactly as I tell you. I know the way to cure it."

"Go through a kind of a course, I suppose," said Beatrix. "Everybody has to go through a course, now, before they can do anything. What should I have to do?"

"Oh, I sha'n't tell you beforehand; but I'll promise you it will be a cure. You will have to make a solemn promise, though, first, not to back out after once beginning."

"You mean I shall have to take the vows."

Beatrix here alluded to a ridiculous rite,

devised by herself, that was practised by the pair whenever they wished to make a promise especially binding. She was in a mood to enjoy the dramatic solemnity with which these occasions were invested, but wisely shrank from putting herself in the power of Harold.

"Let's talk it over," he said blandly, "and I'm sure you'll see what a good thing it will be for you. To begin with, now, instead of improving, you are getting worse all the time, — more afraid and hoppy. A leaf can't stir but you hop. You don't use any reason, either, but go out of your way to speak to a murderous-looking tramp, and then scream at a bug. You're afraid of dogs and thunder-showers."

"It's true," admitted Bee, sadly.

"If you really were in danger, I don't know what you would do. If a burglar were to get in some night, for instance."

"I don't know as I should be so very afraid of a burglar," said Bee; "he would only be a man, after all."

"But he might crack your head open with a club."

"Why would he? I don't believe he would; there are no silver spoons in it."

"What's the good of pretending, Trix? If you are not afraid of burglars, why did you come and wake me up the other night with that yarn about one making a queer noise under your window? You looked as if you were scared stiff."

"It was n't the burglar I was afraid of," answered Bee, eagerly; "it was the horrid little noise. I hate mysterious little noises at night!"

"Well, since you are so brave about burglars, we'll leave them out of the question. I suppose you'll own there are plenty of things you *are* afraid of?"

Bee nodded, and Harold added unkindly,—

"I sympathize entirely with grandpapa about you. I'm ashamed of you."

"So do I. I sympathize with grandpapa about me, too," broke in Bee. "He has been such a brave soldier; and now, to have his descendants cowards, is very hard. I don't wonder he wants to get me out of sight. But, oh, Harold, it would be dreadfully cruel! You know we have never been away from each other, and I think a good deal of you."

"If you think so much of me, I should suppose you would do anything, so that we

could keep together. I only wish I was the one to do it, and you would see whether I care for *you*. *Your* affection is all talk, or you would let me cure you of this fault."

Poor Bee had no answer to Harold's logic; she looked wistfully at him, and hoped she was not going to cry. It seemed to her that the fiat had actually gone forth, her trunk already packed for Hilton, and she was really to be parted from that little blond monkey, who was now turning a neat somersault on the grassy border of the garden,—on which he had no business to set foot,—and who was father, mother, sister, and brother, all in one, to her.

The discussion ended in Bee's yielding to Harold's persistence, and before they went into the house again all arrangements were made.