But a Lassie Yet.

By Phoebe Swift

CHAPTER I

"Anything wrong, Harold?" came from a mischievous face of muslin and golden hair, curled up in the window recess of a well furnished sitting room.

"Just a bit, Mamie," answered a young man who was reclining gracefully in the big arm chair.

The girl gazed fixedly at him, struck by a tone in his voice that was new to her. They were great "chums," these two, in spite of the disparity of age; and the words recalled to trouble her.

"I'm hard hit, Mamie, and that's the fact," he continued, reaching for his pipe and tobacco jar.

Silence ensued, and the girl's big, shining eyes rested searchingly upon him, growing very tender in expression. Meanwhile the smoker leaned back, and, stretching out his splendid limbs, met her gaze. A faint, amused smile stole over his features, softening their expression.

"Your girl gone back on you, Harold?" came softly from the window.

The easy chair moved back a foot on its casters, and its occupant sat still again with his mouth full of smoke, and his heart full of ashes. Then with a nod he replied to this very plain question.—"You've struck it, Mamie—struck it fair and square little one. You are a witch!"

"I guessed as much," said the witch, "all Miss Fortescue, Harold?"

"Right again, Mamie."

"I thought so," was the quiet rejoinder.

Silence again for several minutes. The man smoked and lazily watched the antics of a blue-bottle fly in the window just above the golden head of the girl who had turned her gaze into the street below.

"Does it hurt, Harold?"

She was now kneeling on a footstool by the young man's side, idly toying with a button on his coat, whilst his left hand rested caressingly on her lovely hair. "Just a little, Mamie."

He was evidently a man of few words and this a favorite expression. These commonplaces mean so little in themselves, but so much to those who know each other well, as these two did.

"I am sorry for you," said Mamie; then, very wistfully and with just a suspicion of rising tears, "May I kiss you, Harold?"

In a moment she was sobbing in his arms, whilst all the manhood within him was softened and melted by the pure and tender kiss of a loving child.

"Mamie, don't. You hurt me, child," whispered Harold.

But the keen point of the little surgeon's lancet had pierced into the sore flesh and set it quivering, and already the wound was cased. "Would it ever heal," thought Harold. With his lips on the child's fair head and her form resting quietly in his arms he silently reviewed his trouble. He had been rejected. Nay, rather, dismissed—cruelly misunderstood and dismissed by her whom he had held first among women. He had refused to give up his acquaintance and friendly connection with Mamie's beautiful, widowed mother at the dictate of a jealous beauty. And yet he had loved this high bred, queenly girl—had loved and did love her. He had worked hard to make himself worthy of her, and the inspiration drawn from his love for her had been the chief factor in his success. "I will have all or nothing," had been her final words, and he knew that she meant what she said.

With sorrow and not a little humiliation at her lack of confidence in his love he had gone from her feeling that all was at an end. Should he have yielded? Ought he to yield yet? The manhood within him answered "No," and his arms unconsciously clasped the childish form more closely to his breast. He had wronged no one. Mamie's mother was a true and noble woman—beautiful, certainly—but sorrowing still for the man whose casket had carried into the grave her love forever. That man had charged him in friendship's trust to watch over his dear ones, and he could not, even for her who was dearest to him, neglect his promise to the dead. If the vile tongues of social scandalmongers or envious men misinterpreted his actions, did not his fealty to his love disprove everything? Would not their marriage give the lie to and silence false and flippant gossip. "All or nothing." The words haunted and pained him. Did this woman rightly estimate the 'all,' that a true man gives when he gives her his heart's best love? "Perfect love casteth out fear." What kind of love then was hers, which shuddered and shied at the empty phantoms of his friendship and tender care for a grief-stricken woman and her child? He was the last, closest link between them and the happy past. He could not do it. His generous soul rebelled against the wanton cruelty of such an uncalled for sacrifice—a sacrifice to others as well as to himself. But his heart was sore within him at seeing his golden dream thus vanish into shadow. In his bitterness and grief he had almost forgotten the little loving, faithful heart throbbing so near his own.

"How soon can a girl marry, Harold?"

Her voice, breaking the silence so softly, made him start; and his young sympathizer slipped from his arms and knelt up straight before him. A relic of an unshed tear still trembled pathetically in one eye; but both orbs were bright and soulful.

Not catching the drift of her question, he fell back in his chair, as he absently replied, "Oh, about eighteen or nineteen, I should think."

"And I am only twelve," sighed Mamie, despairingly, clasping her hands together.

Harold sat silent and still. Surely his love troubles had made him very dull and stupid, thought Mamie; but she was in no way discouraged. Harold took his pipe again. Mamie, who looked upon this as a hopeful sign, silently handed him a match. She waited until she saw the pipe was in full blast and then asked—

"Are you quite, quite sure Harold, that Miss Fortescue would have been happy?"

Quite sure, little one," and Harold smoked on slowly.

The little mediæval little maiden drew the big oaken head down until her lips almost touched his left ear, and in a thrilling whisper said, "Then, if you will wait six years for me, Harold, I'll be your wife."

Harold did not move a muscle. It was too serious. He knew her well. A laugh or a joke would have broken the little once heart. She stood before him without a blush, her hands clasped together, evidently enjoying his, to her, incredulous look of amazement. Then she stood and held her head at him several times as if to say, "I will," and "You may depend on me."

But the result was not altogether satisfactory, as the man said nothing. "Will you wait for me, Harold?"

There was no way out of it. This straightforward question must be answered. Amusing as it undoubtedly was, Harold was deeply touched by the candor, earnestness and great love beaming in the child's face, so he replied.

"I think I can't do better, Mamie, though just at present you can understand, I don't feel much inclined to marry anybody."

"That is quite natural, Harold," put in the wise little woman.

"But I shall always love you, Mamie, no matter what happens," he said, drawing her to him and passing his hand over her standing tresses. In his great tenderness he was anxious to soften and smooth down every trace of asperity.

"But, said Mamie, with an increase of maidenliness such as she thought the occasion demanded, "If ever Miss Fortescue will marry you, Harold, then I will give you up to her. She was your first love, wasn't she?" This with an access of womanliness. Mamie was developing fast.

She took his hand within both her own and laid it against her cool, soft cheek. How she loved and sympathized in her childish heart, with the big, handsome fellow!

"Why did Miss Fortescue give you up, Harold?"

Would the catechizing never cease? And yet, somehow his troubles lessened and the bitterness had begun to die out. Sympathy, even if it be only that of a child, is a wonderful balm for heart wounds.

"That is Miss Fortescue's secret, little one," he said, "and it would not be honorable for me to tell."

"No, I suppose not," answered Mamie reflectively.

"Well, I must go now, Harold. Mamma will think I am staying too long. Good-bye."

She kissed the hand that rested so near her lips, put on her hat and proceeded to go. At the door she turned, and with the grace and dignity of a consummate actress in her exit, yet with all the naivete of a lovely child, raised her right hand with the forefinger pointed, uttered the one word, "Remember," and was gone.

CHAPTER II.

In the afternoon of the next day Miss Fortescue, sitting in the drawing room of her splendid home in Chelmsford Square, presented a charming picture of a fashionable young lady fully equipped for a drive. The door opened and Miss Mamie Desmond was shown in. Miss Fortescue's beautiful eyes opened wide to meet the child's steady look as she advanced to greet her. She knew the little one as Harold's pet and the daughter of the woman whose shadow had so strangely fallen across her own love's path. Her antipathy, however, towards the one did not extend to the other, and her greeting was warm and cordial.

"Miss Fortescue," began Mamie with all a child's terrible directness, "Why will you not marry Harold Fairleigh?"

The warm blood waved over the lady's face, and she sat down somewhat staggered and not unreasonably at a loss for an answer. Mamie did not at all relieve the situation by her next inquiry.

"Don't you love him?"

It was terrible. Miss Fortescue fairly gasped. Yet what could she say to this earnest though painfully inquisitive young lady, but the truth, which, alas, always stood only too strongly before her.

"How came you to know of this, dear?" she asked with an effort. "Did he tell you of it?"

"Yes, but I guessed it first, and then he told me all."

"He told you all, Mamie? Did he tell tell you—why—I won't marry him?"

"Oh, no, not that. He said that was your secret."

Then the little lady rose and stood beside Miss Fortescue and in an appealing voice asked,—

"Won't you tell me why you will not marry him, Miss Fortescue? Won't you? He is so sad and lonely, poor fellow, and I would like to help him if I could. He loves you so much, and you know, he saved my life."

Miss Fortescue started and looked at the speaker. Harold had never told her this, and her feelings hardened against him.

"Didn't you know?" went on Mamie, who had noticed her surprise. "I should have been drowned but for him. That was how he came to know me and mother and poor, dear, dead father. He is so good and brave, Miss Fortescue," she continued, quickly returning to the vital point of interest. "Mother says he is the dearest and truest friend a woman ever had."

"I should think he is, Mamie," came from the set lips of the soul-struggling woman.

That last statement of the child struck into her heart like a barbed arrow whose poison fed the jealous demon that possessed her. Mamie knew by the tone of her voice that she had wounded where she had arrived to sooth—but she knew not how or why.

Miss Fortescue quickly controlled her emotion, and not a shade of passion lurked in her quiet tones, when she spoke again. She could not wound this simple, trusting child, by vilifying her mother. Suffer as she might, her pride would not let her say that Mrs. Desmond was the bar to her happiness. A wonderful softness and tenderness came into her eyes as she took Mamie's hands within her own and drew her closer.

"Mamie," she said, "I love Harold Fairleigh dearly, for I cannot marry him as things are, and, dear—for you are a child—I am sorry to say that I cannot tell you why.

"That this was that Mamie could see.

"I am sorry, Miss Fortescue, if he is sick—and I am afraid you will be sorry for it afterwards."—"Poor Harold!" she went on, speaking to herself as much as to her companion, "he will have to wait then—and it is so long! But he has to be comforted somehow, and I have promised to marry him if you will not, if he will wait for me. This is what I wanted to tell you."

Strife as she did at this astounding revelation, it was with trembling lips that Miss Fortescue said, "I trust he will wait for you, Mamie."

And it was all she could say. The interview was growing painful for her. There was nothing more to be said. She therefore rose, told Mamie she was going for a drive and proposed to set her down at her home if she would accompany her.

So the two went out together and drove through the busy streets, the one with jealousy and bender yearning struggling for mastery in her breast, the other filled with a grave wonder that anyone, even a princess, could refuse Harold, her king among men. Such was the irony of it.

CHAPTER III.

Harold, as he told Mamie, was "hard hit." But he calmly recognized the fact that there was nothing for him but to yield or endure. It chose to endure. Luckily he was young, barely twenty-four, and his life was active and his success assured. Strong, brave, keen to observe, his ready pen, guided by a sound judgment, had written him into public favor. He, therefore, kept a firm hold on the strands of his life and pulled and twisted them into the strong rope that was to bind him to the people. Work is the best antidote for love rejected, and Harold worked; and time rolled on. His duties frequently took him away from the metropolis, sometimes for a period to other lands, and during the years that followed, his active pen contributed its full share to the world's news. Occasionally, when at home, he met Miss Fortescue at social gatherings; but, if the glamor of her presence, or the touch of her hand gave his heart a twinge, he never winced, nor did the calm of her bearing towards him ever change. The past was a sealed book to them; for his friendship and intimacy with the Desmonds remained steadfast as ever. Neither would yield yet both, perhaps, secretly thought and hoped that time, the great healer of all things might eventually bring them together again. It is certain that neither displayed any inclination to form a new attachment.

Mamie, meanwhile, did not stand still. Her existence moved on by leaps and bounds, as is ever the case with the very young. Shortly after her memorable interview with Harold, the substance of which she seriously communicated to her mother much to that lady's astonishment, she signified her wish to be sent to school to begin her education, as she said. With equal seriousness she dealt with Harold, to whom she confided her interview with Miss Fortescue and its results, much to his surprise, if not dismay. But what could he say to this affectionate, trusting little being who had assured him in one breath that there was nothing for him to do but wait for her, and in another how she would try to make herself—oh! so worthy of him. Why, she had nothing else to do with her life. It was all his by right established. And Harold listened with amused solemnity and stroked the golden hair, whilst he secretly wished that Mamie as not quite so serious in the matter, yet was utterly unable to throw the least damper on the little one's tenderest feelings.

So Mrs. Desmond consented to the sacrifice of separation and Mamie entered a convent of the highest repute in educational circles to make herself worthy to be Harold's wife. She was a child of brilliant parts, as may be surmised, and amply repaid the care and efforts bestowed upon her. And how she did work!—and how she was loved by the good Sisters and her school companions. Her straightforwardness, beauty, unselfishness and unvarying kindness bound all hearts to her. Her insatiable desire for knowledge appalled her teachers, and her whole conduct proclaimed her a girl with a mission. Of course, like every convent girl, she had one favorite teacher, sweet Sister Agatha. Mamie was very susceptible to the influence of beauty, and Sister Agatha was beautiful. It was whispered also that before entering religion, she had been a society belle, sought after, admired, loved, and that she had had her romance. Therefore, she was a doubly interesting personage to Mamie, who had her own love perplexities to deal with. To Sister Agatha Mamie was a constant study, and to Sister Agatha she gave all her confidence.

It is a trick of story writers to make their nuns romantic personages with a history; as if a convent were only a refuge for the world-wearied heart instead of a garden in which God's love blooms fresh and pure and unsullied by worldly taint. Nevertheless, if this story must be told faithfully, sweet Sister Agatha was an exception among the Sisthood to which she belonged.

One day during Mamie's second year the two were walking together in the shady convent grounds, conversing.

"Mamie," said Sister Agatha, "I am afraid you work too hard. You must not injure your health."

"Oh, no, Sister. I am as strong as an ox," replied Mamie, somewhat taken aback and at a loss for a simile.

"Why do you work so hard, child?" asked the Sister, who had oftened wondered at Mamie's untiring industry and intense application.

The girl cast her eyes on the ground as she walked, but remained silent. Should she tell this sweet Sister the truth, she asked herself.

The next words settled the question.

"Can you not tell me, Mamie?"

"Yes, Sister Agatha, I can tell you."

"Stop then—stop, child," cried Sister Agatha, in a tone of alarm, "for I cannot marry him as things are, and, dear—for you are a child—I am sorry to say that I cannot tell you why.

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The next words settled the question.

"Can you not tell me, Mamie?"

"Yes, Sister Agatha, I can tell you."

"What is it, child?" inquired the Sister.

"I am working for two, Sister Angelica. Mother suggested, a little in folly, she hardly knew why—

"For love, child? You mean for the love of your work, for love of your mother, for love of God. That is beautiful."

"No, Sister, said Mamie, you mistake. I am working for the love of a man."

"Mamie!" exclaimed Sister Agatha, startled out of her usual serenity.

But Mamie was now determined to make a clean breast of it and so she went on.

"I have promised to be Harold's wife when I am old enough. And I wish to be good and beautiful and accomplished—yes, accomplished, that's it—all for him. All my work, Sister is for Harold."

The Sister was speechless. Was the child—this brilliant child—crazy, she thought.

Then Mamie told the bewildered Sister all her love story, and ended with,

"Please don't tell anybody else, Sister Agatha. Of course you may speak to mother. She knows all about it. And"—a sudden thought struck her and clasping her hands on her companion's arm—"you shall see Harold. I will tell mother to bring him here the very first time he is in the city. Oh! he is the dearest"—she gave the Sister's arm a warm little hug—and the convent bell rang for evening prayers.

During recreation a few days afterwards, Sister Agatha, of her own record, renewed the subject. She loved this simple, trusting child, and her own pure but tried heart feared for her.

"Mamie I have been thinking of this bewildering story you told me the other day and I fear for your happiness. You ought not to think too much of—of Harold, dear."

She spoke with a lovely, little, sorrowful smile that went straight to Mamie's heart.

"I don't, Sister. I can assure you. I have not time. I have too many lessons to learn. If I thought too much of Harold I could not get on at all. And I am getting on, am I not, Sister?"

To Be Continued.

A FLIGHT OF FANCY.

Written for the Register.

The sacred anniversary to Irish hearts so dear,
The bond that binds a scattered race more closely year by year
Has come, and I whilst they kept it here, by calm Chebucto Bay,
I'll visit thee my fatherland, three thousand miles away.
Who says there are no fairies now, but I felt not Fancy's wing,
Which swift as light thro' boundless space her votaries can bring.
I'm already in Glasnevin, where repose the true and brave,
I gaze upon the sod that wraps O'Connell's honored grave,
And yonder rises Dublin, cold, lethargic and grand—
Where sits the foreign Incubus, that crushes all the land.
But let's forget ch Fancy dear! and let us haste away—
We come to look on purer things, and brighter scenes to-day.
Now sunrise lights up Dublin Bay, Liffey's placid breast,
And Wicklow's distant mountains, in their misty mantles drest.
Oh, cheering are the sights and sounds that usher in the day,
The thrilling anthem, Shamrock wreaths, and "Patrick's Crosses," gay,
From bushes bursting into gloom, thro' glades with verdure dim,
The thrush and blackbird blend their notes, in Nature's Matin hymn,
Re-echoed by the lark on high, sweet seraph of light—
As if it fain would beat the strain, to heaven's entrance bright.
Now, Fancy, let us rest awhile for this is fair Westmeath,
Where lovely lakes, and winding streams, the fertile plains encircle—
On Carrick's ruined tower we'll stand and look for miles around,
At Hall, and cot and many a spot by dusky legends crowned,
Lough Ennyn, with its monument of moss and ivy drest—
Lough Iliby, with its monument of Folly for a crest,
And proud Doneas, whose boatmen bold, well earned fame have won—
I fain would linger mid the lakes but still must haste on,
To a river girdled village, and to many a grassy grave,
And the homestead that was ours ere we crossed the distant wave.
Can this be it so changed? Alas! our home is here no more,
The aspens too have disappeared that grew beside the door,
The bright turf burns on Cottage hearth; I see but strangers there,
Where are the good old neighbors gone? Sad echo answers—where?
All, all are changed save Nature, and in some things even she,
For a stately building rises, where our playground used to be.
"You too are changed," methinks I hear familiar voices say—
A sad-eyed woman musing where your childhood used to play."
And lo! through fairy forths and glens, and wraiths of ghostly ties,
The iron steed goes shrieking back defiance as it flies.
Ah! ruthless change is trampling out each relic of the past—
But still in Fancy's regions bright, the Fairy power shall last.
By you lake where stands Felstornagh, once home of Saint and Sage—
It claims in Erin's history, a bright monastic page:
The solemn chant has long been hushed, the bell is heard no more—
That woke the fervent worshippers that dwelt along the shore,
And here's the pleasant "Borden," where we children used to pass,
When Loney's low roofed chapel bell, rang out the call to Mass.
Since then in grand Cathedral aisles, I've knelt at Altars fair,
But never with the same glad heart I brought to worship there.
Here's ancient Multifarnham with its tower tall and grey—
What happy children there we knelt on Confirmation day.
And here's the same heart-cheering spring and well-remembered scene,
Where Erin's pet, the Primrose gladdens every nook of green,
And I must bear it with me to the far West, where I go—
To rival Scotia's blossoms sweet, that bloom amid the snow."
Now Fancy let us gather o'er we say adieu once more—
Some ivy from the Abbey's walls, and pebbles from the shore—
Then back again thro' fields of air, beneath us on the deep
The tall ships with quiet sails, like ocean birds asleep.
So here we are, and just in time, to stare the owl's repast.
Our kindred "drown the Shamrock" to the memories of the past
I fain would show the floral gifts I fondly sought to cull,
But alas my talents are empty, though my heart is very full,
Why friends describe in glowing words their pageant bright and gay—
And in my turn I tell them how I spent St. Patrick's Day.

E. M. CAMPBELL.

Halifax, N. S., March 17, 1872.

HAD LA GRIPPE.—Mr. A. Nickerson, Farmer, Dutton, writes: "Last winter I had La Grippe and it left me with a severe pain in the small of my back and hip that used to catch me whenever I tried to climb a fence. This lasted for about two months when I bought a bottle of Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil, and used it both internally and externally, morning and evening, for three days, at the expiration of which time I was completely cured."

A SCHOOL IN SESSION.

Editor of Catholic Register, Sir,—

A school in session is of interest to everybody, but its attraction to the mother, whose little ones, the greater part of each day, are subject to its influence is supreme, and will account for this notice of an informal visit during school hours, to a school in the west end of the city of Toronto, attended by some five hundred children of the parish of St. Mary. Ten rooms, in charge of as many teachers—the Sisters of St. Joseph—and graded from Form I. to Senior IV. were visited, and though stormy and cold weather prevailed, the attendance, even in the rooms devoted to the youngest children was most creditable, and a happy evidence of the comfort and attractiveness of the schools.

The pleasant welcome from the bright, intelligent children, who seconded their teachers' courteous greeting, was in keeping with the prettily decorated class rooms and the refining influences which surrounded the children. Cleanliness, order and an utter absence of any defacement of walls or furniture are a contrast to what obtained in this respect, say twenty-five years ago. The individual desks, the multiplicity of black-boards bearing evidences of the work of skilful and clever pupils, the abundance of modern appliances for making smooth the rough road for learning, called forth as they well deserved, many words of commendation. The tuneful singing of the pupils in every grade witnessed the cultivation of the art that charms and soothes young and old alike. The Tonic Sol-Fa system is taught by the Sisters, and in the more advanced grades, two-part songs were very pleasantly rendered. The love of singing was perhaps most evident among the very young children who responded eagerly to the request for a song. Here, too, on the part of the children there was undisguised pleasure in the praise given by the visitors to the decorations of the school rooms, and evident pride in the announcement that all were the work of their deft young fingers.

Sheltered balconies run along the south side of the building, and here in stormy weather the pupils can conveniently and comfortably spend recreation. Well-kept squares accommodate the pupils in fine weather and the different grades enjoy separate playgrounds. A Sister always presides over the recreation and also at the noon hour, when many remain who bring lunch with them. Certainly children could nowhere be better looked after. A most gratifying feature of the school was the excellent discipline prevailing in the rooms of the senior grades during the absence of the teacher in charge. When commented upon we were informed by the wise and experienced teacher that she strove to cultivate the pupils' sense of honor and the results were most happy.

An interesting quarter of an hour was spent in one of the junior rooms, the little ones were writing down sentences, which they formed containing the words written on the blackboard.

In answer to an inquiry it was ascertained that fourteen children passed the last entrance examination—one girl from the school obtaining the highest percentage among girl candidates.

The average attendance in the ten rooms is 420, while 500 names are on the roll—an unusually good average, it must be admitted.

The growth of the schools in this parish, since the opening of the first school in 1854 has been progressively steady. The new school, built in connection with the original building, and considered one of the finest in the city, is now supplemented by two other fine large, roomy schools—the boys' school on the opposite side of Macdonnell Square—a handsome, red brick building, accommodating the older boys of the parish, and successfully taught by the Christian Brothers, and St. Francis school on Manning Avenue, which also has a large attendance.

It goes without saying, that the Vicar-General is a constant, and I might add, a welcome visitor of the schools of his parish, and is justly proud of the efficiency and high standard maintained by this model Separate School of Toronto.

Half a Cent A Day

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