

For Every Boy and Girl



JUST BECAUSE

By MARION HAMILTON CARTER

I WAS as old as seven when I eloped. With a little boy named Harold who lived next door, I had had an "understanding" for years—two years, if I remember rightly. At any rate, the "understanding" came about at a Sunday-school picnic where I choked on a wild strawberry and they all thought I had swallowed my car-fare-home, a calamity always causing wildest excitement at a picnic; and Harold ran to my rescue with his cap full of water, and afterward fought one Eddy Mooney for calling me "Sissy Chokeberry," nobly receiving in my behalf a crimson nose. I repaid his injury with several tears and a kiss, and haughtily assured the Mooney boy that my mama would never, never let me play with him; to which he made answer that he never, never wanted to play with me and that my mama could not hire him to do so "for a bag of peanuts." Further hostilities were cut short by the superintendent, and Harold and I departed with arms tenderly entwined. It was after that that the "affair" came to be recognized by both families. My big brother, who was a sub-freshman at Harvard, told me every day to remind him when the "event" was to come off so he could "be on deck with the weep-rag"; my big sister, sub-sub-freshman at Vassar, begged me not to elope, "because it would be too dreadful not to have the first wedding of the family in church with all our aunts and cousins there to see how I bore the strain," and they kept up and kept it up, until ran away to Harold and told him if I had to stand it another single day, I'd die!

Harold took my woe soberly and held my hand. I prodded a response by repeating that I'd die—I'd go down to the creek and jump in and then they'd feel sorry!

"No, Lily," answered Harold, judiciously, "we won't do that—we'll elope—that'll show 'em what we can do." To which I answered, "Yes, Harold, we will," holding tight his hand while he went on; "An' they'll nuvver know one word about it till we're all married an' settled—"

"—at my grandmama's!" I interjected, joyously. "Cos she always said when I got married I was to come an' live with her."

"No, at my grandmama's," he corrected, "cos she always said when I got married I was to bring my wife to her house."

And I said, "No, Harold, at mine's"; and he said, "No, Lily, at mine's," and the angry words that followed came near wrecking our romance.

"Oh, Harold, don't you want to get married?" I burst out, finally.

He dug a vicious heel into the turf—"No—not if I have to live with your grandmama."

"N'en nuvver do I—so there!"

He said, "All right for you, Lily! Next time I ask you to marry me, you'll know it!" And I retorted, "Next time I tell you I will, you'll know it," and with one breath we both cried tragically: "All right for you!" and turned our backs on each other.

Harold walked slowly away, his eyes on the ground; I walked rapidly, my nose in the air, to the Summer-house where I dissolved forthwith upon a miniature handkerchief. Grief, mortification, self-reproach and rage surcharged my little heart, and I heard nothing

We decided to elope the very next day, late in the afternoon, and to gather in such sustenance for the journey as could be begged at lunch time, or "sneaked" from the pantry. I made so many interested inquiries as to the route to my grandmama's that Edward, my brother, after saying that "you rode sixty miles due west in the train and got out and walked and you wouldn't know it when you came to it," wound up with a whoop and declared he believed I was contemplating an elopement.

"Oh, do let Lily alone, Edward," said sister. "You're too mean for anything. You'll have her crying in a minute; you forget she's only a little girl."

Big with my secret—if I were only a little girl—I stalked out of the dining-room, sniffing, as I went up-stairs, "Guess you'll find out who's the 'little girl' when I'm 'loped.'"

Into my doll's trunk both my effects and Harold's were to go. The tray was reserved for rations. I had one other treasured object I could not forsake—a tin kitchen, which seemed an important adjunct to our housekeeping; in it you could burn as many as five match-sticks all at once, if carefully prepared.

When the coast was clear I took these to the trysting-place—our Summer-house—where Harold was already waiting with his boxing-gloves, ball and bag of marbles. I eyed his impedimenta with the coldness other young ladies feel under similar circumstances—"What do we want of those, Harold? I can't box."

"Of course, you can't box, Lily; who said you could?" he replied, briskly turning over my doll's things—until I exclaimed, "You're musing her party dress all up!" goading him into retorting, "Well, what do you want those things for? I can't play with dolls."

"Oh, Harold, you do!"

"Not after this. People don't play with dolls when they're married—the gentleman is always a railroad

president, or something like that—I cut him short in dismay—"Ain't you goin' to play dolls with me any more—never?"

"Well—sometimes—maybe."

"Then that's what I'm takin' 'em for—for sometimes."

He handed his things to me—"You put 'em where you think they better go, Lily * * * An' look here what I got—I sneaked that for you, Lily."

It was a chocolate éclair, enfolded in newspapers. I was filled with joy.

"But look here," cried I, opening the hat compartment in the tray, "I sneaked that for you," and with pride I lifted out a tartine and held it under his nose.

Now a tartine is a slice of bread with a thick, thick spread of jam—to be a really, truly tartine, the jam should be thicker than the bread, much; and I explained how I had first sneaked the bread, and later, when all the house was snoring, had gone in my nightie to the pantry and sneaked the jam. "Take a little lick, Harold, 'n' see if it ain't good."

Harold licked and said, "Yum! You take a lick, Lily; it's good."

So I took a lick and he another; and I burst out, "Oh, Harold!—we're eating it all up!—an' I wanted to save it till we started!"

With that he piled the provisions into the tray—tartine and all—slapped down the lid and shouted "Now we're off!"

He was; I ran after, dragging Florida by an arm and hugging the tin kitchen. When I caught up with him at the hole in the hedge, we tried to put the kitchen into the trunk but it wouldn't go.

"Let's leave it," I suggested, "an' come back for it when we're married."

Harold's wisdom prevailed with this counsel—"If we don't get to your grandmama's to-night, we'll need it to cook our supper with. * * * You won't have to carry it, Lily—I see how I can fix it." He put a string through two holes in the back and hung the object round his neck.

And thus we crept away to embark in matrimony, he, dear, chivalrous little soul, carrying our trunk, our kitchen on his breast.

We trudged along silently—it was a solemn step, now that we were really off. Harold held my hand and we changed as the trunk grew heavy. We had still to solve the weighty problem in arithmetic: could we buy a ticket all the way for twenty cents; and if we couldn't, could we buy one nearly all the way and then get out and walk the rest?

When we were still a mile from the station, a dog-cart came spinning along.

"Why, it's Daddy!" I cried, with a sinking of the heart that not even Harold's squeezing hand could save.

Daddy half started to jump out, but suddenly sat back and said:

"You have really decided to do it?"

"Yes, sir, we have," Harold answered; and stood changing the trunk from one hand to the other.

"Well, I wish you all kinds of happiness and good luck," said Daddy. "You're on your way to the station?"

Harold said, "Yes, sir."

Then Daddy said, "Well—I mustn't keep you waiting—you're wanting to be off on your trip," and he threw us a kiss.

A big hollow seemed to swell in my side as he disappeared. I believe most brides feel that way for a few minutes; it's the grief where the Old ends and the New hasn't begun.

Harold looked ahead and swallowed hard. "Come, Lily," he said. "We'd better go, Lily." And slowly, slowly, I followed toward the setting sun.

There was a clatter of hoofs behind. Turning, I cried, "Why, it's Daddy!"

This time Daddy jumped down and I cuddled to him close. He said, very seriously, "I thought I'd have to see you both again before you went off for good—though you'll bring Lily back to visit us, won't you, Harold?"

"Oh, yes, sir—of course, sir. We're not going far—only to—"

"Grandmama's to live," I said.

"So that's it? * * * You must let her come often, Harold, if you're so near."

"Of course, sir. I'll let her come often as she wants to—I'll let Lily do whatever she wants to, long's she's having a good time."

Daddy put his hand on Harold's shoulder. "You're a bally little chap," he said; "and there isn't any one in the world I'd trust her to sooner than to yourself—not any one."

"Isn't there?" asked Harold, straightening up. "I'm so glad, sir," and he changed the trunk from one hand to the other. Daddy stooped, took the trunk and put it in the front of the dog-cart.

"Let it stay there till we're done talking. * * * Harold, I mean it—as man to man—there isn't any one one I'd rather trust Lily to; but isn't this rather sudden?"



We looked at each other, but Harold answered, "I've wanted to marry Lily for ever 'n' ever so long—haven't I, Lily?—'n' haven't you, Lily?"

"Yes, Harold."

"I knew it must be that way for you," said Daddy. "But for me, now—perhaps you hadn't thought of that?—for me it's so awfully sudden, you know."

"Is it?" asked Harold.

"Isn't it, though!—and to lose you both at one fell swoop—for you won't be coming over any more to see us every day, the way you used, and I'll miss our talks and things * * * and Lily gone and the house so quiet; whatever I'll do I don't know—I just don't know—don't know—"

and he looked away over our heads. I stared at Harold and up at Daddy; Harold looked down at the dust he was pushing into ripples with his toe.

"It's hard on a man, isn't it?—I put it to you, Harold," went on Daddy, "to lose his little girl all at once, with no time to think it over and get used to it?"

"It must be," said Harold, manfully; while I got choky, thinking of poor Daddy losing both that way all in a minute, and I squeezed Daddy's hand as hard as ever I could, and Harold's hand as hard as ever I could, and somehow, Daddy had both Harold's hand and mine together in his.

"Couldn't you give an old man a little more time?" Daddy asked, "just to get accustomed to the separation, just for the sake of our friendship, you know, that goes back to the first time we met? Couldn't you bring Lily home to supper at our house to-night?"

Our eyes said "yes" and "no." Then Harold spoke out, "You see, sir, I would—for you, 'cos you know how I feel about Lily—but they all tease her so, Edward teases her most of anything—an' she can't stand it any more, an' I can't stand it—not any more—so we're going away to live—"

Daddy answered quickly. "Neither can I stand it any more, Harold. I'm not going to have you and Lily teased into eloping and driven out of house and home. If they can't stop it—I've told the others, too, so you needn't be afraid of them—we'll elope all three together—you and Lily and I—and go on a honeymoon by ourselves, while I show you what a good time really is."

"Oh, Harold—oh, Harold!" I screamed. "Won't that be lovely?"

"Yes, Lily, if you like it, it will * * * I better take you home right now, Lily."

And Daddy—lifted his hat to Harold! "I thank you, Harold," he said, "and I'm proud of you—proud to have you for a friend." The next minute they were shaking hands, and before I got over the surprise of it all, we were tearing along in the dog-cart with clouds of dust, Daddy's arm about us both.



AND THUS WE CREPT AWAY TO EMBARK IN MATRIMONY.

till an arm slipped round me and Harold's voice said, "Oh, Lily! Are you cryin', Lily? Please don't cry! What are you cryin' for, Lily?"

I went: "Ump-ump-ump—I'm cryin' 'cos you won't live 'ith my grandmama when we're married."

He squeezed my little hand—"Oh, Lily, if you'll only stop cryin', why, Lily—I will!"

Our lovers' quarrel—the only one we ever had—ended by my crying more on his shoulder—to show him how nearly he had lost me as his bride; then I coyly allowed myself to be cheered with plans for our honeymoon at my grandmama's.

THE OWLS' SCHOOL

By GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

LITTLE Patricia Randolph was laboriously teaching America her letters.

Most of the house-servants on the Randolph plantation were taught to read and write, and Patty had begun early with this young nurse girl, brought to the great house to play with them while Aunt Jinsey was busy with the new baby brother.

"I mighty glad you ain't de same kind o' teacher dat Mr. Owl was, when he teach school," America observed, finally with a significant smile.

Pate and Isabel had been sitting still much longer than they liked. "Is it a tale?" the little boy asked.

"If it's a tale, tell it to us, Meriky. We don't want to hear any more old A B C's."

Perhaps America herself was of that mind. Anyhow, she pushed aside the primer, and they all settled themselves on the gallery steps to listen, as she began:

"You know dat Mr. Owl is 'mos' blind in de daytime. He 'bleege to git out in de night to hunt his rations, 'case he can't sca'ce'ly see when de sun shine. But most folks ain't know how come dis. Hit come in dis-er-way. De big barn owl mighty pore, an' he have a mighty hard time to git along. One day he say to he little brother, de squinch owl, dat he gwine have him a school."

"I gwine an' git me a yaller leaf to write on an' a stick to write on hit wid, an' some stump-water for de ink," he say. "An' I gwine have me a school, for to teach—er, um—let-me see, what kind o' little young critters? Aw, yaas, I'll dest teach little doves."

"'Huh, say de little swivelly squinch owl, 'I don't see how dat gwine hep you out none."

"De big owl laugh way down in he froat. 'Hoo! Hoo!—Ha! Ha!' he say. 'You watch me—an' wait. When I gits a nice bunch o' dem young, tender doves on a limb in front o' me, I ain't gwine go hungry.'"

"Den both dem owls laugh an' hoot like dey crazy. So Mr. Barn Owl send out de runners to run, an' de fliers to fly, an' de crawlers to crawl, an' tell every-



"NO, HIT AIN'T Q-DAT'S B, SAY MR. OWL."

body dat he gwine keep school for doves. Mr. and Miz Dove mighty proud to have a school to send dey young-uns to. Yit, dis school business plumb new to 'em, ye know, an' dey natchally mighty skeered o' de whole tribe-an' nation o' owls; an' so, dest dat fast day, dey hang 'bout behind de bushes to see how dey chillen gwine git on at a school what him teach by a owl.

"Mr. Owl he natch de yaller leaf up on a limb wid a

big honey-locus' thorn. Den he make a big A, up on de yaller leaf. 'What dat?' he ax dem little doves, dest like Miss Patty ax me." America stole a humorous sidelong glance at her small mistress, and all the children laughed.

"'Coo—coo!' say all de little doves at once. Dat dove talk, an' de onliest word dey knows."

"Mr. Owl let on like he mighty mad. 'No!' he holler; 'No! dat not Q—hit's A!'"

"Den he make anodder letter on de yaller leaf, an' ax agin:

"'What dat?'"

"De little doves powerful skeered by now. Dey hunch all up togedder on de limb, an' shake like dey cold. Dey mighty skeered o' Mr. Owl's big shippy eyes. Dey voices trim'le when dey tries to talk. 'Coo—!' dey say, 'Coo—oo! coo—ooo!'"

"'No, hit ain't Q—dat's B,' say Mr. Owl.

"'Hi! don't look like a bee,' say de oldest little dove boy. 'A bee have wings, an' our mammy say dat a bee have a stinger. She say we mustn't eat 'em, 'case dey'll sting us an' hurt us ef we do.'"

"Mr. Owl mighty hongry; an' when dat dove boy talk 'bout eatin' hit dest make him wild. He holler so dat Mr. and Miz Dove, behind de bushes, git closer to dey chillen.

"'HR's time to eat,' old Mr. Owl holler.

"'But we didn't bring no snack,' say de dove chillen. 'May we go home an' git somepin' to eat, now, please, suh, Teacher?'"

"Mr. Owl grin mighty fierce. He snap he beak.

"'Oh, yes, you is,' he say. 'You is bring somepin' for me to eat. An' I gwine to eat you every—one—up! Dat what I gwine to do.'"

"By dat, he lep at de little doves. Dem go, skeered, trim'in dove chillen holler an' flip an' flutter; an' Mr. and Miz Dove wif in. Dey peck dat owl in de

eye so fierce dat he ain't never been able to find his way 'bout in de daytime since.

"More dan dat, he never got no doves to eat, an' he show by dem doin's dest what he is. Mr. an' Miz Dove tell hit on him, an' hit git out all over de Big Woods, tell dey ain't nary critter pore an' hongry enough to sen' dey chillen to he school.



"I GWINE AN' GIT ME A YALLER LEAF TO WRITE ON."

"Hit come down tell in dese days an' times he glad enough to sneak out in de night-time wen he do an' hetch him up a stray mouse."