

PUPPY LOVE: AN ADVENTURE IN HOLDING HANDS

By EDWIN L. SABIN

*Oh, puppy love! Oh, puppy love!
Oh, sappy hearts, that touch!
When things that mean so little
Seem things that mean so much!*

AROUND about, the whippoorwills had resumed their nightly cadence; over the grass the fire flies were going their mystic way, while already spellbound, the river lay dusky and still. The west was faintly pink from the departed sun, the east was faintly golden from the arriving moon, and the mid-heaven between was a faintly spangled blue. The air was mild and sweet, languorous with all lingering memories of a summer day. A subtle fragrance floated now here, now there, telling of great peonies drooping and drowsy, of musky petunias sighing for the hawk-moth's kiss, of modest mignonette dreaming of the bee, of a host of sweet peas unfolding to be plucked.

It was the hour for lovers—for hand-



BEULAH.

in-hand and eye-in-eye; for the replighting of truth but yesterday-given, and for the breathing of vows as yet unspoken.

Amidst this, the glamorous aftermath of a day in June, the village rested, its people relaxed for peace.

On the front walk of the Emerson cottage, half-way betwixt porch and gate, four figures stood for a moment hesitant; then they paired, one couple (the elder) proceeding through the gate, the other (the younger) proceeding across the lawn.

"You'd better sit in Grandpa Emerson's chair, kid," called back the man from the gateway. "That hammock looks very weak."

"We'll hurry back, Beulah," informed in her turn, his companion serenely—so serenely that one could with difficulty detect the sly banter in her tones.

They laughed wisely, as those whose thoughts are in accord; the man passed his arm through hers, drawing her closer, and, step matched with step, they paced away down the gloaming path outside the pickets.

Beulah, seventeen and just out of the high school, and Harold, eighteen and a "prep," graduate, standing, surveyed the new hammock, hanging unoccupied and inviting, in the musky dimness beneath the apple tree.

"Shall I get in first," asked Harold—"to test it?"

"No; I was in it this afternoon, and

it seemed strong. But you bring out a chair, if you're afraid."

"Oh, I'm not afraid on my account!" he assured bravely. "It ought to hold two people."

"Of course!" asserted Beulah, with a little toss of the head. "Please steady it for me." She slipped in, and, with feminine aptitude, was adjusted at once, presenting to him a bewildering medley of soft, white dimity, black hair and arched brows. "Now," she directed, looking up at him and thereby displaying a pair of violet eyes, "you may come."

Harold diffidently obeyed.

"No; from the other side would be better, wouldn't it?" she volunteered. "Dear me! Why are men so funny in a hammock! They are either all in or all out. Are you comfortable? You can't be!"

"I'm fine," he declared. "Are you comfortable?"

"Grand—as long as you don't move and make me slide. It's the same way with couch-pillows," she continued with sage raillery. "A girl will take one pillow and put it behind her, and it's exactly right; but a man will use every pillow in the whole house, and then he won't be fixed! He'll look all bolstered like an invalid, or else on the edge of a precipice, and expecting every minute to tumble off."

"I know it," admitted Harold meekly. "Where's your grandfather to-night?"

"Grandfather is discussing crops with old Mr. Maxley. Neither of them ever did one stroke of farming, but to listen you would never suspect it."

"I was going to wear my ducks," remarked Harold, apropos of nothing whatsoever that had yet been said. "All the fellows at school wear them," he added. "I adore men in ducks."

"I'll skip and change, then. Shall I?" "Of course not, silly! I mean, I adore ducks on men. They look so starchy and military in them—the men do; don't they. What do you suppose Ford and Helen are talking about?"

"Perhaps they aren't talking. I've seen them, honestly, sit by the hour and not say a word; just happy and eying each other."

"Yes," mused Beulah, dreamily, gazing into the round, yellow moon now up-floating as if released from the farther bank of the river before them. "I suppose that's the way with two persons who love each other and know that they love each other. They can talk without speaking. It must be splendid."

"I wonder when they'll be married."

"In the fall, I guess. I hope so. I've always wanted a brother—and Ford's perfectly grand."

"And I've always wanted a sister."

"Well, Helen's a lovely sister, you'll find," assured Beulah, still dreamily. A figure entered the gate. "There's grandfather," she announced. "You go and tell him where we are, and have him bring his chair out, if he'd like to."

"It's pretty damp for him here, isn't it?" suggested Harold, evincing a desire to parley over the matter. "He'll get the rheumatism."

"He never has rheumatism, and he's eighty years old. Isn't that wonderful? Go and tell him, please; or else I will."

"Well," assented Harold, shuffling reluctantly. "But he ought not to risk it."

"He ought to be told, though, anyway," insisted Beulah. "Really, he ought."

"All right," assented her companion in an injured tone, shifting farther. "But like enough he'll make you sit on the porch, then."

"Maybe. It is damp out here," agreed Beulah readily.

Harold straightened, with a great show

of preparing to spring to the ground; his hand, slipping along the netting within, encountered something soft and warm and charged with electricity. It was another hand—but not his other hand; no. It did not move, and seemed quite insensible to the proximity of a stranger hand. Harold's hand remained very still, daring to move not so much as a finger lest it should frighten the new-found playmate away.

"Aw, no! He saw us; he must have," protested Harold huskily, sinking back. "He'll come, or he'll call you, if he wants to."

"Maybe he will," agreed Beulah, just as readily as before.

"It's—a—beautiful—night, isn't it?"



HAROLD.

faltered Harold, striving to be matter-of-fact and collected, and not to indicate by his voice the whereabouts of his hand. But his voice sounded to him make-shift and self-conscious.

"Perfectly divine!" exclaimed Beulah. From afar down the river reached their ears the mellow exhaust of a steamer.

"There comes a boat," informed Harold, maintaining the conversation.

His hand had been turning, gently, so as not to be noticed, and, in an unobtrusive way, closed over the other hand—over the little, velvety, innocent of a hand.

"So it does," murmured Beulah abstractedly.

"I've never been up the Ohio on a river-boat; have you?" pursued Harold, his hand gathering in the little, soft, velvety hand, inch by inch.

"No—yes; I mean, I went to New York once," responded Beulah absent-mindedly.

The little, warm, velvety hand betrayed a disposition to go away.

"But that isn't on the Ohio," corrected Harold.

His hand endeavoured to restrain the other hand; still unobtrusively, but persistively.

"I know it. It's on the Hudson," replied Beulah. "What—what was it you asked me?"

"I said I'd never been up the Ohio on a river-boat," explained Harold.

"Oh, I have, loads of times; I've lived here all my life, you know."

The little, soft, warm, velvety, innocent of a hand was struggling and protesting, and the larger hand was pleading with it.

"Oh—a—steamer?" hazarded Harold faintly.

"No; I walked on the ice, winters, and swam, summers," she rebuked briskly. "And when you're through with my hand I should like to use it."

"Oh!" said Harold, with assumed jocularity. "Is that your hand?"

His own relaxed slightly, and the other quietly withdrew. He did not dare retain it, and presently it emerged from between them and fluttered about Beulah's hair.

"I suppose a brother has a right to touch his sister's hand," he proffered, feeling it incumbent upon him to be nettled. "And I'm your brother, too—about."

"Why—yes, if he wants to," mused Beulah. "But brothers don't usually care to, do they?"

"I don't know. Being a brother to a sister is something new to me," he confessed. "But I should think they would," he added hopefully.

"Other girls' brothers are all I've had experience with," she vouchsafed slowly. "Some of them did seem to have got in the habit, though."

"And other fellows' sisters are the only ones I've had," responded Harold. "It didn't seem to be anything very out-of-the-way with some of them, either."

"Didn't it?" murmured Beulah abstractedly.

The little hand had tucked in a hair-pin or two, and had dropped to a very insecure position at the edge of her lap. Thence, it slid, apparently unmoted by her, down in between them, about where it had been before. Harold's hand promptly found it.

"What steamer was it?" queried Harold.

"Where?" she asked.

"The one you went to—the one you went up on," he stammered. Oh, that delicious, warm, vivifying little hand! There were so many fascinating ways to hold it, and each was better than the preceding.

"It—was—I—don't—know," murmured Beulah vacantly, staring hard into the moon.

"I've never been up the Ohio," announced Harold mechanically.

"I—haven't—either," she faltered. "Have you?"

"No, I don't believe I ever have," he replied huskily, trying hard to focus upon the topic.

"When was it, you say?" he asked—his fingers and his brain strangely affected in sympathy.

"When was what?" she returned faintly.

"When—you—went—up."

"I—don't—know," she mused. "Do you?"

"No—no," he uttered, grappling with the problem.

"There come Ford and Helen!" exclaimed Beulah abruptly; with a tiny pressure her hand fled.

"They don't want us," he averred, blindly groping for it.

"Oh, I'm sure they do!" she declared confidently. "I'll beat you—!" And whisking from the hammock she sped, a dainty vision, through the moonlight, leaving hammock singularly cold and empty, and moon muzzling.

Bewildered, resentful, somewhat giddy, Harold slothfully tumbled out and followed.

Senator Dubois has a new cook. People keeping house in Washington always have new cooks. This particular Dubois cook came claiming that she could do anything, and Mrs. Dubois intimated on the first day that they would have some macaroni for dinner.

"What's that?" asked the cook.

Mrs. Dubois took her to the pantry and showed her the macaroni. "Do you mean to say you don't know what this is?" Mrs. Dubois asked.

"Oh, yes, 'dud I do, missus," the cook replied. "Only in the las' place I worked they lighted the gas with them things."—New York World.