

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone.
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"You know, Polly," she stammered, "how it is between Mr. MacKenzie and me. I can make him do anything I say. Oh, if I were free from Oscar Bennett!"

"Then you could marry Old Marc, huh?" Polly interposed with a bob of the chestnut curls, "an' boss him, I bet."

"Something like that, Polly," Evelyn admitted. "That's why I've come to you. When I'm free, I can make Mr. MacKenzie let up on your people."

Anxiously weighing every word, Polly's quick mind ran on ahead.

"An' to do that," she threw in, "you got to get shut of Oscar! I don't blame you for wantin' to, but how be you goin' to work it, Miss Eve? I can't see no help for the squatters if your marryin' Old Marc's part of it."

"That's what I'm trying to tell you, Polly," was the quick retort, "but I want your promise. You help me, and I'll help you and your people. Oscar says he'll free me if—if—you'll marry him."

For an instant Polly's head whirled as if it had been suddenly struck and over her came a weight almost unbearable. Then slowly she shook her curly head.

"I couldn't do that, ma'am," she choked. "I just couldn't."

"But you said you would," retorted Evelyn sharply. "You must. I can save the squatters, and I will; but only on condition that you help me get rid of Oscar Bennett. Mr. MacKenzie is going to buy the Bennett farm, an'—"

"An' Oscar'll be goin' away somewhere else?" put in Polly. "Is that it? He'd take me away from Daddy Hopkins an' from—"

She caught herself just in time. She had it on the tip of her tongue to add the name of Robert Percival, but of course she did not.

"I couldn't ever do that," she ended. "Never, never!"

The blue eyes looked into the brown eyes seriously.

"Oh, yes, you can," insisted Miss Robertson. "Oscar's not the worst in the world, and he'll have a lot of money when he leaves Ithaca. He loves you, Polly, and he'd make life easy and pleasant for you."

A thoughtful moment or two passed, while Polly Hopkins gazed at her hands locked together in her lap.

"You can't tell me nothin' about Oscar," she remarked at length. "I know the dirty duffer, an' I don't know nothin' good about him, you can bet your boots on that." She paused while through the open doorway her eyes were fixed upon a fleecy cloud, high up in the deep blue sky. "But that don't make no difference," she continued. "If I linked up with Oscar, would that pup, Old Marc, let the squatters stay in the Silent City?"

"Why, Polly, dear, of course he will! I talked with Oscar last night, and I'll speak to Mr. MacKenzie just as soon as you promise to do what Oscar wants."

Again the smiling face of Robert Percival cut across Polly Hopkins' mental vision, and through the silence of the shanty she heard his voice—deep, low and like music. Then the evil face of Bennett wormed itself into her mind. Her lids drooped, and she shuddered.

"I couldn't do it, ma'am," she wailed. "I just couldn't do that!"

Evelyn arose and stood over her.

"You must, Polly," she asserted again. "Good heavens, it's the chance of your life! Of course you'd do it, Polly Hopkins. Take a little time to think it over. I'll bring Oscar to see you some day when Mr. MacKenzie and my cousin Robert are away."

At the sound of that beloved name, Polly's head fell forward.

"Scout now," she said, her curls hiding her face. "I'll think about it."

After Evelyn had gone, Polly mechanically resumed her sewing. It seemed that her heart's joy had wholly died within her. Patiently she tried to turn her attention to the work in her hands, but again and again she caught herself sitting with idle fingers.

Finally, worried by the conflicting emotions that were crowding in upon her, Polly flung herself into the open and ran swiftly along the ragged rocks to a little glen where many a time she had been before. Here she waded through the brook and sank down beside it. Mind-picture after mind-picture passed before her. She saw Daddy Hopkins happy with Jerry in the shanty, no longer afraid to fish and hunt. Then she visioned the Silent City, safe at last, and saved by her. Her head sank into her hands; and sobs racked her slender body.

But it was not long before she sat up and tossed back her curls. It seemed as if she had heard a voice. She turned her head slowly; and lo, Robert Percival was standing across the creek, smiling at her.

"I followed you, Polly Hopkins," he called, and springing across the water,

he added: "You ran so fast 't' you got at the corner of the ragged rocks, and it's taken me all this time to find you."

He sat down beside her and took her hands; but Polly could not look up at him. Embarrassed beyond utterance, she withdrew her fingers, letting them fall listlessly. Robert laughed. Her lovely face, first white then scarlet, only told him that she was glad to see him, and spoke of girlish innocence, dear to all men.

"You went away so suddenly the other night," he ran on. "I didn't have a chance to say half I wanted to. I had something for you, too, but couldn't get away until today to bring it down."

He pulled a little roll of paper from his pocket and handed it to her. Wonderingly she opened it, and there was an exact reproduction of "The Greatest Mother in the World."

Polly was so overcome she continued silent.

"Don't you like it, little Pollyop?" queried Robert, putting his fingers under her chin and raising her face to his.

"Yes?" she whispered, blushing. "Sure, sure I do. I love it."

"Then why don't you smile?" he demanded; and as she shyly complied with his request, he ran on: "I've talked with MacKenzie, and he's so set— Confound it! He makes me so hot I can scarcely listen to him. But, Polly dear, I'll do everything I can. I've got money and friends, as well as he has, and I'll use 'em too. Will you trust me, sweet?"

She bowed her head in grateful assent. How she thrilled at the touch of the warm, white hand!

"Look at me, dearie," he begged, and when she did flash him a rosy glance, he caught her to him. "I love you, little girl," he whispered.

"An' love's the greatest thing in Ithaca, ain't it?" she murmured in trembling confusion.

"Yes, yes," he breathed. "Little girl—oh, my littlest dear—"

His voice trailed away, and his passionate kisses made Polly Hopkins forget everything but him. Primeval passion rose within her. She had found her man, and nothing should take him from her.

Then while Robert was telling her of his hopes and plans, rehearsing his love for her and his desire to help her read and study, they walked slowly back along the ragged rocks in the direction of the shanty.

They were almost at Polly's home before he left her. She watched him stride up the hill, and, after he had disappeared, she threw herself flat upon the earth; and mingled with the bird's song in the willow trees, and the rippling of the waves upon the shore, came her cry:

"Oh, God, dear, I can't marry Oscar, I can't! You'll have to help the squatters some other way, darlin'!"

The days that followed, bringing with the spring flowers flocks of summer birds, seemed an eternity to Polly Hopkins. She went about her duties as one in a dream. In spite of Robert's efforts, several of the fishermen had been sent to the Ithaca jail for petty crimes.

Two men had been trapped in the Bad Man's ravine and taken off to the jail without so much as a farewell to their families. Polly had groaned with their women and wept over their babies. She was quite sure Percival was doing everything anybody could do; but sometimes the thought of Evelyn's demand intruded on her mind, and she wondered if she were doing right in refusing it.

One morning at daybreak Polly saw her father lift his gun from the wall and sit down to clean it. Now, why was he doing that, when he knew very well he could not use it? She stood looking down upon him, her heart beating rapidly.

"You ain't goin' to hunt yet, honey," she protested, squatting down beside him.

"Yep," returned Hopkins glancing up. "There ain't no one astir so early, an' I'll bring back something, mebbe a woodchuck or a skunk. We ain't had enough to keep a mess of flies alive since Old Marc got back."

That was true! No one knew better than Pollyop how they had missed the little she had received from Bennett. Sick at heart, she snatched at his hand.

"We might best be without grub, Daddy," she said passionately. "Aw! Don't start rubbin' it up agin! You'll get pinched, if you hunt out of season, no matter what you shoot. For less than carryin' a gun, Old Marc's got a bunch of our men. You shan't do it, Daddy. You shan't, I say!"

If only she could persuade him not to hunt until Robert had come to an understanding with MacKenzie. If he didn't succeed—then she knew another way.

"Mebbe in a little while you can hunt all you like, Daddy," she ven-

tured softly.
"What do you mean by that, brat?" asked Jeremiah, centering his keen eyes upon her.
She leaned forward and slipped both arms about his big waist.
"I don't want you to go today, Daddy," she returned noncommittally. "Why don't you just stay at home, an'—"



"Nope, I'm goin'," interrupted Hopkins.

"I'll be back before any of Old Marc's spies turn over for another nap," Polly knew her father well enough not to make another appeal. She dressed Wee Jerry at Jeremiah's command, and then, troubled in spirit, watched him stride away in the keen morning air.

It had been decided among the squatter men that to keep the breath of life in their women and children they must hunt and fish, but that nothing should be caught that the law forbade. It was this thought that was running through the squatter's mind as he crept up to see if a woodchuck had ventured out. One was sitting up, taking a survey of the neighborhood, when Hopkins lifted his gun; and with one sharp crack and a bech of smoke the furry fellow tumbled over.

The squatter strode forward and was in the act of picking it up when three men appeared as if they had sprung from the earth and with raised pistols closed in upon him.

Jeremiah's huge jaw dropped at the sight of them, and Wee Jerry's fingers caught tight hold of his shaggy hair.

"Drop that gun," cried one man, and the still smoking rifle fell to the earth. It took but a moment to snap a pair of handcuffs about the dazed man's wrists. It was while Jeremiah's face was turned upward to quiet the screaming Jerry that one of the men quickly substituted a dead squirrel, and another went away with the dead woodchuck. Then the third slipped a chain around one of Daddy's wrists and led him down the hill to the ragged rocks, the child still clinging to his neck.

Polly was standing under a willow tree as her eyes caught sight of Daddy Hopkins and Wee Jerry between two men. One of them strode along, a little dead body dangling from one hand, while held in the other hand was her father's gun. She ran toward them, giving spasmodic cries of dismay.

"Daddy!" she screamed.

No answer came from the blinking squatter.

"We caught him with the goods on," one man sneered at her.

"But you're goin' to leave him with me," she shrilled, making her appeal to the man who stood close to Jeremiah. "Daddy'll promise not to hunt no more, won't you, honey? Oh, God! You said you wouldn't shoot nothin' the law said you couldn't."

"I didn't, brat," grunted Hopkins.

Then his eye caught sight of the squirrel, and his jaw dropped. A hoarse groan fell from him.

"I didn't shoot no squirrel, Polly," he cried out to her. "I got that big chunk I were tellin' you about." Then, turning glaring, fury-filled eyes on the man who had sneered at the girl, he continued, "You planted that d—n little critter on me, mister. I never shot him."

Pollyop's lids widened in terror. She lifted one hand and caught the child's shoulder.

"Jerry, baby," she cried madly, "you was there! Tell Pollyop what Daddy shot!"

"Sure I was there," he sobbed, drawing his sleeve across his face. "Twas a big woodchuck settin' up by his hole, an' my Daddy Hopkins—"

The officer who had the squirrel in his hand, put it into his pocket and seized the child by the arm and shook him.

"Here, kid," he shouted, "none of your lip. You've been set up to tell that lie."

The man's aspect was so threatening that Wee Jerry broke off his words and, grasping Daddy's bushy head tightly, smothered his sobs in his hair. Jeremiah Hopkins made a motion toward the speaker, but a sharp twist on the chain around his wrist checked him.

"You see, brat," he groaned, "they've framed me right."

CLEVELAND LIFTS BOXING LID SOON

Drastic Reforms In Conduct of Ring Game To Be Enforced, Says Mayor.

CLEVELAND, APRIL 15.—Cleveland may regain its title as one of the premier professional fight cities of America.

The professional lid is expected to be tilted here late this month, or early in May.

But when Mayor Fred Kohler prides off the lid, professional boxing is going to be conducted along vastly different lines than heretofore. That's his word, and that's the instruction he gave to the newly-created boxing commission, which has charge of all fights here.

Boxing, both amateur and professional, was banned in Cleveland by Mayor Kohler shortly after he took office in January. His action largely resulted from the unpleasant charges arising out of the Frush-Kilbane and Downey-Wilson scraps last fall.

Polly grasped the situation in an instant. She knew the planting system had been practiced on the squatters before. At last the law had her best beloved.

"Daddy never killed that squirrel," she raved. "He didn't; an' you d—n duffers know he didn't. You can't get by with nothin' like that. It's crooked! Here, you—you—you gimme my daddy!"

Like a wildcat unloosed upon them, Polly flew first at one, then at the other. She bit at them, tore at their clothes and kicked out with her strong, bare feet; but it was like a small force attacking a mighty mountain.

Strong hands pinioned her arms, and while she stood raging at them, she saw Wee Jerry snatched from his father's shoulders and set on the ground. Then they led Daddy Hopkins away.

Dazed for a moment, Polly stood shaking from head to foot. Grasping Jerry by the hand, she ran swiftly after them, crying out in despair that Daddy must go home with her and the baby.

At the lane Hopkins turned and spoke to her.

"Brat," he choked, swallowing hard, "kiss your daddy, an' let me smack Wee Jerry too. Go on home. I'll be comin' back after a bit. Tell Larry they got me, an' that I said for him to look after you an' the kid!"

With her arms about his neck she gave the promise squatter women make their men when the majesty of the law steps into the Silent City.

"I'll keep the baby an' the shanty till you get back, Daddy darlin'," she sobbed. "Give your girl-brat kisses, an'—here's Wee Jerry!"

Even the officer who had the squirrel turned his head as the girl clung to the big squatter.

Afraid to lead their prisoner through the Silent City, the deputies marched him up the lane toward the railroad tracks. As they turned into the boulevard, Hopkins looked back down the hill. Pollyop was still in the road, and Wee Jerry was in her arms, his face pressed against her neck.

(To Be Continued.)

Synopsis of the Annual Statement of the NORTHWESTERN NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Amount of capital stock paid up	\$ 9,886,824.67
Total premium income for the year	\$ 3,988,424.56
Interest, dividends and rents received during the year	551,508.81
Income from other sources received during the year	13,939.78
Total income	\$ 4,553,682.95
Disbursements	
Paid for losses, endorsements, annuities and surrender values	\$ 999,313.39
Dividends paid to policyholders during the year	401,604.22
Dividends paid on capital stock during the year	0—
Commissions and salaries paid during the year	963,237.57
Taxes, licenses and fees paid during the year	194,412.84
Amount of all other expenditures	295,196.09
Total disbursements	\$ 2,853,764.11
Assets	
Value of real estate owned (market value)	\$ 72,418.05
Value of stocks and bonds owned (market or amortized value)	858,762.49
Loans on mortgages and collateral, etc.	8,211,902.09
Premium notes and policy loans	2,807,192.48
Cash in banks and on hand	888,547.93
Net uncollected and deferred premiums	550,278.23
Interest and rents due and accrued	316,075.65
Other assets (net)	65,957.82
Total admitted assets	\$12,450,924.65
Net reserves, liabilities	\$10,435,015.00
Gross claims for losses unpaid	71,464.34
All other liabilities	1,044,445.31
Total liabilities, exclusive of capital stock	\$12,450,924.65

BUSINESS IN OREGON FOR THE YEAR
Gross premiums received during the year: 23,940,488
Premiums and dividends returned during the year: 120,251
Losses paid during the year: 10,912,490

NORTHWESTERN NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
President, JOHN T. BAXTER, Secretary, M. V. JENNENS,
State resident attorney for service, M. V. JENNENS.
Approved and filed, April 10, 1922, A. C. BARBER, insurance commissioner.

SPIES ON LOVERS, JUDGE PENALIZES

LONDON, April 15.—Sidney Norburn, 59, went to a department store and bought himself a pair of binoculars, with night lenses. He appeared next day before the Middlesex county magistrates for watching the lovers on the seats in Hyde park through his new purchase. Norburn offered a plea of "idle curiosity." The magistrate offered Norburn the choice of a \$10 fine or a week in jail.



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