

Storm Country

Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone.

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CHAPTER XII

Midsommer was full upon them; and still Pollyop and Jerry held to their lonely tenure of the hut. A few heart-broken letters had reached the squatter girl from Auburn, and she had painstakingly answered them. Yet in spite of the daily predictions of the squatter folks that Old Marc would shortly begin again to harass them, Polly was happier. She could not have explained, if she had been asked, why the agony of doubt had given place to a warmer glow about her heart when she thought of Daddy Hopkins. Away off up there in the gloom of the prison, he had received a mother's benediction; Polly believed this with all her soul. Jerry and she too had come in for their share; and this new confidence lifted the shadow from her eyes a little and lessened the stabbing hurt in her side.

The thing that tormented her most was Jerry's constant mourning for his father. Day by day she had racked her brains for ways to amuse him, but as soon as the novelty of the play had worn off, the old-time cry would begin:

"Want to play horse wif my Daddy Hopkins! Wee Jerry wants Daddy Hopkins!"

She was looking at him one morning after one of his spells of weeping, and wistfully considering if there might be a way to hurry him off to Auburn for a day, when Evelyn Robertson suddenly appeared in the shanty door.

For a long time Evelyn's conscience had made her uncomfortable. Even though her days were exceedingly busy, the remembrance of the squatter girl's piteous pleading face tormented her, and she was fearful Pollyop might not keep the promise she had made, and Marcus MacKenzie would be lost forever.

So astounded was Polly Hopkins to see the girl that she neglected to ask her in. Overlooking this, Miss Robertson stepped into the room in embarrassment.

"Pollyop," she began, catching her breath, "I just had to speak to you. I'm going to be married to Mr. MacKenzie, and I came to talk to you about it—and to bring the baby some candy."

Her expression grave with surprise, Polly scrutinized her coldly.

"Jerry'd rather have his Daddy Hopkins than candy," she retorted, frowning.

Miss Robertson drew back a little, shaking her head.

"I couldn't manage that, I'm afraid," she said soberly, "but—"

Pollyop shifted uneasily.

"Mebbe you could get Old Marc to say I could take Jerry to Auburn, then?" she ventured. "Jerry'd die if he don't see his daddy. He's gettin' thinner an' thinner every day. He's been yellin' like mad all mornin'."

Evelyn pondered on this an instant.

"Yes, I could do that, I'm sure," she answered, smiling broadly. "I'd love to do it, too."

The forlorn droop at the corners of Polly's mouth disappeared.

"Mebbe, if I could get something to wear—" she hesitated.

It had never occurred to Miss Robertson how Pollyop managed for clothing. She had so much herself she was blind to another's need; but, as she had come to demand a favor, then perhaps she had better offer as much as she could.

"Polly," she ejaculated, "you've been awfully good to me, and you can have any one of my dresses you want, and keep it too. And I'll persuade Mr. MacKenzie to get you a permit to go to Auburn."

Polly felt her heart grow big. Then, after all, she could take Wee Jerry to his daddy.

"I s'pose—I s'pose," she hesitated, trembling, "you couldn't tell your cousin—" Her throat caught in a sob but she cleared it, and went on, "just tell 'im Oscar wasn't my man?"

Evelyn Robertson had often lived over the horror of the minutes when the shameful secret of her marriage to Oscar Bennett was so nearly disclosed to Robert Percival. More than once she had congratulated herself upon the cleverness with which she had avoided that danger. To be sure her escape had been at the expense of Polly's reputation. She regretted the necessity but reasoned that a good name could not be much of a loss to a squatter.

"Of course I couldn't do that," she returned sharply. "Why—why should you want—"

The squatter girl's gaze lifted to the speaker's face, and tears welled over the fringed lids. Then Evelyn read the truth; and her eyes glowed and narrowed.

"Merciful Heavens, you're in love with my cousin?" she exclaimed. "Is that what you mean?"

The brown head fell forward, and a flame-hot face was hidden in the chestnut curls.

"And he loves you, too," cried Evelyn, in disdain. "What a fool I was not to discover that before! How perfectly awful! That's what has been the matter with him for months."

She snatched Pollyop's arm and shook her.

"It's absolutely mad of you to think of my cousin in that way," she continued, her voice hoarse with fear. "Promise me again you'll never tell him about Oscar?"

Pollyop shook her head.

"I've never told nothin'; I've said I wouldn't," she replied thickly, almost sullenly.

Then Evelyn smiled. The dimples played hide and go seek at the corners of her lovely mouth. The steady, blue glint faded from her eyes, leaving them the color of heavenly tints. She was certain her secret was as safe in the breast of Polly Hopkins as it was in the heart of the dead Oscar.

"You shall see your father," she said, dropping her hand, "and you can have any dress I have to wear. Come up tonight, at seven. The folks will be at dinner; and I'll slip out and bring you in."

Then she went away, leaving Polly Hopkins alternately plunged into the depths of despair when she thought of Robert Percival and singing with gladness over the joy in store for Wee Jerry and Daddy Hopkins.

It was still broad day when Polly Hopkins left Wee Jerry playing by the water's edge with some squatter youngsters and started for the Robertson home. True to her word, Evelyn met her in the grape arbor at seven and hastily led her up the back stairs to her bedroom.

"There are the closets," she said. "Take anything you like, Polly, but hurry. The cook's in the kitchen, and the other maids are busy. I'll go down for fear someone will come to find me. There's the dinner gong."

Once alone in the beautiful room, Polly's gaze swept its broad dimensions. It did not occur to her to covet the least of these gorgeous surroundings. She only wanted something to wear to Auburn, something to celebrate her visit and do Daddy Hopkins proud. She swung open a closet door and peered in.

The sound of laughter somewhere in the house sent a wave of terror over her. She snatched at the first gown under her hand, rolled it into a bundle and fled down the stairs. Until she was in the lane again, she did not breathe easily.

Once back in the shanty, Polly hid the dress beneath her bed without even daring to look at it. How Evelyn was to arrange the visit to Auburn, she did not know, but of one thing she was sure, she had a beautiful dress to wear.

After she had put the child to bed, and the door was securely locked, Polly drew the curtains tightly over the small windows. Even the corners of the room lost their shadows; and "The Greatest Mother in the World" seemed to stand out more plainly than even when the sun shone.

Pollyop placed her warm cheek against the picture and smiled. She earnestly believed this wonder-mother was helping her to go and see Daddy Hopkins. She turned and looked longingly at the sick little man, then upward to the woman's face.

"You've done so much for me an' Jerry, ma'am," she whispered. "Mebbe sometime you'd make—him—smile just once at me."

Then she took the bundle from under her cot and spread out her treasure. It was a delicate shimmering silk, and in it was the color of the sun just before he sailed over the western hill on his journey around the earth. There could not be such another beautiful gown in all the world, Polly thought. Then she slowly slipped from her own ragged dress and stopped a moment, contemplating Daddy Hopkins' big boots. Even to Polly's primitive mind they did not seem to be just the thing to wear with such a dress. So the boots, too, came off.

As if she had been handling eggs, she drew on the beautiful robe, her bare neck and forearms gleaming white in the candlelight.

Then back and forth she walked, entranced with its voluptuous loveliness. But twist and turn as best she might, she could not see the whole of her golden glory; so she took down Daddy Hopkins' cracked piece of mirror which he had used when pulling out his shaggy whiskers with the tweezers. By the aid of it, she could get glimpses of her slim young figure and the graceful sweep of the skirt. Holding the glass higher up, she studied her slender neck where the sun had tanned it. But tan did not matter, for Daddy Hopkins loved her in spite of it.

All at once she heard a knock



As if She Had Been Handling Eggs, She Drew on the Beautiful Robe, Her Bare Neck and Forearms Gleaming White in the Candle Light.

against the side of the hut. Hastily slipping out of the dress and folding it, she shoved it under her pillow. Then she put on her old dress and opened the door.

Larry Bishop was there, extending her a letter. Taking the note in amazement, she smiled and thanked him.

"Ain't you comin' in, Larry?" she asked. "Kinda chilly tonight, huh?" The squatter stepped inside, his cap in his hand.

"Yep, too cold for summer, Pol," he returned. "Say, brat, how you gettin' on? Got 'nough beans left for a while?"

"Sure, more'n enough, Larry," she replied. "I writ Daddy in my letter yesterday how blessed good you'd all been to me. I bet, when I get face to face with 'im, I'll tell things I can't scribble. An' now you go bringin' me this."

She tapped the letter with her fingers as a mysterious smile touched her lips.

The man shook his head grimly. "You won't be seein' your dad very soon, Pollyop," he muttered, "not if I guess right."

"Mebbe I will," she told him, fingering the letter.

But she liked Larry Bishop very much, but she was eaten up with curiosity to know the contents of the envelope in her hand. Perhaps, oh, might it be—

"Where'd you get this, Larry?" she asked, holding it up.

"I was comin' down the lane," explained Bishop, "an' a feller asked me if I knowed where the Hopkins hut was. I says, 'Yep, I'm goin' there now.' He says, 'Take this letter to the Hopkins girl, an' I says, 'Yep, an'—an' I bring it.'"

He paused, hoping she would open it in his presence. Being persuaded she did not intend to, he went out. His footsteps had no sooner died away than Polly sprang to the door and barred it. Then she turned the letter over and over and looked at it. Her name was on it; so it must be meant for her to read. A thrill of pleasure ran over her. Perhaps Robert had sent her a word of forgiveness. He might have written that some day he would come again.

With sparkling anticipation she cut open the envelope and by the light of the candle spelled out its contents.

"Dear Polly," she read. "I couldn't manage that trip to Auburn. So sorry. "P."

Polly looked dully at the paper, the words running into black smudgy lines. Then she could not go to Daddy Hopkins after all; and Jerry might die! Old Marc had once more laid his powerful hand upon her. Overcome with grief, she wept a while. Then she took the dress from under the pillow, rolled it carefully in a clean cloth and put it away.

The shock of Evelyn's cold note brought back the shadows to Pollyop's brown eyes. As the days passed slowly by, and the rich girl did not come to the shack again, Polly lost all hope of seeing her father.

Her decision to go to Auburn in spite of Old Marc followed a letter that she received from Daddy Hopkins. He was very lonely, he said. He was counting off each day as so many hours nearer the time when he could see his dear children. With the picture of Daddy's loneliness stamped in misery on her mind came the thought that no one had the right to keep Jerry from his father.

From the time she conceived this idea, it never left her thoughts. She had often stolen rides on the Lehigh Valley train from Ithaca to the Silent City and dropped off where the engine took a switch while the Buffalo Special dashed by. Why could she not steal a ride clear to Auburn?

While the squatter girl was making arrangements to carry out this mighty plan, preparations for the MacKenzie-Robertson wedding were going rapidly forward. Evelyn, happy in her new love, untroubled by sympathy for the dead Oscar, passed the days mostly at dressmakers and in the shops. Her contentment would have been complete if her cousin Robert had not looked so sad, or if she could have rid herself of the sense of responsibility for his unhappiness. But hoping in her flippant way that

all would come out well at last she was untroubled, she gave little heed to him and none at all to Polly Hopkins.

Early one morning Polly hopped quickly out of bed and after a breakfast of bread and beans, began to dress Jerry in the best he had. The day was chilly, and a fine rain drizzled over the lake.

Pollyop wrapped Granny Hope's old shawl around the little boy and tied a warm rag about his head; and the child, satisfied with his sister's assurance that he was going to see his father, sat on the cot wide-eyed, watching her in silence.

Polly combed her hair and washed her face and hands. Billy-got Hopkins was in his place at the wood-box cutting a handful of oats she had gleaned for him along the roadside. Polly wished that she might take him, too, but as long as she could not, Billy should have a better feed than usual.

After everything else was attended to, she unwrapped the silken dress and put it on. Her bare feet showed from under the hem, but she had decided she looked better without the boots, and as she stood gazing at herself up and down, she regretted that she had not asked Evelyn for a pair of shoes too. Being careful not to soil her skirt, she knelt and allowed Jerry to climb on her shoulders.

The moment she stood outside the shanty in the rain, she shivered. The damp air nipped at her uncovered arms and neck. To travel the long distance to the station, so lily covered, was out of the question, and the gown would be drenched through in a few minutes. She turned back into the shack and placed Jerry on the cot.

"Jerry wants to see Daddy Hopkins," the child whimpered. "Ain't we goin', Pollyop?"

"Yep, sure!" said Polly. "But sister's got to put on her boots. She can't go this way. It's too cold and the walk to Ithaca's too long, honey."

Her brow puckered into a frown as she drew on her father's heavy boots and slipped into his ragged coat. Then she tucked the dress into the top of the boots that it might show as little as possible and went out again.

It was a long climb to the boulevard; and the boy was heavy. But he was very quiet, and a sudden rush of tears almost blinded her as she turned toward the city. How delighted both Jerry and Daddy would be when they spied each other! Gulping down her tears, she shut out the thought that perhaps some one would catch her breaking the law and clap her in jail too.

Granny Hope and her toothless smile flashed before the eyes of her tortured soul.

"Ask and it shall be given thee," seemed to leap from the vision of old age.

"I did ask," Pollyop cried aloud, "but Old Marc said I couldn't."

(To Be Continued.)

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NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

By virtue of an execution duly issued by the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the County of Marion, State of Oregon, dated the 10th day of April, 1922, in a certain action in the Circuit Court for said County and State, wherein Carrie E. Blunt, as plaintiff, recovered judgment against M. L. Gray and Ella Gray, defendants, J. D. Rogers and Rosa Rogers, defendants, for the sum of two hundred fifty and no/100 Dollars, and costs and disbursements taxed at eighteen and no/100 Dollars, on the 28th day of May, 1915.

Notice is hereby given that I will on the 3rd day of June, 1922, at the front door of the Court House in Bend, Oregon, Deschutes County, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon of said day, sell at public auction to the highest bidder, for cash, the following described property, to-wit:

Lots 3 and 4 of Block 12, Kenwood Addition to the City of Bend, taken and levied upon as the property of the said M. L. Gray and Ella Gray, or as much thereof as may be necessary to satisfy the said judgment in favor of Carrie E. Blunt against said defendants with interest thereon, together with all costs and disbursements that have or may accrue.

S. E. ROBERTS,

Sheriff.
Dated at Bend, Oregon, April 29, 1922. 122-128-134-140-146c

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at the primaries Friday, May 19.

He is a man of rare personality and proved executive ability. Here, briefly, is his story: Isaac Lee Patterson was born in Benton County, Oregon, in 1859. Attended country schools and worked his way through Christian College, Monmouth. Became a successful merchant in Salem. In 1894 was elected State Senator from Marion County. In 1898 was appointed Collector of Customs at Portland, by President McKinley; re-appointed by President Roosevelt in 1902.

A Record of Achievement

WHILE he was collector, the business of Mr. Patterson's office practically doubled yet he reduced the cost of running his office by \$6,380 a year. Since 1906 has been a successful farmer at Eola, Polk County. In 1919 and 1921 served as State Senator from Polk County. As chairman of Senate Finance Committee led the fight against wholesale salary increase bills and defeated most of them. In 1921 voted against increasing Governor's salary.

Vote for Patterson and Stop this Waste!

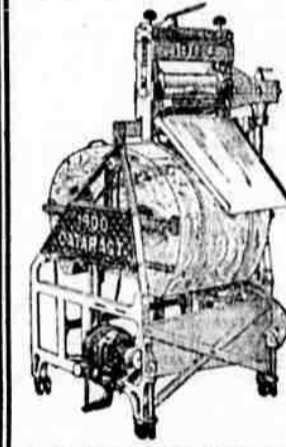
Since 1913 State taxes have increased 748.7 per cent! This gross extravagance must be stopped! Mr. Patterson has pledged that when elected he will make a substantial decrease in your state taxes by efficient and economical administration. A vote for Senator Patterson is a vote for clean, economical business-like government.

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