

Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone

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CHAPTER XV.

There was gloomy silence in the shanty until the horses' hoofs could be heard no longer in the snow outside. Larry Bishop crouched low in Jeremiah's rocking chair, pulling in nervous tension at his fingers until the joints cracked. He shot Polly Hopkins a furtive glance but dropped his thick lids before the unearthly expression in the girl's eyes. She had lost the look of heavenly compassion that had given cheer to the squatters.



He fled as if pursued by a vindictive spirit of the storm country.

As his mind went back to the spring days when she had so often smiled comfort into his own aching heart, he heaved a deep sigh. The sound of his breath, catching in his throat, brought Polly scrambling from the cot.

Unmindful of the morose squatter, she began pacing the floor, holding icy fingers to her aching temples.

"Best take the pillows off'n her, Pol," muttered Bishop. "She'll smother if you don't."

The girl paused and threw him a glance over her shoulder.

"Get out of here, you Larry," she bade him in fierce emphasis. "She'd better smother than get what's comin' to'er. You an' Lye hang around a while till I call you. When I'm done with'er, you'll have to sink her in the lake."

Staggering to his feet, Larry brushed away the water that had gathered in glistening drops upon his brow.

"God, kid," he growled, "you don't seem human no more. It's all so d-d terrible I'm gettin' haunted. If you change your mind, Pol, an' not kill'er—"

A gurgling noise came from under the pillows on the cot, and as if an unseen hand were pushing her forward, Polly strode to the bed and jerked away the small feather ticks.

Evelyn's eyes sought out the squatter man in mute pleading. Polly laughed; and gray with horror at her merciless attitude, Larry stunk to the door.

"I guess this ain't none of my business," he mumbled, and opening it, he fled as if pursued by a vindictive spirit of the storm country.

Again with swift, long strides the girl went to the door and barred it. Then with utmost deliberation she lighted several other candles and set them in different parts of the hut until a flood of light was diffused through the room.

A long deep sigh fell from her lips as she finished her task. She wanted to see every wave of pain that shot across Evelyn MacKenzie's pallid face; and that was why she approached the cot and stood looking down upon the twisted figure.

All she had endured through the rich girl's perfidy swept over her like a tidal wave. Out of the dark dream of Jerry's going she could hear through the moaning willows the weird last cries of the baby. The memory almost drew a shriek from her. Then she rolled the living bundle from the bed and propped it into a sitting position.

As wickedly deliberate as her every act had been, so did she lift the ax from the floor.

"Like a chicken," she taunted, smiling down into Evelyn's haggard face.

Evelyn struggled, and a muffled sound came from back of the gag in her mouth.

While Polly contemplated her, an emotion she used to know so often rose within her and tugged at her heart until the hurt made her clutch at her side. She dropped down and ran her fingers under the heavy cord with which the girl was bound.

"Rope's hurtin' you, huh?" she queried.

An affirmative bob of her head was the only answer Mrs. MacKenzie could give.

"I'll undo 'em a bit," said Polly sulkily. "Loosenin' up a few strings don't say you won't get what's comin' to you."

With her strong, white teeth and deft fingers she untied the heavy knots that pinioned the slender arms.

"Did the squatters give you anythin' to eat?" she asked, rocking back on her heels. "If you was in Larry's but so long with that thing in your mouth, then I bet you're hungry!"

It was scarcely perceptible, the negative shake that followed this question.

"If you've got to die you might as well go on a full belly," ended Polly, getting up.

She took a piece of hard bread and poured some hot water on it. Watching Evelyn frowningly, she beat them together with a tin spoon. Of course, the stuff was tasteless without sugar! Polly knew it very well, because that was what she had for supper every night.

She turned away from the cup in her hand and went to a small cupboard over which hung a flimsy curtain. Back behind a few old dishes she had hidden a little sugar one of the squatter women had given her. She had kept it against Daddy Hopkins' home-coming and for Jerry, too—perhaps. With woeful, in-caught sobs, she poured half of it into the cup. Then she crossed to Evelyn and picked up the ax.

"I'm goin' to take this rag out of your mouth," she said, "an' mind you don't squeal, or I'll send you double-quick to your first man. Now hold still! This'll hurt a bit!"

With her eyes on the agonized face, she drew gently at the corners of the rag stuffed into Evelyn's mouth. When it came out, Evelyn gave a deep groan and her cramped jaws settled rigidly.

"I'm goin' to feed you now," said Polly. "There ain't no hurry, 'cause we got all night."

Then some minutes passed in silence while the squatter girl, bit by bit, forced the pap between Mrs. MacKenzie's teeth.

"Now drink the water," she urged grimly. "It's warm an' got sugar in it."

As if in a trance, she got up and placed the cup on the table. She put a stick of wood into the stove and, turning, caught Evelyn's eyes upon her. Then she sat down and considered the unhappy girl who had been delivered up to the justice of the storm country.

Neither of them spoke. One of them was praying dully to herself, and Polly Hopkins was recounting mentally all the evil deeds of Evelyn and her haughty husband, Marcus MacKenzie. It was necessary to keep Daddy's grief ever before her mind and listen with the ears of her tortured spirit to Jerry's shrieks to be able to keep on with the gruesome thing she had undertaken.

"You ain't goin' to die till I tell you something, Miss," she broke forth, finally. "It ain't news to you, but I just got to make you understand why I'm putting you in the lake."

Weakness kept Evelyn from answering. Her eyes rolled up toward the shanty roof, then shut at the thought of the icy waters of Cayuga.

"I can't hurt your wicked man 'cept in through you," went on Pollyop. "We squatters are goin' to learn him a lesson he won't forget as long as he's in this world. You can bet your boots on that!"

As if in support of the terrible words, the shanty shook, rattling the loosened bits of tin on the roof. At the ghastly sound Evelyn began to cry.

"I know just how your man'll feel," continued Pollyop, a bitter smile distorting her lips into a grimace of pain. "an' so does Larry Bishop. Larry's woman an' baby died when Old Marc sent him up to Auburn, an' the best of me cracked when he grabbed Jerry tight out of my arms."

Both girls sobbed loudly. Then Pollyop cleared her throat and wiped her face.

"An' your man railroaded my daddy to Auburn," she gasped, "after plantin' something on him he didn't do; an' you, every one of you, knew it."

Her voice rose to a high-pitched scream as she remembered the last scene in the county jail.

"God, wasn't it awful!" she cried. "An' you—" She leaned over and grasped Evelyn's arm. "You could 'a' let me go to Auburn if you'd 'a' tried,

but you didn't. An' then—then you said you didn't give me that dress. You're all liars—an'—an'—sneaks, you money folks be."

Her hand reached out and touched the ax, but she withdrew it as if an adder had been under her fingers. She was not yet able to do the deed which she had longed to do and thought would be a joy. Her head sagged forward, and again came Jeremiah's weeping face before her.

"If you'd 'a' seen my daddy in the Ithaca jail, mebbe you'd be able to think what I'm goin' to do is all right. Yep, all right!" she rasped.

Then she went on hoarsely, faltering as she described the horrors that all her loved ones had gone through. Her voice choked and became silent as she thought of Robert. She could not force her tongue to say a word about him, although her heart throbbled bitterly as his name came to her lips.

"Money!" she whispered brokenly, lifting her head. "Did you hear your man say money to us squatters as if cash'd pay for Larry's woman an' Jerry an' my daddy? You heard, didn't you?"

Evelyn's head sagged forward, and a spasm passed over her face as her eyes closed. She looked as if she had died. Polly Hopkins had seen death enter the Silent City many a time; and her heart-strings tightened.

"Are you gone?" she questioned in a blissing whisper.

The other girl's lids lifted slowly, and never had Pollyop seen such an expression in human eyes in all her life.

"Not yet," dropped from the blue lips, "and—and—oh, Pollyop, I'm so afraid to die. I don't know how! Oh, God, help me; I feel so sick."

"Daddy were sick, too," shot back Polly, "an' Jerry's turned up his toes by this time! I ain't heard a word from him since he was took away. Mebbe I could 'a' seen him if you hadn't made your cousin believe I were a bad woman! What d'you know about babies, an' how cunning 'n' sweet they are? You're as wicked as h—! Ithaca'll be better off when you're food for the fishes. I'm glad your man'll live, though. Lordy, how I laughed when he busted into the shanty. And there was you right beside me! Huh? Wasn't it a good joke on Old Marc?"

The speaker held Evelyn's stare, the chestnut eyes glittering as the question was fairly spat out.

"I can't die, Pollyop!" groaned Evelyn, her head drooping against the cot. "Oh, Polly dear, listen—please—"

Polly reached out for the ax.

"Don't you dare 'Polly dear' me," she gritted convulsively. "or I'll hit you with this!"

"God!—Jesus!" came from between Evelyn's chattering teeth. "No, don't pick it up! Don't! Oh, I want to tell you something, Polly Hopkins."

"Then fire ahead," Polly grumbled sullenly.

She withdrew her fingers from the ax-handle and leaned her chin in the palm of her hand.

Evelyn straightened up and bent forward, her eyes swimming with tears.

"Polly," she gasped, "Pollyop, in the summer God's going to send me a little baby. Oh, Polly—"

The squatter girl scrambled up as the speaker dropped back, terrified at the exultant fire in the brown eyes and the awful smile that crept across Polly's face.

"Glory be to God in the sky!" she cried. "Two of you belongin' to Old Marc goin' with one swipe of the ax."

She wheeled around and paced the length of the shanty. Old Marc's baby! Old Marc's woman! Both to go out of his life forever! And by her hands—hers, Polly Hopkins' hands!

She lifted them up, those slender, brown fingers, and looked at them against the candlelight. But a few months ago they had been the most willing fingers in all the county! But tonight—Marc's baby! Evelyn's baby!

Like a hive of bees, the joy of displacing the home of Marcus MacKenzie buzzed through her brain. No sound came from the girl on the floor, for Evelyn MacKenzie had given up all hope. The squatter girl was crazy. No human being could entertain such a ghastly purpose and be in his right mind!

Presently she called Polly's name faintly, and then again; because Polly gave her no heed, she cried louder:

"Pollyop, my feet hurt so! I can't bear it!"

Polly paused, leaned against the wall and glared at her.

"I'm glad they do that," she muttered. "You can't hurt anywhere too much to suit me!"

Then something gave way behind her, and wheeling around, she found herself staring into the face of "The Greatest Mother in the World."

Daddy's dust-covered coat which had hidden the picture all the past weeks lay at her feet.

As she looked, the glare left Polly's eyes. The serious face that had once smiled at her, the smile that had been a benediction for herself and Daddy Hopkins, was there no longer. Rather was there an expression of sorrow. Death rested in the nurse's arms, but from her whole reverent attitude the sense of protection swept out at Polly Hopkins.

Then suddenly she heard a man's voice. It seemed to drift into the hut through every crevice and crack.

"And you're the Littlest Mother in the World," came plainly to her.

Like one struck, she stood rooted to the spot. Evelyn MacKenzie over there against the bed faded from her mind. Old Marc's imaged face went away as if it had never seered her vision. Over and over the delightful words Robert had spoken to her

Sunday One Of Big Days For Fishermen Of Bend; Few Are Unsuccessful

If totals could be arrived at, of all of the Bend people who went fishing Sunday and of the number of fish caught in the lakes and streams of Central Oregon, the day would undoubtedly be recorded as one of the greatest fishing days in the history of this district. Of the numerous parties who were out, practically all reported good catches. East, Elk, Crescent lakes and Crane Prairie, Pringle Falls and Dillon falls, and various spots on the Deschutes, contributed their quota to the total.

Every boat at East lake was in use and the banks of the lake were crowded with fishermen who failed to get boats, reported Claude Metz, who was one of a successful party which included J. A. Dudley, Phil Philbrook and A. Stipe. It is now possible to drive all the way to the lake without chains.

Dr. J. C. Vandeventer, W. D. Evans, Paul C. Bates and son, and R. Shaffer caught 21 Dolly Vardens at Odell lake, averaging five pounds each in weight.

Allie Taylor caught a 24 1/2-inch Dolly weighing five pounds, at Pringle Falls.

B. P. Royce and family and G. A. Curtis of the Western Finance Co. of Portland, caught 17 big trout at Crescent lake. They found the road to the lake unusually good, the grounds around the lake cleaned up and the

camping facilities improved over last year. There are plenty of boats, and the fishing is excellent, they report.

Secretary L. Antles of the Commercial Club, I. Thatcher, Mr. and Mrs. E. Pearl and J. J. Clapp fished on the upper Deschutes. All caught a satisfactory number, Pearl getting the limit. D. H. Peoples also made a good catch along the Deschutes.

C. K. Norcott and son Edward and C. G. Seward were successful anglers at East lake. Norcott caught an eastern brook trout dressing six and one-fourth pounds.

D. G. McPherson reports that both trout and mosquitoes were biting voraciously at Crane Prairie. He brought back all the law allows of the trout.

Mrs. V. A. Forbes and son Vernon, Miss Neil Markel, Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Thurston and daughter and Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Enloe spent a successful day at Elk lake.

A. E. Edwards and A. J. Goggans made a good catch at Elk lake.

H. J. Power and R. P. Robinson of the J. C. Penney store caught all they wanted at East lake.

The Milliron family caught 300 trout at Dillon Falls. No. Mr. Adams, you need not get busy—for there were 19 members of the Milliron family gathered there from various parts of Central Oregon, in a family reunion, so that they were within the law.

SIX ARRESTS MADE IN CITY

Use of Whistle Prompts Two, Booze Alleged Cause of Three.

Of six arrests made during the week-end by city officers, two were caused by a spark plug whistle, alleged to have been manipulated too frequently by Owen Morris and Ivan Doak. Both were arrested by Chief of Police Willard Houston. Doak forfeiting \$50 bail.

Edward Mann was arrested by Houston, charged with driving a car after his license had been revoked by the city recorder at The Dalles, and Sam Davis of Grass Valley was picked up and charged with driving a car while in an intoxicated condition.

T. Williams and S. Burns were arrested by Fire Chief Carlson on charges of drunkenness. Each forfeited \$25 bail. The arrest of Williams was made in front of the fire-house.

2 WOMEN PUT OUT SPREADING BLAZE

Brush Fire Acre in Extent Near Fall River Extinguished Without Tools.

A brush fire which had spread to an area of almost an acre was extinguished Sunday near Fall river by Mrs. Emma U. Broderick and Mrs. E. Pearl, working alone and without tools. The two women scraped with their shoes and with sticks until they had dragged clear of brush a line about the fire which it could not jump.

They were members of a fishing party, and discovered the fire while the men of the party were some distance away. A dropped match or cigarette caused the fire, according to Forest Supervisor H. L. Plumb, there being no sign of a camp fire.

TWO FINED FOR LIQUOR RUNNING

Men Tried In Lakeview To Come Here As Witnesses In New Booze Cases.

James W. Owsley of Bend and Burns D. Young of Brothers were found guilty in Lakeview Saturday on charges of running liquor, and were fined \$250 each and given jail sentences of 10 days, according to word received by the officers here. After they are released in Lakeview, the men will be brought to Bend, as the officers suspect that they have knowledge of High Desert liquor cases which were uncovered in raids Saturday night, resulting in the arrest of Joseph Varco and Sam Boyce of Brothers. Sheriff Roberts and Deputy Stokoe, and State Officers Jack Cassidy and L. A. W. Nixon made the arrests.

Varco and Boyce were discovered, the officers state, beside a 12-gallon still with three worms, near the Brothers postoffice. Three other stills were found, one of 40 gallons capacity. This large one was destroyed, the others brought to Bend. All were in deserted homestead cabins in the vicinity of Brothers. Owners were not apprehended, except in the case of the first find. One hundred and thirty gallons of moonshine was taken.

TUMALO DISTRICT BONDS CERTIFIED

Are Turned Over To United Contracting Co., Which Will Begin Construction Soon.

Bonds of the Tumalo irrigation district were certified Saturday by the state securities commission and were turned over to the United Contracting company, which has the contract for completion of the Tumalo project, involving the construction of a canal from the Deschutes to the Tumalo canal, something over five miles long, which will provide water for 11,000 acres of land. Work is expected to commence about July 1.

Put it in The Bulletin.



As she looked, the glare left Polly's eyes.

rushed into her ears and stamped themselves in golden fire on her memory.

"I love you, Polly," touched her like a caress, and, "You're my little girl," fell upon her like the tender hand of Granny Hope's God.

"The Greatest Mother in the World," whispered Pollyop; and then something hard and hateful within her broke, and the flood-tides of love came pouring in. As when a dam bursts, the pent-up waters sweep away all the accumulated rubbish in the old, unused channels, so was the squatter girl's heart cleansed of every unlovely emotion. To her uplifted vision "The Greatest Mother in the World" smiled again in benediction; and beyond her, dim in the background, appeared a wrinkled, toothless smile, and Polly heard Granny Hope's withered lips saying:

"Love's the hull thing, brat. Just love, an' love, an' keep on lovin'."

Full of the tenderest compassion, Pollyop turned swiftly, and at the sight of her flashing, radiant face, Evelyn fainted, toppled forward and rolled almost under the bed.

The squatter girl bounded to her side, her frantic fingers tearing loose the ropes that Larry and Lye Braeger had made secure around Evelyn's body. They fell away, leaving the girl but a little heap on the floor.

Tears streamed over her dark lashes as Pollyop gathered the limp head of Evelyn MacKenzie into her arms. And then she prayed as Granny Hope had taught her to pray. "Our Father which art in heaven. The rest of the petition slipped from her mind, and she quoted with chattering teeth, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Her strong arms lifted Evelyn and as she rolled over on the cot, Polly Hopkins stood up and cried:

"Underneath Old Marc's woman are your everlasting arms, God dear!"

(To Be Continued.)

GOOD HELP IN SUMMER

Indigestion causes worry, nervousness, sick headaches, biliousness, coated tongue, bad breath, bloating gas, constipation and constant distress. Henry C. Thorne, 1002 Harrison avenue, Boston, Mass., writes: "Since taking Foley Cathartic Tablets I feel fine." Cleanse bowels; sweeten stomach; invigorate liver. Sold Everywhere.—Adv.

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