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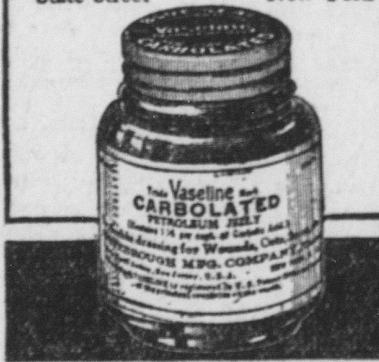
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Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White
Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone

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CHAPTER XIII
—14—
No more unhappy girl lived in all of Tompkins county than Polly Hopkins. Seemingly never-ending days dragged by their minutes one by one. When she woke up in the morning she wished it were night! When she crawled into bed she wished it were morning! And every twenty-four hours brought renewed anguish to Jerry. Pollyop spent most of her time trying to soothe him.

And thus the two little waifs lived until the news spread through the Silent City that Evelyn Robertson and Marcus MacKenzie were going to be married in a fashionable church in Ithaca.

The wedding day dawned bright with sunshine; and, together with Jerry, Pollyop went into town, hid herself in the thick shrubbery in Dewitt park and watched with tormented soul the gorgeous display of riches.

She saw Evelyn in all her beauty and the resplendent Marcus; also the haughty Mrs. Robertson, leaning on the arm of Robert Percival. How pale his face was! Great tears blinded Pollyop's eyes as she wondered vaguely and bewilderedly if he ever thought of her. It was a long, sad night which she spent after that event, but still she lived on and carried her heavy burden in silence. Week by week she counted on her slender fingers the months which would have to be lived through before Daddy Hopkins could come home. Oh, how she wanted to steal into his arms, to lay her head against him and to be ever and ever! Jerry must have him, too, and many were the promises she made to the child during the wild full weather of the Storm country that perhaps tomorrow Daddy would come, perhaps the next day, until the child's face too gathered an expression as if he were always listening for footsteps outside the hut.

The autumn rains had no more set in before Marcus MacKenzie took up again his persecutions of the squatters. On his return from his wedding trip he and Evelyn went to live with Mrs. Robertson for the winter.

One day Percival approached MacKenzie with another request that he use his influence to liberate Jeremiah Hopkins.

"It's wrong for his daughter to stay in such a place alone with that frail child, Marc," protested Robert earnestly.

Evelyn looked up from her sewing. In her own happiness she thought that her handsome cousin loved the squatter girl had lapsed in her memory. Her eyes went from his troubled face to her husband's. Marc's expression was dark and forbidding, and his full red lips dragged down at the corners! Her heart fluttered at the thought of his rage if by chance he got an inkling of her duplicity.

"The huzzy won't be there long, my friend," returned Marcus, gritting his teeth. "I've a plan to put her out with the rest. Why you stand by those people has always puzzled me, Percival."

"They're a forlorn lot," replied Robert, flushing. "Now, what about Hopkins?"

A look of contempt settled on MacKenzie's face, and he flung out his hands as if throwing away something he detested.

"He'll serve his time," he retorted abruptly, "and when he does come back, his brats won't be where he left them."

Keeping her eyes on her husband, Evelyn uttered an exclamation. How somber and forceful he seemed with that network of wrinkles across his broad brow. Anger distended his nostrils, and the look he had fixed upon Robert was full of compelling strength.

"You're both sickening," she broke out fretfully. "Perfectly sickening!"

"Now listen to me, Eve," ejaculated Robert, turning to her. "You know very well that I'm interested in the Hopkins family—"

She did not look at him until his sentence was chopped off in confusion. Then she threw him a peculiar glance.

"Oh, I know that well enough!" she rejoined, dropping her eyes, "but what makes me so impatient is that the second you and Marc come within speaking distance, you begin an argument about them. Why can't you both make a resolution not to talk about those people?"

Her cousin walked to the window and stared out into the garden. A nervous cough came from MacKenzie. "I won't do it, Eve," asserted Robert presently, frowning. "Something's got to be done for Polly Hopkins. She's so young and unhappy!"

"Young and pretty, you mean, Bobs," laughed Marcus disagreeably. "Why don't you marry the trollop and put an end to your philanthropy? Bennet's dead; so he can't interfere with you!"

Percival's fists doubled as fleeting blood left his face wax-white.

sleep, he demanded to know if she were cognizant of the fact that Robert was trying to obtain a pardon for Hopkins. Several representative citizens, among whom were two distinguished lawyers, had approached him on the subject.

"And that isn't all," he fumed, "I started something else today, and he's trying to block me."

He jerked at his collar so violently that the stiff linen tore with a whining sound.

"D-n that thing," he exploded and threw the ruined neckwear on the floor. "I won't stand any more interference."

"If you don't want to bring Bob to terms," he went on, "I will! That's my word! I've held my peace as long as I can—Good God, now, don't start to cry!"

But in spite of his imperious command, Evelyn had wept long after her husband's heavy breathing told her that he was asleep.

Next morning, walking into the dining room wearily, she found her cousin, Robert, standing near the window, his hands in his pockets. She went straight to his side.

"Bob," she breathed.

The young man turned upon her and caught the hand she laid on his arm. "You've got to help me now, Eve," he began, without other response to her greeting. "It's all very well for Marc to take a high hand in some matters, but this thing he's planning is brutal."

"I can't do anything with him," cried the girl. "He told me about it last night; and I talked and talked till I'm hoarse. Bob, why don't you go away somewhere?"

Robert shook his head dismally. "I can't, Eve, I can't," he returned. "I know what Polly is, but she's young and—"

He paused, brushed back his hair and hurried on:

"I love her, that's all! If Marc continues in— Ah, here he comes."

The door flung open, and MacKenzie strode into the room. He came to a halt at the sight of his young wife and her cousin.

"What's up?" he exclaimed testily.

"Bob wants to talk to you, dear," explained Evelyn, in a conciliatory tone. She had learned in the past months that suppressing her own temper was to travel along the lines of least resistance.

"Well, have some breakfast," was the ungracious reply. "Sit down, both of you."

"I've had my breakfast," answered Robert. "I waited to have a word with you, Marc, before you went into town. I want to buy of you at your own price all the land of the squatters are on. That would relieve—"

"Squatters again, eh?" came in quick interruption, "My dear Robert," MacKenzie placed his fingers on the back of his chair and watching his wife, proceeded, "I really dislike to be abrupt in my own family and in your house, but you know there is such a thing as a man minding his own business."

A deep flush rose to Percival's brow.

"I am minding my own business," he shot back. "If it's your will to persecute a girl who's almost dead with grief, it's mine to help her if I can. This last thing you're trying to put over is abominable!"

In rough impatience Marcus sat down, Evelyn dropping into her place opposite him.

"From your interest one would think you had a more intimate reason than just humanity, Robert," he sneered broadly. "Is that it?"

Into Evelyn's pale face rushed a mass of color, and she shrank back as if she had received a blow. As quickly the flush receded, leaving her whiter than before.

Robert came forward to the table.

"You're perfectly right, Marc," he confessed almost inaudibly. "I do love Polly Hopkins—"

MacKenzie interrupted him by rising to his feet, his handsome face suffused with anger.

"Then it's time I cleared her out," he answered. "A squatter in the family—a thief—a liar!"

Mrs. MacKenzie struggled to her feet and began to cry.

"I can't stand any more," she whimpered. "I simply can't, Marc. The way you both quarrel over those people gets on my nerves. You promised me, Marcus, you wouldn't ever do it again."

All the concentrated rage he had gathered in the past few weeks burst forth in a vicious snarl.

"Then tell your precious cousin to keep his nose out of my affairs, my dear! I'm perfectly capable of attending to them. I don't wish to sell that land, but I do intend to get rid of that tribe; and both of you might just as well understand it now as later."

He said it with such forceful determination that Evelyn threw an entreating glance at Robert. Uttering a sharp exclamation, he turned swiftly and went out.

The next few hours he spent in Ithaca, trying to turn aside the blow that threatened to fall upon Polly Hopkins. But so great was MacKenzie's influence that Percival's own friends shook their heads when he approached them.

Utterly cast down by the futility of his morning's work on behalf of the squatter girl, Robert Percival wended his way to the Silent City. He could not let the relentless law burst in upon Pollyop unprepared. Through the settlement he hurried to the Hopkins shanty and paused before it. There still above the door was the printed sign.

"If your heart's loving and kind come right in; if it ain't scoot off."



There Still Above the Door Was the Printed Sign, "If Your Heart's Loving and Kind Come Right In; If It Ain't Scoot Off."

she moved backward and allowed him to enter the room.

Now that he was there, Robert felt as if he could not force his tongue to say the things she must hear. He was oppressed by his utter failure to keep the promise made that day before "The Greatest Mother in the World," and knew not how to explain it.

"Polly," he had commenced, when Pollyop, because she was so tired, so forlornly helpless, began to sob bitterly. The sight of him after all these weary days quite overcame her.

"Don't," he interjected impetuously. "Please don't do that."

Her tears only added to the remorse that scourged him and gave new vitality to his passion; but, like a wall of fire between them, burned his jealousy of Oscar Bennett.

"I want to help you," he stammered.

Pollyop shook her head.

"You can't do nothin' unless you get my daddy back," she whispered.

"Jerry'll die—"

This gave a slight opening, and Robert grasped at it eagerly.

"I came to talk about him," he interrupted. "Now please don't cry any more. Don't! Sit down a minute." He placed her in a chair, going white as his hand touched her. "You say the child is ill, Pollyop?" he went on, but paused as Polly nodded her head.

"Yes, he's sick all right," she returned, wiping her eyes.

"Then perhaps if he went away somewhere, to a place where he'd have good food and care until his father—"

At his words the girl suddenly grew rigidly erect, but the piteous trembling of her lips made the young man avert his eyes.

"Squatter babies grow on the grub squatters give 'em," she replied huskily. "All they need is bread an' beans an' love," she hesitated and swallowed hard before she continued: "An' lots of love! That's what's allin' Wee Jerry. He wants his daddy!"

"But, Polly!" Robert tried to check the flow of her words, but she ran on: "He'd die sure in a strange place. Nope! Jerry stays in the shanty with me."

There was such an air of finality in her inflection and appearance that Percival groaned within himself and nervously paced the length of the room and back. He simply could not tell her. How could he place another burden upon the already bowed young shoulders?

Then the matter was taken out of his hands. The roll of carriage wheels, an unusual sound in the settlement, came distinctly to their ears and caused the girl to throw him a startled, questioning glance. Before he could give her the least warning, the door flung open, and MacKenzie, followed by three men, came into the shanty.

Marcus had not expected to find his wife's cousin there after the scene of that morning. A sneer tugged at the corners of his mouth. Then, remembering that he represented the county, a slow smile curled his lips.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Home Philosophy.

It's the right thing to look around you and admire the world God made, but when it's good working weather you're not expected to admire it all day long.—Atlanta Constitution.

Odd Numbers Masculine.

According to all ancient lore, the odd numbers are masculine, the even feminine. The odd numbers were in nearly every case the lucky ones—a notable and general exception being the fatal number thirteen.

Proof to the Contrary.

Odd thing about yawning; the doctors say it is caused by a deficiency in the supply of air to the lungs—and yet a fellow usually does his best yawning when somebody is pumping "hot air" into him.—Boston Transcript.

One's Ideals.

Humanity never rises above its ideals. What ought to be is always above and beyond what is. Unless, however, we have before us the vision of something better, we can never rise above what we are.—Exchange.

Plato's Tribute to Music.

Plato wrote: Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the whole universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, a galet and life to everything. It is the essence of order and harmony, and leads to all that is good, just and beautiful of which it is the invisible but nevertheless the dazzling, passionate and eternal form.

Birds as Weather Prophets.

At least some birds are good weather prophets. The green woodpecker is known in some parts of this country as the "rain bird" because his laughing cry so often precedes a down-pour. The miselthrush, again, has gained the name of "storm cock," because he sings before wind and rain.

Famous Musicians.

A London writer calls attention to the fact that the names of many composers begin with B. He notes Bach, Beethoven, Bax, Bliss, Bridge, Berners, Brahms, Berlioz, Borodine, Balfe, Bennett, Bellini, Bantock, Bizet, Bishop, Brunnau, Boccherini, Balakireff, Boyce, Busoni, Byrd and Bull.

A Sudden Breeze.

A kind-hearted motorist, seeing an old woman totting along the road, offered to give her a lift. It was her first ride in an auto and she was amused to hear her exclaim: "My, but hasn't the wind come up sudden?"—Boston Transcript.

First Sleeping-Car Berth.

In 1853, Zenas Cobb invented a sleeping-car berth and sold his invention to George M. Pullman for \$4,000. Mr. Pullman perfected the invention and Mr. Cobb afterward manufactured car-spring seats, supplying the entire Pullman service.

Two Sorts of Contagion.

Diseases are not the only things that are contagious: Kindness is contagious; many integrity is contagious; all the positive virtues, with real red blood in their veins, are contagious.—Henry VanDyke.

An Eel Mystery.

How the baby eels which push up the river from their birthplace in the depths of the ocean circumvent the falls of the Rhine and even Niagara falls is a puzzle science has so far been unable to solve.

True Greatness.

He only is great who has the habits of greatness; who, after performing what none in ten thousand could accomplish, passes on like Samson, and "tells neither father nor mother of it."—Lavater.

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"Come back here, Evelyn," He Ordered. "How Dare You Talk Like That to Me?"