

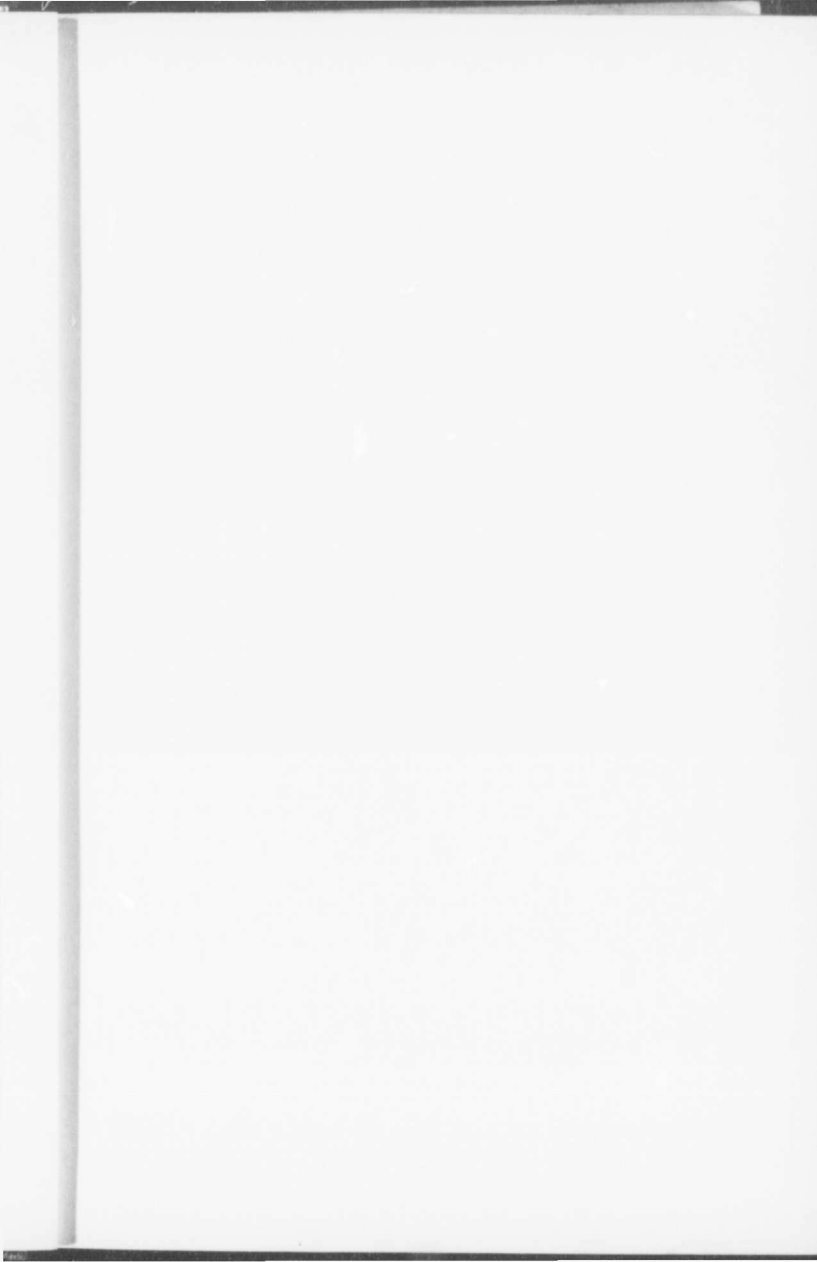
# STORM COUNTRY POLLY

GRACE MILLER WHITE



STORM COUNTRY POLLY







His gaze dropped upon her, and he continued, "and you're the littlest mother in the world." FRONTISPIECE. See page 85.

# STORM COUNTRY POLLY

BY  
GRACE MILLER WHITE

With frontispiece by  
FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON

TORONTO  
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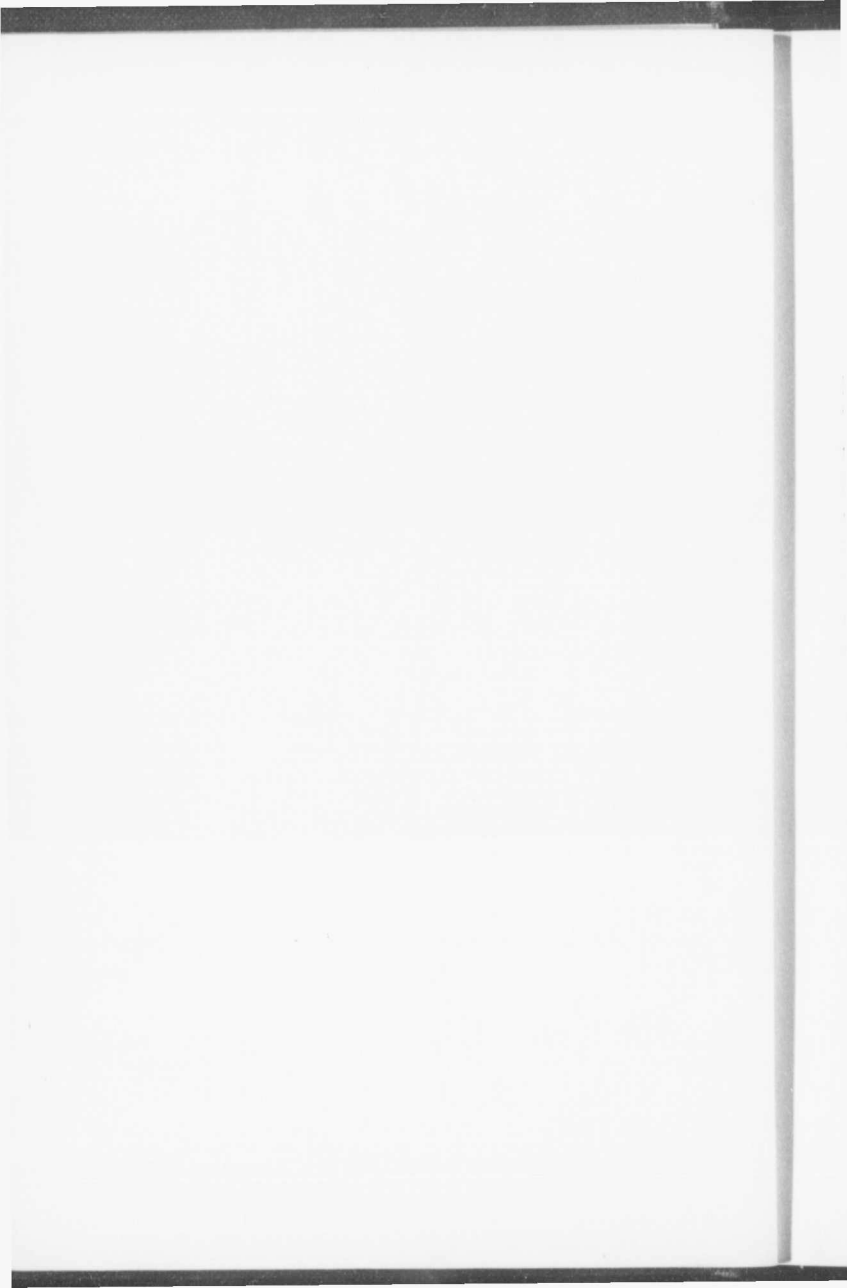
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STORM COUNTRY POLLY



## CHAPTER I

FOUR miles from Ithaca, New York, Oscar Bennett's farm spread its acres along the face of West Hill between the Lehigh Valley tracks and the highway leading to Trumansburg. Oscar Bennett was what the country people and even the Ithaca folks called a fine farmer. His farmhouse faced a lane that led to the west shore of Lake Cayuga, and from the front porch he could see, much to his dislike, the few straggling squatter shacks that brought to an end northward the Silent City. Like all other substantial citizens, Oscar detested the squatters. In his estimation they were a set of thieving loafers and sneaks, and many times he had wished that he owned the ground they squatted on instead of Marcus MacKenzie.

Of course it was no secret that MacKenzie never let an opportunity slip to pop a fisherman into jail, but in Bennett's opinion that treatment was not severe enough, and besides, it did not accomplish anything. MacKenzie's idea was to jail the men whenever the chance came and for a period as long as the law would allow. But

#### 4      STORM COUNTRY POLLY

what good did that do? Fierce hatred flamed in the haggard faces of the women, and they held to their squatter rights with the tenacity of leeches until their husbands were given back to them. Bennett would have done away with the wives and mothers if the job of breaking up the Silent City had been his. No man would hang to a hut long without a woman in it.

One morning in the early spring Oscar was finishing his breakfast when the door opened slowly. A girl with a small tin pail in her hand stepped into the room. She smiled at him almost humbly.

"Shut the door!" he shouted at her. "Where's your manners, Polly Hopkins? Can't you see the rain's coming in after you?"

The smile faded from the girl's face. Mechanically she turned, closed the door and, uninvited, seated herself in a chair and placed the pail at her side.

"So you've come begging again, Pollyop," went on the farmer, wiping his lips on the sleeve of his gingham shirt. "Well, you might as well turn tail and run home again, for you're not going to get anything more from me. I don't want a poacher's brat around here."

The girl's bare wet feet drew tensely backward under the chair; but she remained discreetly

silent. Oscar always abused her and called her names, but that was because she was a squatter. After a while, he'd change his mind, and then she would take home what she came for. She noted with a quick breath that Oscar's eyes softened during the time he was silent. That boded well for her errand; but Bennett's mind was not on milk or any of those suffering for the want of it.

He had just discovered that Polly Hopkins was beautiful even if she were barefooted and ragged. Her straight young shoulders were covered with wet curls that seemed to have given to the wide eyes their shade of ripe chestnuts.

Polly expected every moment that Oscar would reach out for the pail, and, though with bad grace, he'd give her the milk just the same. She fidgeted in her chair and drew a long sigh,—he was staring at her in such a peculiar manner from under his heavy brows.

Why had he not noticed before that Polly Hopkins was so pretty, Oscar wondered, and a slow smile parted his lips. Polly's eyes lowered, and the long dark lashes only added to Bennett's sudden admiration. A quick-drawn breath slipped audibly past the man's teeth. Pollyop sensed in his attitude toward her a new quality that she recognized intuitively as dangerous. To bring

## 6      STORM COUNTRY POLLY

his attention back to the purpose of her visit, she ventured to say:

"I thought it wouldn't hurt you none, Oscar, to gimme a little milk for Granny Hope an' Jerry. I'm always runnin' errands for you an' your woman."

Bennett's heavy farm boots made a scraping sound under the table.

"What good does that do me?" he returned. "Upon my soul, I might as well be without a wife as to have one who won't live with me or let any one know I'm her husband. I'm gettin' sick, good and plenty sick, I can tell you, Miss Polly Hopkins."

This speech did not disturb Polly over much, for he'd made it a dozen times before. It was only the expression in his gaze, she did not quite like. Her mind went to Evelyn Robertson, the girl that Oscar had married. As if it were but yesterday, she remembered how two years ago she had gone with them under protest to a minister far back in the hills. Evelyn had explained that for some time to come no one but the three must know of the marriage.

Pollyop had learned a great many things in two years! What girl does not after she's passed her fifteenth birthday? One of the things she had found out was that Oscar was a dreadful per-

son, more dreadful than most of the squatter men. Of course the men folks of her people did beat their women, now and then. That was their right without any question. The blood colored even her ears as she remembered how Oscar hectored his wife for the money it was so hard for Evelyn to get. Another thing she had come to understand was that, if Oscar had not been afraid of the powerful Robertson family, he would have forced Evelyn into his home long before this. It had been a hard two years' task to keep him quiet.

"Mebbe you are gettin' sick, Oscar," she interposed. "I don't know—mebbe; but you know what that old Miss Robertson would do to you an' her girl if you told. You'd get Eve, mebbe, but you sure wouldn't get any more money."

The man's face darkened.

"That's just the rub," he conceded, "but at that Eve ain't playing square with me. The Robertsons have money to burn, and she deals it out to me in small little dollars. I tell you I'm sick of the whole thing."

Polly noted the glitter in Bennett's angry eyes and felt again the quiver of fear.

"She gives you all she gets her fingers on," she came back at him in defense of the absent Evelyn. "Lots of times she's got along on about nothin'

## 8      STORM COUNTRY POLLY

to send you cash, an' didn't I come runnin' up here with it as soon as she give it to me? Now her ma's gettin' on that Eve ain't spendin' her money on herself, an' she watches 'er like a hawk does a chicken. She told me that only yesterday."

The squatter girl rose to her feet, anxious to be gone.

"Oscar, you might be lettin' me have just a wee bit of milk. You ain't losin' nothin' through me."

She picked up the pail, and with a growl the man snatched it out of her hand.

"Women're a damned nuisance," he grumbled. "Well, wait here!"

He went out of the room, and Polly Hopkins drew a long breath. It was getting harder every day to get the milk she needed.

When Bennett returned, she was standing with her hand on the door knob, ready to go. In silence she took the pail he offered her.

"Looka here, Pollyop," he began abruptly, as Polly opened the door. "What's to hinder your paying for your milk yourself?"

He said it with extreme deliberation, making emphatic the last words.

Polly threw up her head and eyed him sharply.

"I run my legs most off for you as 'tis, Oscar,"



she retorted, "between here and the Robertsons'; but I don't never have no money. You know that, an' Daddy Hopkins don't get much, either. If I had a dollar, I bet I'd spend every penny of it fillin' up Jerry an' Daddy an' Granny Hope with milk an' eggs." To make him understand how anxious she was to please him, she went forward a pace. "An' I'd buy 'em all of you, Oscar. That's as true as Granny Hope's God is settin' up in the sky."

"I didn't ask you for money," answered Bennett, staring at her. Suddenly he came close to her; and Polly backed to the door. His face was red and agitated; the cords in his neck were swollen while his fingers twisted eagerly. That was another thing about which Polly's eyes had been opened in two years of growing womanhood. When a man looked as Oscar did now, a girl got away as fast as she could.

"You might pay me in kisses," he muttered hoarsely, towering over her. "Ten kisses for each bucket. You're a heap prettier than Eve."

For a long moment Polly did not speak. Her breast heaved as she swayed backward.

"I get all the kisses I want to home," she said. "Here, take your hand off'n me, Oscar, or I'll tell Eve the first time I get sight of her." She glared up at him like a cornered animal. "I said I'd

## 10 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

tell Eve. I'll do more than that! I'll put old woman Robertson next to your coppin' her kid an' marryin' 'er."

Oscar's fingers relaxed, and his hand dropped away from her arm as a rough laugh left his lips. She looked so lovely, her eyes blazing, her curls tumbled in confusion on her shoulders, that he would have taken his pay for the milk without her permission if she had not thrown at him a threat he feared she would carry out.

"Men's kisses are what you'll get, my pretty lass," he predicted grimly, "and if I was finished with Eve, by God, I'd set about getting my share. I won't always be married to my lady Robertson, mind you, Pollyop."

The blood had left his face. He was quite white and stern, and by this time Polly was on the porch.

"'Tain't so easy to get unmarried as 'tis to get married," she told him. "An' me! I'm just Daddy Hopkins' brat, an' I don't want any kisses but his'n. I'd let Jerry's tongue go twist for milk before I'd pay for it with—with ——"

Oscar sprang at her. She was so tantalizingly beautiful, so alluring even in her grotesque attire that for the moment he forgot he had reason to fear her.

"I'll kiss you, anyway," he snarled, but Polly,

fleet-footed and afraid, shot from the porch and reached the lane, the milk dashing against the cover of the pail.

The man halted, looking after her. With a shrug of his shoulders he turned back into the house. For the moment he paused in the kitchen; he could hear his old mother pottering about overhead in his bedroom. She was doing the work his wife ought to do! What a fool he had been to marry Evelyn Robertson! Instead of the fortune he had expected, he was tied hand and foot without money or woman. He thought of the radiant squatter girl who had just left him. Two years ago womanhood had not dawned upon Polly Hopkins, but to-day — He undertoned an oath and went out to the barn.

## CHAPTER II

POLLY HOPKINS ran down the lane as fast as her legs could carry her. The milk was safe in the bucket, and she had scarcely reached the railroad tracks before she had decided not to mention Oscar's vicious demand upon her. If she told Daddy Hopkins, he would do some harm to Bennett, and there would be no more eggs and milk for Granny and Jerry. If she spoke of it to Evelyn, there was no telling what the girl would do.

Before entering a shanty of small dimensions, almost hidden by a group of weeping-willow trees, she looked up toward the Silent City. For several days Lake Cayuga had rolled away from Ithaca in a tempest of rain, and although the sky had lightened a little, a fine drizzle still drove before the wind, and the white-capped waves broke over each other in their rush shoreward.

The tangle-haired squatter girl was the daughter of Jeremiah Hopkins, the Mayor of the Silent City, the leader of all those who lived in the rows of huts that ran along the Lehigh Valley tracks and on down the lakeside.

Uncouth and ignorant were Jeremiah and his kind, and visitors who came to the little city of Ithaca agreed with the town's inhabitants that it was a shame the law allowed such a blot as the Silent City upon the natural beauty of Cayuga and its majestic surroundings.

Pollyop stood shivering, her troubled gaze searching the lake for a boat. Daddy Hopkins had gone away early with Wee Jerry, and she always worried a little when they were out. Yet she knew that the only way to get the bread, beans and bacon for the family was for Daddy Hopkins to defy the law and drag his nets whenever the game wardens were not about. Without the lake and its hidden food, it would be a desolate world indeed.

Wee Jerry was Polly's five-year-old brother, and long before he could walk, he had chosen his father's big shoulders upon which to beat his way through an unfriendly and often hungry world. But this same world which had wizened Jerry had given to Polly a wild beauty, a body strong and as pliant as a marsh reed.

The older members of the squatter settlement loved her for the joyous, beaming smile she threw upon them as she passed, and already several young fishermen's pleas for his girl had caused Jeremiah Hopkins to speak his mind. His pretty

## 14    STORM COUNTRY POLLY

brat belonged to him and Jerry and to no one else. But of these requests Polly did not know, nor did any squatter youth dare approach her so long as the Mayor of the Silent City remained among them.

With a sigh Pollyop turned to the house. The door was shut against the storm, and a thin curl of smoke twisted upward from the toppling chimney, losing itself in the baby leaves of the willows. The little lines that had traced the troubled brow vanished at the sight of a slab of wood over the door. On it was painted in crude letters: "If your heart is loving and kind come right in. If it ain't scoot off." Pollyop and Granny Hope had worked a long time to make this sign, and even longer to nail it up.

"It'll help the Silent City folks, Granny," she had said. "'Specially, if I smile a lot at 'em."

The intruding memory of Granny Hope parted Polly's red lips and brought out the chestnut glow in her eyes. She flung open the door and went in, closing it behind her. In one corner of the kitchen, an old woman, so old that no squatter could remember her other than aged, sat near the stove. About her shoulders was a shawl, and its edges were held together with claw-like fingers.

Munching on a bit of hay at the wood-box was a lean goat, an old friend of Polly Hopkins. Long ago she had found him, lost in the wilderness of the Storm Country, and had brought him to the Silent City.

The shanty consisted of three rooms. Back of the kitchen Daddy Hopkins slept, and in the miserable coop-hole where Polly had once stored rubbish Granny Hope stretched out her weary bones at night. Polly's bed ranged the kitchen wall, and the room had but a bench, two old chairs and a three-legged table to offer in rude hospitality.

"I wheedled a little milk from Oscar, Granny," said the girl. "Goddy, but he's gettin' stingy!"

She put down the pail, went to the stove and thrust a piece of wood into it.

"Wood's as wet as hell," she complained, almost as if she had spoken to herself.

The old woman stirred and lifted her withered lids.

"Hell ain't wet," she muttered. "It's dry an' warm—hot, I mean," and she shivered, drawing nearer the fire. "'Tain't like this lakeside."

An expression of indulgent tenderness spread over Pollyop's face. It was a common joke in the shacks to envy the warm dry climate of the place of everlasting torment.

## 16 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"I reckon I better make you comfy here, Granny," the girl laughed, "if I'm goin' to keep you."

Quickly she hurried into the back room and as quickly brought forth a blanket which she wrapped around Mrs. Hope. As soon as the smoky wood fire would permit, she warmed some milk and poured it into a tin cup. Handing it to the woman, she explained:

"I got some left for Jerry. It'll warm you up nice inside."

"It's awful comfortin' like, Pollyop," whispered Granny, and she fell asleep in the weariness of old age.

Granny Hope had been in the Hopkins' shack since the first winter snow. Her own hut stood on a little point about a quarter of a mile away. In it she had lived alone ever since her husband had gone down in the Big Blow, a storm that was a tradition in the settlement, and which only the oldest inhabitants of the Silent City could remember.

One day Polly had found her sick in bed, and, as she had led the forlorn billy goat home, so did she bring Granny Hope, never realizing that in the tottering old figure she was entertaining an angel unawares. All she knew was that Granny's toothless smile, her cheerful words of love and



kindliness, made the sun shine brighter and the meager food more filling.

During the winter, Mrs. Hope had encouraged the girl to read. At first that had been difficult, for the shanty contained nothing but the tattered Bible the old woman had brought with her. Over and over Polly had read the miseries of Job, the patient, the long lamentations of Jeremiah, who always put her in mind of Daddy Hopkins; and she also knew by heart the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, who, so the Bible said, was the best man that had ever walked the globe.

So had those winter days of close companionship with the woman who had lived long and suffered much, and who now was almost ready to go on to larger experiences, brought out in Polly Hopkins a greater capacity for loving. The squatters called her "Pollyop, the love-lass," and sometimes, "Polly of the sun." Granny Hope explained this by saying: "They all love you, Poll, an' it's out of your own heart they get the feelin' of joy when they see ye."

While the old woman slept, the girl emptied some buckets filled with water that had dripped through the leaking roof. Polly had not cared in the winter if there were holes in the shanty, for the snow packed thick upon it, and strong ice filled up the cracks. But now spring had come,

## 18     STORM COUNTRY POLLY

she was kept busy catching the streams of water that forced their way through the kitchen ceiling! She knew her father had no time to repair the roof, for Jeremiah's days and nights were taken up in catching fish.

From behind the wood-box near where the goat stood, Pollyop took up an ax. Tenderly she bent and placed a kiss upon the goat's horny head. Then she touched Granny Hope.

The woman lifted her lids and smiled at the girl.

"What's the matter, love-lass?" she murmured.

"I'm goin' out, Granny," replied Polly. "If Daddy comes, tell 'im I'll be back in a while."

Into the rain she went, her bare feet carrying her swiftly over the ragged rocks, her curls gathered under her chin like a warm glistening hood. When later she appeared in front of the shanty, her gingham skirt was filled with rusty pans and old pieces of tin. She placed them on the doorstep, and looking hesitatingly at the willow tree, went back into the house. Mrs. Hope still slept, and the billy goat still munched his hay.

From a peg Polly took a pair of her father's trousers and clambered into them, tucking her skirts out of sight and rolling up the trouser legs, for Daddy Hopkins was much taller than his

daughter. Into one of the big pockets Polly thrust a handful of nails. It was a grotesque looking girl who a few minutes later was flattening out the pans and the old bits of tin upon the stone.

When that was finished, she gathered them up and, ax in hand, climbed into the willow tree and on to the roof. Daddy Hopkins would be glad when he came home and found the shack dry and warm. Then she began her task of hammering the pieces of tin over the holes through which the water dripped. Once in a while she stopped working, and, flat on her stomach, sought for smaller cracks.

Just as she had mended the last hole, she heard the sound of horses' hoofs and men's voices. With the fear of the persecuted, she crouched close to the roof, and, like some frightened animal, crawled to the edge of it. Squatters did not speak like that, neither did they ride horseback.

There in the lane, astride two magnificent animals, were two men. One she recognized instantly. Polly had every reason to know the tall man whose dark, handsome face had cast deep shadows over the Silent City. Marcus MacKenzie had been for years the Nemesis that hung over the Cayuga Lake squatters. Even during his absence on war work abroad, his long arm had

often reached back to the Silent City to pick away some husband and close the prison gates behind him.

In many of the sessions held in her father's hut, she had heard him discussed. She had heard plans to bring about his death, plans to circumvent his influence with the prominent men of Tompkins County to remove her people, one after another, from the lakeside.

Just then Pollyop had a passionate desire to throw the ax at him. She knew there was not a heart in all the Silent City that did not beat with dread at the very mention of his name.

Then she caught a glimpse of the other man's face and forgot her terror of Marcus MacKenzie. In Ithaca and about it she had seen many soldiers but never any one like MacKenzie's companion. He was dressed in an officer's uniform, and, as his horse whirled him into better view, the frown faded from Pollyop's brow as she gazed wonderingly upon him. She marked his flashing glances that swept the Silent City. She noted with a strange little thrill the beauty of the clear-cut features, the full, kindly mouth and the smooth, tanned skin.

Marcus MacKenzie was speaking rapidly, and though Polly could not hear what he said, she knew he was talking of the squatters. Then

words that made her tingle with joy came distinctly to her ears.

"But you can't turn a lot of folks out of their homes, Marc," rang forth a deep, rich voice. "Where under the Heaven would they go if you did?"

"Anywhere they damn please," snarled MacKenzie contemptuously. "If they were all dead, they'd be better off, and Ithaca too."

Polly's hand tightened on the ax-handle. To let it fly straight into the face of the haughty Ithacan would have been satisfaction indeed!

"Have you tried to buy them out?" asked the other.

"No, and I don't intend to," was the sharp retort. "They'll go because I'll make them go, that's all. I've been too busy for the last two years to make much of a dent among them, but, now I'm home for good, I mean to clear them off." An outward gesture of the officer's hand told Polly he was not in sympathy with MacKenzie's threat. "You can't judge of the situation, Bob," Marcus went on, "because you've been gone for years. Evelyn can tell you what they are, though."

The speaker wheeled his horse and pointed his riding whip straight at the Hopkins' shanty; and Polly's curly head drew quickly back.

## 22    STORM COUNTRY POLLY

“One of the worst of them lives here!” she heard plainly. “He’s sort of a mayor of the settlement. Jeremiah Hopkins! And such a tribe as that hut holds can’t be found anywhere else in this county. A worthless, tangle-haired girl and a boy half in the grave, and I heard only this morning they’re harboring a hag by the name of Hope. They live like pigs too.”

“The poor things haven’t much of a chance to live otherwise, have they, Marc?” The question evidently required no answer. “Well, what do you think of that?” he went on. Then he read aloud: “‘If your heart is loving and kind, come right in. If it ain’t, scoot off.’ Why, that’s beautiful!”

The warm, velvety brown the rich man’s threats had made a hard glare was brought back to Polly’s eyes by these words. She could have hugged the speaker as hard as she sometimes did Daddy Hopkins!

“Rubbish!” sneered MacKenzie. “Perfect rot! Your aunt was saying this morning that the Hopkins girl is as odd as she is filthy. The very idea of having a thing like that hung up!”

Polly saw the younger man reach out and touch the speaker with a gloved hand.

“Love isn’t rubbish, wherever you find it, old chap!” he exclaimed. “It gives even a squatter

shack a glimpse of Heaven. You ought to help these people, Marc. Give them a chance; make something of them, and they won't bother you."

Burning tears filled Polly's eyes. To hear him speak in sympathy with her fishermen friends touched her deeply. And he had spoken of love in the same way Granny Hope did, too. Pollyop had never imagined Old Marc's kind ever thought of the meek—the lowly—and the hungry. Far above the world, up in the skies beyond the clouds where the blue was, right alongside the crucified Saviour, Polly Hopkins placed this new friend of the Silent City. But so long had she feared MacKenzie and his cruel ways among them that she had a quick desire to find Daddy Hopkins, to tell him his enemy had returned, but—— Her thoughts were interrupted by MacKenzie speaking.

"They're pigs, Bob, I tell you," he repeated roughly, "and what I brought you down here to-day for ——"

Polly lost the rest of his sentence. Back and yet farther back she slipped over the roof. She had never heard anything so dreadful as this. In fact, she had always quite liked pigs, but she had never thought of comparing the shanty or Granny Hope and Daddy Hopkins to a barnyard and its occupants.

She heard the men ride away; and once more she sat up. By raising her body a little, she could see them walking their horses along the road that led its crooked way through the settlement.

MacKenzie's straight, thick-set figure made her shudder, but the slim, boyish one beside him brought a queer little thrill to her heart.

"He's a beautiful angel himself," she murmured, and taking up the ax, she slipped down the tree and dropped to the wet ground. Granny Hope straightened up as Polly entered the kitchen. Swiftly the girl crawled out of her father's trousers and tossed back her curls.

"What's the matter, pretty brat?" queried the woman drowsily.

"I got to find Daddy," replied Polly, her voice shaking. "Old Marc's back an' he's after us squatters a-flyin', an', Granny ——"

She paused, her face softened, and she smiled.

"Yep, honey?" prompted Mrs. Hope.

"Old Marc had a beautiful angel with him," went on the girl, "an' he likes us squatters. He stood right up to that rotten MacKenzie. I heard him, I did." She crossed to the old woman's side. "Love's able to send a angel slap-bang down to this old earth to help us, huh, Granny Hope?"



“Yep, sure—sure, honey-girl,” murmured Granny, and once more her head bobbed forward, and she slept.

Polly Hopkins crept out of the hut and sped away along the shore toward Bad Man’s Ravine.

### CHAPTER III

ABOUT the time Polly Hopkins began to repair the shack roof, Evelyn Robertson came into the room where her mother sat reading. The girl was dressed to go out and was drawing a pair of gloves over her ringed fingers.

"Where are you going, Eve?" inquired the lady. "It seems to me that you're running out altogether too much. If you went to town with the other young people, it wouldn't be so bad, but you don't."

"Don't scold, mamma," Evelyn snapped. "I can't stay in the house morning, noon and night."

"But there's your piano!" Mrs. Robertson ejaculated. "You haven't practiced in months. Now don't blame me, Eve, if, when Marcus asks you to play, you fall flat."

A dull red ran into the girl's cheeks, but she made no reply as she smoothed the wrinkles from her gloves.

"The good Lord knows," continued the mother irritably, "that I've kept at you enough. Now

Marc and Robert are home, how are you going to entertain them? Men demand so much."

The experiences of the past two years had taught Evelyn that lesson. It had been demand, demand and more demanding ever since, on girlish impulse, she had secretly married Oscar Bennett.

"And you heard what Marcus said last night about the Silent City folks," went on Mrs. Robertson. "What you want of that Hopkins girl I don't understand. Marcus says her father is the most dangerous man among the lot of them, and the girl herself is queer."

"Oh, don't talk about the squatters all the time," cried Evelyn. "I hate the very sound of the word. What's Polly Hopkins, anyway? . . . Now Marcus is home ——"

"Darling," the mother interrupted eagerly, "it has always been my hope that you and Marc would grow to care for each other. He is so rich and so handsome! Now, isn't he?"

A groan almost leapt from Evelyn's lips. What a fool she had been! Here she was married to a man she loathed, a man she was ashamed of! The realization that another man, rich, good-looking and in every way desirable, had turned his serious eyes upon her, almost made her blurt out the whole story to her mother; but

having kept silent so long, she dared not speak now. All through the night she had tossed and turned, hunting some way to get Oscar Bennett out of her life without Marcus MacKenzie knowing anything about it. She dared not go to Oscar himself; Polly Hopkins was the only hope she had. All Bennett cared for was money. He was as tired of her as she was of him. Perhaps he would go away quietly and set her free if she gave him money enough. Would her mother give it to her?

"It's raining, too," whined Mrs. Robertson.  
"Eve——"

A very pale Evelyn came forward and looked into the speaker's face.

"Mother, do you honestly want me to marry Marc?" she asked, trembling.

Mrs. Robertson caught at the outflung hand.

"I do, I do indeed, darling," she answered.  
"And he'll ask you too, I'm sure. Perhaps not to-day or to-morrow, for he's just renewing his acquaintance with you. By the way he looked last night I could tell he was considering it."

A handkerchief dropped from Evelyn's fingers, and she stooped to pick it up.

"If I lead Marcus on," she suggested, rising, "and—and get him to ask me to marry him, will you give me any sum of money I want?"

The last words were spoken hesitatingly. She had seen a horrified expression cross her mother's face.

"Sum of money?" repeated Mrs. Robertson. "What do you mean by a sum of money?"

"Quite a lot, dear," was the reply. "I can't tell how much now, but I'll let you know. You'll promise me, mother." Then the realization of how much depended upon the answer swept over her, and she added frantically: "Oh, do, please. I've got to have it before I can marry Marc."

Her voice shook with emotion, and her young face seemed suddenly old and haggard. Mrs. Robertson had never seen her daughter in such a state.

"Sit down a minute, Evelyn," she commanded. "Now tell me what you want money for. I know very well that you haven't spent what I've allowed you upon yourself. That's why I've refused you so much lately. No more secrets or mystery! I want the facts. Now tell me this minute."

The girl dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"I can't," she whispered.

For some time she remained in the same attitude, while her mother studied her silently. At length the girl lifted herself erect.

"I can't explain," she broke out, "and I suppose you're thinking all kinds of things. I can't help it if you do. You'll have to give me the money I need, if you want me to marry Marc. There's no 'ifs' and 'ands' about that. If you'll give me the money"—she faltered, wiped her lips and concluded slowly, "I'll marry Marcus MacKenzie."

"You must be crazy, Eve," Mrs. Robertson said in a cold voice, "to talk to me like that. If you have any secrets from me, it's time you told them."

"Well?" shot from Evelyn sharply, "suppose I have? It's my secret, isn't it? Are you going to help me or not, that's the question."

It was evident to Mrs. Robertson that the situation was not to be trifled with. In a twinkling her daughter had changed from a meek and timid girl to an aggressive woman. To try to bully her any more would be a mere waste of effort.

"Heavens," she began, "this is a pretty how to do, I must say. I can't imagine why you should want money. It doesn't make much difference, anyway. There are more reasons than one why you can't get it from me."

"What are they?" fell from the girl's lips.

"The first is," returned the mother, tartly, "I

don't like being held up in this high-handed manner by my own daughter."

She paused; and Evelyn caught her breath. If that were all, she would row and rage until she got what she wanted.

Mother and daughter were staring at one another, each demanding an explanation. Evelyn did not intend to make any! Mrs. Robertson weakened before the steely-blue in the girl's eyes.

"But the main reason is," she went on, "I haven't got it. I don't own this house, nor—nor ——"

Evelyn sprang to her feet and confronted her mother. Her face was drawn into cruel lines, and her hands were gripped spasmodically.

"You lie," she burst forth. "You've always lied to me about money."

A bitter smile drew down the corners of the older woman's mouth. She knew how true the accusation was.

"Well, this time," she answered, "I'm telling you the simple truth. I not only do not own this house, but ——"

"Then who does own it?" interjected the girl.

"Your cousin, Robert Percival," was the quick response; "and he's supplied all the money we have used. Now perhaps you won't try to get something out of me I haven't got."

"Mother!" cried the girl, in agony.

"I told you, Eve, that you should know the truth," Mrs. Robertson continued. "You've asked for it, and here it is. When Robert's father and mother died, I came here to take care of him. I had nothing then and have nothing now. You were only a baby, and I've always kept the facts from you. When Robert went to war, he arranged that if he didn't come back, I should have the home and enough money to keep us."

Evelyn's eyes widened. Of a surety this was the truth.

"Then we aren't rich?" she demanded huskily.

"No, that we're not!" responded the lady, "and what's more, we are dependent upon Robert for everything."

With a quick gesture Evelyn caught her mother's arm, despair changing the lines on her face.

"Oh, you needn't be so theatrical, my dear," said the woman. "Robert's never given me the slightest reason to feel he thought us a burden. I'm quite like his mother, as I should be. The only thing necessary is that you should feather your own nest before Bob makes up his mind to get married. I know very well you've turned down many a young man in Ithaca. Now your



chance has come. Marc MacKenzie's rich. He loves you ——"

Without waiting to hear anything more, Evelyn ran out of the room. Mrs. Robertson sank back with a sigh, partly of relief that at last Evelyn knew just the situation they were in, partly of anxiety as to her daughter's secret.

## CHAPTER IV

As she ran, Polly Hopkins cogitated on MacKenzie's words. Evelyn's mother had said that she was as odd as she was filthy.

Mrs. Robertson! The arrogant woman who lived on the hill in a house almost big enough to hold every person in the Silent City ought not to say anything against the squatters. If the grand lady only knew it, her own daughter had stooped to a trick such as would put to shame any hut-woman. A squatter wife would not leave her man to do for himself or deny him before the world. Added to Polly's personal humiliation was MacKenzie's threat against Daddy Hopkins.

The hope Robert Percival's words had instilled in her seemed to die as she traveled, and her heart beat with fear, for should Old Marc get his fingers on Daddy Hopkins, Polly had no doubt there would be nothing but imprisonment for him and the graveyard for her and Jerry. She could not think of life without her father. Not a single night had she ever been away from his kindly love and attention—and Wee Jerry! A vivid picture rose before her of the baby's grief

if he could not straddle Daddy's neck and play his father was a horse.

She went faster and faster as her brother's weird little face impressed a new sorrow upon her mind. Old Marc and Daddy Hopkins! But the "beautiful angel" had said people could not be without homes, and the squatters had no other place to live but the Silent City.

When she reached the top of the ragged rocks, she pulled up and cast a glance out over the lake. How high the water was! Indifferent to wind and rain, the gulls skipped the foamed crests of the rolling waves. No questions of food and shelter troubled them. Pollyop loved the gulls; indeed she loved every living thing — No, not quite that either, for she could never remember that she had thought well of Old Marc, and the scene in the farmhouse that morning had put Oscar Bennett alongside of the persecutor of her people.

The calling of her name made her turn swiftly. Recognizing Evelyn Robertson's voice, she waited while the other girl came down the path from MacKenzie's woods. She was quite unlike the little squatter. A fashionable raincoat protected her from the wet; and she carried a light umbrella in her gloved hand. The greeting between them was one of embarrassment.

"I were goin' to find my Daddy," Polly explained. "He's somewheres along the lake. I didn't know I'd come on you this mornin'."

The memory of Mrs. Robertson's words brought a rush of color to her face, and she looked down at her feet. There surged up in her a feeling that she did not want anything to do with any of these people. Why should she? They were rich; and she was only a squatter brat! She started to walk away.

"I said," she flung over her shoulder, "I were lookin' for my Daddy. Good-by."

Evelyn Robertson was not interested in Jeremiah Hopkins. As far as she was concerned, the whole Silent City might be washed off into the waves and carried away. Her own troubles filled her mind. The shock of her mother's disclosure stunned her, for without the help she had expected, she could see no way out of Oscar Bennett's clutches. In the meantime, the squatter girl was her only means of communication. Suppressing the angry exclamation which Polly's evident desire to avoid her prompted, she cried:

"Wait, Pollyop, wait a minute! I came down just to speak to you."

Wheeling slowly around, Polly faced her.

"What do you want?" she asked in surly tones.

"Pollyop," ejaculated Evelyn, coming swiftly to her side, "I'm almost scared to death. My cousin Bob—oh, you've got to help me again!"

Bob! Then the soldier in the uniform was Evelyn's cousin. Bob! That was the nicest name in all the world, a name fitted for the man who had dropped into the Silent City to help along the squatters. Suddenly her mood changed. She forgot Oscar Bennett and his odious words, forgot that the girl crying for her aid had allowed her mother to say dreadful things against her and Daddy Hopkins. If Evelyn were related to the soldier, then Polly Hopkins would do anything Miss Robertson asked of her.

"What do you want?" she repeated shyly, blushing.

"It's this," answered Evelyn. "Mr. MacKenzie's home—and my cousin came with him. My cousin, Robert Percival!"

Polly flushed and lowered her eyes, but if Evelyn gave the girl's confusion any thought at all, she laid it to the fact that she had pronounced the name of the man who hated the shanty folks.

"Is your cousin a handsome feller with long legs an' a face——"

Pollyop stopped for lack of words. How could she describe the fine, sympathetic countenance she had seen from the hut roof?

## 38 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"Yes," Evelyn interjected, "Bob's awfully good-looking, and he's tall too. Now listen, Pollyop; you must go to Oscar again for me this very day.—Oh, dear, he's so mean to me!"

Polly considered the pretty face a moment. She could not understand why the home-coming of the cousin and Old Marc should make Evelyn so flustered. With her steady eyes upon her she was studying over this question when Evelyn burst forth:

"Tell Oscar I haven't any money! I just can't get it now! And, Pollyop, tell him too that he mustn't write me any more letters. My mother—well, if she found one of them, she'd turn me out of the house."

Polly's mouth flew open. She could not conceive of a girl doing anything in the world bad enough to make her mother turn her out of her home. But then—rich folks never did things just like the squatters.

"Lordy! Would she now?" she gasped.

"My mother's proud," said Evelyn, in excuse. "You know that, Polly."

Certainly Polly knew it! Hadn't she ducked out of sight of the unsympathetic lady many a time when lurking near the Robertson home with a message from Oscar to Evelyn?

"I don't know what I will do, Polly," the other

girl went on, "if you don't help me—and—some time I'll really do something for you."

A temptation to blurt out the words Marcus MacKenzie had spoken assailed the squatter girl; but Evelyn looked so worried! Polly's heart was as soft as the velvet in her eyes when she came upon trouble of any kind.

"You've been good to Wee Jerry," she interposed gently. "Awful good. He 'most giggles his little life away when I bring him the goodies you send him."

"I'm going to do a lot for both of you," returned Evelyn impulsively, "and to-day I brought this bag of candy for the baby. Here! Take it! And you'll go to Oscar for me as soon as you can, won't you?"

Smiling, Polly slipped the package of sweets into her pocket. She could forgive anything against herself for the sake of seeing Wee Jerry smile and hearing him crow over the contents of the small bag.

"Yep," she agreed, "an' say all you tell me to. But what if he kicks up a row? He's gettin' awful pernicky, Oscar is!"

A sharp cry from Evelyn was followed by:

"Tell him he mustn't! Make him promise he won't! And—and, Pollyop, I'll tell you something else, if you'll promise never to tell."

"I never told anything yet, have I?" Pollyop protested in low, indignant tones.

Staring out through the drizzle into the confusion of the tumbling waves, Evelyn's hope and courage fell still lower. She wanted to talk, to tell some one the tremendous thing Marcus MacKenzie's coming had brought to her. The squatter girl knew about the marriage to Bennett and had proved herself absolutely trustworthy. Perhaps if she understood how vital it was that the tie to Oscar be broken, she would bring more pressure to bear upon him.

"No one must ever know about Oscar and me," she began, still harping upon the great fear that obsessed her, "because ——"

"Because of your Ma," interrupted Polly. "Sure I know that!"

A slim hand was raised in partial protest.

"Mother's an awful worry to me sometimes, but it's not she altogether. But—but ——"

"Then—then—it's your fine-lookin' cousin," came brokenly from Polly, during the pause in Miss Robertson's statement.

"Of course, I wouldn't have him know for anything," Evelyn nodded assent. "Oh, goodness, I might as well tell it and get it over. I love some one else, and he loves me, Pollyop. I want to be his wife more than I've ever wanted any-



thing before. He's wealthy, dear, and I've got to marry him."

Polly's face gathered a shocked expression. How could she marry any one when she was already wedded to Oscar Bennett? By any law Polly knew of, a girl could not have two husbands at the same time. Even the squatters, in their careless way of living, did nothing like that.

"You can't tie up to no other man while you belong to Oscar, Miss Eve," she ventured gravely.

"Well, I know it; of course I know it," retorted Evelyn, resenting the censure in the other's tones; "but I've got to be free. I'm so frantic, I don't much care how. That's the way Oscar's got to help me!"

"He won't never do that," Polly replied dubiously. "It's been awful hard to keep him from yappin' out the hull thing as 'tis!" A shrewd expression crossed her face, and she went on, "This mornin', why, only this mornin', he said, Oscar did, he was sick, plumb sick of bein' without you."

"I don't care if he is," was the bitter answer. "I won't go into that farmhouse; and he knows it. Anyway, make him understand he's got to wait; he must be quiet and not bother me. Then come to-night, and let me know what he says. Will you, Polly?"

## 42    STORM COUNTRY POLLY

The squatter girl nodded. She would rather have been switched than see Oscar Bennett again.

"Yep," she assented, "I'll hunt him up late this afternoocn and then hustle right over to you. I got to go now!—Shall I tell Oscar what you said about lovin' some one else, huh?"

The little scream from Evelyn was enough of a negative to answer Polly Hopkins, but the other added:

"Mercy, no, you're never to tell him that any more than you'd tell any one else about Oscar and me. There, now I'll go back, and you can find your father. Oh, try and make Oscar behave himself, Pollyop."

For some moments after Evelyn left her, Polly watched the slim figure on the path to the woods. Then she suddenly remembered Marcus MacKenzie and without a backward glance hurried swiftly toward the south.

## CHAPTER V

MEANTIME three squatters from the Silent City were in the Bad Man's Ravine, dressing the fish they had netted the night before. Ithaca's legal eye kept its unswerving gaze upon the trio now hidden away in the depths of the chasm, plying their unlawful trade. Often some vigorous young upstart, holding his first job from the State, vowed that before another winter settled over Ithaca the lake shores would be cleared and the Silent City razed to the water's edge; but the squatters stuck like burrs, loved their own loyally, hated their enemies hard, and went their silent way.

One enormous man was seated on a flat rock, his bare feet almost touching the water as it hurried by to the lake. On his shoulders, with his legs wound tightly around the man's neck, sat a small boy, little more than a baby. He was shivering with cold, and, as the spring rain shot its drops upon his face, he lifted a small hand and brushed them away. Seemingly oblivious of the weight against his swarthy head, the man picked up a fish and contemplated it with a scowl. Then he proceeded to clean it deftly.

#### 44      STORM COUNTRY POLLY

Larry Bishop, seated beside him, had been working a long time, his thoughts far away from his actions.

"It's a damn bad day," he grunted finally, "an' cold too. You'd have best left the brat to home with pretty Poll, Jerry Hopkins."

Hopkins twisted his lips into a whimsical grimace.

"Wee Jerry won't stay without me," he explained. "He rags the life out of Poll when I leave 'im. He's spent 'most all his years a-straddle of my neck, an' I guess the rest of 'em'll be spent the same way."

"That's what's made his legs so bowed a pig could run between 'em, I'm thinkin'," said the other man. "Let the boy run the earth a while, Jerry.—Where's your Poll to-day?"

"In the shanty with Granny Hope," answered Hopkins. "By God, that girl can drag home more halt an' lame an' dumb things than any one livin'! But she do say, my Pollyop does, that Granny Hope brought a lot of love with her when she come to my hut. She told me, my Pollyop did, as how the granny keeps sayin' that lovin' folks an' bein' kind to 'em is the greatest thing in the world.—Mebbe—I dunno."

A hard expression crossed the heavy grizzled face. Jeremiah Hopkins believed little in the

love that Granny Hope had taught Pollyop. He knew but the passionate longing for Wee Jerry's dead mother and a fierce desire to protect and feed his children.

"Granny Hope's a mush bag," observed Larry, "an' she suffers that bad, it's a pity she can't slip into 'er grave where she'd be warm an' have nothin' to do but rest a while. Young folks die, an' she's left!" His voice trailed off on the last word, as if he had in his mind one who lay in the graveyard that stretched over the hill beyond the Bennett farm, where often the Silent City sent one of its stragglers.

No one answered Bishop. They knew he held in memory the woman and baby who had passed away two years before, while he was shut up in Auburn prison. The silence was unbroken for a long time except by the rushing of the water, the gruesome running of the knives over the fish scales and a little whimper, now and then, from the child astride the man's neck.

"I heard in town," broke forth Lye Braeger, "that Old Mare MacKenzie's comin' home. Here's where us squatters get hell flung at us good and plenty."

Jeremiah Hopkins stopped his work and frowned at the speaker.

"He'd best be a-lookin' out for hissself," he

muttered. "Mebbe he'll get a taste of the hot place if he does any struttin' around the Silent City."

"Mebbe," repeated Larry Bishop, and no more. Marcus MacKenzie, handsome, smug and rich, had been the instrument that had moved the hands of the law to swing open the prison doors and shove Larry Bishop inside just when his young wife had needed him most.

In the forest that bordered the ragged rocks, Polly could hear the song of the wind in the branches. The fine rain gathered into large drops on the leaves and splashed to the ground, and varied the cadence of the rustling tree tops. It was like sweet music to her ears. How happy she had been only yesterday with no old MacKenzie sneaking about the Silent City, no menace of Oscar's kisses, and no dread that Daddy Hopkins stood in a new danger.

Once in sight of the roaring water, rushing in torrents from the Bad Man's Ravine, she sent out a peculiar little trill; and the hoarse answer of a man's voice mingled with its echo as it struck the enormous, up-rearing rock slabs.

Polly's heart bounded and lost its heavy weight of fear. Daddy Hopkins had responded ponderously to her first call. In another moment she was crawling up the jagged sides of the deep gulf.

Hardly could she pierce the mossy gloom off toward the railroad tracks. Then she caught sight but dimly of the men working at their fish, and scrambled on. Coming nearer, her eyes sought out her father, and when she called his name, Wee Jerry squealed back at her.

As she came up to them, Hopkins' companions waved her a greeting, but stopped their work at the sight of her sober face.

"What's up, lassie?" demanded Hopkins. "You ain't seen a ghost, have you?"

Her bare feet paddling through the cold water that ran in streams over the flat rocks, she came forward.

"Worser'n that, Daddy," she replied. "Much worser'n that! Old Marc's home, an' I heard him say he's goin' to root us squatters out of the Silent City."

A brute-like glare flashed into Larry Bishop's eyes.

"Did he now, brat?" he muttered, taking up his knife and looking at it.

Polly squatted down beside her father, slipping one hand under his arm. The other she gave to the child, who grasped it eagerly.

"Did he now?" came in repetition from Bishop's throat.

"Yep," asserted Pollyop, with an emphatic bob of her head, "an' I come to tell you all you'd best be a-lookin' out for 'im. Daddy, he says you're the worst man in the settlement; but everybody knows he's a liar."

"He'd best be lookin' out for his own hide," Hopkins shot back like a flash of steel. "I ain't in any mind to stand much of his guff, the dirty duffer."

Withdrawing her arm from her father's, she leaned her chin on her hand. She wanted to urge them not to worry too much, to tell them of the other man, rich like Old Marc, who had expressed in tender tones a kindly interest in their welfare. Somehow though the words would not come. The peaceful figure did not fit in with the secret understanding that expressed itself in the frowning, furtive glances that passed from one to the other of her men-folks. Fear for them shook her from head to foot. To fight Mac-Kenzie was madness! It meant prison for a squatter to interfere with him or anything that was his.

"He's awful, powerful strong," she ventured in answer to the look she had intercepted, "an' powerful rich!"

"An' money's what makes the mare go," struck in Lye Braeger.



"Sure, so 'tis," answered Polly. "But 'tain't everything in the world. I got Granny Hope's word for that. An' she knows a lot about love, Granny does."

Larry Bishop's sudden laugh cracked in the middle, and he swallowed fiercely.

"Love! Hell!" he burst out huskily. "Granny'll know soon what havin' money means. Some mornin' the Silent City'll wake up an' find the Hope shack burned to the rocks."

"Mebbe not," replied Polly simply. "Anyway, Granny don't need her hut now she's livin' with us."

A sudden thought of Robert Percival shot a queer little thrill through her, and she got confusedly to her feet.

"Lordy, but the wind's cold this mornin'!" she exclaimed.

"That's so," answered her father. "It's too blamed cold for the baby to stay here. Get off'n my neck, boy, an' go along home with Poll, an' get het up a bit."

The child set up a howl that flung itself back and forth in squealing echoes from side to side of the ravine, but the struggle of unloosening Wee Jerry's fingers from his father's thick hair was short and sharp.

"Take him home, brat," said Jeremiah to

50    STORM COUNTRY POLLY

Pollyop. "He's like a frog, poor imp. We got a full hour's work yet."

"Ain't a-goin' to leave my Daddy Hopkins," yelled Jerry, stamping his queer little feet on the cold, wet rock.

Polly dug into her pocket and mysteriously drew out a paper bag and held it up.

"There's something good in it, Jerry," she wheedled. "Come with Pollyop, an' she'll give you a mouthful."

A wide baby smile showed two rows of white teeth, and Jerry's crooked little legs bore his thin body straight into Polly's outstretched arms.

"Open your mouth, darlin'," coaxed the girl, "an' in will go a sweetie. There! Now I guess you'll mog along home with Pollyop."

With the child's hand in hers, she looked at her father.

"Come when you can, Daddy. I got a s'prise for you."

"Good little kid, your girl is, Jeremiah," droned Braeger, and he grunted as he straightened out his legs.

Hopkins bent over to catch another glimpse of his children.

"Yep," he agreed, a wavering smile touching his lips. "God love 'er! She's like her ma was at her age—as near like as two peas in a pod."

## CHAPTER VI

ABOUT half-way home Pollyop picked the child up, and hoisting him to her shoulder, strode on, her strong young feet making rapid progress over the slippery rocks.

On entering the shack she found Granny Hope still asleep. Then she replenished the fire and sat down with Jerry on her lap. She disrobed him, dried the small body, and placed him on the cot under the blankets. Another piece of candy was popped into the ever-ready little mouth; and he cuddled down contentedly.

His daughter's cheerful face, when Jeremiah came home for his dinner, drove away, for the time being, the dread her announcement of MacKenzie's return had stirred in him. Her description of mending the roof brought a wry smile to his face. She sat on his knee while he smoked his pipe and chattered of the little intimate things of the lakeside, and later sent him and Jerry off to Larry Bishop's shack, feeling the better for food and warmth and love.

At five o'clock, milk-pail in hand, she took the lane that led to the Bennett farm. Nothing but her promise to Evelyn would have dragged her again that day into Oscar's presence. Nor did she consider that the message she had to deliver would incline the farmer to be very generous in the matter of milk. Suppose he demanded pay for it on the basis he had suggested!

As she came within sight of the Bennett farmhouse, she looked around timidly. The bulldog tied at the fence barked her a wriggling welcome. Polly stooped and caressed him. Then she went on to the barn quickly. The late afternoon shadows were falling and Pollyop wanted to be back in the shack before dark. She rounded the building and went into the cow stables. On a nail in the wall hung a lantern, and the farmer sat milking a cow.

"Hello, Oscar!" was her greeting. "I saw Miss Eve, but I didn't tell her nothin' about the kisses you wanted."

Bennett turned and studied her curiously, taking quick stock of her, even to the brown of her bare feet. No, he had not made a mistake in summing her up that morning.

"You better hadn't," he growled, without interrupting his work. "I suppose you brought me some fool message from her, eh?" Having

finished the cow, he rose and stood with the brimming pail of milk in his hand. "She sent you, didn't she?"

Polly hesitated a moment, coughed and cleared her throat.

"A little milk for Jerry, please," she suggested, extending her can.

Bennett snatched it from her hand.

"Good God, you squatters're nothing but beggars," he grumbled, but because he was eager to get her message, he filled the pail full. Smilingly Polly took it back.

"I'm thankin' you, Oscar," she gurgled, "an' now mebbe a fresh egg for Granny Hope?"

He made an angry motion with his hand.

"Up in that box," he snapped. "Then tell what you came for!"

Eggs were good for Jerry also, she remembered.

"Can I take two, Oscar?"

Bennett was putting the full pail upon a shelf.

"Oh, I suppose so," he grunted. Then he took up an empty bucket and stepped to the next cow and sat down. "What'd Eve say?"

With two white eggs in her hand, the squatter girl came back to his side.

"Your woman sent word by me," she began ———

"Hurry up, Polly," came in abrupt interruption. "Out with it."

"She said, your lady did," Polly began again, "that—that ——"

"Tell it, and don't be all day about it," ordered the farmer.

Pollyop took a couple of steps backward toward the door, ready to fly if Oscar showed any signs of unusual wrath.

"She said you wasn't to write her any more letters," she replied. "She's awful scared. She trembled all over when she told me."

The milk was almost spilled on the floor, Bennett's startled movement was so sudden.

"What did she say about money?" he demanded gruffly.

Through the dim light of the lantern, Polly looked at him pleadingly.

"She just can't get another cent," she returned, "an' she's feelin' terrible bad about it."

Although he had not finished his task, Bennett jumped up from his stool, and one step took him very close to the nervous young speaker.

"She can't, eh?" he cried. "She means she won't, I guess. By God, she will, or I'll come out with the whole thing. You go and tell her so. She's got rich folks, and I didn't marry her

to keep quiet all my life. Tell her either she comes home here to me, or she pays up. If she pays ——” he paused, then laughed. “Oh, you needn’t look as if I was goin’ to swat you one, Pollyop,” he went on, “but as I was sayin’, if she pays up and I get rid of her, then—me for you, Polly Hopkins.”

His voice was harsh, and his manners rough. Polly retreated to the threshold.

“The time’s here,” Oscar went on, “when both you women will be leaping to my gad. There! Get home and say to my lady just what I said”—again he broke off, only to continue, “leaving out the part about you. See, Pollyop?”

Dumb with dread, Polly sagged weakly against the door casing. No wonder Evelyn Robertson didn’t want to live with such a man!

“And you can tell her to come to-night at nine o’clock to Granny Hope’s old shack,” he proceeded. “I want to talk to her. Now get along and don’t come round after any more milk, or I’ll throw you out of the barn.”

Glad to be gone, Polly passed out to the lane. On beyond, she could see the lake rising and falling in billows of foam. In a little ravine at her left a noisy stream rumbled down the hill. With wistful eyes she watched it through the fast gathering dusk flow away to the lake. It was

then she saw something moving about in a small pool of water in a rock basin. Carefully she put the milk and eggs on a bit of smooth turf. Down the bank she slipped, and there in the falling gloom, struggling in the water, was a baby lamb. Pollyop forgot all about Evelyn Robertson and her troubles; forgot everything for the moment save that a living thing was fighting with all his might and main to save himself.

She tucked her skirts up about her waist and waded into the water. Several times she fell, and, dripping wet, scrambled up again. When she pulled the lamb to the bank, she dropped to the ground, gasping for breath.

"Poor little duffer," she murmured. "You was 'most gone, wasn't you? Come on home with Pollyop an' get loved up a bit!"

In the road she picked up the pail, slipped the eggs into the milk and went swiftly down the lane, the lamb under one arm. Polly's heart sang with gladness. Out of the rigors of the Storm Country, out of the cold ravine water, she had found another little thing to care for.

Jeremiah Hopkins and Larry Bishop were in the shack when Polly arrived with her burdens. With much pride she displayed the lamb; then she fed him a portion of the milk with a spoon. While she was preparing the evening meal, she



invited her father's friend to take potluck with them.

After supper she settled her family. Wee Jerry she tucked into Daddy's bed, and Granny Hope was made comfortable in a chair by the stove, where she soon nodded off to sleep. Then, the lamb in her lap and the billy goat at her knee, Pollyop sat down on the edge of her cot, facing the two men. She knew by the dark expressions on their faces that a question of import had come up.

"Me an' Larry, brat, have been tryin' to think of some way of gettin' rid of Old Marc," began Hopkins grimly.

Nervous brown fingers plucked at the lamb's wool as Polly, going white, stared at her father.

"You don't mean hurtin' him, Daddy dear, do you?" she broke out. "Oh, if that's what you're talkin' about, don't do it. Don't do it, Daddy! Something beautiful is goin' to happen to us squatters. God up in the sky sent a angel smack down from the high Heaven to help us."

The serious, lovely face turned pleadingly, truthfully up to his prevented Hopkins from indulging his desire to laugh. Polly turned and looked at Larry. His dark face was heavy with frown and deep, grief-cut lines.

"There ain't any angels anywhere but up

there," muttered Larry Bishop, thinking of his dead woman and making an upward thrust with his thumb.

"Yep, there is, Larry," contradicted Polly impetuously. "I seen one. He's bigger'n you an' Daddy put together, I guess; an' his face looks like the sun, all shiny an' bright. He says the squatters has to have a place to live in just like other folks, an' he won't let Old Marc run us out of the Silent City. Mebbe after a while, when he gets to workin' for us, you can hunt an' fish just the same as ever!"

Hopkins looked at his daughter as if she had lost her mind.

"What's eatin' you, brat?" he grunted.

"Nothin'," replied Polly, "but I know what I heard. An' you, Daddy, an' you, Larry, will find it's so when you see all us squatters bein' happy again."

"Spiel it out to us," put in Bishop eagerly.

Then Polly told them. She explained just how she had worked out in her mind that Robert Percival was not like an ordinary man. She thrilled as she described him and ventured the remark that he was a cousin to Evelyn Robertson.

Abruptly both men laughed.

"Why, he's got more money'n Old Marc, Poll," snapped Hopkins. "It's just because we don't

happen to be settin' on his ground that he ain't wantin' us off."

It was quite evident that both the fishermen were of one opinion. Polly got up and placed the lamb in a corner of the wood-box.

"I bet a eel he helps us squatters though," she nodded positively. "An' you both got to promise right now on this," she picked up Granny Hope's Bible, "that you won't use a gun on Marc MacKenzie, nor do nothin' harmful to him. Let the other man look after us.—There! Kiss this here book, an' you'll both feel better."

There was something compelling about the girl. It may have been the tones of her voice, wonderfully sweet and tremulously earnest. It may have been the brilliant smile she flashed upon her listeners. At any rate, the Mayor of the Silent City and Larry Bishop, his henchman, repeated in dull apathy the oath she dictated to them, the words that made the Storm Country a safe habitation for Marcus MacKenzie. Then both men reverently kissed the Bible and fell back limply in their chairs.

Polly kissed the ragged edges of the book too, then she turned to Hopkins.

"Daddy, honey, I'm goin' out. Give your kid a lovin' smack. I'll be back quicker'n the billy goat can blink."

## CHAPTER VII

THE afternoon had been unpleasant for both Mrs. Robertson and her daughter. The lady was studiously icy to Evelyn, and the girl was utterly miserable. Robert Percival was away with MacKenzie. In his absence, although the two women ate dinner together and kept each other company afterward in the drawing-room, their conversation was limited to the simplest commonplaces. The return of the men eased the tension. Percival excused himself almost at once to write some letters, and as MacKenzie made evident his eagerness to get Evelyn by herself, Mrs. Robertson seized a chance to steal away to her own room.

For some time after her departure the girl and the man were silent. This was the first time in Marc's life that his heart had been really touched by a woman, and in spite of his years and experience, he was almost as bashful as a young boy. Hitherto his one answer to those who had asked why he had not married had been that "he was too busy," but now he knew that marrying Evelyn Robertson was the most important business he could undertake.

At length their eyes met, and the girl's lowered, while the color mounted in a flood to her hair.

The man was by her side in an instant. He had read in the shy, retreating glance what he longed to see.

"Evelyn! I—I—I—believe you care for me, I really believe you do," he exclaimed.

She rose in confusion and almost fell into his arms as he stretched them out to her. Her head sank forward on his chest and rested there until Marc placed his finger under her chin and tilted her head back.

"You do, sweet?" he demanded, his voice trembling.

"Yes," whispered Evelyn.

"Now isn't it strange," asked Marcus, after they took up their conversation again, "that while I was gone I always thought of you, but not just like this. Honey, girl, how long have you loved me? Before—before to-day?"

"I think always," confessed Evelyn, with a growing flush.

What a fortunate man Marcus MacKenzie considered himself just at that moment! He had won the prettiest girl in Ithaca; and she loved him.

"And to think I only came home last night,"

he exulted. "This time yesterday you were free, my Eve. At this moment no power can take you away from me."

Dreadful recollections of Oscar intruded upon Evelyn's new happiness. Oh, if she only had the courage to tell Marcus! Would he keep on loving her and help her to get free, or would he — She glanced into his face. There were upon it the marks of breeding, of pride in himself, his wealth, position and power. She knew how highly he regarded the conventions of society. If she should disclose to him the secret of her marriage to the farmer, he would see nothing but the blot upon her and turn away in disgust. No, she couldn't tell him!

Oscar Bennett alone could make her future safe and happy. Would he release her and keep her secret? Oh, money! Money! She must have it! She could strangle her mother for failing her in this desperate need. Despair overwhelmed her and made MacKenzie's arms burdensome. With an effort she smiled faintly and withdrew from him.

"I don't want to let you go, darling," he laughed. "It seems like a beautiful dream!"

Eve wished passionately that she were at liberty to make the dream come true.

"You are my beloved," asserted Marcus, and

with the girl's whispered "yes," he allowed her to leave the room.

Evelyn went immediately to her mother's apartment and, opening the door, slipped in and sank down upon the floor at Mrs. Robertson's side.

"I've told him I'd marry him," she said, with trembling lips. "Mother dear, oh, please, mother dear, don't you think you could borrow some money from Robert for me? I must have it. After I'm married to Marcus, I could get it all back for you. I know I could."

A sharp uplift of Mrs. Robertson's chin was her only answer for a little while. Evelyn was weeping softly, her head against her mother's knee.

"I'm delighted, Evelyn," she said finally, "that you've decided to marry Marcus. Nothing must interfere with that. You're in some kind of a scrape, I suppose. I do hope it's nothing disgraceful. I could never forgive you; but I won't even think of doing anything until you tell me all about it. I was displeased with the way you acted this morning, and I am yet!"

"I know it, oh, don't I know," sobbed Eve, "but I can't help it. I've just got to have a lot of money, and you can't expect me to ask Marcus."

Mrs. Robertson drew away with a shiver.

"If you so forgot yourself, your family and your name as to do such a thing, I should disown you, Evelyn," she said, finality in her tones.

Evelyn rose wearily. She could imagine the heights of her mother's scorn if she discovered the actual situation. She felt that she would rather tell MacKenzie than the unsympathetic, frowning woman in the chair.

"There's no use, mother, in trying to talk to you," she muttered. "I'll manage some way, though only God knows how."

Mrs. Robertson took up her book and gazed sternly at her daughter over the top of it.

"Very well, Evelyn," she said ungraciously. "You're of age. If that's the way you feel about it, there's nothing more to be said."

Whereupon the speaker began to read; and a very hopeless girl crept out of the room.

While Evelyn was repairing the ravages made by her emotions, Polly Hopkins crept into the Robertson garden. Her fear of Mrs. Robertson was mingled with a thrilling happiness. She had seen Granny Hope and Wee Jerry eat the fresh eggs; Daddy's promise would keep him out of trouble with Old Marc; and the beautiful stranger would help them!

Many times before she had been in that vine-



covered arbor, but never with the same feelings. She longed for a glimpse of the soldier; even to see his shadow would be better than nothing. At the thought of being caught by Evelyn's mother, Polly wanted to run back to the shanty, to be with Daddy Hopkins, to hear Granny Hope mumble loving words in her sleep. But of course she could not go until she had delivered Oscar's message.

Near the garage was the high-powered automobile belonging to Marcus MacKenzie, its enormous eyes of light staring at her. Polly quivered at the memory of him. He, for one, must not see her. Ah—she was losing time, trembling there like a frightened kitten. She gave a piercing little trill, the signal she had always used to call Evelyn from the house. Almost at once a figure stepped from the door to the porch directly in front of her, and terrified, she shrank back among the vines and clung there.

Silhouetted against the bright light was Robert Percival. He stood gazing straight ahead of him at the dark driveway, but turned when Evelyn appeared beside him. Polly heard the murmur of their voices, that was all. Then they disappeared into the house, Evelyn laughingly pushing the soldier ahead of her. Quickly the girl

came out again; and Polly could hear her swift-coming breaths as she ran softly down the steps.

"Shush," hissed Polly Hopkins. "Lordy, I was scared to death some one'd catch me."

"Pollyop," questioned Evelyn anxiously. "What'd he say? Was he angry?"

Their heads were very close together, and Polly gave the message in a low tone.

"He wants you to come to Granny Hope's hut at nine o'clock to-night; an' I guess you best do it. He's as mad as ever a man can be."

Through the dim light they looked at each other, both white, trembling in youthful indecision. Evelyn had often been to the Hope shanty to meet Oscar, but those times he had been kind to her.

"I'm afraid," she wailed. "I'm terribly afraid, Polly dear."

All the sympathy in Polly's heart came to sudden life.

"I reckon you be," she returned. "But you've got to get up your spunk an' go. Oscar'd just as soon come bustin' right in your house here, I guess, if you don't. You come along, an' at nine o'clock I'll hike over an' get in the hut too. Say, why can't you talk just a little nicer to him? Granny Hope's got a Bible, an' it says when a feller hurts you, speak kind of soft back,

an' he won't have nothin' more to say.—Hist! What's that noise? Scoot."

Before Evelyn could say another word, the squatter girl slipped away among the shadows. The other, although surrounded with every luxury, went wretchedly up the steps and, forcing a smile to her lips, passed into the music room. On her approach, MacKenzie and Percival rose and smiling welcomed her.

Robert had always loved Evelyn dearly. Indeed, they had been brought up together like brother and sister, and Evelyn almost worshipped him.

Never had her home seemed so beautiful as it did this moment as she compared it mentally with Granny Hope's one-roomed shanty. Never had these two young men, well groomed to the tips of their fingers, seemed so infinitely dear as now, when she recalled Oscar Bennett. She felt ill but dared not show it, and when the three had taken their seats, she leaned languidly back in her chair, toying listlessly with a tassel which hung from the arm of it.

## CHAPTER VIII

BILLY-GOAT HOPKINS had blinked many times before his little mistress came home. Larry Bishop had gone to his lonely hut, and Daddy Hopkins and Granny Hope were dozing in front of the stove.

In nervous tension Polly watched the clock crawl along toward the hour of the meeting between Oscar and Evelyn. About a quarter to nine, she stole out of doors.

The weather had cleared, though the south wind still blew. Above, little points of light twinkled and flashed in the sky. It was not so very dark; an eyrie kind of whiteness seemed to rise up from the soggy ground. Along the shore yellow glows picked out the coves and nooks where the huts were. On the jetty near the Hog Hole, the lighthouse blinked its red and white signals every thirty seconds.

By familiar paths, slipping past a shanty here and there, Pollyop came at length upon a lonely shack set on a point by itself. She went around to the back, opened the door, and once within the room touched a match to a small candle which

she had taken from her pocket and sat down quietly.

At the sound of footsteps on the cinder path at the side of the hut, her mind came back to the import of the hour. The steps were too heavy for a woman; and she stood up, tossing back her curls nervously. She was as fearful now of the big farmer as was Evelyn Robertson.

When Oscar Bennett stepped into the hut, he uttered an oath. He was not expecting to see Polly Hopkins.

"My lady wouldn't come, eh?" he demanded gruffly.

"Oh, she's comin' all right," answered Polly, "but she were afraid. So I come along to see she got home safe."

A loud laugh fell from Bennett's lips.

"You're a clever kid, Pollyop," he said, more affably. "Cunning as a weasel, damned if you ain't! Sit down. I won't bite you!"

Polly squatted on the floor by the old table; and Oscar eased himself gingerly down on to a rickety bench.

"I bet she was scared pink at what I told you to tell 'er," he burst out after a while. "She's about the most lily-livered woman I ever saw."

For the space of a few seconds Polly looked at the speaker. Then:

## 70    STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"She's rich," she excused lamely. "All rich folks' livers are off most of the time, I guess."

With the toe of his heavy boot Oscar marked a line between two boards of the hut floor.

"I'll stand no more monkeyin' from her or any of her gang," he muttered. He ran his fingers up under his cap and dug at his head meditatively. "For my life, I can't see what's the matter with her."

Pollyop pondered on all the women she knew, squatter women of course. She mused over the pitiful scene when the law had torn Larry Bishop from his little woman and recalled the passionate embraces between the two.

"I'm thinkin'," she took up at length, "she ain't lovin' you no more, Oscar; an' a woman without love in her ain't worth nothin'."

There was no smile on the lovely face when the words were finished. She had spoken the truth; and Oscar Bennett knew it.

"I've been a fool, I guess," he ejaculated, "a perfect fool! I might better 'a' married you, Pollyop. Since you was knee high to a grasshopper, I've had a leaning toward you. By now I'd had a home and some comfort."

His glowing eyes were upon her; and for an instant Polly lost her breath.

"I wanted to 'fess up to you this morning,

Poll," Oscar ran on. "It's a funny thing, but I reckon I care more for your little finger than for Eve's whole body. Maybe some day after I get all her cash——"

Polly coughed down a lump that persisted in coming up in her throat.

"You needn't spiel lovin's to me, Oscar," she gulped, "an' I believe in bein' honest. So, before your woman comes, I might as well give you a bit of my mind. If I owned you from your cap to your boots, I wouldn't use you for a doormat in front of Daddy's shanty!"

He shot her a look of amazement. The confident smile faded from his face, and his lips sagged at the corners. Then he arose to his feet.

"I been thinking about you all day," he broke forth. "You've got everything,—looks, action and brains! I want you, Pollyop, and I'm going to kiss you this time, so help me God!"

He took a step toward her; and Polly scrambled up. Just at that moment Evelyn Robertson entered. Oscar Bennett turned swiftly, and Polly, very pale, placed herself at Eve's side. And as the wind foamed the lake to fury and shook Granny Hope's forsaken little hut, the man and two girls stood silent a long, tense minute.

Then Oscar smiled at Evelyn, a triumphant, insulting smile.

"So you thought it best to mind me, my lady," he laughed. "I guess after a while you'll come to know I mean what I say."

Eve tried to speak but could not. Polly squeezed her arm encouragingly.

"You're a mean duffer, Oscar," she thrust in. "Your woman's scared of you, that's all. Try bein' better, an' see how she likes it."

"She's got a good right to be damned scared," grunted Bennett. "Now out with it, Eve. What's the rumpus? You haven't sent me a cent for a month."

With shaking fingers Evelyn pushed back her wind-blown hair.

"I couldn't get any money, Oscar," she wailed. "My allowance is all gone. I gave every cent of it to you. You know very well mother won't give me any more."

She had one card left to play, and she hoped it would take the trick.

"I might as well tell you," she continued, the steel in her eyes wiping away the blue. "Mother hasn't any money. All I thought we had belongs to Cousin Bob."

She ceased speaking and waited an instant to note how her news struck her husband. He flung up a clenched fist.

"The devil take you, Eve!" he cried. "Don't



try to put anything over on me like that. You're the biggest liar in Tompkins County."

That he partly believed her showed in his manner.

"I'm not trying to put anything over on you, Oscar," Evelyn insisted. "You can find out for yourself. I thought we were rich till mother told me different this morning."

"I'd never 'a' married you if I'd 'a' known that two years ago," Oscar asserted hoarsely. "You can be dead certain of that, my lady. You were pretty careful to keep your money troubles to yourself. Sit down, both of you! You're shivering like two cats."

"It's cold," chattered Evelyn. "And I've got to get back home quick."

Impulsively she went toward him.

"Oh, Oscar, listen, listen to me," she said, trying to steady her voice. "I want to be free. I can't, I can't live this way any longer."

A coarse oath fell from Bennett's lips.

"You don't need to," he shouted. "You got a home to come to—my home. You can do the work my old mother's doing. It's your job, not hers. You're my wife, by ginger, and as I said to Pollyop here, you live with me, or you pay up. I don't give a tinker's damn which you do."

His voice grew deep as he finished, and an evil,

taunting smile drew up his lips. Evelyn shuddered and swayed, and Polly slipped one arm around her waist.

“You want to be free from me, eh? That’s it, is it?” he sneered. “Some other guy looming up to love, I s’pose. Well, I don’t mind who gets my leavings if you make it worth my while. But if not ——”

Evelyn’s pale, beseeching face lifted to his. She could not quit him without his promise that she should have her freedom. Neither must he think that she could get him a large sum of money.

“I can’t get another dollar,” she repeated hoarsely. “I simply can’t. And—and I must be free.”

A frown drew the man’s heavy brows together until they touched, and he lifted his fist to strike; but Polly Hopkins, by one swift movement, thrust Evelyn from under the man’s upraised arm and crowded in between them. Because Evelyn was his wife, he had the right to beat her if he pleased, Polly thought, but he would not dare to strike her.

“If you’ve got to swat some one, Oscar,” she gritted between her teeth, “swat me!”

The beautiful white face came close to Bennett’s, and the challenge in the squatter girl’s

flashing eyes stirred a feeling within him that he never had had for Evelyn Robertson. It ran across his mind that Pollyop had said he was not worth a doormat for her father's shanty. Oscar had always believed that a woman must fear a man to respect him, and that to respect him meant to love him. He did not want Evelyn Robertson in the farmhouse, but he did want money and Polly Hopkins. If he could master her as he had Eve, she would come to him willingly when he was ready for her.

Working on that principle, he struck out. As the huge fist came in contact with Pollyop's shoulder, she staggered backward. Her low cry was followed by Evelyn's scream. The squatter girl sank to the floor limply. No one had ever struck her before.

"You've killed her," cried Evelyn; and Oscar Bennett, fearful that the girls' clamor would summon some inquisitive squatter, turned swiftly to go.

"Both of you keep mum about this, my lady," he ordered. "I'm off! See?"

With that he tore open the shanty door; and Evelyn stood panting with her hand on her heart until the sound of his running footsteps was lost in the wind-storm.

Then Evelyn led Polly Hopkins home. One

## 76 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

arm hung at the squatter girl's side; and the pain in her shoulder, where Oscar's fist had landed, was terrific. On nearing the shack, Polly whispered:

"Mebbe he'll be quiet a while now. You'd best scoot home, huh?"

A small box passed from Evelyn's handbag to the squatter girl's pocket.

"I brought them for Jerry," said Evelyn softly, "and oh, Polly, whatever can I do for you to even up things? Perhaps ——"

"Scoot home," interrupted Polly, "I'm goin' in."

Pollyop stole into the shanty in the greatest torment she had ever known. Granny Hope and Daddy Hopkins had gone to bed, and she could hear her father's loud breathing from the back room. She was glad of that, for if he were to learn how she had been hurt, his rage would know no bounds. She lighted a candle and looked about dazedly. The billy goat was snuggled against the wood-box; and Nannie Lamb poked her head up and blinked at the light. Polly put down the candle and slipped the dress from her shoulder. How dreadfully it hurt her! Oh, how she wanted something to make her misery less! But squatters did not have money to spend on drug-store remedies.

From an old can she poured a little coal oil on a rag and bathed the injured flesh. Then she took up the lamb and dropped into a chair by the table. In sheer exhaustion her head sank down upon it. After a while she straightened up, threw back her curls, and raised the lamb's face to hers, a wry smile flitting across her lips.

"It's goin' to be a hard job lovin' Oscar an' Old Marc like Jesus loved wicked folk, Nannyop," she said under her breath, "but mebbe now I been face to face with a angel, I can do it."

Again her head fell forward; but almost instantly she arose, and with the lamb in her right arm like a baby, moved to the side of the bed. Then she snuggled the lamb under the blankets and put Granny Hope's Bible beneath her pillow. Carefully she slipped off her clothes and put on a coarse nightrobe. Then, having snuffed the candle, she crawled in beside the lamb.

## CHAPTER IX

TWICE had the golden sun sunk in a welter of splendid colors behind West Hill, and twice had the warmth of his rising scattered the mists from the lakeside since the encounter in the hut, and Polly Hopkins was making ready for her daily walk through the Silent City.

It was her custom to go among the squatters and give them courage, to tell them that they had a right to their homes, to food, and warmth. How her girl's heart ached for their dumb misery! Surely the squatters had suffered in the past year! Many a boy had been taken from his home and sent to France, and many a mother had crept about the settlement with grief-worn face, waiting for news from over the sea.

Pollyop understood what war meant. The squatters were always at war! Granny Hope had explained to her that, whenever people fought and were cruel to one another, that was war. Hadn't she warred but two nights ago with Oscar Bennett?

She had not seen him since, and the pain and humiliation he had dealt her had been lightened

by Granny Hope's assurances that love was the leveller of hate. So Polly, having quantities of love and sympathy to spare, sent it broadcast over the hopeless ones in the settlement and promptly put Oscar Bennett's cruelty out of her mind. She did not even remember sometimes how much the milk Oscar had begrudgingly given her was missed in the shack. To offset that deprivation, she was free from him and the ugly quarrels she had had to settle almost daily between him and Evelyn.

This morning, while Daddy Hopkins was in Ithaca, Pollyop started out with her many loves for a walk. On her shoulder perched Wee Jerry; at her side, in stately dignity, stalked the billy goat, and tied to one of her arms by a small rope gamboled Nannie Lamb Hopkins.

Through the Silent City she wandered, helping people here and there to see the sunny side of things. Beyond the row of shacks was the fence Marcus MacKenzie had erected to keep the squatters from trespassing on his woodland, and in front of it Polly Hopkins stopped. A bill poster had passed and left on the fence a picture that caught her attention.

It was a beautiful woman, her eyes saddened with tears, and she looked straight out of exquisite coloring at the wide-eyed squatter girl. In

her arms was a withered, sick, little man, and Pollyop knew that somewhere over the ocean an enemy, perhaps a man like Old Marc, had hurt him. The woman held him close as she looked at Polly, and for a moment the girl's eyes stung with tears. Then she went closer to the fence and spelled out the words under the picture: "The Greatest Mother in the World."

Ah! So she was, this protector of the hurt and the sick! The Red Cross poster carried its wondrous message to the very bottom of the squatter girl's heart. She heard nothing, saw nothing but the solemn face during the tense moment she sent back to those plea-filled eyes her boundless devotion.

A sound, close at hand, caused her to turn swiftly. A man on horseback had drawn up on the side of the road. The blood came in swift leaps to Polly's face. There was the "beautiful angel" looking down upon her! What could she do but stare back at him? In another instant he had dismounted and was coming toward her.

Jerry slid from her shoulders to the ground. Pollyop's hand clasped his; but she did not speak. What had happened to her "angel"? He looked different; more like the other men she occasionally saw on horseback. That was it! He was not wearing the olive-drab uniform! To



add to her confusion Robert Percival was smiling at her in the most friendly way. Then he glanced up at the picture, his fine face saddening.

"The Greatest Mother in the World, little girl," he said, and he smiled again.

"The Greatest Mother in the World," repeated Pollyop, in awed tones. "Does that mean she's mother to the squatter kids what was hurt in the war, mister?"

Robert's hand went to his mouth. When it fell back to his side, he was no longer smiling. The girl's uplifted eyes were too serious for levity.

"Yes," he replied after a short pause. "Yes, it means that and more. She's mother to every hurt boy and brings comfort to every one on earth that needs help."

"Golly, she's some mother, ain't she?" breathed Polly soberly. "She's beautiful too. Squatter mammies has too many kids to stay handsome like her." She made a backward motion with her thumb toward the fence and searched his face gravely.

A choking sensation in Robert's throat made him cough. The girl's statement was like a charcoal drawing in which a few broad lines tell the whole story. Her simple words brought vividly before him the hardships of life in a squatter hut.

He felt his interest in her increase. She was the quaintest, prettiest and most solemn child he had ever seen. Yes, he knew she was an inhabitant of the Silent City by the clothes she wore, and the thin, bow-legged child, to say nothing of the bewhiskered goat and woolly lamb that were with her.

“What’s your name?” he inquired.

“Just Pollyop,” was the answer. “Polly Hopkins. My Daddy is Jeremiah Hopkins, the mayor of this settlement.”

Surely! Robert remembered very well MacKenzie speaking of Hopkins, and he remembered too the painted invitation over a hut door as if it were before his eyes. Then his memory repeated the words, “If you heart is loving and kind come right in. If it ain’t, scoot off!” Looking Pollyop over from the top of her curly head to the tips of her bare feet, he decided that she had written it. But Marc had given him the impression she was worthless and filthy! If before he had felt sympathy for the squatters, the sight of this girl with imploring brown eyes augmented it.

Question after question he flung at her, and answer after answer came from Polly’s lips. She told him where she lived, and how she cooked the beans, bacon and fish Daddy Hopkins provided;

how cold it was in the shanty when the cruel north wind swept up the lake; and how wet it was when the rain fell and clammy fogs shrouded the world in gray; how Granny Hope was sick with pains. But she quickly added that the old woman loved the whole earth and everybody on it. She gave him an inside view of life in the Silent City. Long before she had finished her recital, Percival's courtesy had put her at her ease, and she was chattering like a magpie. The velvet sheen that always came when Polly was happy softened the brown of her eyes. She took her hand from Jerry's and locked and interlocked her fingers in her excitement.

"Can I do something for you, Polly Hopkins?" queried Robert, as she finished telling about life in the squatters' city.

She flung out both hands in a comprehensive gesture as much as to say he could see for himself how much she needed.

"Sure, sure you can," she said with fierce emphasis. "You can make Old Marc leave us squatters be. You're bigger'n he is! The squatters need you awful bad."

Her voice broke on the last statement. The warm color of velvet had gone from her eyes; and Robert took a long breath. Of course he could help this girl and her people. He would, too!

As far as money gave power, he could equal and surpass Marcus MacKenzie.

"I did try to talk sense into Mr. MacKenzie's head," he returned presently, "but now I *will* make him leave you alone."

In spite of the curved lips about which a smile lurked, there was apprehension in her voice when she asked:

"Can you lick 'im to a finish, mister?"

"Yes, I think I could," laughed Robert; "but it won't be necessary."

"Then I see us Silent City folks bein' happy again," sighed Polly. "We got a awful lot of things an' folks to take care of here."

Robert made a sweep with his arm that encompassed the group before him.

"*You* have, evidently!" he laughed.

"An' I got more home," interjected Polly. "I got Daddy Hopkins an' Granny Hope—an' this brat is my brother, an' this goat is Billy Hopkins an' this lamb's named Nannyop. Oh, sure, sir, I've got a hull lot to love in this good old city."

Polly made an upward motion with her hand toward the picture on the fence.

"She's got a bunch to love too," she said softly. "Ain't she?"

He walked to her side and contemplated with

her the pictured woman, making her silent appeal to them for the wounded boy in her arms.

"Of course she has," answered Percival reverently. "She's the Greatest Mother in the World, Polly Hopkins, and—and ——" his gaze dropped upon her, and he continued, "and you're the littlest mother in the world."

A glad smile widened the girl's lips. All the fear that had been as a ton weight upon her had fallen away. She wanted to pay him the highest compliment she knew. When he had mounted, she told him gently:

"Some day you'll be the biggest an' most beautifullest daddy in the world. Good-by."

## CHAPTER X

To describe Oscar Bennett's rage when he left the two girls in Granny Hope's shack would indeed be a task. Up until then he had stoutly believed the Robertsons were monied people, for Eve had managed to turn over to him quite a sum of money during the last two years, and the idle gossip about her allowance had supported his belief in her wealth.

Of late Evelyn had ceased to attract him. In the excitement of the courtship he had put his best foot forward, and for a time after the marriage he had found a great satisfaction in the thought that she was his. When the glamour of their secret honeymoon-time had worn off, and the farmer's crude, cruel nature had been disclosed, Evelyn's mad infatuation had disappeared in terror-stricken horror.

As Evelyn was finding in Marcus MacKenzie a mate more to her taste, Bennett's primitive passions had burst into a sudden flame for Polly Hopkins. The squatter girl's scorn of him, her drawling ridicule, only made him desire her the more. Like many another man, he knew no way

of wooing but by cruelty. He had struck her deliberately in Granny Hope's shack and would strike her again if the chance came. But mingled with the determination to take the spirit out of the young girl-soul, to bend her will to his, was the unspeakable longing that she should love him.

A couple of days after the night scene with the girls, he left his house and took his way to the lake. He crossed his fodder lot and plunged into the MacKenzie forest which lay between the railroad tracks and the water. In his pocket he had a letter for Evelyn. He intended to kill two birds with one stone. If he could find Polly Hopkins alone, he would tell her the decision he had come to and give her the note to deliver.

Oscar did not relish entering the Silent City by the highway. The squatters hated him as much as he did them, more, in all probability; and it was his habit to give the settlement a wide berth. If he discovered any of them on his land, with the exception of Polly Hopkins, he drove them away furiously. Oscar was one of those who would rather have produced rot on his land than give it to the needy.

Before vaulting the MacKenzie fence, the sound of people talking on the other side halted him. Pollyop's voice came distinctly to him, and

another voice, a man's, answered her. The deep well-bred tones Bennett was sure did not belong to a squatter. He listened carefully to pick up the import of the conversation. The bass voice mumbled something about a mother. In response, the squatter girl's tones fell upon his ear: "Some day you'll be the biggest an' most beautiful daddy in the world." Then followed the rush of departing hoofs.

Jealousy tore at the eavesdropper. It did not take him long to get to the top of the fence. From there he saw Pollyop, Jerry, the billy goat, and then the little lamb.

Some sound he made brought the squatter girl's head around sharply from her survey of the picture.

"What do you want?" she asked sullenly, frowning at him.

Oscar jumped to the ground.

"I come down to see you, Pollyop," he rejoined, coming forward. "Who were you talking to?"

The only safe way to get along with the farmer, Polly had concluded, was to have nothing to do with him.

"It's none of your funeral, Oscar," she rapped out. "Don't be buttin' in on other folks' business."



At her evident purpose to leave him Oscar moved closer and put out his hand to stop her.

"Leave me be, Oscar Bennett!" she shrilled. "I don't want nothin' to do with you. I'm goin' home."

To cut off her retreat, Oscar needed to take but a couple of strides, and he promptly took them.

"Jeminy crickets!" he expostulated. "Don't be so confounded short, Pollyop! You needn't be mad because I swatted you one. You aren't my woman yet, but you're going to be just as soon as I can get shut of my lady Robertson." Observing no signs of softening in the girl's face, he switched his attack. "Say, where'd you get that lamb?"

This query unfolded new terrors for Polly. She had not thought of the lamb belonging to any one but herself. Had she not found him dying in the water and loved and fed him ever since? She looked first at the man, then down at the lamb.

"He's mine, Oscar," she hesitated. "I've had him two hull days now."

Oscar laughed.

"A likely story!" he jeered. "How long since squatters raised sheep? Where'd you get him?"

"Found him," she answered, putting her hand on the little animal.

"Then he isn't yours," he retorted, "and he can't be anybody's but mine. I thought I was missing some lambs."

Polly's eyes filled with alarm. She was trying to frame an argument in favor of herself and the creature she loved.

"When you find a thing dyin' in a creek, Oscar," she faltered at length, "you can take him home an' love him, now can't you?"

The man's loud guffaw brought a deep flush to the girl's face. She placed herself directly between him and the lamb.

"He's mine," she insisted. "He'd drowned sure if I hadn't jumped into the drink an' pulled him out."

Her words made the farmer certain where the creature came from.

"Dead or alive, he's mine!" he exclaimed.

Besides coveting the lamb, he hated the squatter girl's way of fondling animals. When he got her, he determined, he would take all of that kind of nonsense out of her.

With one sweep of his mighty hand, he thrust her aside, and, whipping out his knife, he cut the rope that held Nanny Hopkins to Polly's arm. Then, in spite of the girl's frantic cries and her

desperate fighting against it, Oscar picked up the lamb.

Pollyop screamed frantically, for from the look on his evil face, she saw instantly what he intended to do. He was going to kill Nannyop! Again she flew at him, but he was tall and strong and held the lamb aloft in the air, high out of her reach. With a rough oath he pushed the girl from him so roughly that she fell. When Polly scrambled up, he had the lamb in one hand and a large stone in the other.

"Oscar!" she shrieked.

She dropped to her knees, clasped Wee Jerry in her arms, and shrouded his face and her own in her curls. When she dared look up again, Oscar had thrown the dead lamb on the ground.

"There," he gritted, "that's to teach you a lesson, Miss Poll Hopkins. And now I'll open your eyes to something else."

As he crossed to her, she tried to struggle to her feet; but her legs were weak, and she was sick over the quivering body there in the road. In another minute Oscar had snatched her into his arms.

She shrieked again and again; and Jerry's loud cries followed, as she fought desperately with the burly farmer.

Once out of sight of the Red Cross poster and the little group in front of it, Percival checked his horse. Bay Dexter shook his head and champed his bit in disapproval. He was accustomed to mad, harum-scarum gallops, and he loved them; but this morning, especially since the pause by the fence corner, he had been compelled to mog along like a worn-out, old nag.

His master was thinking, really and seriously thinking. Happily born and the heir to an immense fortune, his way through life so far had been marked out for him. He had gone to war carelessly, in a mood of hot patriotism and because it was the thing to do. Over there he had done his share and gained, especially from his French comrades, an inkling of life's vital purpose. He had decided that, when he returned, he would do something worth while, something to make the world a little better because he had lived in it.

Now he was home; and almost the first day had come to him this appeal. He smiled ruefully at the recollection of Pollyop's plea. He had promised to help the squatters, and he meant to do it. Suppose it did bring him into conflict with Marcus MacKenzie! He knew how to fight, and a good fight was not bad fun.

Arrived at the beach, he swung to the ground

and continued his consideration of ways and means. Through his meditations, like a strain of wild melody, ran the memory of the quaint squatter girl, and he concluded her charm lay in the artless profusion of her love.

Faintly from the direction he had ridden, the sound of cries came to his ears. Idly he wondered what the row was. Some squatter man disciplining his wife, he decided; but he could not stand to have a woman beaten!

He vaulted into the saddle and raced back over the road. It was not long before he located the place where the screams came from. Then Bay Dexter had an opportunity to show all the speed he had.

The sight of Pollyop writhing in the strong arms of a man he did not recognize made Percival see red. He was off his horse with one leap, and two long strides took him to Oscar's side.

One blow from his powerful knuckles in the farmer's face staggered Bennett and freed Polly so quickly that she fell to the ground. Instinctively she crawled out of the way of the battling men. The blow that had released her had done no damage to Bennett except to aggravate his rage. He recovered himself and confronted his assailant, dripping oaths like rain from a cloud-burst.

In the instant before their fists began to fly, Polly's eye caught the picture with the quickness and accuracy of a camera; and she prayed that Jesus, up there beyond that flock of clouds, would help the beautiful angel knock the devil out of Oscar without getting hurt himself. Her champion was not quite so heavy as the farmer, but he was his equal in height. His face looked very stern, Polly thought. There was a little smile on it. He had what Larry Bishop called a fighting face.

Bennett took the offensive, his fists flying like flails. He wanted to get his arms around the other fellow, to trip him and make the fight a rough and tumble on the ground, but Percival avoided the rush, and struck as Bennett went by. Again and again Bennett tried to come to close quarters. But he could not; neither could he hit his elusive opponent. At length he hesitated, distressed as much by his own efforts as the blows he had received.

Then Percival stepped in, and quickly it was all over. Two well planted thumps laid Bennett like a log on the ground.

Robert dusted off his hands, picked Wee Jerry up, and handed him to his sister.

"Did he hurt you, Polly?" he queried, and her answer was positively gleeful:

"Nary a bit, sir, an' I reckon the big lummox's got a plenty this time."

Robert brushed off his clothes slowly. The farmer still lay on the ground.

"Get up," ordered Percival scornfully, touching the prostrate man with the toe of his boot. "Get up and make off if you don't want me to lick you again."

Oscar rolled over and crawled slowly to his hands and knees.

"The ground's kinda wabby, ain't it, Oscar?" Polly gibed.

"Get out," commanded Robert, once more.

Bennett scrambled to his feet, shook his fist at Polly, snatched up the little dead lamb, and in another moment had climbed the fence and was gone.

"What were you fighting about?" began Robert, looking keenly at Pollyop.

Tears hung on the girl's lashes, and the sensitive underlip quivered.

"Oscar said as how Nannyop were his," she murmured. "Weren't it awful for him to swat it with that stone that way?"

"Did you ——" He broke off the question abruptly. He was going to ask her if she had stolen the lamb; but an expression in the pleading, misty eyes stopped him.

"I found the little feller drownin' in the creek, sir," she explained with bowed head. "I just took him home to love him, that was all."

The strange, thrilling emotion that had overcome Robert but a short time ago in the presence of this squatter girl attacked him again.

"What can I do to help you, child?" he demanded sharply.

Polly flung out her hand. Help! that was what the squatters wanted. The little lamb was dead. Nothing could ever hurt it any more. But there were her people ——

"Just help Daddy Hopkins"—she choked and went on—"an' all the poor folks in the Silent City, an'—an'—I'll love you forever and forever!"



## CHAPTER XI

AFTER that the "littlest mother" made large strides upward toward the "greatest mother." Every little worried thing in the woods, every heavy heart in the squatter settlement felt the difference in Polly Hopkins. She smiled more, she talked more; and, when she found a group of her women-folks wondering how their absent ladies were, she led them in smiling assurance to Old Marc's fence and there repeated what Robert Percival had said about the Greatest Mother in the World.

One morning Pollyop was cleaning the shanty and Granny Hope was seated by the stove. A sharp rap came on the door. When Polly opened it and recognized the caller, she would have closed the door and barred it if a man's heavy boot, thrust across the threshold, had not prevented her. There in his riding clothes, haughty and frowning, stood Marcus MacKenzie.

The girl stepped backward, and he stalked into the kitchen.

"Where's Jeremiah Hopkins?" he demanded, eyeing Pollyop sternly.

She fidgeted with the edge of her apron. It seemed as if her brain were burning up with terror. Had MacKenzie come to harm her best beloved?

"My Daddy's gone out," she returned finally, in a low tone.

"Then I'll wait," said Marcus. "I'll sit down and wait."

Polly set out a chair for him, her legs trembling so she could scarcely stand. Never before, that she could remember, had she wished her father would not come home, but she knew that he might walk in at any minute. He had only gone over to Larry Bishop's shack with Wee Jerry.

Granny Hope grunted out a word of greeting, but the man gave her no answer; and, after blinking at him a few times, the old woman fell asleep.

"This is a rotten hole," spat out MacKenzie presently, looking at the girl.

This scornful comment on the quarters Daddy Hopkins worked so hard to support touched the squatter girl to the quick. She kept the hut as clean as broom and lake water could make it!

"It's our home, mister, all we got," she replied, and she straightened her shoulders with dignity.

"Rotten, just the same," repeated Marcus.  
"Say, you! Come and stand here before me."

He touched a spot on the floor with his riding whip; and Polly stepped upon it.

"Now you listen to me," he said sternly. "I've come with a proposition to your father, and if you've any influence with him, you'd better talk him into it."

Polly's face brightened a little. Then it was not real harm coming to Daddy Hopkins to-day. She wished now that he would come in; and, almost as if in answer to the throbbing of her nerves, Hopkins passed through the doorway with Wee Jerry clinging to his neck. The trembling girl saw his face grow gray at the sight of his powerful enemy.

Jeremiah made an awkward bob of his head to Marcus, slipped Jerry into his arms and without a word sat down. And Pollyop, full of curiosity and anxiety, sat down too, her brilliant eyes steadily leveled upon MacKenzie.

"Hopkins," began Marcus, "I've come with a proposal to you. If you've got any sense, you'll impress its value on the rest of your fellows here, for by hook or by crook, I intend to break up this settlement and burn these shacks."

One long gasp came from Polly. Her father said nothing but looked back at the speaker as if he had not heard.

"Daddy ain't got the hull right to say what's

## 100 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

what," she interrupted suddenly. "There's lots of squatters."

"Then call in some of the others," MacKenzie snapped. "And don't be long about it. I want to know what's going to be done before I go."

Polly flashed a glance at her father.

"Go get 'em, brat," he directed. "An' bring Larry."

Out into the settlement she went, and when she came back into the shanty, there followed her an angry set of illy-clothed men; and outside a sullen group of women waited to hear what Old Mare had to offer.

One by one the men silently ranged themselves in a row around the hut wall while Polly stood at her father's shoulder, one hand resting upon it, and the other on Wee Jerry's head.

Marcus MacKenzie knew the group of men he had to deal with. He knew their wicked ways, how they thieved, how they used their nets against the law, and how they shot game out of season. He remembered, too, how many had been sent to prison with his aid, but this day he hoped to get rid of them all at once.

"I want to pay you fellows to go away from Ithaca." He plumped the proposition at them baldly. "If it hadn't been the easiest way out, I wouldn't have considered it a minute. But

after talking it over with my lawyer, I've decided to give you all a sum of money if you'll leave peaceably."

A sound of boots moving on boards was his only answer. Polly coughed nervously.

"Now this is what I'm going to offer," went on MacKenzie. "No one can make me raise the price one cent. I'll give you men twenty-five dollars apiece; you sign over to me your squatter rights; then take your women and kids and go."

There was not a word in answer to this. Only Wee Jerry felt Daddy Hopkins clasp him tighter.

Realizing that the stony silence that met his offer was practically a refusal, MacKenzie got to his feet.

"You can take it, or—or go to hell for all I care!" he exclaimed.

He turned toward the door; and then Pollyop got back her breath, and while the squatter men watched sullenly, she stepped in front of him.

"You're in wrong, mister," she flared. "You're damned generous, ain't you? Twenty-five dollars wouldn't take us anywhere, an' where would we go, anyhow? This ain't movin' day in the Silent City. You've made your talk, now scoot along."

Marcus fixed her with eyes angry beyond de-

## 102 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

scription. Her own blazed back at him as she pointed toward the door.

"Scoot out," she repeated, "an' don't be comin' again."

MacKenzie lifted his riding whip threateningly, and every man with a growl started forward; but as the whip fell back to his side, they sank down again.

Then it was that he shifted the whip to his left hand and took from his pocket a shining pistol; and although Polly whitened, she held her ground.

"And you, you impudent huzzy," snapped MacKenzie, "what have you got to do with it? What are you, anyway?"

In spite of the deadly thing held in the white, strong fingers, Polly's head went up a bit.

"I'm the littlest mammy in the world," she said simply. "I'm mammy to this hull settlement. An' us squatters stays in the Silent City—see?"

The pistol came up with a click, and MacKenzie, enraged beyond control, struck Pollyop two stinging blows with the riding whip. Then he strode out into the open, and, holding high the weapon, passed through the frowning line of watching women. He gave them but a flashing, disdainful glance, and when he turned around,

Polly Hopkins was standing in the door, motioning the women into the shack. He came to a direct halt and shouted at her :

“ I’ll never offer money again, but out you’ll all go, if I have to burn your huts about your heads.”

As if he had not spoken, Polly gave him no heed but ushered woman after woman into the shanty.

“ I’d ruther he’d ‘a’ hit me than any one of you,” she said, her flesh tingling with pain. “ If you’d ‘a’ pounced on ‘im, Daddy, or you, Larry, he’d ‘a’ popped one of you dead. Now listen to me.”

Then she told them that Robert Percival had said the squatters should stay in the settlement. She said she had had a promise from a man better than Old Marc that he would help them. And thus she brought smiles back to the faces of her miserable friends; and as they went away, each woman kissed her, and each man reverently placed his hand on her curly head in blessing.

## CHAPTER XII

THEN came the days through which the inhabitants of the Silent City lived with nothing to comfort them but Polly Hopkins. Scarcely an hour passed without strangers walking over the rough road through the settlement and every one knew that these men, so curious and yet so unwilling to speak even a "good-day," were doing service for Marcus MacKenzie.

Night after night the squatters gathered in the Hopkins' shanty to talk over their plans, her father and Larry Bishop continually begging Polly to release them from their oaths. Either they must destroy Marcus MacKenzie, they argued, or he would destroy them; but she held them to their word.

At last one day, crushed with apprehension and despair, Jeremiah Hopkins decided that one of them should go to Robert Percival to ask his aid in keeping the settlement together. Polly was so sure he would keep his word to her—now they would give him the chance.

"It's a choice of the three of you, Poll," said



Lye Braeger, "you or your daddy or Larry Bishop."

The squatter girl looked up from her place on the floor by her father's feet.

"But Larry can't go!" she objected promptly. "He'd get to talkin' wild. He'd all the time be thinkin' of his dead woman an' brat! Daddy, you go!"

Jeremiah gazed at her dumbly; then he shook his head.

"He wouldn't listen to me, lassie," he mourned. "Mebbe he would to you. I dunno, but mebbe."

Before the girl's sensitive mind flashed the face of Robert, and she hid her red cheeks against the speaker's knee.

"Oh, I couldn't never go to 'im, Daddy honey," she murmured. "Please, Daddy."

"We ain't got a chance without some one's help, Poll," insisted Braeger. "You go along, an' do your dammedest for the squatters!"

Since the day Robert Percival had thrashed Oscar Bennett under the eyes of the "Greatest Mother in the World," he had filled a large place in Pollyop's thoughts. On the occasions of their rare meetings, she had gazed at him from under lowered lids. In his presence her unruly tongue had lost its boldness. To go to him deliberately and talk with him face to face seemed impossible.

## 106 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

How could she gather enough breath, and how make her lips frame a petition to him! Still, Granny Hope had taught her there was nothing hard to do if you tackled it in a loving spirit.

"All right, Lye," she managed to say. "I'll go after Jerry's in bed, an' the supper's over."

So it came to pass that nightfall found Polly Hopkins struggling up the hill to the railroad tracks. She turned south on the Boulevard and stole cautiously along the edge of the road. She had no desire to meet Old Marc or Evelyn. As she went on she murmured to herself some of the love words Granny Hope had planted in her memory, and when she turned into the carriage way leading to the Robertson home, she held her head a little higher and walked with less nervousness.

Lights in different windows told Polly that members of the family were in the house. Perhaps Old Marc might be with Evelyn at that moment! How could she reach Percival without running into the Robertson women or even MacKenzie himself? Around and around the house she crept, until with trepidation she mounted the steps leading to the front porch and tiptoed to a long French window. It was partly open and there, seated before a table, was the man she sought.

Pollyop knocked once, but the sound was so faint Robert did not hear it.

"Hist," came from between Polly's lips, and the young man glanced up. At the sight of her he got to his feet slowly. Then Polly shoved the window open a crack and squeezed into the room.

Flushed a little, terrified at her temerity in intruding on her idol, but determined to carry out the duty she had undertaken, she awaited his action anxiously.

A strange mixture of conflicting expressions swept over his face, but pleasure at the sight of her predominated them all.

"Pollyop!" he exclaimed. "Polly Hopkins, what's the matter?"

"For the love of Jesus," she faltered, "can't you help me stop Old Marc from kickin' us squatters out of the Silent City?"

A flush mounting his brow, he came toward her.

"That's queer," he told her, "I was just thinking of you—I mean of your people."

Pollyop reddened; then she paled.

"Old Marc's goin' to turn us all out, mister," she whispered huskily, searching his face, "an' Daddy sent me to ask you to help us."

Robert drew one hand across his brow helplessly.

"I've said everything I could to make him understand the crime of it all," he apologized. "He's like a crazy man! I can't see how he can think of such a thing, even though your people were willing to go, Polly."

"We ain't, we can't go," she replied, quivering. "There ain't a place in the world for squatters but the Silent City."

"I know it," he returned gloomily.

"And can't Love do nothin' for us?" implored the girl. "Granny Hope says it can, an' once I—I heard you say 'twas the—the ——"

Just at that moment the sound of footsteps was heard outside in the hall. Robert thrust out his hand, grasped Polly by the shoulders, and in another moment she found herself behind the thick curtain hanging in heavy folds over rows of books which rose to the ceiling.

The door opened; and Percival spun around to meet Marcus MacKenzie. He crushed down his embarrassment and offered his visitor a chair.

"Evelyn sent me for a book," Marcus explained. "Pardon me for disturbing you, old chap."

Glancing back at the book shelves, Robert could see that the curtains hung straight and still as if a trembling squatter girl were not hidden in their folds.

"Sit down," he requested with an effort.

Marcus shook his head.

"I can't," he replied. "Eve and I are confabing over something. I told her I'd get a book and come right back."

He made a movement to walk toward the book shelves; but Robert stopped him.

"You've got to sit down," he said gruffly. "I want to talk to you."

"In a minute then," returned Marcus. "I'll get the book first."

Very white, Robert walked before MacKenzie to the bookcase. Then with one sweep of his arm he moved aside the curtain and with it—Polly Hopkins. He could feel beneath the thick material the slender, quivering body. And there, as the two men stood facing the shelves laden with the masterpieces of the world, and Marcus was running his eye up and down them, Robert felt that first wonderful protective love that comes to a man when he is shielding a woman.

"Evelyn said it was here," observed MacKenzie carelessly. "Let me look! A—B—C—Here's D. It ought to be on this shelf."

He read aloud the names of the books under his eye while still the strong hand of his companion held up the curtain and the girl.

"Ah, here it is," came in exclamation.

## 110 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"There! Thanks, Bob! Now I'll sit down a minute."

He walked back to the table, and Percival carefully dropped the draperies. Keeping his eye on the other man's back, he ran his fingers over the curtain until he came to the curly head of Polly Hopkins. Two tender pats fell upon it. Then he too crossed to the center of the room.

Now that Marcus had the book, Robert was not so anxious for him to sit down. He knew that Pollyop must be in a dreadful state of nerves, but smiling affably, the other man dropped into a chair, and Robert leaned against the edge of the library table.

"You're a hospitable chap, Bob," laughed Marcus. "Heigh-ho! but to-day I've been some busy. I'll bet you a quarter of a dollar it won't be three months before I get every squatter off that shore. The fact of it is, I've only got to catch Hopkins, and the rest'll be easy. He's a bad actor; and that girl of his is a saucy baggage."

"She's a very good girl," Robert interposed in deep tones, "and very pretty too."

The bookcase draperies moved ever so little. Polly Hopkins almost burst with joy when she heard those words.

"Pretty enough, I suppose," Marcus conceded,

"but not good. She's like the rest,—bad clean through."

The curtains moved a little more; and Robert caught the sway of them out of the tail of his eye. He felt that if MacKenzie did not go soon, he would throw him out. What the girl would do if Marc started a tirade against her father, Robert did not dare contemplate.

"Look here, Marc," he burst forth, "you're all wrong about those people, all dead wrong. They don't harm any one as I can see. Why can't you live and let live?"

His eyes flashing, Marcus stood up.

"No harm, no harm, you say," he flared. "Why, they steal everything in sight, and in a few more years there won't be a fish left in the lake. There won't be anything to catch in season or out, if the squatters keep up their infernal poaching. Hunting and fishing are for gentlemen, my dear Bob! Don't forget that!"

"Gentlemen be damned," ejaculated Robert, and then the curtains swayed so that he got to his feet and started toward the door.

"Marc," he continued, "perhaps we can't agree on this matter at all, but I really do want a heart-to-heart talk with you about it. But not now! The fact is I was busy when you came in ——"

"Thinking up a few more pleas for the squatters, eh?" the other man teased. "Well, old fellow, just remember this. I've got at least twenty-five men watching everything that scamp of a Hopkins does, and when I get something on him, there won't be twenty-four hours between that time and his arrest."

Robert almost shoved the speaker out of the door; but Marcus only chuckled good-naturedly as he went away. When Robert turned the key in the lock, he stood quite still, breathing hard.

From behind the curtain, Polly thrust out her head, her small face wrinkled, and tears standing thick in her eyes.

"I'm a-goin' after that pup an' swat him," she hissed stormily. "He lies when he says my Daddy's a scamp."

Percival lifted a precautionary hand.

"Not too loud," he warned. "Come here."

She went slowly forward, her head hanging; but when he held out his hands, she snatched them and bent her curly head over the strong fingers, and kissed them passionately.

"Poor little girl, poor little Polly," murmured Robert, brokenly. Then as she swayed toward him, his arms went around her, and for a moment he pressed her head against his breast.

"Polly, Pollyop," he whispered, kissing her



hair. "Oh, God, if I owned that lake property I'd—I'd ——"

A certain deep tone in his voice brought up Pollyop's head, and she saw in his eyes an expression that made her struggle from his arms. Fleeing to the porch window, she was gone before Robert could stop her.

## CHAPTER XIII

"Bob's a queer fish, Eve," laughed MacKenzie, as he came into the music room where Evelyn Robertson was waiting for him. "If I hadn't kept my temper just now, we should have parted bad friends."

"That's like you, dear," she smiled. "But then of course you wouldn't let him bother you. Fussing about the squatters again, I suppose."

Marcus dropped down at her side and gave her fingers a caressing pat as he settled himself.

"Yes," he nodded. "And why he stands up for them, sweetheart, I can't see. He must know what they are! If they were on his land, I'll wager he'd talk differently."

Evelyn took the speaker's big fingers in her hand and occupied herself in examining the white spots on one of the polished nails.

"My big man mustn't mind Bobs," she exclaimed persuasively, noting the frowning lines that had come in his face. "He's sentimental, Robert is, full of half-baked notions about broth-

erly love, and helping the downtrodden, and that sort of thing."

The man laughed indulgently. It delighted him to have the girl of his choice express his own sentiments so well.

"You precious!" he murmured. "They can't fool my Eve much, can they?" By a simple twist of his wrist, he captured her hand. Then he took up a favorite topic with new zest. "I want to improve my property, dear. The Silent City's an eyesore! If I could get the squatters off the lakeside and buy the Bennett farm, I could make my place the handsomest in the country."

At the suggestion about Oscar's farm, a different light flashed into the girl's eyes. Her hand twitched in his.

"That would be wonderful, dear," she ejaculated.

A rush of words came to her lips. She wanted to tell him of her unhappiness, to confess the past as it loomed in hideous proportions across her mind, but to speak Oscar's name just then was beyond her power. She lowered her lids and continued: "If—if the squatters weren't there, you could make a very lovely drive right along where their road runs, couldn't you?"

This had been MacKenzie's idea also. What a

capable girl Eve was! He took her pretty face between his hands and kissed her once and then again and again.

"You darling!" he murmured. "You're the wisest little woman in the world! My whole ambition is to make our home just to suit you. I was talking to one of those landscape chaps up at the college the other day, and he said the lake section could be made charming. We can build our house on the hill just above there!"

"And the farm," Evelyn interposed, "that would just round out your place perfectly. Oh, honey, do *that* right away. Mr. Bennett will ask more for it as soon as you get rid of the squatters."

Marcus lighted a cigarette thoughtfully.

"The Bennett farm wouldn't be of any use to me," he explained slowly, "unless I can make a clean sweep of the whole thing." He picked up the book he had brought with him and ruffled its pages impatiently. Then, snapping together the covers, he placed it on the table and proceeded: "Why, you can see, Eve darling, there isn't room on this part of the lake for the squatters and me! Rather than put up with them much longer, I'd sell what I've got here, and go somewhere where a man can get some consideration.

"It's a crime, I tell you, Evelyn. Think of it!

I had to send out of the county to get my men to watch those fellows down there. Ithaca makes me tired. It's a good thing I came back to put some snap into the fight against the squatters." He relaxed suddenly; and his full red lips spread wide in a smile. "But I mustn't say anything against old Ithaca," he laughed; "I found my sweetheart here."

The girl's white lids made a curtain between his shining eyes and her own. Evelyn was wishing, oh, how very much she desired that Marcus would buy the farm. Then Oscar could leave the country, and in another State he would set her free! She studied MacKenzie's face covertly through half-closed eyes, considering what to say and how to say it.

MacKenzie flung his cigarette into the grate. He found the suggestion of her veiled look so alluring that he gathered her into his arms and rained kisses upon her face.

"I love you so, sweet, I could almost eat you!" he panted.

A soft, rippling laugh bubbled from the girl's lips. With one hand against his forehead she held him away.

"You can't have your cake and eat it too, Marky," she warned him roguishly. "Hold on, you dreadful ogre, don't devour me!"

A happy sigh, like the perfumed breath of a rose, slipped from her parted lips, and when she laughed again, his deep chuckles joined hers.

"Darling," he broke forth, "I'm just so happy, I can't have a row with Bob. Why don't you talk to him about the squatters? He'll listen to you, Eve!"

Instantly it flashed through her mind how obstinate Robert had often shown himself.

"Bob's stubborn when he wants to be," she said reluctantly, "but of course I'll speak to him the first chance I get. He's a dear, though, and I don't believe he'll say no to me." Looking down, she continued: "But irrespective of the squatters, do please try and get hold of the Bennett farm. It would give you all the land between the lake and the Trumansburg road, wouldn't it?"

"Perhaps you're right," Marcus conceded. "But, Eve darling, that's a detail." He took one of her hands and kissed the tips of the slender fingers. "The most important thing to be considered now is when are you going to marry me? I can't, I simply can't wait much longer! Oh, Eve, Eve, I want you!"

Fiercely he drew her head against him; and the silence that followed was fraught with rapture

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 119

for them both. Oh! She wanted to be his wife, to forget the past two wretched years. If Oscar did not stand in her way, how quickly she would give this man the happiness he craved and drink deep of it herself.

"When, my love," breathed Marcus thickly, caressing her. "When, dear?"

Gravely she lifted her head and looked into his eyes for a few seconds.

"When you buy the Bennett farm," she ventured. "It—it——"

"And get rid of the squatters too, I suppose," he laughingly interrupted.

"And get rid of the squatters too," nodded Evelyn. Then she kissed him softly and whispered, "My sweetheart!"

A moment later she moved to release herself; and with another kiss he let her go. Then he smiled whimsically.

"Now it's settled, dearest," he said, rising. "I won't give you a minute's peace until you begin on your pretties, though the way you've set the day makes it rather indefinite." He waved his arm in a wide-open gesture, and finished: "But I'll see that it's mighty soon."

Mrs. Robertson's daughter was in a brown study before the fire when that lady came into the room, a few minutes later.

"Marc went early to-night, didn't he, Eve?" she questioned, as she dropped into a chair.

"He had to go and meet some one about those tiresome squatters," Eve explained. "I'm sick of the sound of their names. Marcus says if he can't get rid of them, he'll leave Ithaca."

"Mercy me!" the older woman broke in impetuously, "I do hope he succeeds, for if he goes away that'll separate us. Then, too, the squatters *are* a nuisance; and the sooner the nasty nest is cleaned out the better. Marcus has my best wishes, my love."

A step in the hall closed the conversation for the time being, and a moment later Robert Percival joined them. He nodded a greeting, expressed his surprise on not finding MacKenzie, and seated himself between the ladies in front of the fireplace.

In silence Mrs. Robertson studied his face. She wondered what had changed him so perceptibly in the last little while. He looked almost haggard to her searching eyes. She was about to question him as to his health when the young man turned to Evelyn.

"Eve dear," he began hesitatingly, "I want something done very badly, and perhaps you can accomplish it for me."

A lazy smile stole to Evelyn's lips.



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 121

"And you know, Bob, I'll do it if I can," she responded. "Tell me what's on your mind, honey."

"Certainly; why, yes, indeed," interjected Mrs. Robertson. "You know, Bob, Eve and I will do anything we can for you!"

The expression of anxiety, which his face had worn ever since he had seen the last of Polly Hopkins, lifted a little.

"That's fine!" he exclaimed heartily. "There's nothing like a fellow's own women folks, is there? And you're just as good to me as if I belonged to you."

Evelyn patted his shoulder affectionately. Love was so good, and there was so much of it! She would have been perfectly happy, had it not been for the haunting horror of that dreadful farmer! Mrs. Robertson bridled consciously, pleased with her nephew and pleased with herself.

"Why, Robert dear," she returned, "you do belong to us. God bless you, boy, you're my baby, and Eve's little brother. Now tell us what's bothering you."

He glanced from one to the other and met looks of love and sympathy. Encouraged, he blurted out:

"It's Marc's row with the squatters! I can't

get the poor devils out of my mind. Eve, can't you get him to leave the settlement people alone? I'd let them have some of my land, but it doesn't touch the lake, and they couldn't make a living on it."

Evelyn arose and crossed the room to the table. She had not expected this. She had no idea Bob was really in earnest in his talk about helping the fishermen. Her promise to MacKenzie flashed into her mind!

"I don't feel like interfering with Marc's business, Bob," she demurred. "Besides, he wants to improve the property down there, and he can't while the fishermen stay on the shore!"

The older woman sighed deeply and passed her handkerchief over her lips. It seemed lately as if everybody was quarreling over the squatters.

"But this isn't business, is it, Eve?" insisted Robert. "It's a question of the right of a lot of poor folks to live! The Silent City's their home! Pretty poor places they have, according to our notions, I suppose; but all the homes they know, and they love them too. Marc doesn't seem to understand what an awful thing he's trying to do. Can't you make him see it, Eve?"

Gently, for Robert had always been like a younger brother to her, and she loved him dearly, Evelyn explained MacKenzie's plans and showed

how impossible it was for her, under the circumstances, to interfere with them. Then she crossed to his side and bent over him.

"Robert dear," she begged. "Forget about the squatters. They aren't anything special to you!" To head off an objection that she saw in his eyes, she hurried on: "They're poor and unfortunate, I know. I'm sorry for them. We all are; but you can't deny they're worthless and filthy, and worst of all they haven't any right to be where they are. You won't let them come between you and Marc and me, will you?"

Without giving the man a chance to answer, Mrs. Robertson interrupted:

"Mercy, Eve, why of course he won't! Marc will soon be one of the family. People of our social standing don't wrangle over such cattle as the squatters." She turned smilingly to the young man and ended sweetly: "You feel that way, don't you, Bob?"

Disregarding both the lady and her question, Robert got up, his lips grim and his fine brow corrugated with lines. Evelyn and Marcus could do as they pleased; he would take his stand right there.

"Evelyn," he said slowly, "I should be sorry to have anything come between us. You've always been like a dear sister to me. I suppose it's

natural and right for you to see this the way Marc does. You're engaged to him, but you can tell him for me I'm going to help the squatters any way and every way I can."

Too angry to listen to any more arguments, he pushed his chair to one side and left the room.

Mrs. Robertson looked daggers at her daughter and as soon as she could get her breath, broke out:

"Now, Evelyn, see what a storm you've stirred up! Why didn't you use a little diplomacy? That was the least you could have done."

Evelyn flounced down into a chair without replying.

Her mother went on stormily: "You get Marc and Bob by the ears, and where'll you be!"

"Oh! I don't know! I don't know!" moaned Evelyn. "Don't talk to me any more. I'm just about crazy. I'm going to bed! Good night!"

## CHAPTER XIV

ONCE in a while the Storm Country relaxes its grimness and bedecks itself with all the airs and graces of the balmiest climate imaginable. Of such loveliness were the days that followed the squatter girl's visit to Robert Percival's study. One morning she was sewing in the shanty alone. Just outside the door the billy goat was nosing a little bundle of hay; Daddy and Wee Jerry were out, and Granny Hope was in her bed with pains in her legs.

In spite of the weight of apprehension that pressed upon the Silent City, Polly's soul insisted on singing with gladness. She found opportunity, even in the midst of her busy hours, to live over and over the adventures of that evening in the Robertson house. When she remembered how Robert had held her in his arms, her happiness made her almost faint.

She allowed Jerry's gingham blouse to fall neglected in her lap, as in imagination she dwelt on every incident of her visit. She recalled the thrilling tenderness in Robert's words, and her face grew soft in delightful reverie.

## 126 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

Then she remembered the scene in the shack upon her home-coming. How hurt she had been by the ominous, hopeless silence of Larry Bishop and Daddy Hopkins and by Lye Braeger's bitter comments. To satisfy them, she had promised to speak to Percival again, and then for a while her daydreams concerned themselves with that future meeting.

A sound at the door brought her thoughts back and she glanced up, startled. Unnoticed, the blouse dropped to the floor as Evelyn Robertson came in. Embarrassed and in silence, Pollyop arose and offered her a chair.

"You ain't feeling well, I bet," she burst out, wiping the dust from the rope seat of the rocker with her skirt. "You look white like the moon does before a rain. Go on, an' sit down!"

Sinking back, Evelyn looked steadily up at her. Then she caught at the hand resting on her shoulder.

"Pollyop, I've come to you because you're the only friend I have," she exclaimed, tears misting her eyes.

Polly reddened. How delighted she was to hear that! This girl was own blood to the "beautifullest angel" in all the world! And what could any of his folks ask her that she would not do!

"I'm awful glad you come to me," she breathed softly. "You want me to run to Oscar again? I can't stand the sight of that duffer, but I'll go just the same. Have you got a letter?"

Wiping her eyes, Evelyn shook her head.

"No, but Oscar wants to see you," she replied. She paused and studied the girl. "Polly," she continued, "don't you want to do something for—for your people?"

As the dew-drops reflect the brightness of the morning sun, so there glowed in the squatter girl's eyes new hope and purpose.

"Sure! Sure, I do," she answered. "Just show me how, an' I'll do it quicker'n lightnin'."

It might have been thirty seconds before Evelyn spoke again.

"I had to see Oscar," she said. "He mailed me a letter, but fortunately I got hold of it without Mamma seeing it." She hesitated while the other girl drew several anxious breaths and then went on: "There's a way, Pollyop, that you can ——"

Impulsive Polly could not wait.

"Do you mean help Daddy Hopkins an' the rest of 'em?" she interrupted.

Evelyn nodded.

"Yes, every one in the settlement."

A brilliant smile lit up Pollyop's countenance.

## 128 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"I'd give inches out of my hide to do that," she declared. "Go on, an' yap it to me."

"Then sit down, dear," entreated Evelyn, "and don't stare at me so!"

To have saved her life, Pollyop could not drag her eyes away, but obediently she sat down on the floor. Evelyn fidgeted under the searching, honest gaze.

"It won't be easy for you, Polly," she continued lamely, "but if you'll do what I say ——"

"For heaven's sake," came explosively from Polly, "why don't you spill it out? You're slower'n a kid tryin' to flimflam his mammy."

Evelyn flushed to her ears and scrutinized the other closely.

"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 Mare, 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."

"Fair enough," Polly commented. "I'll do my part, all right, all right."

A sigh of relief escaped the other girl.

"I was sure I could depend upon you, dear," she ejaculated. "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, and ——"

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

## 130 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

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, Pollyop, 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?"

A flame of red spread from Evelyn's chin and was lost under the brim of her flowered hat. A

feeling of resentment rose to fury within her. How dared that little squatter speak with such disrespect of Marcus MacKenzie! She wanted to thrust out her hand and slap Pollyop's face. She even had to crush down the desire to pull the chestnut curls that hung over each shoulder of the girl on the hut floor.

The struggle for self-control was short and sharp. It would never do to quarrel with Polly Hopkins, no matter what she said. What Evelyn wanted, what was absolutely necessary, was the squatter girl's promise to marry Oscar Bennett when he was free.

"Why, Polly dear," she cried as soon as she could speak. "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! Your friends here in the settlement will bless you; and I'll be everlastingly grateful to you, and—and you'll get a man and a good home for yourself."

An inarticulate moan of protest came from Polly's lips; and the speaker hurried on:

"Of course you'll 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.

"Scoot 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 she went to the door and gazed out over the lake. Then her eyes traveled along the shore and on through the Silent City. In every shanty lived some one she loved, and every one of them was existing in bitter fear. Was anything too hard to free them from Marcus MacKenzie? If she went to Oscar, it would be worse

than death; but her wretched ones might all die if she did not.

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. There 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 wiped her eyes and glanced up to the tree tops where the birds sang in wild abandonment. The voice came again! It was not in her mind; she had heard it! 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, I lost you 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 to-day 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."

"I got it especially for you, Polly," said Robert. "You can hang it up and look at it every day."

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.

"Yep!" 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."

Gently the girl withdrew her face from the touch of his hand.

"Old Marc's a tough bird, ain't he?" she interjected.

"I'll say he is, Polly," he replied, nodding, "but," again he leaned forward and enclosed her fingers in his, "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

## 136 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

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'."



## CHAPTER XV

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.

Percival had given her money to spend for the needy ones in the Silent City; and she had distributed his charity while refusing to accept anything for her own family. He had procured counsel and tried to arrange bail for the prisoners, but continually encountered unreasonable delays.

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 oftentimes the thought of Evelyn's demand intruded on her mind, and she wondered if she were doing right in refusing it.

Certainly, if the heavy hand of the law were not lifted from the Silent City soon, she would have to accept Oscar Bennett and get Miss Robertson to intercede for the squatters. Every time this temptation assailed her, Robert Percival seemed to thrust himself between her and the farmer. Later, when she met her sweetheart on the Boulevard or in a nook of the ragged rocks, his words of cheer and wisdom would chase away everything but thoughts of him.

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? He was not ignorant of Old Marc's threat; nor that the strangers, sauntering through the Silent City, were paid by MacKenzie to catch him breaking the law. 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 again! 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!"

The white face thrust close to his prevented Hopkins from using his ramrod, and he looked whimsically into the imploring brown eyes.

"We squatters have to live, Poll," he replied, patting her head. "Larry's keepin' a sharp eye out; an' so be I, an' I won't shoot nothin' what's forbid. There's a big woodchuck lives just on the edge of Bennett's grove, an' woodchuck ain't half bad, cooked squatter-fashion. Get away now, brat dear, an' let me work."

Teetering backward on her toes, Polly watched him as he ran the oiled cloth through the gun barrel.

"Aw, Daddy darlin', I wish you wouldn't," she remonstrated again.

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.

## 140 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"Mebbe in a little while you can hunt all you like, Daddy," she ventured 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 to-day, Daddy," she returned noncommittally. "Why don't you just stay to home, an'—an'——"

"Nope, I'm goin'," interrupted Hopkins. "An' Jerry's a-goin' with me. 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. Of late he had been irritable, and who could wonder at that? Showing as little as she could of the nervousness she felt, she dressed Wee Jerry at Jeremiah's command, and then, troubled in spirit, she watched him stride away in the keen morning air.

Keeping an eye open for his enemies, Hopkins took his way northward along the shore and when he reached a woodland path, struck off up the hill. Wee Jerry, in his favorite spot, astride his father's neck, caught with one free hand at the branches as they passed. Once in a while he leaned far over and kissed his father's face.

Above their heads, in the over-growing

branches of the trees, the birds carolled their morning love songs to each other.

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 the woodchuck had ventured out. The animal was sitting up, taking a survey of the neighborhood, when Hopkins lifted his gun; and with one sharp crack and a belch 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

## 142 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

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.

Her gaze, full of horror, left the speaker's sarcastic, smiling face and settled upon her father's. It was drab with fear and hate.

"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, Poll," he cried out

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 143

to her. "I got that big chuck 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 damn 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!"

The little lad, after several convulsive efforts, stopped his clamor long enough to grasp his sister's question when she had repeated it frantically several times.

"Sure I was there," he sobbed, drawing his sleeve across his face. "'Twas a big wood-chuck 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."

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 damn duffers know he didn't. You can't get by with nothin' like that. It's crooked! Here, you—you—you gimme my Daddy!"

Over the face of the man who held the prisoner passed an expression of sympathy. He had children at home. Wee Jerry's screams had touched him, but not so deeply as this girl, whose unfathomable brown eyes seemed to dig out the very secrets of his soul. Ashamed, he glanced at his companion.

"Not much, my pretty one!" came from the other in quick retort. "He's going with us—an' by to-morrow night he'll be nose-turned to Auburn."

Auburn! Where Larry had gone! Where Larry had wept in his cell when they had told him his woman and child had died from the grief of his going. Every primitive instinct in the girl was aroused. She knew what Auburn meant to the Silent City people, and in an in-



stant pictured what the shack would be without Daddy Hopkins.

Like a wild cat 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. How she kissed him and caressed him! Baby Jerry clung so desperately to their father that it took Polly several suffering minutes to wrest his fingers from Jeremiah's bushy hair.

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.

## CHAPTER XVI

As in a nightmare the squatter girl blundered along the path, back to the hut, carrying Wee Jerry in her arms.

Granny Hope was hobbling from the coop-hole when the girl stumbled over the threshold.

"I heard you bawlin', love-lass," wheezed the old woman, "an' the baby ——" She stopped at the sight of Pollyop's death-like face. The child slipped from the girl's arms and sank whimpering, face down, on the rough boards.

"Something awful's happened, huh, Pollyop?" the woman faltered, and limping across the floor, she bent and gathered the thin small boy to her. "Come to grandma, Jerry dear," she coaxed, "an' hear a wee bit about Love."

The crooning voice, choked with entreaty, touched the edge of Polly Hopkins' soul. She swayed forward to her knees, caught the one withered hand extended to her and clung there.

"I'll set, my bird," mumbled Mrs. Hope weakly, and she dropped into a chair with Jerry

in her lap. "There! Aw! Don't cry that way, honey. Listen, dear heart. God's everywhere! An' His love too! Can't——"

Out of the shower of glistening curls appeared a wan, tearful face.

"Daddy's been took to jail, Granny Hope," Pollyop burst out. "God can't go in a dirty jail, God can't! Old Marc——"

Mrs. Hope's sudden trembling broke off the girl's words; and Polly wept again in hopeless misery as the woman repeated almost dully:

"God can't go in a dirty jail."

Then her face, lighted by a radiant thought, lost its drabness; and for a time she stroked the bowed young head. Then:

"Be your Daddy lovin' you an' the baby?" she queried softly.

That question had never been put to Polly Hopkins before. Had Granny Hope gone crazy to ask such a thing? Every squatter in the settlement marveled at Jeremiah's devotion to his children!

"Huh, brat dear?" came more forcibly from Granny Hope, as if she were determined to have an answer.

Pollyop lifted her head wearily.

"Sure, sure, Granny," she moaned. "He'll love us till he dies."

"Then my lass ain't believin' any longer that the God is love, like once she was, huh?"

The woman and girl were now looking straight into each other's eyes.

"Yep, I believe that," fell from Pollyop, unsteadily. "I guess I do!"

A toothless smile wavered to the woman's lips.

"An' it's true," she said tenderly, "as true as the sun's up in the mornin'. Now if Daddy Hopkins has went to prison like you said, then ain't God there? Ain't your pappy brimmin' over with love? An', dear lassie-child, love's love, an' God's God behind the bars just the same as in this here beautiful shanty!"

Through the seconds of silence that fell upon them as the motherly voice ceased, Wee Jerry piped a shrill "Pollyop."

The girl, still on her knees, edged closer to the old woman's side and put her arms around him.

"Listen to what Granny Hope says, baby dear," she sobbed. "Love's went right along to jail with our Daddy. Jesus'll help 'im. He can, can't He, Granny dear?"

"He can, an' He will, poor brats," answered Mrs. Hope. And then through the quietude of the early morning she voiced in tremulous words the promises that had been food and drink to her

during all the lonely years that had passed over her head. "Ask, an' you'll get it, dear lambs. Seek your Daday, an' you'll find 'im, little dears."

One of Pollyop's arms went about the woman's neck in a trice.

"Granny," she cried, comforted. "Oh, Granny Hope!"

The shimmering chestnut curls mingled with thready locks of gray; and then two quivering wizened lips fell upon a trembling rosy mouth.

"Say something more, little Granny," whispered Pollyop. "Oh, God'll do what you say He will—mebbe, huh?"

Weary with unusual emotion, the woman's head bobbed forward.

"With God, Pollyop," she whispered faintly, "there ain't no mebbe. When you get a swat from a hand like Old Marc's, then a angel from Heaven ——"

Instantly Polly Hopkins was on her feet. An angel from Heaven! A blessed angel would help Daddy Hopkins!

With her hand across her lips, as if to crush back the exultant cry that had risen to her throat, she stood rigidly silent until she could speak. Very soon:

"Darlin'," she murmured, bending over Mrs.

Hope, "get on my bed an' take Wee Jerry. I'm goin' out."

Polly Hopkins was in the Robertson grape arbor before she fully realized the task which she had undertaken. To thrust herself into the presence of Robert Percival was not so easy as she had anticipated. The great house seemed almost impenetrable in the glittering sunlight.

"Just let Pollyop find 'im alone, Jesus dear," she prayed, and then stepped out from among the vines. There before her was Marcus MacKenzie's horse tied to the marble post in the roadway. The very thought of meeting his mocking smile sapped her strength and she shrank back; but soon the thought of her father's peril swept over her again, and she jumped up and went on.

It was a cozy scene that met her eyes when she ventured into the house. The family were at breakfast; and Marcus MacKenzie in his riding suit was drinking coffee. At the sight of her he put down the cup and rose to his feet; and instantly Percival got up too. Evelyn went white; and an ejaculation fell from Mrs. Robertson's lips.

Throwing a questioning glance from one to the other, the girl's eyes settled at last on Robert's face.

"They've took my Daddy Hopkins to jail," she faltered, "an' I've come to get 'im back."

The loud laugh that burst from MacKenzie's lips brought a glare from Robert.

"Thank God, we've got him at last," Marcus exulted. "I've waited for this with unendurable impatience."

The expression of woe died in the squatter girl's eyes as Robert Percival came toward her.

"What!" he ejaculated, and then as though conscious of the hate that was directed at the newcomer by Marcus MacKenzie, he added in a lower tone: "Poor little girl! Come into my study, Polly, and tell me about it."

"Nonsense, Bob," interrupted MacKenzie rudely. "Let her tell her lies here. I'd like to hear what she has to say."

A flush mounted to Robert's face as he turned angrily on the speaker. During the moment he was struggling for composure, Mrs. Robertson and her daughter hung on the scene with bated breaths.

"Must I remind you whose house this is, MacKenzie?" demanded Percival finally; and Marcus sank down into his chair with a muttered apology.

In the circles Polly Hopkins knew, such a clash between two men meant fight, and when



MacKenzie avoided the challenge, a glow of confidence in her man swept over her.

"I didn't come to tell lies, Mr. MacKenzie," she broke out impetuously. "I've come to tell God's truth." Then the recollection of her father's desperate need overwhelmed her, and she wailed: "Your men planted a squirrel on 'im, sir; Daddy said so, an' Jerry saw 'em."

"Who's Jerry?" MacKenzie asked savagely.

"Wee Jerry," came in a breath. "My little brother. He's half-past five."

The man relaxed the tense attitude in which he had awaited her answer.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "your brother; oh, yes, of course!"

To Percival, watching the man and girl, came the conviction that she had told the truth, and that MacKenzie knew she had. Before he could break in, Polly spoke again.

"Please, sir," she begged, "please, Mr. MacKenzie, give 'im back to me. You can. Do it, an', an', oh, God, I'll die for you."

She fell forward on her knees; and then Marcus MacKenzie laughed again. Lower and lower fell the curly head, for the sarcastic sound told her more plainly than any words could have done that she would get no aid from him.

Robert stooped and lifted her up.

"Damn you, Marc! Stop it!" he demanded. "It's wicked, downright wicked!" And to her he murmured: "Poor little girl! Poor little Polly."

He tried to lead her away; but how could she go without making another effort? She turned to Evelyn.

"You do something, ma'am!" she implored. "Please do it quick, an', an'——" A light leapt into her eyes and she burst out: "Mebbe some day you'll be askin' me a big favor, an' here's my word before God, I do it."

For a short space of time the two girls stared into each other's eyes, but Evelyn's fell first. She dared not make a plea for Jeremiah Hopkins to Marcus just then. She sank back limply.

"Take her away, Robert!" she groaned. "It's too dreadful."

After Pollyop and Robert had gone, she turned swiftly on Marcus.

"I wish they were all dead, those wretched squatters," she said fretfully, and frowning, MacKenzie continued his breakfast in silence.

## CHAPTER XVII

MISERABLE days passed for the entire squatter settlement. That the right arm of the Silent City had been lopped off when Hopkins was imprisoned showed plainly in the abjection of its inhabitants. Every countenance was wrinkled with anxiety; and still the strange men hovered about the lakeside.

Ugly rumors circulated through the Silent City. It was said that to fix a felony on Hopkins, the officers claimed that in searching him, before shutting him up, they had found a revolver in his pocket. Every one that knew him scouted the idea, but Jeremiah Hopkins was promptly indicted for carrying concealed weapons.

At the time the bail was fixed, the amount was beyond the reach of the squatters, and Percival was refused on a technicality, when he offered himself as bondsman. The authorities defended their acts on the ground that the poacher was a violent and dangerous man, but the squatters saw in it all the purpose to railroad their leader to prison.

The only concession Robert had been able to

obtain was permission for Polly to visit her father, and day after day she carried Jerry to see him. Repeatedly the same scene was enacted in Jeremiah's cell. Wee Jerry clung sobbing to his daddy, and Polly was worn out with the agony of dragging the child away from the Ithaca jail. To add to her misery, Mrs. Hope took to her bed; and nothing that the girl could say would induce the old woman to get up.

The day of Hopkins' trial Polly had to stay at home to care for Granny Hope and the baby. She could not be of any use in the courtroom, though she would have loved to sit beside her father during his ordeal.

Late in the afternoon, while she was rocking Wee Jerry, for there was no other way to keep him quiet, there came a rap on the door. Placing him on the cot, she called a soft: "Come in."

The entrance of Robert Percival filled her with apprehension, he looked so serious, so drawn and pale.

"It's about Daddy," she exclaimed, forgetting for the moment how embarrassed she was.

Robert nodded.

"Sit down, Polly," he said gravely, "and I'll tell you."

Mutely she stood staring at him.

"Sit down, dear," he insisted.

"I don't want to sit down," she moaned. "Tell me about Daddy. What's happened?—He's goin' to Auburn, huh?"

Had he been able, Robert would have contradicted her. Gladly would he have chased away the welling tears that came slowly into the dear eyes.

"Is it Auburn prison?" she whispered. "Did the jury say he were guilty?"

"Yes, Polly, but I've still hopes I can get him another trial," answered Robert. "Oh, little Polly, please don't cry, please don't."

Not to cry when she was hurt beyond endurance! Unmindful that he was holding out his hands to her, she sobbed hysterically, utterly deprived of self-control. The more Robert pleaded with her to cease, the more she kept up the incessant wail.

At the sound of her anguish, Jerry awoke and set up a loud screaming, and, ever true to her mother instinct for him and all others in her wild world, Pollyop took him up and seated herself, hushing and caressing him.

"The littlest mother in the world," breathed Robert tenderly, bending over her. "And a brave girl you are, too, Polly Hopkins."

A little shake of the curly head bowed over Jerry was followed by:

"I can't be brave ever any more, I can't. I need my Daddy so, I do. I'm thinkin' my heart just busted when they took him away."

He understood, and Robert's very soul melted in sympathy. Indeed, never had he worked so hard on any one thing as he had done to defend the squatter. It had been only after MacKenzie had outwitted him that he had come to the Silent City to break the bad news to Polly Hopkins.

"Pollyop," he began, much moved, "you do need your father; every girl does. But while he's gone, if he really has to go, I can make living without him much easier for you."

The rocking-chair ceased its creaking and came to a dead stop.

"You must take some of the money you have for yourself," he hastened on. "No one needs it more than you do. No, now don't shake your head, dear. Some one must help you—don't you see?"

"'Twas awful good of you to give me the money, an' let me help the squatter women," came distinctly from the sobbing lips, "but Jerry an' me couldn't take a cent of yours!"

Somehow Robert had expected this, but her refusal did not make him any the less determined to help her. That she was too upset yet to think of anything outside her appalling grief, he knew.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 159

So for a time he was silent, as Polly slowly rocked Jerry back and forth.

After a few moments the boy fell asleep, and his sister laid him quietly on the bed again. Her own tears dried, she went back to her chair and, sitting down, clasped her fingers about her knees.

"Now what be I goin' to do?" she queried forlornly, looking straight at him.

Robert shook his head.

"Nothing, now," he replied, "but just hope and pray that I can bring your father back again."

She considered him with serious attention, biting her red underlip nervously, as the man watched her in absorbed fascination.

"Granny Hope says love's all powerful," she broke forth at length, "an' every night I cry out to the good God to bring my Daddy home. It's true, ain't it, Jesus can help a squatter girl?"

"Of course," Robert assured her. "Of course, and, oh, Polly, I want you to be different ——"

"What do you mean by bein' different?" she stopped him quickly, and then she caught the look he cast around the room.

"I'll always be a squatter," she went on fiercely. "I love squatters, I do."

## 160 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

His face burned at the emphasis on her words, yet he liked her better for standing by her humble friends.

"And you love me too, don't you, Pollyop?" he asked, reaching out and taking one of her hands.

Didn't she love him? Ah, more than she even dared to admit to herself! A blush mounted to her curls.

"Yep, I'm lovin' you, too," she breathed. "You an' Daddy ——"

Robert stood up dizzily, bringing her up with him. What was there in this crude squatter lassie that made his heart beat so?

"Polly," he murmured, drawing her to him. "Little Polly," and then he raised her face to his—"Kiss me, sweet."

Limp and trembling, she leaned against him as she had that day in his own home. She was so tired and lonely!

"I want you always, Polly," he whispered in her ear. "Some day I want you for my wife. I'll take you away from Ithaca—all of you, your father and the baby—and Granny Hope too. You hear, don't you, Pollyop?"

At that Polly clung to him. She had lost sight of the fact that she might have to marry Oscar Bennett to free Daddy Hopkins, and to keep her



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 161

people in the Silent City. She only realized that she was in Robert's arms, and that he was telling her over and over that he adored her.

Jerry stirred on the bed and cried out sharply. Polly withdrew herself and went to the child, and after she had patted him a moment, she looked up.

"Hadn't you best go now?" she asked. "Some one might catch you here. No! Please, please don't kiss me no more."

Without the slightest regard for her protestations, Robert, smiling, gathered her completely into his arms.

"Perhaps," he stammered, "perhaps, sweetheart, your father'll come back in spite of Marcus MacKenzie. Good-by, dear."

She followed him to the door and watched him go up the lane. Then she crept back into the shanty. Jerry still lay asleep on the bed. For a while she stood, her hand held close about her throat. How ashamed she felt when she recalled that she had forgotten for even the few seconds while she was in Robert's arms that Daddy Hopkins had been found guilty by twelve of the county's best. They were going to take him to Auburn, where perhaps he might die. Better anything than that!

162 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

“Daddy,” she cried, “I’m tryin’ my best to save you, dear, an’, an’ I will, I will, darlin’. Your brat’ll save you, Daddy—but oh, God, it seems as how I couldn’t do it.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

OVER a week had passed since Hopkins had stood before his peers to be judged of a crime the law would not overlook. His lawyer, a good one and well paid by Robert Percival, had fought strenuously for a new trial; but after much deliberation on the part of the judge, the motion had been denied; and this was the last day of Jeremiah's stay in the county jail.

It was soon after luncheon time that a high-powered motor car was carrying Evelyn Robertson and Marcus MacKenzie to the Bennett farmhouse. Marcus was in excellent spirits. Like all men of his haughty, self-conceited type, he was very well pleased with himself when things were coming his way. He was going to add to his fine acreage and make the prettiest girl in Ithaca mistress of his estate. Added to that, Jeremiah Hopkins, that thorn in his flesh, had been dragged from the Silent City and would soon be behind the prison bars.

The purchasing of Bennett's farm had been settled, as far as Marcus was concerned, although

Eve's pleading and Oscar's stubbornness had made him offer more for the place than it was really worth.

When the farmer walked up to the automobile, as it stopped before his door, Oscar paid no attention to Evelyn, sitting beside MacKenzie, save to give her an awkward bow.

"You've spoken to this squatter girl about what you want, Bennett?" asked Marcus, going to the point at once.

"Yes, sure I have," growled Oscar. "I told you that t'other day; but Polly seems to be always holding off for something. If she toes the mark, then I'll sell my farm and take her west. I won't have that brat of a Jerry, though, but I suppose Polly'll make a row when I tell her that."

During the time he was pondering on this, MacKenzie snapped and unsnapped the clasp of his driving gloves. Looking up finally, he observed:

"You won't be worried with the boy, Bennett. I'm going to have the Children's Society take him. Hopkins will serve a long term, and if you marry Polly, the rest of the pests will scatter after a while. I'll be glad to be rid of the whole Hopkins tribe.—But that girl is like a burr; she sticks tighter, the more you pull!"

Oscar glanced furtively from under his shaggy brows at Evelyn.

"I was thinking maybe she'd listen to reason if some woman talked to her, sir," he suggested. "Now Miss ——" He hesitated and threw out his hand toward Evelyn. "Miss Robertson here, perhaps she could make Polly understand something. Sort of wheedle her into it. Couldn't you, Miss?"

The insult in his words and tones, which MacKenzie did not notice at all, caused Evelyn to blush.

"I don't know," she murmured.

Curiously Marcus turned and looked at her.

"But you'd try, Eve dear, surely," he argued. "You know very well that I wouldn't have consented to pay Bennett's price if you hadn't wanted the property more than I did. It's a nasty thing to mix up in, and under any other circumstances I should not allow you to speak to a squatter; but you know the girl, so you might try."

"Of course I'll try," Evelyn returned, darting a steely blue glance at Oscar. "Doesn't she want to marry you, Mr. Bennett?"

She turned squarely in her seat and stared at the farmer. A dull flame of crimson touched his

tanned cheeks. He was so angry he wanted to pull Eve from the motor and beat her.

"I know damn well she don't!" he snapped viciously, "but, as I was saying, perhaps you could put in a word for me. I'd make her a good man, and I want her,—That's the bargain, Mr. MacKenzie. I sell the farm at the price we talked if I get Polly Hopkins. If I don't get 'er, then I won't sell. I can make a good living here for me and my mother, and I don't intend to leave this country without Pollyop."

The thought of his staying around Ithaca filled Evelyn with dread. She knew something of the tenacity with which he clung to any notion that might take possession of him. How could she have ever submitted to his caresses? And the words, "Until death do us part," rang in her ears, filling her with nauseating disgust.

"I wish he were dead this minute," she thought passionately.

She was waiting for Oscar to continue, but he evidently did not intend to; so, settling back as if anxious to start, she said coldly:

"I'll go to her then, as soon as I can."

"When—to-day, ma'am?" asked Oscar eagerly.

If she had to approach Polly Hopkins once more about this disagreeable matter, the sooner the better, Evelyn thought.

"Yes," she consented languidly. "I might go now, I suppose."

"But you won't find her home till night, Eve," Marcus informed her. "She's gone to see her father before he goes to Auburn. I tried to put the quietus on that, but Bob cut up so I told the sheriff to let her in."

"Then I'll telephone you later, Mr. Bennett," said Evelyn, lifting her chin haughtily as if he were really beneath her consideration. "Good afternoon!"

Never afterward could Oscar estimate the time he had stood in the road, gaping after them, white with anger. Thoughts of the past two years, when Evelyn Robertson was as wax in his hands, crowded into his mind.

The hours passed slowly by! It seemed an eternity to Oscar while he awaited the call from Evelyn. When he heard her voice over the telephone, he answered gruffly.

"Now don't be nasty, Oscar," ordered Evelyn imperiously. "I'm doing the best I can. I'm in a booth talking, and if you'll meet me at seven, we'll go together to Polly Hopkins. Does that suit you all right?"

"You don't suit me very well," Oscar grumbled into the receiver. "I'd like to give you the licking of your life, my lady."

Evelyn's laugh came ringing across the wire.

"Don't put yourself out, my dear man," she taunted. "Now, don't start bullying me over the 'phone, Oscar, for I won't stand it. Hold your temper if you can possibly do so. For once do as I tell you! Will you?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Bennett rapped out. "Where'll I meet you?"

"Well, let me see. I'll have to walk, because I don't want my mother to know anything about it, and it looks like rain."

She was so long in deciding that Bennett thought she had gone.

"Hello," he shouted hoarsely into the 'phone.

"I was just wondering," remarked the girl, "where the best place would ——"

"Suit yourself, and you'll suit me," interrupted Oscar, in an ugly tone.

"Very well then, Mr. Surly-Bear," laughed Evelyn, "at seven on the Boulevard, near the lane."

"All right!" and Oscar slammed up the receiver without waiting to hear any more, and proceeded about his farm tasks. Thoughts of anger toward Eve, now so overbearing and contemptuous, were soon crowded out, however, by anticipation of the time when Polly would belong to



him—be his to love or abuse at his own sweet will, for Oscar had little doubt that the squatter girl would eventually yield to his will.

Pollyop, meanwhile, quite unconscious of Oscar's vicious intentions, was already utterly overwhelmed with misery.

After the meager supper was over that night, she sat crouched near the wood-box, her arm around Billy Hopkins' stringy neck. Granny Hope was in bed and Wee Jerry, having cried himself to sleep, was in Jeremiah's room, rolled up in a blanket. The night was chilly; and the thin curls of smoke which rose from the stove gave evidence that the fire had been lately replenished. The day had been nerve-racking. Polly had been to the county jail to say good-by to her father and had taken Wee Jerry with her. Even Daddy Hopkins had broken down under the strain.

For the first time in her life Polly had seen her father weep. How impetuously she had kissed away his tears! How she had hung to his neck! When they had been forced to leave him, Jerry had shrieked his misery all the way through the streets of Ithaca.

To make the matter worse, it began to rain, to thunder and lighten. And now, a forlorn, lonely little creature, she sat listening to the

## 170 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

tempest outside with no company but the billy goat.

In her vivid imagination she had followed Daddy all the way to Auburn. He was there by this time,—there behind the huge, iron gates, that, when once they closed upon a squatter, it seemed almost impossible to open.

In mental anguish, she pictured the keepers putting him in a little cell, perhaps the same one Larry had occupied when his woman and baby had died.

How listless and hopeless she felt! Only when the thunder rolled over the lake, and the lightning flashed across the sky, did she lift her head. When she was happy, Polly loved the storms, but now, with Daddy in Auburn, how could she bear the thrashing rain and the moan of the willow trees as they swung to and fro over the shanty roof?

She found herself wishing fearfully that the storm would sweep off to the south and down behind the hills. Over and over in her mind went the thought that perhaps she could have helped Daddy if she had done what Evelyn wanted her to. Why hadn't she consented to marry Oscar two weeks ago? She knew why, and, blushing, blamed herself. She could not keep the image of Robert Percival from smiling at her.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 171

All of a sudden a frightful flash of lightning made dim the flicker from the small candle, and was followed instantly by a thunderous roar that shook the very earth. Mingled with it came a woman's scream. Polly struggled to her feet. Some one was in trouble! Some squatter-woman was calling her. She dashed toward the door just as it flung wide open, and Evelyn Robertson rushed in.

"Polly Hopkins," she cried, grasping the squatter girl's arm, "Pollyop, something struck Oscar, and he's dead in the road."

Frantically she drew the dazed Polly over the threshold. The darkness was dense, and the torrents of rain pelted their faces. Another zigzag streak of fire ran across the sky, making a vivid picture as it blazed Cornell University into plain view. In the white light of it, Polly saw a man lying face down in the path leading to the shanty. He made no effort to get up as the two girls bent over him.

"Mebbe he ain't dead," muttered Polly, shuddering. "Let's lug him in the hut."

Between them they dragged the heavy, inert body into the shanty and shut the door. Oscar looked dead when they turned him over. His face was livid, and his eyes tightly shut.

## 172 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"The thunder hit him, huh?" questioned Polly, awestruck.

Shudder after shudder ran over Evelyn.

"I don't know," she moaned. "Yes, I suppose so. Oh, it was dreadful!"

She began to cry, wringing her hands desperately.

"Don't do that," begged Pollyop, with a shiver. "Come on an' help me get 'im up on my bunk."

Weak from the shock, Evelyn was of little service in lifting Oscar. But the bed was low, and finally after much tugging, he was rolled lifelessly over on his back, stretched to his full length on the rickety cot.

Standing side by side, the girls looked anxiously down upon him.

"If he ain't dead," mumbled Pollyop, "he's awful sick. Guess we'd best take off his rain-coat."

In this Evelyn helped; and they worked in silence until Oscar was covered to the chin with a warm blanket.

"I guess mebbe he's dead, ain't he?" queried Polly woefully.

Shaking off her superstitious terror, Evelyn touched the prostrate man. Perhaps he was dead; and out of somewhere a thought shot into her mind that if he were, her troubles were over.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 173

"I don't know," she whispered. "But he looks so!"

Pollyop shoved Evelyn aside and slipped her arm under Bennett's head. She seemed to have lost all aversion to him. She realized then only that a human being was suffering, perhaps dead. At her tender touch the man's eyes flew open; and panic-stricken, Pollyop withdrew her arm and was back beside the other girl before she spoke.

"He's got life in him, Miss Eve," she chattered between her teeth. "Look at his eyes! God, ain't it awful!"

Quietly Oscar lay gazing at the girls as they stared at him. Polly was the first to go to him.

"Feel awful sick, eh, Oscar?" she asked in a low tone.

The man did not answer even by a movement of his lids.

"He can't talk," she went on, looking around at Evelyn. "He ought to have a doctor. Can't you go up to the Boulevard an' get Doc Bacon?"

A fresh burst of tears so choked Evelyn Robertson that for a space she could not answer.

"No, I can't go out in this awful storm again," she finally replied. "Of course I can't," she repeated, swallowing. "I'm afraid. I won't go! I won't take a step. If any one goes ——"

174 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"Then stay by him," interjected Polly dully, "an' I'll go!"

Ashamed to declare that she was afraid to be left alone with Oscar, Evelyn watched Pollyop as she went out and softly closed the door behind her.

## CHAPTER XIX

POLLY HOPKINS lingered several moments to accustom her eyes to the night's blackness. Beyond to the east Lake Cayuga rushed on toward Ithaca as if its intentions were to swallow the little town in one huge mouthful. Pollyop crooned over mechanically words which fell hourly from Granny Hope.

"Ask an' it shall be given thee," she whispered. "Then if that's so, let me get some one to help Oscar!"

Through the clatter of the elements she heard the sound of footsteps off in the dark road. An answer to her prayer was about to step out of the night gloom. She hoped it was Larry Bishop or Lye Braeger. Opening her lips, she gave the wierd, crying, squatter-call of the Storm Country; and a voice that clutched at her heart answered her.

Then by the next flash of jagged lightning she saw Robert Percival coming toward her.

"Is that you, Polly?" he called. "What's the matter?"

"Yep," she faltered timidly. "I got some one sick in the shanty."

Of all the people she had expected to see, he was the last. As she waited for him to approach, Pollyop's active mind grasped the fact that now Robert would know what his cousin had done. She saw no way to keep him in ignorance of Evelyn's relation to Oscar, and she was too excited to think of an excuse to keep him outside.

"Pollyop," commenced Robert, "I had to see you if only for a few minutes. Wait a second before you go in."

Confused and agitated, the girl did not stir a step until he was bending over her. One arm went around her shoulders, one tender hand pressed her head against his breast.

"Daddy's gone!" she choked almost inaudibly. "They've took him to Auburn, huh?"

"Yes, dear child," answered Robert, his own throat full with emotion. "But what I came to tell you is this, dear. I've already set things moving to bring him back. I couldn't sleep to-night until I saw you."

A long shudder ran the length of Polly's body; her legs grew so weak she would have fallen but for the strong arms holding her up.

"I want him awful bad," came up in a breath to the pale young man.



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 177

"And I say, Polly dear, that he's coming home," repeated Robert, "and every day I want you to expect him. Will you trust me, darling?"

He had asked her that question once, but that was before Old Marc had railroaded Daddy Hopkins to Auburn.

"Will you, Pollyop?" urged Robert passionately, lifting her face and laying his warm lips on hers.

With swift-coming breaths she flung both arms around his neck.

"I'll trust you every day an' all day!" She hesitated and turned her head. A sound in the hut had frightened her. She knew Robert had heard it too, for he reached out his hand to open the door.

"We'll go in," said he, taking her arm and gathering both of her hands into his.

By a sudden movement, Polly pushed him backward.

"I'd rather you'd make off," she told him unsteadily. "Mebbe I can find a squatter."

"No, my dear," returned Robert. "When you need help, and I'm here, you can't call any one else."

While he was speaking, he had disengaged his hands and had lifted the latch.

Trembling from head to foot, Pollyop followed him into the hut.

When Robert caught sight of his pale cousin, he stopped short.

"*You're* not ill, Eve dear?" he cried, going to her quickly. "Polly said some one was sick here."

He glanced around the shanty. A throb of happiness made his pulses beat faster. "The Greatest Mother in the World" still held her place on the wall. While he was contemplating the wonder of the picture, his thoughts went back to the day he had given it to his Littlest Mother in the World. Billy-goat Hopkins mousing in the wood-box brought his thoughts back, but not soon enough to catch the meaning glance that Evelyn shot at the squatter girl, who was gazing steadily at her. With a fling of contempt Miss Robertson walked to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"No, I'm not the least sick, Bob, but—but just now ——" she hesitated, then continued hurriedly: "There's a little boy here; and I often bring him food and candy. When I got here," she whirled around and flung her hand toward the cot, "this man was so terribly sick that I told Polly Hopkins she ought to get a doctor. Naturally, I consented to stay until some one else came, but I never expected—you!"

The explanation brought a groan from Pollyop. Slowly Robert drew his gaze from Oscar's pallid countenance and turned to her. He looked so shocked and hurt that she impulsively moved toward him.

"How'd he come here?" Robert exclaimed, going to the bedside. "Why, it's Bennett! What's he doing here?"

So passionate were his tones, so full of that demanding quality that Evelyn, fearing Pollyop would tell the truth, again caught hold of him.

"He's in love with Polly Hopkins, Bobs," she offered, trying to speak calmly, "and really it's none of our business. Is it? But I do think he ought to have a doctor."

Robert staggered back, flashing a glance at the squatter girl which seemed to burn her through and through.

"Are you married to him?" he demanded of her.

Her pale lips framed the single word, "No."

"Then how in God's name came he here in your ——"

Two strides brought him so close that Polly felt his hot breath against her cold face. She cried out in anguish and started to speak; but Evelyn broke in upon her in frantic haste.

## 180 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"Now listen to me, Bobs," she insisted. "You are very unkind! What's happened here is none of your business nor mine! Every squatter woman has a man, and you can't expect Polly Hopkins to be an exception. All you can do is to get a doctor."

Robert passed his hand over his face. He looked dazedly from Pollyop, so silent and pale, to the man so horribly still on the cot.

"All right," he replied gruffly. "Come on! This is no place——" He flung a glance at Polly Hopkins that struck her like a blow from a whip, and finished, "no place for a decent girl."

Stupified by the flood of disasters that had overwhelmed her, Polly watched Robert Percival lead his cousin from the hut. After the first wild impulse to tell him the truth, she had made no further effort to clear herself.

Evelyn Robertson was going to hold her to the word she had made two years ago! Being innately honest herself, Pollyop could see no way to lighten her own dejection or to still Robert's fierce anger. Her little world was tumbling to pieces around her! No longer could she think of him as her own, though but a few short minutes before he had comforted her with kisses and promises. He had demanded that

she should trust him, yet at the very first trial of his faith, he had flung away and left her alone.

Blinded by tears, she felt her way to the cot. Bennett lay in the same position, his wide-open eyes holding an expression of horror.

"She's got a lily liver all right, Oscar," Polly hissed through her teeth. "Did you hear all what she said?"

Such is the power of habit over a nature like the squatter girl's that Robert faded from her mind, and Oscar Bennett, suffering and dying, absorbed her whole attention. How very awful his face was, deep lined and networked with fine wrinkles!

"Can't you hear anything, Oscar?" she questioned. "Listen, mebbe you'll get well. If you do, take your old mammy an' get out quick. Eve ain't worth one of your toe nails. You've been a mean duffer, Oscar, but you're too damn good for her.—God, but she were a wicked woman, wasn't she, huh?"

Not a move of the heavy head on the pillow gave evidence that she had been heard.

She was still standing by Bennett's side when, without knocking, Robert opened the door and came in, followed by the doctor. Polly recognized the stranger instantly as the medical man

who lived a short distance down the Boulevard. In anxious inquiry she glanced at Percival.

Observing that she had been weeping, his anger flared again. It never occurred to him that his own cruelty had drawn the tears from her eyes. There was the huge farmer stretched out on the bed; and the squatter girl crying beside him! She was mourning over the stricken man! Robert frowned; and hopelessly, in silence, Polly moved aside to give the doctor the space she had occupied.

After a hasty examination of the patient, Doctor Bacon turned to Polly Hopkins.

"Something struck him," he said shortly. "You've been quarreling with him, eh, girl? What did you hit him with?"

Accusation rang against her not only in the speaker's tones but in Robert's inarticulate cry.

"Why did you strike him, Polly Hopkins?" he demanded hoarsely. "Did you? Speak! Did you?"

That he should believe such things of her crushed her completely. Her head fell forward, but not until Robert spoke again harshly did she answer.

"Nope," she breathed. Her tongue felt as if it were covered with ashes. "Nope, I didn't hit him!"

That was all she said. She looked up at him pleadingly through her thick lashes. Perhaps he did not really believe her guilty. Yes, he did! He was still fixing upon her that accusatory gaze.

"He'd better be moved out of this hole," observed the doctor, looking around, "but it's an awful night." He considered a moment and then added: "I'll telephone to Ithaca for an ambulance."

Sternly he directed a look of disgust at Polly. He hated attending the squatters anyway and never would have consented to enter the Silent City if Robert Percival had not come for him.

Aghast at the horror of the emergency, Pollyop seemed not to notice the physician's contempt.

"Is he goin' to die, mister?" she queried plaintively.

"I don't know," he replied in gruff indecision, as he prepared a draught.

When everything within human power had been done for Oscar Bennett, Robert allowed the doctor to pass out of the hut before him. Then, like a shot, he turned back to Polly's side. His eyes blazed with jealousy; and quickly it crossed her mind that he was going to strike her. Oh!

How she wished he would and then take back all the cruel words he had hurled at her!

"When you said you loved me, you lied," he gritted savagely. "You knew all the time you had him. You let me kiss you! You said love was the greatest thing in the world!—Oh, God! How I wish I could hate you!"

Polly could not speak, neither could she move. Imprisoned tragedy lay in the depths of her eyes. If he had been less violent, she would have implored him to trust her.

Percival really hoped she would resent his accusations. Stormy denials would have been sweet music to his ears. He would have welcomed even a torrent of abuse from her. Anything was less maddening than this sinister silence that seemed to put the stamp of truth upon his cousin's explanation of Bennett's presence.

"Why don't you speak?" he rasped.

When she showed no signs of answering, he turned to go. The door was swinging in his hand, but he did not pass out. It was as though the agony scorching him fused all his emotions; and in a flash he realized that he loved her just the same! No matter what she had done, he loved her, and no woman in the world could or would take her place.



He whirled around and with one sweep gathered her into his arms. Unmindful of the man on the bed, he showered kisses upon her hair, her eyes and lastly seared her lips by his passionate caresses.

“Trust me!” she gasped. “Please trust me.”

A contemptuous laugh fell from him.

“Trust you?” he grated. “That I will not! I’ll never trust you again. But you’re mine just the same. Do you hear? You belong to me. But after this I’ll watch every step you take and—and ——”

He almost crushed her into unconsciousness; and she hung in his arms a fragile, beaten thing, too tired to cry out, too weak to plead.

Then all of a sudden Robert loosened his hold upon her, strode to the door and without a backward glance opened it and was gone.

For a long time after he had left the hut, prone upon the rough shanty boards, she strained her eyes at the door, as if a ghost had just passed through it.

Granny Hope’s voice called her name; and she came limping out of her room on her stick.

“I heard a lot of folks talkin’, Pollyop,” she said, “an’ I got awful pains to-night. It’s the storm, I guess.”

Almost exhausted, Pollyop forced herself to stand up.

"You hadn't ought to be out of bed, Granny," she remonstrated. "Yep, I guess it's the rain what makes you ache."

Then Mrs. Hope noticed Bennett. His eyes gazed at her a moment and then moved back to Polly.

The old woman hobbled to the cot, and Polly came to her side silently.

"He's awful sick, I guess, ain't he?" observed Mrs. Hope, looking up into the girl's face.

"Yep!" The affirmative was but a breath.

"Goin' to die, huh?" whispered the other.

A deep sob rose to the girl's lips, brought almost to utterance by her intense suffering.

"Mebbe!" was all she could say.

"Poor man," the woman muttered, wrinkling up her face. "Dyin's awful hard thing for some folks."

A startled expression, smoothing away some of the hard lines, spread over Oscar's face. In the presence of death, which every squatter held in superstitious awe, Polly dropped down upon her knees beside the bed. Her own hurt had been overcome by the desire to help him if she could.

And there, while the rain dashed its fury into the lake, and the wind shook the shanty, the three kept quiet vigil.

Large drops appeared on Bennett's brow; and Granny Hope lifted one withered hand and brushed them away.

"Love'll carry you over weary places, big dear," she wheezed. "It's all powerful, love is, sir."

Oscar's staring eyes lost something of the abject fear they had shown, as if he had heard and was comforted. Then over his face swept that look that comes but once to any man.

"An' the Christ'll help you too, honey," Granny Hope went on again, smiling.

Polly, weeping silently, bent forward and gazed hard at the dying farmer. Oscar wanted to stay a little longer. He was trying to speak; but she knew he could not. To help him through the valley of shadows and upward into eternal light, she thrust her head close to his.

"Jesus is givin' you rest, Oscar man!" she whispered.

Pollyop's sobbing voice penetrated into the young man's darkening sensibilities, and the ghost of a smile crept to his lips. Then slowly his eyes closed. The strained muscles relaxed from about his mouth, leaving it more boyish;

and thus did the Storm Country give back to Evelyn Robertson her freedom.

After that came dark days for Pollyop. Even the reproduction of The Greatest Mother in the World, which hung in its accustomed place on the shanty wall, failed to lift the heavy load that rested like a stone in her bosom. No more did she stand before it and dream—dream of a deep-toned voice telling her of love and a future, dream of Robert's arms about her and her head pressed against him.

Up and down she went through the Silent City, unable to smile, well nigh unable to speak a word of greeting to those she met. So sympathetic were her squatter friends that many a fish and pan of baked beans found their way into the Hopkins hut.

Several times Pollyop had made an effort to see Evelyn, but the rich girl never appeared as the little trill sounded just after nightfall in the Robertson garden.

In July came rumors that Evelyn Robertson was to marry Marcus MacKenzie; and that he had bought the Bennett farm of Oscar's heirs. Terrified whispers went from mouth to mouth in the settlement that he had boasted how he was going to clear the squatters from

the Silent City before the coming of Christmas.

One night the dark messenger to whom no home is closed slipped into the Hopkins shanty and summoned Granny Hope. Although the absence of the old withered mouth made one less to feed, Pollyop missed the oft repeated assurance that somehow, some time, love would make crooked things straight.

Late one day, she took Jerry and the billy goat and walked through the Silent City and on toward the Bad Man's Ravine. The picture she had grown to love in those long-ago spring days still gazed out at her from Marcus MacKenzie's fence.

There for a moment Polly halted and solemnly contemplated the beautiful face. When she had been happy, and that was ages past, she had not realized what the call in the mother-plea meant. But as one after another, her loved ones had dwindled away, and none but Jerry was left, a clearer understanding took possession of her. The same cruel force had attacked both her and the woman there! They were living in a warring world, trying by might and main to cling to their own, Pollyop and this giant mother. The woman asked aid for her vast army of sick sons; and Polly's sorrow, touched by her broad compassion, lightened a little.

Behind her she heard footsteps. Slowly she turned her head; and almost at the same instant the person stopped. Pollyop could not move or force a word of greeting from her tongue, for Robert Percival was looking at her, his serious white face holding no hint of smile or welcome. For a long minute they stared at each other; then the young man swung about swiftly and strode away.

Crushed almost into insensibility, Pollyop sank lower and lower until Jerry slid away from her shoulders to the ground. Her beloved had not spoken, nor had the pained lines about his mouth softened even a little bit!

Afternoon shadows began to stretch long over the lake and crowd down upon the Silent City, and still the squatter girl knelt and wept out her sorrow and loneliness with no one near but the large-eyed, sad little child, leaning across the thin back of Billy-goat Hopkins.

At length Pollyop arose, wiping her worn face on her sleeve. Then she hoisted Jerry to her shoulders and turned for a last look at the lofty mother of the world.

For a minute she gazed steadily. And then, through the gathering gloom, she thought she saw a smile hovering about the beautiful mouth. Pollyop went nearer by two steps. The woman

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 191

was smiling at her, and the squatter girl, overwhelmed with a joy that hurt keenly like a knife's blade, smiled back, the first smile since Granny Hope had left her.

Holding Jerry by one arm, she thrust the other hand upward.

"Biggest an' beautifulest mammy in all the world," she faltered, "bless me an' Jerry an'—an' Daddy Hopkins away off up in Auburn prison."

Reverently she knelt with her clinging burden, and then, swiftly rising, went back to the shanty, her pale face radiant with a world-wide blessing.

## CHAPTER XX

MIDSUMMER was full upon them; and still Pollyop and Jerry held to their lonely tenure of the hut. A few heartbroken 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:



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 193

"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 pale, 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—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'll die if he don't see his Daddy. He's gettin' thinner an' thinner every day.—He's been yelling 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,

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 195

"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 had she 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 glinted 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 steely-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 to-night, 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, Pollyop, but hurry. The cook's in the kitchen, and the other maids are busy. I'll go down for fear some one 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, Pollyop 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. Then she lighted several fresh candles. 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 candle light.

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 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 to-night, huh?"

The squatter stepped inside, his cap in his hand.

"Yep, too cold for summer, Poll," 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.

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 brung 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.

“E.”

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.

## CHAPTER XXI

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 after she was married, 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-goat Hopkins was in his place at the wood-box eating 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 down 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 illy 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 Mare said I couldn't."

In the past months which had taken away three of her loves, many of the lessons Mrs. Hope had taught her had been effaced. She had even given up the habit of asserting with utmost faith: "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

She was almost overcome with terror and fatigue as she neared the station. One thing seemed to clear her brow of wrinkles and lighten the load she was carrying. Not a soul was in sight. Even the station appeared to be deserted.

At the northern end of the Auburn car, which was waiting for the engine to pick it up, Pollyop halted. She walked around it stealthily, and then climbed up the steps. A little cry of joy

leaped to her lips as the door opened under her touch.

Holding her breath, she shifted Jerry to her arms and crept slowly in. Rapidly she examined every corner; but all the places large enough to hold them both were in plain sight of any one walking through. At the extreme end she discovered the stateroom; and when she went into it, a thankful feeling swept over her. It was as if that empty cabin, with its many dark places, had been built there just for them. Here she could stow Jerry away and hide herself out of sight.

Under one of the cross seats she placed the child, whispering a warning that he must be very quiet because, if a big man found them, he could not go to Daddy Hopkins. Then under the side seat that ran lengthwise, Polly crawled, and after she had completely secreted herself, she drew down the velvet half-curtain that hung from the seat. It seemed hours before she heard a sound. She hissed a warning to Jerry, then waited in nervous tension.

From the station platform voices seemed suddenly to rise up from every quarter. Pollyop closed her eyes, too confused to think of anything to dissipate the agony of mind she was undergoing.

A few minutes before train time a high-powered motor car drew up to the platform.

"We've got the drawing-room, Marc," explained Robert Percival, "and while you three are shopping, I'm going to dig around Auburn a bit."

"I suppose you're going to call on your friend, Jeremiah," taunted MacKenzie. "Bob, I'll give you a pointer. Drop that case! There's no power in heaven or earth that can open the prison doors for Hopkins."

To this Robert did not reply. In deep reverie he helped his aunt and cousin from the automobile and followed them to the car.

When Polly heard a number of people come into the stateroom, she put one hand over her lips. She strained her ears to hear if Jerry had made a move. How she hoped the dear baby had fallen asleep, and that he would not wake up until they were in Auburn! As unexpected as the voice of one long dead, the sound of familiar tones came to her ears. The words were:

"Now Mrs. Robertson, you sit there, and you too, Eve. Then you won't have to ride backward. Bob and I'll sit here."

The squatter girl's heart nearly jumped out of her mouth. There, within touching distance, was her powerful enemy. Her flesh tingled as if bees

had stung her. Robert Percival and Evelyn too were there. Pollyop shivered and wished that she had waited until to-morrow, or perhaps the day after.

She tried to drive out the fear of being discovered and think only of Jerry's happiness and Daddy's. To make her heart beat less fast, she tried earnestly to think of some words that Jesus would hear and understand. But even that desire was driven from her as two heavy bodies dropped upon the seat above her. Plainly she saw two pairs of men's boots near enough to touch her if she moved an inch forward.

Back against the side of the car she pushed her head, noiselessly drawing her thick curls over her shoulder to make more room. How intensely she wished they were in Auburn! If the train would only start ahead, she was sure she would lose the insane desire to open her mouth and scream.

Then a whistle from the engine, and as if the man at the throttle had heard the inward cry of her frightened young soul, the train began to move slowly. As it crossed the northern end of the town, one of the owners of the boots near her face grew exceedingly restless, and of a sudden he pushed his foot directly against her nose.



Gently she shoved it away; and a low exclamation from above followed instantly.

Then a strong, large hand lifted the velvet hangings; and before Pollyop could stir, a set of fingers took sharp hold of her face. In her frightened state she threw the hand off; and another ejaculation came to her ears. Then two hands came under and groped for a grip. She fought strenuously to hold her place; but the person pulled her out by main force.

Polly Hopkins was almost fainting when Robert Percival placed her on her feet. The silk dress, partly tucked in Daddy's boots and partly out, was covered with dust. In silent embarrassment she stooped and brushed it. Then she glanced up imploringly.

Robert, wax-white, was staring at her as if he could not believe his eyes; and MacKenzie, carried away by the rage within him, viciously clutched at her arm. Pollyop dragged herself away from the strong fingers.

"Don't touch me, you," she snapped hoarsely at him. "I'm goin' to Auburn to see my Daddy Hopkins."

Her voice was high-pitched and tensely toned. Her gaze sought one after another until it rested on Evelyn Robertson, huddled back in the corner of the seat.

## 210 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

"You can make him leave me be, ma'am," Polly went on. "I got a right to go to Auburn as well's any one else."

An unfeeling laugh left MacKenzie's lips; and a sharp exclamation fell from Percival.

"You're a thief," Marcus thrust in grimly. "A little thief. You're stealing a ride."

With all her fighting instinct aroused, Polly squared herself.

"Sure, I'm stealin' a ride," she retorted. "I couldn't ride honest; you wouldn't let me. My Daddy Hopkins ——"

"It seems to me," interrupted Mrs. Robertson haughtily, "that she's stolen something else besides a ride. That dress you have on, Miss; where'd you get it?"

Polly's under lip dropped. It seemed as if a thousand hostile eyes were glaring at her.

"It's Evelyn's dress, Marc," went on the lady. "Take that coat off and let me see."

Before Robert could interfere, MacKenzie had grasped Pollyop by the shoulders and had stripped off the heavy coat. And there she stood, her bare young arms and sunburned neck exposed, her scarlet face hidden by a handful of curls. She was so overwhelmed with shame, she could not say a word.

"Twice a thief," gritted MacKenzie. "I suppose you didn't give her this, Eve?"

With one long finger he pointed at the dress, but his eyes, sparkling with anger, were on Evelyn.

Never had Miss Robertson been in such a dilemma. Never had she felt so much like quietly fainting away.

"Did you?" demanded Marc, once more.

"No, no," denied the girl, trembling. "No, of course I didn't give it to her. Why should I?"

MacKenzie's sharp, "You'll land where your father is, you huzzy," brought Polly's flashing glance upon him. Untaught to deceive for her own advantage, she could not fathom Evelyn's direct falsehood. To lie for a daddy, to keep a squatter friend from prison,—yes, she would have done that, but a dress! And Evelyn *had* given it to her too! She turned her burning eyes upon the other girl, and there she read with sickening certainty that the gift of the robe must be buried in the grave with Oscar Bennett. If Jerry had not been tucked away back of the skirts of the two women, Polly would have made a dash for liberty, but she could not leave the baby. Would no one help her? Her eyes sought Robert's face, and as if he were awaking from a dream, he picked up the coat.

"I'll hand her over to the conductor," Marcus proceeded. "He'll know what to do with her," and he put out his hand to grasp her.

"No you won't," snapped Robert, moving in front of Pollyop. "I'll look after her myself, and if you folks want to stay friendly with me, just don't mention this." He held out the coat to Polly Hopkins. "Put it on," he ordered; and instantly she obeyed him.

What he was going to do with her, Pollyop did not know, but this thing she did realize: Jerry could not see Daddy Hopkins that day. She longed to be back in the shanty, to get away from MacKenzie's flashing eyes and the haughty stare of Mrs. Robertson. As for Evelyn, she despised the quivering girl with all her straightforward self.

Frowning, Robert stepped to the door and called the conductor; and when the official appeared, Polly shivered to her toes. The very sight of his uniform suggested trouble for her and Jerry.

"A friend of mine came down to see us off," said Robert distinctly, making a gesture toward her. "The train started before she could get off. Just let us stop at MacKenney's, will you?"

He had a roll of bills in his fingers which he thrust into the officer's hand. Smilingly

the man bowed and jerked the cord over his head.

"We're right there now, sir," said he.

"Thanks," replied Robert. "Thanks;" and "Come," he said to Pollyop.

Jerry! Daddy Hopkins' baby, went through her mind. Wee Jerry asleep under the cross seat!

"Wait a bit, mister," she faltered, "wait till I get the baby. I were takin' him up to see his Daddy, so he wouldn't die." Her lip trembled as she looked at Mrs. Robertson. "Get up, please, ma'am," she begged. "He's under there, where you're settin'!"

Mrs. Robertson and Evelyn arose immediately; and Polly pulled the shawl-bewrapped Jerry into full view. In another instant Robert had snatched up the child and pushed Polly out of the door. He turned about and looked back at the other three, a dreadful expression on his face.

"If you stick your finger in this, Marc," he said huskily, "you can say good-by to me for good." And he followed Polly out of the train as it came to a stop.

MacKenney's Point was on the east side of the lake, about opposite the Hopkins shanty, and when Robert had helped Polly off the train and had seen it pull away north, he stood a moment

considering how best to get her back home. He could not make the girl tramp to Ithaca and then across the head of the lake to the Silent City.

"Stay here with the child," he said curtly. "I'll be back in a minute."

Polly watched him dully as he strode away. When he returned, he had in his hand a large key with which he unfastened a boat-house on the shore. Almost before Pollyop sensed what was happening, she was in the stern of a boat with Jerry crouched down beside her, and Robert's strong arms were sending the craft swiftly across the lake. Not a word had been said between them until they drew up under the willow trees near Jeremiah's shack.

"Get out," exclaimed Robert, holding the boat that it might not tip.

Pollyop scrambled to the bow, bringing Jerry with her, the beautiful dress now hanging in limp folds around her feet. Very pale, Robert lifted her, almost fainting, from the boat, and picking Jerry up in his arms, walked ahead to the shanty.

In the terrible moment that Polly bent under his dark gaze, she felt she must tell him the truth. How could she let him go away thinking her twice a thief, besides believing Oscar Bennett had been her man.

She dared a timid glance at him.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 215

"What in Heaven's name can I do for you?" he demanded hoarsely. "You don't seem to have any honor at all! Can't I say something that would make you a better girl?"

Polly swayed and pushed back her curls. Her tired head fell forward on her chest, and she bit her tongue to keep back the rush of words.

"Get Wee Jerry back his Daddy Hopkins," she gulped presently, "an'—an' I'll swear to be the goodest squatter's brat in the Silent City."

No smile answered her emphatic promise. Robert's face was white and severe, and he was studying her in silence.

"It does seem," he managed to say, "the more I plan and work, the worse things go."

He wanted to kiss the pale lovely face, to take her away from the settlement. He wanted to banish the last few months that, every time he thought of them, sent him dizzy with pain.

"I've tried my best to have your father released," he continued in low tones, "and I've tried not to love you at all. But I do want you to be good—I mean as good as you can."

Up went the curly head, and straight into his eyes she sent a piercing glance. One slender hand flung out toward him.

"Couldn't you trust me, sir?" she breathed. "Couldn't you just forget about—about ——"

She advanced toward him, her hands extended and her face twitching nervously.

“Of course taking the dress doesn’t matter to me,” he choked. “Mr. MacKenzie is a very wicked man, and he has treated you abominably. But, but what hurts me so is the thought of the man who died in your—your home——” His voice broke, and turning swiftly he walked away.

Polly tried to call his name, but her throat made no sound. When he disappeared up the lane, she picked Jerry up, and shivering, went into the shanty.



## CHAPTER XXII

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 splendid Marcus, also the haughty Mrs. Robertson, leaning on the arm of Robert Percival. How pale his face was! Great tears blinded Polly'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 sure he was in the Silent City forever and ever! Jerry must have him too, and many were the promises she made to the child during the wild fall weather of the Storm Country that perhaps to-morrow 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 than 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 the 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, flinging around. "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? Bennett's dead; so he can't interfere with you!"

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

Throwing her work into a basket at her side, Mrs. MacKenzie arose.

"Marcus," she snapped, "you're perfectly dis-

gusting! Now here I speak my mind! I don't ever intend to sit in the same room with you two unless you keep your conversation off the squatters."

She marched to the door, her lovely head held high; and Marcus strode after her.

"Come back here, Evelyn," he ordered. "How dare you talk like that to me?"

It was the first time Marcus had spoken to her just that way; and the sharpness of his tones and the glitter in his dark eyes sent a sudden rage through her. She whirled squarely upon him. At the sight of her face he took a backward step. He had never seen the blue fade from his wife's eyes and a gleam like bright steel take its place.

"I said exactly what I meant," she told him. "I positively refuse to listen to wrangles about the Silent City. Now you both understand, don't you?"

Suddenly she went deathly pale, held out a trembling hand, and swayed as if she were going to fall. She looked so stricken and ill that Marcus caught her to him. Everything but his lovely young bride faded from his mind.

"What's the matter, dear heart?" he cried. "Sit down a minute! There! You know very well, Eve darling, I didn't mean to be brutal."

She knew he did not require an answer and gave him none; she only sobbed hysterically against his arm.

"Neither did I, Evelyn," said Robert, in a low voice.

He went to his cousin's side instantly, begging her forgiveness. The girl turned her head and impulsively kissed his hand.

"Never mind now, Bobs," she said faintly. "Please go away like a good boy."

After Percival's departure, Marcus gathered his wife into his arms and sat down with her on his knee.

"There now, sweetheart!" he soothed, and he drew her head to his shoulder and kissed her. "Don't cry any more!"

"It makes me so nervous, Marc dear," she explained, sitting up, "to hear quarrels between you and Robert. And—and—I don't feel very well."

MacKenzie studied her keenly.

"Then I'll get a doctor to-day," he exclaimed, much concerned.

A flush covered the girl's face, and she hid it against his coat.

"I don't need a doctor, darling," she whispered, "but I do want care and quiet. That's all!"

A strange unknown thrill shot through the man.

“Look at me, beloved,” he begged, quivering. He forced his wife’s face up to his and searched deep into the blue eyes. “Eve, my love, my own darling!” was all he could say.

Then Evelyn rested in supreme happiness against her husband’s breast for a long time.

## CHAPTER XXIII

ONE cold blustering morning a little while before Thanksgiving, Evelyn MacKenzie came down to breakfast alone. She was very pale, and her eyelids showed signs of weeping. The night before her husband had let loose the reins upon his violent temper. He had arrived home at a late hour, chafing and irritable.

Awaking his wife from a sound 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 to-day, and he's trying to block me."

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

"Damn 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.

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.

"Bobs," 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.—Bobs, 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—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.

"Bobs 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 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!"

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 227

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—I—I——"

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 snap.

"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."

Ah, surely he did love her in spite of what she had done. As a traveler in a dry and thirsty land longs for fresh water, so he desired Polly Hopkins. Vain had been his efforts to tear her image from his heart. Often he had been

tempted to marry her and take her out of her dreadful circumstances, but each time the desire came to him, the vision of the dying farmer killed it.

Broodingly his eyes swept the narrow lake and the eastern, rearing hills. He remembered how he and Polly Hopkins had sat together on the ragged rocks, watching the clouds sweep over the sky above, like flocks of birds across wonder-blue water.

With a groan he threw off these memories, and striding forward, he rapped on the hut door.

Polly Hopkins opened it, looked at him, bent her head but spoke no word.

"I want to talk to you, child," was the excuse he gave; and still silent, 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.

"Yep, 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

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 231

is bread an' beans an' love," she hesitated and swallowed hard before she continued: "An' lots of love! That's what's ailin' 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.

"So you're here, young man," he snarled. "Well, muddling in this business won't do you

any good. Didn't I tell you yesterday what I intended to do; and you had the nerve to upset my wife about it. You're making yourself the laughing stock of the whole town! Now you'd better go if you don't want to witness a little comedy that'll stick in your memory for many a long day."

The speaker turned to Pollyop.

"Where's that boy?" he demanded.

Involuntarily Polly looked toward the cot where Wee Jerry lay asleep.

"You mean the baby — Oh, you don't mean Jerry?" she questioned dully.

"Yes, I mean Jerry, if that's what you call him," retorted MacKenzie. "Here, read this."

He held out a paper which the squatter girl took as if she had been in a stupor. She held it up, tried to make out what was printed on it, then dropped her hand hopelessly to her side.

With an exclamation of pity, Robert went to her and took the fingers that clutched the paper.

"Polly," he said swiftly, "you'll have to give Jerry up for a little while, just a little while —"

She snatched her hand away, the document fluttering to the floor. In a moment she had picked up the child from the cot and hugged him to her breast.



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 233

“Old Marc ain’t come for the baby, has he?” she shrieked, her tone high-pitched and strained. “He’s mine, Jerry is. I’m goin’ to keep ’im here till Daddy comes home; so you might as well all scoot.”

In the stillness that fell as her voice broke, each man was impressed with the martyrdom she was passing through. Robert had never imagined a person could go so white and still be alive. With an ejaculation, hoarse and defiant, he sprang to her side.

“Polly,” he cried. “My God, don’t look that way! Listen to me!”

“Can he take the baby?” fell monotonously from her blue lips.

“That’s just what we can do, Miss Hopkins,” thrust in MacKenzie. “The law says a child can’t stay in a place like this. You’d have seen that if you’d taken the pains to read the paper.—Put some wraps on the child, Miss!”

Polly stood with Jerry gripped tightly against her; and, frightened, the little boy began to cry.

“I want my Daddy Hopkins, Pollyop,” he whimpered brokenly.

Polly looked so dreadful that for a moment MacKenzie was silent. Her eyes had an expression of such hate and deadly determination in

their singular brown depths that for a moment he held his breath.

"If you take him," she spoke at last,—“why, damn you, I'll kill you!”

At first MacKenzie eyed her contemptuously. What did such a girl's threats mean to him? Then he laughed. And that laugh stung the sensitive girl more than if he had struck her.

"You took our Daddy Hopkins," she told him, drooping a little at the telling, "but Jerry — He's my baby, an' I keep him in the shanty till his pappy comes home. You hear, the hull of you, don't you?"

Her eyes were roving from one to another, but her voice lowered on each word, because in the steady gaze of Old Marc and his deputies, she saw no relenting.

"I'd rather he'd die," she screamed. "I'd rather he'd be next to Granny Hope in the graveyard!—Get out of here, I say."

The scene was even more nerve-racking than MacKenzie had expected.

"Take him away from her, Bowers," he ordered, turning to one of the men.

The man spoken to stepped forward in evident unwillingness; but a shout from MacKenzie made him grab for the child. With one hand the frenzied girl beat at him with all her energy, but

he struck down her slim young fingers as if they had been twigs. Thrusting one arm around her, he caught Wee Jerry by the shoulders. But to disengage the boy's clutch from the chestnut curls called forth all the quickness the man possessed. Polly struggled madly, and the child shrieked and clung to his sister with all the puny strength he had.

"Keep away, Percival," snapped MacKenzie, pushing Robert backward. "If you lay one finger on my men, I'll take the girl along to jail."

To save the girl he loved, Robert compelled himself to stand by while the boy was torn bodily from her. He saw one of the men drag a blanket from the bed and throw it around Wee Jerry.

Then he snatched at the girl, but she quickly eluded his grasp. How awfully her eyes glowed, and how her face twitched!

"Get out with him before she cuts up any more," growled Marcus, as Polly bounded forward only to be met by the speaker's outstretched arms.

"If you make another scene, my lady," he rapped out, "I'll have you arrested for obstructing the law. And remember this, huzzy, I'm going to get you next."

His threat against herself meant nothing to

Polly Hopkins. But the word "law"! It struck at her brain like a hammer. She suddenly felt as if a tidal wave, strong and relentless, had broken over her. It was the same law taking Jerry that had imprisoned Daddy Hopkins, that had carried away Larry Bishop from his woman. The thought brought her up with a sharp gasp. She did not care what they did with her, but little Jerry, Wee Baby Jerry!

"What you goin' to do with him, mister?" she begged, wringing her hands. "Tell me that! I can't let 'im go till you do!"

She caught at his arm, and the strong brown fingers dug deep into his flesh.

"Look in the paper there and you'll see where I'm going to take him," answered MacKenzie. "Let go of my arm! There!" He wrenched himself free. Then, enraged and with eyes flashing, he shouted, "Get out with the kid, you men, and start off!"

Glad to be gone, the officials stepped into the open, one of them carrying the writhing Jerry. Then Polly Hopkins stood upright in the middle of the shanty, grief, consternation, and then an expression of insanity passing over her face.

Robert Percival was near her, not daring to utter a word; her deep-set agony was too terrible for sympathy. All at once she started for-

ward; and he made a desperate effort to stop her.

"Pollyop," he pleaded. As she raced through the doorway, he called: "Wait—wait ——"

In an instant he was out beside her, speaking her name softly, imploringly. She paid no heed to him but flung up her arms. And then she laughed! Marcus MacKenzie was standing beside his horse, and on beyond in the lane a carriage was rolling away, from which came piteous screams from Jerry.

"Pollyop," entreated Robert.

But Polly had bounded from him toward the man and the horse.

"I hope," she shrieked at MacKenzie, "I hope your hands'll wither off; I'm wishin' all you love'll die before your eyes, an' every day I'll be askin' Granny Hope's lovin' God to damn you till you drop rottin' in your grave."

Marcus had halted with his foot in the stirrup. He had heard every word she had uttered; and drops of cold sweat gathered on his brow. Then with an oath he vaulted into the saddle, put the spurs to his horse and galloped up the hill after the retreating carriage.

Robert was leaning limply against the side of the shanty when Polly Hopkins turned swiftly back. He spoke to her; and she looked dazedly

at him. Then she laughed again, directly into his face; and the young man, almost as distraught as she, tried to take hold of her.

"You scoot too," she said to him; "get out, an' stay out; an'—an' tell your lily-livered cousin, I say, I hope if she ever has a baby it won't have no eyes to see 'er with, nor no mouth to kiss 'er with—I hope——"

"Oh, God!" groaned Robert.

Before he could get back his wits, she had rushed past him into the shack, slammed the door and barred it against him.

For more than two hours Polly Hopkins lay face down on her cot. During that time her loving heart had broken and died within her. She had no longer an incentive to live, no more a desire to look forward to Daddy's home-coming.

When at length she crawled to the floor, all signs of tears had disappeared, leaving the once glowing eyes dull and expressionless. There was no one left to love save the billy goat, and to him she gave no heed.

In her aimless wandering about the shanty she paused before the reproduction of "The Greatest Mother in the World." Polly did not care for her any more either. Deliberately she took an old coat and hung it carefully over the glorious,

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 239

solemn face. She never wanted to look upon it again—Never—Never!

Then taking the ax, she went out and as deliberately as she had hidden from view the picture, so did she hack from above the door the welcoming sign.

When it lay at her feet, battered and partly broken, she muttered over the words, "If your heart is loving and kind come right in. If it ain't scoot off."

She had learned her lesson at last. Hearts were not loving and kind, after all. Then with powerful strokes of the ax she split the slab in pieces. Unfathomable depths of hate and revenge had swallowed her soul! Polly Hopkins was done with love *forever!*

## CHAPTER XXIV

"GOD-ALMIGHTY, Polly brat," exclaimed Larry Bishop one evening, "what made you come out a night like this, huh?"

The girl went to the stove and in silence extended her hands over its top.

"What's up, Pollyop?" the man demanded again curiously, dropping into a chair. "You look something awful!"

And so she did! The long-lashed eyes had gathered and held an indefinable expression of hatred. The fair, lovely face knew tender sympathy no more. She was no longer Polly of the Sun. For her that orb had become merely a ball in the sky, hot like the stove and bright like the candle flame, only more so. Nor did the pale winter moon ever catch her dazzling smiles. The winking stars had forgotten weeks ago that once a squatter girl had stolen out nightly to throw upward a kiss, begging them to deliver it to the crucified one there beyond them,—the good Jesus who sat on the golden throne and who had sent her the message by Granny Hope that, "Love were stronger'n hate any day."



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 241

As usual her feet were in Jeremiah's boots, and as usual she wore his coat. Her curls were covered with snow, and as she studied the dark-faced man, she shook drops of water from them.

She advanced toward him, choking with emotion. Since Wee Jerry had gone, her hours, spent in planning revenge, had completely exhausted her. She was so tired that when she reached Larry, she crouched before him on the floor and turned a pale, beseeching face up to him.

"I've come, Larry Bishop," she began gravely, "to ask you to help me to even up a little with Old Marc."

The squatter's head went up, and a startled expression shot into his fierce eyes. Then he sank lower in his chair, and the fire died out of his countenance.

"Who can get even with that damn brute?" he muttered after a while. "Squatters can't! We'd all go to Auburn if we muss up him or his'n."

A white young face shoved so close to his that Bishop drew back.

"Who cares a damn about Auburn?" Pollyop exclaimed roughly. "We won't go there till we've tore Old Marc's heart to pieces an' made it hurt like yours does, Larry, like mine does for

Jerry an' Daddy Hopkins. Wouldn't you be willin' to spend a few years in jail if you could make him howl an' go almost mad like me an' you have, Larry?"

Bishop looked beyond her head into a dark corner. It was in that spot he often imagined he saw the wraith of his woman. His unsteady regard settled; and the ghost woman rose mistily, gazing at him with unearthly eyes. Then the pale, unsmiling phantom extended her arms and within them appeared a frail infant.

"God," burst from his lips like a shot from a gun.

Pollyop glanced backward over her shoulder. But the shudder that ran over him brought her haggard face back to his.

"Ain't your heart hurtin' something awful for your Betty woman an' your brat now, this very minute?" she queried abruptly, as if she too had seen the ghastly thing in the corner.

"God, yes!" he shivered, taking firm hold of his chin to hide the tremble of it.

She seized his arm viselike, the grip drawing a groan from the squatter.

"An' wouldn't you just love to see Old Mare twist an' squirm like a stepped-on baby snake, huh?" came in one long, sobbing breath.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 243

Again the shifty look of the tortured man came to rest on the gloom beyond.

"I'd die for it, so I would, Pollyop," he cried. "Out with what you got in your bean, Poll; an' I'll listen, so help me God!"

Pollyop leaned heavily against him, panting. She was making an effort to tell him her plan. With a swift upward motion of her head, she began the talk in broken tones; and as she proceeded, Larry Bishop raised straighter in his chair.

Polly's voice trailed into silence; and Larry sent one hasty look over her head. The wraith smiled sadly at him and was gone. He shook himself and struggled to his feet. Then a broad, wicked grin spread his lips apart, and he laughed aloud. Pollyop, still on the floor, laughed too, hysterical sobs catching at her throat, and a desire to scream forcing her hands to her mouth. Such awful sounds were unusual in the Silent City where even honest mirth was no longer heard because the men and women scarcely dared breathe for fear an enemy from Ithaca would suddenly appear.

"Glory be to God," ejaculated the man hoarsely, "that's the how of it, brat! It'll be a whack for my dead woman, an' ——"

"An' a good whack for the Hopkins tribe too,"

cried Polly, scrambling up. "It'll be a black Thanksgiving for Old Mare, huh, Larry?—I'm goin' back home now."

She turned to the door but halted with her hand on the latch.

"You promised I could do it, Larry," she reminded him. "You'll tell Lye Braeger that too, won't you?"

Sinking limply into his chair, Bishop wiped his wet lips.

"Yep, lass," he assented with a groan. "You can turn the trick; I promise you that."

If Jeremiah Hopkins had seen his girl, his Polly of the Sun, when she went home that night, he would not have recognized her. Her face was crafty, pitiless, and as white as the snow under her feet.

Then she waited stoically day after day, feeding the billy goat but absent-mindedly, asking no questions of Larry or Lye Braeger how soon her idea could be carried out. She believed that they would leave no stone unturned to even up with Marcus MacKenzie.

Early one evening Larry Bishop burst into the Hopkins hut without the formality of a knock. He looked years older than he had but yesterday; and Pollyop got up, locking and interlocking her fingers.

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 245

"Well?" she asked from between chattering teeth.

"It's done, by God!" he hissed, almost strangling behind a shaking hand. "It were most awful, Polly Hopkins. If I'd stuck a hog in the gizzard, the squealin' couldn't 'a' been worsen."

The speaker's tones, his half-bent figure, his shifty glances, brought a grunt from the girl.

"An' you're gettin' sorry by the minute, Larry Bishop, I can see that," she returned, giving him a smart rap. "Stand up, Larry man. Once——" A sudden rush of emotion thrust into her throat such an ache that for several seconds she was unable to continue. "Once," she repeated, after clearing away the huskiness with a hacking cough, "I thought love were the greatest thing in the world. But it ain't, Larry Bishop, it ain't!"

Bishop fidgeted with his cap, turning it around and around by its brim. When he looked up, the burning glow had died from the depths of his eyes.

"It's a sickenin' thing to see a woman suffer that bad," he muttered. "God, brat!—Nope! Don't say nothin' till I tell you what me an' Lye did!"

At the memory of it, the speaker wiped drops of sweat from his face.

"She bellered about lovin' her ma," droned Bishop, "an' the way she hollered in my hut for her man was something scand'lous."

"Like your Betty died a-howlin' for you, I s'pose, Larry," came back the girl promptly. "An' I been thinkin' all day how Granny Hope tucked your dead brat alongside his mammy in the coffin. Some awful thinkin', Larry man!"

The squatter's sudden grayness and swallowing hard as if something had stuck in his wind-pipe was the only evidence he gave that he had heard the cruel words.

"We got 'er just after dark," he continued woefully. "She's been tied up in my shack ever since."

"Good 'nough for 'er!" gasped Polly tensely, rolling her hands in her apron.

"An' she yelled so hard you could've heard her near to Ithaca, Poll," moaned Larry. "Me an' Lye gagged 'er."

"Holy smut!" fell from Pollyop, as the picture his words had made burned itself across her mind.

"Her man's been gone all day to Cortland," continued the squatter in a monotone. "Lye found out Old Miss Robertson's been tryin' to reach hold of him."

"Hope she don't!" interjected Polly. "Not

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 247

till we get done with his woman. Are you goin' to tote her over here?"

The man nodded.

"Don't dare to till later, when the squatters is in bed," he answered, clapping on his cap. "If—if you change your mind, Poll, come along over; an' I'll cut 'er loose an' let 'er go."

A harsh sound, something like a chuckle of malicious satisfaction, slipped through Polly's lips and stopped the man at the door.

"That ain't no ways likely, Larry," she said huskily. "Bring 'er here, an' when I'm done with her, she'll have to be took."

She caught Bishop by the arm, whirling him around.

"An' listen, Larry," she continued with cruel emphasis, "an' all the time keep rememberin' how Betty wailed her life into the grave, an'—an' that Old Marc done it."

Overcome by the words she had thrown at him so deliberately, Bishop flung away, and the girl, quaking at what was about to happen, heard him running along the shore toward his shack.

## CHAPTER XXV

It seemed to Polly Hopkins that every minute was an hour long, and every second filled with intolerable anxiety. Would the soft-hearted Larry repent and surrender the prize she longed to get her fingers on?

In extreme nervousness she went from one thing to another, never finishing what she began. She paced the hut floor until she was dripping wet with apprehensiveness. She had no means of knowing when Lye and Larry would come; so she dared not stir from the shack.

Many times she shoved aside the window blind and looked out. But the world outside was wrapped in a white silence. She could not even glimpse the peaked roof of a fisherman's hut, for between her and the Silent City was a flowing curtain of snow, the flakes falling like feathers from an open bag.

Larry would keep his word, she told herself over and over. She was glad it was such a night! The better could the squatters carry out their death plan.

Unnoticed by the girl, the wood burned to



embers in the stove, and the hut grew colder by degrees. In one of her half hours of measuring the shanty's length, she halted, breathing on her frost-bitten fingers. She drew about her shoulders the blanket which had covered Wee Jerry in his hut days.

Her mind brought back to the baby away off in some unknown place, she cried weakly as she replenished the fire. Had the wicked ones of the earth made Jerry forget Daddy Hopkins who up in Auburn was ignorant of his whereabouts? Many times Polly had taken up her pencil to write him of the child, but it always dropped from her fingers before it touched the paper. Daddy could not do anything; and she would not add to his heavy burden.

She was at the stove, her cold, stiff fingers spread over it, when the sound of footsteps outside sent her headlong to the door. Appallingly terrified, she dragged it open.

Then, in deadening silence, Lye Braeger and Larry Bishop carried a large bundle through the doorway and threw it down on Polly's bed.

Heavy lidded, the girl gazed down upon it, her eyes widening in joy, joy at the thought of Old Marc's misery; joy at the thought of getting even. The frightful emotion that surged through her bore relation only by contrast to the delights of a

few months back, when her willing legs had trotted the country over to help every one that needed her.

It wasn't the same Polly at all. This Polly lifted her foot and kicked the bundle none too lightly.

"We had a hell of a time gettin' 'er here, Poll," growled Lye Braeger. "Outside it's like's if a million crazy devils was howlin' over the hills. But we brought 'er just the same! Now do what you like with 'er, brat!"

White teeth gleamed through the maniacal smile that parted the girl's lips. At last! She had not lived through interminable days for nothing!

"Scoot out, you!" she ordered, waving her hand at them, "an' keep a watch about till I get done!"

Braeger made for the door as if anxious to be gone; but Larry Bishop held to the spot where he stood.

"She's a woman, Polly Hopkins," he muttered, his eyes turning from the cot to the rigid girl, "if she is Old Marc's wife. He's home too, so Lye says!"

"What do I care where the pup is?" she thrust in vehemently. "'Course she's a woman! So be I; an' so were your dead Betsy."

Then she stamped her foot tempestuously.

"Get out of here an' watch for MacKenzie an' his folks," she snapped. "It's about time he were stormin' the Silent City, I'm thinkin'."

Roughly she shoved the men out into the blizzard and closed the door. Then she stood with her back to it, deep sobs racking her body.

Now as she had almost died, and Wee Jerry too, so would Marcus MacKenzie. The vicious hope that she could see him writhe in his grief took possession of her.

Distraughtly she placed the bar across the door, making sure it was locked. Then, creeping to the cot, she gazed down on the wet bundle. There, where she had helped Oscar Bennett over dark rough places into the light of Eternity, lay the dearest dear of her bitterest enemy.

She uttered an exclamation when she saw a lifting shudder go over the thing on the bed. A smile flitted across her face, and her hands came together convulsively.

Slowly she knelt down and unwrapped the thick blanket; and Evelyn MacKenzie was staring out at her, dull eyed and terrified. A dark rag completely filled her mouth; and Polly grinned at her.

"Do you know what squatters do to chickens

they swipe from you rich folks?" she asked huskily.

Although she could not speak, Evelyn heard and understood. She closed her eyes, her face going drabber in the flickering light, but at a sound the weary lids flew open again.

Polly had stepped to the wood-box and was picking up the ax. She brought it forward, and smiling the same sinister smile, showed it to the pallid girl.

"This," was all she said, tapping the handle.

Evelyn struggled; and Polly laughed, a wicked laugh, no more like the ripple which Daddy Hopkins had loved to hear than the bark of a wolf is like the lark's morning song.

Tears rose into Evelyn's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. The smile faded slowly from Polly's face. Ever had excruciating agony touched her; like a sunbeam through a rift in a storm cloud, the old Polly leapt up to take heed of another's hurt. This feeling she crushed down; but she put the ax on the floor and squatted beside the bed.

Scarcely had she done this before a loud knock came on the door. She threw the blankets over Evelyn and went swiftly forward and lifted the bar.

Larry Bishop thrust the upper half of his body into the room.

"Old Marc an' his gang are in the Silent City lookin' for his woman," he whispered hoarsely.

"Where's Lye?" came in a hiss from the squatter girl.

"Off up the road watching," returned Bishop. "What'd you do to 'er, brat?"

"Come in," said Polly, in an undertone, grasping the end of his scarf and pulling him through the doorway, "an' if MacKenzie comes here, yappin' for his woman, laugh at him—laugh, an' laugh till your sides split, Larry."

She closed the door, pushed Bishop into a chair, and then deliberately crawled into bed beside Evelyn. Upon the inert figure of the bound girl she piled two old pillows.

Then she and Larry waited, scarcely breathing, until voices seemed to come through the clapboards from every direction.

A rush of feet brought Bishop bolt upright.

"Keep settin'," breathed Pollyop. "They'll be stoppin' here fast enough!"

Of a sudden the door burst open, and Marcus MacKenzie, covered with snow, entered. With him were two of his neighbors and several squatters.

Polly enjoyed a glimpse of Old Marc's agonized face; then she grinned at him.

"What's the matter, mister?" she asked, show-

ing an expanse of even white teeth. "What do you mean by bustin' into my house like this, sir!"

MacKenzie threw a glance from the girl to the squatter in the chair.

"My wife's gone," he cried in desperation. "I—I——"

"So? Now is she?" broke in Polly, smiling wider. "You don't say! Well, golly me! That's too bad. Some other feller run off with 'er—mebbe!"

And when she saw him trying to master his emotion, forcing back the heavy groans that interfered with his efforts to answer, she laughed. Never before had she been reckless in his presence. She knew this was one time Marcus MacKenzie did not want to fight. He needed the help of the squatters to search the Storm Country for his wife,—his bride, the very apple of his eye.

He did not look at all like the flashing-eyed enemy of her people. All at once he had changed from a cynical, handsome man of the world to a pleading, pale-faced husband.

Just then the wind shook the shanty violently; and over his big frame passed shudder after shudder.

"She's been gone, oh, God, I don't know how

long," he groaned aloud, the haggard expression deepening in the lines about his mouth as he spoke. "I'll give—I'll give more money than any of you ever saw ——" He flung around on Bishop and thrust out an importunate hand.

Larry had been watching him covertly, in moody silence. When Marcus addressed him directly, he threw back his head and let out loud malevolent sounds more like the howls of hyenas than the laugh of a human being; and Polly Hopkins joined in again too, dreadful sounds that made her thin lovely face look old.

"This is a queer place to come for your woman," she taunted MacKenzie. "To a squatter's shack, huh? I didn't know before that rich women come to the Silent City, least of all, youn."

MacKenzie took a step toward her.

"Oh, I was sure she wasn't here," he thrust in eagerly. "But I want help—the aid of every one of you. Money," he cried again convulsively. "Money, do you hear? Money, I said ——"

Polly was witnessing just the picture that she had been holding in her mind's eye for many days.

"Money can't buy everything, mister," she jeered at him. "Mebbe your woman's in the snow. To-morrow's Thanksgivin' day. Mebbe

you'll miss 'er if she ain't home with you.—Scoot out of here. Don't be laggin', Old Marc, or she might freeze to death somewheres.—It's a bad night."

The last statement, true to every word, brought a deep sob from MacKenzie's throat. It was immediately followed by more of the bitter laughter.

So changed was Polly of the Silent City that the gaping squatters who did not know what was going to happen wondered at her. They knew her no longer as Polly, the love-lass, or as Polly of the Sun.

A low rumble sounded in the girl's throat. She coughed, then flung out:

"I said, 'It's a bad night!' Scoot out, mister, an' look for your damn lily-livered woman somewheres else."

Uttering an oath, MacKenzie fled, followed by his companions, leaving Larry Bishop staring at the pale squatter girl.



## CHAPTER XXVI

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.

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, Poll," 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 damned terrible I'm gettin' haunted. If you change your mind, Poll, 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, Pollyop 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 slunk 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 fin-

ished 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 anything to eat?" she asked, rocking back on her heels. "If you was in Larry's hut 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 with 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 together 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 re-counting 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 'ceptin' 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 its 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 right out of my arms."

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

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 263

"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 checked and became silent as she thought of Robert. She could not force her tongue to say a word about him, al-

though her heart throbbed 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 hissing 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 cunnin' an' sweet they are? You're as wicked as hell! 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 to-night—Marc's baby! Evelyn's baby!

Like a hive of bees, the joy of dissipating 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 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," whis-

pered 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

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 269

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!"

## CHAPTER XXVII

“CAN you speak to me?”

Pollyop's voice was as tender as when she had repeated heavenly promises to the sad ones of the Silent City and had taught them that love was ever present.

Evelyn gazed at her electrified. The brown eyes were softly luminous. The lips which only a little while ago were strained and blue now were scarlet and fraught with sympathy. What wonderful thing had happened? Pollyop had taken the rope off her feet and hands. She could wriggle them a little, although her flesh hurt dreadfully when she tried it.

Prompted by the attempted movement, Pollyop dropped to her knees and began to chafe the injured ankles.

“I'm goin' to give you back to your man,” she said, quaking. “But you got to swear to him I swiped you, an' not any squatter men. He'll jail me forever, mebbe, but I don't care about that. I love Larry an' Lye Braeger too much to haul 'em into this.”

Then her face fell beside Mrs. MacKenzie's,

and she wept hysterically. Evelyn's fingers clutched at the chestnut curls.

"Pollyop, oh, Polly darling!"

This was all she could say, for she too was weeping even more wildly than the other. In the presence of such divine unselfishness, the petals of her withered soul seemed to lift and open, as she groped for a broader understanding.

"Granny Hope learned me a lot of things," came up to Evelyn brokenly. "She always said, Granny Hope did, that love was stronger'n hate an' I must just pray your man wouldn't be so wicked to us squatters."

The glistening brown head rolled back and forth in consuming agony.

"Don't, Polly darling," Evelyn begged. "Don't, it's all right now. And my husband will ——"

Polly sat up, brushing back damp ringlets from her brow.

"He won't do nothin' to help me," she shot out. "Nothin' at all! First, I know him better'n you do. Then next, I wouldn't ask him. 'Cause—'cause I'm that bad, I ought to be without my Daddy Hopkins an' my Jerry baby." Her voice rose in wild appeal. "But, God dear, how much I want 'em. Oh, how I want 'em!"

The words cut into Evelyn's heart with the

keenness of physical pain. Only a little while before she had stood alone at the brink of the grave. There had been no hope that the summer would bring a helpless wee thing to hold her close to Marcus. But now — Her thoughts whirled. So great was her faith in Polly Hopkins that she knew in a little while she would be back in her husband's arms.

The attack of weeping over, Pollyop arose and beat again into pap the hard bread and hot water. This time she took all the sugar left in the cupboard. Daddy would not be home for over two years, and Baby Jerry probably never, and she — she wouldn't be in the shanty long. Groaning, she whipped the spoon so fiercely that some of the contents of the cup splashed on the floor.

"It ain't very toothsome," she said, coming back to the cot; "but the hut's cold, an' you need a lot of warmin' up. I'm goin' now an' get your man. You get this hot pap into your stomach while I'm gone."

Evelyn waved the cup away, holding out a shaking hand.

"I don't want you to go without me, Pollyop," she cried. "Please don't leave me here alone. I'm terribly scared, I—I —"

The grave young squatter contemplated her for the space of twenty seconds perhaps.



"You're afraid of the fishermen, ain't you, Miss?" she asked. "Well, you've got a right to be! Larry's different from the rest, though he was as willin', up to this night, to chop off your head, as me. But Larry's heart's soft and kind, Larry's is."

"I'm afraid of everybody," gasped Evelyn. "Everybody but you, Polly. Please take me with you, or—or—let me stay till morning."

A slight shake of Pollyop's head brought Evelyn to a sitting position, but pain-racked bones and nerves laid her back again.

"There," interjected the other girl. "You can see how hard it'd be to get you through the snow to your ma's house. You'd die before you got there. I'm blest if you wouldn't.—No, I got to go alone, Miss."

Noting the fear in Mrs. MacKenzie's eyes, she bent over the cot.

"Will you believe something I'm goin' to tell you, Eve?" she said in a wheedling tone.

"Surely I will, Polly," answered Evelyn, wiping her eyes, "but I'm so afraid, so awfully afraid."

"That's no lie," replied Pollyop impetuously, "an' as I said, you got a right to be scared of the squatters. Why, only this afternoon I hated you an' Old Marc as hard as the rest of the Silent

City folks—more, mebbe! But—but what I was really goin' to tell you, is this. If I lug you along with me, you won't have no baby in the summer. That's God's truth I'm tellin' you, too."

Evelyn lowered her lids, and a painful flush mounted to her hair.

"You're wantin' the little thing, ain't you?" demanded Polly, her voice vibrant with emotion. "Now be a big woman, an' stay while I'm gone, will you? I'll promise to hustle for all I'm worth."

Mrs. MacKenzie's timid glance ran around the room.

"I suppose so," she whimpered, "but what if some of your people came here?" She shuddered and went on hurriedly: "Polly, what're you going to say to Marcus?"

"I don't know yet," mumbled Pollyop, "but I'll bring him back. Oh, I got it! Say, I'll stick you away in Granny Hope's coop-hole. No squatter'd think to go in there, even if he comes in. Here! I'll help you."

Tenderly she coaxed and begged, but without avail, and patiently Polly sat down on the side of the cot.

"Miss Eve," she took up in low tones, "I'm goin' to tell you something Granny Hope told

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 275

me. Now you want to get home to your man, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, oh, so bad, Pollyop," cried Evelyn, "but I can't stay here alone! I can't! I can't!"

She did not think then of the many days and nights the other girl had passed by herself in the same little shack.

"Mebbe it does seem so, Eve," said Polly Hopkins. "But, honey, when I'm done, you'll be thinkin' different. Now listen, don't you know way down in your insides that your man's nearly sufferin' his life away?"

Evelyn burst forth into weeping afresh.

"Of course I know it, Polly," she sobbed, "but ——"

"An' you want him to be wailing all night till daybreak, not knowin' whether you're in the land of the livin' or not, huh?"

This was a solemn question asked by a very solemn-eyed girl.

"Another thing," continued Polly. "When it comes daybreak, there'll be a lot of squatters about. They come every day to this hut. I'd have to leave you then, wouldn't I? To-night it's stormin', an' most of 'em are in bed. I could run as fast as a rabbit an' be back in a jiffy. Can't you screw up your courage an' let me go?"

This long statement Evelyn thought over for a few moments. Then:

"Perhaps I could if ——"

"I know you can," interrupted Pollyop. "Now listen, Granny Hope said anything you want, you can have out of Love's own heart for the askin'."

"But I'm such a wicked girl," moaned Evelyn dismally.

"So be I," returned Pollyop promptly. "We're both rotten bad, God knows, but never mind all that now. I got to get Old Marc; an' the only way you can help is to stay quiet while I'm out for him. Now lean on me, an' I'll stow you away in the rubbish room till I get back."

Ashamed to make further appeals to the girl who was showing more spirit than she had ever thought possible for any girl to show, Evelyn allowed Pollyop to pick her up and stand her on the floor.

Then the weak leaned on the strong, and when Polly Hopkins tucked the blankets about Evelyn, she whispered:

"Granny said prayers in this room all last year an' way on till she died. 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!' Granny said was one of the best to keep in mind."

She stooped and smoothed back the hair from Evelyn's wet brow.

"Now while I'm gone you just lay quiet like, askin' Jesus every minute that your man'll be hikin' here faster'n a crow can fly."

Evelyn raised her head.

"Kiss me, Polly dear," she begged, with streaming eyes.

"All right!" murmured the squatter girl. "Kisses're mighty comfortin', ain't they?"

She stooped and laid her lips on Evelyn's and, turning swiftly, left the room. Evelyn heard her snuffing the candles outside and then heard the latch click as Pollyop closed the door behind her.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

BOUNTING out into the snow, Pollyop raced through the road toward Bishop's hut, for she had decided to speak to him before going on. She lifted the latch and peeped in.

Larry sat by the stove, puffing his pipe. He gave her but a glance then dropped his head mournfully.

"Where's Lye, Larry?" Polly asked in a hissing whisper.

"Gone home," came in a grunt. "He's sick to his stummick, an' so be I. I'm most froze too."

With her hand on the latch of the door which she had closed against the storm, the girl stood in shivering indecision. She felt intuitively the inner emotions going on inside the stolid speaker. She wanted to throw her arms about him and tell him all that had passed in her home during the last hour. But if she did, Larry would take the blame of the crime on himself. Of course he would! Polly Hopkins knew the heart of Larry Bishop as if she had made it herself from God's

own clay. If the person in her shack had been Old Marc, he would have had no compunction in putting him out of the way, but a woman —

“I don’t want you for anything to-night, Larry Bishop,” she broke out, fumbling with the latch. “An’, mind you, dearie, never tell nobody you an’ Lye swiped Old Marc’s woman. That’s a promise, Larry, ain’t it?”

“Yep,” replied Bishop, nauseated.

“Then go to bed an’ sleep!” returned Pollyop. “You’ll get warm, an’—an’—I’ll see you to-morrow—mebbe. I won’t be needin’ you in my shanty to-night.”

Then she went swiftly out, slammed the door and was away like a winter bird, before the squatter could question her.

Swiftly she ran on, her hair almost on end because, to save her friends, she must face the haughty MacKenzie himself. It had been her cruelty that had prompted their act, and now, besides saving Evelyn, she must shield them. The nearer she came to the MacKenzie house, the harder her heart pounded, with dread at the task before her.

In the meantime Marcus MacKenzie and his wife’s mother were together, the lady stretched out on the divan, and Marcus pacing the floor. Since MacKenzie had left the Hopkins shack,

he had ridden madly over the hills, urging every man available to help him find his wife. Secretly he had wept tears such as never had poured from his eyes before in all his supercilious days.

Having set in motion what aid he could summon from town and country, he had come back home to the hysterical mother. He had no comforting assurances to give her, or any to allay the burning grief within himself. Evelyn had disappeared as if the ground had opened and swallowed her up. He paused in front of Mrs. Robertson, his dark, handsome face working painfully.

"You're very sure she was feeling well just before she went out?" he inquired. "She didn't act as if she had anything to worry over?"

Mrs. Robertson used her handkerchief before she answered.

"I can't think of anything," she hesitated, "unless it was about Bob. Lately he's been so different. I asked Eve one day——" She broke off and dissolved in tears.

"Yes, you asked her one day—what?" MacKenzie urged.

"It was about Bob," continued the weeping lady. "Eve thought he was suffering over—over——"

"Well!" snapped Marcus.



Would the woman never cease her everlasting crying and give him a clue if she had one?

"Well!" he goaded her on more furiously.

"Polly Hopkins!" she sobbed. "Eve said your continual pounding at the squatters had about broken the boy's spirit."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed MacKenzie. "Eve wouldn't waste her time worrying over such rats. Bob's a fool, I've discovered!—Where is he?"

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Robertson. "He goes away for days at a time without saying a word to Eve or me. And he looks perfectly dreadful. I think Evelyn's grieved over him."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?" cried the man, turning on her swiftly. "I'd have soon made my young gentleman put on a smile, at least when he's home. It's a shame my poor wife had to be tormented like that!"

That he had started the rumpus and done his full half of the quarreling never occurred to him. He was determined to find some one to blame for his wife's disappearance.

"Well, there's one thing certain," he ejaculated, after measuring the room several times with long strides. "I can't stay here, but good God! I don't know where to go."

A deep groan fell from his lips, and he be-

gan with heavy tread to walk up and down again.

"Can't you think of any place she might have gone?" he begged. "You know all her friends. Where would she go if she had determined to leave home?"

"Leave home?" gasped Mrs. Robertson, her jaw dropping.

"Yes!" faltered Marcus. "I don't know whether she told you or not, but we had some words before I started for Cortland."

"Of course she didn't tell me," came from behind the lady's handkerchief. "She never tells me anything, but I heard it. You were quarreling over the squatters, and in Eve's condition, I think you might spare her a little.—She's not strong! So much wrangling makes her sick!—I wish Bob were home. Oh, dear, I can't stand it."

"It's Bob that's made all this trouble," snarled Marcus. "He's spent months trying to circumvent me about the squatters, and Eve and I would have had no quarrels at all if he had attended to his own affairs."

He spoke moodily, conscious that he had treated his wife harshly, yet unwilling to admit it.

Mrs. Robertson, touched with the same feel-

ing, sat up, wiping her face and brushing back her hair. She too remembered now all the bitter words she had flung at her daughter.

"Marcus," she said. "If—we—get Eve back again ——"

"If we get her!" he interjected, his face going snow-white. "Of course we'll get her. Why say such ridiculous things?" He turned away to hide the emotion her tremulous question had filled him with. "It will be my death if we don't," he ended.

Mrs. Robertson raised on her elbow.

"But Marcus," she exclaimed, "there's been something on my mind ever since—since —— Oh, you don't think the squatters have her, do you?"

"I don't know," moaned Marcus, and he sat down quickly as if his legs would no longer bear the weight of his body.

And they were sitting thus, each busy with his own unspeakable unhappiness, when the servant entered.

"There's a girl here, sir," she began, and Marcus sprang up.

"Bring her in," he cried. "Bring her in instantly!"

The maid hesitated.

"She's queer looking, sir," she said timidly,

"and she's wet through. She's one of them squatters."

"Bring her in, I said," ordered Marcus once more, and the girl went out, closing the door softly.

Pollyop crept into the warm room, her teeth chattering, her legs unsteady. Her first glance fell upon Mrs. Robertson who, when she saw her, made a husky throat sound. Then the brown, fearful eyes traveled to the tall man, no longer an enemy to be hated, merely a wounded human creature, like her dear ones in the Silent City, to be loved and comforted.

"I got your woman in my shack," said Pollyop, straight to him, swallowing.

"God be thanked," screamed Mrs. Robertson.

Something snapped in MacKenzie's head, and for a moment he feared he was losing his mind. Polly thought by the blank expression on his face that his wits had gone completely. Ignoring the woman whom she detested, she went rapidly to MacKenzie's side.

"I had her roped up in the bed when you was there to-night, mister," she told him, the words tumbling over each other in the haste of confession. "I were goin' to chop her head off to get even with you. But—but—my dead Granny

Hope an' the biggest mammy in all the world wouldn't let me."

It seemed an eternity to the quaking young speaker before Marcus threw up his head and took a long breath.

"She—she's alive?" he demanded hoarsely. "You're very sure she isn't dead? Girl," he bounded up and grasped Pollyop's arm, "if you lie to me——"

"I ain't lyin' to you, mister," interrupted Polly dully. "You don't need to be scared for Miss Eve, but now you'd best come along to my hut an' get her. She's mournin' for you in Granny Hope's coop-hole, covered up with blankets."

Something like a huge fist struck MacKenzie. The conviction that the squatter girl's words were true lifted him immediately from the bottom depths of hopelessness. The sudden inrush of joyous relief brought with it a mental illumination, and he saw himself as others had seen him. The terrible, blighting uncertainty he had borne for a few maddening hours the girl before him had known for months. If she were to blame for his suffering, what was the measure of his own responsibility?

He turned swiftly to his mother-in-law and said huskily:

“Call some one to get this child some dry clothes. Take anything of Eve’s you can find that will keep her warm, and for God’s sake, take those ragged boots off her feet!” He sprang to the bell. “I’ll order the team.”

When he had given his orders to the servant who appeared at the door, he sank back into a chair, and Mrs. Robertson went swiftly out.

Utterly oblivious of the squatter girl’s presence, Marcus MacKenzie buried his face in his hands. The new Pollyop, the Polly of the Sun, crept forward and touched him.

“Your woman’s all right,” she said huskily. “Don’t cry! She told me about—about the little kid a-comin’ in the summer, an’ she howled like mad to come along with me. But I says to her she couldn’t walk all this way to you without dyin’.”

The soft tones vibrated sympathetically as she voiced the assurances. MacKenzie thrust up his hand and clutched the slim brown fingers.

“Tell me something about it while we’re alone,” he whispered.

Pollyop shuddered.

“Well, sir,” she began, so low that MacKenzie had to raise his head to hear, “all the squatters hate you, but none of ’em was wicked like me. I said, I did, that you couldn’t be hurt no way only

through your woman, an'—an'—I was goin' to cut her head off with the ax an' then sling 'er in the lake. I s'pose I'm goin' to get sent up for years, but I just had to come and tell you."

Before MacKenzie, aghast at the danger his dear one had faced, could answer, Mrs. Robertson entered, followed by Evelyn's maid.

"I'll get my coat," exclaimed Marcus, jumping up. "Dress the girl warm and send along Evelyn's fur motor coat."

A furtive smile curled the maid's lips as she helped pull off Jeremiah's heavy coat, and then grew broader as Pollyop slipped out of Daddy's great boots. Yet the woman admitted to herself as she dried the wet feet and attired the squatter girl in her mistress' beautiful clothes, that she was pretty, even prettier than Mrs. MacKenzie.

When the robing process was finished, Mrs. Robertson glanced over the little figure and grudgingly acknowledged to herself that there was something of elegance in the girl's bearing, even if she were a squatter.

"Come here!" she said. A haughty gesture indicated the spot. "Right here before me."

Polly's shaking legs carried her within a few inches of the august presence.

"You're very sure, girl," asked Mrs. Robert-

son, "that my daughter's safe in your shack? How did she come there?"

Polly remembered Larry Bishop and Lye Braeger. She had been instrumental in bringing them within the prison shadows, and if any one suffered from the deed done that night, it must not be her friends. She alone must take the blame!

"I wheedled 'er there, ma'am," she replied humbly. "I'm goin' to tell her man all about it."

Marcus entered and started back as he caught sight of Polly. How beautiful she was, bedecked in his wife's clothes! Then it came to him that even in her rags she had had a distinctive loveliness. Both Bob and Evelyn — As that precious name went through his mind, his thoughts flew to the squatter's hut where his frail young wife awaited him.

"Come along quickly," he said, going directly to Polly.

How changed he seemed, how gentle he was as he took hold of her arm and led her away; and so preoccupied was she with this thought that the beauty of the clothes which she wore made no impression upon her. She wondered dully when MacKenzie lifted her bodily into the sleigh and the coachman chirruped to the horses, just what he intended to do with her to-morrow.



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 289

She looked back upon the time the authorities had sent Meg Williams to a reform school and also recalled the girl's home-coming after her term had been served. Now that she, herself, was in danger of the like treatment, Pollyop searched her mind for the details that Meg had given of the horrible place.

As the horses trotted along the Boulevard, Pollyop's chin sank into the warm fur about her neck, and until they turned into the narrow lane from the road, no one spoke a word.

"Go straight to the lake, Hank," ordered MacKenzie, and at the sound of his deep voice, Pollyop felt another shock of surprise. She had heard it so often in strident abuse! Now it was actually pleasant to listen to!

Down the hill through the furry flakes of snow the strong horses picked their way. Once the cutter nearly turned on its side but righted itself. The Hopkins hut was dark when they drove up before it. Marcus jumped into the snow, picked Polly out of the cutter as if she had been a kitten, and waded through the drift to the narrow path leading into the house.

He put the girl down before the door, and turning, called to the coachman:

"Drive the team down the road, Hank, out of the wind! I'll call you when I want you!"

It was Pollyop's trembling hand that unlatched the shanty door. It was she who struck a match and touched it to the candle. Then she pointed to Granny Hope's room.

"She's in there, mister," she said, trembling like an aspen leaf.

Then because she was about to face an outraged wife in the presence of a powerful husband, she sat down, shaking with fear from head to foot.

## CHAPTER XXIX

IN the meanwhile a covered carriage containing two men and a little boy was making slow progress along the drifted Boulevard. About two miles from Ithaca a double cutter, with sleigh bells ringing, dashed by them, the little light on the back of it glowing like a steady red eye until a sharp curve in the road blotted it from sight.

"Somebody else out, if 'tis a bad night," commented the older man, who held the boy.

"They went awful fast, too, Daddy Hopkins," murmured the child. "Didn't 'um, darlin'?"

"Yep, son," was the reply. "Sleighs go over the snow better'n wagons."

The words hardly penetrated the younger man's reverie. His thoughts were busy with a squatter girl who would have a real Thanksgiving the next day. Her joy he could picture, but he could not join it. All his thoughts of her were marred by another vision that poisoned his every moment. Never since he had found Oscar Bennett dying in Polly's bed had he known a peaceful instant.

When the vehicle came to the corner where MacKenzie's magnificent turnout had swung into the lane leading to the row of squatter shacks at the lakeside, Robert Percival opened the carriage door and thrust his head out.

"This is where we turn," he shouted to the driver. "Go slow! The drifts are deep all the way down."

When he settled again into his seat, he remarked:

"It's a bad night, Hopkins. Perhaps it would have been better to have waited until morning, after all."

The other man bent over the boy's head and laid his face against it.

"'Twould had to be something more'n a snow-storm to keep me in Ithaca all night," he returned. "Where my pretty brat is, I want to be."

"Of course, of course," sighed Robert.

But he did not utter aloud the thought which flung to his lips that he was tortured by the same wish too. What he did say was:

"Your daughter will be asleep, I've no doubt."

"Mebbe," Hopkins answered. "But Poll'll be glad to hop out of bed for her Daddy an' Jerry baby!"

Then he coughed as if trying to add something else.

"I been wantin' to tell you all day, Mr. Percival," he said awkwardly, "how grateful I be to you. It's kinda hard to say it in words."

"There's no need, I assure you," returned Robert. "The only thing I regret is that you should have been compelled to stay in prison so long."

"But we're home now!" was the happy answer. "An' I'm thankin' you for me an' my brats too."

"Pollyop," squealed the child, wriggling. "Daddy, Wee Jerry wants Pollyop."

"Hush, Jerry," soothed his father. "We're a-comin' near home now.—There! Here we be."

As they descended from the carriage, the baby hid his face in his big father's shoulder.

The snow was still falling quietly into the dark lake, and the squatter, with a throb at his heart, caught the thread of light at the edge of the window blind of his home. Then his Pollyop was still up.

"Cover your horses and wait here," directed Percival to the driver. Then to Hopkins he said: "As I told you, sir, your daughter's suffered frightfully. Poor girl, I am afraid, if you appeared without warning, the shock would be too much for her. Do as we agreed in town, and go

to Bishop's shack until I come for you. I'll tell her you and the boy are home."

A long sigh slipped from the squatter's lips. He desired to rush in and hold his girl-brat to his overwrought heart. He had heard with suppressed emotion Robert's tale of his Pollyop's trials, and now as he recollected them, he could scarcely restrain himself. Yet he realized the young man was right, so, pulling the child's bowed legs around his neck, he faded stolidly into the falling snow.

Inside the hut Polly Hopkins was seated, tensely silent, her slender fingers clasped together about her knees. Suddenly she heard voices other than the low hum of MacKenzie's questions and Evelyn's sobbing answers in the coop-hole.

She arose slowly, ready to spring at Larry Bishop or Lye Braeger if they appeared at the door. To send them away instantly was the decision that she made as she saw the latch lift and the door slowly swing in. A figure she recognized with startled eyes stepped across the threshold; she sat down, but was up again before he spoke.

The man she had so longed to see had come again. But now he was here, she did not dare let him stay a moment. Marcus MacKenzie

might come out of the coop-hole even before she could send the newcomer away. While he was pressing his great coat collar down over his shoulders, she tiptoed to him and with uplifted hand whispered:

"Hush! Go away! Go away quick!" Making a backward gesture, she added: "There's some one in the coop-hole I don't want you to see."

His errand having completely left his mind, Robert, after a moment of startled inspection, stopped stiffly by the door. The resentment and jealousy he had nursed so long flared into active life and licked him like flames. Clothes such as she wore had never been paid for with squatter money! She was beautiful! So much his eyes told him, but he knew she was not honest!

She had said there was some one in the ——

He fixed her with stern eyes and then shoved her aside.

"I'm going to see who he is," he snapped.

Polly's fingers caught him as he tried to pass her.

"No, you can't go in there," she cried.  
"Please don't do it."

The sound of their voices brought Marcus MacKenzie out into the kitchen in one stride. He halted at the sight of the squatter girl hanging

desperately to Robert's arm. An exclamation broke from him; and with one wrench Percival was free and was at him.

"So it's you!" he said in a tone that told Polly Hopkins what was in his mind. "Damn you, you hypocrite——"

His voice broke off, and he brushed his eyes across with shaking fingers. There behind Marcus in the coop-hole doorway was his pale cousin.

"Evelyn!" he gasped thickly. "God, what's this all about? Every one of you look as if—as if——"

Bewildered and overcome, he could not finish his sentence.

Marcus had caught Evelyn to him; and Pollyop, tearlessly ashamed, had sunk into the big chair to hide the finery which she knew had brought the hurt into Robert's eyes. She wished, oh, how she wished she was clothed in Daddy's boots and her own calico dress!

"Shut the door, Bob," Marcus ordered as calmly as he could.

Mechanically Robert did as he was bidden. When he turned again, Marcus was seated, with Evelyn clinging to him, and Pollyop's face was covered by one arm.

Evelyn began to cry weakly.



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 297

"Bob, dear," she broke out, looking up at her cousin with streaming eyes, "Pollyop's been so good to me."

That sounded to Polly as if some one else were to be punished for the night's work.

"No, I ain't," she protested, lifting her head. "I was awful bad! I were the only one to blame. I hated every one of you. Let me tell all of you about it."

She began at the beginning and repeated how she had concocted the plan to steal Mrs. MacKenzie. She spoke of Larry and Lye as her two friends, but did not mention their names.

"I thought I could kill 'er, sir," she added, raising streaming eyes, "but—but when Daddy's coat fell down, an' the big mammy an' Granny Hope smiled at me, I quit hatin' you an' wantin' to kill your woman."

She struggled up and moving to the wall, leaned against "The Greatest Mother in the World" as if she too would add herself to the vast family of hurt ones.

Every one of her words was directed to MacKenzie.

"Then I'm to understand," he asked slowly, "that you deliberately took my wife away to kill her?"

"But she didn't, Marc," interjected Evelyn.

## 298 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

Marcus made a wide gesture with one arm.

"Hush, Eve," he muttered. "I want to hear what Miss Hopkins has to say."

"Yep, I took her," trailed on Polly, "an' I meant to croak her too, an' throw 'er in the lake. Just to get even with you, sir."

"Then why didn't you do it?" demanded Marcus.

Pollyop threw a short glance at the other man, standing white and silent. She cleared her throat, and leaned only the harder against the wall.

"On a sudden," she continued, as if eager to finish her tale, "I somehow remembered everything Granny Hope learned me when she was in the shack here. She always said, mister, when you was devilish enough to snake a squatter from the Silent City,"—Polly paused and coughed, then proceeded in the dead silence: "Granny said you was the image and likeness of the good God up in the sky, an' a brother to Jesus, the same as us squatters. But I said I didn't ever want to fly away to God if He looked like you!"

Leaving the wall she came forward and hurried on: "An' I meant it them times, an' much more after you railroaded my Daddy and swiped Jerry away from me."

Marcus placed his wife in the chair and stood

up. He started to speak to Pollyop; but Evelyn's cry caused him to turn swiftly. The drabness of her face startled him.

"Marc! Robert!" she said. "I can't go back home until I've told you something.—No, Marc, don't stop me.—I will talk.—Now listen! Oh, honey!" This appeal was to her husband who had laid his fingers on her shoulder. "Won't you hold my hand while I tell it?"

Much moved, Marcus did as she requested. His firm clasp seemed to encourage Evelyn, and she went on:

"Darling, I've always been—dreadful to—to Polly Hopkins, and—and she's been an angel to me."

She was going to tell it all, raged through Polly's mind. Was she going to bring to light her relations with the dead Oscar? Old Marc would never forgive it! Thinking more now of the baby coming next summer to the almost incoherent woman than of her own happiness, Pollyop made a movement as if to contradict the statement; but Evelyn's impetuous rush of words halted her.

"No, Polly, I'm going to put things right now, even if Marc leaves me to-night," she declared, clearing her throat. "Robert, dear boy, I lied to you. I lied to Polly and to you, Marcus.

### 300 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

Oscar Bennett wasn't Polly's sweetheart at all. He—he was my husband!"

MacKenzie stiffened, but did not drop the cold fingers he held; and Evelyn wept bitterly, unable to go on.

A horse whinnied outside; but in the shanty no sound could be heard save the hysterical sobbing of Evelyn.

It seemed to Robert as if he must shake from his cousin the rest of the dark story, so impatient was he to hear it.

"Then—then when you came, my—my beloved," Evelyn raised her tired eyes to her husband, "I tried to get rid of him. I did my best to get Polly Hopkins to promise she'd marry Oscar after he had freed me. I wanted to get him out of the country!"

Unwilling to spare herself the least humiliation, she ended in piteous confusion: "I was glad when I knew he was dead."

"Then how did he die?" came swiftly from MacKenzie.

"Oh, just as the doctor told you, Marc dear," replied Evelyn. "He was struck by lightning and died from the shock. I was free then, and—and I made Polly swear over and over again she'd never tell any one! And—and I gave her the silk dress she wore that day in the Auburn

car. I—I—lied about that, too. But, Marc, dear love, I knew you hated her and ——”

Robert bounded to his feet as the girl's words trailed away into silence. Over MacKenzie's face were speeding so many different expressions that the searching brown eyes of Polly Hopkins could not tell whether he intended to forgive his unhappy wife or not.

But Percival did not wait to find out. He sprang to the door, jerked it open, and closed it behind him with a bang. In fact, he did not even see Evelyn slip quietly into a faint, or Marcus snatch her into his arms as if he never intended to let her go.

It was only Polly who heard the passionate love words that came from lips that had so often flung oaths at her and her people. She watched Marcus dully, her heart aching and her muscles rigid with pain. Robert had not believed what Evelyn had said! He had gone away without a word to her! Of course then, he did not love her any more!

## CHAPTER XXX

UNNOTICED by the MacKenzies, Polly Hopkins sat very quiet, while Evelyn, who had regained consciousness, was clinging to her husband's neck and listening to his assurances that she was forgiven. Then suddenly, through the low rumble of Marcus' voice and the sighs and sobs of Evelyn, Pollyop heard a shrill squatter call. She rose slowly to her feet and stood rooted to the spot. The voice that had sounded was high, childish, like Wee Jerry's.

With the superstition of her kind, Polly was overcome by a great fear. Jerry was dying alone in a place of strangers! His little spirit had called to her in the grief of its going! She cast a glance at the man and woman. They were wholly enveloped in themselves and paid no attention to the plaintive wail that broke from her lips. She struggled to the door and opened it, and there—right before her startled eyes—was Daddy Hopkins, with Jerry astraddle his neck.

"Daddy," came in one bewildered cry from her shaking lips.

Then they faded from her vision, and the

brown eyes yielded to semi-consciousness, and semi-consciousness was lost in complete oblivion.

When Polly Hopkins again lifted her lids, she was surrounded by a group of people whom at first she did not recognize. Then Daddy Hopkins detached himself from the rest. He was seated very near her. That was nice indeed! she thought dimly. She must have dreamed that Old Marc had sent him to prison. Wee Jerry was cuddled at her side. Then he too had never gone away!

What brought full remembrance to her was the sight of Larry Bishop leaning against the wall at the foot of the bed. He was looking at her with tear-filled eyes, his cracked lips working painfully.

"Larry," she cried, struggling up.

It was Marcus MacKenzie that shoved himself in beside Jeremiah and bent over her.

"Larry didn't do it, Daddy; I did," she moaned. "Please, Mr. MacKenzie, please believe me!"

She crawled wearily into Jeremiah's arms and hugged his bushy head.

"Oh, Daddy Hopkins, I got to go—to—to jail. I been—a wicked—bad ——"

She was straining so to finish that Robert Percival was no longer able to keep quiet. He

stepped forward so that Polly saw him over Daddy's shoulder. She glared at him wildly.

"Tell 'em—oh—tell 'em," she shuddered.

The tears in his eyes softened her expression.

"It's like you to feel sorry for me, sir!" She winced. "An' gettin' Daddy an' Wee Jerry back is like you too. Every day I'm in jail, I'll be prayin' you'll be happy." She strangled at the memory of Old Marc's words, "I'll get you next, huzzy!"

Then Robert, stung with remorse at his disbelief in her, picked her out of her father's arms. When he had placed her in a chair, he said:

"Polly darling, we've heard the whole story from—from ——"

He looked toward Larry Bishop, stumbling as if he did not remember his name.

"And we've forgotten it, too," MacKenzie boomed in. "Yesterday it wouldn't have been any great loss if my whole family had been sunk in the lake. We were all more wicked than any one in the Silent City. But to-night it's different!"

Polly straightened up, her eyes brilliant with questioning.

"Daddy," she asked, "does he—mean—I ain't goin' to jail for my life long? Oh, Daddy ——"



## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 305

She was in the big squatter's outstretched arms in a twinkling, weeping against his breast.

"This night's work," said MacKenzie, moved almost beyond speech, "won't pass outside the few who know it. And, Polly—look up, child. I want to tell you something."

In silence she dared a timid glance at him.

"While you—you were—asleep—just now, Mr. Percival and I made arrangements with your father to give him work," MacKenzie told her. "Does that please you?"

"Awful much," she sighed; then she turned and looked at Bishop, standing against the wall.

"What about Larry?" she murmured softly. "Poor, poor Larry."

"I'll help him too," Marcus agreed eagerly.

Polly cogitated one small moment.

"There's Lye Braeger," she sighed again. "He ain't got many friends, Lye ain't!"

MacKenzie's laugh sent a sense of relief over the gloomy group.

"Then Lye Braeger too," he exclaimed, "and any other squatter who wants to work."

Pollyop, overwhelmed with this generosity, stood up before him, curls showering each shoulder and framing her lovely, eager face.

"I guess mebbe you were a angel all the time like Granny Hope said once," she said shyly.

"I'm thankin' you, sir, an' I—I'm hopin' the little one God's sendin' in the summer'll look just like—like"—a smile touched her lips—"just like Jerry," she ended.

Because she was so simply natural, MacKenzie replied solemnly:

"If my child looks as much like me as Jerry looks like his father, I'll be satisfied."

Then he hurried his wife away, offering to carry Robert home with them.

"No, sir," said that young man stoutly. "I've got to talk to Polly Hopkins."

"I'm goin' now, too," grunted Larry Bishop. "Got to go an' see Lye Braeger. He's sick in bed with a stummick ache.—Good night, Poll!—See you to-morrow, Jerry Hopkins."

He made a gesture of farewell to Robert; and Pollyop went to the door with him. There she brought a wry, twitching smile to his lips by throwing her arms about his neck and kissing him.

"It's all right now, Larry dear!" she whispered. "Good-by."

When she turned slowly to Robert, her face was suffused with crimson blood.

"Ain't your horses gettin' cold, sir?" she queried. "It's worse outside than when you came!"

Jeremiah blinked at them, went to the cot and picked up the drowsy baby. To hide his embarrassment, he seated himself and rocked the child back and forth. He was almost afraid of his beautiful daughter, dressed so unlike herself, her hair hanging in glistening brown curls over Evelyn Robertson's exquisite clothes.

"The horses are well covered, Polly," answered Robert. "I'll make it worth the driver's while to wait a bit."

Then unable to bear the strain any longer, he burst out:

"Darling, can you ever forgive me?"

She gave him one melting glance and like a fluttering bird sped into his arms and stayed there. And thus the two young things, with nothing between them and long stretches of happiness, clung to each other until the tinkle-tinkle of the MacKenzie sleigh bells was lost in the night.

Then the squatter girl, disengaging herself from her sweetheart's arms, went to her father.

"Daddy," she breathed, bending over him, "ever since I mended the roof that day—the same day Old Marc came home, I've been lovin'" —she reached back her hand, and Robert clasped it, "I've been lovin'——" Choking, she

### 308 STORM COUNTRY POLLY

could get no farther in that important explanation.

Robert stepped beside her, and rested his hand on the down-bent head. He knew now that though she was a squatter, one of the despised of the earth, he loved her better than the whole world.

"It's just like Granny Hope said, Daddy," Pollyop went on, the velvety brown softening the misty eyes. "She said, Granny Hope did, that love's bigger an' better'n hate any day. An' it's true, ain't it?"

"Yep," nodded Hopkins, smoothing her face with one great hand. "I guess so, brat!"

"It sure is," added Robert in her ear.

Then he looked at Jeremiah.

"May I have her some day, sir?" he asked in reverent tones. "I'll make her so happy you won't regret it."

Jeremiah's big frame shook, and Pollyop, ever devoted to him, kissed him tenderly.

"I'll never leave you, Daddy darlin', precious old Daddy," she cried. "Mebbe ——" She looked up at the tall man standing by her. "Mebbe," she repeated, "you'd take Jerry an' Daddy too, huh? They're awful good an' never get in anybody's way."

"And Jerry and your father too, my darling,"

## STORM COUNTRY POLLY 309

laughed Robert, in an outburst of happiness. "I can have your little girl, Mr. Hopkins, can't I?"

"Yep," whispered Jeremiah, sighing heavily.

Then while Robert was bidding Polly good night, Jeremiah, with a far-away look upon his face, gathered the bow-legged child closer to him and rocked him gently to and fro.

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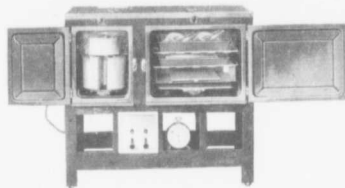
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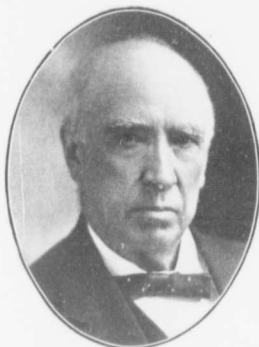


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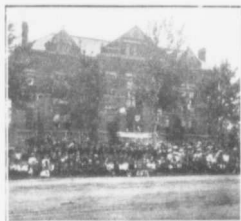
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A Dainty Box of Fragrant  
Flowers  
A Handsome Palm  
A Choice Fern or  
A Rare Flowering Plant.

YOU CAN GET THEM AT THE  
OLD STORE—

**Ed. West Floral Co.**  
249 DUNDAS STREET.

Phone 2187. Nights and Sundays 214, 3844

Quality and Service Unequaled



View in Queen's Park.



Horticultural Building, Queen's Park.

## Perhaps You'll Find It

difficult to believe that we do the best Laundry Work in town, but you will KNOW IT after a single trial. We put a superior finish upon every article and deliver the goods in the pink of perfection. We also Darn your Hosiery Free of Charge.

Yours truly,

**PARISIAN STEAM LAUNDRY CO.**  
LIMITED.

73 and 75 Dundas Street,  
Tel. 558. 559. London, Ont.

J. CHERA, Manager.

# !!! IN A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW !!!

Some sagacious gentleman with a highly developed and probing brain, inherited from his long line of eugenic ancestors, will dig a brick from a wall of some marvellously well-preserved old landmark and will give to the waiting world a laudatory dissertation on Ante-Fired Bricks made by the London Pressed Brick and Tile Company and laid up in the City of London at about the time of that epoch-making celebration of mid-summer, 1914.

People will marvel at the durability of Car-Bex Bricks then just as they now look with astonishment on the burned clay roads built by Caesar's legions. The famous Appian Way, and other Roman roads that are doing service to-day were built by the same method, in fact the ante-fired process of brick making is simply an adaptation of that principle of road con-

struction to sand lime brick making. The result is the speedy manufacture of perfect and beautiful pressed clay bricks at a right price.

The London Pressed Brick and Tile Company, Limited, of London, has produced several million Car-Bex bricks this season, and the demand is unabated. There is a reason.

Rights for brick-making, according to this method, are held by the Ante-Fired Clay Products Company Limited, from which licenses for territory as yet unallotted may be secured. Get down on this proposition. Pick your field and go after the trade. Brick-making is a business of permanency. The demand is there and there is money to be made.

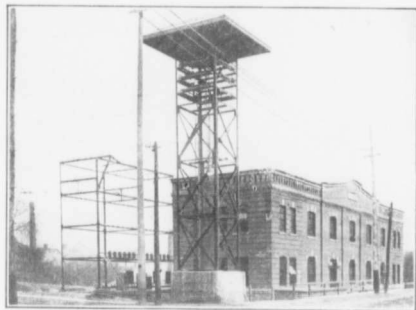
For information concerning contracts for Reds, Buffs or Steel Greys, communicate with

## *London Pressed Brick and Tile Co. Ltd.*

ROBINSON HALL CHAMBERS, LONDON, ONTARIO

If you are interested in a proposition for territory take the matter up with

**THE ANTE-FIRED CLAY PRODUCTS COMPANY, LIMITED**  
401 RICHMOND STREET, LONDON, ONTARIO



Hydro-Electric Station



Dundas Street, Looking East.

## Programme

### **MONDAY, AUGUST 3rd, 1911—Morning**

Grand Welcome—Bands and Reception.

Committee will meet all incoming Old Boys and Visitors.

Registration of all Old Boys and Visitors at Headquarters, Old City Hall Building, Richmond Street, near Dundas.

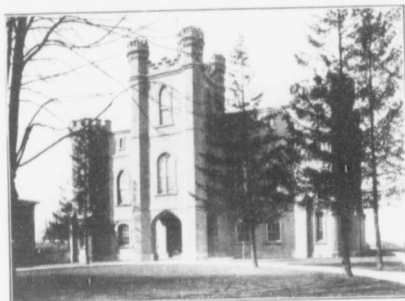
### **MONDAY AFTERNOON 1 p.m.**

Procession to Start promptly at 1 o'clock for Queen's Park.

A prize of \$25.00 will be given to the best and largest turn-out of any organization in the parade.

### **2 p.m.**

Addresses of Welcome by Chairman Reception Committee, Ex-Mayor Sam Stevely; President Home Guard, Lt.-Col. Harry R. Abbott; His Worship the Mayor, Chas. M. R. Graham; the President of the International Old Boys' Association, Mr. Robt. Faunt, Chicago and others.



Court House.

## WATCH IT GROW!

The following table shows, at five year intervals, for a period of only fifteen years, the rapid development of the

### LONDON LIFE INSURANCE CO. LONDON, CANADA

Year	Receipts	Assets	Insurance in Force
1898	\$ 241,182 00	\$ 770,038 00	\$ 5,210,519 00
1903	398,011 00	1,462,965 00	7,466,627 00
1908	652,732 00	2,663,994 00	12,152,949 00
1913	1,295,840 00	4,645,695 00	27,118,375 00

The business for 1914 shows a greater gain than in any previous year. It is worth your while inquiring why this Home Company is making such remarkable progress.

That actual profit payments very largely exceed estimates is only one of many reasons.

JOHN McCLARY,  
President  
JOHN G. RICHTER, F.A.S.  
Manager

A. O. JEFFERY, K.C., LL.D., D.C.L.  
Vice-President  
E. E. REID, B.A., A.I.A.  
Asst. Manager and Actuary

OLD BOYS, PATRONIZE

## B. A. MITCHELL'S London's Oldest Drug Store

WE HAVE SERVED THE PUBLIC 68 YEARS.  
OUR OWN REMEDIES BEING OUR BEST  
ADVERTISEMENT. WE HAVE A SPECIAL  
MEDICINE FOR EACH AILMENT. CALL IN  
AND SEE US.

Phone 623

114 DUNDAS ST.

ESTABLISHED  
1846



Y. M. C. A. Building.

# LONDON MINERAL BATHS

Summer  
Season .

HOURS :

OPEN EVERY DAY

8 a.m. to 9 p.m.



SUNDAYS

7 a.m. 4 p.m.



Swimming  
Plunge .

Size 80 ft. x 40 ft.



OPEN EVERY DAY

(Sunday Included)



Suits Supplied



Massage in Connection

GEO. HAYLOCK, Prop.

PHONE 2198

DUNDAS STREET WEST

SUITS MADE  
—TO—  
YOUR MEASURE  
NO **\$15** NO  
MORE LESS  
SCOTLAND  
WOOLEN MILLS

199 Dundas Street,  
LONDON



Dufferin Avenue



Victoria Park

# The Ontario Loan and Debenture Company

Established  
1870

Total Resources  
\$8,740,500

John McClary,  
President

A. M. Smart,  
Manager

Savings Department :--Interest allowed at  
3½ per cent. \$1.00 opens an Account.

Debentures issued for \$100 and upwards  
at higher rates than on Deposits.

Trustees and Executors are authorized  
to invest their Trust Funds in the Debentures  
of this Company.

OFFICE :--  
Corner DUNDAS ST. & MARKET LANE  
LONDON - ONT.



C. P. D. WEGNER

N. M. WEGNER

## Wegner CLOTHING CO.

Clothing  
Gents' Furnishings  
Hats and Caps

Wholesale and  
Retail Dealers in

### Men's Working Clothing

OF ALL KINDS

Including Pants Work Shirts, Oil Clothing,  
Gloves, Mittens, Overalls, Underwear,  
Sweater Coats, Hats, Caps, Etc.

371 TALBOT ST. (Opposite Market)  
CARL WEGNER, Manager.

Telephone 1849

OPEN EVENINGS

FAMOUS FOR THEIR LITTLE PRICES





Home to the Old Town, London's Boys  
Arrived from all points, with glee and noise;  
With their bugles and horns, their banners and such,  
They've come for a good time—how—it matters not much.

They've greeted the old folks, friends far and near,  
Sighed o'er the absence of some they held dear;  
And now they are ready to look 'round the town—  
"Why there's Susie Perkins and MISS Samantha Brown."

The shop-keepers, too, come in for the fun,  
The boys don't forget them, no! never a one:  
They're all glad to see them—to give them a clasp  
Of the right hand of friendship with hearty grasp.

And now to the market, and what do we see?  
Why SILVERWOODS' BRANCHES as plain as can be.  
So that's where it comes from, that BUTTER so sweet,  
The CHICKENS so tender, the rich, juicy MEAT."

"The fresh new-laid EGGS, the ICE CREAM so rich,  
The BACON so tasty, the CHEESE—there's none sich."  
We're glad you've come home, boys, to enjoy such a treat.  
We'll look for you back at our store on King Street.

Don't forget Silverwoods when you want something specially fine to give the  
"Old Boys"

## SILVERWOODS MARKETS

Stalls 10, 11 and 12 Market House and 141 King Street



Custom House, London



Normal School, London

## Sports Programme

2:30 P. M.

- 1—One Hundred Yard Dash (open)—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 2—Small Pony Race, ¼-mile—Boys, 12 and under—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 3—One-Half Mile Run (open)—(Jack Taite, Toronto, and M. Pollick, London, will compete in this race.) 1st and 2nd prizes.
- 4—Musical Chairs (mounted)—At least eight to compete—1st and 2nd prizes.
- 5—Fifty Yard Dash—Boys 8 and under—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 6—One Hundred Yard Dash (Visiting Old Boys)—40 years old and over—1st and 2nd prizes donated by Ald. C. Merryfield.
- 7—Jumping Exhibition before Grand Stand by Hunters owned by Mr. W. J. Blackburn, London, Canada, and Reason Brothers, London, Canada.
- 8—Barrel Race (Old Boys)—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 9—One-Quarter Mile Run (open)—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 10—Fifty Yard Sunbonnet and Skipping Race—Girls 15 and under—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 11—Tug-of-War (open)—Weight not to be over 900 Pounds of 5 men, Best two out of three—Five-minute pull.
- 12—Wrestling on Horseback (mounted)—1st prize to be divided among winning team.
- 13—Two Mile Run (open)—J. Dellow, Toronto, and R. Campbell, London, will compete in this race—1st and 2nd prizes.
- 14—Watermelon Race—Boys 12 and under—1st 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 15—One Mile Relay Race, four men to a team (open)—1st and 2nd prizes to team.

### MANY OTHER FEATURES.

Drill Competition will start at 3 p.m. on the platform in front of Grand Stand and open to local societies only—1st prize, value \$25.00.

Entries for all Open Events must be made to the Secretary of Sports Committee, Mr. A. T. Taylor, care of Y. M. C. A., Wellington St. not later than Saturday August 1st, at 10 p.m.

1:30 P. M.

Grand opening of the Leon W. Washburn's Might Midway Shows in Queen's Park, with 15 attractions and numerous free acts, including

4:00 P. M.

Miss Elma Meier, Champion Lady High Diver.

Mile. Morak in the death defying "Auto-Swing."  
Free Rides for the Children on the favorite Elephant Gyp.

# THE MURRAY SHOE CO., LTD.



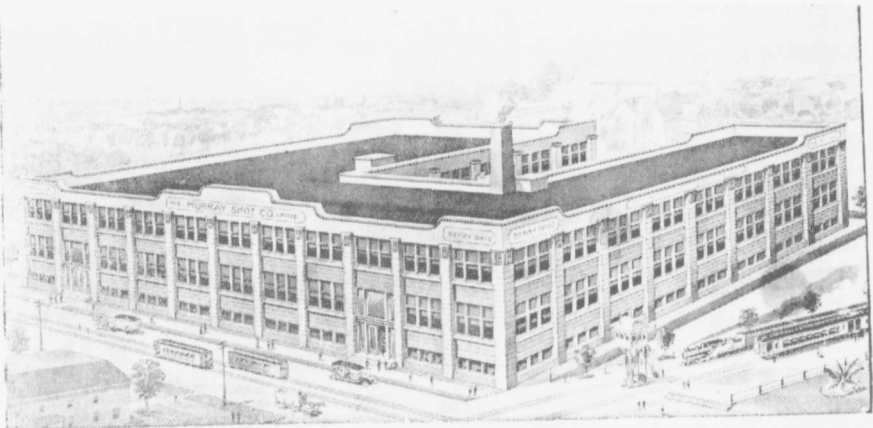
The Largest Building  
in the Province of  
Ontario devoted to  
the manufacturing of  
Men's and Women's  
Fine Footwear.

**DERBY**

The Shoe for Men

**CLEO**

The Shoe for Women

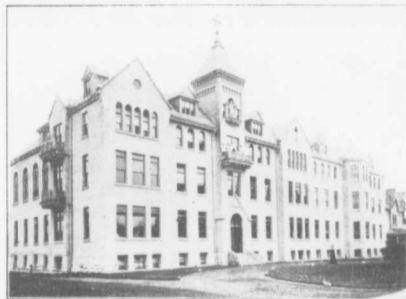


## Head Office and Factory - LONDON, ONT.

Branch Warehouse - READ BUILDING, MONTREAL, QUE.

To Ensure Yourself Satisfaction  
Always Ask Your Grocer for

# Perrin's Biscuits



St. Joseph's Hospital, London



London Medical School

# London Conservatory of Music and School of Elocution, Limited

In Affiliation with the Western University



Pianoforte. Singing. Violin. Organ. Harmony. Counterpoint.  
Composition. Etc. Elocution and Dramatic Art

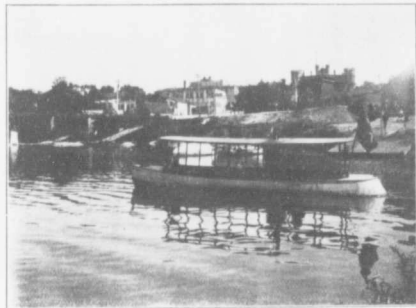
Fall Term Opens Sept. 1st. Recitals Held Weekly.

An efficient staff of teachers, modern building and up-to-date methods.  
Write for yearbook to "The Registrar",

356 Dundas Street, London, Ontario

LOTTIE L. ARMSTRONG,  
Registrar

F. LINFORTH WILLGOOSE, Mus. Bac.  
Principal (Dunelm)



## Grand Mogul Tea

"is pure tea"

Black and Mixed, 25c, 30c, 40c, 50c per pound  
in half and one pound packages.

Sold by all grocers.

CASH COUPONS IN EACH PACKAGE



Cook-Fitzgerald Factory, No. 1.

## Cook-Fitzgerald Co. Ltd.

Makers of Men's Fine Shoes Exclusively

ASTORIA, TECUMSEH  
and LIBERTY BRANDS

Sold Everywhere. Price at Retail, \$4 to \$8

Agency for London: J. P. Cook Ltd., 167 Dundas St.



A London Old Boy Industry

THE DENNIS WIRE & IRON WORKS CO.  
LIMITED

The Most Modern and Complete Plant in  
Canada devoted to the Manufacture of

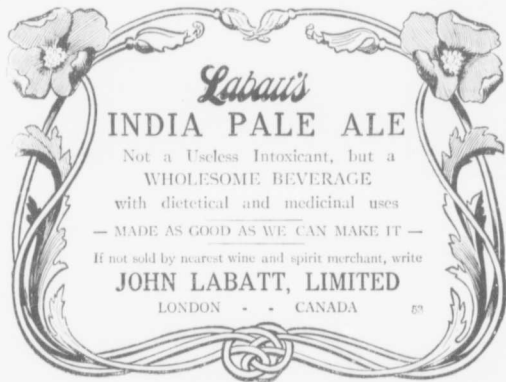
Ornamental Iron and Bronze  
"Dennisteel" Lockers and Shelving

THE STANDARD FOR QUALITY

20-30 DUNDAS STREET - LONDON, ONT.



Byron Dam



*Labatt's*

**INDIA PALE ALE**

Not a Useless Intoxicant, but a  
WHOLESAME BEVERAGE  
with dietetical and medicinal uses

— MADE AS GOOD AS WE CAN MAKE IT —

If not sold by nearest wine and spirit merchant, write

**JOHN LABATT, LIMITED**

LONDON - - CANADA 57



Victoria Hospital, London, Ont.

## Programme

### MONDAY EVENING, AUGUST 3rd—7:30 P.M.

Evening opening of Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows. Grand Masquerade Parade around Queen's Park Midway. Band Concert Queen's Park.

11:00 P. M.

Grand Free Attraction—Miss Elma Meier, Lady High Diver, and Mlle. Morak in the death defying "Auto-Swing."

### TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 4th—7:30 to 9:30 A.M.

Middlesex will show what it can produce in a Vegetable and Fruit Exhibit at the Covent Garden Market. Under the supervision of the Ontario Vegetable Association (London Branch), and the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association (London Branch).

10:00 A. M.

Tour of Local City Stores.

International Old Boys' Associations' Meeting will be held, City Hall, Dundas and Wellington St. (old Spencer Block).





Russian Guns, Victoria Park.

## OLD BOY MEMORIES

Recall the fact that it is only a few years ago there wasn't much of London east of the Fair Grounds.

NOW LOOK AT IT!

Isn't ARGYLE PARK in the very path of progress? Let us show you if you are looking for a Good Investment.

# ARGYLE LAND CO.

173 DUNDAS STREET - LONDON

## London's Beauty Spot

*The Home of Western Ontario's finest horticultural productions.*

*Equal in Quality and selection we offer the Flowers of the changing seasons, for all Occasions.*

THE QUALITY

# Dicks,

FLOWER SHOP



School Children's Picnic, Springbank



Aged People's Home.

Robinson, Little & Co.  
LIMITED  
WHOLESALE  
DRY GOODS

LONDON AND WINNIPEG

# The Empire Mfg. Co.

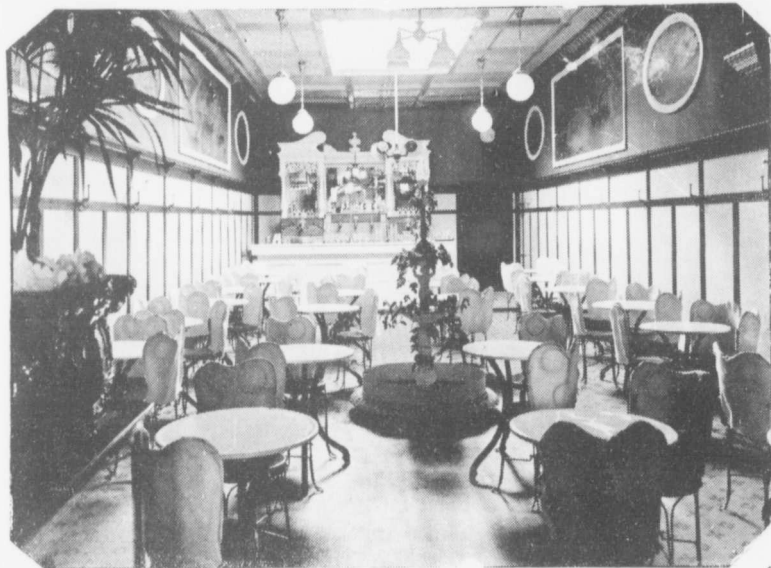
MANUFACTURERS OF

PLUMBERS' AND STEAM-  
FITTERS' BRASS GOODS

CARRYING A FULL LINE OF

PLUMBERS' SUPPLIES  
LONDON, ONTARIO





**T**HIS is a photo reproduction of our remodelled ICE CREAM PARLORS the COOLEST, BRIGHTEST and CLEANEST refreshment resort in the city.

Come in and give us an opportunity of demonstrating to you how well we can serve you.

Ice Cream,  
Fruit Sundaes,  
Ice Cream Sodas,  
and a splendid assortment of  
Cooling and  
Refreshing Drinks

served up by dispensers who know how to do it "just right."

Orchestra in  
Attendance

every evening from 8 to 11  
o'clock.

Fawkes' Ice Cream Parlors,



200 Dundas Street

# THE DOMINION SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT SOCIETY

LONDON - CANADA

Subscribed Capital \$1,000,000.00

Paid-up Capital - 934,730.00

Reserve Fund - 200,000.00

Deposits Received and Debentures  
Issued at Highest Rates

T. H. PURDOM, K.C.  
President

NATHANIEL MILLS,  
Manager



Soldiers' Monument, Victoria Park

ASK FOR

# Hamilton's

CELEBRATED

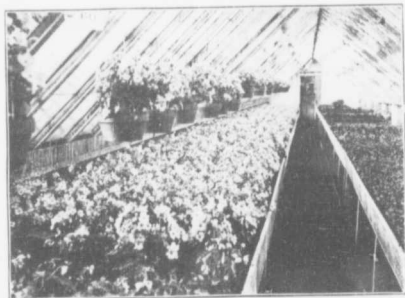
## LONDON PORTER AND PALE ALE

ALWAYS IN FIRST-CLASS  
CONDITION

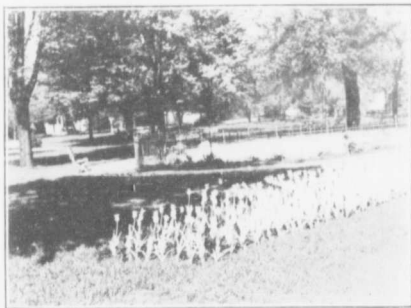


# J. HAMILTON

KENT BREWERY  
LONDON, ONT.



One of Gammage's Greenhouses



Tulip Bed, Victoria Park.

## THE HOUSE OF FLOWERS

# GAMMAGE

## LONDON

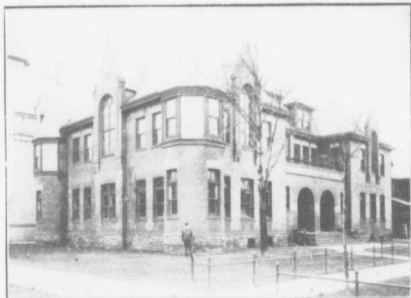
**T**HE most harmonious effects in the arrangement of flowers and plants require the work of artists. Long experience and natural ability has made us experts in the work of floral decorations for every occasion.

**S**UCH functions as Weddings, Banquets, Balls, Receptions, Luncheons and Dinners require an attractive setting or back ground, which is best achieved with the many beautiful Palms, Plant and Furnishing that we carry for that purpose. In addition we have many ideas for the proper blending and arrangement of cut flowers which should form the most intimate part of the decoration for any occasion in harmony with the idea of host and hostess.

**T**HE use of floral decorations for even the simplest affair is never extravagance. Flowers make an atmosphere of refinement and beauty that form the final and most satisfying touch that gives the fullest measure of enjoyment to the invited guest.

# GAMMAGE

## THE HOUSE OF FLOWERS



Public Library



Institute of Public Health.

Thousands have increased their incomes

**Why not you?**

How about that \$1,000 you saw in your savings passbook the other day?

**4 1/2%**

is the safe, profitable rate of interest paid in the Debenture Department of the

**Huron & Erie  
Loan and Savings Company**

(Incorporated 1864)

Any sum of \$100 or more left for a short term of years will draw this interest.

Which counts most - The comfort of knowing that your funds are safely and wisely invested or the anxiety of watching some doubtful speculation eat up your hard-earned savings?

Either of our City offices will gladly give full information.

Main Office - - 442 Richmond St., London  
Market Office - 4-5 Market Square, London

T. G. MEREDITH, K. C.  
President

HUME CRONYN  
General Manager



Queen's Avenue, Looking East.



Queen's Avenue, Looking West.

## Programme

**TUESDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 4th—1:30 P. M.**  
Queen's Park, Leon W. Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows.

**LADIES' AFTERNOON—2:00 P. M.—SPRINGBANK PARK**  
Sports Programme—2:30 P. M.

- 1—International Baseball Match—Old Boys vs. Home Guard.
- 2—50-yard Race for Girls under 15—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 3—50-yard Race for Boys under 10—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 4—50-yard Dash for American Single Ladies only—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 5—International Baseball Match, Ladies—Visitors vs. Londoners.
- 6—25-yard Married Ladies' Egg and Spoon Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 7—50-yards Chum Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 8—Tug-of-War, Ladies—Americans vs. Canadians, best two out of three, pull two minutes.
- 9—Tug-of-War, Old Boys—Americans vs. Canadians, best two out of three, pull five minutes.
- 10—Girls' Highland Fling—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 11—Boys' Highland Fling—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 12—Girls' Irish Jig—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 12—Boys' Irish Jig—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.
- 14—Baby Show, under 12 months—Prizes, Boys' 1st and 2nd; Girls' 1st and 2nd.

**TUESDAY EVENING—7:15 P. M.**

Grand Booster Automobile Parade. Every auto decorated and in line at 7:00 p.m. sharp. Parade will congregate at Victoria Park and move via Richmond and Central Ave. Gates south on Richmond to Carling Street, west on Carling to Ridout Street, south on Ridout to York Street, east on York to Richmond Street, north on Richmond to Dundas Street, and east on Dundas to Rectory Street, south on Rectory to King Street, and east on King to King Street Entrance of Queen's Park. Mr. Arthur H. Keene, Marshall.

7:30 P. M.

Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows.

11:00 P. M.

Miss Elma Meier, Lady High Diver, and Mlle. Morak in the death defying *Swing of Death*.

On Tuesday Evening, August 4th, the London Typographical Union will give a **RECEPTION, BANQUET and DANCE**, to the visiting printers, in the **Masonic Temple, Queen's Ave.**, at 8:30 o'clock. Any of the following committee will be pleased to give you a ticket and programme for the event: H. McPherson, Chairman; C. L. Graves, Sec.-Treas.; F. Chambers, Ald. Ed. Stein, R. Cheswick, A. C. Flowers, J. Drennan, and F. Wanless.

## Officers:

### Honorary Directors

SIR ADAM BECK, M.L.A.  
SIR GEORGE GIBBONS, K.C.  
THE MAYOR OF LONDON

### President

LT.-COL. W. M. GARTSHORE

### Vice President

E. C. MITCHELL WM. SPITAL  
PHILIP POCOCK

### Secretary and Industrial

Commissioner  
GORDON PHILIP

### Treasurer

E. H. NELLIS



For statistical and other information of London's progress, and free reports on any line of industry, apply:

## Industrial Commissioner

Phone 912

City Hall, Dundas Street  
London, Canada

# London Industrial Bureau

A thoroughly representative, semi-official, body of businessmen, devoted to co-operative plans for London's advancement

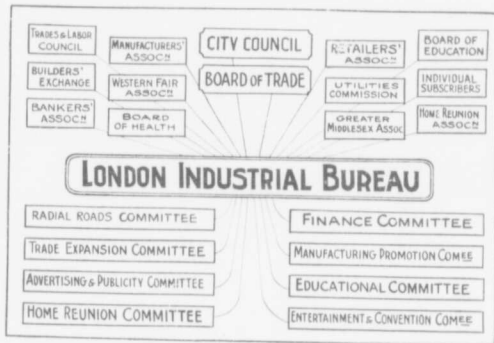


Diagram showing organization and activities of Industrial Bureau. Affiliated bodies annually appoint representatives. Standing Committees are elected from representatives.

## Bureau Representatives

### Bank Clearing Association

W. J. Hill, manager Home Bank;  
E. C. Bowker, manager T. Union Bank.

### Western Fair Board

W. J. Reid and A. M. Hunt.

### Board of Health

D. Burton and J. R. Haslett.

### Greater Middlesex Association

John Loughton, Parkhill; J. L. Robson, Arva.

### Board of Education

W. W. Lammage and L. H. Martin.

### Builders' Exchange

E. H. Dennis and E. R. Russell.

### Utilities Commission

Dr. H. A. Stevenson and William Wyatt.

### Retailers' Association

R. J. Young and W. F. Boughner.

### Manufacturers' Association

T. P. McCormick and A. W. White.

### Board of Trade

Ray Lawson, R. C. Ekers, J. E. McCouncil and William R. Vendall.

### Trades and Labor Council

W. Barleigh and J. Dean.

### City Council

Controllers Coles and Ashplant; Aldermen White, Stein, McDonald and Graebner.

### Home Reunion Association

Colonel Gartschore, William Spittal, E. C. Mitchell, C. J. Fitzgerald, T. P. McCormick, T. W. McFarland, W. C. Allen, Ald. White, Controller Moore, R. G. Bowke, Colonel Campbell and G. Philip.





Waterworks Dam, Springbank.



On the Road to Springbank.

## Programme

### WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 5th—1:30 P. M.

Washburn's Shows at Queen's Park with Lady High Dive at 4 p.m.

2:00 P. M.

Aquatic Sports on River Thames. Take Springbank cars and get off near Pump-house.

2:30 P. M.

Grand display of Decorated Launches and Canoes.

Decorated Launches—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

Decorated Canoes—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

Judges to be three prominent visiting ladies.

1—Single Canoe Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

2—Four-oar Scull Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

3—Double Canoe Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

4—Swimming Race, Boys under 15—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

5—Single Gunwale Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

6—Five-mile Speed Motor Boat Race—1st and 2nd prizes.

7—Swimming Race (open)—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

8—Double Gunwale Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

9—Tub Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

10—10-mile Brener Cup Race—Cup donated by Mr. A. H. Brener.

6 heats to be run by Members of the Thames Motor Boat

Club—first heat to be held at this regatta.

11—Crab Race—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

12—Watermelon Boat Race (open)—1st prize and all you can get.

## Two Interior Views of Barnard's New Jewellery Store



At the last reunion, Barnard occupied the small store which he took over from W. H. Davis, 170 Dundas Street. He has within the last year removed to 194 Dundas Street. These spacious premises are decorated and furnished with great elegance and refinement, and the store is looked on as one of London's show places. The Stock is extremely attractive.

DIAMONDS    WATCHES    SOUVENIRS    SILVER GOODS

HIGH QUALITY

# BARNARD

MODERATE PRICE

194 DUNDAS STREET. LONDON. ONTARIO



## Programme

### WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON—(Continued)

12—Tinting—1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

14—War Canoe Race, four to a canoe—1st and 2nd prizes.

A silk flag will be given to all Motor Boats in the Grand Parade as well as the prizes named.

### WEDNESDAY EVENING—7:30 P. M.

Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows and Big Masquerade Parade headed by a familiar band.

11:00 P. M.

Miss Elma Meier in the fancy Diving and Mlle. Morak in the Swing of Death.

### THURSDAY, AUGUST 6th

Irish Benevolent Picnic. Everybody for Port Stanley with the Irishmen of the City. Special trains on Pere Marquette and Traction.

1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Queen's Park—Washburn's midway with free attraction at 4 p.m.

### FRIDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 7th—1:30 P. M.

Queen's Park—Leon W. Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows.

2:00 P. M.

Old Boys' Cricket Match at Asylum Grounds, under the supervision of Inspector Joseph Sanders and Dr. W. J. Robinson. Old Boys vs. Home Guard.

The Event of Old Boys' Week

WILL BE



# THE IRISH BENEVOLENT PICNIC

Port Stanley, August 6th

"CEAD MILE FALTHA"

## HOTEL INVERERIE



Port  
Stanley

C. S. BUTLER  
Proprietor

Jos. P. O'DELL  
Manager

Rates: \$2.50 & \$3.00 per day; \$15.00 & \$20.00  
per week

This hotel has a beautiful location, setting on bluff overlooking Lake Erie, commanding a beautiful view of Lake and Beach. Incline car carries guests to and from beach free of charge. Dancing Pavillion, Roller Coaster, Board Walk and numerous other amusements on Beach below this Hotel. Running Water and Baths in connection.

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**INVERERIE HOTEL**  
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Many of the visiting "Old Boys and Girls" will be pleased to know that Mr. M. FISHBEIN is now conducting the



M. FISHBEIN

Mr. FISHBEIN extends a cordial invitation to all to VISIT HIS NEW STORE.

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in SUITS, COATS  
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Clothes Cleaning

Ladies' Work and  
Repairing Especially

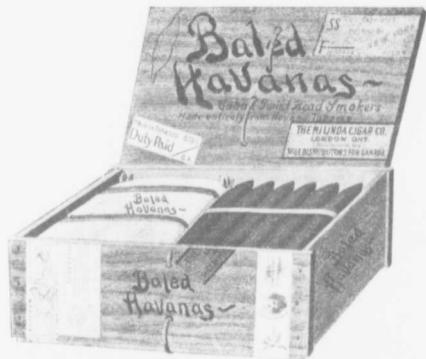
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Port Stanley, Ont.

A. SADLIER,  
PROPRIETOR



# TOM. L. HAYGARTH



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Semi-Ready  
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LONDON, CANADA



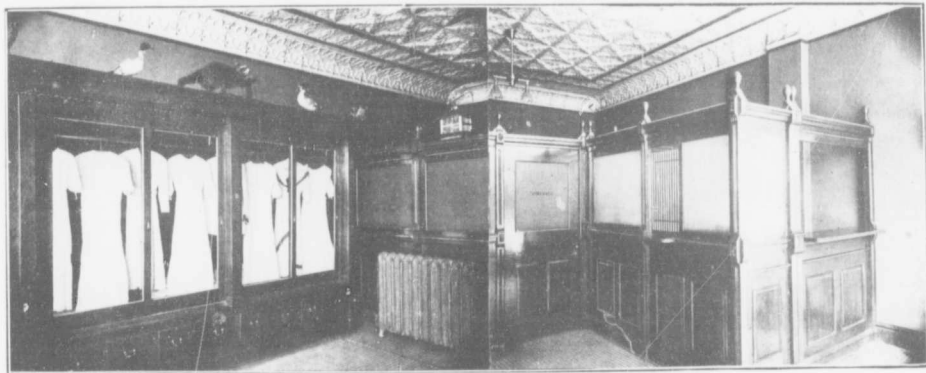
Traction Car, Leaving Port Stanley, for London.

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## Programme

### FRIDAY, MANUFACTURERS' DAY.

See "Made-in-London" exhibits in the windows of the City stores. By courtesy of local manufacturers, visitors are cordially invited to inspect the City's factories during the day. (Apply London Industrial Bureau, Phone 912 for further information).

Have you registered yet? Do so at once at the Old City Hall.

### FRIDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7th—7:30 P. M.

Washburn's Shows at Queen's Park. Masquerade Parade. Prizes for the best costumed lady also gent.

11:00 P. M.

Free attractions, Lady High Diver and Swing of Death.

### SATURDAY MORNING, AUGUST 8th.

Saturday Farmers' Market Day—Biggest and Best in Canada.

### SATURDAY AFTERNOON—1:30 P. M.

Last afternoon to see Washburn's Mighty Midway Shows, also last rides for the children on the Favorite Elephant Gyp. Bring the children and give to them a treat.

### SATURDAY EVENING—GOOD-BYE NIGHT—7:30 P. M.

Everybody come out and see the final Shows of the Washburn's Mighty Midway.

10.30 P. M.

Free Attractions.

### BASEBALL DURING OLD BOYS' WEEK.

Monday, Aug. 3rd—A. M., London vs. Peterborough; P. M., London vs. Peterborough. Tuesday, Aug. 4th—P. M., London vs. Peterborough. Wednesday, Aug. 5th—P. M., London vs. Peterborough. Thursday, Aug. 6th—P. M., London vs. St. Thomas. Friday, Aug. 7th—P. M., London vs. St. Thomas. Saturday, Aug. 8th—P. M., London vs. St. Thomas.

To all the lovers of baseball, this is the chance to see the London Team play ball.



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AUTOMOBILE MR.  
OLD BOY?**

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*IN MIND?*

*If you do you will be interested in the prices we can quote you on Tires and Accessories. Being direct representatives of numerous manufacturers enables us to give you service and quality at reasonable rates.*

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J. L. GINGE, Mgr.

*TO ONE*

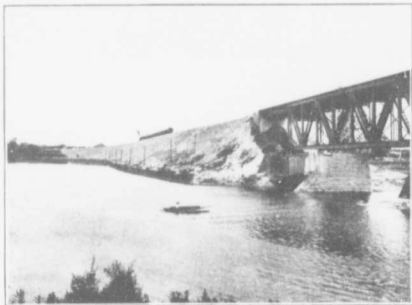
*AND ALL*

*WE*

*EXTEND A*

*CORDIAL*

*WELCOME*



Cove Bridge, Thames River



Boating on the Thames

## Why Take a Risk ?

When the advantage of a Trust Company acting as Trustee or Executor, assuring absolute safety, can be obtained for a cost in no case exceeding that allowed to individuals.

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LONDON'S LEADING DRUG STORE

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## London's Largest Jewellers

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Asylum for the Insane.



London Military School.



## The St. John Ambulance Association

LONDON CENTRE  
LONDON, CANADA

President, - LT.-COL. W. M. GARTSHORE  
Chairman of Executive Committee, J. C. JUDD, Esq., K.C.  
Hon. Secretary, - WM. LOVEDAY, 50 Front St.

The development of the St. John Ambulance Association, in London, during the past year has amply justified the movement to thoroughly organize the Association in the City. An active campaign has been carried on, in regard to the instruction of Classes in First Aid Work, with excellent results, no less a number than 130 citizens having passed their examination, qualifying them to render First Aid to the Injured—also 12 ladies have successfully passed in Home Nursing.

The St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas, is making equal progress, there being three Ambulance Divisions and one Nursing Division in the City.

The members of these Divisions will be on duty during the Reunion, for the purpose of rendering First Aid in case of Accident or sudden illness. The members can be recognized by a special armet.

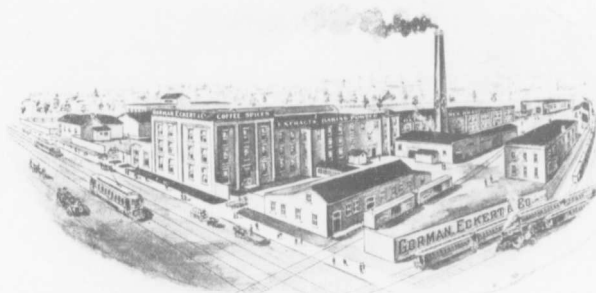
As the work of the St. John Ambulance Association and Brigade is entirely gratis, this being upheld by Public Subscription, any friends interested in and desirous of assisting the work of the Association will find a Collecting Box in the "Emergency Hospital Tent," at Queen's Park, or contributions may be sent direct to the President or Hon. Secretary.

### MEET YOUR FRIENDS AT THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

during the Old Boys' Reunion. The "Y" is on Wellington Street, between Dundas and Queen's Avenue, and is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Writing paper, envelopes, pens and ink supplied free. Large writing table. Reading Rooms open to all. Free Baths to Guests only from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. Billiard room open to guests. Committee rooms may be reserved by calling up the office. Phone 59. Make the Y. M. C. A. Rooms your resting place. WE WELCOME YOU. Wear your Guest badge.

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PURE FOOD PRODUCTS—BUILT ON QUALITY

CLUB HOUSE  
OLIVES



CLUB HOUSE  
CATSUP

GORMAN, ECKERT & COMPANY, LIMITED  
LONDON AND WINNIPEG

# WELCOME HOME, OLD BOYS!

And don't forget to leave behind with your friends, and to pack away in your grip, a remembrance of this Happy Old Week.

What more appropriate than a



## Photo



We are open from 8 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. ready to take your picture, have special designs made up for you, and are prepared to hustle when you want them finished in a hurry.

Note our Address and pay us a visit.

**The Gregory Studio**  
238 Dundas St. Phone 4565



## Mr. Old Boy

Why not take an afternoon or evening drive to look over the city. You will find service, courtesy, fine horses and carriages at reasonable rates at

## *The Palace Livery*

619 DUNDAS STREET

*Carriages For Every Occasion*  
*Automobile Service in Connection*

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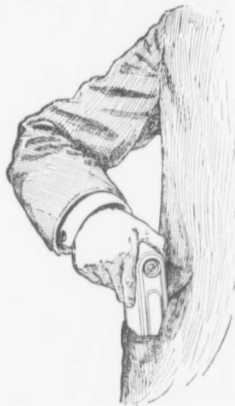
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**Old Boys!** Those Films  
you have  
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will want developed  
where you can  
obtain the best  
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Send them here--You  
will be pleased with  
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### **The New Art Building at the Exhibition Grounds**

This beautiful fireproof building will be filled this year with paintings from the very best Canadian Artists.

There will also be on exhibition that wonderful painting "The Haymakers," by Leon A. L'Hermitte. This painting is valued at \$30,000.00 and is from the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo.



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This programme was compiled by Mr. H. Nicholson and printed by the Advertiser Job Printing Co. Limited.



September  
11th to 19th

September  
11th to 19th

THE  
**WESTERN FAIR**  
LONDON, CANADA  
ONTARIO'S POPULAR EXHIBITION

*\$2,000,000 in Prizes and Attractions This Year!*

**LONDON OLD BOYS**

STAY FOR THE WESTERN FAIR  
LONDON'S IRREVOCABLE EXHIBITION

See the Dominion Experimental Farm Exhibit in Agricultural Hall.  
Come and see the Com. T. Kennedy Shows, the Best and Cheapest Midway on the road.

Special Railway Rates for  
Visitors and a grand special program Sept. 15th, 16th and 17th, all  
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The Fair is held at the Agricultural Hall, London, Ontario.  
For further information apply to the Secretary, C. W. NE. Secretary.

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