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**Polly and the Death Trap**

By CHAS. SLONA REID

Polly Blake was sitting on a puncheon stool, milking a one-horned cow. A man stood a few feet behind her with his back against the fence. He was quite different from Polly's kind, as any stranger might have guessed. He was a town man. Polly was a mountain girl. Polly kept busy with her milking and the man talked volubly, as he usually did. It was sunset and the shadow of night already had fallen upon the valley below giving a dusky hue to the foliage of the distant trees. It was the hour when Polly usually milked the one-horned cow in the evening, and it was not by accident that the man was there, talking to her. Polly wore no bonnet and the mass of curling brown hair which hung about her neck and shoulders was ravishing in the richness of its effect. Obviously she was glad of the man's presence for a certain amount of embarrassment, when he was near invariably set her heart thumping in a way that caused the color in her cheeks to come and go like the gleam of a red ripe cherry in a fitful sunlight.

"Polly," said the man, as he ratted on from one subject to another without taking the trouble to round his periods, "that cow worries me I think, since she cannot have a uniform pair of horns, it would be much better if she had none at all. What do you think about it?"

"Yes, I think she'd look better without any, less she had two. I reckon she couldn't help losing the other one."

"How did she lose it, anyway?"

"She fell into a blind ditch and broke it off trying to get out."

"What is a blind ditch, Polly?"

"It's a gulley that has been livered over with brush and such like."

"That's a pretty dangerous sort of thing to have about the place, isn't it?"

"Yes, reckon it is. Never know where ye're going to land, sometimes, if ye break through the brush."

"I guess it would be well for a chap to be careful in climbing about these hills, then?"

"As I've hinted to ye once or twice already it's a good idea to be careful in several ways, Mr. Gordon."

"Oh, don't call me Mr. Gordon, Polly, say Maxey. It would sound more like you cared a little, you know. And you do, don't you, Polly? There's no one listening, won't you tell me yes?"

"But Polly was silent and her very silence assured the man that she did not."

Her task was soon finished, and as she arose from the milking stool she advanced to take the pail. A little gallantry he had paid her every evening for a fortnight, and Polly had come to accept it as a matter of course. So they sat along together, she in her nature unable to conceal her growing fondness for this man, and he apparently pleased with her manifested liking.

When the evening meal was over, and Gordon, with the Blake family sat near the fireplace, he entered the rest with stories of his own and incidental anecdotes, the mention of a head and shoulders in an open window near where Polly sat, caused the narrator to pause in one of his stories. The head and shoulders were those of a stout mountaineer, and the face would have been one marvelously expressive with the added expression of a cultivated mind.

At the pause in Gordon's story, Polly turned her head, and when her eyes alighted upon the man at the window she lowered her eyebrows.

"Ben Martin had been her acknowledged lover for a long time, and as she thought of how her heart had gone away from him, a little pang of something like remorse troubled her bosom.

Ben stood silently gazing in the window for several minutes, then he spoke in a tone of voice more that of command than of entreaty.

"Polly, I want ye to come out here a minute," he said; "there's something I got to say to you."

The girl glanced at Gordon, then arose. Gordon chuckled to himself, he knew how matters had stood between the two and he suspected that this was to be one more appeal on Martin's part.

When Polly came up to where Ben stood at the edge of the road, the man took her hand.

"Polly," he began and his voice was fully of emotion, "I can see I'm a losin' ye, an' it's a breakin' my heart, girl."

"What do ye mean, Ben?"

"I guess ye know, what I mean, Polly. But I want to tell ye, that chap's a skunk, jest a plain skunk. He pertends to be prospectin' round here for gold—but we all have called he's prospectin' for somethin' else. He keeps a nosin' round the cave; and today he bumped right up agin our still on Soco. Jim Turpin an' Lee Hooper was a watchin' him; an' the way he sneaked away from there an' took his harrin's as he went was a site too plain. So we've laid a trap for him, Polly—a trap that will get him if he's what I think he is, but won't get him if he's all right, little girl. So, if we're wrong, Polly, why—I just wanted

to tell ye, girl, that after all's over I'll still be comin' back to ye—an' maybe ye'll love me will come back to me."

Ben squeezed her hand once and released it. There was silence a moment, then the girl said:

"I think ye're wrong, Ben."

"Maybe so, Polly, maybe so. We'll soon find out. Good-bye."

Ben strode away and left the girl to return slowly toward the house wondering what manner of trap the boys had set, though stoutly resisting the fear it might capture Gordon.

The evening waned, Gordon's stories grew uninteresting, Blake nodded by the hearth corner and Polly waited for the opportunity to give the prospector one more warning. So when Gordon arose to go to his rooms, a low shed room at one end of the veranda, Polly stole to the doorway and slipped into the darkness outside.

"I want to tell ye agin to be keerful," she whispered, as Gordon paused near her. "Ye've raised suspicions, an'—but I can't tell ye any more. Only be powerful keerful."

Gordon laughed softly. "Oh, I'll be careful, little Polly," he said, "never fear about that."

He attempted to take her hand, but the girl dodged back into the main room and was gone.

The next morning Gordon failed to respond when called to an early breakfast.

"Pears to me the prospector's sleepin' mighty sound this mornin'," said Blake, as he returned to the waiting family in the main room.

Polly's heart took fright at once. A hundred things might have happened to Gordon during the night—the methods of the moonshiners were inscrutable.

"Pap, I reckon ye'd better go in an wake him," she suggested, "for the meat on the table's a gettin' cold."

With candle in hand Blake went back to Gordon's door, opened it and peered inside.

"Why, by the livin'!" he exclaimed, "this bed ain't been touched."

At this moment, Polly's knees quaked, and her fingers clinched together impulsively. And at this moment, too, she hated all her race, all her kind among the mountains, her brothers and their co-partners, Ben Martin and all the rest. She turned her eyes toward the rafters and allowed a thought of revenge to take shape in her brain.

"Well, he's not here," said Blake, returning, "so that's no use to wait for him. Let's eat."

Polly minced her breakfast hurriedly, milked the one-horned cow, cleaned the kitchen things, then stole out over the mountain toward the Horse-Shoe Cove on Soco. She knew well the spot where the still stood and she knew the narrow defile through which alone the cove was accessible. The trail wound like a snake round over the mountain, down into the valley, then along up the creek between the cliffs. Where the trail ascended, Polly climbed feverishly, where it descended, she ran. In this manner the three miles to the neck of the cove were covered and she was speeding along the path to where it crossed the Devil's Sink Hole. This was a narrow fissure whose mouth was not over six feet wide, and whose greatest length was not over twenty feet yet it opened away into the earth to a depth of forty feet. A narrow bridge, just the width of the trail had spanned the opening and when Polly reached the spot this morning she saw that the bridge was no longer there. She ran to the edge of the hole and dropped to her knees. It required some moments for her gaze to pierce the gloom down there, but presently she saw the prospector, with disheveled hair and torn clothing, seated at the bottom of the fissure.

Silence reigned throughout the wood and the low sound of Polly's voice when she spoke seemed to echo a mile away. But Gordon had caught the call and he looked up.

"Ah, is it you, Polly?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, an' ye didn't listen when I warned ye last night, though I didn't think about this place when I told ye."

"I am a conceited sort of fellow, Polly, and thought I could take care of myself. But I've learned a lesson this time sure."

"Do ye know what was meant for ye when ye fell into this hole?"

"Why it was meant for ye to perish to death down there, for nobody ever comes this trail but them that laid the trap for ye."

"But you have come to help me out, sweetheart?"

Polly's heart thrilled at this title of endearment and once more an impulse of hatred for her race welled up in her bosom.

"There's a grape vine back here I think long enough."

She sprang away from the hole and soon returned, bringing with her a long stout vine, one end of which she lowered into the hole. When Gordon could reach the lower end, the girl made the other end fast to the roots of a stout shrub near by, and the prospector found it an easy matter to climb out of the hole by means of the vine and its branches.

And when he stood by the side of Polly on the trail above he took her hand and looking into her eyes, said:

"Little girl, you have saved my life and when I tell her all about it, my wife will love and praise you to the skies."

A flash of sudden fire leaped from Polly's eyes. She jerked her hand from Gordon's clasp and the next

night she practiced, whether it's a trap or not."

"That ain't such a bad bunch of brass, professor," Brickly replied to me just before giving his horse the spur, "but any time any cheap stick-up man pipes me out I want you to take a peek at my remains when the inquest's bein' pulled off and see if I look like a prairie dog under my shirt."

"And with that Brickly clattered into the blackness of the canon trail. He got back just thirty-six hours later, almost to the minute, pulling up his lathery cayuse in front of the Hell-Nor-Pete Hotel from which he had started.

"Bud Caldwell was along across the front of Brickly's saddle. Bud couldn't have been much deader if he had fallen from a cage into a 900-foot shaft. Both of his forearms were broken by bullets in exactly the same spot. The other ball had cut Bud's jugular in two.

"Brickly didn't even tell me, his old friend and fiddle instructor, how he had got by with it. The bag, with all of Bud's loot in it intact, was swung around Brickly's neck.

"Brickly dismounted, toted the dead man into the barroom, laid his burden down gently enough on a table, and then strolled over to the bank with the bag of cash. A crowd of good citizens of Durango—mine owners and superintendents and such—were already standing around in the bank when Brickly got there, waiting for his appearance.

"The president of the bank counted Brickly out his \$5,000 reward in bills, and then he pinned a gold star, with 'Marshal, Durango,' engraved on it, on the left side of Brickly's blue dannel shirt. That badge hadn't been used by anybody for six months, the last man to wear it having piped out with such shocking suddenness that no successor to him could be found.

"It took Brickly Barr, the plasterer-fiddler, just eight months to clean Durango up and make it the most decent and safest camp, even for a tenderfoot, from the Columbia to the Rio Grande.

"There is, I suppose, a certain amount of elemental savagery surviving in all of us. That, at any rate, is about the only excuse I have for saying that, of all my little pupils, some of whom became quite distinguished, I never had such a glow of pride over the achievements of any of them as I did over my plasterer on the day that he brought the most heartless devil of the Southwest into Durango on the pommel of his saddle."—Washington Star.

**Marriage in India.**  
Marriage ceremonies in India are full of pretty incidents. The chief incident of the better class Hindoo marriage ceremony is called the Bhairavi. It is the sevenfold circuit of a tree or post, or seven steps taken in unison. The seven steps are the seven grades of life. The husband, often a boy of fourteen, walks round and round solemnly with the end of his coat tied to the end of the cloth which his girl-wife wears on her head, symbolical of their union. All the time they do this they must not look at each other, but upward. The Hindoo is bound to invite his whole cast, within a reasonable distance, to his wedding. Fireworks play an important part in the rejoicings incident to an Indian marriage. The marriage season is limited to two or three months of the year.

**Yarn Will Out Steel.**  
Yarn, with powdered stone, can cut a steel bar. Major McClaughry, warden of the federal prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., once found a prisoner who was supposed to be pounding stone working away at one of the bars to an outside window. The man was induced to give a demonstration. A grating of the same description was placed in his cell and a guard stationed over him to watch the cutting process. With the limestone dust and silicate from the stone pile, the yarn from his sock and a little water, the man cut the bessemer steel bar in eighteen working hours. With some fine emery, a chalk line and two wooden hand-holds to save his fingers he made a clean cut of the other bessemer bar in five hours.

**Lost By Detention.**  
While a New York commuter was stalled an hour on a train coming to the city because the electric engine had blown out its fuses he walked through the train and made a calculation. "There are six hundred persons on this train," he said. "An hour lost for each person means a loss of seventy-five working days for one man. If we were all concentrated into one man and he had to suffer the loss don't you think he would feel that damage should be paid for the loss? Why does the distribution of the loss change the responsibility?"

**A Job for the Hairless.**  
Bill Nye in his earlier days once approached the manager of a lecture bureau with an application for employment, and was asked if he had ever done anything in that line. "Oh, yes," said Bill. "What have you done?" "Well," replied Bill, "my last job was in a dime museum, sitting in a barrel with the top of my head sticking out—posing as the largest ostrich egg in captivity."

**The Contented Man.**  
The man who is thoroughly contented is likely to be a bore or a train.

**THE EDWARD'S RACEHORSES**

Only two have been winners in Great English Turf Events. Probably no horse ever had such a persistent run of bad luck as his Majesty, King Edward, during the early years of his racing career. At his first modest appearance on a race-course, thirty-seven years ago, his horse Champion had the misfortune to fall early in the race, and although he made a game effort to recover lost ground he could only finish second. Six years later—at his second appearance—at the Newmarket July meeting, his horse Alep was badly beaten by Lord Strathairn's Avowal and it was not until 1880 that Leontas II, ridden by Capt. Wentworth Pope-Johnstone, scored his first victory in the Aldershot cup. Six years more elapsed, making fifteen years in all from his racing debut, before the royal colors were carried to victory for the first time in racing, when, amid a scene of great enthusiasm, Counterpane, ridden by Archer, won a maiden plate at Sandown.

**What's in a Title?**  
Judge Gray, of Delaware, was talking recently about the fondness of American girls for English titles. In speaking of how empty and meaningless such foreign titles usually were he illustrated it with the following: "Titles are just as meaningless in the United States. Take my own title, the title of Judge, for instance, I was traveling in the country a short time ago, and, at the table of the hotel where I was stopping, there was a man whom ever; one present addressed to me as 'Judge.' "When this judge got up and went away, I said to the man sitting next him at the table, 'Is the gentleman who just left a United States judge or a local judge?' "He is a local judge, sir," was the reply. "He was a judge at a horse race last week."

"Titles at home, and abroad amount to about the same thing. Nothing counts but the man."

**Liquid Helium.**  
In his recent experiments with the liquefaction of helium, Professor Onnes effected a labor of the most exhausting description. "Not only," he remarked, "was the whole apparatus with its subsidiary arrangements, tested to its utmost capacity, but the physical energies of the professor and his assistants were well-nigh exhausted by the prolonged struggle." This is likely to give to most readers an entirely novel idea of the labors of the laboratory. When the absolute zero is approached the obstacles that have to be overcome in order to lower the temperature a few degrees are immense. The boiling-point of liquid helium is four and one-half degrees Centigrade above absolute zero. By great effort the temperature was reduced to three degrees, but without affecting the mobility of the liquid.

**Facts about the Jews.**  
The number of Jews in the entire world is approximately 12,000,000—scattered among all the nations of the earth. Of this number, about 3,000,000 are in America—half of these in New York; 180,000 in Chicago; 100,000 in Philadelphia; 80,000 in Boston; 80,000 in St. Louis, and the rest distributed chiefly in other large cities. In an area of a single square mile in New York is a population of more than 100,000 Jewish men, women and children.

The Jews almost control the wealth of the world. In Germany, nearly one-half of the rich people are Jews. Six-sevenths of all the bankers of Prussia are Jews, while only one in 500 is a day laborer.

**A Cement Grindstone.**  
A grindstone made from one-half best Portland cement and one-half silica sand may be used in grinding glass to take the place of the wheel and castor. The materials must be thoroughly mixed and evenly tamped. The advantage of this stone is that when properly made there will be no hard and soft spots, and it will grind glass without scratching. The coat is about ten per cent. of that of the common grindstone. The Onward Manufacturing Company, of Menasha, Wis., to whom we are indebted for this information, has been using cement grindstones successfully for a year.

**It Does Not Fal.**  
"Quarrel not at all. No man who resolves to mar the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiation of his temper and the loss of self-control. Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right, and yield lesser ones though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog; than be bitten by him in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite."

**To Bar Christmas Solicitors.**  
Boston.—The Salvation Army ladies and Volunteers of America "Sanctuary" cannot hereafter solicit funds on the street for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for the poor according to Police Commissioner Stephen O'Meara. His report says the custom has grown to such an extent that annually more than fifty different organizations seek the privilege of soliciting aid.

**Mistake Made by Many.**  
"Do smart men," said Uncle Eben, "is likely to get along fur-rate until he stabs in feggerin' 'round' an' tries to make his brains take de place of his conscience."



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