

POLLY of the CIRCUS

BY MARGARET MAYO

(Continued.)

Synopsis Chapter I—Polly, a child of the circus, is brought up by Toby, a clown, and by a boss canvasman called "Muvver Jim." She learns to ride Bingo, a circus horse, and grows to womanhood knowing no life except that of the circus.

Chapter II—A church near the circus lot interests Polly. Jim reproves her for her reckless riding.

Chapter III—Polly urges Bingo to unprecedented speed and falls. Toby and Jim carry the injured girl to the parsonage nearby.

Chapter IV—The Rev. John Douglas, much to Deacon Elverson's disgust, takes Polly into the parsonage. Toby and "Muvver Jim" are received kindly by Douglas, who has placed Polly in charge of his colored servant, Mandy. Douglas promises to care for the girl until she is well.

CHAPTER V.

THE church bells were ringing their first warning for the morning service when Mandy peeped into the spare bedroom for the second time and glanced cautiously at the wisp of hair that bespoke a feminine head somewhere between the covers and the little white pillow on the four poster bed. There was no sound from the sleeper, so Mandy ventured across the room on tiptoe and raised the shades. The drooping boughs of autumn foliage lay shimmering against the window panes, and through them might be seen the gray outline of the church. Mandy glanced again toward the bed to make sure that the burst of sunlight had not awakened the invalid, then crossed to a small, rickety chair laden with the discarded finery of the little circus rider.

"Lawdy sakes!" she cried, holding up a spangled dress admiringly. "Ain't that beautiful!" She drew near the mirror, attempting to see the reflection of the tinsel and chiffon against her very ample background of gingham and avoirdupois. "You'd sure be a swell nigger wid dat on, honey!" she chuckled to herself. "Wouldn't dem deacons holler if dey done see dat?"

The picture of the deacons' astonishment at such a spectacle so grew upon Mandy that she was obliged to cover her generous mouth to shut in her convulsive laughter lest it awaken the little girl in the bed. She crossed to the old fashioned bureau which for many months had stood unused against the wall. The drawer creaked as she opened it to lay away the gay, spangled gown.

"It'll be a mighty long time afore she puts on dem t'ings ag'in," she said, with a doubtful shake of her large, round head.

Then she went back to the chair and picked up Polly's sandals and examined the headwork with a great deal of interest. "Lawdy, lawdy!" she cried as she compared the size of the sandals to that of her own worn, worn shoes. She was again upon the point of exploding with laughter as the church bell added a few final and more emphatic clangs to its warning.

She turned, with a start, motuoning a vain warning out of the window for the bell to be silent, but the little sleeper was already stirring uneasily on her pillow. One soft arm was thrown languidly over her head. The large blue eyes opened and closed dreamily as she murmured the words of the clown song that Jim and Toby had taught her years ago:

"Ting ling.
That's what the bells sing—
Mandy reached the side of the bed as the girl's eyes opened a second time and met hers with a blank stare of astonishment. A tiny frown came into the small white forehead.

"What's the matter?" she asked faintly, trying to find something familiar in the black face before her.

"Hush, child, hush," Mandy whispered. "Jes' you lay puffedly still. Dat's only de furs' bell a-ringin'."

"First bell?" the girl repeated as her eyes traveled quickly about the strange walls and the unfamiliar fittings of the room. "This ain't the show!" she cried suddenly.

"Lor' bless you, no! Dis ain't no show!" Mandy answered, and she laughed reassuringly.

"Then where am I?" Polly asked, half breathless with bewilderment.

"Nebber you mind 'bout dat," was Mandy's unsatisfactory reply.

"But I do mind," protested Polly, trying to raise herself to a sitting po-



"You'd sure be a swell nigger wid dat on, honey!" she chuckled.

sition. "Where's the bunch?"

"De wat?" asked Mandy in surprise. "The bunch—Jim and Toby an' the rest of the push?"

"Lor' bless you," Mandy exclaimed, "dey's done gone 'long wid de circus hours ago."

"Gone! Show gone!" Polly cried in amazement. "Then what am I doin' here?"

"Hol' on dar, honey! Hol' on!" Mandy cautioned. "Don't you 'cite yo'self."

"Let me alone!" Polly put aside the arm that was trying to place a shawl around her. "I got to get out of here."

"Youse got plenty o' time for dat," Mandy answered. "Jes' yo' wait awhile."

"I can't wait, an' I won't!" Polly shrieked, almost beside herself with anxiety. "I got to get to the next burg—Wakefield, ain't it? What time is it? Let me alone! Let me go!" she cried, struggling desperately.

The door opened softly, and the young pastor stood looking down at the picture of the frail, white faced child and her black, determined captor.

"Here, here! What's all this about?" he asked in a firm tone, though evidently amused.

"Who are you?" returned the girl as she shoved herself quickly back against the pillows and drew the covers close under her chin, looking at him oddly over their top.

"She done been cuttin' up somefin awful!" Mandy explained as she tried to regain enough breath for a new encounter.

"Cutting up? You surprise me, Miss Polly," he said, with mock seriousness.

"How do you know I'm Polly?" the little rebel asked, her eyes gleaming large and desperate above the friendly covers.

"If you will be very good and keep very quiet, I will try to tell you," he said as he crossed to the bed.

"I won't be quiet, not for nobody," Polly objected, with a bold disregard of double negatives. "I got to get a move. If you ain't goin' to help me you needn't butt in."

"I am afraid I can't help you to go just yet," Douglas replied. He was beginning to perceive that there were tasks before him other than the shaping of Polly's character.

"What are you tryin' to do to me, anyhow?" she asked as she shot a glance of suspicion from the pastor to Mandy. "What am I up against?"

"Don't you be scared, honey," Mandy reassured her. "Youse jes' as safe here as you done been in de circus."

"Safer, we hope," Douglas added, with a smile.

"Are you two bug?" Polly questioned as she turned her head from one side to the other and studied them with a new idea. "Well, you can't get none the best of me. I can get away all right, an' I will too."

She made a desperate effort to put one foot to the floor, but fell back with a cry of pain.

"Dar, dar," Mandy murmured, putting the pillow under the poor, cramped neck and smoothing the tangled hair from Polly's forehead. "You done hurt yo'self for sum' durn time."

The pastor had taken a step toward the bed. His look of amusement had changed to one of pity.

"You see, Miss Polly, you have had a very bad fall, and you can't get away just yet nor see your friends until you are better."

"It's only a scratch," Polly whimpered. "I can do my work; I got to."

One more feeble effort and she succumbed, with a faint "Jinny creak-ets!"

"Uncle Toby told me that you were a very good little girl," Douglas said as he drew up a chair and sat down by her side, confident by the expression on her face that at last he was master of the situation. "Do you think he would like you to behave like this?"

"I sure am on the blink," she sighed as she settled back wearily upon the pillow.

"You'll be all right soon," Douglas answered cheerily. "Mandy and I will help the time to go."

"I recollect now," Polly faltered without hearing him. "It was the last hoop. Jim seemed to have a hunch I was goin' to be in for trouble when I went into the ring. Bingo must 'a felt it too. He kept a-pullin' and a-jerkin' from the start. I got myself together to make the last jump, an' I can't remember no more." Her head drooped, and her eyes closed.

"I wouldn't try just now if I were you," Douglas answered tenderly.

"It's my wheel, ain't it?" Polly questioned after a pause.

"Yowh what, chile?" Mandy exclaimed as she turned from the table, where she had been rolling up the unused bandages left from the doctor's call the night before.

"I say it's my creeper, my paddle," Polly explained, trying to locate a few of her many pains. "Gee, but that hurts!" She tried to bend her ankle. "Is it punctured?"

"Only sprained," Douglas answered, striving to control his amusement at the expression on Mandy's puzzled face. "Better not talk any more about it."

"Ain't anything the matter with my tongue, is there?" she asked, turning her head to one side and studying him quizzically.

"I don't think there is," he replied good naturedly.

"How did I come to fall in here anyhow?" she asked as she studied the walls of the unfamiliar room.

"We brought you here."

"It's a swell place," she conceded grudgingly.

"We are comfortable," he admitted as a telltale smile again hovered about his lips. He was thinking of the changes that he must presently make in Miss Polly's vocabulary.

"Is this the big top?" she asked.

"The—what?" he stammered.

"The main tent," she explained.

"Well, no; not exactly. It's going to be your room now, Miss Polly."

"My room! Gee! Think of that!" she gasped as the possibility of her actually having a room all of her own took hold of her mind. "Much obliged," she said, with a nod, feeling that something was expected of her. She knew no other phrase of gratitude than the one "Muvver Jim" and Toby had taught her to say to the manager when she received from him the first stick of red and white striped candy.

"You're very welcome," Douglas answered, with a ring of genuine feeling in his voice.

"Awful quiet, ain't it?" she ventured after a pause. "Guess that's what woke me up."

Douglas laughed good naturedly at the thought of quiet as a disturber and added that he feared it might at first be rather dull for her, but that Jim and Toby would send her news of the circus and that she could write to them as soon as she was better.

"I'll have to be a heep better 'an I ever was 'fore I can write much," Polly drawled, with a whimsical little smile.

"I will write for you," the pastor volunteered, understanding her plight.

"You will?" For the first time he saw a show of real pleasure in her eyes.

"Every day," Douglas promised solemnly.

(To be continued.)



Curious Old London Clubs.

The days of quaint and queer clubs are days of the past. We do not hear at present of a "No Nose club," or "Club of Beards," or a "Man Killing club," whose titles are suggestive; of the "Surlly club," whose object was the practice of contradiction and of foul language, so that the members might not be wanting in impudence to abuse passengers on the Thames; or of the "Man Hunting club," established once by young limbs of the law; or of the "Lying club," every member of which was required to wear a blue cap with a red feather in it; or of the "Scatter Wit society," consisting of wits; or of the "Hum Dum club," whose members were to say nothing till midnight; or of the "Twopeuny club," a member of which, if he swore, was to be kicked on the shins by the other members; or of the "Everlasting club," which has not lasted long; or of the "Kit Cat club," known after its toasts of "Old Cats and Young Kits;" or of the "Beef-steak club," of which the following amusing description was written by one of its illustrious members:

Like Britain's island lies our steak,
A sea of gravy bounds it.
Shallots confusedly scattered make
The rockwork that surrounds it.

—London Scraps.

Status of the Deadbeat.

No man is wholly free from sin, but so many lesser evils are tolerated that a man should hesitate long before becoming a deadbeat. Criminals are despised and abhorred, but to the deadbeat all that is coming, as well as the contempt of his fellow men. There is something at once so mean and so little in taking advantage of the confidence which comes with friendship that the hand of every man is turned against a deadbeat as soon as his reputation is well established. The deadbeat may fondly imagine he is living easy and making money without work, and of course he takes no account of the confidence he violates and the hardships he inflicts on others. But, that aside, he really has a harder time than the man who is honest and fair. He is compelled to move a good deal and peace of mind he knows not. Like other types of crooks, he doesn't prosper, and his finish is more unpleasant than the beginning.—Atchison Globe.



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