

POLLY of the CIRCUS

BY MARGARET MAYO

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(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—When Polly becomes conscious she declares that she must rejoin the circus at once. "Are you a sky pilot?" she asks the minister. Her mother was killed riding a circus horse, and her father "got his'n in a lion's cage." The minister reads to her about Ruth and Naomi, and Polly says "I guess I'd like to hear you spiel."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN John Douglas' uncle offered to educate his nephew for the ministry the boy was less enthusiastic than his mother. He did not renege, however, for it had been the custom of generations for at least one son of each Douglas family to preach the gospel of Calvinism, and his father's career as an architect and landscape gardener had not left him much capital.

Douglas senior had been recognized as an artist by the few who understood his talents, but there is small demand for the builder of picturesque houses in the little business towns of the middle west, and at last he passed away, leaving his son only the burden of his financial failure and an ardent desire to succeed at the profession in which his father had fared so badly. The hopeless, defeated look on the departed man's face had always haunted the boy, who was artist enough to feel his father's genius intuitively and

human enough to resent the injustice of his fate.

Douglas' mother had suffered so much because of the impractical efforts of her husband that she discouraged the early tendencies of the son toward drawing and mathematics and tried to direct his thoughts toward creeds and Bible history. When he went away for his collegiate course she was less in touch with him and he was able to steal time from his athletics to devote to his art. He spent his vacations in a neighboring city before a drawing board in the office of a distinguished architect, his father's friend.

Douglas was not a brilliant divinity student, and he was relieved at last when he received his degree in theology and found himself appointed to a small church in the middle west.

His step was very bright the morning he first went up the path that led to his new home. His artistic sense was charmed by the picturesque approach to the church and parsonage. The view toward the tree encircled spire was unobstructed, for the church had been built on the outskirts of the town to allow for a growth that had not materialized. He threw up his head and gazed at the blue hills, with their background of soft, slow moving clouds. The smell of the fresh earth, the bursting of the buds, the forming of new life, set him thrilling with a joy that was very near to pain.

He stopped halfway up the path and considered the advantages of a new front to the narrow eaved cottage, and when his foot touched the first step of the vine covered porch he was far more concerned about a new portico than with any thought of his first sermon.

His speculations were abruptly cut short by Mandy, who bustled out of the door with a wide smile of welcome on her black face and an unmistakable ambition to take him immediately under her motherly wing. She was much concerned because the church people had not met the new pastor at the station and brought him to the house. Upon learning that Douglas had purposely avoided their escort, preferring to come to his new home the first time

alone, she made up her mind that she was going to like him.

Mandy had long been a fixture in the parsonage. She and her worse half, Hasty Jones, had come to know and discuss the weaknesses of the many clergymen who had come and gone, the deacons and the congregation, both individually and collectively. She confided to Hasty that she didn't "blame de new parson fer not wantin' to mix up wid dat ar crowd."

In the study that night, when she and Hasty helped Douglas to unpack his many boxes of books, they were as eager as children about the drawings and pictures which he showed them. His mind had gone beyond the parsonage front now, and he described to them the advantage of adding an extra ten feet to the church spire.

Mandy felt herself almost an artist when she and Hasty bade the pastor good night, for she was still quivering from the contagion of Douglas' enthusiasm. Here, at last, was a master who could do something besides find fault with her.

"I jes' wan' to be on de groun' de firs' time dat Mars Douglas and dat ere Deacon Strong clinches," she said to Hasty as they locked the doors and turned out the hall light. "Did you done see his jaw?" she whispered. "He look laughin' enough now, but jes' you wait till he done set dat 'ere jaw o' his'n, and dar ain't nobody what's goin' ter unsot it."

"Maybe dar ain't goin' ter be no clinchin'," said Hasty, hoping for Mandy's assurance to the contrary.

"What?" shrieked Mandy. "Wid dat 'ere sneakin' Widow Willoughby already a-tellin' de deacons how ter start de new parson a-goin' proper?"

"Now, why youse always a-pickin' on to dat 'ere widow?" asked Hasty, already enjoying the explosion which he knew his defense of the widow was sure to excite.

"I don' like no woman what's allus braggin' 'bout her clean floors," answered Mandy shortly. She turned out the last light and tiptoed upstairs, trying not to disturb the pastor.

John Douglas was busy already with pencil and paper, making notes of the plans for the church and parsonage, which he would perfect later on. Alas, for Douglas' day dreams! It was not many weeks before he understood with a heavy heart that the deacons were far too dull and uninspired to share his faith in beauty as an aid to man's spiritual uplift.

(To be continued.)

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