

# 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 ride.

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—Douglas offends Deacon Strong by defending boys who play baseball on Sunday.

Chapter VII—Polly recovers her health, but is saddened by the death of Toby. Jim sends the news and promises to keep in touch with her.

Chapter VIII—Polly recovers from the blow dealt her by Toby's death. She has ceased using slang and is educating herself under Douglas' guidance. She endeavors to improve Mandy's grammar.

Chapter IX—Deacons Strong and Elverson reprove the pastor for harboring the circus girl. Douglas declares that he is merely doing his duty. Strong declares that the girl must go. Douglas defies him.

"Pro-mis-cuous," she repeated haltingly. "What does that mean?"

"Indiscriminate." He rubbed his forehead as he saw the puzzled look on her face. "Mixed up," he explained, more simply.

"Our game wasn't mixed up." She was thinking of the one to which the widow had objected. "Is it promiscuous to catch somebody?"

"It depends upon whom you catch," he answered, with a dry, whimsical smile.

"Well, I don't catch anybody but the children." She looked up at him with serious, inquiring eyes.

"Never mind, Polly. Your games aren't promiscuous." She did not hear him. She was searching for her book. "Is this what you are looking for?" he asked, drawing the missing article from his pocket.

"Oh!" cried Polly, with a flush of embarrassment. "Mandy told you."

"You've been working a long time on that."

"I thought I might help you if I learned everything you told me," she answered timidly. "But I don't suppose I could."

"I can never tell you how much you help me, Polly."

"Do I?" she cried eagerly. "I can help more if you will only let me. I can teach a bigger class in Sunday school now. I got to the book of Ruth today."

"You did?" He pretended to be astonished. He was anxious to encourage her enthusiasm.

"Um-hum!" she answered solemnly. A dreamy look came into her eyes. "Do you remember the part that you read to me the first day I came?" He nodded. He was thinking how care free they were that day. How impossible such problems as the present one would have seemed then! "I know every bit of what you read by heart. It's our next Sunday school lesson."

"So it is."

"Do you think now that it would be best for me to go away?" She looked up into his troubled face.

"We'll see, we'll see," he murmured, then tried to turn her mind toward other things. "Come, now; let's find out whether you do know your Sunday school lesson. How does it begin?"

There was no answer. She had turned away with trembling lips. "And Ruth said"—He took her two small hands and drew her face toward him, mean-



HER ARMS WENT OUT BLINDLY.

ing to prompt her.

"Entreat me not to leave thee," she pleaded. Her eyes met his. His face was close to hers. The small features before him were quivering with emotion. She was so frail, so helpless, so easily within his grasp. His muscles grew tense, and his lips closed firmly. He was battling with an impulse to draw her toward him and comfort her in the shelter of his strong, brave arms. "They shan't!" he cried, starting toward her.

Polly drew back, overawed. Her soul had heard and seen the things revealed to each of us only once. She would never again be a child.

Douglas braced himself against the back of the bench.

"What was the rest of the lesson?" he asked in a firm, hard voice.

"I can't say it now," Polly murmured. Her face was averted; her white lids fluttered and closed.

"Nonsense. Of course you can. Come, come. I'll help you." Douglas spoke sharply. He was almost vexed with her and with himself for the weakness that was so near overcoming them. "And Ruth said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee.'"

"Or to return from following after thee"—she was struggling to keep back the tears—"for whether thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." She stopped.

"That's right; go on," said Douglas, striving to control the unsteadiness in his own voice.

"Where thou diest will I die." Her arms went out blindly.

"Oh, you won't send me away, will you?" she sobbed. "I don't want to learn anything else just—except—from you." She covered her face and slipped, a little broken heap, at his feet.

In an instant the pastor's strong arms were about her; his stalwart body was supporting her. "You shan't go away. I won't let you—I won't! Do you hear me, Polly? I won't!"

Her breath was warm against his cheek. He could feel her tears, her arms about him, as she clung to him helplessly, sobbing and quivering in the shelter of his strong embrace. "You are never going to leave me—never!"

A new purpose had come into his life, the resolution of a life's easiness, and he knew that the fight which he must henceforth make for this child was the same that he must make for himself.

(To be continued.)

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