

Polly of the Circus

BY MARGARET MAYO
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(Continued from last week)



"Is it possible?" gasped Elverson weakly.
"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Strong when he could trust himself to speak again.
"I shall do what is best for Miss Polly," said the pastor quietly, but firmly.
He turned away to show that the interview was at an end. Strong followed him. Douglas pointed to the gate with a meaning not to be mistaken. "Good afternoon, deacon."
Strong hesitated. He looked at the pastor, then at the gate, then at the pastor again. "I'll go," he shouted, "but it ain't the end!" He slammed the gate behind him.
"Quite so, quite so," chirped Elverson, not having the slightest idea of what he was saying. He saw the cold expression on the pastor's face, he coughed behind his hat and followed Strong.

CHAPTER X.

DOUGLAS dropped wearily on the rustic bench. He sat with drooped head and unseeing eyes. He did not hear Polly as she scurried down the path, her arms filled with autumn leaves. She glanced at him, dropped the bright colored foliage and slipped quickly to the nearest tree. "One, two, three for Mr. John!" she cried as she patted the huge brown trunk.
"Is that you, Polly?" he asked absently.
"Now it's your turn to catch me," she said, lingering near the tree. The pastor was again lost in thought. "Aren't you going to play any more?" There was a shade of disappointment in her voice. She came slowly to his side.
"Sit here, Polly," he answered gravely, pointing to a place on the bench. "I want to talk to you."
"Now I've done something wrong," she pouted. She gathered up her garlands and brought them to a place near his feet, ignoring the seat at his side. "You might just as well tell me and get it over."
"You couldn't do anything wrong," he answered, looking down at her. "Oh, yes, I could, and I've done it. I can see it in your face. What is it?"
"What have you there?" he asked, trying to gain time and not knowing

"But just for a little while," he pleaded. How was she ever to understand? How could he take from her the sense of security that he had purposely taught her to feel in his house?
"Not even for a moment," Polly answered, with a decided shake of her head.
"But you must get ahead in your studies," he argued.
She looked at him anxiously. She was beginning to be alarmed at his persistence.
"Maybe I've been playing too many perfunctory games."
"Not perfunctory, Polly, promiscuous."
"Promiscuous," she repeated half-logically. "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, meaning 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

check. 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 realization of a new necessity, and he knew that the fight which he must henceforth make for this child was the same that he must make for himself.

CHAPTER XI.

"I'm going into de Sunday school room to take off dat 'ere widow's button touches," said Mandy as she came down the steps.
"All right!" called Douglas. "Take those with you. Perhaps they may help." He gathered up the garlands which Polly had left on the ground. His eyes were shining. He looked younger than Mandy had ever seen him.
Polly had turned her back at the sound of Mandy's voice and crossed to the elm tree, drying her tears of happiness and trying to control her newly awakened emotions. Douglas felt intuitively that she needed this moment for recovery, so he piled the leaves and garlands high in Mandy's arms, then ran into the house with the light step of a boy.
"I got the set—sit—settin' room all tidled up," said Mandy as she shot a sly glance at Polly.
"That's good," Polly answered, facing Mandy at last and dimpling and blushing guiltily.
"Mos' de sociable folks will mos' likely be hangin' round de parsonage to-night, 'stead ob stayin' in de Sunday school room, whar dey belongs. Las' time dat 'ere Widow Willoughby done set round all ebensin' a-tellin' de parson as how folks could jes' eat off'n her kitchen floor, an' I ups an' tells her as how folks could pick up a good square meal off'n Mandy's floor too. Guess she'll be mighty careful what she says afore Mandy tonight." She chuckled as she disappeared down the walk to the Sunday school room.
Polly stood motionless where Mandy had left her. She hardly knew which way to turn. She was happy, yet afraid. She felt like sinking upon her knees and begging God to be good to her, to help her. She who had once been so independent, so self-reliant, now felt the need of direction from above. She was no longer master of her own soul. Something had gone from her, something that would never come again. While she gested, Hasty came through the gate, looking anxiously over his shoulder.
"Well, Hasty?" she said, for it was apparent that Hasty had something important on his mind.
"It's de big one from de circus," he whispered excitedly.
"The big one?"
"You know—de one whar brung you."
"You don't mean?"—Polly's question was answered by Jim himself, who had followed Hasty quickly through the gate. Their arms were instantly about each other. Jim forgot Hasty and every one in the world except Polly, and neither of them noticed the horrified Miss Perkins and the Widow Willoughby, who had been crossing the yard on their way from the Sunday school room with Julia.
"You're just as big as ever," said Polly when she could let go of Jim long enough to look at him. "You haven't changed a bit."
"You've changed enough for both of us." He looked at the unfamiliar long skirts and the new way of doing her hair. "You're bigger, Polly, more grown-up like."
"Oh, Jim!" She glanced admiringly at the new brown suit, the rather startling tie and the neat little pony in Jim's buttonhole.
"The fellows said I'd have to slick up a bit if I was a-comin' to see you, so as not to make you ashamed of me. Do you like 'em?" he asked, looking down approvingly at his new brown clothes.
"Very much." For the first time Jim noticed the unfamiliar manner of her speech. He began to feel self-conscious.

He got so thin an' peaked like. He wasn't the same after we lost you—nobody was, not even Bingo."
"Have you still got Bingo?" she asked, through her tears.
"Yep, we got him," drawled Jim, "but he ain't much good no more. None of the other riders can get used to his gait like you was. There ain't nobody with the sign what can touch you ridin'; there never will be. Say, maybe you think Barker won't let out a yell when he sees you comin' back." Jim was jubilant now, and he let out a little yell of his own at the mere thought of her return. He was too excited to notice the look on Polly's face. "Try had a notion before he died that you was never a-comin' back, but I told him I'd change all that once I seen you, an' when Barker sent me over here today to look arter the advertisin' he said he guessed you'd had all you wanted o' church folks. Jes' you bring her along to Wakefield," he said, "an' tell her that her place is waitin' for her, an' I will too." He turned upon Polly with sudden decision. "Why, I feel jes' like pickin' you up in my arms an' carryin' you right off now."
"Wait, Jim!" She put one tiny hand on his arm to restrain him.
"I don't mean—not today—mebbe," he stammered uncertainly. "but we'll be back here a-showin' next month."
"Don't look at me now," Polly answered as the doglike eyes searched her face, "because I have to say something that is going to hurt you, Jim."
"You're comin', ain't you, Polly?" The big face was wrinkled and careworn with trouble.
"No, Jim," she replied in a tone so low that he could scarcely hear her.
"You mean that you ain't never comin' back?" He tried to realize what such a decision might mean to him.
"No, Jim," she answered tenderly, for she dreaded the pain that she must cause the great, good-hearted fellow. "You mustn't care like that." She pleaded, seeing the blank desolation that had come into his face. "It isn't because I don't love you just the same, and it was good of Barker to keep my place for me, but I can't go back."
He turned away. She clung to the rough brown sleeve. "Why, Jim, when I lie in my little room up there at night—she glanced toward the window above them—and everything is peaceful and still I think how it used to be in the old days, the awful noise and the rush of it all, the cheerless wagons, the mob in the tent, the ring with its blazing lights, the whirling round and round on Bingo and the hoops, always the hoops, till my head got dizzy and my eyes all dim, and then the hurry after the show, and the heat and the dust or the mud and the rain, and the rumble of the wheels in the plains at night, and the shriek of the animals, and then the parade, the awful, awful parade, and I riding through the streets in tights, Jim-tights!" She covered her face to shut out the memory. "I couldn't go back to it, Jim! I just couldn't!" She turned away, her face still hidden in her hands. He looked at her a long while in silence.
"I didn't know how you'd come to feel about it," he said doggedly.
"You aren't angry, Jim?" She turned to him anxiously, her eyes pleading for his forgiveness.

(To be continued)

There is more catarrh in this section of the country than all other diseases put together, and until the last few years was supposed to be incurable. For a great many years doctors pronounced it a local disease and prescribed local remedies, and by constantly failing to cure with local treatment, pronounced it incurable. Science has proven catarrh to be a constitutional disease and therefore requires constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio, is the only constitutional cure on the market. It is taken internally in doses of ten drops to a teaspoonful. It acts directly on the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. They offer \$100 for any case it fails to cure. Send for circulars and testimonials. Address, F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio. Sold by all druggists, 75c. Take Hall's Family Pills for constipation.

The East Couldn't Touch It
Bend had a Fourth of July celebration that was probably the most unique in the country because of one great feature—a trout barbecue. There are numerous places in the state that could duplicate it probably, but where in the East could such an affair be held? Bend had about 5300 trout served to those in attendance at the celebration—certainly a splendid advertisement of Oregon's attractions as a fisherman's paradise.

Sees Mother Grow Young
"It would be hard to overstate the change in my mother since she began to use Electric Bitters," writes Mrs. W. L. Gilpatrick of Danforth, Me. Although past 70 she seems really to be growing young again. She suffered untold misery from dyspepsia for 20 years. At last she could neither eat, sleep nor drink. Doctors gave her up and all remedies failed until Electric Bitters worked such wonders for her health. They invigorated all vital organs, cure liver trouble, induce sleep, impart strength and appetite. Only 50 cents at all druggists.



"Now I've done something wrong," she pouted.

how to broach the subject that in justice to her must be discussed.
"Some leaves to make garlands for the social," Polly answered more cheerfully. "Would you mind holding this?" She gave him one end of a string of leaves.
"Where are the children?"
"Gone home."
"You like the children very much, don't you, Polly?" Douglas was striving for a path that might lead them to the subject that was troubling him.
"Oh, no, I don't like them; I love them." She looked at him with tender eyes.
"You're the greatest baby of all." A puzzled line came between his eyes as he studied her more closely. "And yet you're not such a child, are you, Polly? You're quite grown up—almost a young lady." He looked at her from a strange, unwelcome point of view. She was all of that as she sat at his feet, yearning and slender and fair, at the turning of her seventeenth year.
"I wonder how you would like to go away"—her eyes met his in terror—"away to a great school," he added quickly, flinching from the very first hurt that he had inflicted. "where there are a lot of other young ladies."
"Is it a place where you would be?" She looked up at him anxiously. She wondered if his "show" was about to "move on."
"I'm afraid not," Douglas answered, smiling in spite of his heavy heart.
"I wouldn't like any place without you," she said decidedly and seemed to consider the subject dismissed.
"But if it was for your good," Douglas persisted.
"It could never be for my good to leave you."



"You mean that you ain't never comin' back?"

scolds. A year ago she would have said "You bet!" He looked at her awkwardly. She hurried on: "Hasty told me you were showing in Wakefield. I knew you'd come to see me. How's Barker and all the boys?" She stepped with a catch in her throat and added more slowly, "I suppose everything's different now that Toby is gone."
"He'd 'a' liked to see you afore he cashed in," Jim answered, "but maybe it was just as well he didn't. You'd hardly 'a' swung him toward the last,

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