

Pollyanna: The Glad Book

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By

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CHAPTER XXV—(Continued)

"I DON'T believe he knows half so much as Dr. Chilton."

"Oh, yes, he does, I'm sure, dear."

"But it was Dr. Chilton who doctor-ed Mr. Pendleton's broken leg, Aunt Polly. If—if you don't mind very much, I would like to have Dr. Chilton—truly I would!"

"But I do mind, Pollyanna. I mind very much. I would do anything—almost anything for you, my dear; but I—for reasons which I do not care to speak of now, I don't wish Dr. Chilton called in on—on this case. And believe me, he cannot know so much about—about your trouble, as this great doctor does, who will come from New York to-morrow."

Pollyanna still looked unconvinced.

"But, Aunt Polly, if you loved Dr. Chilton—"

"What, Pollyanna?" Aunt Polly's voice was very sharp now. Her cheeks were very red, too.

"I say, if you loved Dr. Chilton, and didn't love the other one," sighed Pollyanna, "seems to me that would make some difference in the good he would do; and I love Dr. Chilton."

The nurse entered the room at that moment, and Aunt Polly rose to her feet abruptly, a look of relief on her face.

"I am very sorry, Pollyanna," she said, a little stiffly; "but I'm afraid you'll have to let me be the judge, this

time. Besides, it's already arranged. The New York doctor is coming to-morrow."

As it happened, however, the New York doctor did not come "to-morrow." At the last moment a telegram told of an unavoidable delay owing to the sudden illness of the specialist himself. This led Pollyanna into a renewed pleading for the substitution of Dr. Chilton—"which would be so easy now, you know."

But as before, Aunt Polly shook her head and said "no, dear," very decisively, yet with a still more anxious assurance that she would do anything—anything—but that—to please her dear Pollyanna.

As the days of waiting passed, one by one, it did indeed, seem that Aunt Polly was doing everything (but that) that she could do to please her niece.

"I wouldn't 'a' believed it—you couldn't 'a' made me believe it," Nancy said to Old Tom one morning. "There don't seem to be a minute in the day that Miss Polly ain't jest hangin' 'round waitin' ter do somethin' for that blessed lamb, if 'tain't more than ter let in the cat—an' her what wouldn't let Fluff nor Buff upstairs for love nor money a week ago; an' now she let's 'em tumble all over the bed jest 'cause it pleases Miss Pollyanna!"

"An' when she ain't doin' nothin' else, she's movin' them little glass danglers 'round ter different winders

in the room so the sun'll make the 'rainbows dance,' as that blessed child calls it. She's sent Timothy down ter Cobb's greenhouse three times for fresh flowers—an' that besides all the posies fetched in ter her, too. An' the other day, if I didn't find her sittin' 'fore the bed with the nurse actually doin' her hair, an' Miss Pollyanna lookin' on an' bossin' from the bed, her eyes all shinin' an' happy. An' I declare ter goodness, if Miss Polly hain't wore her hair like that every day now—jest ter please that blessed child."

Old Tom chuckled.

"Well, it strikes me Miss Polly herself ain't lookin' none the worse—for wearin' them 'ere curls 'round her forehead," he observed dryly.

"Course she ain't," retorted Nancy, indignantly. "She looks like folks now. She's actually almost—"

"Keerful, now, Nancy!" interrupted the old man, with a slow grin. "You know what you said when I told ye she was handsome once."

Nancy shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, she ain't handsome, of course; but I will own up she don't look like the same woman, what with the ribbons an' lace jiggers Miss Pollyanna makes her wear round her neck."

"I told ye so," nodded the man. "I told ye she wa'n't—old."

Nancy laughed.

"Well, I'll own up she hain't got quite so good an imitation of it—as she did have, 'fore Miss Pollyanna come. Say, Mr Tom, who was her lover? I hain't found that out yet; I hain't, I hain't!"

"Hain't ye?" asked the old man, with an odd look on his face. "Well, I guess ye won't then—from me."

"Oh, Mr. Tom, come on, now," wheedled the girl. "Ye see, there ain't many folks here that I can ask."

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"Maybe not. But there's one, anyhow, that ain't answerin'," grinned Old Tom. Then, abruptly, the light died from his eyes. "How is she, ter-day—the little gal?"

Nancy shook her head. Her face, too, had sobered.

"Just the same, Mr. Tom. There ain't no special difference, as I can see—or anybody, I guess. She jest lays there an' sleeps an' talks some, an' tries ter smile an' be 'glad' 'cause the sun sets or the moon rises, or some other such thing, till it's enough ter make yer heart break with achin'."

"I know; it's the 'game'—bless her sweet heart!" nodded Old Tom, blinking a little.

"She told you, then, too, about that 'ere—game?"

"Oh, yes. She told me long ago." The old man hesitated, then went on, his lips twitching a little. "I was growlin' one day 'cause I was so bent up and crooked; an' what do ye s'pose the little thing said?"

"I couldn't guess. I wouldn't think she could find anythin' about that ter be glad about!"

"She did. She said I could be glad, anyhow, that I didn't have ter stoop so far ter do my weedin'—'cause I was already bent part way over."

Nancy gave a wistful laugh.

"Well, I ain't surprised, after all. You might know she'd find somethin'. We've been playin' it—that game—since almost the first, 'cause there wa'n't no one else she could play it with—though she did speak of—her aunt."

"Miss Polly!"

Nancy chuckled.

"I guess you hain't got such an awful diff-rent opinion o' the mistress than I have," she bridled.

Old Tom stiffened.

"I was only thinkin' 'twould be—some of a surprise—to her," he explained with dignity.

"Well, yes, I guess 'twould be—then," retorted Nancy. "I ain't sayin' what 'twould be now. I'd believe anythin' o' the mistress now—even that she'd take ter playin' it herself!"

"But hain't the little gal told her—ever? She's told ev'ry one else, I guess. I'm hearin' of it ev'rywhere, now, since she was hurted," said Tom.

"Well, she didn't tell Miss Polly," rejoined Nancy. "Miss Pollyanna told me long ago that she couldn't tell her, cause her aunt didn't like ter have her talk about her father; an' 'twas her father's game, an' she'd have ter talk about him if she did tell it. So she never told her."

"Oh, I see, I see." The old man nodded his head slowly. "They was always bitter against the minister chap—all of 'em, 'cause he took Miss Jennie away from 'em. An' Miss Polly—young as she was—couldn't never forgive him; she was that fond of Miss Jennie—in them days. I see, I see. 'Twas a bad mess," he sighed, as he turned away.

"Yes, 'twas—all 'round, all 'round," sighed Nancy in her turn, as she went back to her kitchen.

For no one were those days of waiting easy. The nurse tried to look cheerful, but her eyes were troubled. The doctor was openly nervous and impatient. Miss Polly said little; but even the softening waves of hair about her face, and the becoming laces at her throat, could not hide the fact that she was growing thin and pale. As to Pollyanna—Pollyanna petted the dog, smoothed the cat's sleek head, admired the flowers and ate the fruits and jellies that were sent in to her; and returned innumerable cheery answers to the many messages of love and inquiry that were brought to her bedside. But she, too, grew pale and thin; and the nervous activity of the poor little hands and arms only emphasized the pitiful motionlessness of the once active little feet and legs now lying so woefully quiet under the blankets.

(Continued next week)



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