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Pollyanna: The Glad Book

By ELEANOR H. PORTER Copyright 1913 By L. C. Page & Co., Inc.

CHAPTER XXVI A Door Ajar

JUST a week from the time Dr. Mead, the specialist, was first expected, he came. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man with kind gray eyes, and a cheerful smile. Pollyanna liked him at once, and told him so.

"You look quite a lot like my doctor, you see," she added engagingly. "Your doctor?" Dr. Mead glanced in evident surprise at Dr. Warren, talking with the nurse a few feet away. Dr. Warren was a small, brown-eyed man with a pointed brown beard.

"Oh, that isn't my doctor," smiled Pollyanna, divining his thought. "Dr. Warren is Aunt Polly's doctor. My doctor is Dr. Chilton."

"Oh-h!" said Dr. Mead, a little oddly, his eyes resting on Miss Polly, who, with a vivid blush, had turned hastily away.

"Yes," Pollyanna hesitated, then continued with her usual truthfulness. "You see, I wanted Dr. Chilton all the time, but Aunt Polly wanted you. She said you knew more than Dr. Chilton, anyway about—about broken legs like mine. And of course if you do, I can be glad for that. Do you?"

A swift something crossed the doctor's face that Pollyanna could not quite translate.

"Only time can tell that, little girl," he said gently; then he turned a grave face toward Dr. Warren, who had just come to the bedside.

Every one said afterward that it was the cat that did it. Certainly, if Fluffy had not poked an insistent paw and nose against Pollyanna's unlatched door, the door would not have swung noiselessly open on its hinges until it stood perhaps a foot ajar; and if the door had not been open, Pollyanna would not have heard her aunt's words.

In the hall the two doctors, the nurse, and Miss Polly stood talking. In Pollyanna's room Fluffy had just jumped to the bed with a little purring "meow" of joy when through the open door sounded clearly and sharply Aunt Polly's agonized exclamation.

"Not that! Doctor, not that! You don't mean—the child—will never walk again!"

It was all confusion then. First, from the bed-room came Pollyanna's terrified "Aunt Polly—Aunt Polly!" Then Miss Polly, seeing the open door and realizing that her words had been heard, gave a low little moan and—for the first time in her life—fainted dead away.

The nurse, with a choking "She heard!" stumbled toward the open door. The two doctors stayed with Miss Polly. Dr. Mead had to stay—he had caught Miss Polly as she fell. Dr. Warren stood by, helplessly. It was not until Pollyanna cried out again sharply and the nurse closed the door, that the two men, with a despairing glance into each other's eyes, awoke to the immediate duty of bringing the woman in Dr. Mead's arms back to unhappy consciousness.

In Pollyanna's room, the nurse had found a purring gray cat on the bed vainly trying to attract the attention of a white-faced, wild-eyed little girl.

"Miss Hunt, please, I want Aunt Polly. I want her right away, quick, please!"

The nurse closed the door and came forward hurriedly. Her face was very pale.

"She—she can't come just this minute, dear. She will—a little later. What is it? Can't I—get it?"

Pollyanna shook her head.

"But I want to know what she said—just now. Did you hear her? I want Aunt Polly—she said something. I want her to tell me 'tisn't true—'tisn't true!"

The nurse tried to speak, but no words came. Something in her face sent an added terror to Pollyanna's eyes.

"Miss Hunt, you did hear her! It is true! Oh, it isn't true! You don't mean I can't ever—walk again?"

"There, there, dear—don't, don't!" choked the nurse. "Perhaps he didn't know. Perhaps he was mistaken. There's lots of things that could happen, you know."

"But Aunt Polly said he did know! She said he knew more than anybody else about—about broken legs like mine!"

"Yes, yes, I know, dear; but all doctors make mistakes sometimes. Just—just don't think any more about it now—please don't, dear."

Pollyanna flung out her arms wildly.

"But I can't help thinking about it," she sobbed. "It's all there is now to think about. Why, Miss Hunt, how am I going to school, or to see Mr. Pendleton, or Mrs. Snow, or—or anybody?" She caught her breath and sobbed wildly for a moment. Suddenly she stopped and looked up, a new terror in her eyes. "Why, Miss Hunt, if I can't walk, how am I ever to be glad for—anything?"

Miss Hunt did not know "the game," but she did know that her patient must be quieted, and that at once. In spite of her own perturbation and heartache, her hands had not been idle, and she stood now at the bedside with the quieting powder ready.

"There, there, dear, just take this," she soothed; "and by and by we'll be more rested, and we'll see what can be done then. Things aren't half as bad as they seem, dear, lots of times, you know."

Obediently Pollyanna took the medicine, and sipped the water from the glass in Miss Hunt's hand.

"I know; that sounds like things father used to say," faltered Pollyanna, blinking off the tears. "He said there was always something about everything that might be worse; but I reckon he'd never just heard he couldn't ever walk again. I don't see how there can be anything about that, that could be worse—do you?"

Miss Hunt did not reply. She could not trust herself to speak just then.

CHAPTER XXVII Two Visits

IT WAS Nancy who was sent to tell Mr. John Pendleton of Dr. Mead's verdict. Miss Polly had remembered her promise to let him have direct information from the house. To go herself, or to write a letter, she felt to be almost equally out of the question. It occurred to her then to send Nancy.

There had been a time when Nancy would have rejoiced greatly at this extraordinary opportunity to see something of the House of Mystery and its master. But today her heart was too heavy to rejoice at anything. She scarcely even looked about her at all, indeed, during the few minutes she waited for Mr. John Pendleton to appear.

"I'm Nancy, sir," she said respectfully, in response to the surprised questioning of his eyes, when he came into the room. "Miss Harrington sent me to tell you about—Miss Pollyanna."

"Well?"

In spite of the curt terseness of the word, Nancy quite understood the

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anxiety that lay behind that short "well?"

"It ain't well, Mr. Pendleton," she choked.

"You don't mean—" He paused, and she bowed her head miserably.

"Yes, sir. He says—she can't walk again—never."

For a moment there was absolute silence in the room; then the man spoke, in a voice shaken with emotion.

"Poor—little—girl! Poor—little—girl!"

Nancy glanced at him, but dropped her eyes at once. She had not supposed that sour, cross, stern John Pendleton could look like that. In a moment he spoke again, still in the low, unsteady voice.

"It seems cruel—never to dance in the sunshine again! My little prism girl!"

There was another silence; then, abruptly, the man asked:

"She herself doesn't know yet—of course—does she?"

"But she does, sir," sobbed Nancy; "an' that's what makes it all the harder. She found out—drat that cat! I begs yer pardon," apologized the girl, hurriedly. "It's only that the cat pushed open the door an' Miss Pollyanna overheard 'em talkin'." She found out—that way.

"Poor—little—girl!" sighed the man again.

"Yes, sir. You'd say so, sir, if you could see her," choked Nancy. "I hain't seen her but twice since she knew about it, an' it done me up both times. Ye see it's all so fresh an' new to her, an' she keeps thinkin' all the time of new things she can't do—now."

"It worries her, too, 'cause she can't seem ter be glad—maybe you don't know about her game, though," broke off Nancy, apologetically.

"The 'glad game'?" asked the man. "Oh, yes; she told me of that."

"Oh, she did! Well, I guess she has told it generally ter most folks. But ye see, now she—she can't play it herself, an' it worries her. She says she can't think of a thing—not a thing about this not walkin' again, ter be glad about."

"Well, why should she?" retorted the man, almost savagely.

Nancy shifted her feet uneasily.

"That's the way I felt, too—till I happened ter think—it would be easier if she could find somethin', ye know. So I tried to—to remind her."

"To remind her! Of what?" John Pendleton's voice was still angrily impatient.

"Of—of how she told others ter play it—Miss Snow, and the rest, ye know—and what she said for them ter do. But the poor little lamb just cries, an' says it don't seem the same, somehow. She says it's easier ter tell lifelong invalids how ter be glad, but 'tain't the same thing when you're the lifelong invalid yerself, an' have ter try ter do it. She says she's told herself over an' over again how glad she is that other folks ain't like her; but that all the time she's sayin' it, she ain't really thinkin' of anythin' only how she can't ever walk again."

Nancy paused, but the man did not speak. He sat with his hand over his eyes.

"Then I tried ter remind her how she used ter say the game was all the nicer ter play when—when it was hard," resumed Nancy, in a dull voice.

"But she says that, too, is different—when it really is hard. An' I must be goin', now, sir," she broke off abruptly.

(Continued next week)

BADLY MIXED

Dr. C. Alphonse Smith, of the University of Virginia, in a recent afternoon speech, according to the Philadelphia Record, told the following story:

"A Creole friend of mine was giving French lessons to an Englishman, who in turn taught him English. After a lesson one day the Englishman said:

"Come round to see me some time and talk English with me. That's the way to learn it."

"I will come viz plaiser," responded the Creole, "but I have ze fear zat I cockroach upon your time."

"You mean henroach," corrected the Englishman.

"Ah, yes, I always get ze gender wrong." —C. & O. Employer's Magazine.