

ELEANOR H. PORTER

POLLYANNA  
GROWS UP

Bird Publisher, 2011

## About this eBook

POLLYANNA GROWS UP

Eleanor H. Porter

Eleanor H. Porter, 1915

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## CHAPTER I

## DELLA SPEAKS HER MIND

Della Wetherby tripped up the somewhat imposing steps of her sister's Commonwealth Avenue home and pressed an energetic finger against the electric-bell button. From the tip of her wing-trimmed hat to the toe of her low-heeled shoe she radiated health, capability, and alert decision. Even her voice, as she greeted the maid that opened the door, vibrated with the joy of living.

„Good morning, Mary. Is my sister in?“

„Y-yes, ma'am, Mrs. Carew is in,“ hesitated the girl; „but – she gave orders she'd see no one.“

„Did she? Well, I'm no one,“ smiled Miss Wetherby, „so she'll see me. Don't worry – I'll take the blame,“ she nodded, in answer to the frightened remonstrance in the girl's eyes. „Where is she – in her sitting-room?“

„Y-yes, ma'am; but – that is, she said –“ Miss Wetherby, however, was already halfway up the broad stairway; and, with a despairing backward glance, the maid turned away.

In the hall above Della Wetherby unhesitatingly walked toward a half-open door, and knocked.

„Well, Mary,“ answered a „dear-me-what-now“ voice. „Haven't I – Oh, Della!“ The voice grew suddenly warm with love and surprise. „You dear girl, where did you come from?“

„Yes, it's Della,“ smiled that young woman, blithely, already halfway across the room. „I've come from an over-Sunday at the beach with two of the other nurses, and I'm on my way back to the Sanatorium now. That is, I'm here now, but I sha'n't be long. I stepped in for – this,“ she finished, giving the owner of the „dear-me-what-now“ voice a hearty kiss.

Mrs. Carew frowned and drew back a little coldly. The slight touch of joy and animation that had come into her face fled, leaving only a dispirited fretfulness that was plainly very much at home there.

„Oh, of course! I might have known,“ she said. „You never stay – here.“

„Here!“ Della Wetherby laughed merrily, and threw up her hands; then, abruptly, her voice and manner changed. She regarded her sister with grave, tender eyes. „Ruth, dear, I couldn't – I just couldn't live in this house. You know I couldn't,“ she finished gently.

Mrs. Carew stirred irritably.

„I'm sure I don't see why not,“ she fenced.

Della Wetherby shook her head.

„Yes, you do, dear. You know I'm entirely out of sympathy with it all: the gloom, the lack of aim, the insistence on misery and bitterness.“

„But I AM miserable and bitter.“

„You ought not to be.“

„Why not? What have I to make me otherwise?“

Della Wetherby gave an impatient gesture.

„Ruth, look here,“ she challenged. „You’re thirty-three years old. You have good health – or would have, if you treated yourself properly – and you certainly have an abundance of time and a superabundance of money. Surely anybody would say you ought to find SOMETHING to do this glorious morning besides sitting moped up in this tomb-like house with instructions to the maid that you’ll see no one.“

„But I don’t WANT to see anybody.“

„Then I’d MAKE myself want to.“

Mrs. Carew sighed wearily and turned away her head.

„Oh, Della, why won’t you ever understand? I’m not like you. I can’t – forget.“

A swift pain crossed the younger woman’s face.

„You mean – Jamie, I suppose. I don’t forget – that, dear. I couldn’t, of course. But moping won’t help us – find him.“

„As if I hadn’t TRIED to find him, for eight long years – and by something besides moping,“ flashed Mrs. Carew, indignantly, with a sob in her voice.

„Of course you have, dear,“ soothed the other, quickly; „and we shall keep on hunting, both of us, till we do find him – or die. But THIS sort of thing doesn’t help.“

„But I don’t want to do – anything else,“ murmured Ruth Carew, drearily.

For a moment there was silence. The younger woman sat regarding her sister with troubled, disapproving eyes.

„Ruth,“ she said, at last, with a touch of exasperation, „forgive me, but – are you always going to be like this? You’re widowed, I’ll admit; but your married life lasted only a year, and your husband was much older than yourself. You were little more than a child at the time, and that one short year can’t seem much more than a dream now. Surely that ought not to embitter your whole life!“

„No, oh, no,“ murmured Mrs. Carew, still drearily.

„Then ARE you going to be always like this?“

„Well, of course, if I could find Jamie –“

„Yes, yes, I know; but, Ruth, dear, isn’t there anything in the world but Jamie – to make you ANY happy?“

„There doesn’t seem to be, that I can think of,“ sighed Mrs. Carew, indifferently.

„Ruth!“ ejaculated her sister, stung into something very like anger. Then suddenly she laughed. „Oh, Ruth, Ruth, I’d like to give you a dose of Pollyanna. I don’t know any one who needs it more!“

Mrs. Carew stiffened a little.

„Well, what pollyanna may be I don’t know, but whatever it is, I don’t want it,“ she retorted sharply, nettled in her turn. „This isn’t your beloved Sanatorium, and I’m not your patient to be dosed and bossed, please remember.“

Della Wetherby’s eyes danced, but her lips remained unsmiling.

„Pollyanna isn't a medicine, my dear," she said demurely, „ – though I have heard some people call her a tonic. Pollyanna is a little girl."

„A child? Well, how should I know," retorted the other, still aggrievedly. „You have your ‚bella-donna,' so I'm sure I don't see why not ‚pollyanna.' Besides, you're always recommending something for me to take, and you distinctly said ‚dose' – and dose usually means medicine, of a sort."

„Well, Pollyanna IS a medicine – of a sort," smiled Della. „Anyway, the Sanatorium doctors all declare that she's better than any medicine they can give. She's a little girl, Ruth, twelve or thirteen years old, who was at the Sanatorium all last summer and most of the winter. I didn't see her but a month or two, for she left soon after I arrived. But that was long enough for me to come fully under her spell. Besides, the whole Sanatorium is still talking Pollyanna, and playing her game."

„GAME!"

„Yes," nodded Della, with a curious smile. „Her ‚glad game.' I'll never forget my first introduction to it. One feature of her treatment was particularly disagreeable and even painful. It came every Tuesday morning, and very soon after my arrival it fell to my lot to give it to her. I was dreading it, for I knew from past experience with other children what to expect: fretfulness and tears, if nothing worse. To my unbounded amazement she greeted me with a smile and said she was glad to see me; and, if you'll believe it, there was never so much as a whimper from her lips through the whole ordeal, though I knew I was hurting her cruelly.

„I fancy I must have said something that showed my surprise, for she explained earnestly: ‚Oh, yes, I used to feel that way, too, and I did dread it so, till I happened to think ‚twas just like Nancy's wash-days, and I could be gladdest of all on TUESDAYS, ‚cause there wouldn't be another one for a whole week.'"

„Why, how extraordinary!" frowned Mrs. Carew, not quite comprehending.

„But, I'm sure I don't see any GAME to that."

„No, I didn't, till later. Then she told me. It seems she was the motherless daughter of a poor minister in the West, and was brought up by the Ladies' Aid Society and missionary barrels. When she was a tiny girl she wanted a doll, and confidently expected it in the next barrel; but there turned out to be nothing but a pair of little crutches.

„The child cried, of course, and it was then that her father taught her the game of hunting for something to be glad about, in everything that happened; and he said she could begin right then by being glad she didn't NEED the crutches. That was the beginning. Pollyanna said it was a lovely game, and she'd been playing it ever since; and that the harder it was to find the glad part, the more fun it was, only when it was too AWFUL hard, like she had found it sometimes."

„Why, how extraordinary!" murmured Mrs. Carew, still not entirely comprehending.

„You'd think so – if you could see the results of that game in the Sanatorium," nodded Della; „and Dr. Ames says he hears she's revolutionized the whole town where she came from, just the same way. He knows Dr. Chilton very well – the man that married Pollyanna's aunt. And, by the way, I believe that marriage was one of her ministrations. She patched up an old lovers' quarrel between them.

„You see, two years ago, or more, Pollyanna's father died, and the little girl was sent East to this aunt. In October she was hurt by an automobile, and was told she could never walk again. In April Dr. Chilton sent her to the Sanatorium, and she was there till last March – almost a year.

She went home practically cured. You should have seen the child! There was just one cloud to mar her happiness: that she couldn't WALK all the way there. As near as I can gather, the whole town turned out to meet her with brass bands and banners.

„But you can't TELL about Pollyanna. One has to SEE her. And that's why I say I wish you could have a dose of Pollyanna. It would do you a world of good.“

Mrs. Carew lifted her chin a little.

„Really, indeed, I must say I beg to differ with you,“ she returned coldly. „I don't care to be ‚revolutionized,‘ and I have no lovers' quarrel to be patched up; and if there is ANYTHING that would be insufferable to me, it would be a little Miss Prim with a long face preaching to me how much I had to be thankful for. I never could bear –“ But a ringing laugh interrupted her.

„Oh, Ruth, Ruth,“ choked her sister, gleefully. „Miss Prim, indeed – POLLYANNA! Oh, oh, if only you could see that child now! But there, I might have known. I SAID one couldn't TELL about Pollyanna. And of course you won't be apt to see her. But – Miss Prim, indeed!“ And off she went into another gale of laughter. Almost at once, however, she sobered and gazed at her sister with the old troubled look in her eyes.

„Seriously, dear, can't anything be done?“ she pleaded. „You ought not to waste your life like this. Won't you try to get out a little more, and – meet people?“

„Why should I, when I don't want to? I'm tired of – people. You know society always bored me.“

„Then why not try some sort of work – charity?“

Mrs. Carew gave an impatient gesture.

„Della, dear, we've been all over this before. I do give money – lots of it, and that's enough. In fact, I'm not sure but it's too much. I don't believe in pauperizing people.“

„But if you'd give a little of yourself, dear,“ ventured Della, gently. „If you could only get interested in something outside of your own life, it would help so much; and –“

„Now, Della, dear,“ interrupted the elder sister, restively, „I love you, and I love to have you come here; but I simply cannot endure being preached to. It's all very well for you to turn yourself into an angel of mercy and give cups of cold water, and bandage up broken heads, and all that. Perhaps YOU can forget Jamie that way; but I couldn't. It would only make me think of him all the more, wondering if HE had any one to give him water and bandage up his head. Besides, the whole thing would be very distasteful to me – mixing with all sorts and kinds of people like that.“

„Did you ever try it?“

„Why, no, of course not!“ Mrs. Carew's voice was scornfully indignant.

„Then how can you know – till you do try?“ asked the young nurse, rising to her feet a little wearily. „But I must go, dear. I'm to meet the girls at the South Station. Our train goes at twelve-thirty. I'm sorry if I've made you cross with me,“ she finished, as she kissed her sister good-by.

„I'm not cross with you, Della,“ sighed Mrs. Carew; „but if you only would understand!“

One minute later Della Wetherby made her way through the silent, gloomy halls, and out to the street. Face, step, and manner were very different from what they had been when she tripped up the steps less than half an hour before. All the alertness, the springiness, the joy of living were gone. For half a block she listlessly dragged one foot after the other. Then, suddenly, she threw back her head and drew a long breath.