

Part III

CHAPTER 37 The Golden Rule

Two or three weeks after this, as we came into the yard rather late in the evening, Polly came running across the road with the lantern (she always brought it to him if it was not very wet).

“It has all come right, Jerry; Mrs. Briggs sent her servant this afternoon to ask you to take her out tomorrow at eleven o’clock. I said, ‘Yes, I thought so, but we supposed she employed some one else now.’”

“Well,” said he, ‘the real fact is, master was put out because Mr. Barker refused to come on Sundays, and he has been trying other cabs, but there’s something wrong with them all; some drive too fast, and some too slow, and the mistress says there is not one of them so nice and clean as yours, and nothing will suit her but Mr. Barker’s cab again.’”

Polly was almost out of breath, and Jerry broke out into a merry laugh.

“’Twill all come right some day or night’: you were right, my dear; you generally are. Run in and get the supper, and I’ll have Jack’s harness off and make him

snug and happy in no time.”

After this Mrs. Briggs wanted Jerry’s cab quite as often as before, never, however, on a Sunday; but there came a day when we had Sunday work, and this was how it happened. We had all come home on the Saturday night very tired, and very glad to think that the next day would be all rest, but so it was not to be.

On Sunday morning Jerry was cleaning me in the yard, when Polly stepped up to him, looking very full of something.

“What is it?” said Jerry.

“Well, my dear,” she said, “poor Dinah Brown has just had a letter brought to say that her mother is dangerously ill, and that she must go directly if she wishes to see her alive. The place is more than ten miles away from here, out in the country, and she says if she takes the train she should still have four miles to walk; and so weak as she is, and the baby only four weeks old, of course that would be impossible; and she wants to know if you would take her in your cab, and she promises to pay you faithfully, as she can get the money.”

“Tut, tut! we’ll see about that. It was not the money I was thinking about, but of losing our Sunday; the horses are tired, and I am tired, too--that’s where it pinches.”

“It pinches all round, for that matter,” said Polly, “for it’s only half Sunday without you, but you know we should do to other people as we should like they should do to us; and I know very well what I should like if my mother was dying; and Jerry, dear, I am sure it won’t

break the Sabbath; for if pulling a poor beast or donkey out of a pit would not spoil it, I am quite sure taking poor Dinah would not do it.”

“Why, Polly, you are as good as the minister, and so, as I’ve had my Sunday-morning sermon early to-day, you may go and tell Dinah that I’ll be ready for her as the clock strikes ten; but stop--just step round to butcher Braydon’s with my compliments, and ask him if he would lend me his light trap; I know he never uses it on the Sunday, and it would make a wonderful difference to the horse.”

Away she went, and soon returned, saying that he could have the trap and welcome.

“All right,” said he; “now put me up a bit of bread and cheese, and I’ll be back in the afternoon as soon as I can.”

“And I’ll have the meat pie ready for an early tea instead of for dinner,” said Polly; and away she went, while he made his preparations to the tune of “Polly’s the woman and no mistake”, of which tune he was very fond.

I was selected for the journey, and at ten o’clock we started, in a light, high-wheeled gig, which ran so easily that after the four-wheeled cab it seemed like nothing.

It was a fine May day, and as soon as we were out of the town, the sweet air, the smell of the fresh grass, and the soft country roads were as pleasant as they used to be in the old times, and I soon began to feel quite fresh.

Dinah’s family lived in a small farmhouse, up a green

lane, close by a meadow with some fine shady trees; there were two cows feeding in it. A young man asked Jerry to bring his trap into the meadow, and he would tie me up in the cowshed; he wished he had a better stable to offer.

“If your cows would not be offended,” said Jerry, “there is nothing my horse would like so well as to have an hour or two in your beautiful meadow; he’s quiet, and it would be a rare treat for him.”

“Do, and welcome,” said the young man; “the best we have is at your service for your kindness to my sister; we shall be having some dinner in an hour, and I hope you’ll come in, though with mother so ill we are all out of sorts in the house.”

Jerry thanked him kindly, but said as he had some dinner with him there was nothing he should like so well as walking about in the meadow.

When my harness was taken off I did not know what I should do first--whether to eat the grass, or roll over on my back, or lie down and rest, or have a gallop across the meadow out of sheer spirits at being free; and I did all by turns. Jerry seemed to be quite as happy as I was; he sat down by a bank under a shady tree, and listened to the birds, then he sang himself, and read out of the little brown book he is so fond of, then wandered round the meadow, and down by a little brook, where he picked the flowers and the hawthorn, and tied them up with long sprays of ivy; then he gave me a good feed of the oats which he had brought with him; but the time seemed all too short--I had not been in a field since I left poor Ginger

at Earlshall.

We came home gently, and Jerry's first words were, as we came into the yard, "Well, Polly, I have not lost my Sunday after all, for the birds were singing hymns in every bush, and I joined in the service; and as for Jack, he was like a young colt."

When he handed Dolly the flowers she jumped about for joy.