

Maggie's Golden Rule.

Elvira Benson, in 'Michigan Christian Advocate.'

Part I.

'Maggie, our ten have the loveliest plan! We have all agreed to it but you, and I know you will because you are always so ready to help every one. You know that Mrs. Green, who lived on Maple farm. They came here a little over a year ago, but hardly any one is acquainted with her, because she never has time to go anywhere. What with her five children, the twins only eight and three younger, the hired men and the large dairy, she is kept so busy that she has no time to make acquaintances. Now we girls are going to take turns taking care of the children on Saturday afternoons, so she can go out for a walk, make calls, or do whatever she likes and have a good rest.'

'And what will Mr. Green pay you for it Della?'

'Pay us! What do you mean? We are doing it for the Lord's sake.'

'I didn't know the Lord wanted us to help people to be mean,' replied Maggie.

'Why, Maggie, how strange you are today. I felt so sure that you would be glad to help in this, because you always seem to think of others before yourself.'

'Thank you, Della. If there is any truth in what you say it is my reason for not being more interested in your plan. My school work every day, with the mile walk night and morning and extra studies in the evening, takes so much of my time as to leave more of the housework and sewing to mamma than she ought to do. So I try to help her all I can on Saturdays, and I do not feel that I ought to take any time from her to give to Mr. Green to save him the expense of a hired girl. If it were a case of need it would be different, but Mr. Green is rich and stingy, and he has no right to make a slave of his wife as he does.'

'But Mrs. Green cannot help it,' argued Della. 'We are not doing it for Mr. Green, but for his poor overworked wife.'

'But he gets all the benefit of it all the same,' replied Maggie. 'I do feel sorry for Mrs. Green, and would like to help her, if I could. And I can,' she added with sudden energy, 'and I will.'

But not a word more would she say. To all Della's coaxing she only replied: 'Wait and see, I don't know that I have the courage.'

Her suddenly formed plan was to go to Mr. Green and hold him up to himself as he was seen by his neighbors. 'It is a dreadful thing to do' she said to herself, 'but I do believe some one ought to do it. But no one will. They will all talk about it, and say what a shame it is, and how they pity Mrs. Green, but no one will go straight to Mr. Green unless I do. I almost wish I had not thought of it, but the more I think of it the more reasonable and right it seems to me. I think it would be following out the golden rule, too. If I were in her circumstances I should want some one to help me if they could. It's no use saying I'm sorry for her unless I do what I can to help her—and I'll try, anyhow.'

Her opportunity soon came. Mr. Green overtook her one morning on her way to school, and invited her to a seat in his carriage. 'Now or never,' thought Maggie, and a more astonished man than Alonzo Green it would have been hard to find, when, having seated himself beside him, she opened her epistle to Alonzo, and talking very rapidly lest her courage fail her, she told him without sparing his feelings in the

least just what she thought of him and the way he treated his wife. 'I felt sure you did not realize it, sir,' she concluded, 'for of course you love her too well to hurt her if you only thought about it.'

'So this is the way my neighbors are gossiping about me while they are pretending to be my friends. I suppose you have canvassed this thing pretty thoroughly among you, young lady?'

'O, no, sir,' said Maggie earnestly. 'Our ten have a rule never to speak evil of any one. I have not mentioned this even to mamma. I thought it would be kinder to come right to you with it. I hope I have not offended or hurt you, sir. I certainly did not mean to.'

'I don't know, miss. You certainly have astonished me. I am not capable of analyzing my feelings any farther than that at present. Good morning,' as Maggie alighted at the school-house door.

Alonzo Green did a great deal of thinking during the week that followed. And very furtively he watched his wife as she went about her daily work. 'Strange he had not noticed how her cheeks had lost their pretty soft roundness that he had been so proud of only a few years ago. There were actually a few grey hairs among the sunny braids. And how thin and hard her hands were that were once so plump and dimpled.'

Farmer Green was not demonstrative. His wife noticed no difference in his treatment of her; and Maggie Bryan, eagerly watching for the effect of her daring venture, had decided that it was a failure before he made any sign. Then, as she was walking rapidly home from school one evening a pleasant voice called out:

'Good evening, Miss Bryan. Will you ride with me again? You don't happen to know of a young lady who could be persuaded to come and look after our youngsters a few weeks, do you? Mrs. Green and myself are about taking a trip to Niagara, if we can find a suitable person to leave in charge during our absence.'

'O yes, sir, I know the very person,' said Maggie delightedly. 'Such a sweet girl. She was out here last summer, sent by the Fresh Air Society. She works in a store in the city, and it is too confining for her. She was so thin and pale when she came, and the two weeks in the country did her so much good. We have corresponded ever since, and in her last letter she said she could not hope to come again this summer. There are so many who need the rest and change that all must have their turn. Oh, I know she will think this a godsend.'

'Write to her at once,' said Mr. Green, 'and before you send the letter I will see that you have a railway ticket to enclose in it. No, no thanks, I detest them.' And he drove rapidly away, leaving Maggie astonished but happy at her own gate.

Part II.

No words could describe Mrs. Green's surprise and pleasure when, in his singular, abrupt manner, her husband told her of his plans for the trip.

'No use to bother about sewing,' he said. 'We can buy all you need and a trunk to put them in as we go through L—. We'll start as soon as that girl can come from the city.'

Mrs. Green knew her husband too well to express her gratitude in words. But she did what she had not done for many months. She went up to him and laid an arm about his neck and kissed him. He put his arm about her waist and drew her down to his knee.

'You are losing your good looks, Lucy,

and it is not creditable to me. I must take better care of you.' This from silent, reserved Alonzo Green meant more than whole volumes of confession and promises from some men; and his wife understood it as he meant it, that he was sorry for the past and meant to make the future different.

Grace Collins was so tired as she stood behind Lyon & Turner's glove counter. It was bargain day and the rush had been something terrible. It was hot and her head ached, and worst of all, Mr. Turner had that morning called her into his private office and offered her a month's vacation, and she had been obliged to decline it because she had no relatives to visit except a brother in a far away state, and paying for her board was out of the question. It was hard for her to make both ends meet at the best, and any unnecessary expense was not to be thought of. With her inherited tendency to lung trouble she dared not 'rough it,' as some of the girls did, to keep down expenses. She was obliged to eat good nourishing food, and her dress in the winter must be of the warmest, or she could not keep her frail body up to the mark of earning a livelihood. This, with occasional doctor's bills, which she could not avoid, kept her purse at a very low ebb, even when she worked all the time and spent as little as possible.

She was thinking of this as she stood leaning against the counter for a moment in an interval of rest, and, brave little woman though she was, her heart almost failed her. 'But courage,' she said to herself, "ye are of more value and many sparrows," unconsciously repeating the words she had read that morning.

'A letter for you, Miss Grace.' The voice of Jim, the errand boy, broke in upon her reverie.

It was a very excited Grace who a few minutes later knocked at Mr. Turner's office door and asked to see the junior partner.

'Is the offer you made me this morning still open, Mr. Turner?'

'Yes, Miss Collins. Have you changed your mind?'

For answer she handed him the letter, with the railway ticket enclosed.

'I am very glad for you, Miss Collins. You are one of our most faithful helpers, and I rejoice in your good fortune. You will wish to go soon?'

'To-morrow, if I may.'

He bowed. 'There is nothing to prevent you.'

The short trip to Glendale seemed to Grace like a journey to a heavenly country. She could hardly believe she was the same weary girl who had stood yesterday behind Lyon & Turner's glove counter.

Everything on the farm was new to her, but with the assistance of the strong-armed German girl whom Mr. Green had hired to do the heavy work, she learned so fast that in a week Mrs. Green told her husband she felt perfectly safe to go and leave everything in her care.

It would be hard to tell which enjoyed the next month most, Mrs. Green at Niagara or Grace Collins on the farm. A letter had been received from the travellers announcing their return in a few days, and Grace sat on the piazza with the children talking it over.

'Must 'oo do 'way when mamma tomes home? Me don't want 'oo do 'way.' This from little Walter, who was Grace's special pet.

'She need not go away unless she chooses,' said Lena, the oldest girl. 'I heard papa tell mamma before you came, that if you suited he should ask you to stay always.'