

# The True Witness,

AND

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THE TWO COTTAGES;  
SHOWING HOW MANY MORE FAMILIES MAY  
BE HAPPY AND COMFORTABLE  
THAN ARE SO.

## CHAPTER I.

In a quarter of a large town, principally inhabited by the families of working men, there stood a row of cottages, each consisting of three rooms and a little yard. Among these cottages there were two which formed a conspicuous contrast. One was the very picture of neatness and comfort, with its windows garnished with plants and flowers, and its snow-white curtains and blinds. The other had an air of misery and neglect, which showed itself but too plainly in dirty windows, broken panes of glass, and general untidiness. In the first lived a carpenter, named James Brady, and his family. Brady was originally from Ireland, and although at first he had some annoyances to brave, owing to his being an Irishman and a Catholic, he succeeded by patience and good humor, joined with firmness, in gaining the good will of his fellow-workmen. After a time, feeling the discomforts and disadvantages of not having a home, he married; but how this came about, we shall hear by-and-by.

Brady had been a married man for some time, and his children were grown up about him, when a fellow-workman asked him one evening how it was that with his large family, and only a mechanic's wages, he had such a comfortable house, and everything as nice as the foreman, who had so much more to spend? "You must have good friends and help," added John Jones (for that was the name of the man who spoke); "few of the men are so well off; they mostly complain of not getting on with their large families, and want more wages. It makes a man afraid to marry, and yet it is miserable to be single when we have no one to care for us."

"In answer to your question," said Brady, "I must tell you that I have had nothing to help me but my own earnings and my wife's good management; it is to her, indeed, that I owe my comfortable home."

"How did you get such a treasure?" said Jones, smiling.

"I will tell you," replied Brady, "and if you go the same road, perhaps you may find such another."

"You see, my friend," continued Brady, "I believe that there is a God above us, who is our father as well as our maker, and that we ought to ask His guidance in every action of our lives: so, of course, I begged Him to direct me. Then I used prudence and reflection, and was determined not to take the first flimsy, silly, showy-looking girl that I met with. I saw plenty of smartly-dressed girls at the chapel on Sundays, in the streets, and at the houses where I worked; but I would not have any of them, for I thought it would be a bad look-out for me if she were to continue to put all my earnings on her back in that foolish, useless way. Neither would I take a wife out of those rich families, where servants learn such extravagant ways: so I was a long time seeking, till at last I met my Mary. She was second servant in a family where only two were kept; she had a great deal to do, and I liked her cheerful, hearty, busy way in doing her work through the house, for I was often employed there to do one job or another. She seemed to have both good sense and good principles, and her manner was always reserved and steady. After a time, I asked her, and she said she would take a while to consider, and consult her mistress and her director; in which she was right, for she had no other friends so good to advise with. I suppose they satisfied her about me, and so she consented. I saw her lady, and she told me she was a very good girl and just the one for a poor man's wife, for she never knew her to waste a morsel, or spend money uselessly on herself, although she was kind and generous to the poor."

"I found that between us we had saved thirty pounds, so when she came home we had our two rooms comfortably furnished, a good stock of linen, and plenty of comfortable neat clothes for herself, with ten out of the thirty to keep for future extras. She set to at once and got all my clothes mended, and from that day to this I have never had a wrong word with her. She is a good, religious woman, and makes her children and me good too. I give her all my earnings, and she explains to me how she spends them, and it is a wonder to me she makes them go so far. I have never wanted good meals, and even when the children were born, or we had sickness among them, she had things so well arranged, as to make me feel it as little as possible. I never care to go out for pleasure, I always find it at home. The children are not a trouble, but a comfort to us, and when I go home of an evening, I find the place clean and comfortable. After supper, we read a little, and have night prayers, and then the children go to bed, when Mary and I have our quiet hour to ourselves for reading or chatting, and we retire to rest at ten o'clock, late enough for any man that gets up at five o'clock in the morning."

"How happy you must be," said Jones.

"I wish you would find we such another wife!" "Oh, you must seek her as I did," replied Brady.

And so they party for the night.

## CHAPTER II.

Brady and his family were, as he truly said, happy and comfortable. They had experienced of course, days of sickness and trial, and at times heavy calls on their savings, but still they got on. As their family increased, he felt the advantage of his wife's care and prudence. When they were first married, she was never idle, but making and preparing for the future. She bought by degrees bedding for the third room, and as each little one came, had a separate bed for each, the boys in a room at the top of the house, and the girls in another. Brady and his wife having for themselves a shut up bedstead, which they placed in the kitchen or sitting-room. They considered it wise and proper thus to divide children as they emerge from infancy, and this was a duty which Brady said he thought poor people often neglected. "However poor they may be," he said, "they might put up at night (even if they have no more than one room) a division by means of old boards, &c." Brady and his wife, in this as in everything else, watched over and guarded their little ones from evil, and they were amply repaid, by seeing their seven children such as Christian parents might rejoice in; the boys, fine, honest, manly fellows, and the girls as good and useful as many double their age; and all loving and obedient to their parents. James often went on a Sunday to the schoolmaster to ask how his boys were getting on! and both parents made it a point to attend the school examinations, to show the children the interest they took in their improvement.

Mary was very strict in keeping the children to school, and if any fault was found with her girls by the nuns, she corrected them immediately, feeling, justly, that no school correction or instruction will be successful if children are spoiled at home.

In summer, Brady took all the children on Sunday evenings for a nice walk in the country, or sometimes on a little tea excursion. In winter he had them round him by the fire, to enjoy some treat, or read an interesting book, and at these times he questioned them as to their progress during the week, and encouraged them to ask for advice, and tell him all their difficulties. The eldest boy was now fifteen, and a pupil teacher at the school, the second lad was errand-boy at a grocer's. The oldest girl, who was near seventeen, had been sometime out at service, and was as steady as a woman of thirty.

## CHAPTER III.

We must now say something of the inhabitants of the second cottage, mentioned in our first chapter. It was occupied by Richard Sheer, a railway porter, and his family. Sheer had married about the same time as Brady, and brought home a very smart, fine-looking girl as his wife. It made quite a sensation in the street when the porter's wife turned out on Sunday, with her silk dress and mantle, flowers in her bonnet, and a fine parasol. Brady was so disgusted, that he desired his wife to have no acquaintance with her. "No decent man," said he, "ought to allow his wife to dress in that way, making herself look like a wrong-doer; for only that class dress so and live in a poor place. Those that can have a right to dress finely don't reside in poor cottages."

At first, while their family was small, Mrs. Sheer managed to keep up her smart appearance; but gradually the finery became faded, and she had no means of supplying herself with more. The house was the pattern of untidiness, and the children dirty and neglected. In short, she proved herself an idle, indolent slattern, without either the will or the power to make a respectable and comfortable home, though her husband's wages were much better than many of his class. At the time at which we have now arrived, the Sheers had two boys and two girls almost grown up; the latter had their mother's fashion of being very smart on Sunday, and dirty and slovenly during the week; bold, rude girls they seemed to be.—Lately, the eldest had gone out to service, and the second girl as apprentice to a dress-maker. The eldest boy was a kind of porter in the grocer's shop where Brady's son was.

They all turned out as might have been expected from their training, or rather their want of training; their mother never corrected them, but let them do just as they liked, so that they had become selfish and wilful, hard and unfeeling, as human nature will become if left without correction or restraint. As for the father, he became so disgusted with the dirt and discomfort of his home, that he began to leave it for the public-house, and now and then, alas! he would come back the worse for drink. So things went on, as is always the case, from bad to worse.

On one occasion the neighbors heard cries for help from Sheer's cottage, and on running in, they found that he was beating his youngest boy, from whose face the blood was streaming, while his father abused him and his mother in fearful terms. It appeared that when Sheer came home and found no supper prepared for

him, he began to knock things about, and to curse and swear which the boy laughed at.—At this, the father said he would teach him better behaviour, and in a violent rage he nearly killed the lad.

A very different scene appeared a few doors off. There sat Brady and his wife, the very picture of quiet, happiness and comfort.—John Jones had just come in to ask if he might spend an hour with them.

"It is so lonely for a man that does not care to go to the public," he said; "so if you will only let me come in now and then, I won't interrupt your usual way, and I like to hear a bit of reading, so go on with the book you had open when I entered."

"It is a book that has a little religion in it," said Brady; "and as you are not of our way, it may not please you."

"Oh, never mind; I don't believe all that people say of your Papists; I never saw anything bad in you, at any rate," answered Jones.

"I am not so good as many, many Catholics," continued Brady; "and although there are plenty very bad, and half-and-half ones, that is no fault of our religion, any more than it was the fault of our Divine Saviour that Judas was false; but you must please to call us Catholics, not Papists, for our religion is Catholic (that is, universal,) and we are, therefore, Catholics. But, as I said, you must not judge of our religion by the conduct of all of us; for if everyone lived up to what it teaches, there would not be a bad man or woman among us. Our religion, my friend teaches us to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves. Is that bad?"

"No; that's very good, sure enough. But there are so many other queer things you believe and do," said Jones.

"Never mind what you think we believe and do; but let me tell you what we really do believe, and are taught by the Church. You know, of course, as much as this, viz: that God made the world, and that after the disobedience of our first parents (which branded all their posterity with sin) God was so good as to send His only son as a Redeemer."

"O yes, I know all that," said Jones.

"Very well, when our Saviour came, He taught the apostles the new law, which was to be followed by mankind henceforth, and commanded them to teach others, on and on, till the end of time. He made Peter the superior and head of them, as He said, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Well, what the apostles taught, the Catholic Church has continued to teach to the present day, and she has her unerring line of Bishops at Rome, from St. Peter until now. Besides the above text, you will find that St. Paul says, 'There is but one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism.'"

"I remember that too," said Jones.

"Then," added Brady, "don't you think you ought to belong to that Church which has the one Faith that cannot err? For our Lord says, 'Lo, I am with you all days, till the consummation of the world.' You Protestants say you can err, therefore, you cannot be in the right way; for our Divine Saviour would never appoint a way for men to follow that might prove to be a wrong one. No, He showed but one road to Heaven; and He left us plenty of helps in our ministers and teachers to show us that one way in the Catholic Church. And if people won't follow it, they go to destruction. At the day of judgment we shall see that God settled one way to Heaven, and man had no leave to follow any other."

"There is a deal of truth in what you say, and when I know more on the subject, I shall be better able to understand your religion."

"You can read, John Jones, and when a man can do that, he has no excuse for ignorance; and the best way to know our belief is through our own books of instruction and devotion, and not in what our enemies say of us."

"If all your people were like you and your wife, there would not be such a bad opinion of your religion. But do tell me," continued Jones, "why you pray so much to the Virgin; the apostles did not."

Brady quietly took the Bible, and put it before him, saying, "Look at the first of St. Luke, 48th verse."

Jones read it and looked somewhat abashed.

"Now please for the future," said Brady, "to call her 'blessed.' But as to your objection, we know that the apostles venerated her, and that after the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they and all the saints prayed to her. People that are humble find great comfort in having an honored fellow-creature that they can ask to intercede for them with the awful Majesty of God. And God has shown in Scripture that His faithful servants were to intercede with Him for sinners as in the case of holy Job." How much more, then, she who was so far exalted above all others as to be the Mother of God.

Jones looked very thoughtful, and said that his friends had shown him things in quite a new light, and that he would come often, and get them to talk to him on such subjects.

"Come and spend next Sunday evening with us," put in Mary. "Ay," added Brady, "do; it is my wife's feast, and we shall have a little merry meeting; our Mary Ann and a neighbor or two will be here, and it will be pleasant for you."

"But does not the Bible say, 'Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day?'"

"Yes, it does; and I hope we do keep it holy. And if you are out at seven o'clock in the morning you will see plenty of Catholics, in their Sunday clothes, trotting along to our churches and chapels, and in some towns earlier; but here we go for the eight o'clock mass, and many to confession, and to prepare for the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist; that ends about one o'clock, or a little earlier; then we attend at half-past two o'clock for the catechetical instructions which the school children have, half an hour before vespers, or the three o'clock service, which is not over till near five o'clock. Now I don't think many of you Protestants do as much as that, with all your talk about the Sabbath. And after that, do you think that our Heavenly Father would be displeased at working people having innocent recreation and amusement. It is very often not so much the things themselves, as the way they are done, and above all, too, the innocence of heart and mind that makes the difference; where that is pure, and all is done in simplicity and gratitude to God, no innocent amusement can displease God, on a Sunday, after the fulfilment of our religious duties. I put going to public-houses, and other places of sin and temptation, as, of course, out of the case entirely."

"I will come," said Jones; "and I wish truly that I did on a Sunday half what you do. Good bye, till then."

## CHAPTER IV.

Mary had obtained the permission of Mary Ann's mistress for her daughter to spend the Sunday evening with them. Though Mrs. Brown generally disapproved of servants going out visiting on Sunday evenings, from the number of idlers and ill-disposed persons abroad on that day; yet, knowing what excellent people the Bradys were, and the good example and training they gave their children, she never objected to Mary Ann going to them. So, on Sunday evening, when Jones got to Brady's cottage, their small, neat little parlour, or kitchen (whichever it might be called), was quite full. Besides all the children, there were Ester Bell, a young friend of Mary Ann's, and Patrick Murphy, an Irishman, whom Brady had known in early days in his own country, and another friend or two. On the table was a clean white cloth, and a handsome tea-tray, with a new set of tea-things; the latter was their daughter Mary Ann's present to her mother on her feast, and the tea-tray came from her mistress, who, hearing what Mary Ann wished for an hour to go out to purchase, most kindly desired her to get the tray, and take it as a mark of her mistress's esteem for her mother. Mary Ann was greatly delighted, and her parents much gratified with it all. On the table were placed the various little articles each child had prepared for their mother; even the little thing in the infant-school had knitted her a pair of garters, and all had presented her with some gift from the savings of their reward pence.

After tea the children and young people amused themselves in various ways, till, at last, Mary announced that supper was coming. This was another pleasant feast, consisting of a large meat-pie, a rice-pudding, some roasted apples, and a great dish of custard; a goodly display, but not more than Mary's good management could enable her to prepare for her husband's gratification.

After a cheerful, innocent evening, Brady took his daughter and her friend home to their places, for he never allowed his girl to pass through the streets at night alone.

While the young people had been playing, Brady asked Murphy how he was getting on.

"I earn middling," answered he. "But it breaks my strength sorely, them walks of twenty miles a day."

"But you must eat hearty, and keep up your strength with good food," said Brady.

"I have meat on a Sunday; but I can't afford it oftener."

"Then I don't wonder you feel the long walks. Why, man alive, that will never do."

"I don't know how it is," sighed Murphy; "I give Kitty all my earnings; I don't drink, and yet she says she can't make it go further than it does."

"What do you earn a week?" asked Mary.

"I dare say I get, one week with another, about eighteen shillings; but I don't think my wife is a good manager. I wish, Mrs. Brady, you would advise her a bit; she would take it kindly, I'm sure. She was very young when we were married, and had no one to put her in the way of things; and since I got down in the world she is all astray. I get out of patience sometimes, and angry; when I see the children not kept constant to school."

"But you ought to insist on that," interposed Brady; "and be firm yourself in exacting obedience from both wife and children."

"Ay," said Mary, "poor people's children

are required to go out so early to earn for themselves, that they can't be too soon taught what is necessary for them; the girls only want to read and sew well, with a little writing and figures, and to be well instructed in their religion; if they have time for more, well and good, but the mother should look most to their sewing and catechism. The boys, of course, want more learning; and therefore we don't, for that reason as well as others, let them lose their time in playing about the streets after school hours. In fine weather I make them go a walk in the country, or some useful message, but never idle a moment's time; for, I am sure, if every idle word has to be accounted for, every idle minute has."

"But don't you think children require some play and diversion?" asked Murphy.

"Of course they do," replied Mary; "but even useful occupations can be made amusing to them. And at any rate, mine are never allowed to play in the streets; if I have nothing for them to do, I send them to play in the fields."

"Can you trust them?"

"Oh yes; we have taught our children to be steady and obedient, and as good in our absence as when with us, and to remember God's presence more than ours."

"I'm afraid Kitty and I are not such good and careful parents as we ought to be; but I am never at home till evening, and can't look after the children."

"But you can inquire into things, and make use of the Sunday for instructing them," said Brady.

"I shall feel for ever obliged to you and Mrs. Brady," replied Murphy, "if you will take us in hand; for you are both more knowledgeable than we are; and do, Mrs. Brady, come and see Kitty while she is troubled with the little one's illness."

"I shall be very glad to do whatever I can for her; and, please God, I'll go to-morrow and see her."

## CHAPTER V.

Next day Mary went, and found Murphy's wife (whom she already had a slight acquaintance with), and the youngest child, better than she expected; the other little ones (except the eldest) were playing about.

"Not at school?" said Mary.

"No," replied the mother; "I was so busy with baby that I could not get them ready."

"But where is your eldest girl?"

"Oh, she is gone to school, for Patrick made such a piece of work about it, that I durst not keep her at home. Indeed, Mrs. Brady, he is very cross at times, and last week threatened to go off and enlist. But ye see, he is sore put to, having to earn for us in such a way. When we married, he had a bit of land that would have kept us comfortable."

"It is hard," said Mary, "but God has so willed it, and we must all, you know, make the best of things as they come; if I can help you, I will, with pleasure. Poor people must earn, both as husbands and wives, and when your baby gets better, I think I can get you half a day's employment, now and then."

"Thank you Mrs. Brady; but how can I leave the child and the place?"

"Oh, very well; the child is old enough to stand and sit by herself, and you can take her to the infant school, and leave some food for her, and she will be quite as well and happy there as with you,—if you can't trust her and the place to your oldest girl."

"I'm afraid she is too giddy."

"That's a pity," said Mary, "for all poor people's children should be steady and useful as soon as possible; good as my husband is, I assure you he would be in a fine way if, when I was ill, my little ones were not orderly and useful, and the elder ones able to look after the youngest; and the sooner you get yours into order the better for your own and their advantage. I make it a rule in my place that they all get up at a fixed hour, and while I attend to the house, the eldest girls dress and wash the little ones, and hear them say their prayers, put by their night things and get them down to breakfast by eight o'clock, and then prepare them for school. I did it myself till one of the girls was old enough, and then I made her attend to the others. I give each child a good breakfast of milk and bread, and sometimes porridge and treacle. Each one has in her little bag, with her name written on it, a piece of bread, and I send a can of stew, or broth, or rice. To each one also I give a spoon and tin mug, so that they can eat their dinner at the play hour of one o'clock. Then they have their evening meal at five o'clock."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Brady, I could not afford to give the children such food as you do; we mostly have to do with a cup of tea and bit of bread, unless on Sunday, when we have meat."

"And do you mean to say you don't give your husband meat oftener than that?"

"He takes a bit of bread and cheese and gets a drop of beer as he goes along."

"Then I don't wonder he looks so ill."

"Do you think he looks ill, Mrs. Brady?"

"Indeed I do, and Brady and I were saying he was breaking fast."

"Oh, dear! what should we do if anything happened to him?" exclaimed his wife.