

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 VI.

Mary's daughter came in a few days to ask her mother to do some little service for Mrs. Brown, her mistress, and at the same time she named to her another object of her visit, viz.: to get her permission to go to a servants' party where her young friend Esther Bell lived. She had leave to invite two friends and it was to be a large gathering.

"I don't like to deny you any pleasure," said Mary; "but I have a great dislike to these servants' parties, and I would rather you would refuse. If people could meet together and dance, and enjoy themselves in a simple innocent way, I should not object; but when you see people going to the devil with pride and vanity, I don't choose that my daughter should be among them. Those parties do a great deal of harm to servants, by giving them some taste for luxury which their betters have, and unfitting them, after a time, for the duties of their station in life, by which means numbers are drawn in the end into sin."

"I don't care to go myself, mother, for I expect they will all be very smart: the cook and housemaid are very dressy, and wear silk."

"Yes, and the housemaid is sinful enough to put that useless finery on herself, while she lets her poor old mother live on the parish where she will be herself some of these days. I expect, when she can no longer work. The cook, too, has, I know, lost an opportunity of a good sensible tradesman marrying her, for he was afraid, from her dress, that she would be an extravagant wife, and on this account he left her. I wouldn't blame the man; for the extravagance of their wives ruins more tradesmen than you have any idea of. As to the party, you must tell them why I prefer your not going; and I wish, from my heart, the gentry would give their servants amusements more suitable for them; what may be all very well for the rich and high-born, and suitable to their means, is unsuitable, and even injurious, to persons in our class."

When Mary Ann returned to tell her friend Esther that she could not come to their party, the servants were in the hall after dinner, and they all attacked her for her refusal.

"You are a regular old granny," said the kitchen maid, "never to have a bit of fun or amusement."

"That is not the case," retorted Mary Ann. "I have as much amusement and recreation as I desire, and you should see me at home playing at blind-man's buff with the children; but I don't like your parties any more than my mother does. I'd come and dance with great enjoyment if your gatherings were like what poor people have; but you will all be aping the ways of quality with your fine dresses, and I don't think any good will come of it."

"And why can't you have as smart dresses as we have?" asked the housemaid.

"I don't think I require better than what I have," answered Mary Ann; "and I prefer to spend my money in other things, and to put by a little."

"How can you put by out of eight pounds a year, and have proper clothes?"

"I can do both," said Mary Ann. "I am very well provided with underthings, such as are plain and suitable to me, for my lady is very particular about personal cleanliness, and dress is so cheap now, that by getting each quarter a certain portion, and saving my gowns by large aprons, I dress as you see and put by into the savings' bank ten shillings a quarter, besides giving a little to the altar, and often a present to my mother."

"Your mistress gives you, I suppose?"

"She does give me a gown or some other thing now and then, and a present at Christmas, but she knows the very poor require them more than I do."

"Well," said the housemaid, "I would not stay there, with so much to do, for such wages. Why don't you better yourself?"

"I would not better myself, as you call it, for I could not," said Mary Ann, her eyes filling with tears. "I love my mistress; she is very kind, and treats and cares for her servants as if they were her children, and both cook and I make her interests our own: I feel that I can never be grateful enough to her for all she has taught me, and her patience in bearing with my ignorance till I learnt to be a good servant. And to go and leave her now would be most ungrateful, and not bettering myself either, for God's blessing would not be with me."

"But look how much higher wages we get, and why don't you ask the same?"

"I don't value myself as highly as others do themselves; I am quite content, and contentment is a thing I have a great horror of, a sin that poor people fall into very easily without thinking it. It is sad to think that we can't be kind to one another except for gain; besides, all the gentry can't give the same wages, as they are not all rich, and if every

servant insisted on the same wages, there would not be places enough for them all."

"Ay," said the butler, who had come in while Mary Ann was speaking, "and the most ignorant slattern often asks the most, and is most presumptuous. You are right, young woman," he continued, "be content with a little and God's blessing, and He will give you more in good time. If the poorer gentry were as dissatisfied with their portion, and still craving for more and more, as servants are, the world would soon be at an end. You see servants turning up their noses at a dinner and general table that ladies and gentlemen, the sons and daughters of noblemen, would sometimes be glad of, and that often after slaving as none of you would. When I was with master in foreign service, I knew the younger officers and their ladies, born and delicately reared in every comfort, living on their pay, and obliged to appear as gentlemen, but having no fortune. Many a time they had to eat bread and cheese for their dinner, and having no more to live upon for all their expenses than many a valet gets."

The cook was quite surprised at this, and said,—

"Lad! Mr. Tims, I can hardly believe what you say to be the case; do you mean to say that an officer in the army receives so little as that?"

"I do say so, and I say also," continued Tims, "that I've seen a dead in my time, and if there is one class that is better off than another it is ours. We are well provided with food and lodging, and have no anxiety in procuring it, and all may, if they please, lay by for their old age."

Mary Ann, when he had finished speaking, now took the opportunity, as she was a collector for the Altar Society, to ask some of the women for their subscription, but they all said they could not afford it, excepting Esther, who had the least wages.

"I thought so," said Tims; "the finery for the party has run away with all their money."

"No, indeed, Mr. Tims, you know I have to help my mother," said one.

"Yes, I know," he said, "you don't disgrace yourself by letting her be on the parish; but remember that what you have is God's, only lent you to promote His honor, and your own, and your neighbor's salvation; and at the judgment, when asked what you did with your money, and you reply—I spent the most of it on dress and vanity, and to please myself and the devil—what will be your reward?"

"Oh, Mr. Tims, how can you speak that way?" said the cook, who was very extravagant; "must we not keep ourselves respectable?"

"Of course you must, but a silk dress is not necessary for servants to make themselves respectable; indeed it has, in my opinion, the contrary effect. God allows only what is necessary for our station in life, and such duties as we have to fulfil; more than that is folly and sin, and leads to much evil, especially among women. Our Maker no more allows us superfluities, than He does the rich."

"Ay, they set us a bad example," broke in the kitchen-maid.

"Then you need not follow it," pursued Mr. Tims, "and you must not, unless you wish to be condemned with them. There are plenty of good examples for you to follow, and, what is more, the commands of God to obey."

Mary Ann saw that she had better go, as the conversation was getting so disagreeable to the women that they were one by one dropping off; so she bade adieu to Esther.

Tims the butler was a very superior man for his station. He had a great taste for reading and improving the mind, and what was better, he had sound religious principles. He had a sister equally good with himself, and like him, respected and loved by the family in which she lived. Both had continued from their going into service in the same family where they were first engaged, and together they now formed the entire support of their aged parents. Would that more servants were like them!

CHAPTER VII.

One evening, when John Jones called at Brady's cottage, he told him that he had been reading the books he gave him and had got so far, that he thought he should like to go and see one of the clergy.

"I am glad to hear it, my friend," said Brady, "and I will go with you, any day you like to see Father Smith, our good pastor; it is a great blessing vouchsafed you, to be called to the true faith; it will make you happy in this world and in the next, for whatever sorrow and trouble may befall you, our Holy Religion, truly believed and practised, is a source of peace and comfort, especially to the poor; and it is very sad to think that so many deprive themselves of this comfort by not living up to their duties, for without a good conscience there can be no peace."

"I am often astonished," remarked Jones, "at the indifferent lives that many Catholics lead, when they have the support of so many graces in the mysteries of your religion to keep them from evil."

"Alas!" replied Brady, "we are all more

or less infected by the prevailing faults of the age, worldliness and self-indulgence. Our religion teaches self-denial, and consequently, such of her children as dislike that only way to heaven, either cheat themselves by being nominally Catholic and practically nothing at all, or, as many times happens, throw off the restraints of religion altogether, and run into open infidelity, preferring this world to the next, the devil's society to God's."

"That is very sad and very awful to think of," said Jones; "but I remember the Scripture says 'Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out; I suppose that relates to you as well as to the Jews.'"

"It does," answered Brady; "let us then pray that we may not be of the number of the castaways."

Shortly after this conversation, Brady took his friend to the good priest, and after being under instruction with him for some time, till he fully understood the doctrines and obligations of the Catholic faith, Jones was received into the Church.

Our readers will not be surprised to hear that this good beginning was followed by a life conformable to it, and that Jones became an edifying and zealous Catholic. He now began to wish that he had a home of his own, and such a wife as would go hand in hand with him in Christian duties, and he asked Mary if she thought he would have any chance with her Mary Ann. "She was," he said, "just the one he thought would make him happy, and help him on to heaven."

"I can't tell," answered Mary; "but when she comes I will ask her; or you can write her a line, if you are impatient about it."

So in a week from that time Jones called, and told them he had had an answer from Mary Ann.

"Not quite what you like, I fear," said Mary, "if I may judge from your face."

"I am, certainly, a bit disappointed," said Jones; "it is a great bother one can't get speech of a servant girl," he continued, rather pettishly; "if I could have spoken, instead of written, I should perhaps have succeeded better."

"I think not," said Mary; "for she knows her own mind, and would decide at once; but what does she say?"

"She says she does not intend to marry, and prefers remaining single; but," he inquired, "do you think she has any other person in her mind?"

"Oh no; I suspect she will never leave her mistress, to whom she is a great comfort; and if she did, it would only be to enter a convent. I think Mary Ann leans that way."

"And I am sure she might as well be in a convent as where she is," said Jones, who could not get over his disappointment.

The father and mother smiled, but the latter immediately added, with her usual good sense and gentle words, "You must reflect, Jones, that it is a very good thing that men visitors cannot always easily see servant girls; it is a wise restraint on the weak and foolish, and very little matter to the steady ones. Just imagine how any family could go on if the servants' time were taken up with their own visitors; and how many, too, would thereby be led into evil; for it is not respectable, good men like you, that would go darning after them but mostly bad men, seeking their ruin. As a mother, loving her child, I would not allow a girl of mine to remain at a house where loose, free ways were allowed. Salutary restraints are good for the best of us; you can see Mary Ann when she comes here; but, at any rate, I will ask her if she has well weighed your offer."

Thus, when their daughter had leave to come and see them, Mary asked her if she had quite decided, and what was her reason for refusing such a good husband.

"Because I don't wish ever to marry, as I told him; I won't leave my mistress, who has no relation or child to be a comfort to her."

"But if she should die?"

"Then I will go to the convent, to which I know you won't object."

"No child, only pray to do whatever is most for God's honor and your neighbor's good."

"I do mother."

"Then all will go right."

"But, mother, I think that Esther would suit Jones very well. With a little instruction from you, she would make as good a wife as yourself; she lets no one turn her from the right thing, and she deserves a steady good man, for she refused Mat O'Connor last week, who is very well off, saying she would have no man that neglected his duty and was ashamed of his religion. You know he is a bit of a coward and pretends he is not a Catholic when he hears people abusing our religion. Esther says such a fellow ought not to call himself a man."

"Very well," said Mary; "I'll tell Jones what you say, and your recommendation of Esther. When you have an opportunity, tell her to come and see me, and then I shall know

what he says, and he can see something of her."

CHAPTER VIII.

Some two months after this, Mary met with a pleasant reward for her neighborly charity and labors in the cause of good. Patrick Murphy came one day to ask the Brady's to stand for his baby, which was to be christened on the Sunday following, and to take tea with him and his wife afterwards. The Murphys had moved into a cottage of their own, and Patrick said that Mrs. Brady must come and see how comfortable he was, and how much good she had done by her counsel and kind assistance. His wife had never been taught to be active and neat in household matters, and thus from not knowing how to manage, and from the habit of taking things easy, everything was getting so neglected that her husband was nearly driven out of all patience, and was fast losing all regard for home. And here we may remark that the indolence and ignorance of good management, which poor men's wives so frequently show, are just the things which send their husbands to the public-house in order to get rid of the dirty home, where squalling children, wife out of temper, and badly-prepared food, are the only greeting he meets with on his return from his day's work. But in Murphy's cottage all was now changed; and when the day of the christening arrived, and the Bradys entered the house, it was evident to them in a moment how vastly the management improved. Murphy's earnings were just the same as before, but his wife had profited so much by Mary's help and instruction that the money went twice as far, and produced much more comfort. Mrs. Murphy showed Mary the children's mattresses cut from the old corks by herself and the children, and each had a pillow of the snipped rags—all looking clean and neat. She said she had only made a beginning; but hoped, after a time, to make the cottage still more comfortable for Patrick, who, while she spoke, stood smiling with his face as bright as if he had been left a fortune.

There was a nice, hot, potato cake on the griddle, and tea laid out on the table; and as they sat down, Murphy could not help exclaiming, "Oh, Mrs. Brady, it would be a good job if poor men's wives could all be taught such useful ways as are suited to a poor home, and especially how to economise and prepare food. Until you showed Kitty, she had no idea of making nice broth or stews; the most general thing was tea, with sometimes a bit of bacon and potatoes. Now she always has something with meat in its turn in my can, when I start in the morning. And there is our pig, nice and clean on her bed of dry leaves, and a little straw over, and the bones are stewed down for it as you told us. I built the sty myself and the children keep it clean; and we are going to have a decent man to rent the top room for a while, so you see I am as happy as a prince!"

"And you'd be astonished," added his wife, "how clever our eldest girl is getting at her needle, and she has had several gifts from the ladies of the school for being attentive. She and Johnny are soon to make their first communion, and he is to have a suit of clothes, for good conduct."

"I told you it would be good for the children every way, to keep them to school, and would repay yourself too," said Mary.

"Indeed it has, Mrs. Brady; after the little girl has made her first communion, she will be going for twelve, and I think she will be fit to be put to some trade."

"What do you intend to put her to?"

"Kitty likes the dressmaking," said Murphy, "and thinks it the best, as she has such a taste for the needle. What think you?"

"I don't like it, and would not put any of my girls to that trade if I could help it. It throws young things so early into dangerous company, and exposes them in a way no good parents would like. I often grieve, when coming home of an evening in winter to see those young apprentices out so late, and exposed to so many dangers."

"I think with my husband," added Mary, "and I should dread also the vain and foolish ideas, which that trade so often put into girls' heads. Indeed, he and I have pretty well decided to make all our girls go to service, as being, on the whole, safer."

"But it is so difficult to get Catholic girls into places."

"No doubt," answered Mary; "but if they are good and steady, and well instructed in their work, they are very often liked; and you know there are Catholic places, too, where vacancies are every now and then to be heard of. Of course, it is an anxious thing as to where, and with whom, we place our children; but while they are at school we can be on the look-out, and when a good situation offers, where proper attention to religious duties is allowed, we can take advantage of it. I make my girls learn to clean a grate, and sweep and dust as soon as they can hold a brush, and be as useful for their age, as possible, so that when they go out they get better terms, and are not such a trial as some children are to their mistresses."

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Brady.—

What do you think, Kitty?" said Murphy, turning to his wife.

"Indeed, Patrick," she replied, "I'm inclined to change my intention about the dress-making, after what Mrs. Brady has said; she and Mr. Brady seem to be so right in everything, that I think we can't be wrong in being advised by them."

"I am quite of your mind, Kitty," said Murphy; "if there were more such sensible couples among us, we'd be all the better of them, for the help and example of one good family makes many other good and happy."

"I'm sure we don't deserve your praises," said Mary; "you'll find, by-and-by, that your wife, too, will take a pleasure in helping others as I do. Indeed, it is our duty and what God requires. We can all assist one another more or less, and there is no one, however poor, that cannot contribute some good deeds to the treasury of the Church; remembering that the 'idle servant shall be cast out, as well as the wicked one.'"

"I have always thought," said Brady, "that the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints is very beautiful. How consoling to think that the whole body of the church is so bound together, that a good thought or deed of one benefits all; that we are helped also by our brethren in glory, and that we poor creatures on earth can assist to get those that are in duration more quickly to the unspeakable bliss of Heaven."

"What part of our religion is not lovely?" said Murphy; "no wonder converts are so happy when they get to know it; but will you tell me why it is that Protestants are told such false things of our religion by their clergy?"

"That is easy enough to know. They have stolen goods in their possession, and they would make some excuse for keeping them, by vilifying our religion. Then some of our own people, that the devil carries away help more than all our enemies could do, to injure the souls of them that know not the truth and beauty of our Holy Faith."

"The Lord knows," said Murphy, "I'm often ashamed and heart-sore to see the way that some of our neighbor's neglect their religion, and scandalize others."

"And woe to them for it; but I fear it is now, as it was with the Jews, the former favored people of God, who did not answer to His great mercies; and as they brought on themselves the heavy punishments they were visited with, so shall we be awfully chastised. If it were not for the few good and holy ones that are among us praying for us, we should all be swept away. When, even to us men, the sin and iniquity that abounds seems so dreadful, what must it be in the sight of Almighty God? So, my friend, let us try all we can to save ourselves and families from the corruption that is around us, and from the eternal reprobation it will bring on so many."

CHAPTER IX.

As the Bradys were going up their own street on their way home that same evening, and as they passed Sheer's cottage, they were surprised at hearing violent shrieks and cries for help from within. They stopped at the door and listened for a minute; but the cries continuing, they rushed into the house, and up the stairs to where the disturbance seemed to be. There an awful scene presented itself. Sheer, seemingly mad, his hair on end, his eyes starting out of his head, was beating his wife, who lay on the floor covered with blood, which was flowing from her nose and mouth.—They raised her up, and with kind words endeavored to calm the man, who kept cursing her, and accusing her of some trouble that had come upon him. "Curse her!" he went on; "she has been a curse to me and her children; let her lie there; let her die."

Brady found that the only plan was to get Sheer home with him, and leave Mary with other neighbors to attend to the half-killed woman.

It was a fortunate thing that Mary could dress wounds, and had sufficient knowledge to get on without sending for a doctor, which she was loath to do; for she knew that if it was known, Sheer would very probably lose his situation. Accordingly, Mary washed the wounds, plastering them up, and cutting off the hair round such as were on the head. She got the poor woman into bed, charging them to keep her quiet, and give her nothing but toast and water, after the little spirit and water she had administered at first to revive her. Mary then returned home to rest, where she found that Sheer had become quiet, and quite sober and rational, and had given Brady an account of the late scene of violence.

It appeared that Sheer, on coming home with just enough drink in him to make him cross, had been told that his eldest girl, his pet and pride, a pretty, showy-looking girl, who was at service, had become a castaway, the result of her mother's neglectful bringing up. No correction of faults, or good principles, had ever been instilled into the mind of the poor girl, to guide or restrain her inclinations. Full of vanity, which her mother had fostered instead of repressing, when the tempter came, and offered the baubles which gratified the girl's vanity, there was nothing to hinder his success,