

CHEAP REPOSITORY.
SUNDAY READING.
THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
TWO WEALTHY FARMERS;
OR, A
New DIALOGUE, between
Mr. BRAGWELL and Mr. WORTHY.
PART IV.



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THE
Two Wealthy Farmers, &c.

IT was mentioned in the last part of this History, that the chief reason which had drawn Mr. Worthy to visit his friend just at the present time, was, that Mr. Bragwell had a small Estate to sell by auction. Mr. Worthy, though he did not think he should be a bidder, wished to be present, as he had business to settle with one or two persons who were expected at the Golden Lion on that day, and he had put off his visit till he had seen the sale advertised in the County Paper.

Mr. Bragwell and Mr. Worthy set out early on the Monday morning on their way to the Golden Lion, a small Inn in a neighbouring market town. As they had time before them, they had agreed to ride slowly, that they might converse on some useful

subject; but here, as usual, they had two opinions about the same thing. Mr. Bragwell's notion of an useful subject was, something by which money was to be got, and a good bargain struck. Mr. Worthy was no less a man of business than his friend. His schemes were wise, and his calculations just; his reputation for integrity and good sense made him the common judge and umpire in his neighbours' affairs, while no one paid a more exact attention to every transaction of his own. But the business of getting money was not with him the first, much less was it the whole concern of the day. Every morning when he rose, he remembered that he had a Maker to worship as well as a family to maintain. Religion, however, never made him neglect business, though it sometimes led him to postpone it. He used to say, no man had any reason to expect God's blessing through the day who did not ask it in the morning. But he had not the less sense, spirit and activity when he was among men abroad, because he had first served God at home.

As these two Farmers rode along, Mr. Worthy took occasion, from the fineness of the day, and the beauty of the country through which they passed, to turn the discourse to the goodness of God and our infinite obligations to him. He knew that the transition from thanksgiving to prayer would be natural and easy, and he therefore slid, by degrees, into that important subject: and he observed that secret prayer was a duty of universal obligation, which every man had it in his power to fulfil, and which he seriously believed was the ground-work of all religious practice, and of all devout affections.

Mr. Bragwell felt conscious that he was very negligent and irregular in the performance of this duty, he considered it as a mere ceremony, or at least as a duty which might give way to the slightest temptation of drowsiness at night, or of business in the morning. As he knew he did not live in the conscientious performance of this practice, he tried to ward off the subject, knowing what a home way his friend had of putting things. At last he said, he certainly thought private prayer a good custom, especially for people who have time, and that those who were sick, or old, or out of business, could not do better, but that, for his part, he believed much of these sort of things was not expected from men in active life.

Mr. Worthy. I should think, Mr. Bragwell, that those who are most exposed to temptation stand most in need of prayer; now there are few methinks who are more exposed to temptation than men in business, for those must be in most danger, at least from the world, who have most to do with it. And if this be true, ought we not to prepare ourselves in the closet for the trials of the market, the field, and the shop?

Bragwell. For my part, I think example is the whole of Religion, and if the master of a family is orderly, and regular, and goes to church, he does every thing which can be required of him, and no one has a right to call him to account for any thing more.

Worthy. Give me leave to say, Mr. Bragwell,

that highly as I rate a good example, still I must set a good principle above it. I must keep good order indeed, for the sake of others; but I must keep a good conscience for my own sake. To God I owe secret piety, I must therefore pray to him in private.— To my family I owe a Christian example, and for that, among other reasons, I must not fail to go to Church.

Bragwell. You are talking, Mr. Worthy, as if I were an enemy to Christianity. Sir, I am no Hea-then. Sir, I belong to the Church. I always drink prosperity to the Church. You yourself, as strict as you are, in never missing it twice a day, are not a warmer friend to the Church than I am.

Worthy. That is to say, you know its value as an institution, but you do not seem to know that a man may be very irreligious under the best religious institutions; and that even the most excellent of them are but *means* of being religious, and are no more religion itself than brick and mortar are prayers and thanksgivings. I shall never think, however high their profession, and even however regular their attendance, that those men truly respect the Church, who bring home little of that religion which is taught in it into their own families, or their own hearts. Excuse me, Mr. Bragwell.

Bragwell. Mr. Worthy, I am persuaded that religion is quite a proper thing for the poor; and I don't think that the multitude can ever be kept in order without it, and I am a bit of a politician you know.

Worthy. Your opinion is very just, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, since it does not go to the root of the evil, for while you value yourself on the soundness of this principle as a politician, I wish you to see the reason of it as a Christian; depend upon it, if Religion be good for the community at large, it is equally good for every family; and what is right for a family is equally right for each individual in it. You have therefore yourself brought the most unanswerable argument why you ought to be religious, by asking how we shall keep others in order without Religion. For, believe me, Mr. Bragwell, there is no particular clause to except you in the Gospel. No exceptions in favor of any one class of men. The same restraints which are necessary for the people at large are equally necessary for men of every order, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, learned and ignorant. May I ask you, Mr. Bragwell, what is your reason for going to Church?

Bragwell. Sir, I am shocked at your question. How can I avoid doing a thing so customary and so creditable? Not go to Church, indeed! What do you take me for, Mr. Worthy? I am afraid you suspect me to be a Papist, or a Heathen, or of some religion or other that is not what it should be.

Worthy. If a foreigner were to hear how violently one set of Christians in this country often speak against another, how earnest would he suppose us all to be in religious matters: and how astonished to discover that many a man has perhaps little other proof to give of the sincerity of his own religion,

except the violence with which he hates the religion of another party. It is not *irreligion* which such men hate, but the religion of the man, or the party, whom they are set against. Well, you have told me why you go to Church; now pray tell me, why do you confess there on your bended knees every Sunday, that “you have erred and strayed from God’s ways?” “that there is no health in you?” “that you have done what you ought not to do?” “and that you are a miserable sinner?”

Bragwell. Because it is in the Common Prayer Book, to be sure, a book which I have heard you yourself say was written by wise and good men.

Worthy. But have you no other reason?

Bragwell. No, I can’t say I have.

Worthy. When you repeat that excellent form of confession, do you really feel that you *are* a miserable sinner?

Bragwell. No, I can’t say I do. But that is no objection to my repeating it, because it may suit the case of many who are so. I suppose the good Doctors who drew it up intended that part for wicked people only, such as drunkards, and thieves, and murderers; for I imagine they could not well contrive to make the same prayer quite suit an honest man and a rogue; and so I suppose they thought it safer to make a good man repeat a prayer which suited a rogue, than to make a rogue repeat a

prayer which suited a good man: and you know it is so customary for every body to repeat the general confession, that it can't hurt the credit of the most respectable persons, though every one must know they have no particular concern in it.

Worthy. Depend upon it, Mr. Bragwell, those good Doctors you speak of, were not quite of your opinion; they really thought that what you call honest men were grievous sinners in a certain sense, and stood in need of making that humble confession. Mr. Bragwell, do you believe in the fall of Adam?

Bragwell. To be sure I do, and a sad thing for Adam it was; why, it is in the Bible, is it not? It is one of the prettiest chapters in Genesis. Don't you believe it, Mr. Worthy?

Worthy. Yes, truly I do. But I don't believe it *merely* because I read it in Genesis. I know, indeed, that I am bound to believe every part of the word of God. But I have still an additional reason for believing in the fall of the first man.

Bragwell. Have you, indeed? Now, I can't guess what that can be.

Worthy. Why, my own observation of what is within myself teaches me to believe it. It is not only the third chapter of Genesis which convinces me of the truth of the fall, but also the sinful inclinations which I find in my own heart. This is

one of those leading truths of Christianity of which I can never doubt a moment, first, because it is abundantly expressed or implied in Scripture; and next, because the consciousness of the evil nature I carry about with me confirms the doctrine beyond all doubt. Besides, is it not said in Scripture that by one man sin entered into the world, and that "all we, like sheep, have gone astray; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," and so again in twenty more places that I could tell you of.

Bragwell. Well, I never thought of this. But is not this a very melancholy sort of doctrine, Mr. Worthy?

Worthy. It is melancholy, indeed, if we stop here. But while we are deploring this sad truth, let us take comfort from another, that "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Bragwell. Yes, I remember I thought those very fine words, when I heard them said over my poor father's grave. But as it was in the Burial of the dead, I did not think of taking it to myself, for I was then young and hearty, and in little danger of dying, and I have been so busy ever since, that I have hardly had time to think of it.

Worthy. And yet the service pronounced at the burial of all who die, is a solemn admonition to all who live. It is there said, as indeed the Scrip-

ture says also, "I am the resurrection and the life, whosoever believeth in me shall never die, but I will raise him up at the last day." Now do you think you believe in Christ, Mr. Bragwell?

Bragwell. To be sure I do; why, you are always fancying me an Atheist.

Worthy. In order to believe in Christ, we must believe first in our own guilt and our own unworthiness, and when we do this we shall see the use of a Savior.

Bragwell. Why, all this is a new way of talking. I can't say, I ever meddled with such subjects before in my life. But now, what do you advise a man to do upon your plan of Religion?

Worthy. Why, all this leads me back to the ground from which we set out, I mean the duty of prayer; for if we believe that we have an evil nature within us, and that we stand in need of God's grace to help us, and a Savior to redeem us, we shall be led of course to pray for what we so much need.

Bragwell. Well, but don't you think, Mr. Worthy, that you good folks who make so much of prayer, have lower notions than we of the wisdom of the Almighty? you think he wants to be informed of the things you tell him; whereas, I take for granted that he knows them already, and that, being so good as he is, he will give me every thing he sees fit to give me without my asking it.

Worthy. God, indeed, who knows all things, knows what we want before we ask him, but still has he not said, that "with prayer and supplication we must make known our requests unto him." Prayer is the way in which God hath said that his favour must be sought. It is the channel through which he hath declared it is his sovereign will and pleasure that his blessings should be conveyed to us. What ascends up in prayer descends again to us in blessings. It is like the rain which just now fell, and which had been drawn up from the ground in vapours to the clouds before it descended from them to the earth in that refreshing shower. Besides, prayer has a good effect on our own minds: it tends to excite a right disposition towards God in us. But above all, it is the way to get the good things we want. "Ask," says the Scripture, "and ye shall receive."

Bragwell. Now that is the very thing which I was going to deny. For the truth is, men don't always get what they ask; I believe if I could get a good crop for asking it I should pray oftener than I do.

Worthy. Sometimes Mr. Worthy, men "ask and receive not, because they ask amiss." They ask worldly blessings perhaps when they should ask spiritual ones. Now the latter, which are the good things I spoke of, are always granted to those who pray to God for them, though the former are not. I have observed in the case of some worldly things I have sought for, that the grant of my prayer would have caused the misery of my life.

Bragwell. And yet you continue to pray on, I suppose?

Worthy. Certainly; but then I try to mend as to the object of my prayers. I pray for God's blessing and favor, which is better than riches.

Bragwell. You seem very earnest on this subject.

Worthy. To cut the matter short, I ask then whether prayer is not positively commanded in the Gospel. When this is the case, we can never dispute about the necessity or the duty of a thing, as we may when there is no such command. Here however let me just add also, that a man's prayers may be turned to no small use in the way of discovering to him whatever is amiss in his life.

Bragwell. How so, Mr. Worthy?

Worthy. Why, suppose now, you were to try yourself by turning into the shape of a prayer every practice in which you allow yourself. For instance, let the prayer in the morning be a sort of preparation for the deeds of the day, and the prayer at night a sort of observation on those deeds. You, Mr. Bragwell, I suspect are a little inclined to covetousness, excuse me, Sir. Now suppose after you have been during a whole day a little too eager to get rich, suppose, I say, you were to try how it would sound to beg of God at night on your knees, to give you still more money though you have

already so much that you know not what to do with it. Suppose you were to pray in the morning, O Lord give me more riches, though those I have are a snare and a temptation to me; and ask him in the same solemn manner to bless all the grasping means you intend to make use of in the day, to add to your substance?

Bragwell. Mr. Worthy, I have no patience with you for thinking I could be so wicked.

Worthy. Hear me out, Mr. Bragwell, you turned your good nephew, Tom Broad, out of doors you know; you owned to me it was an act of injustice. Now suppose on the morning of your doing so you had begged of God in a solemn act of prayer, to prosper the deed of cruelty and oppression, which you intended to commit. I see you are shocked at the thought of such a prayer. Well, then, would not prayer have kept you from committing that wicked action? In short, what a life must that be, no act of which you dare beg God to prosper and bless. If once you can bring yourself to believe that it is your bounden duty to pray for God's blessing on your day's work, you will certainly grow careful about passing such a day as you may safely ask his blessing upon. The remark may be carried to sports, diversions, company. A man, who once takes up the serious use of prayer, will soon find himself obliged to abstain from such diversions, occupations, and societies, as he cannot reasonably desire that God will bless to him; and thus he will see himself compelled to leave off either the prac-

vice or the prayer. Now, Mr. Bragwell, I need not ask you which of the two he that is a real Christian will give up.

Mr. Bragwell began to feel that he had not the best of the argument, and was afraid he was making no great figure in the eyes of his friend. Luckily, however, he was relieved from the difficulty into which the necessity of making some answer must have brought him, by finding they were come to the end of their little journey: and he never beheld the Bunch of Grapes, which decorated the Sign of the Golden Lion, with more real satisfaction.

I refer my readers for the transactions at the Golden Lion, and for the sad Adventures which afterwards befel Mr. Bragwell's family, to the Fifth Part of the History of the Two Wealthy Farmers.

Z.

T H E E N D.

On the 1st of June, 1795, was published,

The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, Part II.—The Beggarly Boy.—Wild Robert, a Ballad.

On the 1st of July,

Daniel in the Den of Lions.—The Good Mother's Legacy.—Patient Joe, a Ballad.

On the 1st of August,

Hints to all Ranks of People.—The Happy Waterman.—The Riot, a Ballad.—The Plowboy's Dream, a Ballad.

On the 1st of September,

Tom White, Part II.—Noah's Flood.—Dame Andrews, a Ballad.

On the 1st of October,

Harvest Home.—Two Farmers, Part I.—Honest Miller,
a Ballad.

On the 1st of November,

The Parable of the Vineyard.—The Two Farmers, Part II.
—The Sorrows of Yamba, a Ballad.

On the 1st of December,

The Troubles of Life.—Sorrowful Sam.—Merry Christ-
mas, a Carol.

On the 1st of January, 1796,

New Thoughts on the New Year.—The History of Mary
Wood, the Housemaid.—Robert and Richard, a Ballad.

On the 1st of February,

The Touchstone; or, the Way to know a good Christian;
—The Apprentice turned Master; or, the Two Shoe-
makers, Part II.—The Story of Sinful Sally. Told by
herself a Ballad.

On the 1st of March.

Onesimus; or, the Run-away Servant converted.—Idle Jack
Brown; or, the Two Shoemakers, Part III.—Shop-
keeper, Part I.

On the 1st of April,

Conversion of St. Paul.—Jack Brown in Prison; or, the
Two Shoemakers, Part IV.—Shopkeeper, Part II.

On the 1st of May,

The General Resurrection, Part I.—The History of Charles
Jones the Footman, written by Himself.—The Hackney
Coachman; or, the Way to get a good Fare, a Ballad.

On the 1st of June,

Carrying Religion into the Common Business of Life.—
The Cheap-side Apprentice.—The Election Song, a
Ballad.

On the 1st of July,

Look at Home.—Gamester.—Turn the Carpet, or, Two
Weavers.

On the 1st of August,

Grand Affizes.—Betty Brown.—Shopkeeper, Part III.

On the 1st of September,

Two Wealthy Farmers, Part III.—Explanation of Scrip-
ture of Baptism.—Hymn of Praise for the abundant
Harvest of 1796.

And other Pieces on a similar Plan, on the 1st of every Month.

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