

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE
TWO WEALTHY FARMERS,

With the sad ADVENTURES of

Miss BRAGWELL.

PART V.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,

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The Two Wealthy Farmers, &c.

MR. Bragwell and Mr. Worthy alighted at the Golden Lion. It was market-day; the inn, the yard, the town was all alive. Mr. Bragwell was quite in his element. He felt himself the principal man in the company. He had three great objects in view, the sale of his land, the letting Mr. Worthy see how much he was looked up to by so many substantial people, and the shewing these people what a wise man his most intimate friend Mr. Worthy was. It was his way to try to borrow a little credit from every person and every thing he was connected with, and by that credit to advance his interest and increase his wealth.

The Farmers met in a large room, and while they were transacting their various concerns, those whose pursuits were the same naturally herded together. The Tanners were drawn to one corner, by the common interest which they took in bark, and hides. A useful debate was carrying on at another little table, whether the practice of *sowing* wheat or of *planting* it were most profitable. Another set were disputing whether horses or oxen were best for plows. Those who were concerned in Canals, sought the company of other Canallers; while some, who were interested in the new bill for Inclosures, wisely looked out for such as knew most about waste lands.

Mr. Worthy was pleased with all these subjects, and picked up something useful on each. It was a saying of his, that most men understood some one thing, and that he who was wise would try to learn

from every man something on the subject he best knew; but Mr. Worthy made a further use of the whole. "What a pity is it," said he, "that Christians are not as desirous to turn their time to as good account as men of business are! When shall we see religious persons as anxious to derive profit from the experience of others as these Farmers? When shall we see them as eager to turn their time to good account? While I approve these men for not being *slothful in business*, let me improve the hint by being also *servent in spirit*."

When the hurry was a little over, Mr. Bragwell took a turn on the Bowling-green. Mr. Worthy followed him, to ask why the sale of the estate was not brought forward. "Let the Auctioneer proceed to business," said he; "the company will be glad to get home by day-light. I speak mostly with a view to others for you, I do not think of being a purchaser myself."—"I know it," said Bragwell, "or I would not be such a fool as to let the cat out of the bag. But is it really possible (proceeded he with a smile of contempt) that you should think I will sell my estate before dinner? Mr. Worthy, you are a clever man at books and such things; and perhaps can make out an account on paper in a handsomer manner than I can. But I never found much was to be got by fine writing. As to figures, I can carry enough of them in my head to add, divide, and multiply more money than your learning will ever give you the fingering of. You may beat me at a book, but you are a very child at a bargain. Sell my land before dinner, indeed!"

Mr. Worthy was puzzled to guess how a man was to shew more wisdom by selling a piece of ground at one hour than at another, and desired an expla-

nation. Bragwell felt rather more contempt for his understanding than he had ever done before. "Look'ee, Mr. Worthy," said he, "I do not know that knowledge is of any use to a man unless he has sense enough to turn it to account. Men are my books, Mr. Worthy, and it is by reading, spelling, and putting them together to good purpose, that I have got up in the world. I shall give you a proof of this to-day. These Farmers are most of them come to the Lion with a view of purchasing this bit of land of mine, if they should like the bargain. Now, as you know a thing can't be any great bargain to the buyer and the seller too, to them and to me, it becomes me, as a man of sense, who has the good of his family at heart, to secure the bargain to myself. I would not cheat any man, Sir, but I think it fair enough to turn his weakness to my own advantage; there is no law against that you know; and this is the use of one man's having more sense than another. So, whenever I have a bit of land to sell, I always give a handsome dinner, with plenty of punch and strong beer. We fill up the morning with other business, and I carefully keep back any talk about the purchase till we have dined. At dinner we have of course a bit of politics. This puts most of us into a passion, and you know anger is thirsty. Besides, Church and King naturally bring on a good many other toasts. Now, as I am Master of the Feast, you know it would be shabby in me to save my liquor, so I push about the glass one way and the tankard the other, till all my company are as merry as kings. Every man is delighted to see what a fine hearty fellow he has to deal with, and Mr. Bragwell receives a thousand compliments. By this time they have gained as much in good hu-

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mour as they have lost in sober judgment, and this is the proper moment for setting the Auctioneer to work, and this I commonly do to such good purpose, that I go home with my purse a score or two of pounds heavier than if they had not been warmed by their dinner. In the morning men are cool and suspicious, and have all their wits about them; but a chearful glass cures all distrust. And, what is lucky, I add to my credit as well as my pocket, and get more praise for my dinner than blame for my bargain."

Mr. Worthy was struck with the absurd vanity which could tempt a man to own himself guilty of an unfair action for the sake of shewing his wisdom. He was beginning to express his disapprobation, when they were told dinner was on table. They went in and were soon seated. All was mirth and good cheer. Every body agreed that no one gave such hearty dinners as Mr. Bragwell. Nothing was pitiful where he was master of the Feast. Bragwell, who looked with pleasure on the excellent dinner before him, and enjoyed the good account to which he should turn it, heard their praises with delight, and cast an eye on Worthy, as much as to say, "Who is the wise man now?" Having a mind to make his friend talk, he turned to him, saying, "Mr. Worthy, I believe no people enjoy life more than men of our class. We have money and power, we live on the fat of the land, and have as good a right to gentility as the best."

"As to gentility, Mr. Bragwell," replied Worthy, "I am not sure that this is among the wisest of our pretensions. But I will say that ours is a creditable and respectable business. In ancient times, Farming was the employment of Princes and Patriarchs; and, now-a-days, an honest, humane, sen-

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sible, English yeoman, I will be bold to say, is not only a very useful but an honourable character. But then he must not merely think of *enjoying life*, as you call it, but he must think of living up to the great ends for which he was sent into the world. A Wealthy Farmer not only has it in his power to live well, but to do much good. He is not only the father of his own family, but of his workmen, his dependents, and the poor at large, especially in these hard times. He has it in his power to raise into credit all the parish offices which have fallen into disrepute by getting into bad hands; and he can convert, what have been falsely thought mean offices, into very important ones, by his just and Christian-like manner of filling them. An upright Juryman, a conscientious Constable, a humane Overseer, an independent Elector, an active Superintendent of a Work-house, a just Arbitrator in public disputes, a kind Counsellor in private troubles, such a one, I say, fills up a station in society no less necessary, and, as far as it reaches, scarcely less important than that of a Magistrate, a Sheriff of a County, or even a Member of Parliament. That can never be a slight or a degrading office, on which the happiness of a whole parish may depend."

Bragwell, who thought the good sense of his friend reflected credit on himself, encouraged Worthy to go on, but he did it in his own vain way. "Aye, very true, Mr. Worthy," said he; "You are right; a leading man in our class ought to be looked up to as an example, as you say; in order to which, he should do things handsomely and liberally, and not grudge himself or his friends any thing," casting an eye of complacency on the good dinner he had provided. "True," replied Mr.

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Worthy, "he should be an example of simplicity sobriety and plainness of manners. But he will do well, added he, not to affect a frothy gentility which will fit but clumsily upon him. If he has money, let him spend prudently, lay up moderately for his children, and give liberally to the poor. But let him rather seek to dignify his own station by his virtues than to get above it by his vanity. If he acts thus, then, as long as this country lasts, a Farmer of England will be looked upon as one of its most valuable members; nay more, by this conduct he may contribute to make England last the longer. The riches of the Farmer, corn and cattle, are the true riches of a nation; but let him remember, that tho' corn and cattle *enrich* a country, nothing but justice and integrity can *preserve* it."

Young Wilson, the worthy grazier, whom Miss Bragwell had turned off because he did not understand French dances, thanked Mr. Worthy for what he had said, and hoped he should be the better for it as long as he lived, and desired his leave to be better acquainted. Most of the others declared they had never heard a finer speech, and then, as is usual, proceeded to shew the good effect it had had on them by loose conversation and hard drinking.

Mr. Worthy was much concerned to hear Mr. Bragwell, after dinner, whisper to the waiter, to put less and less water into every fresh bowl of punch. It was his way, if the time they had to sit was long, then the punch was to be weaker, as he saw no good in wasting money to make it stronger than the time required. But if time passed, then the strength was to be increased in due proportion,

as a small quantity must then intoxicate them as much in a short time as would be required of a greater quantity had the time been longer. This was one of Mr. Bragwell's nice calculations, and this was the sort of skill on which he so much valued himself.

At length the guests were properly primed for business, just in that convenient stage of intoxication which makes men warm and rash, yet short of absolute drunkenness. The Auctioneer set to work. All were bidders, and, if possible, all would have been purchasers, so happily had the feast and the punch operated. They bid on with a still increasing spirit, till they had got so much above the value of the land, that Bragwell with a wink and a whisper said, "Who would sell his land fasting? Eh! Worthy?" At length the estate was knocked down, at a price very far above its worth.

As soon as it was sold, Bragwell again said softly to Worthy, "Five from fifty, and there remain forty-five. The dinner and drink won't cost me five pounds, and I have got fifty more than the land was worth. Spend a shilling to gain a pound, this is what I call practical Arithmetic, Mr. Worthy."

Mr. Worthy was glad to get out of this scene; and seeing that his friend was quite sober, he resolved, as they rode home, to deal plainly with him. Bragwell had found out among his calculations, that some sins could only be committed by a prudent man one at a time. For instance, he knew that a man could not well get rich and get drunk at the same moment, but he had found out that some vices made very good company together; so, while he had watched himself in drinking, left

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he should become as unfit to sell as his guests were to buy, he had indulged without measure in the good dinner he had provided. Mr. Worthy, I say, seeing him able to bear reason, rebuked him for this day's proceedings with some severity. Bragwell bore his reproofs with that sort of patience which arises from an opinion of one's own wisdom, and a recent flush of prosperity. He behaved with that good-humour which grows out of vanity and good luck. "You are too squeemish, Mr. Worthy," said he, "I have done nothing discreditable. These men came with their eyes open. There is no compulsion used. They are free to bid or to let it alone. I make them welcome, and I shall not be thought a bit the worse of to-morrow, when they are sober. Others do it besides me, and I shall never be ashamed of any thing as long as I have custom on my side.

Worthy. "I am sorry, Mr. Bragwell, to hear you support such practices by such arguments. There is not perhaps a more dangerous snare to the souls of men than is to be found in that word CUSTOM. It is a word invented to reconcile corruption with credit and sin with safety. But no custom, no fashion, no combination of men to set up a false standard can ever make a wrong action right. That a thing is often done, is so far from a proof of its being right, that it is the very reason which will set a thinking man to inquire if it be not really wrong, lest he should be following "a multitude to do evil." Right is right, though only one man in a thousand pursues it, and wrong will be for ever wrong, though it be the allowed practice of the other nine hundred and ninety-nine. If this shameful custom is really common, which I can

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hardly believe, that is a fresh reason why a conscientious man should set his face against it. And I must go so far as to say (you will excuse me Mr. Bragwell) that I see no great difference in the eye of conscience, whatever there may be in the eye of law, between your making a man lose his reason, and then getting 50 guineas out of his pocket *because* he has lost it, and your picking the fifty guineas out of his pocket, if you had met him dead drunk in his way home to-night. Nay, he who meets a man already drunk and robs him, commits but one sin, while he who makes him drunk first that he may rob him afterwards, commits two."

Bragwell gravely replied, "Mr. Worthy, while I have the practice of people of credit to support me, and the law of the land to protect me, I see no reason to be ashamed of any thing I do."—"Mr. Bragwell (answered Worthy) a truly honest man is not always looking sharp about him, to see how far custom and the law will bear him out; if he be honest on principle he will consult the law of his conscience, and if he be a Christian he will consult the written law of God.

Notwithstanding this rebuff, Mr. Bragwell got home in high spirits, for no arguments could hinder him from feeling that he had the 50 guineas in his purse. As soon as he came in, he threw the money he had received on the table, and desired his wife to lock it up. Instead of receiving it with her usual satisfaction, she burst into a violent fit of passion, and threw it back to him. "You may keep your cash yourself, said she. It is all over: we want no more money. You are a ruined man! A wicked creature, scraping and working as we have done for her!" Bragwell trembled, but durst not

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ask what he dreaded to hear. His wife spared him the trouble, by crying out, as soon as her rage permitted, "Polly is gone off!" Poor Bragwell's heart sunk within him; he grew sick and giddy, and as his wife's rage swallowed up her grief, so in his grief he almost forgot his anger. The purse fell from his hand, and he cast a look of anguish upon it, finding, for the first time, that it could not relieve his misery.

Mr. Worthy, who though much concerned, was less discomposed now, called to mind that the young lady had not returned with her mother and sister the night before: he begged Mrs. Bragwell to explain the sad story. She, instead of soothing her husband, fell to reproaching him. "It is all your fault, said she, you were a fool for your pains. If I had had my way, the girls never would have kept company with any but men of substance." "Mrs. Bragwell," said Worthy, "If she has chosen a bad man, it would be still a misfortune, even though he had been rich." "O that would alter the case," said she; "*a fat sorrow is better than a lean one.* But to marry a beggar!" Here Miss Betsey, who stood sullenly by, put in a word, and said, "her sister, however, had not disgraced herself by having married a Farmer or a Tradesman, she had at least made choice of a Gentleman." "What marriage! what Gentleman," cried the afflicted father. "Tell me the worst!" He was now informed that his darling daughter was gone off with a strolling player, who had been acting in the neighbouring villages lately. Miss Betsey again put in, saying, "he was no stroller, but a gentleman in disguise, who only acted for his own diversion." "Does he so," said the now furious Bragwell, "then he shall be transported for

mine. At this moment a letter was brought him from his new son-in-law, who desired his leave to wait upon him, and implore his forgiveness. He owned he had been shopman to a haberdasher, but thinking his person and talents ought not to be thrown away upon trade, and being also a little behind hand, he had taken to the stage with a view of making his fortune. That he had married Miss Bragwell entirely for love, and was sorry to mention so paltry a thing as money, which he despised, but that his wants were pressing, his landlord, to whom he was in debt, having been so vulgar as to threaten to send him to prison. He ended with saying, “ I have been obliged to shock your daughter’s delicacy, by confessing my unlucky real name; I believe I owe part of my success to my having assumed that of Augustus Frederick Theodosius. She is inconsolable at this confession. which, as you are now my father. I must also make to you, and subscribe myself, with many blushes, your dutiful son,

TIMOTHY INCLE.”

“ O,” cried the afflicted father, as he tore the letter in a rage. “ Miss Bragwell married to a strolling actor! How shall I bear it?” “ Why, I would not bear it at all,” cried the enraged mother. “ I would never see her, I would never forgive her. I would let her starve at one corner of the barn, while that rascal, with all those Pagan, Popish names, was ranting away at the other.” “ Nay,” said Miss Betsey, “ If he is only a shopman, and if his name be really Timothy Inkle, I would never forgive her neither. But who would have thought it by his looks, and by his monstrous genteel behaviour.”

“ Come, come,” said Mr. Worthy, “ were he really

an honest haberdasher, I should think there was no other harm done, except the disobedience of the thing. Mr. Bragwell, this is no time to blame you, or hardly to reason with you. I feel for you sincerely. I ought not, perhaps, just at present, to reproach you for the mistaken manner in which you have bred up your daughters. Your error has brought its punishment along with it. You now see, because you now feel, the evil of a false education. It has ruined your daughter, your whole plan has led to some such end. The large sums you spent to qualify them as you thought for a high station, could do them nothing but harm, while your habits of life properly confined them to company of a lower station. While they were better dressed than the daughters of the first gentry, they were worse taught as to real knowledge, than the daughters of your plowmen. Their vanity has been raised by excessive finery, and kept alive by excessive flattery. Every evil temper has been fostered by indulgence. Their pride has never been controled. Their self-will has never been turned. Their idleness has laid them open to every temptation, and their abundance has enabled them to gratify every desire. Their time, that precious talent, has been entirely wasted. Every thing they have been taught to do is of no use, while they are utterly unacquainted with all which they ought to have known. I deplore Miss Polly's false step. That she should have married a run-away shopman, turned stroller, I truly lament. But for what husband was she qualified? For the wife of a Farmer she was too idle. For the wife of a Tradesman she was too expensive. For the wife of a Gentleman she was too ignorant, You yourself was most to

blame. You expected her to act wisely, though you never taught her that *fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom*. I owe it to you, as a friend, and to myself as a Christian to declare, that your practices in the common transactions of life, as well as your present misfortune, are almost the natural consequences of those false principles which I protested against when you were at my* house.

Mrs. Bragwell attempted several times to interrupt Mr. Worthy, but her husband would not permit it. He felt the force of all his friend said, and encouraged him to proceed. Mr. Worthy thus went on. "It grieves me to say how much your own indiscretion has contributed even to bring on your present misfortune. You gave your countenance to this very company of strollers, though you knew they are acting in defiance to the laws of the land, to say no worse. They go from town to town, and barn to barn, stripping the poor of their money, the young of their innocence, and all of their time. Do you remember with how much pride you told me that you had bespoke *The Bold Stroke for a Wife*, for the benefit of this very Mr. Frederic Theodosius? To this pernicious ribaldry you not only carried your own family, but wasted I know not how much money in treating your workmen's wives and children, in these hard times too, when they have scarcely bread to eat, or a shoe on their feet. And all this only that you might have the absurd pleasure of seeing those flattering words, *By Desire of Mr. Bragwell*, stuck up in Print at the Public-

* See Second Part of Two Farmers.

house, on the Blacksmith's shed, at the Turnpike-gate, and on the Barn-door."

Mr. Bragwell acknowledged, that his friend's rebuke was but too just, and he looked so very contrite as to raise the pity of Mr. Worthy, who, in a mild voice, thus went on. "What I have said is not so much to reproach you with the ruin of one daughter, as from a desire to save the other. Let Miss Betsey go home with me. I do not undertake to be her gaoler, but I will be her friend. She will find in my daughters kind companions; and in my wife a prudent guide. I know she will dislike us at first, but I do not despair in time of convincing her that a sober, humble, useful, pious life is as necessary to make us happy on earth, as it is to fit us for heaven."

Poor Miss Betsey, though she declared it would be *frightful dull*, and *monstrous vulgar*, and *dismal melancholy*, yet was she so terrified at the discontent and grumbling which she would have to endure at home, that she sullenly consented. She had none of that filial tenderness which led her to wish to stay and sooth and comfort her afflicted father. All she thought about was to get out of the way of her mother's ill-humour, and to carry so much finery as to fill the Miss Worthies with envy and respect. Poor girl! She did not know that envy was a feeling they never indulged; and that fine cloaths was the last thing to draw their respect. Mr. Worthy took her home next day. When they reached his house, they found there young Wilson, Miss Betsey's old admirer. She was much pleased at this, and resolved to treat him well. But her good or ill treatment now signified but little. This young Crazier revered Mr. Worthy's character, and since he had

met him at the Lion, had been thinking what a happiness it would be to marry a young woman bred up by such a father. He had heard much of the modesty and discretion of both the daughters, but his inclination now determined him in favour of the elder.

Mr. Worthy, who knew him to be a young man of good sense and sound principles, allowed him to become a visitor at his house, but deferred his consent to the marriage till he knew him more thoroughly. Mr. Wilson, from what he saw of the domestic piety of this family, improved daily both in the knowledge and practice of religion, and Mr. Worthy soon formed him into a most valuable character. During this time Miss Bragwell's hopes had revived, but though she appeared in a new dress almost every day, she had the mortification of being beheld with great indifference by one whom she had always secretly liked. Mr. Wilson married before her face a girl who was greatly her inferior in fortune, person, and appearance, but who was humble, frugal, meek and pious. Miss Bragwell now strongly felt the truth of what Mr. Wilson had once told her, "that a woman may make an excellent partner for a dance, who would make a very bad one for life.

Hitherto Mr. Bragwell and his daughters had only learnt to regret their folly and vanity, as it had produced them mortification in this life; whether they were ever brought to a more serious sense of their errors, may be seen in a future part of this history.

THE END. *

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