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THE

GOOD MOTHER'S LEGACY.



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(Printers to the Cheap Repository for Moral and Religious Tracts)
No. 41, and 42, LONG-LANE, WEST-SMITHFIELD, and also by
HATCHARD, No. 190, PICCADILLY, London. By S. HAZARD,
BATH. And by all Booksellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers in,
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PRICE ONE PENNY, Or 6s. per Hundred.

Entered at Stationers Hall.

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GOOD MOTHER'S LEGACY.

FARMER ADAMS at his death left a wife and seven children: though his worldly property was but slender for the maintainance of such a family, yet Mrs. Adams was quite a treasure in herself; her life was a daily lesson of instruction. To an extraordinary degree of piety she joined the most unwearied industry; and her religion made her so chearful and good humoured, that the whole parish sought her acquaintance, and they never left her but they said, she had made them better and happier. As she lived within a few miles of a considerable town, she twice a week carried her goods to market, yet never once belied her conscience by asking one price, and then taking another; so that the gentlefolks who were her customers, seeing she never broke her word with them, always took her butter and cheese at her own price: by this dispatch in business, she was often ready to quit the market before many a farmer's wife had sold a single griskin. Her character for honesty was so well known through the market, that the officers, when they went their rounds to weigh the butter, never thought of putting a single pound of Mrs. Adams's into the scales, though they frequently seized baskets full belonging to other women, which they sent off to the prisons for being under weight: it grieved her to the heart whenever this happened, for it would set her a thinking how these very people at the Day of Judgment might "be weighed in the

balance, and found wanting," for having violated our
 Saviour's Golden Rules, of not doing unto others as
 they would be done unto, "for a false ballance is
 an abomination to the Lord." Whenever the but-
 ter was taken away in this manner, the other peo-
 ple who saw it would shout, and laugh, and hiss the
 poor wretches who had been detected, whilst Mrs.
 Adams was inwardly grieved at it, and would mild-
 ly rebuke them amidst their riotous mirth, and say
 they ought to pity the disgrace of a neighbour, not
 rejoice over it, and then she would kindly exhort
 the culprits to do so no more, and would pray to
 God for them, that a spirit of piety might be given
 them, for she would say, if there were no religion
 in the heart, you could never expect to find strict
 honesty in the dealings—and moreover, that we
 have all our faults, and therefore we must learn
 to live in love and charity with our neighbours, and
 forgive one another if we ourselves hope to be for-
 given. It was the custom of Mrs. Adams when-
 ever the seized butter was carried to the prisoners,
 always to send sixpence to them by the officers, it
 was the widow's mite. She had a large family, but
 if every body in time of need added a trifle to the
 prisoner's wants, much kindness, she would say,
 might be done them; though to be sure, she would
 add, if there were no laziness, there would be no
 want; and if there were no drunkenness or theft in
 good Old England, there need be no prisons. Mrs.
 Adams never went to drink a dram when her mar-
 rying was over, as is but too customary, but she
 hastened home immediately to attend the business
 of her farm; and when that was done, she had
 sometimes an hour's leisure in the evening to in-
 struct her servants and children: whilst they were

sitting round the fire at work, making and mending the family linen, her eldest son George would read a chapter in the Testament, after which she herself would read a bit of a sermon, such as the curate recommended, one that was more religious than learned, such as people could understand who had but little education; after which she read a general family prayer, and then they all went cheerfully to bed, blessing and praising God for his mercies.

Mrs. Adams brought up her two eldest sons in the farming business; no part of their good mother's instructions were lost upon them; they were sober, diligent, and dutiful, they never frequented a market or a fair, but for the necessary purpose of buying and selling their cattle, and their business was no sooner over, than they returned home to give their mother a faithful account of what they had done. Mrs. Adams's children were never sent at any revelling or merry making in the parish; and as a reward for their dutiful behavior, she often made some little entertainment for them at home, and gave them the liberty also of inviting some of their friends, for she would say, "I love to see young people cheerful and happy, but I trouble to have them dancing in ale-houses, which takes away their modesty—or getting drunk, which turns them into brutes—or profanely cursing or swearing, to the endangering their immortal souls."

Mrs. Adams's eldest daughter, Mary, being brought up under so good a mother, turned out exactly like her, for by being kept in her youth out of evil company, she was preserved from falling into those temptations which prove the ruin of many young women. Her dress was neat, modest, and suitable to her station, for as to ruffles

flounces, long-tailed gowns, and hair curled half-way down her back, she thought them very unbecoming a farmer's daughter, whose business it was to carry a milk pail, though to be sure, now a days it is a sight commonly seen, and she looked so neat at church every Sunday, that it made all the girls in the parish ashamed of their frippery. Molly Adams's good name soon procured her a good husband, who had an estate in free land of an hundred pounds a year, and his father and mother very much approved the match, though Molly had not a shilling—for they were prudent people, and said, it was better to get a fortune *in* a wife, than a fortune *with* a wife—as for the young man, he liked one who knew how to take care of the main chance, and the sweetness of her temper made him happy, whilst the labors of her hands made him rich.

Mrs. Adams's two next daughters did not take kindly to the dairy life, Susan therefore, the eldest went into a respectable family, and by her obliging behaviour, soon acquired the love and confidence of her master and mistress. They were people of excellent character, and by a regular practice of devotion being kept up in the family, the servants by degrees became sober, diligent, and faithful in whatever was intrusted to their care, and every Christmas their mistress made them a present, saying, she could afford to increase their wages, when she found they did not waste her substance. Susan Adams now began to thrive in the world, for she did not spend the profits of her labours in flaunty gowns and caps, as many young servants do, but wisely left her money in her mistress's hand, and out of the first twenty pounds she saved, she very dutifully made her mother a present of ten, towards

wards paying for her bringing up. In the course of some years few servants were so rich as Susan Adams, for she staid in the same place, whereas too many, by their fickleness or bad conduct, are changing places continually, and by having had their time nothing to do, they soon come to poverty and rags.

But Mrs. Adams was not equally happy in all her children; she had her trials; but in her deepest distress she would often say, our faith in God can only be known by the patience and submission with which we support ourselves under troubles; and if afflictions had not been useful to our souls' good, our heavenly Father would have withheld them from us.

Her third daughter Betty had imprudently made an acquaintance with the servants of the gentleman and lady who lived at the great white house on the hill. This whole family, from the highest to the lowest, lived as though there were no duties in this world, and no God in the next; as they were without principle in their hearts, their daily lives were a scene of extravagance and disorder, and there were more oaths sworn in the family in one day, than there were prayers offered in it in a twelvemonth; indeed, since the heads of this house lived very riotously, it could not be excepted but the servants would do the same. Betty Adams was a pretty genteel young woman, when she unfortunately got acquainted with Lady Townley's waiting-maid, a very dressy, flaunty body, who was ignorant of all good things which every Christian ought to know; because, forsooth, she was better dressed than her country neighbors, she looked upon herself as altogether one of their betters; and she

was the more proud, and saucy, because she was very ignorant; for real gentlefolks who have got learning on their side, generally behave as mildly and civilly to poor people as if they were their equals. This Mrs. Perkins, for so she was called, took a mighty fancy to Betty Adams, and would sometimes *condescend*, as she called it, to walk over to the farm, less with a view, as it was whispered, to see Mrs. Adams, than to take a peep at her son; but the young farmer shunned her, and wisely concluded, that such a tawdry minx of a wife would soon bring a young man to ruin. Betty Adams, naturally fond of fine clothes and smart company, took mightily to Mrs. Perkins, who finding she had great power over Betty's mind, began by making her dissatisfied with a country life; and told her she was such a pretty figure of a woman, that when she was dressed genteely, she would look as much like a gentlewoman as any body, and then concluded by saying, "No young person was fit to be spoken to who had never been to London; besides, the servants in many families there had such merry times on't, that they had often more pleasure than their masters or mistresses; for," said she, "we have our card-parties in the hall; sometimes a concert; and you have a pretty voice, Betsey," continued she, "and I'll answer for it, you will be vastly admired amongst us; besides, our butler is half in love with you already." Betty was no stranger to this intelligence, having often heard it, from the butler himself; this circumstance served secretly to strengthen the arguments already made use of by Mrs. Perkins. and she resolved to quit her mother, as a place offered in Lady Townley's family, who was now about to return to London

for the winter. Betty, like many other young folks never asked her mother's advice, till it was too late to take it; within a few days of her intended departure, she told her mother what she had done, who, though grieved at heart, spoke kindly and gently to her as follows; "My dear Betty, as you think you can mend your fortune by going to service, and as you are of an age to think and act for yourself, I have no right to controul you; yet it is my duty as a mother to advise you, and to warn you against falling into those temptations which prove the ruin of thousands of heedless girls; by first yielding to small sins, you will be led on to fall into greater ones, and for the indulgence of a worldly pleasure, you may endanger your immortal soul. Never look with an envious eye, my child, on the seeming prosperity of thy neighbor, but whatever be thy condition, learn to be satisfied with it, *for a contented mind is a continual feast.* It is not always the favourites of heaven who abound the most in the good things of this world: the best people, we often see, are most chastised by affliction, for it is truly said, *God loveth those whom he chasteneth.* Be not discouraged, my love, if thou art often rebuked for well-doing. Be careful of whatever is intrusted to thy care, manage thy master's or mistress's property with as much attention as if it were thy own; take care not to be negligent in the performance of thy duty, but do thy work diligently; for though the eye of thy mistress be not over thee, the eye of God is upon thee. Take care that every action of thy life be done honestly, and fairly; for they must all be accounted for at the day of judgment; no poor person need therefore envy a wicked rich man for his wealth, since he must be accountable

God for the means by which he obtained it, and the manner in which he has spent it. There is a great deal of sin and wickedness in the world, Betty, beyond what I could ever have imagined, if I had not sometimes read Cruttwell's Bath Journal.— Take heed therefore to all your ways now you are venturing into the world, or ruin will soon come upon you, and put not your trust in your own strength, instead of looking up for safety to God, but be constant in prayer to him morning and evening. When you are in health praise the Lord for his mercies—when you are in sickness and sorrow humbly pray for his assistance under every affliction, and he will send it you in his own good time, since he can by his power in an instant turn your mourning into joy.”—Here Mrs. Adams finished her truly motherly exhortation. All Betty's brothers and sisters, with tears streaming from their eyes tenderly kissed her, and bade her farewell; her fond mother for a long time held her to her bosom before she could speak, at last she said, “My child, my dear child, remember what I have been saying to you; when you get among irreligious people, then will be your hour of trial, and remember there is no way of escaping evil, but by cleaving unto that which is good; if you lead a regular, sober, and religious life, you must expect to be jeered and laughed at; but it is safer to win God's favour, than the world's love. Once more, my Betty, take my blessing, and let me warn thee for the last time, that the only way to avoid sorrow, is to flee from sin.” Betty most dutifully thanked her mother, and casting a mournful look on all around, took up her bundle, and walked off to the great house.

The rest of Mrs. Adams's children were soon after comfortably settled in life, and grew every day richer and happier—they were industrious without being covetous, for the good things of this world never made them lose sight of those better things they looked forward to possess in the world to come.—For some time after she got to London, Betty Adams continued to write to her mother; at length many a long month passed but no tale or tidings could they get of her, till at last they began to conclude she was dead. It must be mentioned here why Betty did not write as usual; she went on very well for some time, but as the largest fortune is insufficient to supply the wants of extravagant people, it so fell out at Lady Townley's where all was riot and waste, from the parlor down to the kitchen, that my lady, and her children, who were all grown up, to avoid a prison, were obliged to retire to foreign parts, where many English folks go, the more is the pity, when they have spent more than they can pay. The servants were all turned off at a minute's warning with most of their wages unsatisfied. Betty Adams was too proud to write to her mother the history of the disgrace which had befallen the family; but, to say the truth, the butler had also decoyed her away under a promise of marriage, which he never fulfilled, and having first deluded her, he then left her to starve.

One night, in the middle of January, it was one of the coldest that ever was known, the wind blowing quite a hurricane, the snow falling in sheets and being now so drifted, that it was four or five feet deep in many places—on this night the young farmer Adams was making his way, as well as he

could to the barn, to see if some young lambs had been properly taken care of. As he was going to open the barn-door, his foot struck against something which he thought was a block of wood, but stooping down to remove it, what was his surprise to perceive it was a woman with a young child in her arms.—“Speak, if you are alive,” cried the farmer, “and tell me who and what you are.”—“A poor miserable wretch,” replied the woman in a dying voice, “exposed to shame—sunk in sin—and perishing with cold and hunger.” “Then lend me your arm, (said the farmer) and I’ll help you in to my mother; you will make her happy, for she loves to help those that cannot help themselves.” Here the poor creature gave a deep groan, but spoke not; the farmer thought she was dead, and ran with all speed into the house to get assistance. He desired the man servant who was sitting by the kitchen fire learning to read, (his work for the night being done) to get a candle and follow him to the barn: his mother on hearing for what cause, said she would follow them, when her son kindly advised her to stay within as she had so bad a cold. “I would not go out such a night as this, George,” replied she “to a merry making or a puppet-show, but no weather is too bad for a person in tolerable health to go out in, if it is to assist a fellow creature in distress.

The whole family then sallied forth together:—when they reached the poor woman, they thought the hand of death had closed her eyes for ever; she was the very image of horror, withered and shrunk by famine; her helpless infant lay half naked and stretched out on her lap, and one of its little hands for want of a cloak to cover it, was frozen to the snow,

under which it lay buried; at this sad sight every female present burst into tears, when one of the servants took the child out of its mother's arms, and ran with it, wrapped up in her apron, into the house, whilst the men followed with its mother. They gave her a cup of warm wine, for Mrs. Adams always kept a bottle in the house for sickness, though she would have thought it very extravagant to have made use of a glass in time of health. At length the poor creature opened her eyes, and looking mournfully all round, in a piteous voice cried out, "O my dear mother!—O my dear brothers and sisters;—why did you bring such a wretch as I am into a house where none but Christians live. I believe I have lost my poor baby in the snow—My memory is quite gone—My heart scarcely beats, so heavily does the weight of my guilt lie upon it—My dear mother, do you not know your own child, your penitent child, Betty Adams." The house now rung with the most piteable lamentations: "My Betty! my child!" said Mrs. Adams. As soon as her grief would let her speak she tenderly kissed her, and said, "God only has a right to judge thee for thy faults, and if thou art truly penitent for them, thou art a thousand times more welcome to my heart, than if I had found thee surrounded by all the grandeur of this world, and living in a course of sinful pleasure; for the sufferings of this life are but short, when compared with eternity." Though every care was taken of the poor little baby, its limbs were already perished with the frost; it fell into a convulsion fit, and died on the maid's lap. Betty Adams was light-headed for the greater part of the night; towards the morning she dosed a little; she was somewhat refreshed

when she awoke, but was again nearly overcome when she saw all her family sitting round her bed; then seeing her dear mother, who raised her a little, she spoke as follows:—"My honored mother, and you, my kind brothers and sisters, weep not for me; I have only myself to blame for the miseries which have befallen me, I have sinned against warning, and must shortly appear before God to answer for it. Soon after I left you, my good mother, I began to neglect my duty towards God, and that soon led me on to be neglectful of my duty towards my master and mistress; the hours when my work was done, which I should have spent in reading my Bible, as I used to do, I spent in making smart hats and caps, for all the servants made it quite a pastime to laugh me out of my religion: so by degrees I grew bolder and bolder; our butler at length betrayed me to ruin, and then left me in sickness and poverty to bewail my unhappy fate.—I was then turned out of doors at a moment's warning, and as I had no one to give me a character, I could not expect a place without one; so I was forced to live in one of those dark cellars in London, which are full of beggars and thieves, where my poor baby was born—I soon pawned all my clothes, but that could not maintain us long, and as I had a constant fever and cough, thinking I should not live a great while to be a charge to my mother, I determined, as soon as I could crawl, to beg my way home. I left London, and the first door I knocked at to ask for a bit of bread, I thought of my dear mother, and I fainted away; the people of the house were kind, relieved my wants, and gave me sixpence to help me on. I have been three weeks travelling hither, sometimes taking up

my night's lodging under a hay-mow, and in the towns I got a penny lodging amongst beggars. I came to our little hatch this evening, just as the night set in, but my heart failed me, and I had not courage to lift up the latch, so, with my legs trembling under me, I staggered off, as well as I could, to the barn, where I fell down fainting with cold and hunger; not being able to stir a step farther, I hoped I should die soon, for I was certain I should break my poor mother's heart, when she found me asking charity at her door; but I feel it is all over with me; your blessing and forgiveness are all I have now to ask of you; and I do not despair of it, for I know that real Christians, and real Christians only, can forgive such offences as I have committed."—"Thou hast my pardon, my poor child," cried Mrs. Adams, "and I trust, if thy spirit be truly humbled for thy crime, thou wilt, for Christ's sake, meet the forgiveness of God also. Take comfort in the Scripture promise, *That there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*" Hearing, these comfortable words, the poor girl lifted up her hands and eyes; her quivering lips tried to speak but in vain, a ghastly hue overspread her features, her limbs shivered, her jaws fell, and with a deep groan, she expired. At Mrs. Adams's request, the following Sunday the curate preached an excellent sermon, to advise all young people to take warning by poor Betty Adams, and to learn to be content and happy in that station of life in which Providence has placed them. The sermon was so very moving, there was not a dry eye in the church. Mrs. Adams's children and all her grand children also, returned to her house when the funeral was over,

and as soon as they were all met, she spoke to them in the following manner :

“My dear children,” said she, “it may please the Almighty to take me from you as suddenly as he has done your poor sister; to God I must be accountable for all the things I have done in this life. As I shall have no great riches to leave amongst you, I wish to give you a LEGACY before I die,” so saying, she gave every one of them a HANDSOME NEW BIBLE, “this is the richest treasure you can possess in this world, and if rightly used will procure you a treasure in the world to come. Without daily studying this book, and making it's doctrines the constant rule of your lives, you will live to a woeful purpose. The HOLY BIBLE, my children, is the only thing that can give you support under every affliction; it is our comfort in life, our hope in death, and our source of happiness to all eternity. But it is not enough, my dear children, that you are constantly hearing God's word, you must be constantly doing God's work. Be very careful to avoid evil company and evil words; they are the great snares which lead youth into temptation; remember, that every sin you commit, however it may escape your memory, will be noted in the book of Heaven, and produced at the great day of account; then you will be convinced, my children, how safe it was for you to have loved godliness more than greatness. Never forget that a contented mind is a continual feast; now, as God's love is great towards us, let our thankfulness be equally great towards him. Never be ambitious to possess what is out of your reach; it is safer striving to win a Heavenly Crown by prayer, than earthly riches by fraud. How, often, my good children,

have I seen you rejoice when you have escaped any dangerous distemper in the parish, how much more ought you to rejoice when you have escaped any dangerous sin. Above all things, be careful that pride never enters your heart; because you will find on your death-bed as much satisfaction in having been low born as high born; the grand question will then be, in the midst of your prosperity did you possess an humble praying heart? Those only who have lived righteously can die joyfully; for he who sinks in darkness can never rise in light. All our sorrows in life, my children, are but the punishments of sin: it is a sad thing to live sinning, but it is a glorious one to die rejoicing. Above all things remember, that every blessing you receive, is an instance of God's mercy towards you. And, O! remember daily what a dreadful thing it is to die in a christian country, and yet be ignorant of the doctrines of Christ, who shed his blood upon the Cross for you. All that I shall further advise you is, to let your morning song begin with prayer, and your evening one close with thanksgiving, that under every affliction in life you may be able to say, **THY WILL NOT MINE BE DONE, O LORD!**"

Here Mrs. Adams ended her little sermon, as one may call it. Her family heard it with tears, and treasured it up in their minds. After an affectionate parting they each returned home blessing God for sending them so good a Mother.

T H E E N D.