

# Treforest. --Brothers in Church Choir.

by T. Mardy Rees

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*The sermon tells the story of two brothers, Seth and Frank, who are converted to Christianity through their experiences with the Salvation Army and Gospel Temperance movement.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

**Topics:** "Personal Conversion", "Faith Transformation"

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## Description

T. Mardy Rees preaches about the remarkable experiences of Seth and Frank, two brothers from Treforest who were converted after encountering the Salvation Army. Seth, initially skeptical, witnessed his brother Frank's transformation and eventually found his own salvation through a powerful encounter with God. Both brothers gave up their old habits and embraced a new life of faith and sobriety, despite facing challenges and temptations along the way. Seth's journey from doubt to conviction serves as a powerful testimony of God's transformative power and the importance of standing firm in one's faith, especially during the early stages of conversion.

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## Transcript

Treforest. --Brothers in Church Choir. --Advent of Salvation Army. --Ted Rickett. --Dai Caravan. --Frank and Seth are converted. --Remarkable experiences. --Seth at Blaenavon. -- Frank at Cinderford.

THE family removed from Pontypool to Treforest, where the father, a blast furnaceman, had found employment at the iron works. Seth became a carrier of pig iron. Equipped with a leather apron and leather cuffs he carried many thousands of tons of pig iron over the hot beds of the blast furnaces. If Monmouthshire had its evil temptations, the district of Treforest was much worse. Frank was engaged as a pupil teacher at a board school. Both brothers were fond of singing and joined the Glyntaff Church Choir, and the solo parts as a rule were entrusted to them. The Salvation Army settled at Treforest and placarded the place:

"This town will be bombarded." Such an advertisement was unheard of in connection with religion, and the boys talked together about it, Seth acting as ring-leader. He was the chairman of the "Free and Easy" at the Rickett Arms Hotel. The landlady, a widow, Mrs. Plummer, expected to see him present at all the convivial gatherings, because he never failed to keep things going. Seth could play the piano, sing, and do all sorts of things, and was undoubtedly a centre of attraction. He could not get over the news that the town was to be bombarded. "Boys," said he, "we are going to have some fun now. Look out! It has been pretty dead here for some time.' Are you going to see this bombardment business? Very well let's go down

Sunday morning." That was the first time for Seth to see the Salvation Army, and he did not know what to make of it. Girls with tambourines, wearing scuttle-bonnets, and standing in a ring on an old piece of ground, and praying for "this wicked town." Wicked town and both he and Frank in the choir! Frank was the first to go to their meeting-place, called " the barracks." They were shocked at the thought of a " barracks" used for the worship of God. A comrade, Ted Rickett, told Seth one night when they were practising for Christmas: " Seth, your brother Frank has got it on him." " What has he got, Ted? The measles or what? " " He is going to the barracks. Take my word for it he has got it." Just then Frank came to the door and Ted asked:

What will you have to drink, Frank? " With bowed head he answered: " I don't mind having a lemonade." Ted nudged Seth and said: " He's got it."

The following morning at work Dai Caravan informed Seth that he had been to the barracks, and that he saw Frank go up to the penitent form crying like a kid. " What is a penitent form, Dai? " asked Seth. " What does he want at a penitent form? Doesn't he come of a respectable family? " That evening he watched the procession, surmising that if Frank had been converted he would be with it. Frank was placed in the front rank, and his voice rang out clearly as they sang: " Fire away! Fire away!" This seemed beneath the dignity of one used to the Te Deum in the church choir. Seth felt ashamed of such conduct; but the thought came to him that Frank was going up and he was going down. Determined to choke the feeling he went to the Rickett Arms and banged the counter for a pint of beer, but the beer could not drown the thought. " It came up like a cork all the while."

A blue ribbon army campaign had just started at Pontypridd, led by Colonel Colwill, of America, Rev. John Pugh, W. I. Morris, Pontypridd, and R. T. Booth. Over two thousand signed the pledge. Seth had just won a billiard handicap, and as he was coming out of the New Inn Hotel, Pontypridd, his old friend Dai Caravan met him and said: " Come up to the Gospel Temperance meeting at the Wesleyan to-night, Seth " He went on condition that he might sit at the back. " Yes, sit anywhere, only come." Seth's favourite argument at the time was that " drink is the good creature of God." Colonel Colwill began by saying: " I suppose there is someone here who says that drink is the good creature of God." His reasons for total abstinence carried conviction. Frank also was at the meeting and went up to the table, signed the pledge, and received a blue ribbon badge. Seth with his strong bump of combativeness would not be beaten by his brother. Hundreds of people at the meeting were praying for Seth, for he was well known at Gelliwastad Chapel. When he marched forward to the table for his blue ribbon all clapped their hands with joy. Afterwards he called to see his sweetheart, who lived behind the chapel; and Ellen the cook, beholding the blue ribbon in his coat, went for a half-pint bottle of champagne. The sparkling drink said: "Drink, Seth, drink," and he was about taking the glass when his, sweetheart came out of a side door.. She sprang like a deer between him and the champagne and said: " Seth, play the man." This was "Mary, his good angel," whom he afterward married.

He gave up drink, smoking and bad language, and his old "pals " gave him up. Whilst walking about alone he passed an old mansion where Frank and others were holding a meeting. Good old Dai Caravan came out and said: " There's a revival meeting here, Seth, and your brother Frank was praying for you now." " Praying for me in public? Let him pray for himself in public, not for me. Look here, Dai, I am going down to Johnny Nokes' wooden theatre." Come on in here, Seth," implored Dai, "there's a beautiful meeting on." " Look here, Dai," rejoined Seth, " you got me to go into that place at Gelliwastad, and I signed the pledge. I will stick to it mind, but I am miserable. I do not know what to make of it." He was in bad temper because all pleasure had been taken out of his life. Nothing daunted, the loyal Dai besought him to enter the

meeting. "Perhaps you will get happy in here; come on in." Seth went in and the place was all alive, some leaping, some shouting: " Thank God I am saved." He knew them all, old bruisers whom he had punched and who had punched him, the rag-tag and bob-tail of Treforest, and all saying that they were saved. He could not understand it. Then a little girl stood and sang beautifully:

" I'm but a little pilgrim,  
My journey's just begun;  
They say I shall meet sorrow  
Before my journey's done.  
The world is full of trouble,  
And suffering they say,  
But I will follow Jesus  
All the way."

He dropped his head as if shot, and said: " I am going to Hell! " He felt that he was in it already. The workers asked those who were not saved to go to the penitent form. Seth warned them not to put their hand on him, or they would rue it. He was in a wild temper, and no one came to him. " The devil," as he put it, " was having his last kicks." At length he rose of his own accord and walked to the front. He knelt by an old broken chair, on old broken bricks, with a broken heart. When he rose he felt as if a great load had been rolled away from him. The tears fell like a stream, and Dai Caravan told him afterward that he left a pool of tears behind him. That night he went to bed supperless, and in the morning on his way to work the whole world seemed changed. Birds never sang as they did that morning. The springtime of grace had entered his soul. That night he stood outside the Rickett Arms Hotel, and was hailed by his old chums: " Seth, come and have a drink." Boys," he replied, " I have found another well; come and have a drink of it." In his own characteristic words: " Thank God I took my stand then; it was neck or nothing." Young converts he always exhorted to stand firmly where they were wont to fall; and although Herod might seek the young child's life they would outlive him. " If only you will weather the first three months of your converted life, you will get on alright."

Without any college preparation he entered into the work of the Gospel straight away at Blaenavon, where he followed two men--who had a mission in the centre of Cinderford--Joblin and Holt. Frank went to Cinderford where he became exceedingly popular as Gospel singer.

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