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THE STORY OF

PEEVISH WILLIAM.

Embellished with a Magic Lantern Exhibition.

PUBLISHED BY BENJAMIN JOHNSON, No. 249,
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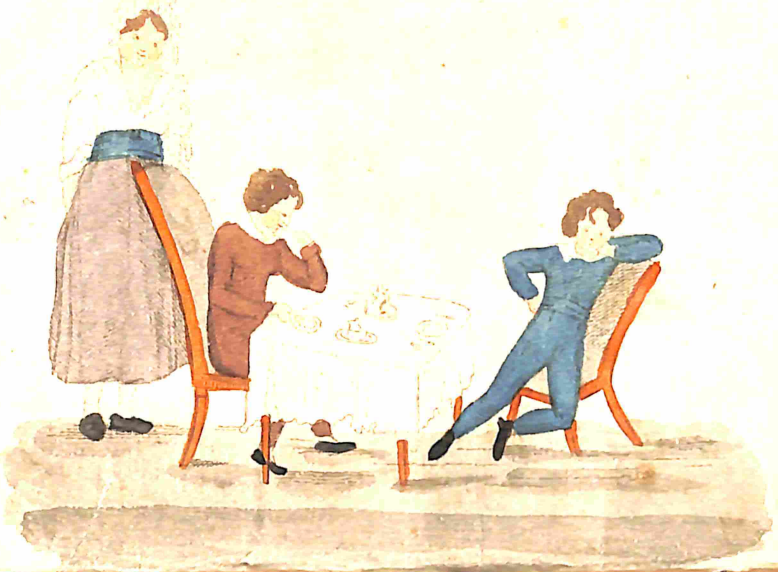

THE

STORY OF

PEEVISH WILLIAM.

MR. AND MRS. MANLY, EDWARD, FREDERIC, CAROLINE, SOPHY.

SOPHY.

OH! dear, how glad I am that those two girls are gone; I never spent two days more uncomfortably than the two last: they have interrupted all our pleasure.

MRS. MANLY.

Pray, Sophy, do not find fault with both the cousins. Miss Allen is certainly a very tiresome unpleasant girl, but Maria Peters is as good and amiable as her cousin is the contrary.

SOPHY.

So she is, mamma; but so disagreeable as the other I never saw any one: nothing could please

her, she was discontented and dissatisfied the whole time she was here; sometimes her bed was too hard, then too soft, always too warm or too cold, and then she was sure to dislike whatever she had for her dinner.

MR. MANLY.

Here she is in boy's clothes. Look, ladies and gentlemen, at the young man in the blue jacket, and tell me if he is not just such a creature as Miss Allen.

MRS. MANLY.

That he is, I will answer for it; and the other little fellow who is eating so contentedly, and who appears to have an excellent appetite, has just such a sweet happy countenance as Maria Peters.

MR. MANLY.

They were the sons of a gentleman, who lived on a small estate in the country, and who to save expence, which he could not well afford, educated them himself (as I do you my children) in the best manner he was able.

John was a very fine well disposed boy, always good humoured, and pleased and contented in every place, and with every thing. William was not vicious or ill-natured, he was ready enough to oblige any one, and so charitably disposed that he would give away the only sixpence he had in his pocket to a person who he saw in want of it; but unfortunately nothing that could be done for him could please his discontented whimsical humour,

and he tormented every body who had any thing to do with him by his continual peevishness and finding fault. If his meat was roasted, he wanted it boiled; when he had boiled potatoes, he wished them roasted; if he was told he might go out in the fields to take a walk or play, he could not think, indeed why he was to be driven out into the fields when he had no inclination to go, but would rather stay at home; and if he was desired not to go out, or at least not go far from home, because there was an appearance of bad weather, it was extremely hard, he said, that he could not go an inch from the door, because there happened to be a black cloud in the sky,—he was not made of sugar, he should not be melted if it did rain a few drops.

"Here's is your new jacket, master William," says Nicholas, his papa's old servant; "see how well it is made! come let me try it on."—"Was there any thing so provoking," exclaimed he; "no I will not try it on: I do not like a brown jacket, I wished to have a blue one."—"Oh, dear!" said Nicholas, "I have made a mistake, this is master John's; here is yours, it is a blue one."—"Oh, frightful!" cried William, "why a brown one would be better than such a nasty colour as that. You need not look so wise, Mr. Nicholas. I know I said I wished for a blue jacket, but I did not desire a dirty muddy thing like that."

Nicholas told him it was the very pattern he had chosen, and that he must endeavour to be

contented with it, as the tailor could not take it back now it was made.

The two boys were very found of fishing, and having obtained their father's permission to go to a fine trout stream at the distance of four miles from their house, they prepared themselves accordingly: the rods were put in order, and their basket slung over their shoulders; but where should they dine? it would be very late if they dined at home. "Would it not be better," said William, "that we should take some cold meat in our baskets and dine by the river side?"

John said there was no occasion to load themselves with provision, for he recollected when he went with his uncle to fish in the same place, there was a neat little public house, kept by a widow and her daughter, close to the spot, where they had had a very comfortable dinner. "Not extremely elegant," added John; "but my uncle and I were very hungry, and we enjoyed it as much as if we had had all the dainties in the world; and my uncle was very much amused by the awkwardness of our attendant, the poor woman's daughter: she was a great bouncing country girl with rosy cheeks, very talkative indeed, and laughed and chatted all dinner time."

William agreed to go and dine with his brother's merry acquaintance, and they set forward on their little journey with light hearts and cheerful countenances.

They had not walked more than one mile from the house, when William declared he would not

set out on any account if he had known it would have been so warm, that they should be tired before they got to the river, and consequently be in no humour to stand broiling in the sun to catch a few trifling fish. "Well never mind that," said John, "Peggy has the prettiest little parlour you ever saw; it is close to the water, and the window is so shaded with jessamine that the sun never enters it, and we shall dine as cool as if we were in Mrs. Mansfield's grotto. If we are too much fatigued to fish, we may stay there till the cool of the evening, and then walk home again. I shall be very well pleased with our little jaunt, whether we fish or not."

"You are very easy to please," replied William; "but come along we shall see when we get there how we shall best amuse ourselves."

Thus saying, he trudged along, grumbling all the way at the heat of the weather, the roughness of the road, and the flies which tickled his nose. John took off his jacket, and threw it across his fishing basket; William told him he looked like a plough boy, but he did not mind him, he only laughed and walked on.

"I should like to rest a little while on this bank," said John; "look, William, what a fine spreading tree hangs over it, in half an hour's time you will be as cool as when you sat out.—Will you sit down?"

"Certainly not," replied William; "who ever heard of setting in the open air to cool themselves. If we were in Peggy's shady parlour, I

should have some hope of cooling myself."—"Let us then go on," said his brother with the utmost good nature.

William proposed quitting the high road, and crossing a couple of fields, which would he thought save them a long walk, as he observed a turn in the road; and John being of the same opinion, they jumped over the stile, and, following a narrow footpath, soon found themselves in a kind of coppice on the side of a hill, at the bottom of which ran a clear and beautiful stream. On looking about them, they perceived a small wooden bridge, and that the path on the other side of the stream led through an extensive meadow, which they doubted not would bring them once more into the road they had quitted, and they congratulated each other on having saved themselves so many weary steps, and having escaped so much of the dusty road.

They walked quickly down the coppice to the side of the stream, but, to their great disappointment, found that the bridge was broken, and the middle of it quite washed away. John proposed that they should pull off their stockings and shoes, and wade through the water to the other side; but, on examination, it appeared to be very deep, and so rapid, that he was afraid they might be carried away with it. William seeing a large limb of a tree lying at a little distance, asked his brother to assist him in bringing it to the water side, and trying to throw it across the broken part of the bridge.

It was very heavy, and William wished a thousand times he had staid at home, instead of exposing himself to so much fatigue.—It was a very ridiculous jaunt, he said, and he wondered how they happened to think of such a thing.

"What is there ridiculous," asked John, "in two boys going a fishing?" and at the same moment his hand slipped from the tree, he fell back on the grass with his cheek on a stinging nettle, which, though he felt the smart, did not prevent his laughing so immoderately as he lay sprawling on the ground, that William was quite angry, and told him he had much better try to get over the stream than lay there playing the fool. John, always good humoured and obliging, got up immediately, and at length they dragged the tree to the bridge: but, alas! it was lost labour. John, who was first, directly perceived that it was too short, and told his brother so, laughing heartily at the same time at their stupidity in not having observed it before they gave themselves so much trouble.

"I have no patience with you," cried William; "what is there to laugh at? is it not the most vexatious thing in the world that we cannot get over this plague of a streamlet?—Why, it is not two steps; but it is so deep that there is no venturing, and I suppose we must go back, to the road by the way we came."

At this moment they were joined by a traveller, with a wallet on his back, who came down the coppice, as they had done, to cross the water, not

knowing that any accident had happened to the bridge.

The man immediately saw the impossibility of getting over, and advised the two young gentlemen to accompany him to a village a little higher up, where he told them they might cross; and from whence, he said he would put them in the way (by going over a bit of common and down a narrow lane) to arrive at the little inn where they were to dine, without meeting any more with the dusty road.

This good news smoothed the brow of fretful William, and he walked on by the man's side in tolerable good humour till they reached the village, where, crossing a stone bridge, they took the road to the common, and following exactly the traveller's directions, in less than an hour came in sight of the trout stream, the good woman's neat little habitation, and smiling Peggy, who sat spinning at the door.

"How do you do, Peggy?" said John, "we are come to dine with you; I hope you have something ready, for I am so hungry that I do not know what I shall do if I have to wait."

"Nor I either," added William; "I am half starved.—What can you give us Peggy?"

"Mother, come out!" cried Peggy as loud as she could bawl, "here am young gentlefolk want some dinner."

"You are come in the very time, my sweet young masters," said the good dame, "I have a piece of pork and greens, and an apple pudding

in the pot boiling, as nice a one as ever was made:—nobody makes a pudding better than Peggy. Then I have the best part of a cold tongue and a cold fowl, and Peggy shall go into the garden and gather you some currants and raspberries: will this do for your honours?"

"Oh, excellently!" replied John, "and the sooner we have it the better."

"You have no such thing as a bit of roast beef to give us," asked William, "instead of the boiled pork?"

"No, sir, I am very sorry, but I have no beef."

"Cold ham is much better than tongue.—Have you no ham?"

"Not a bit, sir; but my tongue is a very good one."

"Apple pudding too! that is very bad.—I cannot imagine dame Morris, why you did not make an apple tart rather than a pudding."

"Why, young master, for this reason: it was intended for ourselves, and we made what we liked best."

"Then you may eat it."

"Not all," interrupted John, "I hope dame Morris will let me have a piece, for I am very fond of it."

"You shall have all my share, master John," said Peggy, "you be be so good natured; and I will go and lay the cloth directly, for you look as hungry as a hunter." So saying, she went into the house; and William desired his brother to show him the shady parlour he had talked so much

of, saying he longed to take off his basket and sit down, never having been so much tired in his life: but he no sooner entered the door than he began to find fault with it; it was too shady by half, the jessamine ought to be cut away, and the window be made larger. He was very much surprised that there should not be a mahogany table in the room; it would be very disagreeable to dine on an oaken one; and the chairs were too low for the table, he should have his chin in his plate.

"I wish I had my plate and my dinner before me," said John, "I should not trouble my head about the table or the chairs."

Peggy came in to lay the cloth, and William found fault with every thing. The plates were not of the kind he preferred—the knives and the forks had black handles—there were no salt spoons, no bread basket—the bread was on a plate.

"Bless me!" exclaimed John, almost out of patience, "what does it signify, brother: every thing is nicely clean, and we shall have an excellent dinner; what can you desire more?"

In came Peggy with the pork and greens. John put a large slice upon his brother's plate:" I could have eat roast beef or mutton," said William, "or even pork if it had been roasted; but this is sad stuff. I suppose I must dine on the tongue when it comes; in the mean time I will just taste this." So saying he put a large piece in his mouth, and then another, till he had finished his slice, and then he sent away his plate.

The tongue and fowl being placed on the table, and John having helped him to a couple of slices

of the one, and a large wing of the other, he said he had no ~~but that~~ doubt it was stale, and turning round on his chair, and throwing his arm on the back of it, declared he could not touch it.

Peggy, who was standing behind his brother's chair, had a full view of his peevish cross countenance, and, recollecting what he had said of the pork, though he had eaten every morsel that had been put on his plate, could scarcely prevent herself from bursting into a fit of laughter whenever she looked at him, because she fully expected the end of it would be his finishing his second plate full: and so it happened; for, his brother being too busily employed to mind whether he ate or not, and having no inclination to lose his dinner though he liked to make difficulties, he very soon turned towards the table, and curling up his nose and the corners of his mouth as if he had been going to take rhubarb, he never stopped till he had entirely cleared his plate. Peggy laughed as she changed it.

"This is the most horrid stuff in the world," said he, helping himself to an enormous piece of the apple pudding; "I do not think I shall be able to swallow it."—"Never fear, master," said Peggy, "you will swallow it as well as you did the pork, and the greens, and potatoes, and tongue, and chicken, and pickles, and cucumber. I am quite happy to see you eat so hearty. You made so many difficulties, just like sick folks, that I was afraid you was in a bad state of health; but I see you be well enough, only a little bit whimsical or so."

This speech of Peggy's completed William's ill humour: he said he had not half dined; that he was too much fatigued to fish, and would rather return home than do any thing else, wishing a thousand times he had not left it, and accused his brother of having brought him against his inclination.

John made little reply to his ill humour, only saying he also wished he had not come with him, for he was so difficult and hard to please that he made every one uncomfortable; and seeing a man on horseback at the door, whom he knew to be a farmer who lived just by them, he advised him to get up behind him, and ride home. William, who was always happier in any other place than that in which he happened to be, caught at the proposal, and as soon as the farmer had finished his beer, mounted behind him and rode off, without troubling his head about his brother, whom he left quite alone.

His father was very much displeased with him, and sent off his old servant on horseback to John, with orders to remain with him as long as he liked to stay.

Nicholas found him with his rod in his hand by the river side, looking as happy and contented as possible. Old Nicholas had not forgot to bring his rod; they spent a delightful afternoon; and John returned with his basket filled with fine trout, which he presented to his father for his supper.