

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE
History of Idle Jack Brown.

CONTAINING THE
MERRY STORY of the MOUNTEBANK, with some
Account of the Bay Mare SMILER.

Being the THIRD PART of the
TWO SHOEMAKERS.



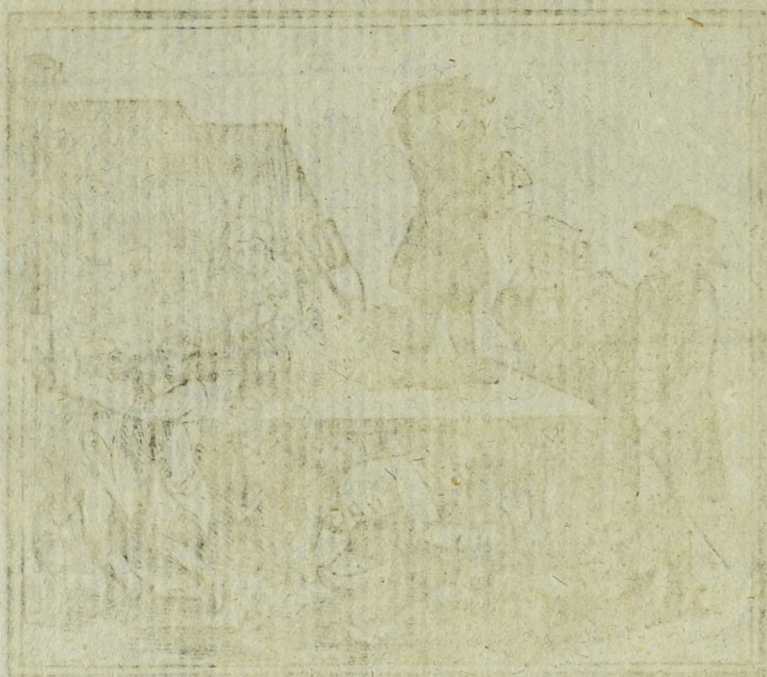
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TWO SHOCKMAKERS



T H E

H I S T O R Y, &c.

YOU have not, I hope, forgotten your old acquaintance idle Jack Brown, the fellow 'prentice of James Stock. I gave a little account of him and his wild tricks in the first part of this history, from which I dare say you expect to hear no great good of him. The second part shewed how James Stock, from a parish 'prentice, became a top Shoemaker. You shall now hear what befel idle Jack, who, being a farmer's son, had many advantages to begin life with. But he who wants prudence may be said to want every thing, because he turns all his advantages to no account.

Jack Brown was just out of his time when his master Williams died in that terrible drunken fit at the Greyhound. You know already how Stock succeeded to his master's business, and prospered in it. Jack wished very much to enter into partnership with him. His father and mother too were

desirous of it, and offered to advance a hundred pounds with him. Here is a fresh proof of the power of a good character! The old farmer, with all his covetousness, was eager to get his son into partnership with Stock, though the latter was not worth a shilling, and even his mother, with all her pride, was eager for it, for they had sense enough to see it would be the making of Jack. The father knew that Stock would look to the main chance; and the mother that he would take the labouring oar, and so her darling would have little to do.

Stock, however, young as he was, "was too old a bird to be caught with chaff." His wisdom was an overmatch for their cunning. He had a kindness for Brown, but would on no account enter into business with him. "One of these three things," said he, "I am sure of if I do; he will either hurt my principles, my character, or my trade; perhaps all." And here, by-the-bye, let me drop a hint to other young men who are about to enter into partnership. Let them not do that in haste which they may repent at leisure. Next to marriage it is a tie the hardest to break; and next to that it is an engagement which ought to be entered into with the most caution. Many things go to the making such a connexion suitable, safe, and pleasant. There is many a top man need not be above taking a hint in this respect from James Stock the Shoemaker.

Brown was still unwilling to leave him, indeed he was too idle to look out for business, so he offered Stock to work with him as a journeyman;

but this he also mildly refused. It hurt his good-nature to do so; but he reflected that a young man who has his way to make in the world must not only be good-natured, he must be prudent also. "I am resolved" said he "to employ none but the most sober, regular young men I can get. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and I should be answerable for all the disorders of my own house if I knowingly took a wild drinking young fellow into it. "That which might be kindness to one, would be injustice to many, and therefore a sin in myself."

Brown's mother was in a great rage when she heard that her son had stooped so low as to make this offer. She thought pride was a grand thing. Poor woman! She did not know that it was the meanest thing in the world. It was her ignorance which made her proud, as is apt to be the case. "You mean-spirited rascal," said she to Jack "I had rather follow you to your grave, as well as I love you, than see you disgrace your family by working under Jem Stock, the parish 'prentice." She forgot already what pains she had taken about the partnership, but pride and passion have a bad memory.

It is hard to say which was now uppermost in her mind, her desire to be revenged on Stock, or to see her son make a figure. She raised every shilling she could get from her husband, and all she could crib from the dairy to set up Jack in a showy way. So the very next market day she came herself, and took for him the new white house,

with the two little sash windows painted blue, and blue posts before the door. It is that house which has the old cross just before it, as you turn down between the Church and the Greyhound. It's being so near the Church to be sure was no recommendation to Jack, but it's being so near the Greyhound was, and so taking one thing with the other it was to be sure no bad situation; but what weighed most with the mother was, that it was a much more showy shop than Stock's, and the house, though not half so convenient, was far more smart.

In order to draw custom, his foolish mother advised him to undersell his neighbours just at first; to buy ordinary but showy goods, and employ cheap workmen. In short, she charged him to leave no stone unturned to ruin his old comrade Stock. Indeed she always thought with double satisfaction of Jack's prosperity, because she always joined to it the hope that his success would be the ruin of Stock, for she owned it would be the joy of her heart to bring that proud upstart to a morsel of bread. She did not understand, for her part, why such beggars must become Tradefmen, it was "making a velvet purse of a sow's ear."

Stock however set out on quite another set of principles. He did not allow himself always to square his own behaviour to others by their's to him. He seldom asked himself what he should *like* to do: but he had a mighty way of saying "I wonder now what is my duty to do?" And when he was once clear in that matter he generally did it. So instead of setting Brown at defiance; instead of

all that vulgar selfishness, of "catch he that catch can"—and "two of a trade can never agree," he resolved to be friendly towards him. Instead of joining in the laugh against him for making his house so fine, he was sorry for him, because he feared he would never be able to pay such a rent. So he very kindly called upon him, told him there was business enough for them both, and gave him many useful hints for his going on. He warned him to go oftner to Church and seldomer to the Greyhound: Put him in mind how following the one and forsaking the other had been the ruin of their poor master, and added the following

ADVICE TO YOUNG TRADESMEN.

Buy the best goods, cut the work out yourself: let the eye of the master be every where; employ the soberest men; avoid all the low deceits of trade; never lower the credit of another to raise your own; make short payments, keep exact accounts; avoid idle company, and be very strict to your word.

For a short time things went on swimmingly. Brown was merry and civil. The shop was well situated for gossip; and every one who had something to say and nothing to do was welcome. Every idle story was first spread, and every idle song first sung in Brown's shop. Every customer who came to be measured was promised that his shoes should

be done first. But the misfortune was, if twenty came in a day the same promise was made to all; so that nineteen were disappointed and of course affronted. He never said *No* to any one. It is indeed a word which it requires some honesty to pronounce. By all these false promises he was thought the most obliging fellow that ever made a shoe. And as he set out on the principle of underselling, people took a mighty fancy to the Cheap Shop. And it was agreed among all the young and giddy, that he would beat Stock hollow, and that the old shop would be soon knocked up.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLISTENS.

After a few months however folks began to be not quite so fond of the Cheap Shop; one found out that the leather was bad, another that the work was slight. Those who liked substantial goods went all of them to Stock's, for they said Brown's heel taps did not last a week; his new boots let in water, and they believed he made his soles of brown paper. Besides it was thought by most that his promising all, and keeping his word with none, hurt his business as much as any thing. Indeed I question if lying ever answers in the long run.

Brown had what is commonly called a *good heart*; that is he had a thoughtless good nature, and a sort of feeling for the moment which made him seem sorry when others were in trouble. But he was

not apt to put himself to any inconvenience, nor go a step out of his way, nor give up any pleasure to serve the best friend he had. He loved *fun*; and those who do should always see that it be harmless, and that they do not give up more for it than it is worth. I am not going to say a word against innocent merriment. I like it myself. But what the proverb says of gold, may be said of mirth, "it may be bought too dear." If a young man finds that what he fancies is a good joke may possibly offend God, hurt his neighbour, afflict his parent, or make a modest girl blush, let him then be assured it is not fun but wickedness, and he had better let it alone.

Jack Brown then, as *good a heart* as he had, did not know what it was to deny himself any thing. He was so *good-natured* indeed that he never in his life refused to make one of a jolly set; but he was not good-natured enough to consider that those men whom he kept up all night roaring and laughing had wives and children at home, who had little to eat, and less to wear, because *they* were keeping up the character of merry fellows at the public house.

THE MOUNTEBANK.

One day he saw his father's plow boy come galloping up to his door in great haste. He brought Brown word that his mother was dangerously ill,

and that his father had sent his own best bay mare Smiler, that his son might lose no time, but set out directly to see his mother before she died. Jack burst into tears, lamented the danger of so fond a mother, and all the people in the shop extolled his *good heart*.

He sent back the boy directly, with a message that he would follow him in half an hour, as soon as the mare had baited; for he well knew that his father would not thank him for any haste he might make if Smiler was hurt.

Jack accordingly set off, and rode with such speed to the next town, that both himself and Smiler had a mind to another bait. They stopped at the Star, unluckily it was Fair day, and as he was walking about while Smiler was eating her oats, a bill was put into his hand setting forth, that on a stage opposite the Globe a Mountebank was showing away, and his Andrew performing the finest tricks that ever were seen. He read—he stood still—he went on—“It will not hinder me,” says he; “Smiler must rest, and I shall see my poor dear mother just as soon if I just take a peep, as if I sit moping at the Star.”

The tricks were so merry that the time seemed short, and when they were over he could not forbear going into the Globe and treating these choice spirits with a bowl of punch. Just as they were taking the last glass Jack happened to say that he was the best fives player in the country. “That is lucky,” said the Andrew, “for there is a famous

match now playing in the court, and you may never have such an opportunity to show your skill." Brown declared he could not stay, for that he had left his horse at the Star, and must set off on urgent business. They now all pretended to call his skill in question. This roused his pride, and he thought another half hour could break no squares. Smiler had now had a good feed of corn, and he would only have to push her on a little more; so to it he went.

He won the first game. This spurred him on: and he played till it was so dark they could not see a ball. Another bowl was called for from the winner. Wagers and betts now drained Brown not only of all the money he had won, but of all he had in his pocket, so that he was obliged to ask leave to go to the house where his horse was, to borrow enough to discharge his reckoning at the Globe.

All these losses brought his poor dear mother to his mind, and he marched off with rather a heavy heart to borrow the money, and to order Smiler out of the stable. The landlord expressed much surprise at seeing him, and the ostler declared there was no Smiler there; that he had been rode off above two hours ago by the Merry Andrew, who said he came by order of the owner Mr. Brown to fetch him to the Globe, and to pay for his feed. It was indeed one of the neatest tricks the Andrew ever performed, for he had made such a clean conveyance of Smiler, that neither Jack nor his father ever heard of her again.

It was night. No one could tell what road the Andrew took, and it was another hour or two before an advertisement could be drawn up for apprehending the horse-stealer. Jack had some doubts whether he should go on or return back. He knew that though his father might fear his wife most, yet he loved Smiler best. At length he took that courage from a glass of brandy which he ought to have taken from a hearty repentance, and he resolved to pursue his journey. He was obliged to leave his watch and silver buckles in pawn for a little old hack which was nothing but skin and bone, and would hardly trot three miles an hour.

He knocked at his father's door about five in the morning. The family were all up. He asked the boy who opened the door how his mother was? "She is dead," said the boy, "she died yesterday afternoon." Here Jack's heart smote him, and he cried aloud, partly from grief, but more from the reproaches of his own conscience, for he found by computing the hours, that had he come strait on, he should have been in time to have received his mother's blessing.

The Farmer now called from within. "I hear Smiler's step. Is Jack come?" "Yes father," said Jack in a low voice. Then, "cried the Farmer, "run every man and boy of you and take care of the mare. Tom, do thou go and rub her down; Jem, run and get her a good feed of corn. Be sure walk her about that she may not catch cold." Young Brown came in. "Are you not an undutiful dog?" said the father, "You might have

been here twelve hours ago. Your mother could not die in peace without seeing you. She said it was a cruel return for all her fondness that you could not make a little haste to see her; but it was always so, for she had wronged her other children to help you, and this was her reward." Brown sobbed out a few words, but his father replied, "Never cry Jack, for the boy told me that it was out of regard for Smiler that you were not here as soon as he was; and if 'twas your over care of her, why there's no great harm done. You could not have saved your poor mother, and you might have hurt the mare." Here Jack's double guilt flew into his face. He knew that his father was very covetous, and had lived on bad terms with his wife; and also that his own unkindness to her had been forgiven out of love to the horse; but to break to him how he had lost that horse through his own folly and want of feeling was more than Jack had courage to do. The old man, however, soon got at the truth, and no words can describe his fury. Forgetting that his wife lay dead above stairs, he abused his son in a way not fit to be repeated; and though his covetousness had just before found an excuse for neglecting to visit a dying parent, yet he now vented his rage against Jack as an unnatural brute, whom he would cut off with a shilling, and bade him never see his face again.

Jack was not allowed to attend his mother's funeral, which was a real grief to him; nor would his father advance even the little money which was needful to redeem his things at the Star. He had now no fond mother to assist him, and he set out on his

return home on his borrowed hack full of grief. He knew he had also lost a little hoard of money which his mother had saved up for him.

When Brown got back to his own town he found that the story of Smiler and the andrew had got thither before him, and it was thought a very good joke at the Greyhound. He soon recovered his spirits as far as related to the horse, but as to his behaviour to his dying mother it troubled him at times to the last day of his life, though he did all he could to forget it. He did not however go on at all better, nor did he engage in one frolic the less for what had passed at the Globe.

Jack began at length to feel the reverse of that proverb, "Keep your shop and your shop will keep you." He had neglected his customers, and they forsook him. Quarter day came round; there was much to pay and little to receive. He owed two years rent. He was in arrears to his men for wages. He had a long account with his Currier. It was in vain to apply to his father. He had now no mother. Stock was the only true friend he had in the world, and had helped him out of many petty scrapes, but he knew Stock would advance no money in so hopeless a case. Duns came fast about him. He named a speedy day for payment, but as soon as they were out of the house, and the danger put off to a little distance, he forgot every promise, was as merry as ever, and run the same round of thoughtless gaiety. Whenever he was in trouble Stock did not shun him, because that was the moment he thought to throw in a little good advice. He one day asked him if he always intend-

ed to go on in this course? “ No,” said he, “ I am resolved by-and-bye to reform, grow sober, and go to church. Why I am but five and twenty, man, I am stout and healthy, and likely to live long, I can repent and grow melancholy and good at any time.”

“ Oh Jack,” said Stock, “ don’t cheat thyself with that false hope. What thou dost intend to do, do quickly. Didst thou never read about the heart growing hardened by long indulgence in sin? Some folk, who pretend to mean well, show that they mean nothing at all, by never beginning to put their good resolutions into practice ; which made a wise man once say, that “ hell is paved with good intentions.”

Michaelmas day was at hand. The Landlord declared he would be put off no longer, but would seize for Rent if it was not paid him on that day, as well as for a considerable sum due to him for leather. Brown now began to be frightened. He applied to Stock to be bound for him. This Stock flatly refused. Brown now began to dread the horrors of a jail, and really seemed so very contrite, and made so many vows and promises of amendment, that at length Stock was prevailed on, together with two or three of Brown’s other friends, to advance each a small sum of money to quiet the Landlord, Brown promising to make over to them every part of his stock, and to be guided in future by their advice, that he would turn over a new leaf, and follow Mr. Stock’s example, as well as his directions in every thing.

Stock's good-nature was at last wrought upon, and he raised the money. The truth is, he did not know the worst, nor how deeply Brown was involved, and Brown joyfully set out at the very quarter day to a town at some distance to carry his Landlord the money raised by the imprudent kindness of his friend. At his departure Stock put him in mind of the old story of Smiler and the Merry Andrew, and he promised of his own head that he would not even call at a public house till he had paid the money.

He was as good as his word. He very triumphantly passed by several. He stopped a little under the window of one where the sounds of merriment and loud laughter caught his ear. At another he heard the enticing notes of a fiddle and the light heels of the merry dancers. Here his heart had well nigh failed him, but the dread of a jail on the one hand, and what he feared almost as much, Mr. Stock's anger on the other, spurred him on; and he valued himself not a little at having got the better of this temptation. He felt quite happy when he found he had reached the door of his landlord without having yielded to one idle inclination.

He knocked at the door. The maid who opened it said her master was not at home. "I am sorry for it," said he strutting about, and with a boasting air took out his money. "I want to pay him my rent: he need not have been afraid of me." The servant, who knew her master was very much afraid of him, desired him to walk in, her master

would be at home in half an hour. "I will call again," said he; "but no, let him call on me, and the sooner the better: I shall be at the Blue-Posts." While he had been talking he took care to open his black leather case, and to display the Bank Bills to the servant, and then, in a swaggering way, he put up his money and marched off to the Blue Posts.

He was by this time quite proud of his own resolution, and having tendered the money, and being clear in his own mind that it was the landlord's own fault that it was not paid, he went to refresh himself at the Blue Posts. In a barn belonging to this public house some strollers were just going to perform some of that sing-song ribaldry by which our villages are corrupted, the laws broken, and that money is drawn from the poor for pleasure, which is wanted by their families for bread. The name of the last new song which made part of the entertainment, made him think himself in high luck, that he should have just that half hour to spare. He went into the barn, but was too much delighted with the actor who sung his favourite song to remain a quiet hearer. He leaped out of the pit, and got behind the two ragged blankets which served for a curtain. He sung so much better than the actors themselves, that they praised and admired him to a degree which awakened all his vanity. He was so intoxicated with their flattery, that he could do no less than invite them all to supper, an invitation which they were too hungry not to accept.

He did not however quite forget his appointment with his Landlord; but the half hour was long since past by. "And so," says he, "as I know he is a mean curmudgeon, who goes to-bed I suppose by day light to save candle, it will be too late to speak with him to-night—besides, let him call upon me; it is his business and not mine. I left word where I was to be found, the money is ready, and if I don't pay him to-night, I can do it before breakfast."

By the time these firm resolutions were made supper was ready. There never was a more jolly evening. Ale and punch were as plenty as water. The actors saw what a vain fellow was feasting them; and as they wanted victuals, and he wanted flattery, the business was soon settled. They ate and Brown sung. They pretended to be in raptures. Singing promoted drinking, and every fresh glass produced a song, or a story still more merry than the former. Before morning those who were engaged to act in another barn a dozen miles off stole away quietly. Brown having dropt asleep they left him to finish his nap by himself: as to him his dreams were gay and pleasant, and the house being quite still, he slept comfortably till morning.

As soon as he had breakfasted, the business of the night before popped into his head. He set off once more to his landlord's in high spirits, gaily singing all the way scraps of all the tunes he had picked up the night before from his new friends. The landlord opened the door himself, and re-

proached him with no small furlinefs for not having kept his word with him the evening before, adding, that he fupposed he was come now with fome more of his fhallow excufes. Brown put on all that haughtinefs which is common to people who are generally in the wrong, when they catch themfelves doing a right action, and looked big, as fome fort of people do, when they have money to pay. “ You need not have been fo anxious about your money,” faid he, “ I was not going to break or run away.” The Landlord knew this was the common language of thofe who were ready to do both. Brown haughtily added,— “ You fhall fee I am a man of my word; give me a receipt.” The Landlord had it ready and gave it him.

Brown put his hand in his pocket for his black leather cafe where the bills were, he felt, he fearchcd, he examined, firft one pocket, then the other, then both waiftcoat pockets, but no leather cafe could he find. He looked terrified. It was the face of real terror. The landlord conceived it to be that of guilt, and abufed him heartily for putting his old tricks upon him; he fwore he would not be impofed upon any longer, the money or a jail, there lay his choice.

Brown protefted for once with great truth, that he had no intention to deceive; that he had actually brought the money, and knew not what was become of it, but the thing was far too unlikely to gain credit. Brown now called to mind that he had fallen afleep on the fettle in the room

where they had supped. This raised his spirits. He had no doubt but the case had fallen out of his pocket, said he would step to the public house and search for it, and would be back directly. Not one word of all this did the landlord believe, so inconvenient is it to have a bad character. He swore Brown should not stir out of his house without a constable, and made him wait while he sent for one. Brown, guarded by the constable, went back to the Blue Posts. The landlord charging the officer not to lose sight of the culprit. The caution was needless, Brown had not the least design of running away, so firmly persuaded was he that he should find his leather case.

But who can paint his dismay, when no tale or tidings of the leather case could be had. The master, the mistress, the boy, and the maid of the public house all protested they were innocent. His suspicions soon fell on the strollers with whom he had passed the night. And he now found out for the first time that a merry evening did not always produce a happy morning. He obtained a warrant, and proper officers were sent in pursuit of the strollers. No one however believed he had lost any thing. And as he had not a shilling left to defray the expensive treat he had given, the master of the inn agreed with the other landlord in thinking this story was a trick to defraud both. Brown remained in close custody. At length the officer returned, who said they had been obliged to let the strollers go, as they could not fix the charge on any one, and they had all offered to swear before a justice that they had seen nothing of the

leather case. And it was agreed that as he had passed the evening in a crowded barn, he had probably been robbed there of it all; and among so many who could pretend to guess at the thief?

Brown raved like a madmen, he cried and tore his hair, said he was ruined for ever. - The abusive language of his old landlord, and his new creditor at the Blue Posts, did not lighten his sorrow. His landlord would be put off no longer. Brown declared he could neither find bail nor raise another shilling, and as soon as the forms of law were made out, he was sent to the county jail.

Here it might have been expected that hard living and much leisure would have brought him to reflect a little on his past follies. But his heart was not truly touched. The chief thing which grieved him at first was, his having abused the kindness of Stock, for to him he should appear guilty of a real fraud, where he had indeed been only vain, idle, and imprudent. And it is worth while here to remark that vanity, idleness, and imprudence, often bring a man to ruin both soul and body, though silly people do not put them in the catalogue of heavy sins, and those who indulge them are often reckoned good honest merry fellows.

I wish I had room to tell my readers what befel Jack in his present doleful habitation, and what became of him afterwards. I promise them however, that they shall certainly know the first of next month, when I hope they will not forget to inquire for the Fourth Part of the Shoemakers, or Jack Brown in prison. Z.

END OF THE THIRD PART.

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