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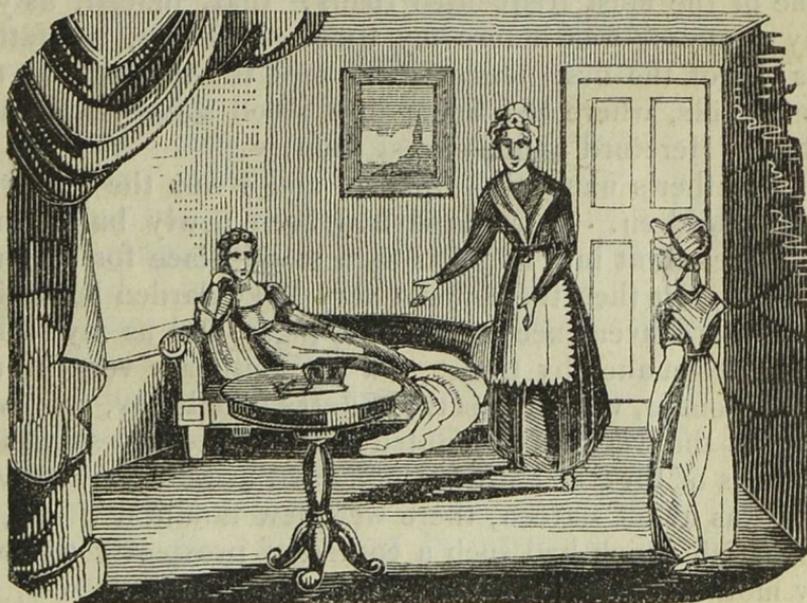
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THE  
TURNPIKE-HOUSE.

PART I.

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# THE TURNPIKE-HOUSE.



## PART I.

WHO has travelled in Herefordshire without remarking the beauty and richness of the country, the inequality of its surface, and the deepness of the clay roads by which it is intersected? The time was, and that not a hundred years ago, when there was no such thing as a turnpike-house on some of the most frequented roads: that, indeed, as you may suppose, was before my time. However, my father was one of the first persons who kept the turnpike at the cross roads, where the finger-post stood some years past, between Hereford and the west country.

My father's name was Spence, and I was the youngest of six children. Our house had been newly built when my father went into it. It was a small place for so large a family, but then there was a very large garden belonging to it, and convenience for keeping pigs; and as my father was a shoemaker by trade, and my mother a very industrious woman, we were, as the country people say, very well to do in the world, and wanted none of the necessaries or comforts of life: and while I remained at home, which was till I was about sixteen, there were few families, if any, in our parish which had such a course of prosperity as ours. My mother (for I must speak of her as she then was, although thank God, things are now quite changed with her) prided herself much upon never having called in a doctor since she had been a housekeeper: and I often used to hear her say to the neighbours, "Nothing ever ails our children: they eat and drink what they will: I never baulk their appetites: and I have never given to one of them so much as a spoonful of doctor's stuff." She used to pride herself also on the clearness and freshness of our skins; and if she saw any one troubled with sores, she would

turn away, and make some remark, as if it had been in the power of the diseased persons to have avoided those nauseous complaints if they would.

My father used to chime in, as I may say, with my mother on these occasions; and I have often known him range us all in a row when any person came in, and say, "There they are, all six. Is not my dame a good nurse? We have never lost one: and there is not a spot or scab about them, and never has been: their skin's as clean and fresh as it was the first day they were born." And then he would turn us about, and chuck me under the chin, as being the youngest, and praise the carnation of my cheeks and my lips.

A parent may indeed be thankful when he sees his little ones blooming about him as flowers in a garden, or as trees in an orchard; nevertheless, he should never forget that *all flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.* (1 Pet. i. 24.)

And now, my reader, do not condemn me for speaking thus freely of my parents, without hearing what I have to say by way of excuse. I am happy to tell you, that my father and mother are both sitting by me, the one on the right hand and the other on the left, my father being employed in mending a shoe, and my mother in knitting; and that it is by their orders that I am recording all these things, as my dear father thinks it may answer the good of others into whose hands the little narrative may fall. This being understood, I trust you will not blame me for what I have said, or may say, that may seem disrespectful of the instruments of my existence.

My father's family consisted of three sons and as many daughters. All of these grew up to be fine young men and women. Two of my brothers are married, and living in distant parts of the country. My youngest brother died when about thirty; he was in service at London. My eldest sister also died, after being in service some years. And my second sister married also; and is so far distant that we seldom see her; so that I only am left with my parents. So much for my brothers and sisters, and now for myself.

It was our father's plan to get us out to service as soon as we were able; and as we were known to be a clean, honest, and industrious family, he found no difficulty in procuring places for us.

When I was sixteen, my mother obtained a situation for

me as under housemaid, at one Squire Clifford's, who resided a little more than thirty miles from my native place. The housekeeper there, Mrs. West, was a distant relation to a farmer's wife in our parish, and it was by her means that I was introduced into this family.

Squire Clifford's is a very handsome old-fashioned house, standing in a paddock. The family consisted, when I went there, of the squire, his lady, and his mother, and three young ladies; there were many servants kept, and it was a decent, orderly house; for Mrs. West, the housekeeper, and Mr. Pipe, the butler, were very discreet and prudent persons. The head servants, that is, Mrs. West, and Mrs. Pinner, the old ladies'-maid, and Miss Kitty, the young ladies'-maid, always took their meals in the housekeeper's-room, and dined after the parlour; but we, the lower servants, dined at one, in the servants'-hall.

My father walked over with me from our home to Mr. Clifford's, occupying two days with it, for there were few stage-coaches then by which a person might be conveyed many miles for a few shillings; and when I was brought into the housekeeper's-room, where the upper servants were at tea, I was quite abashed at seeing how smart they were, and how like ladies and gentlemen they looked. However, Mrs. West expressed herself satisfied with my appearance, and was pleased to say that she liked my dress, and was glad to find that I was not set off with fine clothes, and muslin caps, and top-knots, and such like vanities.

She then asked my father if I was healthy, and could bear work. You will easily guess what answer my father gave to this question; and indeed he made every one in the room stare at his assertion, which was nothing but the truth, that he had been married twenty-six years, and had never seen the face of a doctor in his house.

"You are a lucky man then," remarked some one present.

On which Mrs. West said, "At least he ought to be a grateful man: for health is a gift of God, and to God we ought to give the praise when we are permitted to enjoy it."

The housekeeper then sent for the upper housemaid, a decent, steady, elderly person, and putting me under her care, I took leave of my father, and was taken to my supper in the servants'-hall; where I soon became acquainted with the other servants, and began to think that I should like my service very well.

Now as I intend not to put down any thing but truth

in my story, I hope that my reader will not suppose that I am boasting when I give myself a pretty good character in some particulars. My mother had made me clean and diligent; and I was honest; and, when not displeased, I was also good-tempered. Perhaps you will say, "There is no great commendation in saying of yourself that you were good-tempered when you were pleased." But I answer, that there are some people who never are pleased; and others, who, when obliged, or when any one tries to oblige them, become proud, and insolent, and contrary. Now this was not my case, and as I had somewhat of a smiling countenance and cheerful manner, I soon became a favourite in the house; and, what was of great consequence to me, Nelly Brian, the housemaid, liked me very well, and treated me very kindly, though she made me obey her. I slept with her in a little attic, and she and I used to work together: and she made me thoroughly acquainted with the best means of cleaning a house.—But to go on with the particulars of my story.

It seems that old Madam Clifford had taken it into her kind heart (for she was the best of friends to the needy) to have compassion on the orphan child belonging to a servant of the family; and had educated her at a boarding-school, and taken every possible care of her. This young person's name was Pamela, and she was two years older than myself.

She had been kept at school till it was thought the confinement had injured her health, for it was the fashion in those days for girls to be much employed in fine needlework: by reason of which Mrs. Clifford brought her home and put her under Mrs. West's care, and she took her meals in the housekeeper's-room, though she had not been present when I was first introduced to Mrs. West. However, the next morning at breakfast I heard the servants talking of Miss Pamela,—and Miss Pamela,—and then I enquired who she was, and heard her history: and Nelly Brian was observing, "What a pity it is she looks so pale, and has such shocking chilblains! It is all owing to her having been kept at that fine needlework for so many hours every day. She had better have been polishing the floors as I do."

"It is affecting to think what she suffers with her chilblains," remarked the laundry-maid. "I have dressed them for her ever since the last under housemaid left; but I suppose, Nelly, it will now be Eliza Spence's business?"

"No, indeed, no," I said, "I will have nothing to do

with that work. I never have been used to sores, and I am sure I can't nor won't touch them!"

"Won't!" said Nelly Brian; "that's a word that is come in fashion since my younger days. Pray what will Mrs. West say when you tell her you won't do what she bids you?"

"O, I will do any thing she bids me," I answered, "but dress sores: I can't do that; indeed I can't."

"Can't! and why?" said Mrs. Brian. "Have not you as many fingers as other folks?"

"Perhaps," said a footman, named Richard Willis, who was sitting on a dresser behind where we were sitting, and taking a tankard of toast-and-ale, "perhaps Eliza is *narvish*, as Miss Pinner says she is when it thunders, and is afraid that she should faint if she was to attempt to dress poor Miss Pamela's chilblains." He then gave a leap from his place, and coming round to me, "Pray, Miss," he said, "are you troubled with *narves* and a *dilicate* constitution? Do you faint easily?"

"Get away, you fool Dick," said the cook. "Why do you talk of nerves and a constitution to Eliza Spence? Such a stout, hearty girl, who, as her father tells us, never drank a ladle-full of doctor's stuff in her life, what has she to do with nerves and a delicate constitution?"

"Well then," said the footman, "if she has neither *narves* nor a *dilicate* constitution, why is she to refuse to do a kind act for a fellow-creature any more than any body else?"

"O, but dressing sores is such a nasty job!" I said.

"And pray," said Mrs. Brian, "why are not you to do nasty jobs in your turn as well as other folks? Though I don't like that word nasty either. Where people bring diseases on themselves by their ill conduct, one might indeed call them nasty; though even then, unless we were without sin ourselves, I don't see that it becomes us to despise them: but when the Almighty sends afflictions, and they do not arise from any particular fault in the subject of them, then, indeed, it is most unbecoming in us to shew contempt or disgust. This I will say, Eliza Spence, that I don't think there is one servant in this house that will like you the better for your false delicacy."

"Excepting me," said Richard. "I think I must ask her to take me for her husband; for then I shall be sure of a wife who will never meddle or make with me when I am ill and want assistance."

The young man said this in a laughing way, and then walked out of the kitchen.

“There now,” said the cook, “you have offended Richard, for he would do any thing in the world for Miss Pamela; because, when Miss was a little girl, as much as six years ago, she used to go down to the village three or four times a week to carry broth, and other good things she could procure, to his poor mother who lay dying.”

This discourse passed over; and the same morning, being called into Mrs. West’s sleeping-room, I saw Miss Pamela, lying upon a sofa, working with her needle: and though I had made up my mind not to like her, yet I could not help being affected with the sweetness of her countenance; for her features were delicate, and she had the loveliest blue eyes I had ever seen.

“This is Eliza Spence, Pamela,” said Mrs. West. “Will you let her try to dress your chilblains? I will direct her; and it is proper for young people to learn to do these things.”

“I am sure,” said Pamela, “Eliza will try to do it well. I am sorry to give so much trouble, and I will do any thing for Eliza in return which is in my power.”

“Come forward, Eliza,” said Mrs. West; for I coloured, and had drawn back.

“I can’t dress sores, Ma’am,” I said.

“No, I suppose not,” said Mrs. West; “but I will instruct you.”

“No, Ma’am,” I said, “I can’t. I never could.”

“Perhaps you are afraid,” said Mrs. West: “but you must get over this feeling. Every woman, but particularly every poor woman, is liable to be called upon to wait upon the sick, to dress sores, to put on leeches, and to do other matters of this kind; and I know, from painful experience, that it is very difficult to learn to do these things when we are advanced in years. I therefore make a point of using all the young servants to these sorts of offices. You must therefore, overcome your reluctance, and do as I direct.”

“Indeed, Ma’am, I can’t!” I answered.

“Are you afraid?” said Mrs. West.

“I can’t do it,” I repeated.

“You may try at least.”

“No, Ma’am,” I said, “I can’t. I never saw sores or any thing of that kind. I can’t do it.”

“And if you were to meet with any accident, who do you think is to wait on you, if you are so obstinately determined

not to help others?" said Mrs. West, angrily. "Come, I insist upon it. Come and assist me."

"No, Ma'am, I can't," I replied. "I shall be ill. I know I shall. I don't like these things."

"And who does?" she answered. "None of us like these things: but persons of feeling and principle never think on these occasions of what they like or what they dislike, but make it their pleasure to help others; trusting, that others will help them in the time of need."

It was of no use for Mrs. West to argue with me. I was determined not to do as she desired; and I know not how this dispute would have ended if, at that moment, old Mrs. Clifford had not sent word that she was coming up herself, with the surgeon, to inspect Miss Pamela's chilblains. I took this occasion to slip away; neither was the subject mentioned to me again, for the chilblains got well, and I heard no more about them.

There are some people, I know, who have a real horror at looking upon sores; and such persons will, perhaps, excuse for me, by observing, that it was impossible for me to dismiss these feelings. But they should consider, that almost every female, and many men, have by nature a dread of this kind, and that it becomes them to endeavour to conquer that dread when good is to be done: and, as for me, I was a strong, hearty girl, and not particularly timid or sensitive in any thing, and, therefore, why was I to be more nice than other people, unless it was from pride?"

When spring and the finer weather came, Miss Pamela was quite recovered from her chilblains; and then, when she could walk and move about, I could not but observe that she was as lovely a girl, as humble, genteel, and pretty, as I had ever seen, and ready to do a kindness for any one. Unkind as I had been to her respecting her chilblains, she was always ready to do me any service. She plaited all my caps, and trimmed my bows for me. But I was not brought to the conviction of my fault by these little acts of kindness; for when Mrs. West once remarked to me, that Miss Pamela was more obliging to me than I had been to her when she needed my help,—I answered, "To be sure, Madam, she is very kind: but then the little jobs she does for me are clean, at any rate, and not so disgusting as those which I was asked to do for her."

"Disgusting!" said Mrs. West. "And pray what right have we to talk of things being disgusting? To be sure,

there are many infirmities attending on our nature which might be disgusting to creatures who did not share that nature: but we are constituted alike; and our blessed Lord, in all the glory of his Godhead, did not despise our humble nature, but descended from his state of glory, and became like one of us in all respects, only without sin. I should like to know, if you can tell me, Eliza Spence, what would have become of you and me, if Christ our Saviour had not condescended to be as one of us? He despised no man, and forbade us to do so."

Now at this time I had no religion. I will tell you just how much I believed, and how little.—I believed there was a God, but I knew nothing about him. I knew there was a Bible, and had read parts of it, and heard other parts, but I understood little about it: and I knew that Jesus Christ came into the world, and that it was wicked to speak lightly of him. But there my religion began, and there it ended; it had no power over my heart; and I was much more afraid of shame and punishment from my fellow-creatures than from the anger of God. Hence, when Mrs. West put the question to me, What would have become of you and me, if Christ had not condescendingly stooped to our situation?—I did not know what to answer, and therefore I was silent, and looked as sullen as obstinacy and ignorance could make me; which occasioned this excellent woman to give me my first lesson in true religion.

She spoke to me of the Almighty, and told me that he had certain perfections from which he could not depart; the chief of which were holiness, justice, and mercy. And she tried to make me understand, that God's character rendered him averse to sin; and that his justice was such, that he must either depart from his own perfections or punish it. And again, that his mercy or love was exercised in a way perfectly consistent with his holiness and justice. She observed that our blessed Lord came down from heaven, and was made man, and did all which justice or holiness could require, and so opened a way for our salvation: and that the Almighty Father, in his holy book, has declared to us, that all those who are united by faith to this dear Saviour, and become one with him, shall be made partakers of his merits and the benefits of his death, and shall enjoy everlasting life with him. "And now, Eliza," continued Mrs. West, after she had repeated these things more than once to me, "I ask the question again,—What would have

become of you and me, had Christ our Saviour neglected us as you have your fellow-creatures?"

I must say, that this conversation of Mrs. West's sunk deeply into my heart, and that I never could get rid of it entirely from my mind, though I was still too stubborn to confess that it had made any impression on me. But let Christians continue in well-doing, and in reproving sin in those who are placed under their charge, and not be disheartened, although they do not immediately gather the fruits of their labours: for it is written—*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.* (Eccles. xi. 1.)

After this conversation I remember little that passed for more than two years, at the end of which time an uncle of Richard Willis died, and left him a little farm, well stocked: on which, the young man made proposals to Miss Pamela; and Mrs. Clifford having given her consent, and a hundred pounds as a wedding present, the young people were married, and left us, with the blessings of all the family, to go to the farm, which was not, as I learned, very far distant from my father's house, for Mrs. Willis took a parcel from me to my mother, promising to deliver it the first opportunity.

After Mrs. Willis was gone, I was taken by Mrs. West into the housekeeper's-room, and intrusted with the keys: for I was deemed honest, and was much in favour. I was as much as two more years at Squire Clifford's before the changes took place of which I hope to give an account before I have done my history: and it was at this time that I had an opportunity of improving myself in reading and writing, and also in speaking by using a better sort of language than is met with among the lower servants. For Mrs. West, being old, could not see to write her accounts, or keep her books, or to send written orders to the tradespeople, and she employed me in this business, and took much pains with me: Mrs. Pinner also, the ladies'-maid, prided herself in her elegant language, and accustomed me to read to her, in an evening, while she was employed with her needle; and, though I cannot say that she chose always the most profitable books for me, yet a book must be bad indeed if it is worse than the conversation which often takes place when a number of well-fed idle persons meet constantly together, with few, if any, among them who are impressed by the fear of God; and it happened that there

were none among us in the housekeeper's-room of this description but good Mrs. West.

It was in the summer of the fifth year of my abode at Squire Clifford's, that I received a letter from home, relating many changes about to take place in my father's family, by which it was likely that my father and mother would soon be left alone; the last of the family who had remained at home being on the point of marriage. In this letter something was said about a new place of abode; but as people, who are not used to letter-writing, are apt to put the most important news in some odd corner, so this last piece of information was just under the seal, and I could only make out these words—"Your mother don't like —— and there are no apples in the garden,"—a few words which conveyed no idea to my mind, and which I thought no more of.

I was not accustomed to have more than two letters in the year from home, and these letters I generally answered as soon as received, and this was the case on the occasion I speak of.

It happened that year that we had more rain than I ever remember during the summer, and in the autumn we had some very hot weather; and the sun being very powerful, many thick mists and vapours were raised from the earth which induced fevers in many parts of the country. At least, the doctors said, that the fevers, which appeared at that time, were occasioned by this circumstance, and I am by no means skilled enough in these matters to say whether they were right or wrong. I heard the servants in the kitchen, and those in the housekeeper's-room, talking of these fevers some time before they approached us. And Mr. Pipe, the butler, read an account of the terrible havock which they had made in some of the poorer streets of the great capital.

At length the evil approached us, and two persons in the village were taken ill. The news was presently brought up to the Hall, and we were all in great alarm. That same night, my bedfellow, Nelly Brian, (for we had always slept together since I came to the house,) had a very uneasy night; and told me, in the morning, she had dreamed that she had the fever.

Mrs. West reproved her when she indulged this fear in her presence, and said, that pestilence and death being under the direction of the Almighty, no one needed to fear either the one or the other, who had been brought to make

God her friend, and who had an interest in the covenant of mercy.

Nelly Brian was, in her way, a very upright, worthy character; and had learned much of the nature of true religion from Mrs. West. Nevertheless, she continued depressed all day, and when in bed became extremely feverish, complaining much of her head, and was rambling and moaning in her sleep. She was so ill in the morning that she could not rise; on which I went to inform Mrs. West, and the doctor was sent for. We could think of nothing, nor apprehend any thing but the fever. However, the doctor told us, when he had seen poor Nelly, that her symptoms were quite different from those of the persons ill of the fever in the village: and that he believed the housemaid's complaint was a violent cold, which, he feared, might terminate in inflammation on the chest, a complaint which, it seems, she had been subject to in the early part of her life. He ordered some medicines, and desired that a number of leeches should be procured to put on in case the worst symptom, which was difficulty of breathing, should increase before he came again in the morning.

When it was found that Nelly's complaint was not the fever, a young girl, who had been employed to help her since I had been so much with Mrs. West, was set to watch her during the day, and Mrs. West directed me, at night, to have a rushlight in our room, and to lie down by the sick person in my clothes, so as to be ready to get up in a moment if she wanted any thing. All this I did; and when I had procured toast-and-water, and put other things ready, I went up to our little attic, and, dismissing the girl, I gave the sick woman her medicine; and, having lighted the rushlight, got into bed by her, though as far off as the size of the bed would allow.

And now, though in the middle of my account of poor Nelly Brian, I must finish the first part of my story, hoping to give the second part as soon as possible.

END OF PART I.

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