

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. II. The Character of Mrs. Western.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-884

any Man, how much soever he may despise the Character of a Flatterer, but will condescend in the meanest Manner to flatter himself.

To those, therefore, I apply for the Truth of the above Observations, whose own Minds can bear Testimony to what I have advanced.

Examine your Heart, my good Reader, and resolve whether you do believe these Matters with me. If you do, you may now proceed to their Exemplification in the following Pages; if you do not, you have, I assure you, already read more than you have understood; and it would be wiser to pursue your Business, or your Pleasures (such as they are) than to throw away any more of your Time in reading what you can neither taste nor comprehend. To treat of the Effects of Love as you, must be as absurd as to discourse on Colours to a Man born blind; since possibly your Idea of Love may be as absurd as that which we are told such blind Man once entertained of the Colour Scarlet: that Colour seem'd to him to be very much like the Sound of a Trumpet; and Love probably may, in your Opinion, very greatly resemble a Dish of Soup, or a Sir-loin of Roast-beef.

C H A P. II.

The Character of Mrs. Western. Her great Learning and Knowledge of the World, and an Instance of the deep Penetration which she derived from those Advantages.

THE Reader hath seen Mr. *Western*, his Sister and Daughter, with young *Jones*, and the Parson, going together to Mr. *Western's* House,

Houfe, where the greater Part of the Company spent the Evening with much Joy and Fertility. *Sophia* was indeed the only grave Person: For as to *Jones*, though Love had now gotten entire Possession of his Heart, yet the pleasing Reflection on Mr. *Allworthy's* Recovery, and the Presence of his Mistress, joined to some tender Looks which she now and then could not refrain from giving him, so elevated our Heroe, that he joined the Mirth of the other three, who were perhaps as good-humoured People as any in the World.

Sophia retained the same Gravity of Countenance the next Morning at Breakfast; whence she retired likewise earlier than usual, leaving her Father and Aunt together. The Squire took no Notice of this Change in his Daughter's Disposition. To say the Truth, though he was somewhat of a Politician, and had been twice a Candidate in the Country Interest at an Election, he was a Man of no great Observation. His Sister was a Lady of a different Turn. She had lived about the Court, and had seen the World. Hence she had acquired all that Knowledge which the said World usually communicates; and was a perfect Mistress of Manners, Customs, Ceremonies, and Fashions; nor did her Erudition stop her. She had considerably improved her Mind by Study; she had not only read all the modern Plays, Operas, Oratorios, Poems and Romances; in all which she was a Critic; but had gone thro' *Rapin's* History of *England*, *Eachard's* *Roman History*, and many *French Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire*; to these she had added most of the political Pamphlets and Journals, published within the last twenty Years.

From

From which she had attained a very competent Skill in Politics, and could discourse very learnedly on the Affairs of *Europe*. She was moreover excellently well skilled in the Doctrine of Amour, and knew better than any Body who and who were together: A Knowledge which she the more easily attained, as her Pursuit of it was never diverted by any Affairs of her own; for either she had no Inclinations, or they had never been solicited; which last is indeed very probable: For her masculine Person, which was near six Foot high, added to her Manner and Learning, possibly prevented the other Sex from regarding her, notwithstanding her Petticoats, in the Light of a Woman. However, as she had considered the Matter scientifically, she perfectly well knew, though she had never practised them, all the Arts which fine Ladies use when they desire to give Encouragement, or to conceal Liking, with all the long Appendage of Smiles, Ogles, Glances, &c. as they are at present practised in the Beau-monde. To sum the whole, no Species of Disguise or Affectation had escaped her Notice; but as to the plain simple Workings of honest Nature, as she had never seen any such, she could know but little of them.

By means of this wonderful Sagacity, Mrs. *Western* had now, as she thought, made a Discovery of something in the Mind of *Sophia*. The first Hint of this she took from the Behaviour of the young Lady in the Field of Battle: and the Suspicion which she then conceived, was greatly corroborated by some Observations which she had made that Evening and the next Morning. However, being greatly cautious to avoid being found in a Mistake, she carried the Secret a

whole Fortnight in her Bosom, giving only some oblique Hints, by Simpering, Winks, Nods, and now and then dropping an obscure Word, which indeed sufficiently alarmed *Sophia*, but did not at all affect her Brother.

Being at length, however, thoroughly satisfied of the Truth of her Observation, she took an Opportunity, one Morning, when she was alone with her Brother, to interrupt one of his Whistles in the following Manner :

‘ Pray, Brother, have you not observed something very extraordinary in my Niece lately ?’
 ‘ No, not I,’ answered *Western* ; ‘ Is any thing the Matter with the Girl ?’ ‘ I think there is,’ replies she, ‘ and something of much Consequence too.’ ‘ Why she doth not complain of any thing,’ cries *Western*, ‘ and she hath had the Small Pox.’ ‘ Brother,’ returned she, ‘ Girls are liable to other Distempers besides the Small Pox, and sometimes possibly to much worse.’ Here *Western* interrupted her with much Earnestness, and begged her, if any thing ailed his Daughter, to acquaint him immediately, adding, ‘ she knew he loved her more than his own Soul, and that he would send to the World’s End for the best Physician to her.’ ‘ Nay, nay,’ answered she, smiling, ‘ the Distemper is not so terrible ; but I believe, Brother, you are convinced I know the World, and I promise you I was never more deceived in my Life, if my Niece be not most desperately in Love.’ ‘ How ! in Love,’ cries *Western*, in a Passion, ‘ in Love without acquainting me ! I’ll disinherit her, I’ll turn her out of Doors, stark naked, without a Farthing.’ ‘ Is all my kindness vor’ur, and vondness o’ur
 ‘ come

' come to this, to fall in Love without asking.
 ' me Leave ! ' But you will not,' answered
 Mrs. *Western*, ' turn this Daughter, whom
 ' you love better than your own Soul, out of
 ' Doors, before you know whether you shall ap-
 ' prove her Choice. Suppose she should have
 ' fixed on the very Person whom you yourself
 ' would wish, I hope you would not be angry
 ' then.' ' No, no,' cries *Western*, ' that would
 ' make a Difference. If she marries the Man I
 ' would ha' her, she may love whom she pleases,
 ' I shan't trouble my Head about that.' ' That
 ' is spoken,' answered the Sister, ' like a sensible
 ' Man, but I believe the very Person she hath
 ' chosen, would be the very Person you would
 ' chuse for her. I will disclaim all Knowledge
 ' of the World if it is not so; and I believe,
 ' Brother, you will allow I have some.' ' Why
 ' lookee, Sister,' said *Western*, ' I do believe you
 ' have as much as any Woman; and to be sure
 ' those are Women's Matters. You know I
 ' don't love to hear you talk about Politics, they
 ' belong to us, and Petticoats should not meddle:
 ' But come, who is the Man?' ' Marry!' said
 she, ' you may find him out yourself, if you
 ' please. You who are so great a Politician,
 ' can be at no great Loss. The Judgment which
 ' can penetrate into the Cabinets of Princes, and
 ' discover the secret Springs which move the
 ' great State Wheels in all the political Machines
 ' of *Europe*, must surely, with very little Diffi-
 ' culty find out what passies in the rude unin-
 ' formed Mind of a Girl.' ' Sister,' cries the
 Squire, ' I have often warned you not to talk the
 ' Court Gibberish to me. I tell you, I don't
 ' understand the Lingo; but I can read a Jour-
 ' nal,

'nal, or the *London Evening-Post*. Perhaps indeed, there may be now and tan a Verse which
 'I can't make much of, because half the Letters
 'are left out; yet I know very well what is
 'meant by that, and that our Affairs don't go so
 'well as they should do, because of Bribery and
 'Corruption.' 'I pity your Country Ignorance
 'from my Heart,' cries the Lady, 'Do you?'
 answered *Western*, 'and I pity your Town
 'Learning; I had rather be any thing than a
 'Courtier, and a Presbyterian, and a *Hanoverian*
 'too, as some People, I believe, are.' 'If
 'you mean me,' answered she, 'you know I am
 'a Woman, Brother; and it signifies nothing
 'what I am. Besides ----- 'I do know you are
 'a Woman,' cries the Squire, 'and its well for
 'thee, that art one; if hadst been a Man, I pro-
 'mise thee I had lent thee a *Flick* long ago.' 'Ay
 'there,' said she, 'in that *Flick* lies all your fan-
 'cied Superiority. Your Bodies, and not your
 'Brains, are stronger than ours. Believe me, it
 'is well for you that you are able to beat us; or,
 'such is the Superiority of our Understanding,
 'we should make all of you what the brave, and
 'wise, and witty, and polite are already, ---our
 'Slaves.' 'I am glad I know your Mind,' an-
 'swered the Squire, 'but we'll talk more of this
 'Matter another Time. At present, do tell me
 'what Man is it you mean about my Daughter.'
 'Hold a Moment,' said she, 'while I digest that
 'sovereign Contempt I have for your Sex; or
 'else I ought to be angry too with you. There
 '-----I have made a Shift to gulp it down.
 'And now, good politic Sir, what think you of
 'Mr. *Blissl*? Did she not faint away on seeing
 'him lie breathless on the Ground? Did she not,
 'after

' after he was recovered, turn pale again the
 ' Moment we came up to that Part of the Field
 ' where he stood? And pray what else should be
 ' the Occasion of all her Melancholy that Night
 ' at Supper, the next Morning, and indeed ever
 ' since?' 'Fore *George!*' cries the Squire, 'now
 ' you mind me on't, I remember it all. It is
 ' certainly so, and I am glad on't, with all my
 ' Heart. I knew *Sophy* was a good Girl, and
 ' would not fall in Love to make me angry. I
 ' was never more rejoiced in my Life: For no-
 ' thing can lie so handy together as our two
 ' Estates. I had this Matter in my Head some
 ' Time ago; for certainly the two Estates are in
 ' a Manner joined together in Matrimony al-
 ' ready, and it would be a thousand Pities to
 ' part them. It is true indeed, there be larger
 ' Estates in the Kingdom, but not in this Coun-
 ' ty, and I had rather bate something, than
 ' marry my Daughter among Strangers and Fo-
 ' reigners. Besides most o' zuch great Estates be
 ' in the Hands of Lords, and I heate the very
 ' Name of *themmun*. Well but, Sister, what
 ' would you advise me to do: For I tell you
 ' Women know these Matters better than we do?'
 ' O your humble Servant, Sir,' answered the
 Lady, ' we are obliged to you for allowing us a
 ' Capacity in any Thing. Since you are pleased
 ' then, most politic Sir, to ask my Advice, I
 ' think you may propose the Match to *Allworthy*
 ' yourself. There is no Indecorum in the Pro-
 ' posal's coming from the Parent of either Side:
 ' King *Alcinous*, in Mr. *Pope's* *Odyfsey*, offers
 ' his Daughter to *Ulyfses*. I need not caution so
 ' politic a Person not to say that your Daughter is
 ' in Love; that would indeed be against all
 ' B 6. ' Rules.'

‘ Rules.’ ‘ Well,’ said the Squire, ‘ I will propose it; but I shall certainly lend un a *Flick*, if he should refuse me.’ ‘ Fear not,’ cries Mrs. *Western*, ‘ the Match is too advantageous to be refused.’ I don’t know that,’ answered the Squire, ‘ *Allworthy* is a queer B—ch, and Money hath no Effect o’un.’ ‘ Brother,’ said the Lady, ‘ your Politics astonish me. Are you really to be imposed on by Professions? Do you think Mr. *Allworthy* hath more Contempt for Money than other Men, because he professes more? Such Credulity would better become one of us weak Women, than that wise Sex which Heaven hath formed for Politicians. Indeed, Brother, you would make a fine Ple-nipo to negotiate with the *French*. They would soon persuade you, that they take Towns out of mere defensive Principles.’ ‘ Sister,’ answered the Squire, with much Scorn, ‘ let your Friends at Court answer for the Towns taken; as you are a Woman, I shall lay no Blame upon you: For I suppose they are wiser than to trust Women with Secrets.’ He accompanied this with so sarcastical a Laugh, that Mrs. *Western* could bear no longer. She had been all this Time fretted in a tender Part (for she was indeed very deeply skilled in these Matters, and very violent in them) and therefore burst forth in a Rage, declared her Brother to be both a Clown and a Blockhead, and that she would stay no longer in his House.

The Squire, tho’ perhaps he had never read *Machiavel*, was, however, in many Points, a perfect Politician. He strongly held all those wise Tenets, which are so well inculcated in that Politico-Peripatetic School of *Exchange-Alley*.

Alley. He knew the just Value and only Use of Money, viz. to lay it up. He was likewise well skilled in the exact Value of Reversions, Expectations, &c. and had often considered the Amount of his Sister's Fortune, and the Chance which he or his Posterity had of inheriting it. This he was infinitely too wise to sacrifice to a trifling Resentment. When he found, therefore, he had carried Matters too far, he began to think of reconciling them; which was no very difficult Task, as the Lady had great Affection for her Brother, and still greater for her Niece; and tho' too susceptible of an Affront offered to her Skill in Politics, on which she much valued herself, was a Woman of a very extraordinary good and sweet Disposition.

Having first, therefore, laid violent Hands on the Horses, for whose Escape from the Stable no Place but the Window was left open; he next applied himself to his Sister, softened and soothed her, by unsaying all he had said, and by Assertions directly contrary to those which had incensed her. Lastly, he summoned the Eloquence of *Sophia* to his Assistance, who, besides a most graceful and winning Address, had the Advantage of being heard with great Favour and Partiality by her Aunt.

The Result of the Whole was a kind Smile from Mrs. *Western*, who said, ' Brother, you
' are absolutely a perfect *Croat*; but as those
' have their Use in the Army of the Empress
' Queen, so you likewise have some Good in
' you. I will therefore once more sign a Treaty
' of Peace with you, and see that you do not in-
' fringe it on your Side; at least, as you are so
' excellent a Politician, I may expect you will
' keep