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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. III. Containing two Defiances to the Critics.

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‘ keep your Leagues, like the *French*, till your
 ‘ Interest calls upon you to break them.’

C H A P. III.

Containing two Defiances to the Critics.

THE Squire having settled Matters with his Sister, as we have seen in the last Chapter, was so greatly impatient to communicate the Proposal to *Allworthy*, that Mrs. *Western* had the utmost Difficulty to prevent him from visiting that Gentleman in his Sickness, for this Purpose.

Mr. *Allworthy* had been engaged to dine with Mr. *Western* at the Time when he was taken ill. He was, therefore, no sooner discharged out of the Custody of Physic, but he thought (as was usual with him on all Occasions, both the highest and the lowest) of fulfilling his Engagement.

In the Interval between the Time of the Dialogue in the last Chapter, and this Day of public Entertainment, *Sophia* had, from certain obscure Hints thrown out by her Aunt, collected some Apprehension that the sagacious Lady suspected her Passion for *Jones*. She now resolved to take this Opportunity of wiping out all such Suspicion, and for that Purpose to put an entire Constraint on her Behaviour.

First, she endeavoured to conceal a throbbing melancholy Heart with the utmost Sprightlines in her Countenance, and the highest Gaiety in her Manner. Secondly, she addressed her whole Discourse to Mr. *Blifil*, and took not the least Notice of poor *Jones* the whole Day.

The Squire was so delighted with this Conduct of his Daughter, that he scarce eat any
 Dinner,

Dinner, and spent almost his whole Time in watching Opportunities of conveying Signs of his Approbation by Winks and Nods to his Sister; who was not at first altogether so pleased with what she saw as was her Brother.

In short, *Sophia* so greatly overacted her Part, that her Aunt was at first staggered, and began to suspect some Affectation in her Niece; but as she was herself a Woman of great Art, so she soon attributed this to extreme Art in *Sophia*. She remembered the many Hints she had given her Niece concerning her being in Love, and imagined the young Lady had taken this Way to rally her out of her Opinion, by an overacted Civility; a Notion that was greatly corroborated by the excessive Gaiety with which the whole was accompanied. We cannot here avoid remarking that this Conjecture would have been better founded, had *Sophia* lived ten Years in the Air of *Grosvenor-square*, where young Ladies do learn a wonderful Knack of rallying and playing with that Passion, which is a mighty serious Thing in Woods and Groves an hundred Miles distant from *London*.

To say the Truth, in discovering the Deceit of others, it matters much that our own Art be wound up, if I may use the Expression, in the same Key with theirs: For very artful Men sometimes miscarry by fancying others wiser, or in other Words, greater Knaves than they really are. As this Observation is pretty deep, I will illustrate it by the following short Story. Three Countrymen were pursuing a *Wiltshire* Thief through *Brentford*. The simplest of them seeing the *Wiltshire House* written under a Sign, advised his Companions to enter it, for there most probably

bably they would find their Countryman. The second, who was wiser, laughed at this Simplicity; but the third, who was wiser still, answered, 'Let us go in, however, for he may think we should not suspect him of going amongst his own Countrymen.' They accordingly went in and searched the House, and by that Means missed overtaking the Thief, who was, at that Time, but a little Way before them; and who, as they all knew, but had never once reflected, could not read.

The Reader will pardon a Digression in which so invaluable a Secret is communicated, since every Gamester will agree how necessary it is to know exactly the Play of another, in order to countermine him. This will, moreover, afford a Reason why the wiser Man, as is often seen, is the Bubble of the weaker, and why many simple and innocent Characters are so generally misunderstood and misrepresented; but what is most material, this will account for the Deceit which *Sophia* put on her politic Aunt.

Dinner being ended, and the Company retired into the Garden, Mr. *Western*, who was thoroughly convinced of the Certainty of what his Sister had told him, took Mr. *Allworthy* aside, and very bluntly proposed a Match between *Sophia* and young Mr. *Bliss*.

Mr. *Allworthy* was not one of those Men, whose Hearts flutter at any unexpected and sudden Tidings of worldly Profit. His Mind was, indeed, tempered with that Philosophy which becomes a Man and a Christian. He affected no absolute Superiority to all Pleasure and Pain, to all Joy and Grief; but was not at the same time to be discomposed and ruffled by every accidental
Bliss;

Blast; by every Smile or Frown of Fortune. He received, therefore, Mr. *Western's* Proposal without any visible Emotion, or without any Alteration of Countenance. He said, the Alliance was such as he sincerely wished, then launched forth into a very just Encomium on the young Lady's Merit; acknowledged the Offer to be advantageous in Point of Fortune; and after thanking Mr. *Western* for the good Opinion he had profess'd of his Nephew, concluded, that if the young People liked each other, he should be very desirous to complete the Affair.

Western was a little disappointed at Mr. *Allworthy's* Answer; which was not so warm as he expected. He treated the Doubt whether the young People might like one another with great Contempt; saying, 'That Parents were the best Judges of proper Matches for their Children; that, for his Part, he should insist on the most resigned Obedience from his Daughter; and if any young Fellow could refuse such a Bedfellow, he was his humble Servant, and hoped there was no Harm done.'

Allworthy endeavoured to soften this Resentment by many Elogiums on *Sophia*; declaring, he had no Doubt but that Mr. *Blifil* would very gladly receive the Offer; but all was ineffectual, he could obtain no other Answer from the Squire but—'I say no more—I humbly hope there's no Harm done—that's all.' Which Words he repeated at least a hundred Times before they parted.

Allworthy was too well acquainted with his Neighbour to be offended at this Behaviour; and tho' he was so averse to the Rigour which some Parents exercise on their Children in the Article

of

of Marriage, that he had resolv'd never to force his Nephew's Inclinations, he was nevertheless much pleas'd with the Prospect of this Union: For the whole Country resounded the Praises of *Sophia*, and he had himself greatly admir'd the uncommon Endowments of both her Mind and Person. To which, I believe we may add, the Consideration of her vast Fortune, which, tho' he was too sober to be intoxicated with it, he was too sensible to despise.

And here, in Defiance of all the barking Critics in the World, I must and will introduce a Digression concerning true Wisdom, of which Mr. *Allworthy* was in Reality as great a Pattern as he was of Goodness.

True Wisdom then, notwithstanding all which Mr. *Hogarth's* poor Poet may have writ against Riches, and in Spite of all which any rich, well-fed Divine may have preach'd against Pleasure, consists not in the Contempt of either of these. A Man may have as much Wisdom in the Possession of an affluent Fortune, as any Beggar in the Streets; or may enjoy a handsome Wife or a hearty Friend, and still remain as wise as any four Popish Recluse, who buries all his social Faculties, and starves his Belly while he well lashes his Back.

To say Truth, the wisest Man is the likeliest to possess all worldly Blessings in an eminent Degree: For as that Moderation which Wisdom prescribes is the surest Way to useful Wealth; so can it alone qualify us to taste many Pleasures. The wise Man gratifies every Appetite and every Passion, while the Fool sacrifices all the rest to pall and satiate one.

It may be objected, That very wise Men have been notoriously avaricious. I answer, Not wise in that Instance. It may likewise be said, That the wisest Men have been, in their Youth, immoderately fond of Pleasure. I answer, They were not wise then.

Wisdom, in short, whose Lessons have been represented as so hard to learn by those who never were at her School, only teaches us to extend a simple Maxim universally known and followed even in the lowest Life, a little farther than that Life carries it. And this is not to buy at too dear a Price.

Now, whoever takes this Maxim abroad with him into the grand Market of the World, and constantly applies it to Honours, to Riches, to Pleasures, and to every other Commodity which that Market affords, is, I will venture to affirm, a wise Man; and must be so acknowledged in the worldly Sense of the Word: For he makes the best of Bargains; since in Reality he purchases every Thing at the Price only of a little Trouble, and carries home all the good Things I have mentioned, while he keeps his Health, his Innocence, and his Reputation, the common Prices which are paid for them by others, entire and to himself.

From this Moderation, likewise, he learns two other Lessons, which complete his Character. First, never to be intoxicated when he hath made the best Bargain, nor dejected when the Market is empty, or when its Commodities are too dear for his Purchase.

But I must remember on what Subject I am writing, and not trespass too far on the Patience of