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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. VII. A Picture of formal Courtship in Miniature, as it always ought to be drawn, and a Scene of a tender Kind, painted at a full Length.

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C H A P. VII.

A Picture of formal Courtship in Miniature, as it always ought to be drawn, and a Scene of a tenderer Kind, painted at full Length.

IT was well remarked by one, (and perhaps by more) that Misfortunes do not come single. This wife Maxim was now verified by *Sophia*, who was not only disappointed of seeing the Man she loved; but had the Vexation of being obliged to dress herself out, in order to receive a Visit from the Man she hated.

That Afternoon, Mr. *Western*, for the first Time, acquainted h's Daughter with his Intention; telling her, he knew very well that she had heard it before from her Aunt. *Sophia* looked very grave upon this, nor could she prevent a few Pearls from stealing into her Eyes. 'Come, come, says *Western*, 'none of your Maidenish Airs; I know all; I assure you, Sister hath told me all.

'Is it possible,' says *Sophia*, 'that my Aunt can have betrayed me already?' 'Ay, ay,' says *Western*, 'betrayed you! ay. Why, you betrayed yourself Yesterday at Dinner. You shewed your Fancy very plainly, I think. But you young Girls never know what you would be at. So you cry because I am going to marry you to the Man you are in Love with! Your Mother, I remember, whimpered and whined just in the same Manner; but it was all over within twenty-four Hours after we were married: Mr. *Blissl* is a brisk young Man, and will soon put an End to your Squeamishness. Come, 'chear

‘chear up, chear up, I expect un every Minute.’

Sophia was now convinced that her Aunt had behaved honourably to her; and she determined to go through that disagreeable Afternoon with as much Resolution as possible, and without giving the least Suspicion in the World to her Father.

Mr. *Bliss* soon arrived; and Mr. *Western* soon after withdrawing, left the young Couple together.

Here a long Silence of near a Quarter of an Hour ensued: For the Gentleman who was to begin the Conversation had all that unbecoming Modesty which consists in Bashfulness. He often attempted to speak, and as often suppressed his Words just at the very Point of Utterance. At last out they broke in a Torrent of far-fetched and high-strained Compliments, which were answered on her Side, by downcast Looks, half Bows and civil Monosyllables. *Bliss* from his Inexperience in the Ways of Women, and from his Conceit of himself, took this Behaviour for a modest Assent to his Courtship; and when to shorten a Scene which she could no longer support, *Sophia* rose up and left the Room, he imputed that too, merely to Bashfulness, and comforted himself, that he should soon have enough of her Company.

He was indeed perfectly well satisfied with his Prospect of Success: For as to that entire and absolute Possession of the Heart of his Mistress, which romantic Lovers require, the very Idea of it never entered his Head. Her Fortune and her Person were the sole Objects of his Wishes, of which he made do Doubt soon to obtain the ab-



solute Property ; as Mr. *Western's* Mind was so earnestly bent on the Match ; and as he well knew the strict Obedience which *Sophia* was always ready to pay to her Father's Will, and the greater still which her Father would exact, if there was Occasion. This Authority, therefore, together with the Charms which he fancied in his own Person and Conversation, could not fail, he thought, of succeeding with a young Lady, whose Inclinations, were, he doubted not, entirely disengaged.

Of *Jones* he certainly had not even the least Jealousy ; and I have often thought it wonderful that he had not. Perhaps he imagined the Character which *Jones* bore all over the Country, (how justly let the Reader determine) of being one of the wildest Fellows in *England*, might render him odious to a Lady of the most exemplary Modesty. Perhaps his Suspicions might be laid asleep by the Behaviour of *Sophia*, and of *Jones* himself, when they were all in Company together. Lastly, and indeed principally, he was well assured there was not another Self in the Case. He fancied that he knew *Jones* to the Bottom, and had in reality a great Contempt for his Understanding, for not being more attached to his own Interest. He had no Apprehension that *Jones* was in Love with *Sophia* ; and as for any lucrative Motives, he imagined they would sway very little with so silly a Fellow. *Blifil*, moreover, thought the Affair of *Molly Seagrim* still went on, and indeed believed it would end in Marriage : For *Jones* really loved him from his Childhood, and had kept no Secret from him, till his Behaviour on the Sickness of Mr. *Allworthy* had entirely alienated his Heart ; and it was
by

by Means of the Quarrel which had ensued on this Occasion, and which was not yet reconciled, that Mr. *Bliffl* knew nothing of the Alteration which had happened in the Affection which *Jones* had formerly borne towards *Molly*.

From these Reasons, therefore, Mr. *Bliffl* saw no Bar to his Success with *Sophia*. He concluded, her Behaviour was like that of all other young Ladies on a first Visit from a Lover, and it had indeed entirely answered his Expectations.

Mr. *Western* took Care to way-lay the Lover at his Exit from his Mistress. He found him so elevated with his Success, so enamoured with his Daughter, and so satisfied with her Reception of him, that the old Gentleman began to caper and dance about his Hall, and by many other antic Actions, to express the Extravagance of his Joy: For he had not the least Command over any of his Passions: and that which had at any Time the Ascendant in his Mind, hurried him to the wildest Excesses.

As soon as *Bliffl* was departed, which was not till after many hearty Kisses and Embraces bestowed on him by *Western*, the good Squire went instantly in quest of his Daughter, whom he no sooner found than he poured forth the most extravagant Raptures, bidding her chuse what Clothes and Jewels she pleased; and declaring that he had no other Use for Fortune but to make her happy. He then caressed her again and again with the utmost Profusion of Fondness, called her by the most endearing Names, and protested she was his only Joy on Earth.

Sophia perceiving her Father in this Fit of Affection, which she did not absolutely know the Reason of (for Fits of Fondness were not unusual



to him, tho' this was rather more violent than ordinary) thought she should never have a better Opportunity of disclosing herself than at present; as far at least, as regarded Mr. *Bliss*; and she too well foresaw the Necessity which she should soon be under of coming to a full Explanation. After having thanked the Squire, therefore for all his Professions of Kindness, she added, with a Look full of inexpressible Softness, 'And is it possible my Papa can be so good to place all his Joy in his *Sophy's* Happiness?' which *Western* having confirmed by a great Oath, and a Kiss; she then laid hold of his Hand, and falling on her Knees, after many warm and passionate Declarations of Affection and Duty, she begged him, 'not to make her the most miserable Creature on Earth, by forcing her to marry a Man whom she detested. This I entreat of you, dear Sir, said she, for your Sake, as well as my own, since you are so very kind to tell me your Happiness depends on mine.' 'How! what!' says *Western*, staring wildly. 'O Sir,' continued she, 'not only your poor *Sophy's* Happiness, her very Life, her Being depends upon your granting her Request. I cannot live with Mr. *Bliss*. To force me into this Marriage, would be killing me.' 'You can't live with Mr. *Bliss*!' says *Western*. 'No, upon my Soul I can't,' answered *Sophia*. 'Then die and be d—ned,' cries he, spurning her from him. 'Oh! Sir,' cries *Sophia*, catching hold of the Skirt of his Coat, 'take Pity on me, I beseech you. Don't look, and say such cruel—Can you be unmoved while you see your *Sophy* in this dreadful Condition? Can the best of Fathers break my Heart? Will he kill me by the most painful, cruel, lingering Death?'

‘Death?’ Pooh! Pooh!’ cries the Squire, all
 ‘Stuff and Nonsense, all maidenish Tricks. Kill
 ‘you indeed! Will Marriage kill you?’— ‘Oh!
 ‘Sir,’ answered *Sophia*, ‘such a Marriage is worse
 ‘than Death---He is not even indifferent, I hate
 ‘and detest him.’--- ‘If you detest un never so
 ‘much,’ cries *Western*, ‘you shall ha’ un.’ This
 he bound by an Oath too shocking to repeat, and
 after many violent Asseverations, concluded in
 these Words: ‘I am resolved upon the Match,
 ‘and unless you consent to it, I will not give
 ‘you a Groat, not a single Farthing; no, tho’
 ‘I saw you expiring with Famine in the Street,
 ‘I would not relieve you with a Morsel of Bread.
 ‘This is my fixed Resolution, and so I leave you
 ‘to consider on it.’ He then broke from her
 with such Violence, that her Face dashed against
 the Floor, and he burst directly out of the Room,
 leaving poor *Sophia* prostrate on the Ground.

When *Western* came into the Hall, he there
 found *Jones*; who seeing his Friend looking wild,
 pale, and almost breathless, could not forbear en-
 quiring the Reason of all these melancholy Ap-
 pearances. Upon which the Squire immediately
 acquainted him with the whole Matter, conclud-
 ing with bitter Denunciations against *Sophia*, and
 very pathetic Lamentations of the Misery of all
 Fathers who are so unfortunate to have Daugh-
 ters.

Jones, to whom all the Resolutions which had
 been taken in Favour of *Bliss* were yet a Secret,
 was at first almost struck dead with this Relation;
 but recovering his Spirits a little, mere Despair,
 as he afterwards said, inspired him to mention a
 Matter to Mr. *Western*, which seemed to require
 more Impudence than a human Forehead was
 ever