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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. XI. The Adventure of a Company of Soldiers.

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made with Rushes, when Sleep, which had lately shunned his Company in much better Apartments, generously paid him a Visit in his humble Cell.

As for the Landlord, he was prevented by his Fears from retiring to rest. He returned therefore to the Kitchin-Fire, whence he could survey the only Door which opened into the Parlour, or rather Hole, where *Jones* was seated; and as for the Window to that Room, it was impossible for any Creature larger than a Cat to have made his Escape through it.

C H A P. XI.

The Adventure of a Company of Soldiers.

THE Landlord having taken his Seat directly opposite to the Door of the Parlour, determined to keep Guard there the whole Night. The Guide and another Fellow remained long on Duty with him, tho' they neither knew his Suspicions, nor had any of their own. The true Cause of their watching did indeed, at length, put an End to it; for this was no other than the Strength and Goodness of the Beer, of which having tippled a very large Quantity, they grew at first very noisy and vociferous, and afterwards fell both asleep.

But it was not in the Power of Liquor to compose the Fears of *Robin*. He continued still waking in his Chair, with his Eyes fixed stedfastly on the Door which led into the Apartment of *Mr. Jones*, till a violent Thundering at his outward Gate called him from his Seat, and obliged him to open it; which he had no sooner done,



than his Kitchen was immediately full of Gentlemen in red Coats, who all rushed upon him in a tumultuous a Manner, as if they intended to take his little Castle by Storm.

The Landlord was now forced from his Post to furnish his numerous Guests with Beer, which they called for with great Eagerness; and upon his second or third Return from the Cellar, he saw Mr. Jones standing before the Fire in the midst of the Soldiers; for it may easily be believed, that the Arrival of so much good Company should put an End to any Sleep, unless that from which we are to be awakened only by the last Trumpet.

The Company having now pretty well satisfied their Thirst, nothing remained but to pay the Reckoning, a Circumstance often productive of much Mischief and Discontent among the inferior Rank of Gentry; who are apt to find great Difficulty in assessing the Sum, with exact Regard to distributive Justice, which directs, that every Man shall pay according to the Quantity which he drinks. This Difficulty occurred upon the present Occasion; and it was the greater, as some Gentlemen had, in their extreme Hurry, marched off, after their first Draught, and had entirely forgot to contribute any thing towards the said Reckoning.

A violent Dispute now arose, in which every Word may be said to have been deposed upon Oath; for the Oaths were at least equal to all the other Words spoken. In this Controversy, the whole Company spoke together, and every Man seemed wholly bent to extenuate the Sum which fell to his Share; so that the most probable Conclusion which could be foreseen, was, that

a large Portion of the Reckoning would fall to the Landlord's Share to pay, or (what is much the same thing) would remain unpaid.

All this while Mr. *Jones* was engaged in Conversation with the Serjeant; for that Officer was entirely unconcerned in the present Dispute, being privileged, by immemorial Custom, from all Contribution.

The Dispute now grew so very warm, that it seemed to draw towards a military Decision, when *Jones* stepping forward, silenced all their Clamours at once, by declaring that he would pay the whole Reckoning, which indeed amounted to no more than three Shillings and Four-pence.

This Declaration procured *Jones* the Thanks and Applause of the whole Company. The Terms honourable, noble, and worthy Gentleman, resounded through the Room; nay, my Landlord himself began to have a better Opinion of him, and almost to disbelieve the Account which the Guide had given.

The Serjeant had informed Mr. *Jones*, that they were marching against the Rebels, and expected to be commanded by the glorious Duke of *Cumberland*. By which the Reader may perceive (a Circumstance which we have not thought necessary to communicate before) that this was the very Time when the late Rebellion was at the highest; and indeed the Banditi were now marched into *England*, intending, as it was thought, to fight the King's Forces, and to attempt pushing forward to the Metropolis.

Jones had some Heroic Ingredients in his Composition, and was a hearty Well-wisher to the glorious Cause of Liberty, and of the Protestant Religion. It is no Wonder, therefore, that in



Circumstances which would have warranted a much more romantic and wild Undertaking, it should occur to him to serve as a Volunteer in this Expedition.

Our commanding Officer had said all in his Power to encourage and promote this good Disposition, from the first Moment he had been acquainted with it. He now proclaimed the noble Resolution aloud, which was received with great Pleasure by the whole Company, who all cried out, 'God bless King *George*, and your Honour;' and then added, with many Oaths, 'We will stand by you both to the last Drops of our Blood.'

The Gentleman, who had been all Night tippling at the Alehouse, was prevailed on by some Arguments which a Corporal had put into his Hand, to undertake the same Expedition. And now the Portmanteau belonging to Mr. *Jones* being put up in the Baggage-cart, the Forces were about to move forwards; when the Guide, stepping up to *Jones*, said, 'Sir, I hope you will consider that the Horses have been kept out all Night, and we have travelled a great ways out of our Way.' *Jones* was surprized at the Impudence of this Demand, and acquainted the Soldiers with the Merits of his Cause, who were all unanimous in condemning the Guide for his Endeavours to put upon a Gentleman. Some said, he ought to be tied Neck and Heels; others, that he deserved to run the Gantlope; and the Sergeant shook his Cane at him, and wished he had him under his Command, swearing heartily he would make an Example of him.

Jones contented himself, however, with a negative Punishment, and walked off with his new Comrades,

Comrades, leaving the Guide to the poor Revenge of cursing and reviling him, in which latter the Landlord joined, saying, 'Ay, ay, he is a pure one, I warrant you. A pretty Gentleman, indeed, to go for a Soldier. He shall wear a laced Wastecoat truly. It is an old Proverb and a true one, all is not Gold that glisters. I am glad my House is well rid of him.'

All that Day the Serjeant and the young Soldier marched together; and the former, who was an arch Fellow, told the latter many entertaining Stories of his Campaigns, tho' in Reality he had never made any; for he was but lately come into the Service, and had, by his own Dexterity, so well ingratiated himself with his Officers, that he had promoted himself to a Halberd, chiefly indeed by his Merit in recruiting, in which he was most excellently well skilled.

Much Mirth and Festivity passed among the Soldiers during their March. In which the many Occurrences that had passed at their last Quarters were remembered, and every one, with great Freedom, made what Jokes he pleased on his Officers, some of which were of the coarser Kind, and very near bordering on Scandal. This brought to our Heroe's Mind the Custom which he had read of among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, of indulging, on certain Festivals and solemn Occasions, the Liberty to Slaves, of using an untroubled Freedom of Speech towards their Masters.

Our little Army, which consisted of two Companies of Foot, were now arrived at the Place where they were to halt that Evening. The Serjeant then acquainted his Lieutenant, who was the commanding Officer, that they had picked up two Fellows in that Day's March; one of which,

which, he said, was as fine a Man as ever he saw (meaning the Tippler) for that he was near six Feet, well-proportioned, and strongly limbed; and the other, (meaning *Jones*,) would do well enough for the rear Rank.

The new Soldiers were now produced before the Officer, who having examined the six Foot Man, he being first produced, came next to survey *Jones*: at the first Sight of whom, the Lieutenant could not help shewing some Surprise; for, besides that he was very well dressed, and was naturally genteel, he had a remarkable Air of Dignity in his Look, which is rarely seen among the Vulgar, and is indeed not inseparably annexed to the Features of their Superiors.

‘ Sir,’ said the Lieutenant, ‘ my Serjeant informed me, that you are desirous of enlisting in the Company I have at present under my Command; if so, Sir, we shall very gladly receive a Gentleman who promises to do much Honour to the Company, by bearing Arms in it.’

Jones answered: ‘ That he had not mentioned any thing of enlisting himself; that he was most zealously attached to the glorious Cause for which they were going to fight, and was very desirous of serving as a Volunteer;’ concluding with some Compliments to the Lieutenant, and expressing the great Satisfaction he should have in being under his Command.

The Lieutenant returned his Civility, commended his Resolution, shook him by the Hand, and invited him to dine with himself and the rest of the Officers.