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**The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling**

In Four Volumes

**Fielding, Henry**

**London, 1750**

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

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## C H A P. XII.

*The Adventure of a Company of Officers.*

THE Lieutenant, whom we mentioned in the preceding Chapter, and who commanded this Party, was now near sixty Years of Age. He had entered very young into the Army, and had served in the Capacity of an Ensign at the Battle of *Tannieres*; here he had received two Wounds, and had so well distinguished himself, that he was by the Duke of *Marlborough* advanced to be a Lieutenant, immediately after that Battle.

In this Commission he had continued ever since, *viz.* near forty Years; during which Time he had seen vast Numbers preferred over his Head, and had now the Mortification to be commanded by Boys, whose Fathers were at Nurse when he first entered into the Service.

Nor was this ill Success in his Profession solely owing to his having no Friends among the Men in Power. He had the Misfortune to incur the Displeasure of his Colonel, who for many Years continued in the Command of this Regiment. Nor did he owe the implacable Ill-will which this Man bore him, to any Neglect or Deficiency as an Officer, nor indeed to any Fault in himself; but solely to the Indiscretion of his Wife, who was a very beautiful Woman, and who, tho' she was remarkably fond of her Husband, would not purchase his Preferment at the Expence of certain Favours which the Colonel required of her.

The poor Lieutenant was more peculiarly unhappy in this, that while he felt the Effects of the  
Ennity



Enmity of his Colonel, he neither knew, nor suspected, that he really bore him any; for he could not suspect an Ill-will for which he was not conscious of giving any Cause; and his Wife, fearing what her Husband's nice Regard to his Honour might have occasioned, contented herself with preserving her Virtue, without enjoying the Triumphs of her Conquest.

This unfortunate Officer (for so I think he may be called) had many good Qualities, besides his Merit in his Profession; for he was a religious, honest, good-natured Man; and had behaved so well in his Command, that he was highly esteemed and beloved, not only by the Soldiers of his own Company, but by the whole Regiment.

The other Officers who marched with him were a *French* Lieutenant, who had been long enough out of *France* to forget his own Language, but not long enough in *England* to learn ours, so that he really spoke no Language at all, and could barely make himself understood, on the most ordinary Occasions. There were likewise two Ensigns, both very young Fellows; one of whom had been bred under an Attorney, and the other was Son to the Wife of a Nobleman's Butler.

As soon as Dinner was ended, *Jones* informed the Company of the Merriment which had passed among the Soldiers upon their March; 'and yet,' says he, 'notwithstanding all their Vociferation, I dare swear they will behave more like *Grecians* than *Trojans* when they come to the Enemy.' 'Grecians and *Trojans*!' says one of the Ensigns, 'who the Devil are they? I have heard of all the Troops in *Europe*, but never of any such as these.'

'Don't

‘Don’t pretend to more Ignorance than you have, Mr. *Northerton*,’ said the worthy Lieutenant, ‘I suppose you have heard of the *Greeks* and *Trojans*, tho’, perhaps, you never read *Pope’s Homer*; who, I remember, now the Gentleman mentions it, compares the March of the *Trojans* to the Cackling of Geese, and greatly commends the Silence of the *Grecians*. And upon my Honour, there is great Justice in the Cadet’s Observation.’

‘Begar, me remember dem ver well,’ said the *French* Lieutenant, ‘me ave read dem at School in dans Madam *Daciere*, des *Greek*, des *Trojan*, dey fight for von Woman---ouy, ouy, me ave read all dat.’

‘D—n *Homo* with all my Heart,’ says *Northerton*, ‘I have the Marks of him in my A— yet. There’s *Thomas* of our Regiment, always carries a *Homo* in his Pocket: D—n me if ever I come at it, if I don’t burn it. And there’s *Corderius*, another d—n’d Son of a Whore that hath got me many a Flogging.’

‘Then you have been at School, Mr. *Northerton*?’ said the Lieutenant.

‘Ay d—n me, have I,’ answered he, ‘the Devil take my Father for sending me thither. The old Put wanted to make a Parson of me, but d—n me, thinks I to myself, I’ll nick you there, old Cull: The Devil a Smack of your Nonsense, shall you ever get into me. There’s *Jemmy Oliver* of our Regiment, he narrowly escaped being a Pimp too; and that would have been a thousand Pities: For d—n me if he is not one of the prettiest Fellows in the whole World; but he went farther than I with the  
‘old

old Cull: For Jimmey can neither write nor read.

'You give your Friend a very good Character,' said the Lieutenant, 'and a very deserved one, I dare say; but prithee, *Northerton*, leave off that foolish as well as wicked Custom of swearing: For you are deceived, I promise you, if you think there is Wit or Politeness in it. I wish too, you would take my Advice, and desist from abusing the Clergy. Scandalous Names and Reflections cast on any Body of Men, must be always unjustifiable; but especially so, when thrown on so sacred a Function: For to abuse the Body is to abuse the Function itself; and I leave to you to judge how inconsistent such Behaviour is in Men, who are going to fight in Defence of the Protestant Religion.'

Mr. *Adderly*, which was the Name of the other Ensign, had sat hitherto kicking his Heels and humming a Tune, without seeming to listen to the Discourse; he now answered, '*O Monsieur, on ne parle pas de la Religion dans la Guerre,*' Well said, *Jack*, cries *Northerton*, 'if the Religion was the only Matter, the Parsons should fight their own Battles for me.'

'I don't know, Gentlemen,' says *Jones*, 'what may be your Opinion; but I think no Man can engage in a nobler Cause than that of his Religion; and I have observed in the little I have read of History, that no Soldiers have fought so bravely, as those who have been inspired with a religious Zeal: For my own Part, tho' I love my King and Country, I hope, 'as well as any Man in it yet; the Protestant Interest

‘ Interest is no small Motive to my becoming a  
 ‘ Volunteer in the Cause.’

*Northerton* now winked on *Adderly*, and  
 whispered to him sily, ‘ Smoke the Prig, *Ad-  
 ‘ derly*, smoke him.’ Then turning to *Jones*,  
 said to him, ‘ I am very glad, Sir, you have  
 ‘ chosen our Regiment to be a Volunteer in:  
 ‘ For if our Parson should at any Time take a  
 ‘ Cup too much, I find you can supply his Place:  
 ‘ I presume, Sir, you have been at the Univer-  
 ‘ sity; may I crave the Favour to know what  
 ‘ College?’

‘ Sir,’ answered *Jones*, ‘ so far from having  
 ‘ been at the University, I have even had the  
 ‘ Advantage of yourself: For I was never at  
 ‘ School.’

‘ I presumed,’ cries the Ensign, ‘ only upon  
 ‘ the Information of your great Learning—’  
 ‘ Oh! Sir,’ answered *Jones*, ‘ it is as possible  
 ‘ for a Man to know something without having  
 ‘ been at School; as it is to have been at School  
 ‘ and to know nothing.’

‘ Well said, young Volunteer,’ cries the  
 Lieutenant, ‘ upon my Word, *Northerton*, you  
 ‘ had better let him alone; for he will be too  
 ‘ hard for you.’

*Northerton* did not very well relish the Sarcasm  
 of *Jones*; but he thought the Provocation was  
 scarce sufficient to justify a Blow, or a Rascal, or  
 Scoundrel, which were the only Repartees that  
 suggested themselves. He was, therefore, silent  
 at present; but resolved to take the first Oppor-  
 tunity of returning the Jest by Abuse.

It now came to the Turn of Mr. *Jones* to give  
 a Toast, as it is called; who could not refrain  
 from mentioning his dear *Sophia*. This he did  
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the more readily, as he imagined it utterly impossible, that any one present should guess the Person he meant.

But the Lieutenant, who was the Toast-master, was not contented with *Sophia* only. He said, he must have her Sir-name; upon which *Jones* hesitated a little, and presently after named Miss *Sophia Western*. Ensign *Northerton* declared, he would not drink her Health in the same Round with his own Toast, unless somebody would vouch for her. 'I knew one *Sophy Western*,' says he, 'that was lain-with by half the young Fellows at *Bath*; and, perhaps, this is the same Woman.' *Jones* very solemnly assured him of the contrary; asserting that the young Lady he named was one of great Fashion and Fortune. 'Ay, ay,' says the Ensign, 'and so she is; d—n me, it is the same Woman; and I'll hold half a Dozen of *Burgundy*, *Tom French* of our Regiment brings her into Company with us at any Tavern in *Bridges-street*.' He then proceeded to describe her Person exactly, (for he had seen her with her Aunt) and concluded with saying, 'That her Father had a great Estate in *Somersetshire*.'

The Tenderness of Lovers can ill brook the least jesting with the Names of their Mistresses. However, *Jones*, tho' he had enough of the Lover and of the Heroe too in his Disposition, did not resent these Slanders as hastily as, perhaps, he ought to have done. To say the Truth, having seen but little of this Kind of Wit, he did not readily understand it, and for a long Time imagined Mr. *Northerton* had really mistaken his Charmer for some other. But now turning to the Ensign with a stern Aspect, he said, 'Pray, Sir,

‘ Sir, chuse some other Subject for your Wit :  
 ‘ For I promise you I will bear no jesting with  
 ‘ this Lady’s Character.’ ‘ Jestings,’ cries the  
 other, ‘ d--n me if ever I was more in Earnest  
 ‘ in my Life. *Tom French* of our Regiment had  
 ‘ both her and her Aunt at *Bath*.’ ‘ Then I  
 ‘ must tell you in Earnest,’ cries *Jones*, ‘ that  
 ‘ you are one of the most impudent Rascals upon  
 ‘ Earth.’

He had no sooner spoken these Words, than  
 the Ensign, together with a Volley of Curfes,  
 discharged a Bottle full at the Head of *Jones*,  
 which hitting him a little above the right Tem-  
 ple, brought him instantly to the Ground.

The Conqueror perceiving the Enemy to lie  
 motionless before him, and Blood beginning to  
 flow pretty plentifully from his Wound, began  
 now to think of quitting the Field of Battle,  
 where no more Honour was to be gotten ; but  
 the Lieutenant interposed, by stepping before the  
 Door, and thus cut off his Retreat.

*Northerton* was very importunate with the  
 Lieutenant for his Liberty ; urging the ill Conse-  
 quences of his Stay, asking him, what he could  
 have done less ! ‘ Zounds !’ says he, ‘ I was but  
 ‘ in Jest with the Fellow. I never heard any  
 ‘ Harm of Miss *Western* in my Life.’ ‘ Have  
 ‘ not you ?’ said the Lieutenant, ‘ then you  
 ‘ richly deserve to be hanged, as well for making  
 ‘ such Jestings, as for using such a Weapon. You  
 ‘ are my Prisoner, Sir ; nor shall you stir from  
 ‘ hence, till a proper Guard comes to secure  
 ‘ you.’

Such an Ascendant had our Lieutenant over  
 this Ensign, that all that Fervency of Courage  
 which had levelled our poor Heroe with the Floor,  
 would



would scarce have animated the said Ensign to have drawn his Sword against the Lieutenant, had he then one dangling at his Side; but all the Swords being hung up in the Room, were, at the very Beginning of the Fray, secured by the *French* Officer. So that Mr. *Northerton* was obliged to attend the final Issue of this Affair.

The *French* Gentleman and Mr. *Adderly*, at the Desire of their Commanding-Officer, had raised up the Body of *Jones*; but as they could perceive but little (if any) Sign of Life in him, they again let him fall. *Adderly* damning him for having blooded his Wastecoat; and the *Frenchman* declaring, 'Bégarme no tush de Engliseman de mort me ave heard de Englisé Ley, Law, what you call, hang up de Mán dat tush him last.'

When the good Lieutenant applied himself to the Door, he applied himself likewise to the Bell; and the Drawer immediately attending, he dispatched him for a File of Musquetteers and a Surgeon. These Commands, together with the Drawer's Report of what he had himself seen, not only produced the Soldiers, but presently drew up the Landlord of the House, his Wife and Servants, and, indeed, every one else, who happened, at that Time, to be in the Inn.

To describe every Particular, and to relate the whole Conversation of the ensuing Scene, is not within my Power, unless I had forty Pens, and could, at once, write with them all together, as the Company now spoke. The Reader must, therefore, content himself with the most remarkable Incidents, and perhaps he may very well excuse the rest.

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The first Thing done was securing the Body of *Neriberton*, who being delivered into the Custody of six Men with a Corporal at their Head, was by them conducted from a Place which he was very willing to leave, but it was unluckily to a Place whither he was very unwilling to go. To say the Truth, so whimsical are the Desires of Ambition, the very Moment this Youth had attained the above-mentioned Honour, he would have been well contented to have retired to some Corner of the World, where the Fame of it should never have reached his Ears.

It surprizes us, and so, perhaps, it may the Reader, that the Lieutenant, a worthy and good Man, should have applied his chief Care, rather to secure the Offender, than to preserve the Life of the wounded Person. We mention this Observation, not with any View of pretending to account for so odd a Behaviour, but lest some Critic should hereafter plume himself on discovering it. We would have these Gentlemen know we can see what is odd in Characters as well as themselves, but it is our Business to relate Facts as they are; which when we have done, it is the Part of the learned and sagacious Reader to consult that original Book of Nature, whence every Passage in our Work is transcribed, tho' we quote not always the particular Page for its Authority.

The Company which now arrived were of a different Disposition. They suspended their Curiosity concerning the Person of the Ensign, till they should see him hereafter in a more engaging Attitude. At present, their whole Concern and Attention were employed about the bloody Object on the Floor; which being placed upright in



a Chair, soon began to discover some Symptoms of Life and Motion. These were no sooner perceived by the Company (for *Jones* was, at first, generally concluded to be dead) than they all fell at once to prescribing for him: (For as none of the physical Order was present, every one there took that Office upon him.)

Bleeding was the unanimous Voice of the whole Room; but unluckily there was no Operator at hand: Every one then cry'd, 'Call the Barber;' but none stirred a Step. Several Cordials were likewise prescribed in the same ineffective Manner; till the Landlord ordered up a Tankard of strong Beer, with a Toast, which he said was the best Cordial in *England*.

The Person principally assistant on this Occasion; indeed the only one who did any Service, or seemed likely to do any, was the Landlady. She cut off some of her Hair, and applied it to the Wound to stop the Blood: She fell to chafing the Youth's Temples with her Hand; and having exprest great Contempt for her Husband's Prescription of Beer, she dispatched one of her Maids to her own Closet for a Bottle of Brandy, of which, as soon as it was brought, she prevailed upon *Jones*, who was just returned to his Senses, to drink a very large and plentiful Draught.

Soon afterwards arrived the Surgeon, who having viewed the Wound, having shaken his Head, and blamed every Thing which was done, ordered his Patient instantly to Bed; in which Place, we think proper to leave him some Time, to his Repose, and shall here, therefore, put an End to this Chapter.

C H A P.