

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. XV. A brief History Europe. And a curious Disourse between Mr.
Jones and the Man of the Hill.

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

‘Apprehensions of Danger, and gave me an Opportunity of once more visiting my own Home, and of enquiring a little into my Affairs, which I soon settled as agreeably to my Brother as to myself; having resigned every Thing to him, for which he paid me the Sum of a thousand Pounds, and settled on me an Annuity for Life.

‘His Behaviour in this last Instance, as in all others, was selfish and ungenerous. I could not look on him as my Friend, nor indeed did he desire that I should; so I presently took my Leave of him, as well as of my other Acquaintance; and from that Day to this my History is little better than a Blank.’

‘And is it possible, Sir,’ said *Jones*, ‘that you can have resided here, from that Day to this?’
 ‘O no, Sir,’ answered the Gentleman, ‘I have been a great Traveller, and there are few Parts of *Europe* with which I am not acquainted.’
 ‘I have not, Sir,’ cried *Jones*, ‘the Assurance to ask it of you now. Indeed it would be cruel, after so much Breath as you have already spent. But you will give me Leave to wish for some further Opportunity of hearing the excellent Observations, which a Man of your Sense and Knowledge of the World must have made in so long a Course of Travels.’ ‘Indeed, young Gentleman,’ answered the Stranger, ‘I will endeavour to satisfy your Curiosity on this Head likewise, as far as I am able.’ *Jones* attempted fresh Apologies, but was prevented; and while he and *Partridge* sat with greedy and impatient Ears, the Stranger proceeded as in the next Chapter.

C H A P. XV.

A brief History of Europe. And a curious Discourse between Mr. Jones and the Man of the Hill.

‘**I**N *Italy* the Landlords are very silent. In *France* they are more talkative, but yet
 ‘civil.

' civil. In *Germany* and *Holland* they are gene-
 ' rally very impertinent. And as for their Ho-
 ' nesty, I believe it is pretty equal in all those
 ' Countries. The *Laquais à Louange* are sure to
 ' lose no Opportunity of cheating you: And as
 ' for the Possilions, I think they are pretty much
 ' alike all the World over. These, Sir, are the
 ' Observations on Men which I made in my
 ' Travels; for these were the only Men I ever
 ' conversed with. My Design, when I went
 ' abroad, was to divert myself by seeing the
 ' wondrous Variety of Prospects, Beasts, Birds,
 ' Fishes, Insects, and Vegetables, with which
 ' God has been pleased to enrich the several Parts
 ' of this Globe. A Variety, which as it must
 ' give great Pleasure to a contemplative Beholder,
 ' so doth it admirably display the Power and Wis-
 ' dom and Goodness of the Creator. Indeed,
 ' to say the Truth, there is but one Work in his
 ' whole Creation that doth him any Dishonour,
 ' and with that I have long since avoided holding
 ' any Conversation.

' You will pardon me,' cries *Jones*, ' but I
 ' have always imagined, that there is in this very
 ' Work you mention, as great Variety as in all
 ' the rest; for besides the Difference of Inclina-
 ' tion, Customs and Climates have, I am told,
 ' introduced the utmost Diversity into Human
 ' Nature.' ' Very little indeed,' answered the
 ' other; ' those who travel in order to acquaint
 ' themselves with the different Manners of Men,
 ' might spare themselves much Pains, by going
 ' to a Carnival at *Venice*; for there they will see
 ' at once all which they can discover in the sever-
 ' al Courts of *Europe*. The same Hypocrisy,
 ' the same Fraud; in short, the same Follies and
 ' Vices, dressed in different Habits. In *Spain*
 ' these are equipped with much Gravity; and in
 ' *Italy*,

‘ *Italy*, with vast Splendor. In *France*, a Knav
 ‘ is dressed like a Fop; and in the Northern
 ‘ Countries, like a Sloven. But Human Nature
 ‘ is every where the same, every where the Ob-
 ‘ ject of Detestation and Scorn.

‘ As for my own Part, I pass through all these
 ‘ Nations, as you perhaps may have done through
 ‘ a Croud at a Shew, jostling to get by them,
 ‘ holding my Nose with one Hand, and defend-
 ‘ ing my Pockets with the other, without speak-
 ‘ ing a Word to any of them, while I was press-
 ‘ ing on to see what I wanted to see; which,
 ‘ however entertaining it might be in itself, scarce
 ‘ made me Amends for the Trouble the Company
 ‘ gave me.’

‘ Did not you find some of the Nations among
 ‘ which you travelled, less troublesome to you
 ‘ than others?’ said *Jones*. ‘ O yes,’ replied
 ‘ the old Man; ‘ the *Turks* were much more tele-
 ‘ rable to me than the *Christians*. For they are
 ‘ Men of profound Taciturnity, and never dis-
 ‘ turb a Stranger with Questions. Now and then
 ‘ indeed they bestow a short Curse upon him, or
 ‘ spit in his Face as he walks the Streets, but then
 ‘ they have done with him; and a Man may live
 ‘ an Age in their Country without hearing a
 ‘ dozen Words from them. But of all the Peo-
 ‘ ple I ever saw, Heaven defend me from the
 ‘ *French*. With their damned Prate and Civili-
 ‘ ties, and doing the Honour of their Nation to
 ‘ Strangers, (as they are pleased to call it) but
 ‘ indeed setting forth their own Vanity; they are
 ‘ so troublesome, that I had infinitely rather pass
 ‘ my Life with the *Hottentots*, than set my Foot
 ‘ in *Paris* again. They are a nasty People, but
 ‘ their Nastiness is mostly *without*; whereas in
 ‘ *France*, and some other Nations that I won’t
 ‘ name, it is all *within*, and makes them stink
 ‘ much

‘ much more to my Reason than that of *Hottentots* does to my Nose.

‘ Thus, Sir, I have ended the History of my Life; for as to all that Series of Years, during which I have lived retired here, it affords no Variety to entertain you, and may be almost considered as one Day. The Retirement has been so compleat, that I could hardly have enjoyed a more absolute Solitude in the Deserts of the *Thebais*, than here in the midst of this populous Kingdom. As I have no Estate, I am plagued with no Tenants or Stewards; my Annuity is paid me pretty regularly, as indeed it ought to be; for it is much less than what I might have expected, in Return for what I gave up. Visits I admit none; and the old Woman who keeps my House knows, that her Place entirely depends upon her saving me all the Trouble of buying the Things that I want, keeping off all Solicitation or Business from me, and holding her Tongue whenever I am within hearing. As my Walks are all by Night, I am pretty secure in this wild, unfrequented Place from meeting any Company. Some few Persons I have met by Chance, and sent them home heartily frightened, as from the Oddness of my Dress and Figure they took me for a Ghost or a Hobgoblin. But what has happened Tonight shews, that even here I cannot be safe from the Villainy of Men; for without your Assistance I had not only been robbed, but very probably murdered.’

Jones thanked the Stranger for the Trouble he had taken in relating his Story, and then expressed some Wonder how he could possibly endure a Life of such Solitude; ‘ in which,’ says he, ‘ you may well complain of the Want of Variety. Indeed I am astonished how you have filled up, or rather killed, so much of your Time.’

' I am not at all surprized,' answered the other,
 ' that to one whose Affections and Thoughts are
 ' fixed on the World, my Hours should appear to
 ' have wanted Employment in this Place; but
 ' there is one single Act, for which the whole
 ' Life of Man is infinitely too short. What
 ' Time can suffice for the Contemplation and
 ' Worship of that glorious, immortal, and eternal
 ' Being, among the Works of whose stupendous
 ' Creation, not only this Globe, but even those
 ' numberless Luminaries which we may here be-
 ' hold spangling all the Sky, tho' they should
 ' many of them be Suns lighting different Systems
 ' of Worlds, may possibly appear but as a few
 ' Atoms, opposed to the whole Earth which we
 ' inhabit? Can a Man who, by Divine Medita-
 ' tions, is admitted, as it were, into the Con-
 ' version of this ineffable, incomprehensible Ma-
 ' jesty, think Days, or Years, or Ages, too long
 ' for the Continuance of so ravishing an Honour?
 ' Shall the trifling Amusements, the palling Plea-
 ' sures, the silly Business of the World, roll away
 ' our Hours too swiftly from us; and shall the
 ' Pace of Time seem sluggish to a Mind exercised
 ' in Studies so high, so important, and so glorious!
 ' As no Time is sufficient, so no Place is impro-
 ' per for this great Concern. On what Object
 ' can we cast our Eyes, which may not inspire
 ' us with Ideas of his Power, of his Wisdom, and
 ' of his Goodness? It is not necessary, that the
 ' rising Sun should dart his fiery Glories over the
 ' Eastern Horizon; nor that the boisterous Winds
 ' should rush from their Caverns, and shake the
 ' lofty Forest; nor that the opening Clouds should
 ' pour their Deluges on the Plains: It is not ne-
 ' cessary, I say, that any of these should proclaim
 ' his Majesty; there is not an Insect, not a Vege-
 ' table, of so low an Order in the Creation, as not

' to be honoured with bearing Marks of the At-
 ' tributes of its great Creator; Marks not only of
 ' his Power, but of his Wisdom and Goodness.
 ' Man alone, the King of this Globe, the last and
 ' greatest Work of the Supreme Being, below the
 ' Sun; Man alone hath basely dishonoured his
 ' own Nature, and by Dishonesty, Cruelty, Ingrat-
 ' titude, and Treachery, hath called his Maker's
 ' Goodness in Question, by puzzling us to account
 ' how a benevolent Being should form so foolish,
 ' and so vile an Animal. Yet this is the Being
 ' from whose Conversation you think, I suppose,
 ' that I have been unfortunately restrained; and
 ' without whose blessed Society, Life, in your
 ' Opinion, must be tedious and insipid.'

' In the former Part of what you said,' replied
Jones, ' I most heartily and readily concur; but I
 ' believe, as well as hope, that the Abhorrence
 ' which you express for Mankind, in the Conclu-
 ' sion, is much too general. Indeed you here fall
 ' into an Error, which, in my little Experience, I
 ' have observed to be a very common one, by
 ' taking the Character of Mankind from the worst
 ' and basest among them; whereas indeed, as an
 ' excellent Writer observes, nothing should be
 ' esteemed as characteristical of a Species, but
 ' what is to be found among the best and most
 ' perfect Individuals of that Species. This Error,
 ' I believe, is generally committed by those who,
 ' from Want of proper Caution in the Choice of
 ' their Friends and Acquaintance, have suffered
 ' Injuries from bad and worthless Men; two or
 ' three Instances of which are very unjustly
 ' charged on all Human Nature.'

' I think I had Experience enough of it,' an-
 ' swered the other. ' My first Mistress, and my
 ' first Friend, betrayed me in the basest Manner,
 ' and in Matters which threatened to be of the
 ' worst

‘ worst of Consequences, even to bring me to a shameful Death.’

‘ But you will pardon me,’ cries *Jones*, ‘ if I desire you to reflect who that Mistress, and who that Friend were. What better, my good Sir, could be expected in Love derived from the Stews, or in Friendship first produced and nourished at the Gaming-Table! To take the Characters of Women from the former Instance, or of Men from the latter, would be as unjust as to assert, that Air is a nauseous and unwholesome Element, because we find it so in a Jakes. I have lived but a short Time in the World, and yet have known Men worthy of the highest Friendship, and Women of the highest Love.’

‘ Alas! young Man,’ answered the Stranger, ‘ you have lived, you confess, but a very short Time in the World; I was somewhat older than you when I was of the same Opinion.’

‘ You might have remained so still,’ replies *Jones*, ‘ if you had not been unfortunate, I will venture to say incautious, in the placing your Affections. If there was indeed much more Wickedness in the World than there is, it would not prove such general Assertions against human Nature, since much of this arrives by mere Accident, and many a Man who commits Evil, is not totally bad and corrupt in his Heart. In Truth, none seem to have any Title to assert human Nature to be necessarily and universally evil, but those whose own Minds afford them one Instance of this natural Depravity; which is not, I am convinced, your Case.’

‘ And such,’ said the Stranger, ‘ will be always the most backward to assert any such Thing. Knaves will no more endeavour to persuade us of the Baseness of Mankind, than a Highwayman will inform you that there are
‘ Thieves

‘ Thieves on the Road. This would indeed be
 ‘ a Method to put you on your Guard, and to
 ‘ defeat their own Purposes. For which Reason
 ‘ tho’ Knaves, as I remember, are very apt to
 ‘ abuse particular Persons; yet they never cast
 ‘ any Reflection on Human Nature in general.’
 The old Gentleman spoke this so warmly, that
 as *Jones* despaired of making a Convert, and was
 unwilling to offend, he returned no Answer.

The Day now began to send forth its first
 Streams of Light, when *Jones* made an Apology
 to the Stranger for having staid so long, and
 perhaps detained him from his Rest. The
 Stranger answered, ‘ He never wanted Rest less
 ‘ than at present; for that Day and Night were
 ‘ indifferent Seasons to him, and that he com-
 ‘ monly made use of the former for the Time of
 ‘ his Repose, and of the latter for his Walks and
 ‘ Lucubrations. However,’ said he, ‘ it is now
 ‘ a most lovely Morning, and if you can bear
 ‘ any longer to be without your own Rest or
 ‘ Food, I will gladly entertain you with the Sight
 ‘ of some very fine Prospects, which I believe
 ‘ you have not yet seen.’

Jones very readily embraced this Offer, and
 they immediately set forward together from the
 Cottage. As for *Partridge*, he had fallen into a
 profound Repose, just as the Stranger had finished
 his Story; for his Curiosity was satisfied, and the
 subsequent Discourse was not forcible enough in
 its Operation to conjure down the Charms of
 Sleep. *Jones* therefore left him to enjoy his
 Nap; and as the Reader may perhaps be, at this
 Season, glad of the same Favour, we will here
 put an End to the Eighth Book of our History.

T H E