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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. IX. Containing strange Matters.

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Jones fell into Raptures with this good Gentleman; and when after much Persuasion, they found the Father grew still more and more irritated, instead of appeased, *Jones* conducted the Uncle to his Nephew at the House of Mrs. *Miller*.

C H A P. IX.

Containing strange Matters.

AT his Return to his Lodgings, *Jones* found the Situation of Affairs greatly altered from what they had been in at his Departure. The Mother, the two Daughters, and young Mr. *Nightingale*, were now sat down to Supper together, when the Uncle was, at his own Desire, introduced without any Ceremony into the Company, to all of whom he was well known; for he had several Times visited his Mother at that House.

The old Gentleman immediately walked up to Miss *Nancy*, saluted and wished her Joy, as he did afterwards the Nephew and the other Sister; and lastly, he paid the proper Compliments to his Nephew, with the same good Humour and Courtesy, as if his Nephew had married his equal or superior in Fortune, with all the previous Requisites first performed.

Miss *Nancy* and her supposed Husband both turned pale, and looked rather foolish than otherwise upon the Occasion; but Mrs. *Miller* took the first Opportunity of withdrawing; and having sent for *Jones* into the Dining Room, she threw herself at his Feet, and in a most passionate Flood of Tears, called him her good Angel, the

Preserver of her poor little Family, with many other respectful and endearing Appellations, and made him every Acknowledgment which the highest Benefit can extract from the most grateful Heart.

After the first Gust of her Passion was a little over, which she declared, if she had not vented, would have burst her, she proceeded to inform Mr. Jones, that all Matters were settled between Mr. *Nightingale* and her Daughter, and that they were to be married the next Morning: At which Mr. Jones having expressed much Pleasure, the poor Woman fell again into a Fit of Joy and Thanksgiving, which he at length with Difficulty silenced, and prevailed on her to return with him back to the Company, whom they found in the same good Humour in which they had left them.

This little Society now past two or three very agreeable Hours together, in which the Uncle, who was a very great Lover of his Bottle, had so well ply'd his Nephew, that this latter, though not drunk, began to be somewhat flustered; and now Mr. *Nightingale* taking the old Gentleman with him up Stairs into the Apartment he had lately occupied, unbosomed himself as follows:

‘As you have been always the best and kindest of Uncles to me, and as you have shewn such unparalleled Goodness in forgiving this Match, which to be sure may be thought a little imprudent; I should never forgive myself if I attempted to deceive you in any thing.’ He then confessed the Truth, and opened the whole Affair.

‘How, *Jack!* said the old Gentleman, and are you really then not married to this young Woman?’ ‘No, upon my Honour,’ answered
‘*Nigh-*

Nightingale, I have told you the simple Truth
 My dear Boy, cries the Uncle kissing him, I
 am heartily glad to hear it. I never was better
 pleased in my Life. If you had been married
 I should have assisted you as much as was in
 my Power, to have made the best of a bad
 Matter; but there is a great Difference be-
 tween considering a Thing which is already
 done and irrecoverable, and that which is yet
 to do. Let your Reason have fair Play, *Jack*,
 and you will see this Match in so foolish and
 preposterous a Light, that there will be no
 Need of any dissuasive Arguments.' 'How,
 Sir! replies young *Nightingale*, is there this
 Difference between having already done an Act,
 and being in Honour engaged to do it?' 'Pugh,
 said the Uncles, Honour is a Creature of the
 World's making, and the World hath the
 Power of a Creator over it, and may govern
 and direct it as they please. Now you well
 know how trivial these Breaches of Contract
 are thought; even the grossest make but the
 Wonder and Conversation of a Day. Is there
 a Man who afterwards will be more backward
 in giving you his Sister or Daughter? [Or is
 there any Sister or Daughter who would
 be more backward to receive you? Honour is not
 concerned in these Engagements.' 'Pardon
 me, dear Sir, cries *Nightingale*, I can never
 think so; and not only Honour, but Con-
 science and Humanity are concern'd. I am
 well satisfied, that was I now to disappoint the
 young Creature, her Death would be the Con-
 sequence, and I should look upon myself as her
 Murderer; nay, as her Murderer by the cruel-
 lest of all Methods, by breaking her Heart.'

' Break her Heart, indeed! no, no, *Jack*, cries
 ' the Uncle, the Hearts of Women are not so
 ' soon broke; they are tough, Boy, they are
 ' tough.' ' But, Sir,' answered *Nightingale*,
 ' my own Affections are engaged, and I never
 ' could be happy with any other Woman. How
 ' often have I heard you say, that Children should
 ' be always suffered to chuse for themselves, and
 ' that you would let my Cousin *Harriet* do so!
 ' Why ay,' replied the old Gentleman, ' so I
 ' would have them; but then I would have them
 ' chuse wisely.—Indeed, *Jack*, you must and
 ' shall leave this Girl.'—' Indeed, Uncle,' cries
 the other, ' I must and will have her.' ' You
 ' will, young Gentleman?' said the Uncle; ' I
 ' did not expect such a Word from you. I should
 ' not wonder if you had used such Language to
 ' your Father, who hath always treated you like
 ' a Dog, and kept you at the Distance which a
 ' Tyrant preserves over his Subjects; but I,
 ' who have lived with you upon an equal Footing,
 ' might surely expect better Usage: But I know
 ' how to account for it all! it is all owing to your
 ' preposterous Education, in which I have had
 ' too little Share. There is my Daughter now,
 ' whom I have brought up as my Friend, never
 ' doth any Thing without my Advice, nor ever
 ' refuses to take it when I give it her.' ' You
 ' have never yet given her Advice in an Affair of
 ' this Kind,' said *Nightingale*, ' for I am greatly
 ' mistaken in my Cousin, if she would be very
 ' ready to obey even your most positive Com-
 ' mands in abandoning her Inclinations.' ' Don't
 ' abuse my Girl,' answered the old Gentleman
 with some Emotion; ' don't abuse my *Harriet*. I
 ' have brought her up to have no Inclinations con-
 ' trary

'trary to my own. By suffering her to do what-
 'ever she pleases, I have enured her to a Habit
 'of being pleased to do whatever I like.' 'Par-
 'don me, Sir,' said *Nightingale*, 'I have not
 'the least Design to reflect on my Cousin, for
 'whom I have the greatest Esteem; and indeed
 'I am convinced you will never put her to so se-
 'vere a Trial, or lay such hard Commands on
 'her as you would do on me.—But, dear Sir,
 'let us return to the Company; for they will be-
 'gin to be uneasy at our long Absence. I must
 'beg one Favour of my dear Uncle, which is
 'that he would not say any Thing to shock the
 'poor Girl or her Mother.' 'O you need not
 'fear me,' answered he, 'I understand myself
 'too well to affront Women; so I will readily
 'grant you that Favour; and in Return I must
 'expect another of you.' 'There are but few
 'of your Commands, Sir,' said *Nightingale*,
 'which I shall not very chearfully obey.' 'Nay,
 'Sir, I ask nothing,' said the Uncle, 'but the
 'Honour of your Company home to my Lodging,
 'that I may reason the Case a little more fully
 'with you: For I would, if possible, have the
 'Satisfaction of preserving my Family, notwith-
 'standing the headstrong Folly of my Brother,
 'who, in his own Opinion, is the wisest Man in
 'the World.'

Nightingale, who well knew his Uncle to be as
 headstrong as his Father, submitted to attend him
 Home, and then they both returned back into the
 Room, where the old Gentleman promised to
 carry himself with the same Decorum which he
 had before maintained.