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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. II. In which is open'd a very black Design against Sophia.

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This therefore would seem an Exception to the above Rule, if indeed it was a Rule; but as we have in our Voyage through Life seen so many other Exceptions to it, we chuse to dispute the Doctrine on which it is founded, which we don't apprehend to be Christian, which we are convinced is not true, and which is indeed destructive of one of the noblest Arguments that Reason alone can furnish for the Belief of Immortality.

But as the Reader's Curiosity (if he hath any) must be now awake, and hungry, we shall provide to feed it as fast as we can.

C H A P. II.

In which is opened a very black Design against Sophia.

I Remember a wise old Gentleman, who used to say, 'When Children are doing Nothing, they are doing Mischief.' I will not enlarge this quaint Saying to the most beautiful Part of the Creation in general; but so far I may be allowed, that when the Effects of female Jealousy do not appear openly in their proper Colours of Rage and Fury, we may suspect that mischievous Passion to be at work privately, and attempting to undermine, what it doth not attack above ground.

This was exemplified in the Conduct of Lady *Bellafton*, who, under all the Smiles which she wore in her Countenance, concealed much Indignation against *Sophia*; and as she plainly saw, that this young Lady stood between her and the full Indulgence of her Desires, she resolved to get rid of her by some Means or other; nor was it long before

before a very favourable Opportunity of accomplishing this presented itself to her.

The Reader may be pleased to remember, that when *Sophia* was thrown into that Consternation at the Play-house, by the Wit and Humour of a Set of young Gentlemen who call themselves the Town, we informed him, that she had put herself under the Protection of a young Nobleman, who had very safely conducted her to her Chair.

This Nobleman, who frequently visited Lady *Bellafton*, had more than once seen *Sophia* there, since her Arrival in Town, and had conceived a very great Liking to her; which Liking, as Beauty never looks more amiable than in Distress, *Sophia* had in this Fright so increased, that he might now, without any great Impropriety, be said to be actually in Love with her.

It may easily be believed, that he would not suffer so handsome an Occasion of improving his Acquaintance with the beloved Object as now offered itself, to elapse, when even Good-breeding alone might have prompted him to pay her a Visit.

The next Morning therefore, after this Accident, he waited on *Sophia*, with the usual Compliments, and Hopes that she had received no Harm from her last Night's Adventure.

As Love, like Fire, when once thoroughly kindled, is soon blown into a Flame; *Sophia* in a very short Time completed her Conquest. Time now flew away unperceived, and the noble Lord had been two Hours in Company with the Lady, before it entered into his Head that he had made too long a Visit. Though this Circumstance alone would have alarmed *Sophia*, who was somewhat more a Mistress of Computation at present; she had

had indeed much more pregnant Evidence from the Eyes of her Lover of what pass within his Bosom; nay, though he did not make any open Declaration of his Passion, yet many of his Expressions were rather too warm, and too tender, to have been imputed to Complaisance, even in the Age when such Complaisance was in Fashion; the very Reverse of which is well known to be the reigning Mode at present.

Lady *Bellaſton* had been apprised of his Lordship's Visit at his first Arrival; and the Length of it very well satisfied her, that Things went as she wished, and as indeed she had suspected the second Time she saw this young Couple together. This Business she rightly, I think, concluded, that she should by no Means forward by mixing in the Company while they were together; she therefore ordered her Servants, that when my Lord was going, they should tell him, she desired to speak with him; and employed the intermediate Time in meditating how best to accomplish a Scheme which she made no doubt but his Lordship would be very readily embrace the Execution of.

Lord *Fellamar* (for that was the Title of this young Nobleman) was no sooner introduced to her Ladyship, than she attacked him in the following Strain: 'Bless me, my Lord, are you here yet? I thought my Servants had made a Mistake, and let you go away; and I wanted to see you about an Affair of some Importance.'-----
 'Indeed, Lady *Bellaſton*,' said he, 'I don't wonder you are astonish'd at the Length of my Visit: For I have staid above two Hours, and I did not think I had staid above half a one.'—
 'What am I to conclude from thence, my Lord?'

said

said she, 'The Company must be very agreeable
 ' which can make Time slide away so very deceit-
 ' fully.'—'Upon my Honour,' said he, 'the
 ' most agreeable I ever saw. Pray tell me, La-
 ' dy *Bellaston*, who is this blazing Star which
 ' you have produced among us all of a sudden?'
 '—'What blazing Star, my Lord?' said she,
 ' affecting a Surprize. 'I mean,' said he, 'the
 ' Lady I saw here the other Day, whom I had
 ' last Night in my Arms at the Play-house, and
 ' to whom I have been making that unreasonable
 ' Visit.'—'O my Cousin *Western!*' said she,
 ' why that blazing Star, my Lord, is the Daugh-
 ' ter of a Country Booby Squire, and hath been
 ' in Town about a Fortnight, for the first Time.'
 '—Upon my Soul,' said he, 'I should swear she
 ' had been bred in a Court; for besides her Beau-
 ' ty, I never saw any Thing so genteel, so fen-
 ' sible, so polite.'—'O brave!' cries the Lady,
 ' my Cousin hath you, I find.'—'Upon my
 ' Honour,' answered she, 'I wish she had: For
 ' I am in Love with her to Distraction.'—'Nay,
 ' my Lord,' said she, 'it is not wishing yourself
 ' very ill neither, for she is a very great Fortune:
 ' I assure you she is an only Child, and her Fa-
 ' ther's Estate is a good 3000 *l.* a Year.' 'Then
 ' I can assure you, Madam,' answered the Lord,
 ' I think her the best Match in *England*.' 'In-
 ' deed, my Lord,' replied she, 'if you like her,
 ' I heartily wish you had her.' 'If you think
 ' so kindly of me, Madam,' said he, 'as she is
 ' a Relation of yours, will you do me the Ho-
 ' nour to propose it to her Father?' 'And are
 ' you really then in earnest?' cries the Lady,
 ' with an affected Gravity. 'I hope, Madam,'
 ' answered he, 'you have a better Opinion of me,
 ' than
 ' than

' than to imagine I would jest with your Lady-
 ' ship in an Affair of this Kind.' ' Indeed then,'
 said the Lady, ' I will most readily propose your
 ' Lordship to her Father; and I can, I believe,
 ' assure you of his joyful Acceptance of the Pro-
 ' posal; but there is a Bar, which I am almost
 ' ashamed to mention; and yet it is one you will
 ' never be able to conquer. You have a Rival,
 ' my Lord, and a Rival who, though I blush to
 ' name him, neither you, nor all the World will
 ' ever be able to conquer.' ' Upon my Word,
 ' Lady *Bellaſton*,' cries he, ' you have struck a
 ' Damp to my Heart, which hath almost de-
 ' prived me of Being.' ' Fie! my Lord,' said
 she, ' I should rather hope I had struck Fire into
 ' you. A Lover, and talk of Damps in your
 ' Heart! I rather imagined you would have asked
 ' your Rival's Name, that you might have im-
 ' mediately entered the Lifts with him.' ' I pro-
 ' mise you, Madam,' answered he, ' there are
 ' very few Things I would not undertake for
 ' your charming Cousin: But pray who is this
 ' happy Man? — ' Why he is,' said she, ' what
 ' I am sorry to say most happy Men with us are,
 ' one of the lowest Fellows in the World. He
 ' is a Beggar, a Bastard, a Foundling, a Fellow
 ' in meaner Circumstances than one of your
 ' Lordship's Footmen.' ' And is it possible,'
 cried he, ' that a young Creature with such Per-
 ' fections should think of bestowing herself so
 ' unworthily?' ' Alas! my Lord,' answered
 she, ' consider the Country—the Bane of all
 ' young Women is the Country. There they
 ' learn a Set of romantic Notions of Love, and I
 ' know not what Folly, which this Town and
 ' good Company can scarce eradicate in a whole
 ' Winter.' ' Indeed, Madam,' replied my
 Lord,

Lord, ' your Cousin is of too immense a Value
 ' to be thrown away : Such Ruin as this must
 ' be prevented.' ' Alas !' cries she, ' my Lord,
 ' how can it be prevented ? The Family have
 ' already done all in their Power ; but the Girl
 ' is, I think, intoxicated, and nothing less than
 ' Ruin will content her. And to deal more o-
 ' penly with you, I expect every Day to hear she
 ' is run away with him.' ' What you tell me,
 ' Lady *Bellafton*,' answered his Lordship, ' af-
 ' fects me most tenderly, and only raises my
 ' Compassion instead of lessening my Adoration
 ' of your Cousin. Some Means must be found
 ' to preserve so inestimable a Jewel. Hath your
 ' Ladyship endeavoured to reason with her ?'
 ' Here the Lady affected a Laugh, and cried, ' My
 ' dear Lord, sure you know us better than to talk
 ' of reasoning a young Woman out of her Inclina-
 ' tions ? These inestimable Jewels are as deaf
 ' as the Jewels they wear: Time, my Lord, Time
 ' is the only Medicine to cure their Folly ; but
 ' this is a Medicine, which I am certain she will
 ' not take ; nay, I live in hourly Horrors on her
 ' Account. In short, nothing but violent Me-
 ' thods will do.' ' What is to be done ?' cries
 ' my Lord, ' What Methods are to be taken ?—
 ' Is there any Method upon Earth ?—Oh ! Lady
 ' *Bellafton* ! there is nothing which I would not
 ' undertake for such a Reward.'—' I really know
 ' not,' answered the Lady, after a Pause ; and
 ' then pausing again, she cried out, — ' Upon my
 ' Soul, I am at my Wit's End on this Girl's
 ' Account.—If she can be preserved, something
 ' must be done immediately ; and as I say, no-
 ' thing but violent Methods will do. — If your
 ' Lordship hath really this Attachment to my
 ' Cousin,

‘Cousin, (and to do her Justice, except in this
‘filly Inclination, of which she will soon see her
‘Folly, she is every Way deserving) I think there
‘may be one Way, indeed it is a very disagree-
‘able one, and what I am almost afraid to think
‘of.—It requires a great Spirit, I promise you.’
‘I am not conscious, Madam,’ said he, ‘of
‘any Defect there; nor am I, I hope, suspected
‘of any such. It must be an egregious Defect
‘indeed, which could make me backward on this
‘Occasion.’ ‘Nay, my Lord,’ answered she,
‘I am far from doubting you. I am much more
‘inclined to doubt my own Courage; for I must
‘run a monstrous Risque. In short, I must place
‘such a Confidence in your Honour as a wise
‘Woman will scarce ever place in a Man on any
‘Consideration.’ In this Point likewise my Lord
very well satisfied her; for his Reputation was
extremely clear, and common Fame did him no
more than Justice, in speaking well of him. ‘Well
‘then,’ said she, ‘my Lord, — I — I vow, I
‘can’t bear the Apprehension of it. — No, it must
‘not be.—At least every other Method shall be
‘tried. Can you get rid of your Engagements,
‘and dine here to Day? Your Lordship will
‘have an Opportunity of seeing a little more of
‘Miss *Western*.—I promise you we have no Time
‘to lose. Here will be no Body but Lady *Betty*,
‘and Miss *Eagle*, and Colonel *Hampsted*, and
‘Tom *Edwards*; they will all go soon,—and I
‘shall be at Home to no Body. Then your Lord-
‘ship may be a little more explicit. Nay, I will
‘contrive some Method to convince you of her
‘Attachment to this Fellow.’ My Lord made
proper Compliments, accepted the Invitation, and
then they parted to dress, it being now past three
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