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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. VIII. Short and sweet.

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Jones followed her down Stairs, often offering her his Hand, which she absolutely refused him, and got into her Chair without taking any Notice of him as he stood bowing before her.

At his Return up Stairs, a long Dialogue pass between him and Mrs. *Honour*, while she was adjusting herself after the Discomposure she had undergone. The Subject of this was his Infidelity to her young Lady; on which she enlarged with great Bitterness; but *Jones* at last found means to reconcile her, and not only so, but to obtain a Promise of most inviolable Secrecy, and that she would the next Morning endeavour to find out *Sophia*, and bring him a further Account of the Proceedings of the Squire.

Thus ended this unfortunate Adventure to the Satisfaction only of Mrs. *Honour*; for a Secret (as some of my Readers will perhaps acknowledge from Experience) is often a very valuable Possession; and that not only to those who faithfully keep it, but sometimes to such as whisper it about till it come to the Ears of every one, except the ignorant Person, who pays for the supposed concealing of what is publickly known,

C H A P. VIII.

Short and sweet.

NOtwithstanding all the Obligations she had received from *Jones*, Mrs. *Miller* could not forbear in the Morning some gentle Remonstrances for the Hurricane which had happened the preceding Night in his Chamber. These were however so gentle and so friendly; professing, and indeed truly, to aim at nothing

more than the real Good of Mr, *Jones* himself, that he, far from being offended, thankfully received the Admonition of the good Woman, expressed much Concern for what had past, excused it as well as he could, and promised never more to bring the same Disturbances into the House.

But though Mrs. *Miller* did not refrain from a short Expostulation in private at their first meeting; yet the Occasion of his being summoned down Stairs that Morning was of a much more agreeable Kind; being indeed to perform the Office of a Father to Miss *Nancy*, and to give her in Wedlock to Mr. *Nightingale*, who was now ready drest, and full as sober as many of my Readers will think a Man ought to be who receives a Wife in so imprudent a Manner.

And here perhaps it may be proper to account for the Escape which this young Gentleman had made from his Uncle, and for his Appearance in the Condition in which we have seen him the Night before.

Now when the Uncle had arrived at his Lodgings with his Nephew, partly to indulge his own Inclinations (for he dearly loved his Bottle) and partly to disqualify his Nephew from the immediate Execution of his Purpose, he ordered Wine to be set on the Table; with which he so briskly ply'd the young Gentleman, that this latter, who, though not much used to Drinking, did not detest it so as to be guilty of Disobedience, or of Want of Complaisance by refusing, was soon completely finished.

Just as the Uncle had obtained this Victory, and was preparing a Bed for his Nephew, a Messenger arrived with a Pice of News, which so entirely disconcerted and shocked him, that

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he in a Moment lost all Consideration for his Nephew, and his whole Mind became entirely taken up with his own Concerns.

This sudden and afflicting News was no less than that his Daughter had taken the Opportunity of almost the first Moment of his Absence, and had gone off with a neighbouring young Clergyman; against whom, tho' her Father could have had but one Objection, namely, that he was worth nothing, yet she had never thought proper to communicate her Amour even to that Father; and so artfully had she managed, that it had never been once suspected by any, till now that it was consummated.

Old Mr. *Nightingale* no sooner received this Account, than in the utmost Confusion he ordered a Post-Chaise to be instantly got ready, and having recommended his Nephew to the Care of a Servant, he directly left the House, scarce knowing what he did, nor whither he went.

The Uncle thus departed, when the Servant came to attend the Nephew to Bed, had waked him for that Purpose, and had at last made him sensible that his Uncle was gone, he, instead of accepting the kind Offices tendered him, insisted on a Chair being called; with this the Servant, who had received no strict Orders to the contrary, readily complied; and thus being conducted back to the House of Mrs. *Miller*, he had staggered up to Mr. *Jones's* Chamber, as hath been before recounted.

This Bar of the Uncle being now removed (though young *Nightingale* knew not as yet in what Manner) and all Parties being quickly ready, the Mother, Mr. *Jones*, Mr. *Nightingale*, and



his Love stept into a Hackney-Coach, which conveyed him to Doctor's Commons; where Miss *Nancy* was, in vulgar Language, soon made an honest Woman, and the poor Mother became in the purest Sense of the Word, one of the happiest of all human Beings.

And now Mr. *Jones* having seen his good Offices to that poor Woman and her Family brought to a happy Conclusion, began to apply himself to his own Concerns; but here lest many of my Readers should censure his Folly for thus troubling himself with the Affairs of others, and lest some few should think he acted more disinterestedly than indeed he did, we think proper to assure our Reader, that he was so far from being unconcerned in this Matter, that he had indeed a very considerable Interest in bringing it to that final Consummation.

To explain this seeming Paradox at once, he was one who could truly say with him in *Terence*, *Homo sum: Humani nihil a me alienum puto*. He was never an indifferent Spectator of the Misery or Happiness of any one; and he felt either the one or the other in great Proportion as he himself contributed to either. He could not therefore be the Instrument of raising a whole Family from the lowest State of Wretchedness to the highest Pitch of Joy without conveying great Felicity to himself; more perhaps than worldly Men often purchase to themselves by undergoing the most severe Labour, and often by wading through the deepest Iniquity.

Those Readers who are of the same Complexion with him, will perhaps think this short Chapter contains abundance of Matter; while others may probably wish, short as it is, that it had