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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. VI. In which the History is obliges to look back.

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what he said than to any Thing that passed on the Stage.

He durst not go to Bed all that Night, for Fear of the Ghost; and for many Nights after, sweated two or three Hours before he went to sleep, with the same Apprehensions, and waked several Times in great Horrors, crying out, 'Lord have Mercy upon us! there it is.'

C H A P. VI.

In which the History is obliged to look back.

IT is almost impossible for the best Parent to observe an exact Impartiality to his Children, even though no superior Merit should bias his Affection; but sure a Parent can hardly be blamed, when that Superiority determines his Preference.

As I regard all the Personages of this History in the Light of my Children; so I must confess the same Inclination of Partiality to *Sophia*; and for that I hope the Reader will allow me the same Excuse, from the Superiority of her Character.

This extraordinary Tenderness, which I have for my Heroine, never suffers me to quit her any long Time without the utmost Reluctance. I could now, therefore, return impatiently to enquire, what hath happened to this lovely Creature since her Departure from her Father's, but that I am obliged first to pay a short Visit to Mr. *Bliss*.

Mr. *Western*, in the first Confusion into which his Mind was cast, upon the sudden News he received of his Daughter, and in the first Hurry to go after her, had not once thought of sending any



any Account of the Discovery to *Blisl*. He had not gone far, however, before he recollected himself, and accordingly stopt at the very first Inn he came to, and dispatched away a Messenger to acquaint *Blisl* with his having found *Sophia*, and with his firm Resolution to marry her to him immediately, if he would come up after him to Town.

As the Love which *Blisl* had for *Sophia* was of that violent Kind, which nothing but the Loss of her Fortune, or some such Accident, could lessen, his Inclination to the Match was not at all altered by her having run away, though he was obliged to lay this to his own Account. He very readily, therefore, embraced this Offer. Indeed, he now proposed the Gratification of a very strong Passion besides Avarice, by marrying this young Lady, and this was Hatred: For he concluded that Matrimony afforded an equal Opportunity of satisfying either Hatred or Love; and this Opinion is very probably verified by much Experience. To say the Truth, if we are to judge by the ordinary Behaviour of married Persons to each other, we shall perhaps be apt to conclude, that the Generality seek the Indulgence of the former Passion only in their Union of every Thing but of Hearts.

There was one Difficulty, however, in his Way, and this arose from Mr. *Allworthy*. That good Man, when he found by the Departure of *Sophia*, (for neither that, nor the Cause of it, could be concealed from him) the great Aversion which she had for his Nephew, began to be seriously concerned that he had been deceived into carrying Matters so far. He by no Means concurred with the Opinion of those Parents, who think it as im-



material to consult the Inclinations of their Children in the Affair of Marriage, as to sollicit the good Pleasure of their Servants when they intend to take a Journey; and who are, by Law or Decency at least, with-held often from using absolute Force. On the contrary, as he esteemed the Institution to be of the most sacred Kind, he thought every preparatory Caution necessary to preserve it holy and inviolate; and very wisely concluded, that the surest Way to effect this, was by laying the Foundation in previous Affection.

Bliss! indeed soon cured his Uncle of all Anger on the Score of Deceit, by many Vows and Protestations that he had been deceived himself, with which the many Declarations of *Western* very well tallied; but now to persuade *Allworthy* to consent to the renewing his Addresses, was a Matter of such apparent Difficulty, that the very Appearance was sufficient to have deterred a less enterprizing Genius; but this young Gentleman so well knew his own Talents, that nothing within the Province of Cunning seemed to him hard to be achieved.

Here then he represented the Violence of his own Affection, and the Hopes of subduing Aversion in the Lady by Perseverance. He begged that in an Affair on which depended all his future Repose, he might at least be at Liberty to try all fair Means for Success. Heaven forbid, he said, that he should ever think of prevailing by any other than the most gentle Methods! 'Besides, Sir, said he, if they fail, you may then (which will be surely Time enough) deny your Consent.' He urged the great and eager Desire which Mr. *Western* had for the Match, and lastly, he made great Use of the Name of *Jones*, to whom he

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imputed all that had happened; and from whom, he said, to preserve so valuable a young Lady was even an Act of Charity.

All these Arguments were well seconded by *Thwackum*, who dwelt a little stronger on the Authority of Parents than Mr. *Blifil* himself had done. He ascribed the Measures which Mr. *Blifil* was desirous to take, to Christian Motives; ‘and though,’ says he, ‘the good young Gentleman hath mentioned Charity last, I am almost convinced, it is his first and principal Consideration.’

Square, possibly, had he been present, would have sung to the same Tune, though in a different Key, and would have discovered much moral Fitness in the Proceeding; but he was now gone to *Bath* for the Recovery of his Health.

Allworthy, though not without Reluctance, at last yielded to the Desires of his Nephew. He said, he would accompany him to *London*, where he might be at Liberty to use every honest Endeavour to gain the Lady: ‘But I declare,’ said he, ‘I will never give my Consent to any absolute Force being put on her Inclinations, nor shall you ever have her, unless she can be brought freely to Compliance.’

Thus did the Affection of *Allworthy* for his Nephew betray the superior Understanding to be triumphed over by the inferior; and thus is the Prudence of the best of Heads often defeated, by the Tendernefs of the best of Hearts.

Blifil having obtained this unhop'd for Acquiescence in his Uncle, rested not till he carried his Purpose into Execution. And as no immediate Business required Mr. *Allworthy's* Presence in the Country, and little Preparation is necessary to

