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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. II. The generous and grateful Behaviour of Mrs. Miller.

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C H A P. II.

The generous and grateful Behaviour of Mrs. Miller.

MR. *Allworthy* and *Mrs. Miller* were just sat down to Breakfast, when *Blifil*, who had gone out very early that Morning, returned to make one of the Company.

He had not been long seated before he began as follows, ‘ Good Lord! my dear Uncle, what do you think hath happened? I vow I am afraid of telling it you, for fear of shocking you with the Remembrance of ever having shewn any Kindness to such a Villain.’ ‘ What is the Matter, Child, said the Uncle, I fear I have shewn Kindness in my Life to the Unworthy more than once. But Charity doth not adopt the Vices of its Objects.’ ‘ O, Sir, returned *Blifil*, ‘ it is not without the secret Direction of Providence that you mention the Word Adoption. Your adopted Son, Sir, that *Jones*, that Wretch whom you nourished in your Bosom, hath proved one of the greatest Villains upon Earth.’ ‘ By all that’s sacred ’tis false,’ cries *Mrs. Miller*. ‘ *Mr. Jones* is no Villain.’ ‘ He is one of the worthiest Creatures breathing; and if any other Person had called him Villain, I would have thrown all this boiling Water in his Face.’ *Mr. Allworthy* looked very much amazed at this Behaviour. But she did not give him Leave to speak, before turning to him, she cry’d, ‘ I hope you will not be angry with me; I would not offend you, Sir, for the World; but indeed I could not bear

' bear to hear him called so.' ' I must own,
 ' Madam,' said *Allworthy* very gravely, ' I am
 ' a little surprized to hear you so warmly defend
 ' a Fellow you do not know.' ' O I do know
 ' him, Mr. *Allworthy*,' said she, ' indeed I do;
 ' I should be the most ungrateful of all Wretches
 ' if I denied it. O he hath preserved me and
 ' my little Family; we have all Reason to bless
 ' him while we live.—And I pray Heaven to
 ' bless him, and turn the Hearts of his malicious
 ' Enemies. I know, I find, I see he hath such.'
 ' You surprize me, Madam, still more,' said
Allworthy, ' sure you must mean some other.
 ' It is impossible you should have any such Ob-
 ' ligations to the Man my Nephew mentions.'
 ' Too surely,' answered she, ' I have Obligations
 ' to him of the greatest and tenderest Kind.
 ' He hath been the Preserver of me and mine.
 ' —Believe me, Sir, he hath been abused, grossly
 ' abused to you; I know he hath, or you,
 ' whom I know to be all Goodness and Honour,
 ' would not, after the many kind and tender
 ' Things I have heard you say of this poor help-
 ' less Child, have so disdainfully called him Fel-
 ' low. Indeed, my best of Friends, he deserves
 ' a kinder Appellation from you, had you heard
 ' the good, the kind, the grateful Things which
 ' I have heard him utter of you. He never men-
 ' tions your Name but with a sort of Adoration.
 ' In this very Room I have seen him on his Knees,
 ' imploring all the Blessings of Heaven upon your
 ' Head. I do not love that Child there better
 ' than he loves you.'

' I see, Sir, now,' said *Bliss*, ' with one of
 ' those grinning Sneers with which the Devil
 ' marks his best Beloved, Mrs. *Miller* really

‘ doth know him. I suppose you will find she is
 ‘ not the only one of your Acquaintance to
 ‘ whom he hath exposed you. As for my Cha-
 ‘ racter, I perceive by some Hints she hath
 ‘ thrown out, he hath been very free with it,
 ‘ but I forgive him.’ ‘ And the Lord forgive
 ‘ you, Sir,’ says Mrs. *Miller*, ‘ we have all
 ‘ Sins enough to stand in Need of his Forgive-
 ‘ nefs.’

‘ Upon my Word, Mrs. *Miller*,’ said *All-
 worthy*, ‘ I do not take this Behaviour of yours
 ‘ to my Nephew, kindly; and I do assure you
 ‘ as any Reflections which you cast upon him
 ‘ must come only from that wickedest of Men,
 ‘ they would only serve, if that were possible,
 ‘ to heighten my Resentment against him: For
 ‘ I must tell you, Mrs. *Miller*, the young Man
 ‘ who now stands before you, hath ever been
 ‘ the warmest Advocate for the ungrateful Wretch
 ‘ whose Cause you espouse. This, I think, when
 ‘ you hear it from my own Mouth, will make
 ‘ you wonder at so much Baseness and Ingrati-
 ‘ tude.’

‘ You are deceived, Sir,’ answered Mrs. *Mil-
 ler*, ‘ if they were the last Words which were to
 ‘ issue from my Lips, I would say you were de-
 ‘ ceived; and I once more repeat it, the Lord
 ‘ forgive those who have deceived you. I do
 ‘ not pretend to say the young Man is without
 ‘ Faults; but they are all the Faults of Wildness
 ‘ and of Youth; Faults which he may, nay
 ‘ which I am certain he will relinquish, and if
 ‘ he should not, they are vastly over-balanced
 ‘ by one of the most humane tender honest Hearts
 ‘ that ever Man was blest with.’

‘ In-

‘ Indeed, Mrs. *Miller*,’ said *Allworthy*, ‘ had this been related of you, I should not have believed it.’ ‘ Indeed, Sir,’ answered she, ‘ you will believe every Thing I have said, I am sure you will ; and when you have heard the Story which I shall tell you, (for I will tell you all) you will be so far from being offended, that you will own (I know your Justice so well) that I must have been the most despicable and most ungrateful of Wretches, if I had acted any other Part than I have.’

‘ Well, Madam,’ said *Allworthy*, ‘ I shall be very glad to hear any good Excuse for a Behaviour which I must confess, I think wants an Excuse. And now, Madam, will you be pleased to let my Nephew proceed in his Story without Interruption. He would not have introduced a Matter of slight Consequence with such a Preface. Perhaps even this Story will cure you of your Mistake.’

Mrs. *Miller* gave Tokens of Submission, and then Mr. *Bliffl* began thus. ‘ I am sure, Sir, if you don’t think proper to resent the ill Usage of Mrs. *Miller*, I shall easily forgive what affects me only. I think your Goodness hath not deserved this Indignity at her Hands.’ ‘ Well, Child,’ said *Allworthy*, ‘ but what is this new Instance ? What hath he done of late ?’ ‘ What?’ cries *Bliffl*, ‘ notwithstanding all Mrs. *Miller* hath said, I am very sorry to relate, and what you should never have heard from me, had it not been a Matter impossible to conceal from the whole World. In short, he hath killed a Man ; I will not say murdered, — for perhaps it may not be so construed in Law, and I hope the best for his Sake.’

Allworthy looked shocked, and blessed himself; and then turning to *Mrs. Miller*, he cried, 'Well, Madam, what say you now?'

'Why, I say, Sir,' answered she, 'that I never was more concerned at any Thing in my Life; but, if the Fact be true, I am convinced the Man, whoever he is, was in Fault. Heaven knows there are many Villains in this Town, who make it their Business to provoke young Gentlemen. Nothing but the greatest Provocation could have tempted him; for of all the Gentlemen I ever had in my House, I never saw one so gentle, or so sweet-tempered. He was beloved by every one in the House, and every one who came near it.'

While she was thus running on, a violent Knocking at the Door interrupted their Conversation, and prevented her from proceeding further or from receiving any Answer; for as she concluded this was a Visitor to *Mr. Allworthy*, she hastily retired, taking with her her little Girl, whose Eyes were all over blubbered at the melancholy News she heard of *Jones*, who used to call her his little Wife, and not only gave her many Play-things, but spent whole Hours in playing with her himself.

Some Readers may perhaps be pleased with these minute Circumstances, in relating of which we follow the Example of *Plutarch*, one of the best of our Brother Historians; and others to whom they may appear trivial, will, we hope, at least pardon them, as we are never prolix on such Occasions.

C H A P.