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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

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Chap. III. The Arrival of Mrs. Western, with some Matters concerning the Paternal Authority.

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C H A P. III.

The Arrival of Mr. Western, with some Matters concerning the Paternal Authority.

MRS. Miller had not long left the Room, when Mr. Western entered; but not before a small wrangling Bout had pass'd between him and his Chairmen; for the Fellows who had taken up their Burden at the *Hercules Pillars*, had conceived no Hopes of having any future good Customer in the Squire; and they were moreover farther encouraged by his Generosity, (for he had given them of his own Accord Sixpence more than their Fare;) they therefore very boldly demanded another Shilling, which so provoked the Squire, that he not only bestowed many hearty Curses on them at the Door, but retained his Anger after he came into the Room; swearing that all the *Londoners* were like the Court, and thought of nothing but plundering Country Gentlemen. 'D—n me, says he, if I won't walk in the Rain rather than get into one of their Handbarrows again. They have jolied me more in a Mile than Brown Bess would in a long Fox Chace.'

When his Wrath on this Occasion was a little appeas'd, he resumed the same passionate Tone on another. 'There,' says he, 'there is fine Business forwards now. The Hounds have changed at last, and when we imagined we had a Fox to deal with, Od-rat-it, it turns out to be a Badger at last.'

'Pray, my good Neighbour,' said *Allworthy*, 'drop your Metaphors, and speak a little plainer.'

‘Why then,’ says the Squire, ‘to tell you plainly, we have been all this Time afraid of a Son of a Whore of a Bastard of Somebody’s, I don’t know who’s, not I—And now here is a confounded Son of a Whore of a Lord, who may be a Bastard too for what I know or care, for he shall never have a Daughter of mine by my Consent. They have beggared the Nation, but they shall never beggar me. My Land shall never be sent over to *Hannover*.’

‘You surprize me much, my good Friend,’ said *Allworthy*. ‘Why, zounds! I am surprized myself,’ answered the Squire, ‘I went to zee Sister *Western* last Night, according to her own Appointment, and there I was a had into a whole Room-full of Women.—There was my Lady Cousin *Bellafton*, and my Lady *Betty*, and my Lady *Catharine*, and my Lady I don’t know who; d—n me if ever you catch me among such a Kennel of Hoop-petticoat B—s. D—n me, I’d rather be run by my own Dogs, as one *Acton* was, that the Story Book says was turned into a Hare; and his own Dogs kill’d un, and eat un. Od-rabbit-it, no Mortal was ever run in such a manner; if I dodg-ed one Way, one had me, if I offered to clap back, another snap’d me. O! certainly one of the greatest Matches in *England*,’ says one Cousin (here he attempted to mimic them); ‘A very advantageous Offer indeed,’ cries another Cousin, ‘(for you must know they be all my Cousins, thof I never zeed half oum before.) “Surely,” says that fat a—se B—, my Lady *Bellafton*, “Cousin, you must be out of your Wits to think of refusing such an Offer.”

‘Now

‘ Now I begin to understand,’ says *Allworthy*, ‘ some Person hath made Proposals to Miss *Western*, which the Ladies of the Family approve, but is not to your Liking.’

‘ My Liking!’ said *Western*, ‘ how the Devil should it? I tell you it is a Lord, and those are always Volks whom you know I always resolved to have nothing to do with. Did unt I refuse a matter of vorty Years Purchase now for a Bit of Land, which one oom had a Mind to put into a Park, only because I would have no Dealings with Lords, and dost think I would marry my Daughter zu? Besides, ben’t I engaged to you, and did I ever go off any Bargain when I had promised?’

‘ As to that Point, Neighbour,’ said *Allworthy*, ‘ I entirely release you from any Engagement. No Contract can be binding between Parties who have not a full Power to make it at the Time, nor ever afterwards acquire the Power of fulfilling it.’

‘ Slud! then,’ answered *Western*, ‘ I tell you I have Power, and I will fulfil it. Come along with me directly to *Doctors Commons*, I will get a Licence; and I will go to Sister and take away the Wench by Force, and she shall haun, or I will lock her up and keep her upon Bread and Water as long as she lives.’

‘ Mr. *Western*,’ said *Allworthy*, ‘ shall I beg you will hear my full Sentiments on this Matter?’ ‘ Hear thee! ay to be sure, I will,’ answered he. ‘ Why then, Sir,’ cries *Allworthy*, ‘ I can truly say, without a Compliment either to you or the young Lady, that when this Match was proposed, I embraced it very readily and heartily, from my Regard to you both.’

“ An Alliance between two Families so nearly
“ Neighbours, and between whom there had al-
“ ways existed so mutual an Intercourse and good
“ Harmony, I thought a most desirable Event ;
“ and with Regard to the young Lady, not only
“ the concurrent Opinion of all who knew her,
“ but my own Observation assured me that she
“ would be an inestimable Treasure to a good
“ Husband. I shall say nothing of her personal
“ Qualifications, which certainly are admirable ;
“ her Good-nature, her charitable Disposition,
“ her Modesty are too well known to need any
“ Panegyric : But she hath one Quality which
“ existed in a high Degree in that best of Wo-
“ men, who is now one of the first of Angels,
“ which as it is not of a glaring Kind, more
“ commonly escapes Observation ; so little in-
“ deed is it remarked, that I want a Word to
“ express it. I must use Negatives on this Oc-
“ casion. I never heard any thing of Pertness,
“ or what is called Repartee out of her Mouth ;
“ no Pretence to Wit, much less to that Kind
“ of Wisdom, which is the Result only of great
“ Learning and Experience ; the Affectation of
“ which, in a young Woman, is as absurd as
“ any of the Affectations of an Ape. No dic-
“ tatorial Sentiments, no judicial Opinions, no
“ profound Criticisms. Whenever I have seen
“ her in the Company of Men, she hath been
“ all Attention, with the Modesty of a Learner,
“ not the Forwardness of a Teacher. You’ll
“ pardon me for it, but I once, to try her only,
“ desired her Opinion on a Point which was con-
“ troverted between Mr. *Thwackum* and Mr.
“ *Square*. To which she answered with much
“ Sweetness, “ You will pardon me, good Mr.
“ *All-*

“ *Allworthy*, I am sure you cannot in Earnest
 “ think me capable of deciding any Point in
 “ which two such Gentlemen disagree!” *Thwack-*
 “ *kum* and *Square*, who both alike thought them-
 “ selves sure of a favourable Decision, seconded
 “ my Request. She answered with the same
 “ good Humour, “ I must absolutely be excused;
 “ for I will affront neither so much, as to give
 “ my Judgment on his Side.” “ Indeed, she
 “ always shewed the highest Deference to the
 “ Understandings of Men; a Quality absolutely
 “ essential to the making a good Wife. I shall
 “ only add, that as she is most apparently void of
 “ all Affectation, this Deference must be certain-
 “ ly real.”

Here *Bliss* sighed bitterly; upon which *Wes-*
tern, whose Eyes were full of Tears at the Praise
 of *Sophia*, blubbered out, “ Don’t be Chicken-
 “ hearted, for that ha her, d—n me, that ha
 “ her, if she was twenty Times as good.”

“ Remember your Promise, Sir,” cried *All-*
worthy, “ I was not to be interrupted.” “ Well,
 “ that unt,” answered the Squire, “ I won’t speak
 “ another Word.”

“ Now, my good Friend,” continued *Allwor-*
thy, “ I have dwelt so long on the Merit of this
 “ young Lady, partly as I really am in Love
 “ with her Character, and partly that Fortune
 “ (for the Match in that Light is really advanta-
 “ geous on my Nephew’s Side) might not be
 “ imagined to be my principal View in having so
 “ eagerly embraced the Proposal. Indeed I hear-
 “ tily wished to receive so great a Jewel into my
 “ Family; but tho’ I may wish for many good
 “ Things, I would not therefore steal them, or
 “ be guilty of any Violence or Injustice to possess
 “ my-

' myself of them. Now to force a Woman in-
 ' to a Marriage contrary to her Consent or Ap-
 ' probation, is an Act of such Injustice and Op-
 ' pression, that I wish the Laws of our Country
 ' could restrain it; but a good Conscience is ne-
 ' ver lawless in the worst-regulated State, and
 ' will provide those Laws for itself, which the
 ' Neglect of Legislators hath forgotten to supply.
 ' This is surely a Case of that Kind; for is it
 ' not cruel, nay impious, to force a Woman in-
 ' to that State against her Will; for her Beha-
 ' viour in which she is to be accountable to the
 ' highest and most dreadful Court of Judicature,
 ' and to answer at the Peril of her Soul? To
 ' discharge the Matrimonial Duties in an ade-
 ' quate Manner is no easy Task, and shall we
 ' lay this Burthen upon a Woman, while we at
 ' the same Time deprive her of all that Assistance,
 ' which may enable her to undergo it? Shall we
 ' tear her very Heart from her, while we enjoin
 ' her Duties to which a whole Heart is scarce e-
 ' qual. I must speak very plainly here, I think
 ' Parents who act in this Manner are Accessaries
 ' to all the Guilt which their Children after-
 ' wards incur, and of Course must, before a just
 ' Judge, expect to partake of their Punishment;
 ' but if they could avoid this, good Heaven! is
 ' there a Soul who can bear the Thought of hav-
 ' ing contributed to the Damnation of his Child?
 ' For these Reasons, my best Neighbour, as
 ' I see the Inclinations of this young Lady are
 ' most unhappily averse to my Nephew, I must
 ' decline any further Thoughts of the Honour
 ' you intended him, tho' I assure you I shall al-
 ' ways retain the most grateful Sense of it.'

' Well,

‘ Well, Sir,’ said *Western*, (the Froth burst-
 ing forth from his Lips the Moment they were
 uncorked) ‘ you cannot say but I have heard you
 ‘ out, and now I expect you’ll hear me; and if
 ‘ I don’t answer every Word on’t, why then I’ll
 ‘ consent to gee the Matter up. First then I
 ‘ desire you to answer me one Question, Did
 ‘ not I beget her? Did not I beget her? answer
 ‘ me that. They say indeed it is a wise Father
 ‘ that knows his own Child; but I am sure I
 ‘ have the best Title to her, for I bred her up.
 ‘ But I believe you will allow me to be her Fa-
 ‘ ther, and if I be, am I not to govern my own
 ‘ Child? I ask you that, am I not to govern my
 ‘ own Child? And if I am to govern her in o-
 ‘ ther Matters, surely I am to govern her in this
 ‘ which concerns her most. And what am I
 ‘ desiring all this while? Am I desiring her to do
 ‘ any Thing for me? To give me any Thing?—
 ‘ Zu much on t’other Side, that I am only de-
 ‘ siring her to take away half my Estate now,
 ‘ and t’other half when I die. Well, and what
 ‘ is it all vor? Why is unt it to make her hap-
 ‘ py? It’s enough to make one mad to hear
 ‘ Volks talk; if I was going to marry myself,
 ‘ then she would ha Reason to cry and to blub-
 ‘ ber; but, on the contrary, han’t I offered to
 ‘ bind down my Land in such a Manner, that I
 ‘ could not marry if I wou’d, seeing as narro’
 ‘ Woman upon Earth would ha me. What the
 ‘ Devil in Hell can I do more? I contribute to
 ‘ her Damnation!—Zounds! I’d zee all the
 ‘ World d—d bevore her little Vinger should be
 ‘ hurt. Indeed, Mr. *Allworthy*, you must ex-
 ‘ cuse me, but I am surprized to hear you talk
 ‘ in such a Manner, and I must say, take it
 ‘ how

‘ how you will, that I thought you had more
 ‘ Sense.’

Allworthy resenteth this Reflection only with a
 Smile; nor could he, if he would have endeavoured it, have conveyed into that Smile any Mixture of Malice or Contempt. His Smiles at Folly were indeed such as we may suppose the Angels bestow on the Absurdities of Mankind.

Bliss now desired to be permitted to speak a few Words. ‘ As to using any Violence on the
 ‘ young Lady, I am sure I shall never consent to
 ‘ it. My Conscience will not permit me to
 ‘ use Violence on any one, must less on a Lady
 ‘ for whom, however cruel she is to me, I shall
 ‘ always preserve the purest and sincerest Affec-
 ‘ tion; but yet I have read, that Women are
 ‘ seldom proof against Perseverance. Why may
 ‘ I not hope then by such Perseverance at last to
 ‘ gain those Inclinations, in which for the future
 ‘ I shall, perhaps, have no Rival; for as for this
 ‘ Lord, *Mr. Western* is so kind to prefer me to
 ‘ him; and sure, Sir, you will not deny but that
 ‘ a Parent hath at least a negative Voice in these
 ‘ Matters; nay, I have heard this very young
 ‘ Lady herself say so more than once, and de-
 ‘ clare, that she thought Children inexcusable
 ‘ who married in direct Opposition to the Will
 ‘ of their Parents. Besides, though the other
 ‘ Ladies of the Family seem to favour the Pre-
 ‘ tensions of my Lord, I do not find the Lady
 ‘ herself is inclined to give him any Counte-
 ‘ nance; alas! I am too well assured she is not;
 ‘ I am too sensible that wickedest of Men re-
 ‘ mains uppermost in her Heart.’

‘ Ay, ay, so he does,’ cries *Western*.

‘ But

‘ But surely,’ says *Blifil*, ‘ when she hears of this Murder which he hath committed, if the Law should spare his Life’—

‘ What’s that?’ cries *Western*, ‘ Murder! hath he committed a Murder, and is there any Hopes of seeing him hanged?—Tol de rol, tel lol de rol.’ Here he fell a singing and capering about the Room.

‘ Child,’ says *Allworthy*, ‘ this unhappy Passion of yours distresses me beyond Measure. I heartily pity you, and would do every fair Thing to promote your Success.’

‘ I desire no more,’ cries *Blifil*, ‘ I am convinced my dear Uncle hath a better Opinion of me than to think that I myself wou’d accept of more.’

‘ Lookeec,’ says *Allworthy*, ‘ you have my Leave to write, to visit, if she will permit it, —but I insist on no Thoughts of Violence. I will have no Confinement, nothing of that Kind attempted.’

‘ Well, well,’ cries the Squire, ‘ nothing of that Kind shall be attempted; we will try a little longer what fair Means will effect; and if this Fellow be but hanged out of the Way —Tol lol de rol. I never heard better News in my Life; I warrant every Thing goes to my Mind.—Do, prithee, dear *Allworthy*, come and dine with me at the *Hercules Pillars*: I have bespoke a Shoulder of Mutton roasted, and a Spare-rib of Pork, and a Fowl and Egg-Sauce. There will be Nobody but ourselves, unless we have a Mind to have the Landlord; for I have sent Parson *Supple* down to *Basingstoke* after my Tobacco Box, which I left at an Inn there, and I would not lose it for the
‘ World;

World; for it is an old Acquaintance of above
Twenty Years standing. I can tell you Land-
lord is a vast comical Bitch, you will like un-
hugely.

Mr. *Allworthy* at last agreed to this Invitation,
and soon after the Squire went off, singing and
capering at the Hopes of seeing the speedy tragi-
cal End of poor *Jones*.

When he was gone, Mr. *Allworthy* resumed
the aforefaid Subject with much Gravity. He
told his Nephew, ' he wished with all his Heart
' he would endeavour to conquer a Passion, in
' which I cannot,' says he, ' flatter you with
' any Hopes of succeeding. It is certainly a vul-
' gar Error, that Aversion in a Woman may be
' conquered by Perseverance. Indifference may,
' perhaps, sometimes yield to it; but the usual
' Triumphs gained by Perseverance in a Lover.
' are over Caprice, Prudence, Affectation, and
' often an exorbitant Degree of Levity, which
' excites Women not over warm in their Con-
' stitutions, to indulge their Vanity by prolong-
' ing the Time of Courtship, even when they
' are well-enough pleased with the Object, and
' resolve (if they ever resolve at all) to make him
' a very pitiful Amends in the End. But a fixed
' Dislike, as I am afraid this is, will rather gain
' other Strength, than be conquered by Time.
' Besides, my Dear, I have another Apprehen-
' sion which you must excuse. I am afraid this
' Passion which you have for this fine young
' Creature, hath her beautiful Person too much
' for its Object, and is unworthy of the Name
' of that Love, which is the only Foundation of
' matrimonial Felicity. To admire, to like, and
' to long for the Possession of a beautiful Wo-
' man,