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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. V. Mrs. Miller and Mr. Nightingale visit Jones in the Prison.

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little Ease for herself, and, at least, put off the evil Day. And now we have seen our Heroine in a better Situation than she hath been for a long Time before, we will look a little after Mr. *Jones*, whom we left in the most deplorable Situation that can well be imagined.

C H A P. V.

Mrs. Miller and Mr. Nightingale visit Jones in the Prison.

WHEN Mr. *Allworthy* and his Nephew went to meet Mr. *Western*, Mrs. *Miller* set forwards to her Son-in-law's Lodgings, in order to acquaint him with the Accident which had befallen his Friend *Jones*; but he had known it long before from *Partridge*, (for *Jones*, when he left Mrs. *Miller*, had been furnished with a Room in the same House with Mr. *Nightingale*.) The good Woman found her Daughter under great Affliction on Account of Mr. *Jones*, whom having comforted as well as she could, she set forwards to the *Gate-house*, where she heard he was, and where Mr. *Nightingale* was arrived before her.

The Firmness and Constancy of a true Friend is a Circumstance so extremely delightful to Persons in any Kind of Distress, that the Distress itself, if it be only temporary, and admits of Relief, is more than compensated by bringing this Comfort with it. Nor are Instances of this Kind so rare, as some superficial and inaccurate Observers have reported. To say the Truth, Want of Compassion is not to be numbered among our general Faults. The black Ingredient which souls

our Disposition is Envy. Hence our Eye is seldom, I am afraid, turned upward to those who are manifestly greater, better, wiser, or happier than ourselves, without some Degree of Malignity; while we commonly look downwards on the Mean and Miserable, with sufficient Benevolence and Pity. In Fact, I have remarked, that most of the Defects which have discovered themselves in the Friendships within my Observation, have arisen from Envy only; a hellish Vice; and yet one from which I have known very few absolutely exempt. But enough of a Subject which, if pursued, would lead me too far.

Whether it was that Fortune was apprehensive lest *Jones* should sink under the Weight of his Adversity, and that she might thus lose any future Opportunity of tormenting him; or whether she really abated somewhat of her Severity towards him, she seemed a little to relax her Persecution, by sending him the Company of two such faithful Friends, and what is perhaps more rare, a faithful Servant. For *Partridge*, though he had many Imperfections, wanted not Fidelity; and though Fear would not suffer him to be hanged for his Master, yet the World, I believe, could not have bribed him to desert his Cause.

While *Jones* was expressing great Satisfaction in the Presence of his Friends, *Partridge* brought an Account, that Mr. *Fitzpatrick* was still alive, though the Surgeon declared that he had very little Hopes. Upon which *Jones* fetching a deep Sigh, *Nightingale* said to him; ‘ My dear *Tom*,
 ‘ why should you afflict yourself so upon an Ac-
 ‘ cident, which, whatever be the Consequence,
 ‘ can be attended with no Danger to you, and

'in which your Conscience cannot accuse you
 'of having been in the least to blame. If the
 'Fellow should die, what have you done more
 'than taken away the Life of a Ruffian in your
 'own Defence? So will the Coroner's Inquest
 'certainly find it; and then you will be easily
 'admitted to Bail: And though you must un-
 'dergo the Form of a Trial, yet it is a Trial
 'which many Men would stand for you for a
 'Shilling.' 'Come, come, Mr. Jones,' says
 Mrs. Miller, 'cheer yourself up. I knew you
 'could not be the Aggressor, and so I told Mr.
 'Allworthy, and so he shall acknowledge too be-
 'fore I have done with him.'

Jones gravely answered, 'That whatever might
 'be his Fate, he should always lament the hav-
 'ing shed the Blood of one of his Fellow-crea-
 'tures, as one of the highest Misfortunes which
 'could have befallen him. But I have another
 'Misfortune of the tenderest Kind.—O! Mrs.
 'Miller, I have lost what I held most dear up-
 'on Earth.' 'That must be a Mistress,' said
 Mrs. Miller, 'But come, come; I know more
 'than you imagine;' (for indeed Partridge had
 'blabbed all) 'and I have heard more than you
 'know. Matters go better, I promise you, than
 'you think; and I would not give Bliffl Six-
 'pence for all the Chance which he hath of the
 'Lady.'

'Indeed, my dear Friend, indeed,' answered
 Jones, 'you are an entire Stranger to the Cause
 'of my Grief. If you was acquainted with the
 'Story, you would allow my Case admitted of
 'no Comfort. I apprehend no Danger from
 'Bliffl. I have undone myself.' 'Don't de-
 'spair,' replied Mrs. Miller; 'you know not
 'what

‘ what a Woman can do, and if any Thing be
 ‘ in my Power, I promise you I will do it to
 ‘ serve you. It is my Duty. My Son, my dear
 ‘ Mr. *Nightingale*, who is so kind to tell me he
 ‘ hath Obligations to you on the same Account,
 ‘ knows it is my Duty. Shall I go to the Lady
 ‘ myself? I will say any Thing to her you would
 ‘ have me say.’

‘ Thou best of Women,’ cries *Jones*, taking
 her by the Hand; ‘ talk not of Obligations to
 ‘ me;—but, as you have been so kind to men-
 ‘ tion it, there is a Favour which, perhaps, may
 ‘ be in your Power. I see you are acquainted
 ‘ with the Lady (how you came by your In-
 ‘ formation I know not) who sits indeed very
 ‘ near my Heart. If you could contrive to de-
 ‘ liver this, (giving her a Paper from his Pocket)
 ‘ I shall for ever acknowledge your Goodness.’

‘ Give it me,’ said Mrs. *Miller*. ‘ If I see
 ‘ it not in her own Possession before I sleep, may
 ‘ my next Sleep be my last. Comfort yourself,
 ‘ my good young Man; be wise enough to take
 ‘ Warning from past Follies, and I warrant all
 ‘ shall be well, and I shall yet see you happy
 ‘ with the most charming young Lady in the
 ‘ World; for so I hear from every one she is.’
 ‘ Believe me, Madam,’ said he, ‘ I do not
 ‘ speak the common Cant of one in my unhappy
 ‘ Situation. Before this dreadful Accident hap-
 ‘ pened, I had resolved to quit a Life of which
 ‘ I was become sensible of the Wickedness as
 ‘ well as Folly. I do assure you notwithstanding
 ‘ the Disturbances I have unfortunately oc-
 ‘ casioned in your House, for which I heartily
 ‘ ask your Pardon, I am not an abandoned Pro-
 ‘ fligate. Though I have been hurried into Vices

‘ I do not approve a vicious Character ; nor will
 ‘ I ever, from this Moment, deserve it.’

Mrs. *Miller* expressed great Satisfaction in these Declarations, in the Sincerity of which she averred she had an entire Faith : And now, the Remainder of the Conversation past in the joint Attempts of that good Woman and Mr. *Nightingale*, to cheer the dejected Spirits of Mr. *Jenes*, in which they so far succeeded, as to leave him much better comforted and satisfied than they found him ; to which happy Alteration nothing so much contributed as the kind Undertaking of Mrs. *Miller*, to deliver his Letter to *Sophia*, which he despaired of finding any Means to accomplish : For when *Black George* produced the last from *Sophia*, he informed *Partridge*, that she had strictly charged him, on Pain of having it communicated to her Father, not to bring her any Answer. He was moreover not a little pleased, to find he had so warm an Advocate to Mr. *Alworthy* himself in this good Woman, who was in Reality, one of the worthiest Creatures in the World.

After about an Hour’s Visit from the Lady, (for *Nightingale* had been with him much longer) they both took their Leave, promising to return to him soon ; during which Mrs. *Miller* said, she hoped to bring him some good News from his Mistress, and Mr. *Nightingale* promised to enquire into the State of Mr. *Fitzpatrick*’s Wound, and likewise to find out some of the Persons who were present at the Rencounter.

The former of these went directly in Quest of *Sophia*, whither we likewise shall now attend her.