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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. II. Containing a very tragical Incident.

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most solemnly declare they were not pointed at thee or them. I question not but thou hast been told, among other Stories of me, that thou wast to travel with a very scurrilous Fellow: But whoever told thee so, did me an Injury. No Man detests and despises Scurrility more than myself; nor hath any Man more Reason; for none hath ever been treated with more: And what is a very severe Fate, I have had some of the abusive Writings of those very Men fathered upon me, who in other of their Works have abused me themselves with the utmost Virulence.

All these Works, however, I am well convinced, will be dead long before this Page shall offer itself to thy Perusal: For however short the Period may be of my own Performances, they will most probably outlive their own infirm Author, and the weakly Productions of his abusive Cotemporaries.

C H A P. II.

Containing a very tragical Incident.

WHILE *Jones* was employed in those unpleasant Meditations, with which we left him tormenting himself, *Partridge* came stumbling into the Room with his Face paler than Ashes, his Eyes fixed in his Head, his Hair standing an End, and every Limb trembling. In short, he looked as he would have done had he seen a Spectre, or had he indeed been a Spectre himself.

Jones, who was little subject to Fear, could not avoid being somewhat shocked at this sudden Appearance. He did indeed himself change Co-

lour, and his Voice a little faltered, while he asked him what was the Matter.

I hope, Sir, said *Partridge*, ' you will not be angry with me. Indeed I did not listen, but I was obliged to stay in the outward Room. I am sure I wish I had been a hundred Miles off, rather than have heard what I have heard.' ' Why what is the Matter?' said *Jones*. ' The Matter, Sir? O good Heaven!' answered *Partridge*, ' was that Woman who is just gone out, the Woman who was with you at *Upton*?' ' She was, *Partridge*,' cries *Jones*. ' And did you really, Sir, go to Bed with that Woman?' said he trembling—' I am afraid what past between us, is no Secret,' said *Jones*.—' Nay, but pray, Sir, for Heaven's Sake, Sir, answer me,' cries *Partridge*. ' You know I did,' cries *Jones*.—' Why then the Lord have Mercy upon your Soul, and forgive you,' cries *Partridge*; ' but as sure as I stand here alive, you have been a Bed with your own Mother.'

Upon these Words, *Jones* became in a Moment a greater Picture of Horror than *Partridge* himself. He was indeed, for some Time, struck dumb with Amazement, and both stood staring wildly at each other. At last his Words found Way, and in an interrupted Voice he said.—' How! how! What's this you tell me?' ' Nay, Sir,' cries *Partridge*, ' I have not Breath enough left to tell you now—but what I have said is most certainly true—That Woman who now went out is your own Mother. How unlucky was it for you, Sir, that I did not happen to see her at that Time, to have prevented it? Sure the Devil himself must have contrived to bring about this Wickedness.'

‘ Sure,’ cries *Jones*, ‘ Fortune will never have done with me, ’till she hath driven me to Distraction. But why do I blame Fortune? I am myself the Cause of all my Misery. All the dreadful Mischiefs which have befallen me, are the Consequences only of my own Folly and Vice. What thou hast told me, *Partridge*, hath almost deprived me of my Senses. And was Mrs. *Waters* then——But why do I ask? for thou must certainly know her.——If thou hast any Affection for me; nay, if thou hast any Pity, let me beseech thee to fetch this miserable Woman back again to me. O good Heavens! Incest—with a Mother! To what am I reserved?’ He then fell into the most violent and frantic Agonies of Grief and Despair, in which *Partridge* declared he would not leave him: But at last having vented the first Torrent of Passion, he came a little to himself; and then having acquainted *Partridge* that he would find this wretched Woman in the same House where the wounded Gentleman was lodged, he dispatched him in quest of her.

If the Reader will please to refresh his Memory, by turning to the Scene at *Upton* in the Ninth Book, he will be apt to admire the many strange Accidents which unfortunately prevented any Interview between *Partridge* and Mrs. *Waters*, when she spent a whole Day there with Mr. *Jones*. Instances of this Kind we may frequently observe in Life, where the greatest Events are produced by a nice Train of little Circumstances; and more than one Example of this may be discovered by the accurate Eye, in this our History.

After a fruitless Search of two or three Hours, *Partridge* returned back to his Master, without having

having seen Mrs. *Waters*. *Jones*, who was in a State of Desperation at his Delay, was almost raving mad when he brought him this Account. He was not long however in this Condition, before he received the following Letter.

‘ Sir,

‘ SINCE I left you, I have seen a Gentleman, from whom I have learnt something concerning you which greatly surprizes and affects me; but as I have not at present Leisure to communicate a Matter of such high Importance, you must suspend your Curiosity till our next Meeting, which shall be the first Moment I am able to see you. O Mr. *Jones*, little did I think, when I past that happy Day at *Upton*, the Reflection upon which is like to embitter all my future Life, who it was to whom I owed such perfect Happiness. Believe me to be ever sincerely your unfortunate

‘ *J. Waters.*

‘ P. S. ‘ I would have you comfort yourself as much as possible; for Mr. *Fitzpatrick* is in no Manner of Danger; so that whatever other grievous Crimes you may have to repent of, the Guilt of Blood is not among the Number.’

Jones having received the Letter, let it drop (for he was unable to hold it, and indeed had scarce the Use of any one of his Faculties) *Partridge* took it up, and having received Consent by Silence, read it likewise; nor had it upon him a less sensible Effect. The Pencil, and not the Pen, should describe the Horrors which appeared in

in both their Countenances, While they both remained speechless, the Turnkey entered the Room, and without taking any Notice of what sufficiently discovered itself in the Faces of them both, acquainted *Jones* that a Man without desired to speak with him. This Person was presently introduced, and was no other than Black *George*.

As Sights of Horror were not so usual to *George* as they were to the Turnkey, he instantly saw the great Disorder which appeared in the Face of *Jones*. This he imputed to the Accident that had happened, which was reported in the very worst Light in Mr. *Western's* Family; he concluded therefore that the Gentleman was dead, and that Mr. *Jones* was in a fair Way of coming to a shameful End. A Thought which gave him much Uneasiness; for *George* was of a compassionate Disposition, and notwithstanding a small Breach of Friendship which he had been overtempted to commit, was, in the main, not insensible of the Obligations he had formerly received from Mr. *Jones*.

The poor Fellow therefore scarce refrained from a Tear at the present Sight. He told *Jones* he was heartily sorry for his Misfortunes, and begged him to consider, if he could be of any Manner of Service. 'Perhaps, Sir,' said he, 'you may want a little Matter of Money upon this Occasion; if you do, Sir, what little I have is heartily at your Service.'

Jones shook him very heartily by the Hand, and gave him many Thanks for the kind Offer he had made; but answered, 'He had not the least Want of that Kind.' Upon which *George* began to press his Services more eagerly than before.

fore. *Jones* again thanked him, with Assurances that he wanted nothing which was in the Power of any Man living to give. ‘Come, come, my good Master, answered *George*, do not take the Matter so much to Heart. Things may end better than you imagine; to be sure you want the first Gentleman who hath killed a Man, and yet come off.’ ‘You are wide of the Matter, *George*,’ said *Partridge*, ‘the Gentleman is not dead, nor like to die. Don’t disturb my Master, at present, for he is troubled about a Matter in which it is not in your Power to do him any good.’ You don’t know what I may be able to do, Mr. *Partridge*,’ answered *George*, ‘if his Concern is about my young Lady, I have some News to tell my Master.—’ ‘What do you say, Mr. *George*?’ cry’d *Jones*, ‘Hath any thing lately happened in which my *Sophia* is concerned? My *Sophia*! How dares such a Wretch as I mention her so prophanely.’ — ‘I hope she will be yours yet,’ answered *George*. — ‘Why, yes, Sir, I have something to tell you about her. Madam *Western* hath just brought Madam *Sophia* home, and there hath been a terrible to do. I could not possibly learn the very Right of it; but my Master he hath been in a vast big Passion, and so was Madam *Western*, and I heard her say as she went out of Doors into her Chair, that she would never set her Foot in Master’s House again. I don’t know what’s the Matter, not I, but every thing was very quiet when I came out; but *Robin*, who waited at Supper, said he had never seen the Squire for a long while in such good Humour with young Madam; that he kiss’d her several Times, and swore she should

' should be her own Mistress, and he never would
 ' think of confining her any more. I thought
 ' this News would please you, and so I slipp'd
 ' out, though it was so late, to inform you of it.'
 Mr. *Jones* assured *George* that it did greatly please
 him; for though he should never more presume
 to lift his Eyes towards that incomparable Crea-
 ture, nothing could so much relieve his Misery
 as the Satisfaction he should always have, in hear-
 ing of her Welfare.

The rest of the Conversation which pass'd at
 the Visit, is not important enough to be here re-
 lated. The Reader will therefore forgive us this
 abrupt breaking off, and be pleas'd to hear how
 this great good Will of the Squire towards his
 Daughter was brought about.

Mrs. *Western*, on her first Arrival at her Bro-
 ther's Lodging, began to set forth the great Ho-
 nours and Advantages which would accrue to the
 Family by the Match with Lord *Fellamar*, which
 her Niece had absolutely refused; in which Re-
 fusal, when the Squire took the Part of his
 Daughter, she fell immediately into the most
 violent Passion, and so irritated and provoked the
 Squire, that neither his Patience nor his Prudence
 could bear it any longer; upon which there ensued
 between them both so warm a Bout at Alterca-
 tion, that perhaps the Regions of *Billinggate* ne-
 ver equalled it. In the Heat of this Scolding Mrs.
Western departed, and had consequently no Lei-
 sure to acquaint her Brother with the Letter
 which *Sophia* received, which might have pos-
 sibly produced ill Effects; but to say Truth I
 believe it never once occurred to her Memory at
 this Time.

When