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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. IV. Containing two Letters in very different Stiles.

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C H A P. IV.

Containing two Letters in very different Stiles.

“ *My worthy Friend,*

“ I Informed you in my last, that I was for-
 “ bidden the Use of the Waters, as they
 “ were found by Experience rather to encrease
 “ than lessen the Symptoms of my Distemper.
 “ I must now acquaint you with a Piece of
 “ News, which, I believe, will afflict my Friends
 “ more than it hath afflicted me. *Dr. Harring-*
 “ *ton* and *Dr. Brewster* have informed me,
 “ that there is no Hopes of my Recovery.

“ I have somewhere read, that the great Use
 “ of Philosophy is to learn to die. I will not
 “ therefore so far disgrace mine, as to shew any
 “ Surprize at receiving a Lesson which I must
 “ be thought to have so long studied. Yet, to
 “ say the Truth, one Page of the Gospel teaches
 “ this Lesson better than all the Volumes of an-
 “ tient or modern Philosophers. The Assurance
 “ it gives us of another Life is a much stronger
 “ Support to a good Mind, than all the Conso-
 “ lations that are drawn from the Necessity of
 “ Nature, the Emptiness or Satiety of our En-
 “ joyments here, or any other Topic of those
 “ Declamations which are sometimes capable of
 “ arming our Minds with a stubborn Patience in
 “ bearing the Thoughts of Death; but never of
 “ raising them to a real Contempt of it, and
 “ much less of making us think it is a real Good.
 “ I would not here be understood to throw the
 “ horrid Censure of Atheism, or even the abso-
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" lute Denial of Immortality, on all who are
 " called Philosophers. Many of that Sect, as
 " well antient as modern, have, from the Light
 " of Reason, discovered some Hopes of a future
 " State; but, in Reality, that Light was so faint
 " and glimmering, and the Hopes were so in-
 " certain and precarious, that it may be justly
 " doubted on which Side their Belief turned.
 " *Plato* himself concludes his *Phædon* with de-
 " claring, that his best Arguments amount only
 " to raise a Probability; and *Cicero* himself seems
 " rather to profess an Inclination to believe, than
 " any actual Belief in the Doctrines of Immor-
 " tality. As to myself, to be very sincere with
 " you, I never was much in earnest in this
 " Faith, till I was in earnest a Christian.

" You will perhaps wonder at the latter Ex-
 " pression; but I assure you it hath not been till
 " very lately, that I could, with Truth, call
 " myself so. The Pride of Philosophy had in-
 " toxicated my Reason, and the sublimest of all
 " Wisdom appeared to me, as it did to the
 " *Greeks* of old, to be Foolishness. God hath
 " however been so gracious to shew me my Er-
 " ror in Time, and to bring me into the Way
 " of Truth, before I sunk into utter Darknes
 " for ever.

" I find myself beginning to grow weak, I
 " shall therefore hasten to the main Purpose of
 " this Letter.

" When I reflect on the Actions of my past
 " Life, I know of nothing which sits heavier
 " upon my Conscience, than the Injustice I have
 " been guilty of to that poor Wretch, your a-
 " dopted Son. I have indeed not only connived

" at

“ at the Villainy of others, but been myself ac-
 “ tive in Injustice towards him. Believe me, my
 “ dear Friend, when I tell you on the Word of
 “ a dying Man, he hath been basely injured.
 “ As to the principal Fact, upon the Misrepre-
 “ sentation of which you discarded him, I so-
 “ lemnly assure you he is innocent. When you
 “ lay upon your supposed Death-bed, he was
 “ the only Person in the House who testified any
 “ real Concern; and what happened afterwards
 “ arose from the Wildness of his Joy on your
 “ Recovery; and, I am sorry to say it, from
 “ the Baseness of another Person (but it is my
 “ Desire to justify the Innocent, and to ac-
 “ cuse none.) Believe me, my Friend, this
 “ young Man hath the noblest Generosity of
 “ Heart, the most perfect Capacity for Friend-
 “ ship, the highest Integrity, and indeed eve-
 “ ry Virtue which can enoble a Man. He
 “ hath some Faults, but among them is not
 “ to be numbred the least Want of Duty or
 “ Gratitude towards you. On the contrary,
 “ I am satisfied when you dismissed him from
 “ your House, his Heart bled for you more than
 “ for himself.

“ Worldly Motives were the wicked and base
 “ Reasons of my concealing this from you so
 “ long; to reveal it now I can have no Induce-
 “ ment but the Desire of serving the Cause of
 “ Truth, of doing Right to the Innocent, and of
 “ making all the Amends in my Power for a
 “ past Offence. I hope this Declaration there-
 “ fore will have the Effect desired, and will re-
 “ store this deserving young Man to your Fa-
 “ vour; the hearing of which, while I am yet
 “ alive,

“ alive, will afford the utmost Consolation

“ to,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obliged,

“ Obedient humble Servant,

“ Thomas Square.”

The Reader will, after this, scarce wonder at the Revolution so visibly appearing in Mr. *Allworthy*, notwithstanding he received from *Thwackum*, by the same Post, another Letter of a very different Kind, which we shall here add, as it may possibly be the last Time we shall have Occasion to mention the Name of that Gentleman.

“ Sir,

“ I am not at all surprized at hearing from your
 “ worthy Nephew a fresh Instance of the Villainy
 “ of Mr. *Square* the Atheist’s young Pupil. I shall
 “ not wonder at any Murders he may commit ;
 “ and I heartily pray that your own Blood may
 “ not seal up his final Commitment to the Place
 “ of Wailing and Gnashing of Teeth.

“ Though you cannot want sufficient Calls to
 “ Repentance for the many unwarrantable Weak-
 “ nesses exemplified in your Behaviour to this
 “ Wretch, so much to the Prejudice of your own
 “ lawful Family, and of your Character. I say,
 “ tho’ these may sufficiently be supposed to prick
 “ and goad your Conscience at this Season ; I
 “ should yet be wanting to my Duty, if I spared
 “ to give you some Admonition, in order to bring
 “ you

' you to a due Sense of your Errors. I there-
 ' fore pray you seriously to consider the Judg-
 ' ment which is likely to overtake this wicked
 ' Villain; and let it serve at least as a Warning
 ' to you, that you may not for the future despise
 ' the Advice of one who is so indefatigable in his
 ' Prayers for your Welfare.

' Had not my Hand been with-held from due
 ' Correction, I had scourged much of this diabo-
 ' lical Spirit out of a Boy, of whom from his
 ' Infancy I discovered the Devil had taken such
 ' entire Possession; but Reflections of this Kind
 ' now come too late.

' I am sorry you have given away the Living
 ' of *Westerton* so hastily. I should have applied
 ' on that Occasion earlier, had I thought you
 ' would not have acquainted me previous to the
 ' Disposition. — Your Objection to Pluralities
 ' is being righteous over-much. If there were
 ' any Crime in the Practice, so many godly Men
 ' would not agree to it. If the Vicar of *Alder-*
 ' *grove* should die (as we hear he is in a declin-
 ' ing Way) I hope you will think of me, since I
 ' am certain you must be convinced of my most
 ' sincere Attachment to your highest Welfare.

' A Welfare to which all worldly Considerations
 ' are as trifling as the small Tithes mentioned in
 ' Scripture are, when compared to the weighty
 ' Matters of the Law.

' I am, Sir,
 ' Your faithful humble Servant,
 ' Roger Thwackum.'

This was the first Time *Thwackum* ever wrote
 in this authoritative Stile to *Allworthy*, and of this
 he had afterwards sufficient Reason to repent, as