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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. VIII. A dreadful Alarm in the Inn, with the Arrival of an unexpected Friend of Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

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‘not a Fool?’ ‘That,’ answered the other, ‘is too general a Negative; but none, I believe, is so likely as a Fool to prove so. Among my Acquaintance, the silliest Fellows are the worst Husbands; and I will venture to assert, as a Fact, that a Man of Sense rarely behaves very ill to a Wife, who deserves very well.’

C H A P. VIII.

A dreadful Alarm in the Inn, with the Arrival of an unexpected Friend of Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

SOPHIA now, at the Desire of her Cousin, related—not what follows, but what hath gone before in this History: For which Reason the Reader will, I suppose, excuse me, for not repeating it over again.

One Remark, however, I cannot forbear making on her Narrative, namely, that she made no more mention of *Jones*, from the Beginning to the End, than if there had been no such Person alive. This I will neither endeavour to account for, nor to excuse. Indeed, if this may be called a Kind of Dishonesty, it seems the more inexcusable, from the apparent Openness and explicit Sincerity of the other Lady.—But so it was.

Just as *Sophia* arrived at the Conclusion of her Story, there arrived in the Room where the two Ladies were sitting, a Noise, not unlike, in Loudness, to that of a Pack of Hounds just let out from their Kennel; nor, in Shrillness, to Cats, when caterwauling; or, to Screech-Owls; or, indeed, more like (for what Animal can resemble a human Voice?) to those Sounds, which, in the pleasant Mansions of that Gate, which seems to
derive

derive its Name from a Duplicity of Tongues, issue from the Mouths, and sometimes from the Nostrils of those fair River Nymphs, clyped of old the *Naiades*; in the vulgar Tongue translated Oyster-Wenches: For when, instead of the antient Libations of Milk and Honey and Oil, the rich Distillation from the Juniper-Berry, or perhaps, from Malt, hath, by the early Devotion of their Votaries, been poured forth in great Abundance, should any daring Tongue with unhallowed License prophane; *i. e.* depreciate the delicate fat *Milton* Oyster, the Plaice sound and firm, the Flounder as much alive as when in the Water, the Shrimp as big as a Prawn, the fine Cod alive but a few Hours ago, or any other of the various Treasures, which those Water-Deities, who fish the Sea and Rivers, have committed to the Care of the Nymphs, the angry *Naiades* lift up their immortal Voices, and the prophane Wretch is struck deaf for his Impiety.

Such was the Noise, which now burst from one of the Rooms below; and soon the Thunder, which long had rattled at a Distance, began to approach nearer and nearer, 'till, having ascended by Degrees up Stairs, it at last entered the Apartment where the Ladies were. In short, to drop all Metaphor and Figure, Mrs. Honour having scolded violently below Stairs, and continued the same all the Way up, came in to her Mistress in a most outrageous Passion, crying out, 'What doth your Ladyship think? Would you imagine, that this impudent Villain, the Master of this House, hath had the Impudence to tell me, nay, to stand it out to my Face, that your Ladyship is that nasty, stinking Wh—re,

(Jenny

Ch. 8. a FOUNDLING. III

‘ (*Jenny Cameron* they call her) that runs about
 ‘ the Country with the Pretender? Nay, the
 ‘ lying, saucy Villain, had the Assurance to tell
 ‘ me, that your Ladyship had owned yourself to
 ‘ be so: But I have clawed the Rascal; I have
 ‘ left the Marks of my Nails in his impudent
 ‘ Face. My Lady!’ says I, ‘ you saucy Scound-
 ‘ rel: My Lady is Meat for no Pretenders.
 ‘ She is a young Lady of as good Fashion, and
 ‘ Family, and Fortune, as any in *Somerſetſhire*.
 ‘ Did you never hear of the great Squire *Western*,
 ‘ Sirrah? She is his only Daughter; she is,—
 ‘ and Heireſs to all his great Eſtate. My Lady
 ‘ to be called a naſty *Scotch Wh—re* by ſuch a
 ‘ Varlet—To be ſure, I wiſh I had knocked
 ‘ his Brains out with the Punch-bowl.

The principal Uneaſineſs with which *Sophia*
 was affected on this Occaſion, *Honour* had her-
 ſelf cauſed, by having in her Paſſion diſcovered
 who ſhe was. However, as this Miſtake of the
 Landlord ſufficiently accounted for thoſe Paſſages
 which *Sophia* had before miſtaken, ſhe acquired
 ſome Eaſe on that Account; nor could ſhe, upon
 the whole, forbear ſmiling. This enraged *Ho-
 nour*, and ſhe cried, ‘ Indeed, Madam, I did not
 ‘ think your Ladyſhip would have made a laugh-
 ‘ ing Matter of it. To be called Whore by ſuch
 ‘ an impudent low Rascal. Your Ladyſhip may
 ‘ be angry with me, for ought I know, for tak-
 ‘ ing your Part, ſince proffered Service, they ſay,
 ‘ ſtinks; but to be ſure I could never bear to hear
 ‘ a Lady of mine called Whore.—Nor will I
 ‘ bear it. I am ſure your Ladyſhip is as virtuous
 ‘ a Lady as ever ſat Foot on *Engliſh* Ground,
 ‘ and I will claw any Villain’s Eyes out who
 ‘ dares for to offer to preſume for to ſay the leaſt

‘ Word to the contrary. No body ever could
 ‘ say the least ill of the Character of any Lady
 ‘ that ever I waited upon.’

Hinc illæ Lachrymæ; in plain Truth, *Honour* had as much Love for her Mistress as most Servants have, that is to say—But besides this, her Pride obliged her to support the Character of the Lady she waited on; for she thought her own was in a very close Manner connected with it. In Proportion as the Character of her Mistress was raised, hers likewise, as she conceived, was raised with it; and, on the contrary, she thought the one could not be lowered without the other.

On this Subject, Reader, I must stop a Moment to tell thee a Story. ‘ The famous *Nell Gwynn*, stepping one Day from a House where she had made a short Visit into her Coach, saw a great Mob assembled, and her Footman all bloody and dirty; the Fellow being asked by his Mistress, the Reason of his being in that Condition, answered, ‘ I have been fighting, Madam, with an impudent Rascal who called your Ladyship a Wh—re. ‘ You Blockhead,’ replied Mrs. *Gwynn*, ‘ at this Rate you must fight every Day of your Life; why, you Fool, all the World knows it.’ ‘ Do they?’ cries the Fellow, in a muttering Voice, after he had shut the Coach Door, ‘ they shan’t call me a Whore’s Footman for all that.’

Thus the Passion of Mrs. *Honour* appears natural enough, even if it were to be no otherwise accounted for; but, in reality, there was another Cause of her Anger; for which we must beg Leave to remind our Reader of a Circumstance mentioned in the above Simile. There

Ch. 8. a FOUNDLING. 113

are indeed certain Liquors, which being applied to our Passions, or to Fire, produce Effects the very Reverse of those produced by Water, as they serve to kindle and inflame, rather than to extinguish. Among these, the generous Liquor called Punch is one. It was not therefore without Reason, that the learned Dr. *Cheney* used to call drinking Punch, pouring liquid Fire down your Throat.

Now Mrs. *Honour* had unluckily poured so much of this liquid Fire down her Throat, that the Smoke of it began to ascend into her Pericranium, and blinded the Eyes of Reason which is there supposed to keep her Residence, while the Fire itself from the Stomach easily reached the Heart, and there inflamed the noble Passion of Pride. So that upon the whole, we shall cease to wonder at the violent Rage of the Waiting-woman; tho' at first sight we must confess the Cause seems inadequate to the Effect.

Sophia, and her Cousin both, did all in their Power to extinguish these Flames which had roared so loudly all over the House. They at length prevailed; or, to carry the Metaphor one Step farther, the Fire having consumed all the Fuel which the Language affords, to wit, every reproachful Term in it, at last went out of its own Accord.

But tho' Tranquillity was restored above Stairs, it was not so below; where my Landlady highly resenting the Injury done to the Beauty of her Husband, by the Flesh-Spades of Mrs. *Honour*, called aloud for Revenge and Justice. As to the poor Man who had principally suffered in the Engagement, he was perfectly quiet. Perhaps the Blood which he lost, might have cooled his Anger:

Anger: For the Enemy had not only applied her Nails to his Cheeks, but likewise her Fist to his Nostrils, which lamented the Blow with Tears of Blood in great Abundance. To this we may add Reflections on his Mistake; but indeed nothing so effectually silenced his Repentment, as the Manner in which he now discovered his Error; for as to the Behaviour of Mrs. *Honour*, it had the more confirmed him in his Opinion: but he was now assured by a Person of great Figure, and who was attended by a great Equipage, that one of the Ladies was a Woman of Fashion and his intimate Acquaintance.

By the Orders of this Person, the Landlord now ascended, and acquainted our fair Travelers, that a great Gentleman below desired to do them the Honour of waiting on them. *Sophia* turned pale, and trembled at this Message, tho' the Reader will conclude it was too civil, notwithstanding the Landlord's Blunder, to have come from her Father; but Fear hath the common Fault of a Justice of Peace, and is apt to conclude hastily from every slight Circumstance, without examining the Evidence on both Sides.

To ease the Reader's Curiosity, therefore, rather than his Apprehensions, we proceed to inform him, that an *Irish* Peer had arrived very late that Evening at the Inn in his Way to *London*. This Nobleman having sallied from his Supper at the Hurricane before commemorated, had seen the Attendant of Mrs. *Fitzpatrick*, and upon a short Enquiry, was informed, that her Lady, with whom he was very particularly acquainted, was above. This Information he had no sooner received, than he addressed himself to the Landlord, pacified him, and sent him up
Stairs

Stairs with Compliments rather civiler than those which were delivered.

It may perhaps be wondered at, that the Waiting-woman herself was not the Messenger employed on this Occasion; but we are sorry to say, she was not at present qualified for that, or indeed for any other Office. The Rum (for so the Landlord chose to call the Distillation from Malt) had basely taken the Advantage of the Fatigue which the poor Woman had undergone, and had made terrible Depredations on her noble Faculties, at a Time when they were very unable to resist the Attack.

We shall not describe this tragical Scene too fully; but we thought ourselves obliged by that historic Integrity which we profess, shortly to hint a Matter which we would otherwise have been glad to have spared. Many Historians indeed, for want of this Integrity, or of Diligence, to say no worse, often leave the Reader to find out these little Circumstances in the Dark, and sometimes to his great Confusion and Perplexity.

Sophia was very soon eased of her causeless Fright by the Entry of the noble Peer, who was not only an intimate Acquaintance of Mrs. *Fitzpatrick*, but in Reality a very particular Friend of that Lady. To say Truth, it was by his Assistance, that she had been enabled to escape from her Husband; for this Nobleman had the same gallant Disposition with those renowned Knights, of whom we read in heroic Story, and had delivered many an imprisoned Nymph from Durance. He was indeed as bitter an Enemy to the savage Authority too often exercised by Husbands and Fathers, over the Young and Lovely of the other Sex, as ever Knight-Errant was to the barbarous

barous Power of Enchanters: Nay, to say Truth, I have often suspected that those very Enchanters with which Romance every where abounds, were in Reality no other than the Husbands of those Days; and Matrimony itself was perhaps the enchanted Castle in which the Nymphs were said to be confined.

This Nobleman had an Estate in the Neighbourhood of *Fitzpatrick*, and had been for some Time acquainted with the Lady. No sooner therefore did he hear of her Confinement, than he earnestly applied himself to procure her Liberty; which he presently effected, not by storming the Castle, according to the Example of antient Heroes; but by corrupting the Governor, in Conformity with the modern Art of War; in which Craft is held to be preferable to Valour, and Gold is found to be more irresistible than either Lead or Steel.

This Circumstance, however, as the Lady did not think it material enough to relate to her Friend, we would not at that Time impart it to the Reader. We rather chose to leave him a while under a Supposition, that she had found, or coined, or by some very extraordinary, perhaps supernatural Means, had possessed herself of the Money with which she had bribed her Keeper, than to interrupt her Narrative by giving a Hint of what seemed to her of too little Importance to be mentioned.

The Peer, after a short Conversation, could not forbear expressing some Surprize at meeting the Lady in that Place; nor could he refrain from telling her, he imagined she had been gone to *Bath*. Mrs. *Fitzpatrick* very freely answered, ' That she had been prevented in her Purpose by
 ' the

Ch. 8. a FOUNDLING. 117

‘ the Arrival of a Person she need not mention.
 ‘ In short,’ says she, ‘ I was overtaken by my
 ‘ Husband (for I need not affect to conceal what
 ‘ the World knows too well already.) I had the
 ‘ good Fortune to escape in a most surprizing
 ‘ Manner, and am now going to *London* with
 ‘ this young Lady, who is a near Relation of
 ‘ mine, and who hath escaped from as great a
 ‘ Tyrant as my own.’

His Lordship concluding that this Tyrant was likewise a Husband, made a Speech full of Compliments to both the Ladies, and as full of Invectives against his own Sex; nor indeed did he avoid some oblique Glances at the matrimonial Institution itself, and at the unjust Powers given by it to Man over the more sensible, and more meritorious Part of the Species. He ended his Oration with an Offer of his Protection, and of his Coach and Six, which was instantly accepted by Mrs. *Fitzpatrick*, and at last, upon her Persuasions, by *Sophia*.

Matters being thus adjusted, his Lordship took his Leave, and the Ladies retired to Rest, where Mrs. *Fitzpatrick* entertained her Cousin with many high Encomiums on the Character of the noble Peer, and enlarged very particularly on his great Fondness for his Wife; saying, she believed he was almost the only Person of high Rank, who was entirely constant to the Marriage Bed. ‘ Indeed,’ added she, ‘ my dear *Sophy*, that is a very rare Virtue amongst Men of Condition. Never expect it when you marry; for, believe me, if you do, you will certainly be deceived.’

A gentle Sigh stole from *Sophia* at these Words, which perhaps contributed to form a Dream of no
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