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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

Fielding, Henry

London, 1750

Chap. XIV. What happend to Mr. Jones in his Journey from Albans.

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C H A P. XIV.

*What happened to Mr. Jones in his Journey from
St. Albans.*

THEY were got about two Miles beyond *Barnet*, and it was now the Dusk of the Evening, when a genteel looking Man, but upon a very shabby Horse, rode up to *Jones*, and asked him whether he was going to *London*, to which *Jones* answered in the Affirmative. The Gentleman replied, 'I should be obliged to you, Sir, ' if you will accept of my Company; for it is ' very late, and I am a Stranger to the Road.' *Jones* readily complied with the Request; and on they travelled together, holding that Sort of Discourse which is usual on such Occasions.

Of this, indeed, Robbery was the principal Topic; upon which Subject the Stranger expressed great Apprehensions; but *Jones* declared he had very little to lose, and consequently as little to fear. Here *Partridge* could not forbear putting in his Word. 'Your Honour,' said he, 'may ' think it a little, but I am sure, if I had a hundred Pound Bank Note in my Pocket, as you ' have, I should be very sorry to lose it; but, for ' my Part, I never was less afraid in my Life; ' for we are four of us, and if we all stand by one ' another, the best Man in *England* can't rob us. ' Suppose he should have a Pistol, he can kill but ' one of us, and a Man can die but once—That's ' my Comfort, a Man can die but once.'

Besides the Reliance on superior Numbers, a kind of Valour which hath raised a certain Nation among the Moderns to a high Pitch of
Glory,



Glory, there was another Reason for the extraordinary Courage, which *Partridge* now discovered; for he had at present as much of that Quality as was in the Power of Liquor to bestow.

Our Company were now arriv'd within a Mile of *Highbate*, when the Stranger turned short upon *Jones*, and pulling out a Pistol, demanded that little Bank Note which *Partridge* had mentioned.

Jones was at first somewhat shocked at this unexpected Demand; however, he presently recollected himself, and told the Highwayman, all the Money he had in his Pocket was entirely at his Service; and so saying, he pulled out upwards of three Guineas, and offered to deliver it; but the other answer'd with an Oath, That would not do. *Jones* answer'd coolly, He was very sorry for it, and return'd the Money into his Pocket.

The Highwayman then threatn'd, if he did not deliver the Bank Note that Moment, he must shoot him; holding his Pistol at the same Time very near to his Breast. *Jones* instantly caught hold of the Fellow's Hand, which trembled so that he could scarce hold the Pistol in it, and turn'd the Muzzle from him. A Struggle then ensu'd, in which the former wrested the Pistol from the Hand of his Antagonist, and both came from their Horses on the Ground together, the Highwayman upon his Back, and the victorious *Jones* upon him.

The poor Fellow now began to implore Mercy of the Conqueror; for, to say the Truth, he was in Strength by no Means a Match for *Jones*.

'Indeed, Sir,' says he, 'I could have had no Intention to shoot you; for you will find the Pistol was not loaded. This is the first Rob-

bery
Glory

‘ bery I ever attempted, and I have been driven
‘ by Distress to this.’

At this Instant, at about an hundred and fifty
Yards Distance, lay another Person on the
Ground, roaring for Mercy in a much louder
Voice than the Highwayman. This was no other
than *Partridge* himself, who endeavouring to
make his Escape from the Engagement, had been
thrown from his Horse, and lay flat on his Face,
not daring to look up, and expecting every Mi-
nute to be shot.

In this Posture he lay, till the Guide, who was
no otherwise concerned than for his Horses, hav-
ing secured the stumbling Beast, came up to him
and told him, his Master had got the better of the
Highwayman.

Partridge leapt up at this News, and ran back
to the Place, where *Jones* stood with his Sword
drawn in his Hand to guard the poor Fellow;
which *Partridge* no sooner saw, than he cried
out, ‘ Kill the Villain, Sir, run him through the
‘ Body, kill him this Instant.’

Luckily however for the poor Wretch he had
fallen into more merciful Hands; for *Jones* hav-
ing examined the Pistol, and found it to be really
unloaded, began to believe all the Man had told
him before *Partridge* came up; namely, that he
was a Novice in the Trade, and that he had been
driven to it by the Distress he mentioned, the
greatest indeed imaginable, that of five hungry
Children, and a Wife lying in of a sixth, in the
utmost Want and Misery. The Truth of all
which the Highwayman most vehemently asserted,
and offered to convince Mr. *Jones* of it, if he would
take the Trouble to go to his House, which was
not above two Miles off; saying, ‘ That he de-
‘ fired

‘fired no Favour, but upon Condition of proving all he had alledged.’

Jones at first pretended that he would take the Fellow at his Word, and go with him, declaring that his Fate should depend entirely on the Truth of his Story. Upon this the poor Fellow immediately expressed so much Alacrity, that *Jones* was perfectly satisfied with his Veracity, and began now to entertain Sentiments of Compassion for him. He returned the Fellow his empty Pistol, advised him to think of honest Means of relieving his Distress, and gave him a couple of Guineas for the immediate Support of his Wife and his Family; adding, ‘he wished he had more for his Sake, for the hundred Pound that had been mentioned, was not his own.’

Our Readers will probably be divided in their Opinions concerning this Action; some may applaud it perhaps as an Act of extraordinary Humanity, while those of a more saturnine Temper will consider it as a Want of Regard to that Justice which every Man owes his Country. *Partridge* certainly saw it in that Light; for he testified much Dissatisfaction on the Occasion, quoted an old Proverb, and said, He should not wonder if the Rogue attacked them again before they reached *London*.

The Highwayman was full of Expressions of Thankfulness and Gratitude. He actually dropt Tears, or pretended so to do. He vowed he would immediately return home, and would never afterwards commit such a Transgression; whether he kept his Word or no, perhaps may appear hereafter.

Our

Our Travellers having remounted their Horses, arrived in Town without encountering any new Mishap. On the Road much pleasant Discourse passed between *Jones* and *Partridge*, on the Subject of their last Adventure. In which *Jones* expresseth a great Compassion for those Highwaymen who are, by unavoidable Distress, driven as it were, to such illegal Courses, as generally bring them to a shameful Death. 'I mean,' said he, 'those only whose highest Guilt extends no farther than to Robbery, and who are never guilty of Cruelty nor Insult to any Person, which is a Circumstance that, I must say, to the Honour of our Country, distinguishes the Robbers of *England* from those of all other Nations; for Murder is, amongst those, almost inseparably incident to Robbery.'

'No doubt,' answered *Partridge*, 'it is better to take away one's Money than one's Life; and yet it is very hard upon honest Men, that they can't travel about their Business without being in Danger of these Villains. And to be sure it would be better that all Rogues were hanged out of the Way, than that one honest Man should suffer. For my own Part, indeed, I should not care to have the Blood of any of them on my own Hands; but it is very proper for the Law to hang them all. What Right hath any Man to take Sixpence from me, unless I give it him? Is there any Honesty in such a Man?'

'No surely,' cries *Jones*, 'no more than there is in him who takes the Horses out of another Man's Stable, or who applies to his own Use the Money which he finds, when he knows the right Owner.'

These

These Hints stopt the Mouth of *Partridge*, nor did he open it again till *Jones* having thrown some sarcastical Jokes on his Cowardice, he offered to excuse himself on the Inequality of Fire Arms, saying, 'A thousand naked Men are nothing to one Pistol; for though, it is true, it will kill but one at a single Discharge, yet who can tell but that one may be himself.'

T H E