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《THE HISTORY OF TOM JONES》

By Henry Fielding

(三)

Chapter 9

WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MAY SERVE AS A COMMENT ON THAT SAYING OF ESCHINES, THAT DRUNKENNESS SHOWS THE MIND OF A MAN, AS A MIRROR REFLECTS HIS PERSON

The reader may perhaps wonder at hearing nothing of Mr. Jones in the last Chapter. In fact, his behaviour was so different from that of the persons there mentioned, that we chose not to confound his name with theirs.

When the good man had ended his speech, Jones was the last who deserted the room. Thence he retired to his own apartment, to give vent to his concern; but the restlessness of his mind would not suffer him to remain long there; he slipped softly therefore to Allworthys chamber-door, where he listened a considerable time without hearing any kind of motion within, unless a

violent snoring, which at last his fears misrepresented as groans. This so alarmed him, that he could not forbear entering the room; where he found the good man in the bed, in a sweet composed sleep, and his nurse snoring in the abovementioned hearty manner, at the beds feet. He immediately took the only method of silencing this thorough bass, whose music he feared might disturb Mr. Allworthy; and then sitting down by the nurse, he remained motionless till Blifil and the doctor came in together and waked the sick man, in order that the doctor might feel his pulse, and that the other might communicate to him that piece of news, which, had Jones been apprized of it, would have had great difficulty of finding its way to Mr. Allworthys ear at such a season.

When he first heard Blifil tell his uncle this story, Jones could hardly contain the wrath which kindled in him at the others indiscretion, especially as the doctor shook his head, and declared his unwillingness to have the matter mentioned to his patient. But as his passion did not so far deprive him of all use of his understanding, as to hide from him the consequences which any violent

expression towards Blifil might have on the sick, this apprehension stilled his rage at the present; and he grew afterwards so satisfied with finding that this news had, in fact, produced no mischief, that he suffered his anger to die in his own bosom, without ever mentioning it to Blifil.

The physician dined that day at Mr. Allworthys; and having after dinner visited his patient, he returned to the company, and told them, that he had now the satisfaction to say, with assurance, that he had now the satisfaction to say, with brought his fever to a perfect intermission, and doubted not by throwing in the bark to prevent its return.

This account so pleased Jones, and threw him into such immoderate excess of rapture, that he might be truly said to be drunk with joyan intoxication which greatly forwards the effects of wine; and as he was very free too with the bottle on this occasion (for he drank many bumpers to the doctors health, as well as to other toasts) he became very soon literally drunk.

Jones had naturally violent animal spirits: these being set on float and augmented by the spirit of wine,

produced most extravagant effects. He kissed the doctor, and embraced him with the most passionate endearments; swearing that next to Mr. Allworthy himself, he loved him of all men living. Doctor, added he, you deserve a statue to be erected to you at the public expense, for having preserved a man, who is not only the darling of all good men who know him, but a blessing to society, the glory of his country, and an honour to human nature. Dn me if I dont love him better than my own soul.

More shame for you, cries Thwackum. Though I think you have reason love him, for he hath provided very well for you. And perhaps it might have been better for some folks that he had not lived to see just reason of revoking his gift.

Jones now looking on Thwackum with inconceivable disdain, answered, And doth thy mean soul imagine that any such considerations could weigh with me? No, let the earth open and swallow her own dirt (if I had millions of acres I would say it) rather than swallow up my dear glorious friend.

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus

Tam chari capitis?1

The doctor now interposed, and prevented the effects of a wrath which was kindling between Jones and Thwackum; after which the former gave a loose to mirth, sang two or three amorous songs, and fell into every frantic disorder which unbridled joy is apt to inspire; but so far was he from any disposition to quarrel, that he was ten times better humoured, if possible, than when he was sober.

To say truth, nothing is more erroneous than the common observation, that men who are ill-natured and quarrelsome when they are drunk, are very worthy persons when they are sober: for drink, in reality, doth not reverse nature, or create passions in men which did not exist in them before. It takes away the guard of reason, and consequently forces us to produce those symptoms, which many, when sober, have art enough to conceal. It heightens and inflames our passions (generally indeed that passion which is uppermost in our mind), so that the angry temper, the amorous, the generous, the good-humoured, the avaricious, and all other dispositions of men, are in their cups heightened

and exposed.

And yet as no nation produces so many drunken quarrels, especially among the lower people, as England (for indeed, with them, to drink and to fight together are almost synonymous terms), I would not, methinks, have it thence concluded, that the English are the worst-natured people alive. Perhaps the love of glory only is at the bottom of this; so that the fair conclusion seems to be, that our countrymen have more of that love, and more of bravery, than any other plebeians. And this the rather, as there is seldom anything ungenerous, unfair, or ill-natured, exercised on these occasions: nay, it is common for the combatants to express good-will for each other even at the time of the conflict; and as their drunken mirth generally ends in a battle, so do most of their battles end in friendship.

But to return to our history. Though Jones had shown no design of giving offence, yet Mr. Blifil was highly offended at a behaviour which was so inconsistent with the sober and prudent reserve of his own temper. He bore it too with the greater impatience, as it appeared to him very indecent at this season; When,

as he said, the house was a house of mourning, on the account of his dear mother; and if it had pleased Heaven to give him some prospect of Mr. Allworthys recovery, it would become them better to express the exultations of their hearts in thanksgiving, than in drunkenness and riots; which were properer methods to encrease the Divine wrath, than to avert it. Thwackum, who had swallowed more liquor than Jones, but without any ill effect on his brain, seconded the pious harangue of Blifil; but Square, for reasons which the reader may probably guess, was totally silent.

Wine had not so totally overpowered Jones, as to prevent his recollecting Mr. Blifils loss, the moment it was mentioned. As no person, therefore, was more ready to confess and condemn his own errors, he offered to shake Mr. Blifil by the hand, and begged his pardon, saying, His excessive joy for Mr. Allworthys recovery had driven every other thought out of his mind.

Blifil scornfully rejected his hand; and with much indignation answered, It was little to be wondered at, if tragical spectacles made no impression on the blind; but, for his part, he had the misfortune to know who his

parents were, and consequently must be affected with their loss.

Jones, who, notwithstanding his good humour, had some mixture of the irascible in his constitution, leaped hastily from his chair, and catching hold of Blifils collar, cried out, Dn you for a rascal, do you insult me with the misfortune of my birth? He accompanied these words with such rough actions, that they soon got the better of Mr. Blifils peaceful temper; and a scuffle immediately ensued, which might have produced mischief, had it not been prevented by the interposition of Thwackum and the physician; for the philosophy of Square rendered him superior to all emotions, and he very calmly smoaked his pipe, as was his custom in all broils, unless when he apprehended some danger of having it broke in his mouth.

The combatants being now prevented from executing present vengeance on each other, betook themselves to the common resources of disappointed rage, and vented their wrath in threats and defiance. In this kind of conflict, Fortune, which, in the personal attack, seemed to incline to Jones, was now altogether as

favourable to his enemy.

A truce, nevertheless, was at length agreed on, by the mediation of the neutral parties, and the whole company again sat down at the table; where Jones being prevailed on to ask pardon, and Blifil to give it, peace was restored, and everything seemed in statu quo.

But though the quarrel was, in all appearance, perfectly reconciled, the good humour which had been interrupted by it, was by no means restored. All merriment was now at an end, and the subsequent discourse consisted only of grave relations of matters of fact, and of as grave observations upon them; a species of conversation, in which, though there is much of dignity and instruction, there is but little entertainment. As we presume therefore to convey only this last to the reader, we shall pass by whatever was said, till the rest of the company having by degrees dropped off, left only Square and the physician together; at which time the conversation was a little heightened by some comments on what had happened between the two young gentlemen; both of whom the doctor declared to be no better than scoundrels; to which appellation the

philosopher, very sagaciously shaking his head, agreed.

1 What modesty or measure bounds to our desire of so dear a friend? The word desiderium here cannot be easily translated. It includes our desire of enjoying our friend again, and the grief which attends that desire.

Chapter 10

SHOWING THE TRUTH OF MANY OBSERVATIONS OF OVID, AND OF OTHER MORE GRAVE WRITERS, WHO HAVE PROVED BEYOND CONTRADICTION, THAT WINE IS OFTEN THE FORERUNNER OF INCONTINENCY

Jones retired from the company, in which we have seen him engaged, into the fields, where he intended to cool himself by a walk in the open air before he attended Mr. Allworthy. There, whilst he renewed those meditations on his dear Sophia, which the dangerous illness of his friend and benefactor had for some time interrupted, an accident happened, which with sorrow we relate, and with sorrow doubtless will it be read; however, that historic truth to which we profess so inviolable an attachment, obliges us to communicate it

to posterity.

It was now a pleasant evening in the latter end of June, when our heroe was walking in a most delicious grove, where the gentle breezes fanning the leaves, together with the sweet trilling of a murmuring stream, and the melodious notes of nightingales, formed altogether the most enchanting harmony. In this scene, so sweetly accommodated to love, he meditated on his dear Sophia. While his wanton fancy roamed unbounded over all her beauties, and his lively imagination painted the charming maid in various ravishing forms, his warm heart melted with tenderness; and at length, throwing himself on the ground, by the side of a gently murmuring brook, he broke forth into the following ejaculation:

O Sophia, would Heaven give thee to my arms, how blest would be my condition! Curst be that fortune which sets a distance between us. Was I but possessed of thee, one only suit of rags thy whole estate, is there a man on earth whom I would envy! How contemptible would the brightest Circassian beauty, drest in all the jewels of the Indies, appear to my eyes! But why do I

mention another woman? Could I think my eyes capable of looking at any other with tenderness, these hands should tear them from my head. No, my Sophia, if cruel fortune separates us for ever, my soul shall doat on thee alone. The chastest constancy will I ever preserve to thy image. Though I should never have possession of thy charming person, still shalt thou alone have possession of my thoughts, my love, my soul. Oh! my fond heart is so wrapt in that tender bosom, that the brightest beauties would for me have no charms, nor would a hermit be colder in their embraces. Sophia, Sophia alone shall be mine. What raptures are in that name! I will engrave it on every tree.

At these words he started up, and beheld not his Sophiano, nor a Circassian maid richly and elegantly attired for the grand Signiors seraglio. No; without a gown, in a shift that was somewhat of the coarsest, and none of the cleanest, bedewed likewise with some odoriferous effluvia, the produce of the days labour, with a pitchfork in her hand, Molly Seagrim approached. Our hero had his penknife in his hand, which he had drawn for the before-mentioned purpose of carving on