

HENRY  
FIELDING

AMELIA

PART II

T8 RUGRAM

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### **Henry Fielding**

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Henry Fielding (1707 – 1754) was an English novelist and dramatist known for his rich, earthy humour and satirical prowess. “Amelia” is a sentimental novel of a young couple’s struggles against adversity. It tells a story of Amelia and Captain William Booth after they are married. The novel contains many allusions to classical literature and focuses on the theme of marriage and feminine intelligence.

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# BOOK VII



## CHAPTER I

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*A very short chapter, and consequently requiring no preface.*

Mrs. Bennet having fastened the door, and both the ladies having taken their places, she once or twice offered to speak, when passion stopt her utterance; and, after a minute's silence, she burst into a flood of tears. Upon which Amelia, expressing the utmost tenderness for her, as well by her look as by her accent, cried, "What can be the reason, dear madam, of all this emotion?" "O, Mrs. Booth!" answered she, "I find I have undertaken what I am not able to perform. You would not wonder at my emotion if you knew you had an adulteress and a murderer now standing before you."

Amelia turned pale as death at these words, which Mrs. Bennet observing, collected all the force she was able, and, a little composing her countenance, cried, "I see, madam, I have terrified you with such dreadful words; but I hope you will not think me guilty of these crimes in the blackest degree." "Guilty!" cries Amelia. "O Heavens!" "I believe, indeed, your candour," continued Mrs. Bennet, "will be readier to acquit me than I am to acquit myself. Indiscretion, at least, the highest, most unpardonable indiscretion, I shall always lay to ray own charge: and, when I reflect on the fatal consequences,

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I can never, never forgive myself. "Here she again began to lament in so bitter a manner, that Amelia endeavoured, as much as she could (for she was herself greatly shocked), to soothe and comfort her; telling her that, if indiscretion was her highest crime, the unhappy consequences made her rather an unfortunate than a guilty person; and concluded by saying – "Indeed, madam, you have raised my curiosity to the highest pitch, and I beg you will proceed with your story."

Mrs. Bennet then seemed a second time going to begin her relation, when she cried out, "I would, if possible, tire you with no more of my unfortunate life than just with that part which leads to a catastrophe in which I think you may yourself be interested; but I protest I am at a loss where to begin."

"Begin wherever you please, dear madam," cries Amelia; "but I beg you will consider my impatience." "I do consider it," answered Mrs. Bennet; "and therefore would begin with that part of my story which leads directly to what concerns yourself; for how, indeed, should my life produce anything worthy your notice?" "Do not say so, madam," cries Amelia; "I assure you I have long suspected there were some very remarkable incidents in your life, and have only wanted an opportunity to impart to you my desire of hearing them: I beg, therefore, you would make no more apologies." "I will not, madam," cries Mrs. Bennet, "and yet I would avoid anything trivial; though, indeed, in stories of distress, especially where love is concerned, many little incidents may appear trivial to those who have never felt the passion, which, to delicate minds, are the most interesting part of the whole." "Nay, but, dear madam," cries Amelia, "this is all preface."

“Well, madam,” answered Mrs. Bennet, “I will consider your impatience.” She then rallied all her spirits in the best manner she could, and began as is written in the next chapter.

And here possibly the reader will blame Mrs. Bennet for taking her story so far back, and relating so much of her life in which Amelia had no concern; but, in truth, she was desirous of inculcating a good opinion of herself, from recounting those transactions where her conduct was unexceptionable, before she came to the more dangerous and suspicious part of her character. This I really suppose to have been her intention; for to sacrifice the time and patience of Amelia at such a season to the mere love of talking of herself would have been as unpardonable in her as the bearing it was in Amelia a proof of the most perfect good breeding.

## CHAPTER II

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*The beginning of Mrs. Bennet's history.*

“I was the younger of two daughters of a clergyman in Essex; of one in whose praise if I should indulge my fond heart in speaking, I think my invention could not outgo the reality. He was indeed well worthy of the cloth he wore; and that, I think, is the highest character a man can obtain.

“During the first part of my life, even till I reached my sixteenth year, I can recollect nothing to relate to you. All was one long serene day, in looking back upon which, as when we cast our eyes on a calm sea, no object arises to my view. All appears one scene of happiness and tranquillity.

“On the day, then, when I became sixteen years old, must I begin my history; for on that day I first tasted the bitterness of sorrow.

“My father, besides those prescribed by our religion, kept five festivals every year. These were on his wedding-day, and on the birthday of each of his little family; on these occasions he used to invite two or three neighbours to his house, and to indulge himself, as he said, in great excess; for so he called drinking a pint of very small punch; and, indeed, it might ap-