

**The Reconciliation,
or The Triumph of Nature**

A COMIC OPERA

IN TWO ACTS

BY

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MUSIC BY

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The Reconciliation

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Deborah *alone*)

Deborah:

Mercy on me! What is become of Simon? Some bad accident or other has happened to the poor, dear fellow. What shall we do, if he should never return? No victuals in the house; no messenger to go for any, and little, very little money remaining. I never suspected, when I turned cook, that things would come to this pass. Our family at times might as well have a coach with a fifth wheel to it, as a cook. Now and then we get a comfortable meal; now and then, I say. But in general we lead the life of a dog – hunger and ease. – False-hearted Simon! Thou worst of cannibals! Thus to desert master and mistress, our promising your gentleman, and thy own Debby – The fellow is certainly taking his swing in some tavern or other, drinking, and gormandizing; or perhaps making love to some draggled-tail'd – But I'll match him; I'll match him.

AIR I (page 54)

Tune, *My Jockey is the blythest Lad* [no longer extant]

How happy once were Debby's days!
Ah! days of sweet content!
The hearth rejoic'd her with its plaze;
Tha jack alertly went.

Since Simon leaves his love to weep,
No comfort can she know;
The jack eternally may sleep;
And Debby's cake is dough.

Should roving Simon prove untrue,
How hard would be her lot!
Soon must lost Debby bid adieu,
Alas! to spit and pot.

Two cruel tyrants she obeys;
Ah death! prepare thy dart!
On her poor stomach hunger preys,
And love afflicts her heart.

But here comes my master. A very good sort of a man in the main; but a little too proud. Pride and poverty never agree well together, — that is a clear case.

SCENE 2

(Deborah, Wilson *with a gun in his hand*)

Wilson:

Deborah! Is Simon returned?

Deborah:

No, Sir — he is always in a hurry to go to town; but before he thinks of coming home, his hurry is over.

Wilson:

What can detain him? No sustenance procured from abroad, and none to be found at home! Where is your mistress?

Deborah:

She is mending some old clothes; and now and then she sings a hymn to keep up her spirits.

Wilson:

At once pious and industrious! — Let the fire be ready against Simon returns. He at least will not come back empty-handed, as he took with him that which commands a selfish world.

Deborah:

Yes, Sir.

SCENE 3

(Wilson *alone*)

Wilson:

Exposed to the chilling damps of the morning, and to the scorching rays of the noon-day sun, I have unceasingly wandered in pursuit of food for my family — but in vain. The distress of my mind affect my bodily faculties. My once unerring hands have forgot their office. The birds hover over my head, as if unapprehensive of my gun, whilst the deer, no longer timid, feed in security, and seem to defy my feeble efforts. Once more let me enter my cottage; the abode — O Heaven! — the abode of innocence and affliction.

AIR II (page 66)
Tune, *The Birks of Indermay*

Why sleeps the thunder in the skies,
When guilty men to *grandeur* rise? –
Or why should innocence bewail
Distress, in bleak misfortune's vale?
Just are the dark decrees of heav'n,
Since short the date to either giv'n:
Vice earns unceasing dread and shame,
Whilst endless joys are virtue's claim.

SCENE 4
(Wilson, Deborah)

Deborah:
The fire is ready, Sir; but I see nothing of Simon.

Wilson:
Where is William?

Deborah:
Gone a walking to get an appetite. – (*Aside*) A very foolish errand
in our starving condition.

Wilson:
Let your mistress know, I should be glad to speak with her; and put
up my gun.

Deborah:
Yes, Sir.

SCENE 5
(Wilson *alone*)

Wilson:
Incomparable woman! How piously resigned to the will of Heaven!
Alone, she indulges in the extreme of sorrow; but at my approach the
smiles of conjugal affection add new luster to her charms. Joy seems
to triumph on her countenance, lest grief should lour on mine. The
wife is studious to cheer the bosom of her desponding husband,
whilst the woman and the mother feels internally all the horrors of
her situation. Such virtue is entitled to reward. But as for me, O!
that distress were my lot only! – that I alone were doomed to
misery – provided that she and my son were happy! Our poverty
increases. Age, accelerated by grief and sickness, advances with

rapid strides. My money is nearly exhausted; and alas! I have no credit. Deserted by my father, from whom can I expect relief? The exertions of my industry have been destroyed by the late storm. Twelve years have elapsed, since I entreated forgiveness from my father in a letter fraught with filial contrition. Alas! can the fault, which I have committed, excuse his severity? Detesting treachery towards a woman, who united herself to me in consequence of my most solemn promises, I have discharged the duty of a man of honour, although in so doing I acted contrary to his commands. Not all the glare of riches, not all the pride of mind, had I consigned to obloquy and disgrace a woman, who justly lays claim to universal esteem. But let me not despond. Nature will assert her rights, and the heart of my father must at length relent. My son approaches! Gracious Heaven! to what misery may he not be exposed! I will conceal my sorrow, and assume the semblance of contentment, whilst anguish preys upon my heart. Hitherto secluded from the world, his conversation is necessarily puerile, but his heart, I trust, is good, and his understanding not defective.

SCENE 6
(Wilson, William)

William:
My dear, dear father!

Wilson:
My beloved child! What have you been doing? You appear quite cheerful.

William:
I have been this hour or two with the boy, who minds the sheep on the hill. The poor fellow made me quite sorrowful.

Wilson:
But why?

William:
He burst into tears as we were sitting down together. "I have not had a morsel to eat all day," says he. — "Here!" says I — "take this piece of bread, and much good may it do you," — and so I gave him all I had saved from my own dinner. Although I felt a little hungry myself, it did my heart good to see how eagerly he swallowed it.

Wilson:
(*Aside*) May Heaven reward my son!

William:

I hope, Sir, you are not angry with me. I am certain, the little fellow would have shared any thing he had with me, if I had been hungry.

Wilson:

But, my dear! did you not know, that we had not a morsel of food in the cottage?

William:

Yes Sir, I did — but I could not bear to see him starve. Besides, you have often told me, that God will be kind to us, if we are kind to one another.

Wilson:

Come to my arms, my Son! — (*Aside*) Creator of heaven and earth! Can so much innocence and tenderness be long afflicted?

William:

What makes you weep, Sir; your tears distress me exceedingly.

Wilson:

Go up the hill, and let me know if Simon be coming.

SCENE 7

(Wilson *alone*)

Wilson:

Now indeed is my wretchedness complete. Let me, great Power! let me implore thee to protect the best of women, and this unoffending child. Add strength to my mind, lest I should presume to censure my decrees, or yield to despair! If I enter the cottage, I must have recourse — hard task indeed! — to dissimulation; concealing my anguish, and assume an air of contentment. Happily the keenness of the air seconds my best wishes, and dries up those tears, which nature demanded.

SCENE 8

(Wilson, Amelia)

Amelia:

You are welcome home, my dear.

Wilson:

Heaven bless you, my love! — How have you spent this afternoon?

Amelia:

As cheerfully as possible during your absence.

Wilson:

What a heroine have you approved yourself throughout our sufferings!

Amelia:

Sufferings! — On you my happiness, or unhappiness depends. Incited by your virtues, and secure in your love, I am — as I ought to be — contented. When her husband suffers, then is his Amelia distressed.

Wilson:

What tenderness do you not bear toward the man, who has heaped such misery on you, as might have turned love into hatred, and blessings into execrations!

Amelia:

Your self-reproaches are injurious to my love. Most solemnly I declare, that the serenity of my countenance is the true picture of the tranquility of my heart. Whilst possessed of you, I am truly happy. Bereft of you, no earthly consideration could afford my comfort.

Wilson:

And can you enjoy tranquility of mind, whilst afflicted with poverty, and threatened with extreme distress?

Amelia:

Discontent and grief are ever strangers to my bosom, 'till I observe, that they disturb your quiet. Reflect on those, whose distresses are by far greater than ours. Shall we, who boast the blessings of education, suffer by a comparison with such? As we know more than they, let our knowledge teach us greater resignation.

Wilson:

They more unhappy than we! — Less fortunate than a bird of prey, I have in vain this afternoon traversed those mountains in pursuit of game. As I departed, I return — utterly unprovided. My own sufferings I could bear, especially as your resignation furnishes a bright example. But the present and future distress of my son overcomes my resolution, particularly as I know, he endeavors to conceal his sorrow, lest they should add horror to my woes.

Amelia:

Best of husbands! why should you give way to despondence, since

the extremity of distress is as yet at a distance? Fruits at least we may reasonably expect from our son at his return. But should his exertions prove vain, Simon will undoubtedly bring a supply from town.

Wilson:

I am ashamed — I confess it — quite ashamed — of my despondency.

Amelia:

Besides this embroidery may be sold to the milliner, who has never failed to pay me for my labor. Despondence is unworthy of you. Recollect that, in our gloomiest hours relief has always been at hand.

Wilson:

Your mind is a never-failing spring of consolation. Yet the situation of my son distresses me. What must finally be his lot!

Amelia:

If he follows virtue, she will conduct him to happiness.

Wilson:

The prospect, at least with regard to this world, is gloomy. Few are the comforts, which virtue communicates to those who are oppressed by poverty. Not only his immediate wants, but his future destiny excite apprehension. Doomed to poverty, how fortunate he will be, should he remain uninfected by the vices of the outcasts of society. O my father! may thy heart be a stranger to such sorrow, as I now experience, even should thy offspring, unpitied and unknown, be compelled to beg a morsel of bread at thy door.

Amelia:

Misery is not necessarily his portion. By innumerable and inscrutable means Providence can effectuate human happiness.

Wilson:

True. But great must be his trials. Reflect on our own sufferings. No sooner had I experienced the frowns of my father, and expended our little property, than every trace of friendship and consolation vanished. Deserted by mankind, on what can we rest our hope?

Amelia:

On Heaven! — On Heaven! who pours blessings on us even in this retreat, and by adversity has reclaimed us from vanity.

Wilson:

Be it so. But can any situation in life be conceived for our William, consistently with probability, in which he will not be exposed to temptations, which may exceed his strength?

Amelia:

Again I repeat, we may confidently rely on Providence.

AIR III (Page 78)

Tune, *The Bird, that hears* [no longer extant]

The birds, who wing their way through air,
Are objects of his love;
The wolf's fierce young he tends with care;
His bounty reptiles prove.

Much more to thee, desponding man!
He kindness shall display:
Can we then doubt his glorious plan?
For are we less than they?

Wilson:

Admirable woman!

Amelia:

Our situation is not absolutely desperate, and may even be productive of bliss. Both religion and fortitude condemn our discontent. I lately visited a female neighbor. How much more grievous are her sufferings than ours? Poorer than ourselves, she is moreover aged, infirm and helpless. All her prospects terminate in pain and distress. Yet calamity has not entirely depressed her mind. Death alone can administer comfort to her; but longer sufferings must precede that consolation. — And shall an uneducated woman exhibit an example to us, which we are incapable of following?

Wilson:

It ought not to do.

Amelia:

It ought not indeed. Both reason and religion forbid it. From him, my love, let us expect relief, who preserves that bird, chirping on yonder bough; the bee humming near us, and those worms, which crawl at our feet. And shall we murmur, because our circumstances are not such, as may create envy? Be cheerful, my dear; behold, how

enchancing is the scene around us! How magnificent is that luster, gilding the clouds of this evening, which brings us nearer to the completion of our wishes!

Wilson:

Amelia, you are entitled to my warmest acknowledgements. What a blessing do I not possess in you! You have spoken peace to my desponding mind, and added strength to my wavering reason. The sensations I now feel resemble the serenity of the midnight hour rendered pleasing by the gentle effulgence of the moon, more than the fervid splendor of the meridian sun. My distress has its source in the implacability of my father. O! if at the hour of his death, I should not be present to receive his benediction, still he will remember his son, and bless the unhappy being, to whom he gave existence!

Amelia:

Best of men! your melancholy would have soon yielded to the exertion of your own reason. Animated by the best intentions, I have endeavored to discharge the duty of a wife in suggesting those consolatory ideas, which after a short space would have occurred to yourself. With respect to a reconciliation with your father, would to Heaven your wishes were speedily accomplished! But as for me — unhappy woman! — the object of his fixed, his unalterable resentment —

Wilson:

I conjure you by all my hopes, not to give utterance to the unkind sentiments, which you were about to express. You are free from reproach. I should be unworthy of your happiness, you have bestowed, and continue to bestow on me, should I patiently listen to your unfounded and cruel self-accusations.

Amelia:

The delicacy of your love is great. Henceforth I shall abstain from offending it. But surely my fond hopes may plead admission to your bosom. How transporting would be the change, should your relenting father, anxious concerning a son, whom —

Wilson:

Such thoughts, my Amelia, I have frequently indulged, when ardently, but vainly, I expected answers, replete with love, to my affectionate letters; letters, which might have drawn tears even from an alien in blood — from an entire stranger — from the most unfeeling of human beings, had he accidentally found them. But my father — yes, my father, Amelia!

Amelia:

Had he received them, it were an outrage to nature to suppose, that –

Wilson:

An outrage indeed! – You, who once loved me with all the ardour of paternal affection; who delighted in every juvenile display of my ripening talents – how could you entail on me your inexpiable anger! – In the hour of serious reflection, when your displeasure calls tears from my eyes, my conscience is free from remorse. Had I justly incurred your wrath, how should I have endured existence! I yet hope, I yet claim, your affection! – Let me indulge the rapturous idea! Perhaps his anger is appeased! Perhaps he pities a son, whom he has exposed to the storms of misfortune. I will write to him, and endeavour to rouse the latent sparks of affection in his bosom. They cannot be utterly extinguished. This day, this hour I will write to him. Come, my Amelia! and assist me in the arduous undertaking.

Amelia:

I obey with pleasure.

SCENE 9

(Simon alone, with a basket in his hand)

Simon:

Is the coast clear? Yes; they are gone. I am heartily glad of it. I do not wish, they should see me yet awhile – But why so, Simon! – A bad conscience is the reason; otherwise the fight of your best friends would be as agreeable to you as ever. – What a bustle in my bosom! My heart is in a terrible uproar. It strikes against my side like a tennis ball; – and my pulse too – it gallops like a troop of horse. My breast feels as if a mountain were on it. Simon! you are a coward! – not I; I am no coward; a little afraid or so. – If I am a knave, I am at least a well-meaning, praise-worthy sort of knave. I have acted from the best of principles; a wish to relieve the distressed. Who calls me a robber? – I say, he is a good for nothing, lying son of a ----- I am an honest, trust-worthy, tender-hearted fellow. So, Mr. Conscience! I beg of you to be quiet, and give no further trouble. If I had committed this robbery – I say, if I had made free with the old gentleman's purse from bad motives – why – it might have been called a robbery. But as I acted from pure, disinterested motives – it is no robbery at all; not in the least. Intention and circumstances quite alter the nature of things. I'll be hanged, if there is any crime at all in it. Yet – I do not know how it

happens — I tremble in every limb, as if I deserved to be hanged indeed. I would not for the world old Deborah should see me. She would swear the gallows was in my face. (*Taking a purse out of his pocket.*) Here is the rino! — What charming music it makes in the old green purse! This will put Debby in tune, and make her pot boil merrily for some weeks at least. But it was obtained unjustly — and on the high-way too — if I had tricked a man out of it in the way of a bargain, there would have been no harm done. — But to act so barefacedly! — Simon! you old knave! you will certainly pay for this one day or another. Good Mr. Conscience! forgive me for this time — it is my first offence — and I will never do so any more. You pull an honest fellow's heart-strings so severely, that I vow and protest, it is better to die peaceably with hunger, than to live in luxury after having once offended you. It is very true, that, because our worthy family are in a starving condition, I did presume to ask a traveller — perhaps rather in a peremptory style — for a trifle, of which he can be in no great want. He will soon have recourse to his bureau, which will make him amends for the pitiful sum I borrowed from him. But after all is it not a burning shame, that the rich should wallow in excess, whilst my worthy master, his charming Amelia, the young gentleman, their son; and honest Simon, not forgetting greasy Deborah — are ready at times to perish with hunger in these regions of misery? I say, it is a scandalous thing; and who dares say to the contrary? — O Lud! O Lud! — I hear somebody coming. — No. — What a simpleton I am! — Simon! take heart; you have given proofs of courage; you must now display your wisdom. But, as I hate to be cross-questioned, let me think on what I may safely say. — Honest Simon! stick to the truth. — You old fool! do you mean to tie the rope about your own neck? — A hard tax upon my veracity! — I'll tell him — what? That will never do; now I have it. I'll tell him, that a great man, whom I do not know, met me — I have forgot where — and asked me, if I was yet in Mr. George Wilson's service; told me, that he had heard lately of his distressed circumstances; pitied him much — and a great deal more to the same purpose — and so — this good, worthy gentleman — Who is coming? — Only Mr. William — I am so stinted in time, that I fear I shall make but a sorry piece of work of it. Whilst I am thinking of a plausible story, I will trifle away a minute of two with this over-grown boy, who knows no more of the world, than if he did not belong to it. — Honest Simon, I fear after all, you will turn out but a pitiful liar, and a paltry politician.

SCENE 10
(Simon, William)

William:

You are welcome home, Simon; I am heartily glad to see you.

Simon:

Thank you, thank you!

William:

What makes you look so melancholy?

Simon:

Because I am not in very good humour.

William:

You come very late from town to-day.

Simon:

No wonder — I had a good deal to do there.

William:

Have you brought any thing with you?

Simon:

Yes; some supply for the cupboard.

William:

That is a dear clever fellow. I have been busy gathering fruit.

Simon:

Well done. We shall live now like emperors.

William:

This news, Simon! will be of great comfort to father and mother. Till you came, we had not a morsel in the house. To-day, I saw mother in tears, and she was at work. She did not see me, but she sighed and wept in such a manner, that I could not help weeping too. As she turned round, she perceived me, and then wiped her eyes, because she did not wish I should see her tears; but I saw them plain enough. Simon! pray, tell me what makes father and mother weep so much. It always makes me sad to see them so sorrowful.

Simon:

I am inclined to think, it is because they are poor.

William:

They poor! Our neighbours in the mountains may be poor; but that is not our case, I am certain.

Simon:

(Aside) How much he knows of the world.

William:

If we can be said to be poor at all, it is but for a little while. This morning we were in a sad condition; but now we have victuals enough, and some to spare.

Simon:

Charming youth! excellent reasoning! *(Aside)* I fancy, Mr. William, you will be a philosopher — ha! ha! ha!

William:

What makes you so merry, Simon? Those, I think, who suffer no want, cannot be said to be poor. We have enough for to-day, and to-morrow, and next day to.

Simon:

(Aside) What a sensible lad!

William:

But, Simon! if we are poor, how do the rich live?

Simon:

Why, in abundance to be sure; they have more than they know what to do with.

William:

But of what use is it to them to have too much?

Simon:

No improper question! — Yet these people are still grasping after more riches, and are often more unhappy than the poor.

William:

That is very extraordinary. — Do they never share with the poor?

Simon:

They share with the poor! — not they truly; they would rather take from the poor what little they have, and add it to their on monstrous heaps.

William:

Can this be possible?

Simon:

Very possible, I assure you; and what is more, it is very common.

William:

Simon! you certainly wish to deceive me. Don't you know you must never tell a fib?

Simon:

A fib! — I never told a greater truth in my life. The town swarms with such sort of gentry.

William:

For my part, if I could afford it, I would do as father and mother do, and share with the poor. I can't tell how it happens, but joy makes me cry, whenever a poor body thanks us and prays to God to bless us for any trifle, which we can well enough spare.

Simon:

That is because you are young, and tender-hearted.

William:

And why should I not always be tender-hearted?

Simon:

Perhaps you may — (*Aside*) unless you take after the old rogue, your grand-father.

William:

But, Simon! I had almost forgot. Tell me what makes my dear parents so sad?

Simon:

It is, I believe, because they are not able to do as much good as they wish.

William:

You have hit it, Simon! as sure as a gun. I am often sorry, because I am not rich; and for the same reason to. I am however contented.

AIR IV (Page 89)

Tune, I kiss'd, and I prattled [no longer extant]

William:

Since the rich, in the midst of their ill-gotten store,
From troubles and cares are not free;
Why should they look down with disdain on the poor?
Contentment is wealth to me.

Simon:

My days have in toil and in hardship been spent;
And the world I know well — do you see? —
On wealth since I find all my betters are bent,
Contentment is wealth to me!

William:

In health I abound, and in conscience am gay;
What happier creature can be?
I lie down to rest, and I rise yo to play;
Contentment is wealth to me.

Simon:

Some talk much of friendship, and others of love;
And with such in the main I agree;
But if mistress and friend should both treacherous
prove,
Contentment is wealth to me.

Both:

However we differ in words or in things,
Let all bow to Heaven's decree;
Since joy from contentment unceasingly spring,
Contentment is wealth to me.

William:

Let us go in. Come along, Simon!

END ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1 (Simon *alone*)

Simon:

My master is asleep yet. I wish he may not awake for an hour at least. I am still at a loss what to say. But courage, Simon! What is the story I was framing? Fear, I think, has put knavery out of my head. Why do you tremble, you old simpleton! Look like a judge with a grave, placid countenance, and deceive with the easy dignity of a man of quality. You may plead many precedents in your favour.

AIR V (Page 113)

Tune, An old Woman clothes in grey

Since falsehood triumphantly reigns,
And millions unblushingly lie
In cities, at courts, on the plains;
My genius for once I will try.
It needs neither learning nor wit
To cant, to deceive, and betray;
Here the rustic may vie with the cit,
And deep statesmen to swindlers give way.

Then who shall poor Simon upbraid?
In lying he stands not alone;
Of punishment he's not afraid,
Should innocence throw the first stone;
If truth all the world should obey,
The great would be silent, I fear;
Our wits would have little to say,
And our belles would have little to hear.

After all, I believe, I am rather too old to learn a new trade, especially as it is contrary to my natural disposition. I shall certainly make but a clumsy piece of work of it. What would I not give to be fairly out of this scrape! I have up a great man in my brain; and now what must I make this great man say? I have it; I have it! — But here comes my master. Mind your hits, Simon! — Sharp is the word!

SCENE 2

(Wilson, Simon)

Wilson:

Honest Simon! I am glad to see you. Are you not tired? It is no short walk from town.

Simon:

I am not in the least tired.

Wilson:

Tell Deborah to prepare supper; and then come back to me.

SCENE 3

(Wilson *alone*)

Wilson:

Worthy creature! Now may I indulge the pleasing hope of being enabled to reward his services. The letter is begun, and shall be finished this evening. How tormenting is doubt! how enchanting is hope! My rapture will exceed all bounds, should the answer to it speak the language of paternal love. That answer, the forerunner of bliss, shall be bathed in the tears of filial affection. But should my supplications be rejected – there is horror in that thought! – Thou universal Father! hear my humble petition! Let me not be tempted beyond my strength! Suffer not the grave to receive an unrelenting father! – But what if Simon should conduct my son to him? – Alas! the journey would answer no good purpose; and, as he has, hitherto been educated in extreme simplicity, his ignorance of the world, although he is not deficient in natural good sense, might expose him to irreparable evils. But surely if the unoffending youth were placed before his grand-sire; should he deliver to him my letter; and, clasping his knees, implore a blessing for himself and parents – flattering idea! – but vain and illusive! Such is the situation of the unhappy man! He forms a thousand and a thousand projects. Disappointed in all, he experiences still greater misery. But should they go on this embassy of love, what support can they expect during their absence?

SCENE 4

(Wilson, Simon)

Wilson:

What recompense, Simon! can I make you for your fidelity?

Simon:

Recompense! — your good opinion, Sir, is a sufficient recompense.

Wilson:

No; your services can never be adequately rewarded. Forsaken by my friends, your attachment to me has been inviolable. Destitute and helpless, what could be expected from me? You followed me into this wilderness, endured with me the bitterness of want, and neglected the means of advancing yourself in life.

Simon:

Pray, good Sir! do not make me proud of my poor services. You will find it is no easy matter to persuade me that I have ever done my duty. — Be pleased, Sir, to accept—

Wilson:

What?

Simon:

Take it; take it, Sir — that is all.

Wilson:

Take what?

Simon:

Only a small sum of money, which I got in town.

Wilson:

A small sum do you call it? What makes your hand shake so?

Simon:

My — hand — shake? — That is because — I am — overcome with joy.

Wilson:

You stammer too — what can be the matter with you?

Simon:

Take the money, I beg of you. — This is very strange — a little while ago we were in the greatest distress; and now you seem angry at receiving relief.

Wilson:

Your behaviour makes me doubtful, whether I should rejoice, or not. Answer this question plainly. Where did you get this money?

Simon:

The gentleman, Sir — a very bashful sort of gentleman — would not tell me his name.

Wilson:

Simon! trifle no longer with my feelings. Take back the money. I shall not receive it, till I know how you became possessed of it.
(Delivers the purse to him.)

Simon:

That is out of my power. I never knew so squeamish a man in my life.

Wilson:

Be candid, Simon! — and tell me all about it.

Simon:

Why then, since you must know — I found it as I was coming out of town — just at the bottom of the hill.

Wilson:

Can I believe my ears? Does honest Simon prevaricate? Your story contradicts itself.

Simon:

I believe you can see through my very soul.

Wilson:

There is no necessity for so much penetration. Whenever you wander from the truth, your countenance alone is sufficient to betray you.

Simon:

Well then, as I told you at first, I did not find it.

Wilson:

What was it you told me at first?

Simon:

That a gentleman in town gave it to me.

Wilson:

O Simon, Simon! — Is this gentleman acquainted with me?

Simon:

I suppose so. He asked if I still lived with you.

Wilson:

Well; and what then?

Simon:

I told him, I did – and then he gave me the money, telling me to give it to you.

Wilson:

And have you no knowledge of this worthy gentleman?

Simon:

I told you already, I never saw him before. – (*Aside*) I wish this confounded cross-examination was over.

Wilson:

I readily believe, it was indeed the first time you ever saw him. Till this unfortunate day, you never swerved from truth. How can you persist in endeavoring to deceive me?

Simon:

There is not a word of falsehood in all I have said from beginning to end. Excuse me, Sir – I am rather in a hurry – I have a little business in the garden.

SCENE 5

(Wilson *alone*)

Wilson:

There is some mystery in this affair, which I cannot comprehend. What can create such confusion in the poor man's brain? His second story is as problematical as his first. I will follow him into the garden. Till this affair is explained, I shall be incapable of rest.

AIR VI (Page 125)

Tune, *In Infancy* [no longer extant]

Truth! from thy radiant throne look down
On man's bewilder'd state;
Teach us, howe'er misfortune frown,
That want is no disgrace.

Teach us, since guilt along is woe,
To smile at weak distress;
The Power, who man afflicts below,
Is prompt above to bless.

SCENE 6
(Simon, Wilson)

Simon:

I come, Sir, most humbly to crave your pardon. I cannot bear to deceive you any longer. Be pleased to listen to the whole affair, that I may know from you, whether I am really as guilty, as my troublesome conscience tells me I am.

Wilson:

Go on; and speak with candor.

Simon:

This purse, Sir — with its contents — I received from a traveller in those mountains.

Wilson:

What! did you take it by force?

Simon:

Be patient, Sir — and I shall relate to you every circumstance of the affair. — In crossing those solitary mountains on my return to our dreary abode, casting my eyes towards the city, I beheld those lofty mansions, whose roofs are lost in the clouds; and called to mind the debaucheries of their owners, who live as if fortune were at their beck; lavishing their ill-gotten wealth in a most scandalous manner, whilst their unhappy fellow-creatures are suffered to perish at their doors, unpitied and even despised.

Wilson:

There is too much truth in what you say. But speak to the purpose.

Simon:

I grew angry — very angry, Sir — when I recollected, that such should engross the good things of the world, whilst the finest, the wisest, and the most virtuous man on earth — whom, at present, I shall not presume to name — together with the best, and most accomplished of her sex — meaning your lady, Sir — should live in want and misery.

Wilson:

A truce with compliments — proceed —

Simon:

I took a survey of our deplorable situation, and was reminded by an importunate, but faithful, monitor near my heart — I mean, Sir, my

stomach — that we were often without a morsel of bread in the house, whilst many an idle profligate fellow — not worthy to clean your honour's shoes — is living in a palace in riot and profusion, and often risks on a single card more money than a sober pain-staking labourer can earn all his life. Your honour know I tell nothing but the truth. They storm at a poor man worse than a mercenary magistrate, when asked for a penny by the old, the lame, or the blind. Your honour also knows, when they want to trick an innocent maiden out of her virtue, they spend more money, than would suffice to fill the bellies of a large family for a twelvemonth.

Wilson:

You are in a moralizing humour — but go on —

Simon:

With these thoughts in my head, I could not help losing my temper. Is it right, says I — is it right that such knaves should possess almost all the gifts of nature, in which their fellow-creatures ought to share? Shall one man waste what would be enough for thousands? My heart ready to break, I took up my burden, and jogging on in a very bad humour saw a well dressed man in a cross-road on horse-back, advancing towards me. Suppose, thought I on a sudden, I should frighten this fine spark into a little charity? He might very well share with me his superfluities; and where there is no harm done — there can be no injury received. In this manner I reasoned.

Wilson:

An acute logician!

Simon:

Courage told me to accost him boldly; but conscience wanted to make a coward of me. After some altercation, I compromised the matter between them in this manner. One half of his money, says I to courage, swearing like a trooper, he shall give me. The other half, whispered I to conscience, he may keep. I want the means of subsistence, not wealth; and it is a great pity, so many worthy people — including myself — should perish with hunger.

Wilson:

Compassionate, as well as logical!

Simon:

I then threw my bundle amongst the bushes, and felt — as the man on horse-back approached me — I can't tell you how I felt. At one time I was as bold as a lion, and then again I trembled like a hare. "Please to stop a little," cried I, taking hold of the bridle with my left

hand, whilst I *accidentally* flourished my cudgel with my right; “be so kind as to lend me half of your money; and do not keep me long waiting, for I am in a confounded hurry. My friends expect me.” His courage was certainly less than mine; otherwise he would have seen my confusion and tremor, as I held the bridle. In short he threw down this old green purse. I took it into the wood, and after some time, seemed as if just awaking from a dream. — Now, Sir, if you will condescend to consider all the circumstances of this affair, I humbly presume you will by no means condemn honest Simon to the gallows.

Wilson:

Honest! honest, do you say? — No man, possessed of the smallest portion of honesty, could have committed so vile an action.

Simon:

Is it come to this? — I wish all the money was at the bottom of the sea. — But, my dear Sir, consult your usual good sense. Reflect with coolness on our circumstances, our deplorable situation.

Wilson:

No situation, however distressing, can warrant injustice.

Simon:

But I cannot conceive it to be so very unjust an action.

Wilson:

My mind, once for all I tell you, must be a stranger to rest, till the money is restored to the rightful proprietor.

Simon:

Where shall I find him? — The devil take the money, I say. But after all he parted with it in a manner, that shewed he could very well do without it.

Wilson:

That is nothing to the purpose. We are forbidden to wrong our fellow-creature in any, even the smallest, degree. Go up in the mountain. Perhaps you will see him on one or other of the roads leading to town.

Simon:

And if I see him, must I in good earnest—

Wilson:

What?

Simon:

Must I restore him the money with my own hands?

Wilson:

Without doubt. Take it, and act like an honest man.

AIR VII (Page 136)

Tune, If 'Tis Joy to wound a Lover

When misfortune sorely presses,
Mortal! call your courage forth;
He, who never felt distresses,
Never shew'd but half his worth;
Toss'd by all the storms of fate,
If we conquer, we are great! [Repeat]

Simon:

Well, well – I will trudge up the mountain, and keep a good look out for him, I warrant you. But listen – listen – I hear a horse. Who can it be? What if I should be taken up, tied neck and heels, and hanged like a dog! What a fool I am! always in dread of the worst – There is somebody coming however. He is fastening his bridle to the rails. – O Lud! O Lud! it is he! the very same! (*He conceals himself.*)

SCENE 7

(Wilson, Wilson Sr., Simon *peeping*)

Wilson Sr.:

Excuse, Sir, my intrusion. I have lost me way, and cannot find my servant, who left me for the purpose of discovering the right road. (*He observe Simon.*) Heaven! be merciful to me, or I shall certainly be murdered!

Simon:

(*Aside*) That is sure enough. O! I am tried, condemned, and executed.

Wilson:

You appear, Sir, unaccountably agitated.

Wilson Sr.:

Good Mr. Highwaymen! have pity on a weak, defenseless old man. That worthy gentleman (*pointing to Simon*) was humane enough to

content himself with a part of my money. The little that is left will barely suffice to defray my travelling expenses.

Wilson:

You labour, Sir, under a great mistake. We are not robbers, but unfortunate people, who have taken refuge in this forest from the frowns of an ungenerous world. Pardon us, I beseech you, for the terror you have undergone. Simon! bring the gentleman his money.

SCENE 8

(Wilson, Wilson Sr., Simon)

Simon:

I am — as you see, Sir — overwhelmed with shame and sorrow. Be pleased to receive what desperation and the dread of starving compelled me to take from you. Alas! Sir, I was driven to undertake this business, by no means suited to my talents, by my master — I mean, Sir — by my master's distresses, and those of his family. Heaven, I hope, as well as your worship, will pardon me for an action, which I abhor in my heart. Here is your purse, Sir — take it, and with it its full contents; a load, which would have lain heavy upon my mind the longest day I have to live. I was looking out for your worship for this very purpose.

Wilson Sr.:

(To Wilson, after a pause.) I have misconceived, Sir, your character. Pardon my error. I now find, that you have every claim to compassion and relief. Oblige me in accepting this trifle. Nay, Sir — I am in earnest. A larger sum should be at your service; but a traveller is seldom overburdened with money.

Wilson:

It must not be. We should be altogether undeserving of your good opinion, should we deprive you of what if absolutely necessary for your journey.

Wilson Sr.:

Will you not allow me the pleasure of evincing my esteem for you? Surely I am the most proper judge of what is sufficient for my expenses. At least, Sir, I may present it to your worthy attendant.

Simon:

I thank you, Sir, from the bottom of my heart. — *(Aside)* Honest Simon lays no claim to mock-modesty.

Wilson:

Accept, Sir, my warmest gratitude. Better circumstances were once my lot. I could then enjoy the supreme delight of conferring a benefit.

Wilson Sr.:

My worthy friend! (pardon the liberty I take in thus addressing you) your conversation and behaviour convince me, that your mind is – and ought to be – superior to your present condition. Your misfortunes must have flowed from no common source.

Wilson:

Alas! Sir, all I now possess is undeviating probity, and an unsullied conscience.

Wilson Sr.:

How enviable is your situation! I am rich, very rich; yet would I part with all my possessions in exchange for tranquility of mind. Like an avenging friend, conscience unceasingly afflicts me; nor can I promise myself the satisfaction of being able to expiate my offense at least in this world. Merciful Heaven! should I not succeed in my endeavours to find those, who suffer from my injustice, how severe must be the anguish, which is reserved for my last hours!

Wilson:

Your tears, Sir, afflict me.

Simon:

(Aside) I begin to think the old fellow is the greatest knave in the company.

Wilson Sr.:

You are yet young. Listen to the advice of an old man, who counsels you to lay up in your youth the treasure of a good conscience, as the chief comfort of your age. How sharp is self-reproach in the evening of life! Its stings incessantly goad the unhappy wretch, till they hurry him to a premature grave. Long have I been in pursuit of those, who from my cruelty – excruciating reflection! – from my cruelty have probably either expired in misery, or still experience all the horrors of extreme distress.

Simon:

(Aside) I am heartily glad, he has not been guilty of murder.

Wilson Sr.:

What spot of earth contains their dust! What pitying skies shed their

dews on their graves! Guide me, gracious Heaven! to where they rest in anguish. There will I tear up by the roots my grey hairs, scatter them to all the winds of heaven, and in the bitterness of woe await my ardently expected dissolution. O! most unfortunate of fathers! — But perhaps I have no child! (*In taking out his handkerchief he drops a letter, which Simon pick up and endeavors to read.*) You sympathize with me. Indeed, my friend! your pity is not ill-bestowed. I am — Heaven knows, I am — an object of compassion.

SCENE 11

(Wilson, Wilson Sr., Simon, Amelia)

Amelia:

My dear! you detain our venerable guest too long in the damp evening air. You are certainly fatigued, Sir. — Be pleased to enter our humble habitation. Your great coat and boots must be cumbersome to you.

Wilson Sr.:

Your humane invitation, Madam, is extremely acceptable.

Simon:

What is this I read? or am I in a dream? Is this paper yours?

Wilson Sr.:

What paper?

Simon:

Worthy Sir! excuse my freedom. — Is this your name? (*Delivers the paper.*)

Wilson Sr.:

It is.

Simon:

O! I am wild with joy. Master! fall down on your marrow-bones, and embrace the old gentleman's knees. Mistress! throw your lily-white arms round his neck. He is your father. — Blessings on the old green purse, I say, that brought him here. — (*Aside*) This gentleman, Sir, is your son; and this lady is Madam Amelia — your daughter — and I am honest Simon at your worship's service. (*He goes out.*)

Wilson:

(*Kneeling*) O! my father! am I once more blest in beholding you!

Amelia:

(Kneeling) May I too presume thus humble to implore your favour, to claim you as *my* father, and to dedicate my days to your future ease and comfort!

Wilson Sr.:

My children! — Joy almost deprives me of the power of utterance. Rise, my son! — my daughter! — George! you are considerably altered. Now I recollect your features, although greatly impaired by affliction. Much have you suffered from my cruelty; but you are still my son — Nature asserts her rights. Good Heaven! how unexpectedly am I restored to peace of mind!

Simon:

(Returning with William.) Kneel down, my brave lad! and ask grand-papa's blessing. Now ye are all happy — and I as much as any of you. A moment has driven away all our sorrows; thanks to Simon's cleverness, and the virtues of the old green purse. A little while ago I was half mad with grief, and now I am quite foolish with joy.

Wilson Sr.:

Rise, my child! support me, my son! my transports exceed my strength. Embrace me, both of ye, embrace your father. Is this youth your son? Henceforth he shall be mine; and Amelia my daughter.

Amelia:

I am, I am; and will ever approve myself your daughter.

Wilson Sr.:

Providence has at length put an end to my woes. Three years have I suffered the torments of a disturbed conscience. A severe fit of sickness almost reduced me to the grave, and my mind was pierced with sorrow at the apprehended approach of death, because of my injustice to you. Great was my affliction, my children! How did I, almost in despair, call upon the Almighty! Great Power! I exclaimed, snatch me not away in this agony of mind, till I have once more seen my son; till I embrace him, and acknowledge to him my injustice! Let me then expire in his arms with a reconciled and cheerful mind!

Simon:

You must have been in a terrible taking, old gentleman! *(Aside)* and well you might. — Here is a chair for your honour.

Wilson Sr.:

(*Seated*) As you quitted your first place of residence, my inquiries were fruitless. I have traversed various regions in quest of you. Blessed be the hour, which ensures felicity to my declining age! Forgive me, my son! for my unrelenting severity. In truth it brought with it its own punishment.

Wilson:

Forgive you, my father! — I alone am the object of pardon.

SCENE THE LAST

(Wilson, Wilson Sr., Amelia, William, Simon, Deborah)

Deborah:

Supper is ready, Madam.

Simon:

Who wants your company, Mrs. Deborah Dishcloth?

Deborah:

The fellow, I believe, is crazy. You graceless varlet! you scapegallows! how dare you speak to me in this manner — before so much company?

Amelia:

For shame, Simon! — Peace, Deborah! — Let all be harmony. Notwithstanding your little quarrels, I know you love one another in your hearts. Let me beseech you, Sir, (*to Wilson Sr.*) no longer to reproach yourself; but enter our cottage. We all stand in need of composure, after having experienced the extremes of grief, of hope, and of joy. Let us now bend in gratitude to Heaven!

FINALE (Page 145)

DUET

Tune, *Guardian Angels* [no longer extant]

Wilson:

Nature! to thy throne thus bending,
Hear a son —

Amelia:

— A daughter too!

Both:

Grief no more our bosoms rending,
Brighter prospects now we view.

Wilson:

Let him, Heaven! thy favours share!

Amelia:

Make him thy peculiar care!

Both:

And in death's awful hour
On him thy blessings pour,
Who thus preserves a faithful pair.

Tune, The Babes in the Wood

William:

Dear Grand-papa! indeed, indeed!
I love you passing well.
To you with joy I'll sing and read,
And pretty stories tell.
I mean to copy all your ways,
Instructed by mama;
That wond'ring crouds the youth may praise,
Who loves his Grand-papa.

Tune, Good-morning to your Night-cap

Deborah:

If she may be bold, Sir,
Poor Debby takes upon her,
Although you are not old, Sir,
To tend and nurse your honour.
With happy art
I'll play my part,
With soup and sago cheer your heart;
For you I'll pray.
And bid each day
Good-morning to your night-cap.

Simon:

Since now our cares are over,
I sue for Debby's favour;

No more I'll play the rover,
But stick to her for ever.
To you — and you
My thanks are due;
Your worship claims my service too.
For you I'll pray.
And bid each day
Good-morning to your night-cap.

Tune, How happy a Life does a Miller posses [no longer extant]

Wilson Sr.:

Affection! continue to warm ev'ry breast;
Henceforth I shall hail thee the welcomest guest.
To nature if just, we most evils defy;
It charms us on earth, and conducts to the sky.

If fond of our friends and our kindred we prove,
Our country may safely depend on our love.
Then may true affection each bosom possess!
'Tis the parent of union! the source of success!

All in Chorus:

If fond of our friends and our kindred we prove,
Our country may safely depend on our love.
Then may true affection each bosom possess!
'Tis the parent of union! the source of success!

FINIS