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## JOHN GAY

1685–1732

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The career of John Gay encompasses most of the ways that a talented but indigent writer of the early eighteenth century could try to make a living: publication, patronage, odd jobs at court, and the theater. After a good education at school in Devon, he went to London at seventeen to try his luck as apprentice to a dealer in silks. Five years later he became secretary to a friend from school, the writer and entrepreneur Aaron Hill, who introduced him to the publishing world and literary circles. Eventually, leading authors in London adopted Gay as a favorite; with Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, and Thomas Parnell, he founded the Scriblerus Club, famous for its literary satires and practical jokes. Friends like these helped him obtain the patrons and political appointments that supported him. The same Scriblerian influence shaped the mixture of high Virgilian style and rustic humor in his first successful poem, *The Shepherd's Week* (1714), a burlesque pastoral. Here and in his other verse Gay shows off his special gifts: lightness of touch, a keen eye for homely details, and an irony that exposes the disparity between high poetic expectations and the coarse reality of the way people live. Two years later a mock georgic, *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, revealed that the town could be as rough as the country, and far more corrupting. Gay's hopes for affluence were blasted by the collapse of South Sea stock in 1721. His popularity and financial security rose to new heights, however, with the phenomenal success of his verse *Fables* (1727; a second set was published posthumously in 1738) and above all *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), which made him rich. But he did not enjoy his prosperity for long. A sequel, *Polly* (1729), was banned from the stage by Walpole; and although the printed version sold very well, the tension may have precipitated the illness that led a few years later to his death.

Audiences have always loved *The Beggar's Opera*. Nothing quite like it had ever been seen on the London stage; when Congreve read the script, he said, "It would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly." On opening night, according to Pope, Gay's friends were anxious, "till we were very much encouraged by overhearing

the Duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, say, 'It will do—it must do! I see it in the eyes of them.'" The duke was right. The play quickly became the talk of the town, it ran for a record sixty-two performances, and during the rest of the century it kept being revived. At first the shock of pleasure must have been sparked by daring thrusts at people and things in the news. Italian opera is one obvious target. Although it was preposterously artificial and costly, with lavish scenery and imported stars, opera had been the rage of fashionable London. Now Gay turned the music over to beggars, or actors playing thieves and whores, and gave them popular British tunes to sing instead of showy foreign arias.

On this stage, moreover, the underworld rose to the surface. Crime was a constant, brutal threat in early eighteenth-century London, and stories about notorious criminals (such as Moll Flanders) poured from the press. In the corrupt legal system, which rewarded racketeers for informing on (or "peaching") less powerful felons, the line between those who broke the law and those who enforced it was often smudged. Jonathan Wild, the "Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and Ireland," became rich and famous by manipulating this system (before the executioner caught up with him); he serves as a model for Peachum. By comparison, a forthright highwayman and killer like Macheath might seem rather gallant. But the electricity of the play comes from its superimposition of these criminals on heads of state, especially the prime minister, Robert Walpole. Playgoers recognized Walpole everywhere. In Act 2, scene 10, for instance, when Peachum and Lockit argue and conspire—"like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends"—the audience roared at the allusion to Walpole and Lord Townshend, his ally and brother-in-law (at an early performance, Walpole himself is said to have won over the crowd by calling for an encore). Spectators saw a picture of their own times on the stage: a society driven by greed, where everything, including justice and love, was for sale.

Yet *The Beggar's Opera* has lasted beyond its age. The parallel between high life and low life turned out to be more than a trick; it still rings true when audiences reflect on those who hold power today. Brecht's and Weill's famous *Threepenny Opera* adapted Gay's story to the sinister conditions of Germany in the 1920s; gang lords, fascists, and capitalistic bosses all seem the same. Little people go to jail, the high ones get away. That worldly and cynical message, seasoned with wit, continues to make sense to people who compare their ideals of government, society, and law to things as they are.

Pope's epitaph on Gay, inscribed in Westminster Abbey, begins this way:

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;  
In wit, a man; simplicity, a child;  
With native humor tempering virtuous rage,  
Formed to delight at once and lash the age.

But Gay's own epitaph is far less pious:

Life is a jest, and all things show it;  
I thought so once, but now I know it.

# The Beggar's Opera

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE<sup>1</sup>

### *Men*

PEACHUM	ROBIN OF BAGSHOT
LOCKIT	NIMMING NED
MACHEATH	HARRY PADDINGTON
FILCH	MATT OF THE MINT
JEMMY TWITCHER	BEN BUDGE
CROOK-FINGERED JACK	BEGGAR
WAT DREARY	PLAYER
CONSTABLES, DRAWER, TURNKEY, ETC.	

### *Women*

MRS. PEACHUM	MRS. VIXEN
POLLY PEACHUM	BETTY DOXY
LUCY LOCKIT	JENNY DIVER
DIANA TRAPES	MRS. SLAMMEKIN
MRS. COAXER	SUKY TAWDRY
DOLLY TRULL	MOLLY BRAZEN

### *Introduction*

BEGGAR, PLAYER

**BEGGAR** If poverty be a title to poetry, I am sure nobody can dispute mine. I own myself of the Company of Beggars; and I make one at their weekly festivals at St. Giles's. I have a small yearly salary for my catches,<sup>2</sup> and am welcome to a dinner there whenever I please, which is more than most poets can say.

**PLAYER** As we live by the Muses, 'tis but gratitude in us to encourage poetical merit wherever we find it. The Muses, contrary to all other ladies, pay no distinction to dress, and never partially mistake the pertness of embroidery for wit, nor the modesty of want for dullness. Be the author who he will, we push his play as far as it will go. So (though you are in want) I wish you success heartily.

**BEGGAR** This piece I own was originally writ for the celebrating the marriage of James Chanter and Moll Lay, two most excellent ballad singers. I have introduced the similes that are in all your celebrated operas: the swallow, the moth, the bee, the ship, the flower, etc. Besides, I have a prison scene, which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic. As to the parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that

1. The names of characters reflect their trades. Peachum ("peach 'em") is an informer, Lockit a jailer, Macheath a "son of the heath" or highwayman, Twitcher and Diver pickpockets, Nimming Ned a thief, Budge a burglar, Trull and Doxy harlots. Dreary ("gory") suggests a cutthroat; Bagshot Heath was known for highway robberies; Pad-

dington ("pad," a highwayman) was where criminals were hanged; the Mint was a sanctuary for outlaws. Trapes and Slammekin are slatterns.

2. Rounds, in which one singer follows or chases the words of another. St. Giles was a slum named after the patron saint of beggars and lepers.

it is impossible for either of them to take offense.<sup>3</sup> I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative.<sup>4</sup> Excepting this, as I have consented to have neither prologue nor epilogue, it must be allowed an opera in all its forms. The piece indeed hath been heretofore frequently represented by ourselves in our great room at St. Giles's, so that I cannot too often acknowledge your charity in bringing it now on the stage.

PLAYER But I see 'tis time for us to withdraw; the actors are preparing to begin. Play away the overture. [Exeunt.]

### Act 1

#### SCENE I *Peachum's house*

PEACHUM *sitting at a table with a large book of accounts before him.*

AIR 1. An old woman clothed in gray<sup>5</sup>

*Through all the employments of life  
Each neighbor abuses his brother;  
Whore and rogue they call husband and wife;  
All professions be-rogue one another.  
The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,  
The lawyer be-knaves the divine;  
And the statesman, because he's so great,  
Thinks his trade as honest as mine.*

A lawyer is an honest employment, so is mine. Like me too he acts in a double capacity, both against rogues and for 'em; for 'tis but fitting that we should protect and encourage cheats, since we live by them.

#### SCENE 2

PEACHUM, FILCH

FILCH Sir, Black Moll hath sent word her trial comes on in the afternoon, and she hopes you will order matters so as to bring her off.

PEACHUM Why, she may plead her belly<sup>6</sup> at worst; to my knowledge she hath taken care of that security. But as the wench is very active and industrious, you may satisfy her that I'll soften the evidence.

FILCH Tom Gagg, sir, is found guilty.

PEACHUM A lazy dog! When I took him the time before, I told him what he would come to if he did not mend his hand. This is death without reprieve. I may venture to book him. [Writes.] For Tom Gagg, forty pounds.<sup>7</sup> Let Betty Sly know that I'll save her from transportation,<sup>8</sup> for I can get more by her staying in England.

3. Two famous divas, Faustina and Cuzzoni, had recently feuded on stage.

4. Operatic declamation, midway between singing and speaking.

5. The name of the ballad whose tune Peachum sings.

6. Claim to be pregnant, hence not at risk of execution.

7. The reward when informing resulted in execution.

8. Criminals were sentenced to banishment abroad.

FILCH Betty hath brought more goods into our lock to-year<sup>9</sup> than any five of the gang; and in truth, 'tis a pity to lose so good a customer.

PEACHUM If none of the gang take her off,<sup>1</sup> she may, in the common course of business, live a twelve-month longer. I love to let women scape. A good sportsman always lets the hen partridges fly, because the breed of the game depends upon them. Besides, here the law allows us no reward; there is nothing to be got by the death of women—except our wives.

FILCH Without dispute, she is a fine woman! 'Twas to her I was obliged for my education, and (to say a bold word) she hath trained up more young fellows to the business than the gaming-table.

PEACHUM Truly, Filch, thy observation is right. We and the surgeons are more beholden to women than all the professions besides.<sup>2</sup>

AIR 2. The bonny gray-eyed morn

FILCH *'Tis woman that seduces all mankind,  
By her we first were taught the wheedling arts:  
Her very eyes can cheat; when most she's kind,  
She tricks us of our money with our hearts.  
For her, like wolves by night we roam for prey,  
And practise every fraud to bribe her charms;  
For suits of love, like law, are won by pay,  
And beauty must be fee'd into our arms.*

PEACHUM But make haste to Newgate,<sup>3</sup> boy, and let my friends know what I intend; for I love to make them easy one way or other.

FILCH When a gentleman is long kept in suspense, penitence may break his spirit ever after. Besides, certainty gives a man a good air upon his trial, and makes him risk another without fear or scruple. But I'll away, for 'tis a pleasure to be the messenger of comfort to friends in affliction.

SCENE 3

PEACHUM

But 'tis now high time to look about me for a decent execution against next Sessions.<sup>4</sup> I hate a lazy rogue, by whom one can get nothing 'till he is hanged. A register of the gang, [*reading*] Crook-fingered Jack. A year and a half in the service; let me see how much the stock owes to his industry: one, two, three, four, five gold watches, and seven silver ones. A mighty clean-handed fellow! Sixteen snuff-boxes, five of them of true gold. Six dozen of handkerchiefs, four silver-hilted swords, half a dozen of shirts, three tye-perriwigs, and a piece of broad cloth. Considering these are only the fruits of his leisure hours, I don't know a prettier fellow, for no man alive hath a more engaging presence of mind upon the road. Wat Dreary, alias Brown Will, an irregular dog, who hath an underhand way of disposing of his goods. I'll try him only for a Sessions or two longer upon his good behavior. Harry Paddington, a poor petty-larceny rascal, without the least genius; that fellow, though he were to live these six months, will

9. This year. "Lock": a house where stolen goods are kept.

1. Inform on her.

2. Surgeons treated venereal diseases.

3. The chief London prison.

4. Trials of criminals, held eight times a year.

never come to the gallows with any credit. Slippery Sam; he goes off the next Sessions, for the villain hath the impudence to have views of following his trade as a tailor, which he calls an honest employment. Matt of the Mint; listed<sup>5</sup> not above a month ago, a promising sturdy fellow, and diligent in his way; somewhat too bold and hasty, and may raise good contributions on the public, if he does not cut himself short by murder. Tom Tipple, a guzzling soaking sot, who is always too drunk to stand himself, or to make others stand.<sup>6</sup> A cart<sup>7</sup> is absolutely necessary for him. Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Caruncle, alias Bob Booty.<sup>8</sup>

## SCENE 4

PEACHUM, MRS. PEACHUM

MRS. PEACHUM What of Bob Booty, husband? I hope nothing bad hath betided him. You know, my dear, he's a favorite customer of mine. 'Twas he made me a present of this ring.

PEACHUM I have set his name down in the black-list, that's all, my dear; he spends his life among women, and as soon as his money is gone, one or other of the ladies will hang him for the reward, and there's forty pound lost to us forever.

MRS. PEACHUM You know, my dear, I never meddle in matters of death; I always leave those affairs to you. Women indeed are bitter bad judges in these cases, for they are so partial to the brave that they think every man handsome who is going to the camp or the gallows.

## AIR 3. Cold and raw

*If any wench Venus's girdle wear,  
Though she be never so ugly;  
Lilies and roses will quickly appear,  
And her face look wond'rous smugly.  
Beneath the left ear so fit but a cord,  
(A rope so charming a zone is!)  
The youth in his cart hath the air of a lord,  
And we cry, "There dies an Adonis!"<sup>9</sup>*

But really, husband, you should not be too hard hearted, for you never had a finer, braver set of men than at present. We have not had a murder among them all, these seven months. And truly, my dear, that is a great blessing.

PEACHUM What a dickens is the woman always a-whimpering about murder for? No gentleman is ever looked upon the worse for killing a man in his own defense; and if business cannot be carried on without it, what would you have a gentleman do?

MRS. PEACHUM If I am in the wrong, my dear, you must excuse me, for nobody can help the frailty of an over-scrupulous conscience.

PEACHUM Murder is as fashionable a crime as a man can be guilty of. How many fine gentlemen have we in Newgate every year, purely upon

5. Enlisted.

6. Stand still; i.e., when held up.

7. Carriage to the gallows.

8. This became a nickname for Walpole.

9. Venus's lover. The magic powers of Venus's belt ("girdle"), which could make any woman sexy, are associated with the rope or belt ("zone") around a condemned man's neck.

that article! If they have wherewithal to persuade the jury to bring it in manslaughter, what are they the worse for it? So, my dear, have done upon this subject. Was Captain Macheath here this morning, for the bank notes he left with you last week?

MRS. PEACHUM Yes, my dear; and though the bank hath stopped payment, he was so cheerful and so agreeable! Sure there is not a finer gentleman upon the road than the Captain! If he comes from Bagshot at any reasonable hour he hath promised to make one this evening with Polly and me, and Bob Booty, at a party of quadrille.<sup>1</sup> Pray, my dear, is the Captain rich?

PEACHUM The Captain keeps too good company ever to grow rich. Mary-bone and the chocolate-houses<sup>2</sup> are his undoing. The man that proposes to get money by play should have the education of a fine gentleman, and be trained up to it from his youth.

MRS. PEACHUM Really, I am sorry upon Polly's account the Captain hath not more discretion. What business hath he to keep company with lords and gentlemen? He should leave them to prey upon one another.

PEACHUM Upon Polly's account! What, a plague, does the woman mean? Upon Polly's account!

MRS. PEACHUM Captain Macheath is very fond of the girl.

PEACHUM And what then?

MRS. PEACHUM If I have any skill in the ways of women, I am sure Polly thinks him a very pretty man.

PEACHUM And what then? You would not be so mad to have the wench marry him! Gamesters and highwaymen are generally very good to their whores, but they are very devils to their wives.

MRS. PEACHUM But if Polly should be in love, how should we help her, or how can she help herself? Poor girl, I am in the utmost concern about her.

AIR 4. Why is your faithful slave disdained?

*If love the virgin's heart invade,  
How, like a moth, the simple maid  
Still plays about the flame!  
If soon she be not made a wife,  
Her honor's singed, and then for life,  
She's—what I dare not name.*

PEACHUM Look ye, wife. A handsome wench in our way of business is as profitable as at the bar of a Temple<sup>3</sup> coffee-house, who looks upon it as her livelihood to grant every liberty but one. You see I would indulge the girl as far as prudently we can. In anything but marriage! After that, my dear, how shall we be safe? Are we not then in her husband's power? For a husband hath the absolute power over all a wife's secrets but her own. If the girl had the discretion of a court lady, who can have a dozen young fellows at her ear without complying with one, I should not matter it;<sup>4</sup> but Polly is tinder, and a spark will at once set her on a flame. Married! If the

1. A card game.

2. Popular haunts for gambling.

3. London college for lawyers.

4. Think it important.

wench does not know her own profit, sure she knows her own pleasure better than to make herself a property!<sup>5</sup> My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang. Married! If the affair is not already done, I'll terrify her from it, by the example of our neighbors.

MRS. PEACHUM Mayhap, my dear, you may injure the girl. She loves to imitate the fine ladies, and she may only allow the Captain liberties in the view of interest.

PEACHUM But 'tis your duty, my dear, to warn the girl against her ruin, and to instruct her how to make the most of her beauty. I'll go to her this moment, and sift her. In the meantime, wife, rip out the coronets and marks of these dozen of cambric handkerchiefs, for I can dispose of them this afternoon to a chap in the City.

## SCENE 5

MRS. PEACHUM

Never was a man more out of the way in an argument than my husband! Why must our Polly, forsooth, differ from her sex, and love only her husband? And why must Polly's marriage, contrary to all observation, make her the less followed by other men? All men are thieves in love, and like a woman the better for being another's property.

AIR 5. Of all the simple things we do

*A maid is like the golden ore,  
Which hath guineas intrinsical in't,  
Whose worth is never known, before  
It is tried and impressed in the Mint.  
A wife's like a guinea in gold,  
Stamped with the name of her spouse:  
Now here, now there, is bought, or is sold,  
And is current in every house.*

## SCENE 6

MRS. PEACHUM, FILCH

MRS. PEACHUM Come hither, Filch. I am as fond of this child, as though my mind misgave me he were my own. He hath as fine a hand at picking a pocket as a woman, and is as nimble-fingered as a juggler. If an unlucky Session does not cut the rope of thy life, I pronounce, boy, thou wilt be a great man in history. Where was your post last night, my boy?

FILCH I plied at the opera, madam; and considering 'twas neither dark nor rainy, so that there was no great hurry in getting chairs and coaches, made a tolerable hand on't. These seven handkerchiefs, madam.

MRS. PEACHUM Colored ones, I see. They are of sure sale from our warehouse at Redriff among the seamen.

FILCH And this snuffbox.

5. A husband had legal title to everything his wife possessed.



MRS. PEACHUM Set in gold! A pretty encouragement this to a young beginner.

FILCH I had a fair tug at a charming gold watch. Pox take the tailors for making the fobs so deep and narrow! It stuck by the way, and I was forced to make my escape under a coach. Really, madam, I fear I shall be cut off in the flower of my youth, so that every now and then (since I was pumped)<sup>6</sup> I have thoughts of taking up and going to sea.

MRS. PEACHUM You should go to Hockley in the Hole,<sup>7</sup> and to Marybone, child, to learn valor. These are the schools that have bred so many brave men. I thought, boy, by this time, thou hadst lost fear as well as shame. Poor lad! How little does he know as yet of the Old Bailey!<sup>8</sup> For the first fact I'll insure thee from being hanged; and going to sea, Filch, will come time enough upon a sentence of transportation. But now, since you have nothing better to do, even go to your book, and learn your catechism, for really a man makes but an ill figure in the Ordinary's paper,<sup>9</sup> who cannot give a satisfactory answer to his questions. But, hark you, my lad. Don't tell me a lie; for you know I hate a liar. Do you know of anything that hath passed between Captain Macheath and our Polly?

FILCH I beg you, madam, don't ask me; for I must either tell a lie to you or to Miss Polly; for I promised her I would not tell.

MRS. PEACHUM But when the honor of our family is concerned—

FILCH I shall lead a sad life with Miss Polly, if ever she come to know that I told you. Besides, I would not willingly forfeit my own honor by betraying anybody.

MRS. PEACHUM Yonder comes my husband and Polly. Come, Filch, you shall go with me into my own room, and tell me the whole story. I'll give thee a glass of a most delicious cordial that I keep for my own drinking.

## SCENE 7

## PEACHUM, POLLY

POLLY I know as well as any of the fine ladies how to make the most of myself and of my man too. A woman knows how to be mercenary, though she hath never been in a court or at an assembly.<sup>1</sup> We have it in our natures, papa. If I allow Captain Macheath some trifling liberties, I have this watch and other visible marks of his favor to show for it. A girl who cannot grant some things, and refuse what is most material, will make but a poor hand of her beauty, and soon be thrown upon the common.<sup>2</sup>

AIR 6. What shall I do to show how much I love her

*Virgins are like the fair flower in its luster,  
Which in the garden enamels the ground;  
Near it the bees in play flutter and cluster,  
And gaudy butterflies frolic around.  
But, when once plucked, 'tis no longer alluring,*

6. When pickpockets were caught, they were doused with water.

7. A place for brutal sports such as bear-baiting.

8. London's criminal court.

9. First offenders could escape the death sentence by pleading "benefit of clergy" if they passed

a literacy test given by the ordinary or chaplain of Newgate.

1. A public social affair.

2. Common law; common law; and a name for a prostitute.

*To Covent Garden<sup>3</sup> 'tis sent (as yet sweet),  
There fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring,  
Rots, stinks, and dies, and is trod under feet.*

PEACHUM You know, Polly, I am not against your toying and trifling with a customer in the way of business, or to get out a secret, or so. But if I find out that you have played the fool and are married, you jade you, I'll cut your throat, hussy. Now you know my mind.

## SCENE 8

PEACHUM, POLLY, MRS. PEACHUM

AIR 7. Oh London is a fine town

MRS. PEACHUM [*In a very great passion.*]

*Our Polly is a sad slut! nor heeds what we have taught her.*

*I wonder any man alive will ever rear a daughter!*

*For she must have both hoods and gowns, and hoops to swell her pride,*

*With scarfs and stays, and gloves and lace; and she will have men beside;*

*And when she's dressed with care and cost, all-tempting, fine and gay,*

*As men should serve a cowcumber,<sup>4</sup> she flings herself away.*

*Our Polly is a sad slut, etc.*

You baggage! You hussy! You inconsiderate jade! Had you been hanged, it would not have vexed me, for that might have been your misfortune; but to do such a mad thing by choice! The wench is married, husband.

PEACHUM Married! The Captain is a bold man, and will risk anything for money; to be sure he believes her a fortune. Do you think your mother and I should have lived comfortably so long together, if ever we had been married? Baggage!

MRS. PEACHUM I knew she was always a proud slut; and now the wench hath played the fool and married, because forsooth she would do like the gentry. Can you support the expense of a husband, hussy, in gaming, drinking and whoring? Have you money enough to carry on the daily quarrels of man and wife about who shall squander most? There are not many husbands and wives who can bear the charges of plaguing one another in a handsome way. If you must be married, could you introduce nobody into our family but a highwayman? Why, thou foolish jade, thou wilt be as ill-used, and as much neglected, as if thou hadst married a lord!

PEACHUM Let not your anger, my dear, break through the rules of decency, for the Captain looks upon himself in the military capacity, as a gentleman by his profession. Besides what he hath already, I know he is in a fair way of getting,<sup>5</sup> or of dying; and both these ways, let me tell you, are most excellent chances for a wife. Tell me hussy, are you ruined or no?

MRS. PEACHUM With Polly's fortune, she might very well have gone off to a person of distinction. Yes, that you might, you pouting slut!

3. A market where produce and prostitutes were bought.

4. Cucumber.

5. Acquiring wealth.

PEACHUM What, is the wench dumb? Speak, or I'll make you plead by squeezing out an answer from you. Are you really bound wife to him, or are you only upon liking?<sup>6</sup> [*Pinches her.*]

POLLY Oh! [*Screaming.*]

MRS. PEACHUM How the mother is to be pitied who hath handsome daughters! Locks, bolts, bars, and lectures of morality are nothing to them; they break through them all. They have as much pleasure in cheating a father and mother as in cheating at cards.

PEACHUM Why, Polly, I shall soon know if you are married, by Macheath's keeping from our house.

AIR 8. Grim king of the ghosts

POLLY *Can love be controlled by advice?  
Will Cupid our mothers obey?  
Though my heart were as frozen as ice,  
At his flame 'twould have melted away.  
When he kissed me so closely he pressed,  
'Twas so sweet that I must have complied;  
So I thought it both safest and best  
To marry, for fear you should chide.*

MRS. PEACHUM Then all the hopes of our family are gone for ever and ever!

PEACHUM And Macheath may hang his father and mother-in-law, in hope to get into their daughter's fortune.

POLLY I did not marry him (as 'tis the fashion) coolly and deliberately for honor or money. But I love him.

MRS. PEACHUM Love him! Worse and worse! I thought the girl had been better bred. O husband, husband! Her folly makes me mad! My head swims! I'm distracted! I can't support myself—O! [*Faints.*]

PEACHUM See, wench, to what a condition you have reduced your poor mother! A glass of cordial, this instant. How the poor woman takes it to heart! [*POLLY goes out, and returns with it.*] Ah hussy, now this is the only comfort your mother has left!

POLLY Give her another glass, sir; my mama drinks double the quantity whenever she is out of order. This, you see, fetches<sup>7</sup> her.

MRS. PEACHUM The girl shows such a readiness, and so much concern, that I could almost find in my heart to forgive her.

AIR 9. O Jenny, O Jenny, where hast thou been

MRS. PEACHUM *Oh Polly, you might have toyed and kissed.  
By keeping men off, you keep them on.*

POLLY *But he so teased me,  
And he so pleased me,  
What I did, you must have done.*

MRS. PEACHUM Not with a highwayman. You sorry slut!

PEACHUM A word with you, wife. 'Tis no new thing for a wench to take man without consent of parents. You know 'tis the frailty of woman, my dear.

6. On approval.

7. Revives.

MRS. PEACHUM Yes, indeed, the sex is frail. But the first time a woman is frail, she should be somewhat nice<sup>8</sup> methinks, for then or never is the time to make her fortune. After that, she hath nothing to do but to guard herself from being found out, and she may do what she pleases.

PEACHUM Make yourself a little easy; I have a thought shall soon set all matters again to rights. Why so melancholy, Polly? Since what is done cannot be undone, we must all endeavor to make the best of it.

MRS. PEACHUM Well, Polly, as far as one woman can forgive another, I forgive thee. Your father is too fond of you, hussy.

POLLY Then all my sorrows are at an end.

MRS. PEACHUM A mighty likely speech in troth, for a wench who is just married!

AIR 10. Thomas, I cannot

POLLY *I, like a ship in storms, was tossed,  
Yet afraid to put in to land;  
For seized in the port the vessel's lost,  
Whose treasure is contraband.  
The waves are laid,  
My duty's paid.  
O joy beyond expression!  
Thus, safe ashore,  
I ask no more,  
My all is in my possession.*

PEACHUM I hear customers in t'other room. Go, talk with 'em, Polly; but come to us again as soon as they are gone. But, hark ye, child, if 'tis the gentleman who was here yesterday about the repeating-watch,<sup>9</sup> say, you believe we can't get intelligence of it, till tomorrow, for I lent it to Suky Straddle, to make a figure with it tonight at a tavern in Drury Lane. If t'other gentleman calls for the silver-hilted sword, you know beetle-browed Jemmy hath it on, and he doth not come from Tunbridge till Tuesday night, so that it cannot be had till then.

SCENE 9

PEACHUM, MRS. PEACHUM

PEACHUM Dear wife, be a little pacified. Don't let your passion run away with your senses. Polly, I grant you, hath done a rash thing.

MRS. PEACHUM If she had had only an intrigue with the fellow, why the very best families have excused and huddled up a frailty of that sort. 'Tis marriage, husband, that makes it a blemish.

PEACHUM But money, wife, is the true fuller's earth<sup>1</sup> for reputations, there is not a spot or a stain but what it can take out. A rich rogue nowadays is fit company for any gentleman; and the world, my dear, hath not such a contempt for roguery as you imagine. I tell you, wife, I can make this match turn to our advantage.

8. Choosy.

9. A watch that strikes the hour and quarter

hour when a button is pressed.

1. Clay used for cleaning fabrics.

MRS. PEACHUM I am very sensible,<sup>2</sup> husband, that Captain Macheath is worth money, but I am in doubt whether he hath not two or three wives already, and then if he should die in a Session or two, Polly's dower would come into dispute.

PEACHUM That, indeed, is a point which ought to be considered.

AIR 11. A soldier and a sailor

*A fox may steal your hens, sir,  
A whore your health and pence, sir,  
Your daughter rob your chest, sir,  
Your wife may steal your rest, sir,  
A thief your goods and plate.  
But this is all but picking,  
With rest, pence, chest, and chicken;  
It ever was decreed, sir,  
If lawyer's hand is fee'd, sir,  
He steals your whole estate.*

The lawyers are bitter enemies to those in our way. They don't care that anybody should get a clandestine livelihood but themselves.

SCENE 10

MRS. PEACHUM, PEACHUM, POLLY

POLLY 'Twas only Nimming Ned. He brought in a damask window curtain, a hoop-petticoat, a pair of silver candlesticks, a perriwig, and one silk stocking, from the fire that happened last night.

PEACHUM There is not a fellow that is cleverer in his way, and saves more goods out of the fire than Ned. But now, Polly, to your affair; for matters must not be left as they are. You are married then, it seems?

POLLY Yes, sir.

PEACHUM And how do you propose to live, child?

POLLY Like other women, sir, upon the industry of my husband.

MRS. PEACHUM What, is the wench turned fool? A highwayman's wife, like a soldier's, hath as little of his pay as of his company.

PEACHUM And had not you the common views of a gentlewoman in your marriage, Polly?

POLLY I don't know what you mean, sir.

PEACHUM Of a jointure,<sup>3</sup> and of being a widow.

POLLY But I love him, sir. How then could I have thoughts of parting with him?

PEACHUM Parting with him! Why, that is the whole scheme and intention of all marriage articles. The comfortable estate of widowhood is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits. Where is the woman who would scruple to be a wife, if she had it in her power to be a widow whenever she pleased? If you have any views of this sort, Polly, I shall think the match not so very unreasonable.

2. Aware.

3. Property jointly held by a couple, hence inherited by the wife if her husband died.

POLLY How I dread to hear your advice! Yet I must beg you to explain yourself.

PEACHUM Secure what he hath got, have him peached the next Sessions, and then at once you are made a rich widow.

POLLY What, murder the man I love! The blood runs cold at my heart with the very thought of it.

PEACHUM Fie, Polly! What hath murder to do in the affair? Since the thing sooner or later must happen, I dare say, the Captain himself would like that we should get the reward for his death sooner than a stranger. Why, Polly, the Captain knows that as 'tis his employment to rob, so 'tis ours to take robbers; every man in his business. So that there is no malice in the case.

MRS. PEACHUM Ay, husband, now you have nicked the matter.<sup>4</sup> To have him peached is the only thing could ever make me forgive her.

AIR 12. Now Ponder well, ye parents dear

POLLY *O, ponder well! be not severe;  
So save a wretched wife!  
For on the rope that hangs my dear  
Depends poor Polly's life.*

MRS. PEACHUM But your duty to your parents, hussy, obliges you to hang him. What would many a wife give for such an opportunity!

POLLY What is a jointure, what is widowhood to me? I know my heart. I cannot survive him.

AIR 13. Le printemps rappelle aux armes<sup>5</sup>

*The turtle<sup>6</sup> thus with plaintive crying,  
Her lover dying,  
The turtle thus with plaintive crying,  
Laments her dove.  
Down she drops quite spent with sighing,  
Paired in death, as paired in love.*

Thus, sir, it will happen to your poor Polly.

MRS. PEACHUM What, is the fool in love in earnest then? I hate thee for being particular.<sup>7</sup> Why, wench, thou art a shame to thy very sex.

POLLY But hear me, mother. If you ever loved—

MRS. PEACHUM Those cursed playbooks she reads have been her ruin. One word more, hussy, and I shall knock your brains out, if you have any.

PEACHUM Keep out of the way, Polly, for fear of mischief, and consider of what is proposed to you.

MRS. PEACHUM Away, hussy. Hang your husband, and be dutiful.

## SCENE II

MRS. PEACHUM, PEACHUM [POLLY *listening*]

MRS. PEACHUM The thing, husband, must and shall be done. For the sake of intelligence<sup>8</sup> we must take other measures, and have him peached the

4. Hit the mark.

5. The spring calls to arms (French).

6. Turtledove.

7. Attached to one person; freakish.

8. Secret information.

next Session without her consent. If she will not know her duty, we know ours.

PEACHUM But really, my dear, it grieves one's heart to take off a great man. When I consider his personal bravery, his fine stratagem,<sup>9</sup> how much we have already got by him, and how much more we may get, methinks I can't find in my heart to have a hand in his death. I wish you could have made Polly undertake it.

MRS. PEACHUM But in a case of necessity—our own lives are in danger.

PEACHUM Then, indeed, we must comply with the customs of the world, and make gratitude give way to interest. He shall be taken off.

MRS. PEACHUM I'll undertake to manage Polly.

PEACHUM And I'll prepare matters for the Old Bailey.

## SCENE 12

## POLLY

Now I'm a wretch, indeed. Methinks I see him already in the cart, sweeter and more lovely than the nosegay in his hand! I hear the crowd extolling his resolution and intrepidity! What volleys of sighs are sent from the windows of Holborn,<sup>1</sup> that so comely a youth should be brought to disgrace! I see him at the tree! The whole circle are in tears! Even butchers weep! Jack Ketch<sup>2</sup> himself hesitates to perform his duty, and would be glad to lose his fee, by a reprieve. What then will become of Polly! As yet I may inform him of their design, and aid him in his escape. It shall be so. But then he flies, absents himself, and I bar my self from his dear dear conversation!<sup>3</sup> That too will distract me. If he keep out of the way, my papa and mama may in time relent, and we may be happy. If he stays, he is hanged, and then he is lost forever! He intended to lie concealed in my room, 'till the dusk of the evening. If they are abroad, I'll this instant let him out, lest some accident should prevent him.

[Exit, and returns.]

## SCENE 13

## POLLY, MACHEATH

AIR 14. Pretty parrot, say

MACHEATH

*Pretty Polly, say,  
When I was away,  
Did your fancy never stray  
To some newer lover?*

POLLY

*Without disguise,  
Heaving sighs,  
Doating eyes,  
My constant heart discover.  
Fondly let me lolll!*

MACHEATH

*O pretty, pretty Poll.*

9. Guile.

1. The street that connects Newgate to the gallows ("tree") at Tyburn.

2. The hangman (after a famous 17th-century executioner).

3. Intimate contact.

POLLY And are *you* as fond as ever, my dear?

MACHEATH Suspect my honor, my courage, suspect anything but my love. May my pistols misfire, and my mare slip her shoulder while I am pursued, if I ever forsake thee!

POLLY Nay, my dear, I have no reason to doubt you, for I find in the romance you lent me, none of the great heroes were ever false in love.

AIR 15. Pray, fair one, be kind

MACHEATH *My heart was so free,  
It roved like the bee,  
'Till Polly my passion requited;  
I sipped each flower,  
I changed every hour,  
But here every flower is united.*

POLLY Were you sentenced to transportation, sure, my dear, you could not leave me behind you—could you?

MACHEATH Is there any power, any force that could tear me from thee? You might sooner tear a pension out of the hands of a courtier, a fee from a lawyer, a pretty woman from a looking glass, or any woman from quadrille. But to tear me from thee is impossible!

AIR 16. Over the hills and far away

MACHEATH *Were I laid on Greenland's coast,  
And in my arms embraced my lass;  
Warm amidst eternal frost,  
Too soon the half year's night would pass.*

POLLY *Were I sold on Indian soil,  
Soon as the burning day was closed,  
I could mock the sultry toil,  
When on my charmer's breast reposed.*

MACHEATH *And I would love you all the day,  
POLLY Every night would kiss and play,  
MACHEATH If with me you'd fondly stray  
POLLY Over the hills and far away.*

Yes, I would go with thee. But oh! How shall I speak it? I must be torn from thee. We must part.

MACHEATH How? Part?

POLLY We must, we must. My papa and mama are set against thy life. They now, even now, are in search after thee. They are preparing evidence against thee. Thy life depends upon a moment.

AIR 17. Gin thou wert mine awn thing

*Oh what pain it is to part!  
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee?  
Oh what pain it is to part!  
Can thy Polly ever leave thee?  
But lest death my love should thwart,  
And bring thee to the fatal cart,*



*Thus I tear thee from my bleeding heart!  
Fly hence, and let me leave thee.*

One kiss and then—one kiss—begone—farewell.

MACHEATH My hand, my heart, my dear, is so riveted to thine, that I cannot unloose my hold.

POLLY But my papa may intercept thee, and then I should lose the very glimmering of hope. A few weeks, perhaps, may reconcile us all. Shall thy Polly hear from thee?

MACHEATH Must I then go?

POLLY And will not absence change your love?

MACHEATH If you doubt it, let me stay—and be hanged.

POLLY Oh how I fear! How I tremble! Go—but when safety will give you leave, you will be sure to see me again; for 'till then Polly is wretched.

AIR 18. Oh the broom

*[Parting, and looking back at each other with fondness; he at one door, she at the other.]*

MACHEATH *The miser thus a shilling sees,  
Which he's obliged to pay,  
With sighs resigns it by degrees,  
And fears 'tis gone for aye.*

POLLY *The boy, thus, when his sparrow's flown,  
The bird in silence eyes;  
But soon as out of sight 'tis gone,  
Whines, whimpers, sobs, and cries.*

## Act 2

### SCENE I A tavern near Newgate

JEMMY TWITCHER, CROOK-FINGERED JACK, WAT DREARY, ROBIN OF BAGSHOT, NIMMING NED, HENRY PADDINGTON, MATT OF THE MINT, BEN BUDGE, *and the rest of the gang, at the table, with wine, brandy, and tobacco.*

BEN But prithee, Matt, what is become of thy brother Tom? I have not seen him since my return from transportation.

MATT Poor brother Tom had an accident this time twelve-month, and so clever a made fellow he was, that I could not save him from those flaying rascals the surgeons; and now, poor man, he is among the otamies<sup>4</sup> at Surgeon's Hall.

BEN So it seems, his time was come.

JEMMY But the present time is ours, and nobody alive hath more. Why are the laws levelled at us? Are we more dishonest than the rest of mankind? What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms and the right of conquest.

JACK Where shall we find such another set of practical philosophers, who to a man are above the fear of death?

4. Skeletons ("anatomies"). The "accident" was hanging. "Clever a made": Well-made.

WAT Sound men, and true!

ROBIN Of tried courage, and indefatigable industry!

NED Who is there here that would not die for his friend?

HARRY Who is there here that would betray him for his interest?

MATT Show me a gang of courtiers that can say as much.

BEN We are for a just partition of the world, for every man hath a right to enjoy life.

MATT We retrench the superfluities of mankind. The world is avaricious, and I hate avarice. A covetous fellow, like a jackdaw, steals what he was never made to enjoy, for the sake of hiding it. These are the robbers of mankind, for money was made for the free-hearted and generous, and where is the injury of taking from another what he hath not the heart to make use of?

JEMMY Our several stations<sup>5</sup> for the day are fixed. Good luck attend us all. Fill the glasses.

AIR 19. Fill every glass

MATT *Fill every glass, for wine inspires us,  
And fires us  
With courage, love, and joy.  
Women and wine should life employ.  
Is there ought else on earth desirable?  
Fill every glass, etc.*

CHORUS

SCENE 2

*To them enter MACHEATH*

MACHEATH Gentlemen, well met. My heart hath been with you this hour; but an unexpected affair hath detained me. No ceremony, I beg you.

MATT We were just breaking up to go upon duty. Am I to have the honor of taking the air with you, sir, this evening upon the heath? I drink a dram now and then with the stagecoachmen in the way of friendship and intelligence; and I know that about this time there will be passengers upon the Western Road, who are worth speaking with.

MACHEATH I was to have been of that party, but—

MATT But what, sir?

MACHEATH Is there any man who suspects my courage?

MATT We have all been witnesses of it.

MACHEATH My honor and truth to the gang?

MATT I'll be answerable for it.

MACHEATH In the division of our booty, have I ever shown the least marks of avarice or injustice?

MATT By these questions something seems to have ruffled you. Are any of us suspected?

MACHEATH I have a fixed confidence, gentlemen, in you all, as men of honor, and as such I value and respect you. Peachum is a man that is useful to us.

5. Individual posts.

MATT Is he about to play us any foul play? I'll shoot him through the head.

MACHEATH I beg you, gentlemen, act with conduct and discretion. A pistol is your last resort.

MATT He knows nothing of this meeting.

MACHEATH Business cannot go on without him. He is a man who knows the world, and is a necessary agent to us. We have had a slight difference, and till it is accommodated I shall be obliged to keep out of his way. Any private dispute of mine shall be of no ill consequence to my friends. You must continue to act under his direction, for the moment we break loose from him, our gang is ruined.

MATT As a bawd to a whore, I grant you, he is to us of great convenience.

MACHEATH Make him believe I have quitted the gang, which I can never do but with life. At our private quarters I will continue to meet you. A week or so will probably reconcile us.

MATT Your instructions shall be observed. 'Tis now high time for us to repair to our several duties; so till the evening at our quarters in Moorfields<sup>6</sup> we bid you farewell.

MACHEATH I shall wish myself with you. Success attend you. [*Sits down melancholy at the table.*]

AIR 20. March in *Rinaldo*,<sup>7</sup> with drums and trumpets

MATT

*Let us take the road.*

*Hark I hear the sound of coaches!*

*The hour of attack approaches,*

*To your arms, brave boys, and load.*

*See the ball I hold!*

*Let the chemists<sup>8</sup> toil like asses,*

*Our fire their fire surpasses,*

*And turns all our lead to gold.*

[*The gang, ranged in the front of the stage, load their pistols, and stick them under their girdles; then go off singing the first part in chorus.*]

### SCENE 3

MACHEATH

What a fool is a fond wench! Polly is most confoundedly bit.<sup>9</sup> I love the sex. And a man who loves money might as well be contented with one guinea, as I with one woman. The town perhaps hath been as much obliged to me for recruiting it with free-hearted ladies, as to any recruiting officer in the army. If it were not for us and the other gentlemen of the sword, Drury Lane<sup>1</sup> would be uninhabited.

6. A district known as a "seminary of vice."

7. Opera by Handel.

8. Alchemists.

9. Taken in.

1. Associated with prostitutes.

AIR 21. Would you have a young virgin

*If the heart of a man is depressed with cares,  
The mist is dispelled when a woman appears;  
Like the notes of a fiddle, she sweetly, sweetly  
Raises the spirits, and charms our ears,  
Roses and lilies her cheeks disclose,  
But her ripe lips are more sweet than those.*

*Press her,  
Caress her,  
With blisses,  
Her kisses*

*Dissolve us in pleasure, and soft repose.*

I must have women. There is nothing unbends the mind like them. Money is not so strong a cordial for the time. Drawer! [*Enter DRAWER.*] Is the porter gone for all the ladies, according to my directions?

DRAWER I expect him back every minute. But you know, sir, you sent him as far as Hockley in the Hole, for three of the ladies, for one in Vinegar Yard, and for the rest of them somewhere about Lewkner's Lane. Sure some of them are below, for I hear the bar bell. As they come I will show them up. Coming, coming.

SCENE 4

MACHEATH, MRS. COAXER, DOLLY TRULL, MRS. VIXEN, BETTY DOXY, JENNY DIVER, MRS. SLAMMEKIN, SUKY TAWDRY, and MOLLY BRAZEN

MACHEATH Dear Mrs. Coaxer, you are welcome. You look charmingly today. I hope you don't want the repairs of quality, and lay on paint.<sup>2</sup> Dolly Trull! Kiss me, you slut; are you as amorous as ever, hussy? You are always so taken up with stealing hearts, that you don't allow yourself time to steal anything else. Ah Dolly, thou wilt ever be a coquette! Mrs. Vixen, I'm yours, I always loved a woman of wit and spirit; they make charming mistresses, but plaguey wives. Betty Doxy! Come hither, hussy. Do you drink as hard as ever? You had better stick to good wholesome beer; for in troth, Betty, strong waters<sup>3</sup> will in time ruin your constitution. You should leave those to your betters. What! and my pretty Jenny Diver too! As prim and demure as ever! There is not any prude, though ever so high bred, hath a more sanctified look, with a more mischievous heart. Ah! Thou art a dear artful hypocrite. Mrs. Slammekin! As careless and genteel as ever! All you fine ladies, who know your own beauty, affect an undress.<sup>4</sup> But see, here's Suky Tawdry come to contradict what I was saying. Everything she gets one way she lays out upon her back. Why, Suky, you must keep at least a dozen tallymen.<sup>5</sup> Molly Brazen! [*She kisses him.*] That's well done. I love a free-hearted wench. Thou hast a most agreeable assurance, girl, and art as willing as a turtle. But hark! I hear music. The harper is at the door. "If music be the food of love, play on."<sup>6</sup> E'er you seat yourselves,

2. Cosmetics. "Quality": women of high social position.  
3. Spirits.

4. Prefer casual clothes.  
5. Suppliers of clothes on credit.  
6. The opening line of *Twelfth Night*.

ladies, what think you of a dance? Come in. [*Enter HARPER.*] Play the French tune that Mrs. Slammekin was so fond of.

[*A dance a la ronde in the French manner; near the end of it this song and chorus.*]

## AIR 22. Cotillon

MACHEATH     *Youth's the season made for joys,  
Love is then our duty,  
She alone who that employs,  
Well deserves her beauty.  
Let's be gay,  
While we may,  
Beauty's a flower despised in decay.*

CHORUS         *Youth's the season etc.*

MACHEATH     *Let us drink and sport today,  
Ours is not tomorrow.  
Love with youth flies swift away,  
Age is nought but sorrow.  
Dance and sing,  
Time's on the wing,  
Life never knows the return of spring.*

CHORUS         *Let us drink etc.*

MACHEATH     Now, pray ladies, take your places. Here, fellow. [*Pays the HARPER.*] Bid the drawer bring us more wine. [*Exit HARPER.*] If any of the ladies choose gin, I hope they will be so free to call for it.

JENNY         You look as if you meant me. Wine is strong enough for me. Indeed, sir, I never drink strong waters, but when I have the colic.

MACHEATH     Just the excuse of the fine ladies! Why, a lady of quality is never without the colic. I hope, Mrs. Coaxer, you have had good success of late in your visits among the mercers.<sup>7</sup>

MRS. COAXER   We have so many interlopers.<sup>8</sup> Yet with industry, one may still have a little picking. I carried a silver flowered lute string and a piece of black padesoy<sup>9</sup> to Mr. Peachum's lock but last week.

MRS. VIXEN     There's Molly Brazen hath the ogle of a rattlesnake. She riveted a linen draper's eye so fast upon her that he was nicked of three pieces of cambric before he could look off.

MOLLY BRAZEN   Oh dear madam! But sure nothing can come up to your handling of laces! And then you have such a sweet deluding tongue. To cheat a man is nothing; but the woman must have fine parts indeed who cheats a woman!

MRS. VIXEN     Lace, madam, lies in a small compass, and is of easy conveyance. But you are apt, madam, to think too well of your friends.

MRS. COAXER   If any woman hath more art than another, to be sure, 'tis Jenny Diver. Though her fellow be never so agreeable, she can pick his pocket as coolly, as if money were her only pleasure. Now that is a command of the passions uncommon in a woman!

7. Dealers in fabrics.

8. I.e., competitors in thievery.

9. Expensive silks.

JENNY I never go to the tavern with a man, but in the view of business. I have other hours, and other sort of men, for my pleasure. But had I your address,<sup>1</sup> madam—

MACHEATH Have done with your compliments, ladies; and drink about. You are not so fond of me, Jenny, as you use to be.

JENNY 'Tis not convenient, sir, to show my fondness among so many rivals. 'Tis your own choice, and not the warmth of my inclination, that will determine you.

AIR 23. All in a misty morning

*Before the barn door crowing,  
The cock by hens attended,  
His eyes around him throwing,  
Stands for a while suspended.  
Then one he singles from the crew,  
And cheers the happy hen;  
With how do you do, and how do you do,  
And how do you do again.*

MACHEATH Ah Jenny! Thou art a dear slut.

DOLLY Pray, madam, were you ever in keeping?<sup>2</sup>

SUKY I hope, madam, I ha'n't been so long upon the town, but I have met with some good fortune as well as my neighbors.

DOLLY Pardon me, madam, I meant no harm by the question; 'twas only in the way of conversation.

SUKY Indeed, madam, if I had not been a fool, I might have lived very handsomely with my last friend. But upon his missing five guineas, he turned me off. Now I never suspected he had counted them.

MRS. SLAMMEKIN Who do you look upon, madam, as your best sort of keepers?

DOLLY That, madam, is thereafter as they be.<sup>3</sup>

MRS. SLAMMEKIN I, madam, was once kept by a Jew; and bating<sup>4</sup> their religion, to women they are a good sort of people.

SUKY Now for my part, I own I like an old fellow, for we always make them pay for what they can't do.

MRS. VIXEN A spruce prentice, let me tell you, ladies, is no ill thing, they bleed<sup>5</sup> freely. I have sent at least two or three dozen of them in my time to the plantations.<sup>6</sup>

JENNY But to be sure, sir, with so much good fortune as you have had upon the road, you must be grown immensely rich.

MACHEATH The road, indeed, hath done me justice, but the gaming table hath been my ruin.

AIR 24. When once I lay with another man's wife

JENNY *The gamesters and lawyers are jugglers<sup>7</sup> alike,  
If they meddle your all is in danger.  
Like gypsies, if once they can finger a souse,<sup>8</sup>*

1. Adroitness.

2. A kept mistress.

3. Depends on their behavior.

4. Except for.

5. Spend.

6. The colonies, where convicts were transported.

7. Tricksters.

8. A negligible coin.

*Your pockets they pick, and they pilfer your house,  
And give your estate to a stranger.*

A man of courage should never put anything to the risk but his life. These are the tools of a man of honor. Cards and dice are only fit for cowardly cheats, who prey upon their friends. [*She takes up his pistol. SUKY takes up the other.*]

SUKY This, sir, is fitter for your hand. Besides your loss of money, 'tis a loss to the ladies. Gaming takes you off from women. How fond could I be of you! But before company, 'tis ill bred.

MACHEATH Wanton hussies!

JENNY I must and will have a kiss to give my wine a zest.

[*They take him about the neck, and make signs to PEACHUM and the constables, who rush in upon him.*]

## SCENE 5

*To them, PEACHUM and constables.*

PEACHUM I seize you, sir, as my prisoner.

MACHEATH Was this well done, Jenny? Women are decoy ducks; who can trust them! Beasts, jades, jilts, harpies, furies, whores!

PEACHUM Your case, Mr. Macheath, is not particular. The greatest heroes have been ruined by women. But, to do them justice, I must own they are a pretty sort of creatures, if we could trust them. You must now, sir, take your leave of the ladies, and if they have a mind to make you a visit, they will be sure to find you at home. The gentleman, ladies, lodges in Newgate. Constables, wait upon the Captain to his lodgings.

AIR 25. When first I laid siege to my Chloris

MACHEATH *At the tree I shall suffer with pleasure,  
At the tree I shall suffer with pleasure,  
Let me go where I will,  
In all kinds of ill,  
I shall find no such Furies as these are.*

PEACHUM Ladies, I'll take care the reckoning shall be discharged.

[*Exit MACHEATH, guarded, with PEACHUM and the constables.*]

## SCENE 6

*The women remain.*

MRS. VIXEN Look ye, Mrs. Jenny, though Mr. Peachum may have made a private bargain with you and Suky Tawdry for betraying the Captain, as we were all assisting, we ought all to share alike.

MRS. COAXER I think Mr. Peachum, after so long an acquaintance, might have trusted me as well as Jenny Diver.

MRS. SLAMMEKIN I am sure at least three men of his hanging, and in a year's time too (if he did me justice), should be set down to my account.

DOLLY Mrs. Slammekin, that is not fair. For you know one of them was taken in bed with me.

JENNY As far as a bowl of punch or a treat, I believe Mrs. Suky will join with me. As for anything else, ladies, you cannot in conscience expect it.

MRS. SLAMMEKIN Dear madam—

DOLLY I would not for the world<sup>9</sup>—

MRS. SLAMMEKIN 'Tis impossible for me—

DOLLY As I hope to be saved, madam—

MRS. SLAMMEKIN Nay, then I must stay here all night—

DOLLY Since you command me.

[*Exeunt with great ceremony.*]

SCENE 7 *Newgate*

LOCKIT, *turnkeys*, MACHEATH, *constables*.

LOCKIT Noble Captain, you are welcome. You have not been a lodger of mine this year and half. You know the custom, sir. Garnish,<sup>1</sup> Captain, garnish. Hand me down those fetters there.

MACHEATH Those, Mr. Lockit, seem to be the heaviest of the whole set. With your leave, I should like the further pair better.

LOCKIT Look ye, Captain, we know what is fittest for our prisoners. When a gentleman uses me with civility, I always do the best I can to please him. Hand them down I say. We have them of all prices, from one guinea to ten, and 'tis fitting every gentleman should please himself.

MACHEATH I understand you, sir. [*Gives money.*] The fees here are so many, and so exorbitant, that few fortunes can bear the expense of getting off handsomely, or of dying like a gentleman.

LOCKIT Those, I see, will fit the Captain better. Take down the further pair. Do but examine them, sir. Never was better work. How genteelly they are made! They will sit as easy as a glove, and the nicest man in England might not be ashamed to wear them. [*He puts on the chains.*] If I had the best gentleman in the land in my custody, I could not equip him more handsomely. And so, sir, I now leave you to your private meditations.

SCENE 8

MACHEATH.

AIR 26. Courtiers, courtiers think it no harm

*Man may escape from rope and gun;  
Nay, some have outlived the doctor's pill;  
Who takes a woman must he undone,  
That basilisk<sup>2</sup> is sure to kill.  
The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets,  
So he that tastes woman, woman, woman,  
He that tastes woman, ruin meets.*

To what a woeful plight have I brought myself! Here must I (all day long, 'till I am hanged) be confined to hear the reproaches of a wench who lays her ruin at my door. I am in the custody of her father, and to be sure if he knows of the matter, I shall have a fine time on't betwixt this and my execution. But I promised the wench marriage. What signifies a promise

9. With exaggerated politeness, each gestures for the other to leave the room first.

1. Jailer's fee or bribe.

2. Mythical reptile whose breath and look were fatal.



to a woman? Does not man in marriage itself promise a hundred things that he never means to perform? Do all we can, women will believe us, for they look upon a promise as an excuse for following their own inclinations. But here comes Lucy, and I cannot get from her. Would I were deaf!

## SCENE 9

MACHEATH, LUCY.

LUCY You base man you! How can you look me in the face after what hath passed between us? See here, perfidious wretch, how I am forced to bear about the load of infamy<sup>3</sup> you have laid upon me. O Macheath! Thou hast robbed me of my quiet. To see thee tortured would give me pleasure!

AIR 27. A lovely lass to a friar came

*Thus when a good huswife sees a rat  
In her trap in the morning taken,  
With pleasure her heart goes pit a pat,  
In revenge for her loss of bacon.  
Then she throws him  
To the dog or cat,  
To be worried, crushed and shaken.*

MACHEATH Have you no bowels,<sup>4</sup> no tenderness, my dear Lucy, to see a husband in these circumstances?

LUCY A husband!

MACHEATH In every respect but the form, and that, my dear, may be said over us at any time. Friends should not insist upon ceremonies. From a man of honor, his word is as good as his bond.

LUCY 'Tis the pleasure of all you fine men to insult the women you have ruined.

AIR 28. 'Twas when the sea was roaring

*How cruel are the traitors,  
Who lie and swear in jest,  
To cheat unguarded creatures  
Of virtue, fame, and rest!  
Whoever steals a shilling,  
Through shame the guilt conceals;  
In love the perjured villain  
With boasts the theft reveals.*

MACHEATH The very first opportunity, my dear (have but patience), you shall be my wife in whatever manner you please.

LUCY Insinuating monster! And so you think I know nothing of the affair of Miss Polly Peachum. I could tear thy eyes out!

MACHEATH Sure Lucy, you can't be such a fool as to be jealous of Polly!

LUCY Are you not married to her, you brute, you?

3. Pregnancy.

4. Pity.

MACHEATH Married! Very good. The wench gives it out only to vex thee, and to ruin me in thy good opinion. 'Tis true, I go to the house; I chat with the girl, I kiss her, I say a thousand things to her (as all gentlemen do) that mean nothing, to divert myself; and now the silly jade hath set it about that I am married to her, to let me know what she would be at. Indeed, my dear Lucy, these violent passions may be of ill consequence to a woman in your condition.

LUCY Come, come, Captain, for all your assurance, you know that Miss Polly hath put it out of your power to do me the justice you promised me.

MACHEATH A jealous woman believes everything her passion suggests. To convince you of my sincerity, if we can find the Ordinary,<sup>5</sup> I shall have no scruples of making you my wife; and I know the consequence of having two at a time.

LUCY That you are only to be hanged, and so get rid of them both.

MACHEATH I am ready, my dear Lucy, to give you satisfaction—if you think there is any in marriage. What can a man of honor say more?

LUCY So then it seems you are not married to Miss Polly.

MACHEATH You know, Lucy, the girl is prodigiously conceited. No man can say a civil thing to her, but (like other fine ladies) her vanity makes her think he's her own for ever and ever.

AIR 29. The sun had loosed his weary teams

*The first time at the looking-glass  
The mother sets her daughter,  
The image strikes the smiling lass  
With self-love ever after.  
Each time she looks, she, fonder grown,  
Thinks every charm grows stronger.  
But alas, vain maid, all eyes but your own  
Can see you are not younger.*

When women consider their own beauties, they are all alike unreasonable in their demands; for they expect their lovers should like them as long as they like themselves.

LUCY Yonder is my father. Perhaps this way we may light upon the Ordinary, who shall try if you will be as good as your word. For I long to be made an honest woman.

SCENE 10

PEACHUM, LOCKIT *with an account book.*

LOCKIT In this last affair, Brother Peachum, we are agreed. You have consented to go halves in Macheath.

PEACHUM We shall never fall out about an execution. But as to that article, pray how stands our last year's account?

LOCKIT If you will run your eye over it, you'll find 'tis fair and clearly stated.

PEACHUM This long arrear<sup>6</sup> of the Government is very hard upon us! Can it be expected that we should hang our acquaintance for nothing, when

5. Chaplain.

6. Overdue reward money.

our betters will hardly save theirs without being paid for it. Unless the people in employment pay better, I promise them for the future, I shall let other rogues live besides their own.

LOCKIT Perhaps, brother, they are afraid these matters may be carried too far. We are treated too by them with contempt, as if our profession were not reputable.

PEACHUM In one respect indeed, our employment may be reckoned dishonest, because, like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends.

LOCKIT Such language, brother, anywhere else, might turn to your prejudice. Learn to be more guarded, I beg you.

AIR 30. How happy are we

*When you censure the age,  
Be cautious and sage,  
Lest the courtiers offended should be:  
If you mention vice or bribe,  
'Tis so pat to all the tribe,  
Each cries, "That was leveled at me!"*

PEACHUM Here's poor Ned Clincher's name, I see. Sure, brother Lockit, there was a little unfair proceeding in Ned's case; for he told me in the condemned hold,<sup>7</sup> that for value received, you had promised him a Session or two longer without molestation.

LOCKIT Mr. Peachum, this is the first time my honor was ever called in question.

PEACHUM Business is at an end if once we act dishonorably.

LOCKIT Who accuses me?

PEACHUM You are warm, brother.

LOCKIT He that attacks my honor, attacks my livelihood. And this usage, sir, is not to be born.

PEACHUM Since you provoke me to speak, I must tell you too that Mrs. Coaxer charges you with defrauding her of her information money, for the apprehending of curl-pated Hugh. Indeed, indeed, brother, we must punctually pay our spies, or we shall have no information.

LOCKIT Is this language to me, sirrah, who have saved you from the gallows, sirrah! [*Collaring each other.*]

PEACHUM If I am hanged, it shall be for ridding the world of an arrant rascal.

LOCKIT This hand shall do the office of the halter<sup>8</sup> you deserve, and throttle you—you dog!

PEACHUM Brother, brother, we are both in the wrong. We shall be both losers in the dispute—for you know we have it in our power to hang each other. You should not be so passionate.

LOCKIT Nor you so provoking.

PEACHUM 'Tis our mutual interest; 'tis for the interest of the world we should agree. If I said anything, brother, to the prejudice of your character, I ask pardon.

7. Prison cell.

8. Noose.

LOCKIT Brother Peachum, I can forgive as well as resent. Give me your hand. Suspicion does not become a friend.

PEACHUM I only meant to give you occasion to justify yourself. But I must now step home, for I expect the gentleman about this snuffbox, that Filch nimmed<sup>9</sup> two nights ago in the park. I appointed him at this hour.

## SCENE 11

LOCKIT, LUCY

LOCKIT Whence come you, hussy?

LUCY My tears might answer that question.

LOCKIT You have then been whimpering and fondling, like a spaniel, over the fellow that hath abused you.

LUCY One can't help love; one can't cure it. 'Tis not in my power to obey you, and hate him.

LOCKIT Learn to bear your husband's death like a reasonable woman. 'Tis not the fashion, nowadays, so much as to affect sorrow upon these occasions. No woman would ever marry, if she had not the chance of mortality for a release. Act like a woman of spirit, hussy, and thank your father for what he is doing.

AIR 31. Of a noble race was Shenkin

LUCY

*Is then his fate decreed, sir?*

*Such a man can I think of quitting?*

*When first we met, so moves me yet,*

*Oh see how my heart is splitting!*

LOCKIT Look ye, Lucy, there is no saving him. So I think you must even do like other widows: buy yourself weeds,<sup>1</sup> and be cheerful.

AIR 32. You'll think e'er many days ensue

*You'll think e'er many days ensue*

*This sentence not severe;*

*I hang your husband, child, 'tis true,*

*But with him hang your care.*

*Twang dang dillo dee.*

Like a good wife, go moan over your dying husband. That, child, is your duty. Consider, girl, you can't have the man and the money too. So make yourself as easy as you can, by getting all you can from him.

## SCENE 12

LUCY, MACHEATH

LUCY Though the Ordinary was out of the way today, I hope; my dear, you will, upon the first opportunity, quiet my scruples. Oh sir! My father's hard heart is not to be softened, and I am in the utmost despair.

MACHEATH But if I could raise a small sum—would not twenty guineas, think you, move him? Of all the arguments in the way of business, the

9. Stole.

1. Mourning clothes.

perquisite<sup>2</sup> is the most prevailing. Your father's perquisites for the escape of prisoners must amount to a considerable sum in the year. Money well timed, and properly applied, will do any thing.

AIR 33. London ladies

*If you at an office solicit your due,  
And would not have matters neglected,  
You must quicken the clerk with the perquisite too,  
To do what his duty directed.  
Or would you the frowns of a lady prevent,  
She too has this palpable failing,  
The perquisite softens her into consent;  
That reason with all is prevailing.*

LUCY What love or money can do shall be done; for all my comfort depends upon your safety.

SCENE 13

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY

POLLY Where is my dear husband? Was a rope ever intended for this neck! Oh let me throw my arms about it, and throttle thee with love! Why dost thou turn away from me? 'Tis thy Polly! 'Tis thy wife!

MACHEATH Was ever such an unfortunate rascal as I am!

LUCY Was there ever such another villain!

POLLY Oh Macheath! Was it for this we parted? Taken! Imprisoned! Tried! Hanged! Cruel reflection! I'll stay with thee 'till death. No force shall tear thy dear wife from thee now.—What means my love? Not one kind word! Not one kind look! Think what thy Polly suffers to see thee in this condition.

AIR 34. All in the downs

*Thus when the swallow, seeking prey,  
Within the sash<sup>3</sup> is closely pent,  
His consort, with bemoaning lay,  
Without sits pining for th' event.  
Her chattering lovers all around her skim;  
She heeds them not (poor bird!), her soul's with him.*

MACHEATH [*Aside.*] I must disown her. The wench is distracted.

LUCY Am I then bilked of my virtue? Can I have no reparation? Sure men were born to lie, and women to believe them! Oh villain! Villain!

POLLY Am I not thy wife? Thy neglect of me, thy aversion to me, too severely proves it. Look on me. Tell me, am I not thy wife?

LUCY Perfidious wretch!

POLLY Barbarous husband!

LUCY Hadst thou been hanged five months ago, I had been happy.

POLLY And I too. If you had been kind to me 'till death, it would not have vexed me—and that's no very unreasonable request (though from a wife) to a man who hath not above seven or eight days to live.

2. Tip or bribe.

3. Window.

LUCY Art thou then married to another? Hast thou two wives, monster?

MACHEATH If women's tongues can cease for an answer, hear me.

LUCY I won't. Flesh and blood can't bear my usage.

POLLY Shall I not claim my own? Justice bids me speak.

AIR 35. Have you heard of a frolicsome ditty

MACHEATH *How happy could I be with either,  
Were t'other dear charmer away!  
But while you thus tease me together,  
To neither a word will I say,  
But tol de rol, etc.*

POLLY Sure, my dear, there ought to be some preference shown to a wife. At least she may claim the appearance of it. He must be distracted with his misfortunes, or he could not use me thus!

LUCY Oh villain, villain! Thou hast deceived me. I could even inform against thee with pleasure. Not a prude wishes more heartily to have facts<sup>4</sup> against her intimate acquaintance, than I now wish to have facts against thee. I would have her satisfaction, and they should all out.

AIR 36. Irish trot

POLLY *I'm bubbled.<sup>5</sup>*  
LUCY *I'm bubbled.*  
POLLY *O how I am troubled!*  
LUCY *Bamboozled, and bit!*  
POLLY *My distresses are doubled.*  
LUCY *When you come to the tree, should the hangman refuse,  
These fingers, with pleasure, could fasten the noose.*  
POLLY *I'm bubbled, etc.*

MACHEATH Be pacified, my dear Lucy. This is all a fetch<sup>6</sup> of Polly's, to make me desperate with you in case I get off. If I am hanged, she would fain have the credit of being thought my widow. Really, Polly, this is no time for a dispute of this sort; for whenever you are talking of marriage, I am thinking of hanging.

POLLY And hast thou the heart to persist in disowning me?

MACHEATH And hast thou the heart to persist in persuading me that I am married? Why, Polly, dost thou seek to aggravate my misfortunes?

LUCY Really, Miss Peachum, you but expose yourself. Besides, 'tis barbarous in you to worry a gentleman in his circumstances.

AIR 37.

POLLY *Cease your funning;  
Force or cunning  
Never shall my heart trapan.<sup>7</sup>  
All these sallies  
Are but malice  
To seduce my constant man.*

4. Incriminating information.  
5. Cheated.

6. Ruse.  
7. Beguile.

'Tis most certain,  
 By their flirting  
 Women oft have envy shown;  
 Pleased to ruin  
 Others wooing,  
 Never happy in their own!

Decency, madam, methinks might teach you to behave yourself with some reserve with the husband, while his wife is present.

MACHEATH But seriously, Polly, this is carrying the joke a little too far.

LUCY If you are determined, madam, to raise a disturbance in the prison, I shall be obliged to send for the turnkey to show you the door. I am sorry, madam, you force me to be so ill-bred.

POLLY Give me leave to tell you, madam, these forward airs don't become you in the least, madam. And my duty, madam, obliges me to stay with my husband, madam.

AIR 38. Good morrow, gossip Joan

LUCY *Why how now, Madam Flirt?  
 If you thus must chatter;  
 And are for flinging dirt,  
 Let's try who best can spatter,  
 Madam Flirt!*

POLLY *Why how now, saucy jade?  
 Sure the wench is tipsy!  
 How can you see me made  
 The scoff of such a gipsy?  
 Saucy jade!*

[To him.]

[To her.]

SCENE 14

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY, PEACHUM

PEACHUM Where's my wench? Ah hussy! Hussy! Come you home, you slut; and when your fellow is hanged, hang yourself, to make your family some amends.

POLLY Dear, dear father, do not tear me from him. I must speak; I have more to say to him—Oh! Twist thy fetters about me, that he may not haul me from thee!

PEACHUM Sure all women are alike! If ever they commit the folly, they are sure to commit another by exposing themselves. Away, not a word more. You are my prisoner now, hussy.

AIR 39. Irish howl

POLLY *No power on earth can e'er divide  
 The knot that sacred love hath tied.  
 When parents draw against our mind,  
 The true-love's knot they faster bind.  
 Oh, oh ray, oh Amborah—oh, oh, etc.*

[Holding MACHEATH, PEACHUM pulling her.]

## SCENE 15

LUCY, MACHEATH

MACHEATH I am naturally compassionate, wife, so that I could not use the wench as she deserved; which made you at first suspect there was something in what she said.

LUCY Indeed, my dear, I was strangely puzzled.

MACHEATH If that had been the case, her father would never have brought me into this circumstance. No, Lucy, I had rather die than be false to thee.

LUCY How happy am I, if you say this from your heart! For I love thee so, that I could sooner bear to see thee hanged than in the arms of another.

MACHEATH But couldst thou bear to see me hanged?

LUCY O Macheath, I can never live to see that day.

MACHEATH You see, Lucy, in the account of love you are in my debt, and you must now be convinced that I rather choose to die than be another's. Make me, if possible, love thee more, and let me owe my life to thee. If you refuse to assist me, Peachum and your father will immediately put me beyond all means of escape.

LUCY My father, I know, hath been drinking hard with the prisoners, and I fancy he is now taking his nap in his own room. If I can procure the keys, shall I go off with thee, my dear?

MACHEATH If we are together, 'twill be impossible to lie concealed. As soon as the search begins to be a little cool, I will send to thee. 'Till then my heart is thy prisoner.

LUCY Come then, my dear husband, owe thy life to me. And though you love me not, be grateful. But that Polly runs in my head strangely.

MACHEATH A moment of time may make us unhappy forever.

AIR 40. The lass of Patie's mill

LUCY

*I like the fox shall grieve,  
Whose mate hath left her side,  
Whom hounds, from morn to eve,  
Chase o'er the country wide.  
Where can my lover hide?  
Where cheat the weary pack?  
If love be not his guide,  
He never will come back!*

## Act 3

SCENE 1 Newgate

LOCKIT, LUCY

LOCKIT To be sure, wench, you must have been aiding and abetting to help him to this escape.

LUCY Sir, here hath been Peachum and his daughter Polly, and to be sure they know the ways of Newgate as well as if they had been born and bred in the place all their lives. Why must all your suspicion light upon me?



LOCKIT Lucy, Lucy, I will have none of these shuffling<sup>8</sup> answers.

LUCY Well then—if I know anything of him I wish I may be burnt!

LOCKIT Keep your temper, Lucy, or I shall pronounce you guilty.

LUCY Keep yours, sir. I do wish I may be burnt. I do. And what can I say more to convince you?

LOCKIT Did he tip handsomely? How much did he come down with?

Come hussy, don't cheat your father, and I shall not be angry with you.

Perhaps you have made a better bargain with him than I could have done. How much, my good girl?

LUCY You know, sir, I am fond of him, and would have given money to have kept him with me.

LOCKIT Ah Lucy! Thy education might have put thee more upon thy guard, for a girl in the bar of an ale house is always besieged.

LUCY Dear sir, mention not my education, for 'twas to that I owe my ruin.

AIR 41. If love's a sweet passion

*When young at the bar you first taught me to score,  
And bid me be free of my lips, and no more,  
I was kissed by the parson, the squire, and the sot;  
When the guest was departed, the kiss was forgot.  
But his kiss was so sweet, and so closely he pressed,  
That I languished and pined 'till I granted the rest.*

If you can forgive me, sir, I will make a fair confession, for to be sure he hath been a most barbarous villain to me.

LOCKIT And so you have let him escape, hussy, have you?

LUCY When a woman loves, a kind look, a tender word can persuade her to anything. And I could ask no other bribe.

LOCKIT Thou wilt always be a vulgar slut, Lucy. If you would not be looked upon as a fool, you should never do anything but upon the foot of interest. Those that act otherwise are their own bubbles.<sup>9</sup>

LUCY But love, sir, is a misfortune that may happen to the most discreet woman, and in love we are all fools alike. Notwithstanding all he swore, I am now fully convinced that Polly Peachum is actually his wife. Did I let him escape (fool that I was!) to go to her? Polly will wheedle herself into his money, and then Peachum will hang him, and cheat us both.

LOCKIT So I am to be ruined because, forsooth, you must be in love! A very pretty excuse!

LUCY I could murder that impudent happy strumpet. I gave him his life, and that creature enjoys the sweets of it. Ungrateful Macheath!

AIR 42. South Sea ballad

*My love is all madness and folly,  
Alone I lie,  
Toss, tumble, and cry,  
What a happy creature is Polly!  
Was e'er such a wretch as I!  
With rage I redden like scarlet,  
That my dear inconstant varlet,*

8. Evasive.

9. Dupes.

*Stark blind to my charms,  
Is lost in the arms  
Of that jilt, that inveigling harlot!  
Stark blind to my charms,  
Is lost in the arms  
Of that jilt, that inveigling harlot!  
This, this my resentment alarms.*

LOCKIT And so, after all this mischief, I must stay here to be entertained with your caterwauling, Mistress Puss! Out of my sight, wanton strumpet! You shall fast and mortify yourself into reason, with now and then a little handsome discipline to bring you to your senses. Go.

## SCENE 2

LOCKIT

Peachum then intends to outwit me in this affair; but I'll be even with him. The dog is leaky<sup>1</sup> in his liquor, so I'll ply him that way, get the secret from him, and turn this affair to my own advantage. Lions, wolves, and vultures don't live together in herds, droves, or flocks. Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one. Every one of us preys upon his neighbor, and yet we herd together. Peachum is my companion, my friend. According to the custom of the world, indeed, he may quote thousands of precedents for cheating me. And shall not I make use of the privilege of friendship to make him a return?

AIR 43. Packington's pound

*Thus gamesters united in friendship are found,  
Though they know that their industry all is a cheat;  
They flock to their prey at the dice-box's sound,  
And join to promote one another's deceit.  
But if by mishap  
They fail of a chap,<sup>2</sup>  
To keep in their hands, they each other entrap.  
Like pikes, lank with hunger, who miss of their ends,  
They bite their companions, and prey on their friends.*

Now, Peachum, you and I, like honest tradesmen, are to have a fair trial which of us two can overreach the other. Lucy! [Enter LUCY] Are there any of Peachum's people now in the house?

LUCY Filch, sir, is drinking a quartern<sup>3</sup> of strong waters in the next room with Black Moll.

LOCKIT Bid him come to me.

## SCENE 3

LOCKIT, FILCH

LOCKIT Why, boy, thou lookest as if thou wert half starved, like a shotten herring.<sup>4</sup>

1. A blabbermouth.

2. Customer or sucker.

3. Quarter of a pint.

4. A herring exhausted by spawning.

FILCH One had need have the constitution of a horse to go through the business. Since the favorite child-getter<sup>5</sup> was disabled by a mishap, I have picked up a little money by helping the ladies to a pregnancy against their being called down to sentence. But if a man cannot get an honest livelihood any easier way, I am sure 'tis what I can't undertake for another Session.

LOCKIT Truly, if that great man should tip off,<sup>6</sup> 'twould be an irreparable loss. The vigor and prowess of a knight-errant never saved half the ladies in distress that he hath done. But, boy, can'st thou tell me where thy master is to be found?

FILCH At his lock, sir, at the Crooked Billet.

LOCKIT Very well. I have nothing more with you. [*Exit FILCH.*] I'll go to him there, for I have many important affairs to settle with him; and in the way of those transactions, I'll artfully get into his secret. So that Macheath shall not remain a day longer out of my clutches.

SCENE 4 *A gaming-house*

MACHEATH *in a fine tarnished coat*, BEN BUDGE, MATT OF THE MINT

MACHEATH I am sorry, gentlemen, the road was so barren of money. When my friends are in difficulties, I am always glad that my fortune can be serviceable to them. [*Gives them money.*] You see, gentlemen, I am not a mere court friend, who professes everything and will do nothing.

AIR 44. Lillibullero

*The modes of the court so common are grown,  
That a true friend can hardly be met;  
Friendship for interest is but a loan,  
Which they let out for what they can get.  
'Tis true, you find  
Some friends so kind,  
Who will give you good counsel themselves to defend.  
In sorrowful ditty,  
They promise, they pity,  
But shift you for money, from friend to friend.*

But we, gentlemen, have still honor enough to break through the corruptions of the world. And while I can serve you, you may command me.

BEN It grieves my heart that so generous a man should be involved in such difficulties, as oblige him to live with such ill company, and herd with gamesters.

MATT See the partiality of mankind! One man may steal a horse, better than another look over a hedge.<sup>7</sup> Of all mechanics,<sup>8</sup> of all servile handicraftsmen, a gamester is the vilest. But yet, as many of the quality are of the profession, he is admitted amongst the politest company. I wonder we are not more respected.

5. Stud.

6. Die.

7. I.e., a mere look at a horse can get some peo-

ple in trouble.

8. Workers who use their hands.

MACHEATH There will be deep play tonight at Marybone, and consequently money may be picked up upon the road. Meet me there, and I'll give you the hint who is worth setting.<sup>9</sup>

MATT The fellow with a brown coat with a narrow gold binding, I am told, is never without money.

MACHEATH What do you mean, Matt? Sure you will not think of meddling with him! He's a good honest kind of a fellow, and one of us.

BEN To be sure, sir, we will put ourselves under your direction.

MACHEATH Have an eye upon the moneylenders. A rouleau,<sup>1</sup> or two, would prove a pretty sort of an expedition. I hate extortion.

MATT Those rouleaus are very pretty things. I hate your bank bills; there is such a hazard in putting them off.<sup>2</sup>

MACHEATH There is a certain man of distinction, who in his time hath nicked me out of a great deal of the ready.<sup>3</sup> He is in my cash,<sup>4</sup> Ben. I'll point him out to you this evening, and you shall draw upon him for the debt. The company are met; I hear the dicebox in the other room. So, gentlemen, your servant. You'll meet me at Marybone.

SCENE 5 *Peachum's Lock*

*A table with wine, brandy, pipes, and tobacco*

PEACHUM, LOCKIT

LOCKIT The Coronation account,<sup>5</sup> brother Peachum, is of so intricate a nature, that I believe it will never be settled.

PEACHUM It consists indeed of a great variety of articles. It was worth to our people, in fees of different kinds, above ten installments.<sup>6</sup> This is part of the account, brother, that lies open before us.

LOCKIT A lady's tail<sup>7</sup>—of rich brocade—that, I see, is disposed of.

PEACHUM To Mrs. Diana Trapes, the tallywoman, and she will make a good hand on't in shoes and slippers, to trick out young ladies, upon their going into keeping.<sup>8</sup>

LOCKIT But I don't see any article of the jewels.

PEACHUM Those are so well known, that they must be sent abroad. You'll find them entered under the article of exportation. As for the snuff-boxes, watches, swords, etc., I thought it best to enter them under their several heads.

LOCKIT Seven and twenty women's pockets<sup>9</sup> complete, with the several things therein contained; all sealed, numbered, and entered.

PEACHUM But, brother, it is impossible for us now to enter upon this affair. We should have the whole day before us. Besides, the account of the last half year's plate<sup>1</sup> is in a book by itself, which lies at the other office.

9. Robbing.

1. Rolls of gold coins.

2. Converting them into money.

3. Money.

4. He owes me.

5. Register of goods stolen during the coronation of George II (1727).

6. Public installations of the new Lord Mayor of London.

7. Train.

8. Becoming mistresses.

9. Purses worn around the waist.

1. Silver or gold utensils.

LOCKIT Bring us then more liquor. Today shall be for pleasure, tomorrow for business. Ah brother, those daughters of ours are two slippery hussies. Keep a watchful eye upon Polly, and Macheath in a day or two shall be our own again.

AIR 45. Down in the North Country

*What gudgeons<sup>2</sup> are we men!  
Every woman's easy prey.  
Though we have felt the hook, again  
We bite and they betray.*

*The bird that hath been trapped,  
When he hears his calling mate,  
To her he flies, again he's clapped  
Within the wiry grate.*

PEACHUM But what signifies catching the bird, if your daughter Lucy will set open the door of the cage?

LOCKIT If men were answerable for the follies and frailties of their wives and daughters, no friends could keep a good correspondence together for two days. This is unkind of you, brother; for among good friends, what they say or do goes for nothing.

[Enter a SERVANT.]

SERVANT Sir, here's Mrs. Diana Trapes wants to speak with you.

PEACHUM Shall we admit her, brother Lockit?

LOCKIT By all means. She's a good customer, and a fine-spoken woman. And a woman who drinks and talks so freely, will enliven the conversation.

PEACHUM Desire her to walk in.

[Exit SERVANT.]

SCENE 6

PEACHUM, LOCKIT, MRS. TRAPES

PEACHUM Dear Mrs. Dye, your servant. One may know by your kiss that your gin is excellent.

MRS. TRAPES I was always very curious<sup>3</sup> in my liquors.

LOCKIT There is no perfumed breath, like it. I have been long acquainted with the flavor of those lips, han't I, Mrs. Dye?

MRS. TRAPES Fill it up. I take as large draughts of liquor, as I did of love. I hate a flincher in either.

AIR 46. A shepherd kept sheep

*In the days of my youth I could bill like a dove, fa, la, la, etc.  
Like a sparrow at all times was ready for love, fa, la, la, etc.  
The life of all mortals in kissing should pass,  
Lip to lip while we're young—then the lip to the glass, fa, etc.*

2. Minnows.

3. Choosy.

But now, Mr. Peachum, to our business. If you have blacks of any kind, brought in of late, mantoes<sup>4</sup>—velvet scarfs, petticoats—let it be what it will, I am your chap. For all my ladies are very fond of mourning.

PEACHUM Why, look ye, Mrs. Dye, you deal so hard with us that we can afford to give the gentlemen who venture their lives for the goods little or nothing.

MRS. TRAPES The hard times oblige me to go very near<sup>5</sup> in my dealing. To be sure, of late years I have been a great sufferer by the Parliament—three thousand pounds would hardly make me amends. The Act for destroying the Mint<sup>6</sup> was a severe cut upon our business. 'Till then, if a customer stepped out of the way, we knew where to have her. No doubt you know Mrs. Coaxer. There's a wench now (till today) with a good suit of clothes of mine upon her back, and I could never set eyes upon her for three months together. Since the Act too against imprisonment for small sums,<sup>7</sup> my loss there too hath been very considerable, and it must be so, when a lady can borrow a handsome petticoat or a clean gown, and I not have the least hank<sup>8</sup> upon her! And o' my conscience, nowadays most ladies take a delight in cheating, when they can do it with safety.

PEACHUM Madam, you had a handsome gold watch of us t'other day for seven guineas. Considering we must have our profit, to a gentleman upon the road, a gold watch will be scarce worth the taking.

MRS. TRAPES Consider, Mr. Peachum, that watch was remarkable, and not of very safe sale. If you have any black velvet scarfs, they are a handsome winter wear, and take with most gentlemen who deal with my customers. 'Tis I that put the ladies upon a good foot. 'Tis not youth or beauty that fixes their price. The gentlemen always pay according to their dress, from half a crown to two guineas; and yet those hussies make nothing of bilking of me. Then too, allowing for accidents—I have eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands. What with fees and other expenses, there are great goings-out, and no comings-in, and not a farthing to pay for at least a month's clothing. We run great risks, great risks indeed.

PEACHUM As I remember, you said something just now of Mrs. Coaxer.

MRS. TRAPES Yes, sir. To be sure I stripped her of a suit of my own clothes about two hours ago; and have left her as she should be, in her shift, with a lover of hers at my house. She called him upstairs, as he was going to Marybone in a hackney coach. And I hope, for her own sake and mine, she will persuade the Captain to redeem her, for the Captain is very generous to the ladies.

LOCKIT What Captain?

MRS. TRAPES He thought I did not know him. An intimate acquaintance of yours, Mr. Peachum. Only Captain Macheath—as fine as a lord.

PEACHUM Tomorrow, dear Mrs. Dye, you shall set your own price upon any of the goods you like. We have at least half a dozen velvet scarfs, and all at your service. Will you give me leave to make you a present of this suit of night-clothes for your own wearing? But are you sure it is Captain Macheath?

4. Mantles or cloaks. "Blacks": mourning clothes.

5. Stingy.

6. The status of the Mint district as a sanctuary for outlaws had been undermined by recent

statutes.

7. Previous to this act, someone could be arrested for owing any sum, however small.

8. Hold.

MRS. TRAPES Though he thinks I have forgot him, nobody knows him better. I have taken a great deal of the Captain's money in my time at second hand, for he always loved to have his ladies well dressed.

PEACHUM Mr. Lockit and I have a little business with the Captain—you understand me—and we will satisfy you for Mrs. Coaxer's debt.

LOCKIT Depend upon it. We will deal like men of honor.

MRS. TRAPES I don't inquire after your affairs, so whatever happens, I wash my hands on't. It hath always been my maxim, that one friend should assist another. But if you please, I'll take one of the scarfs home with me. 'Tis always good to have something in hand.

SCENE 7 *Newgate*

LUCY

Jealousy, rage, love, and fear are at once tearing me to pieces. How I am weather-beaten and shattered with distresses!

AIR 47. One evening, having lost my way

*I'm like a skiff on the ocean tossed,  
Now high, now low, with each billow born,  
With her rudder broke, and her anchor lost,  
Deserted and all forlorn.  
While thus I lie rolling and tossing all night,  
That Polly lies sporting on seas of delight!  
Revenge, revenge, revenge,  
Shall appease my restless sprite.*

I have the ratsbane<sup>9</sup> ready. I run no risk, for I can lay her death upon the gin, and so many die of that naturally that I shall never be called in question. But say I were to be hanged—I never could be hanged for anything that would give me greater comfort than the poisoning that slut.

[Enter FILCH.]

FILCH Madam, here's our Miss Polly come to wait upon you.

LUCY Show her in.

## SCENE 8

LUCY, POLLY

LUCY Dear madam, your servant. I hope you will pardon my passion when I was so happy to see you last. I was so overrun with the spleen<sup>1</sup> that I was perfectly out of myself. And really when one hath the spleen, everything is to be excused by a friend.

AIR 48. Now Roger, I'll tell thee, because thou'rt my son

*When a wife's in her pout,  
(As she's sometimes, no doubt!)  
The good husband as meek as a lamb,  
Her vapors<sup>2</sup> to still,*

9. Poison.

1. Fashionable seizure of peevishness or melan-

choly.

2. Ill humor or whims.

*First grants her her will,  
And the quieting draught is a dram.  
Poor man! And the quieting draught is a dram.*

I wish all our quarrels might have so comfortable a reconciliation.

POLLY I have no excuse for my own behavior, madam, but my misfortunes. And really, madam, I suffer too upon your account.

LUCY But, Miss Polly, in the way of friendship, will you give me leave to propose a glass of cordial to you?

POLLY Strong waters are apt to give me the headache. I hope, madam, you will excuse me.

LUCY Not the greatest lady in the land could have better in her closet,<sup>3</sup> for her own private drinking. You seem mighty low in spirits, my dear.

POLLY I am sorry, madam, my health will not allow me to accept of your offer. I should not have left you in the rude manner I did when we met last, madam, had not my papa hauled me away so unexpectedly. I was indeed somewhat provoked, and perhaps might use some expressions that were disrespectful. But really, madam, the Captain treated me with so much contempt and cruelty that I deserved your pity rather than your resentment.

LUCY But since his escape, no doubt all matters are made up again. Ah Polly, Polly! 'Tis I am the unhappy wife, and he loves you as if you were only his mistress.

POLLY Sure, madam, you cannot think me so happy as to be the object of your jealousy. A man is always afraid of a woman who loves him too well, so that I must expect to be neglected and avoided.

LUCY Then our cases, my dear Polly, are exactly alike. Both of us indeed have been too fond.

AIR 49. O Bessy Bell

POLLY	<i>A curse attends that woman's love, Who always would be pleasing.</i>
LUCY	<i>The pertness of the billing dove, Like tickling, is but teasing.</i>
POLLY	<i>What then in love can woman do?</i>
LUCY	<i>If we grow fond they shun us.</i>
POLLY	<i>And when we fly them, they pursue.</i>
LUCY	<i>But leave us when they've won us.</i>

Love is so very whimsical in both sexes, that it is impossible to be lasting. But my heart is particular, and contradicts my own observation.

POLLY But really, Mistress Lucy, by his last behavior I think I ought to envy you. When I was forced from him, he did not show the least tenderness. But perhaps he hath a heart not capable of it.

AIR 50. Would Fate to me Belinda give

*Among the men, coquettes we find,  
Who court by turns all womankind;  
And we grant all their hearts desired,  
When they are flattered, and admired.*

3. Small private room.



The coquettes of both sexes are self-lovers, and that is a love no other whatever can dispossess. I fear, my dear Lucy, our husband is one of those.

LUCY Away with these melancholy reflections. Indeed, my dear Polly, we are both of us a cup too low. Let me prevail upon you, to accept of my offer.

AIR 51. Come, sweet lass

*Come sweet lass,  
Let's banish sorrow  
'Till tomorrow;  
Come, sweet lass,  
Let's take a chirping<sup>4</sup> glass.  
Wine can clear  
The vapors of despair,  
And make us light as air;  
Then drink, and banish care.*

I can't bear, child, to see you in such low spirits. And I must persuade you to what I know will do you good. [*Aside.*] I shall now soon be even with the hypocritical strumpet.

SCENE 9

POLLY

All this wheedling of Lucy cannot be for nothing. At this time too, when I know she hates me! The dissembling of a woman is always the forerunner of mischief. By pouring strong waters down my throat, she thinks to pump some secrets out of me. I'll be upon my guard, and won't taste a drop of her liquor, I'm resolved.

SCENE 10

LUCY, with strong waters. POLLY

LUCY Come, Miss Polly.

POLLY Indeed, child, you have given yourself trouble to no purpose. You must, my dear, excuse me.

LUCY Really, Miss Polly, you are so squeamishly affected about taking a cup of strong waters as a lady before company. I vow, Polly, I shall take it monstrously ill if you refuse me. Brandy and men (though women love them never so well) are always taken by us with some reluctance—unless 'tis in private.

POLLY I protest, madam, it goes against me.—What do I see! Macheath again in custody! Now every glimmering of happiness is lost. [*Drops the glass of liquor on the ground.*]

LUCY [*Aside.*] Since things are thus, I'm glad the wench hath escaped; for by this event, 'tis plain she was not happy enough to deserve to be poisoned.

4. Cheering.

SCENE 11<sup>5</sup>

LOCKIT, MACHEATH, PEACHUM, LUCY, POLLY

LOCKIT Set your heart to rest, Captain. You have neither the chance of love or money for another escape, for you are ordered to be called down upon your trial immediately.

PEACHUM Away, hussies! This is not a time for a man to be hampered with his wives. You see, the gentleman is in chains already.

LUCY O husband, husband, my heart longed to see thee; but to see thee thus distracts me!

POLLY Will not my dear husband look upon his Polly? Why hadst thou not flown to me for protection? With me thou hadst been safe.

AIR 52. The last time I went o'er the moor

POLLY *Hither, dear husband, turn your eyes.*

LUCY *Bestow one glance to cheer me.*

POLLY *Think with that look, thy Polly dies.*

LUCY *O shun me not, but hear me.*

POLLY *'Tis Polly sues.*

LUCY *—'Tis Lucy speaks.*

POLLY *Is thus true love requited?*

LUCY *My heart is bursting*

POLLY *—Mine too breaks.*

LUCY *Must I—*

POLLY *—Must I be slighted?*

MACHEATH What would you have me say, ladies? You see, this affair will soon be at an end, without my disoblging either of you.

PEACHUM But the settling this point, Captain, might prevent a lawsuit between your two widows.

AIR 53. Tom Tinker's my true love

MACHEATH *Which way shall I turn me? How can I decide?  
Wives, the day of our death, are as fond as a bride.  
One wife is too much for most husbands to hear,  
But two at a time there's no mortal can bear.  
This way, and that way, and which way I will,  
What would comfort the one, t'other wife would take ill.*

POLLY But if his own misfortunes have made him insensible to mine, a father sure will be more compassionate. Dear, dear sir, sink<sup>6</sup> the material evidence, and bring him off at his trial. Polly upon her knees begs it of you.

AIR 54. I am a poor shepherd undone

*When my hero in court appears,  
And stands arraigned for his life,  
Then think of poor Polly's tears;*

5. For an illustration of this scene by William Hogarth, see the color insert in this volume.

6. Suppress.

*For ah! Poor Polly's his wife,  
Like the sailor he holds up his hand,  
Distressed on the dashing wave.  
To die a dry death at land,  
Is as had as a wat'ry grave.  
And alas, poor Polly!  
Alack, and well-a-day!  
Before I was in love,  
Oh! every month was May.*

LUCY If Peachum's heart is hardened, sure you, sir, will have more compassion on a daughter. I know the evidence is in your power: how then can you be a tyrant to me? [Kneeling.]

AIR 55. Ianthe the lovely

*When he holds up his hand arraigned for his life,  
Oh think of your daughter, and think I'm his wife!  
What are cannons, or bombs, or clashing of swords?  
For death is more certain by witnesses' words.  
Then nail up their lips, that dread thunder allay;  
And each month of my life will hereafter be May.*

LOCKIT Macheath's time is come, Lucy. We know our own affairs, therefore let us have no more whimpering or whining.

AIR 56. A cobbler there was

*Ourselfs, like the great, to secure a retreat,  
When matters require it, must give up our gang.  
And good reason why,  
Or, instead of the fry,  
Even Peachum and I,  
Like poor petty rascals, might hang, hang;  
Like poor petty rascals, might hang.*

PEACHUM Set your heart at rest, Polly. Your husband is to die today. Therefore, if you are not already provided, 'tis high time to look about for another. There's comfort for you, you slut.

LOCKIT We are ready, sir, to conduct you to the Old Bailey.

AIR 57. Bonny Dundee

MACHEATH *The charge is prepared; the lawyers are met;  
The judges all ranged (a terrible show!).  
I go, undismayed, for death is a debt,  
A debt on demand. So take what I owe.  
Then farewell my love—dear charmers, adieu.  
Contented I die—'tis the better for you.  
Here ends all dispute the rest of our lives,  
For this way at once I please all my wives.*

Now, gentlemen, I am ready to attend you.

## SCENE 12

LUCY, POLLY, FILCH

POLLY Follow them, Filch, to the court. And when the trial is over, bring me a particular account of his behavior, and of everything that happened. You'll find me here with Miss Lucy. [*Exit FILCH.*] But why is all this music?

LUCY The prisoners whose trials are put off till next Session are diverting themselves.

POLLY Sure there is nothing so charming as music, I'm fond of it to distraction. But alas! Now all mirth seems an insult upon my affliction. Let us retire, my dear Lucy, and indulge our sorrows. The noisy crew, you see, are coming upon us. [*Exeunt.*]

[*A Dance of Prisoners in Chains, etc.*]

SCENE 13 *The condemned hold*

MACHEATH, *in a melancholy posture*

AIR 58. Happy groves

*O cruel, cruel, cruel case!  
Must I suffer this disgrace?*

AIR 59. Of all the girls that are so smart

*Of all the friends in time of grief,  
When threat'ning death looks grimmer,  
Not one so sure can bring relief,  
As this best friend, a brimmer.<sup>7</sup>*

[*Drinks.*]

AIR 60. Britons strike home

*Since I must swing, I scorn, I scorn to wince or whine.* [*Rises.*]

AIR 61. Chevy Chase

*But now again my spirits sink;  
I'll raise them high with wine.*

[*Drinks a glass of wine.*]

AIR 62. To old Sir Simon the King

*But valor the stronger grows,  
The stronger liquor we're drinking.  
And how can we feel our woes,  
When we've lost the trouble of thinking?*

[*Drinks.*]

AIR 63. Joy to great Caesar

*If thus—A man can die  
Much bolder with brandy.*

[*Pours out a bumper of brandy.*]

7. Brimming goblet.

AIR 64. There was an old woman

*So I drink off this bumper. And now I can stand the test.  
And my comrades shall see, that I die as brave as the best.* [Drinks.]

AIR 65. Did you ever hear of a gallant sailor

*But can I leave my pretty hussies,  
Without one tear, or tender sigh?*

AIR 66. Why are mine eyes still flowing

*Their eyes, their lips, their busses<sup>8</sup>  
Recall my love. Ah must I die?*

AIR 67. Green sleeves

*Since laws were made for every degree,  
To curb vice in others, as well as me,  
I wonder we han't better company,  
Upon Tyburn Tree!  
But gold from law can take out the sting;  
And if rich men like us were to swing,  
'Twould thin the land, such numbers to string  
Upon Tyburn Tree!*

JAILER Some friends of yours, Captain, desire to be admitted. I leave you together.

#### SCENE 14

MACHEATH, BEN BUDGE, MATT OF THE MINT

MACHEATH For my having broke prison, you see, gentlemen, I am ordered immediate execution. The sheriff's officers, I believe, are now at the door. That Jemmy Twitcher should peach me, I own surprised me! 'Tis a plain proof that the world is all alike, and that even our gang can no more trust one another than other people. Therefore, I beg you, gentlemen, look well to yourselves, for in all probability you may live some months longer.

MATT We are heartily sorry, Captain, for your misfortune. But 'tis what we must all come to.

MACHEATH Peachum and Lockit, you know, are infamous scoundrels. Their lives are as much in your power as yours are in theirs. Remember your dying friend! 'Tis my last request. Bring those villains to the gallows before you, and I am satisfied.

MATT We'll do't.

JAILER Miss Polly and Miss Lucy entreat a word with you.

MACHEATH Gentlemen, adieu.

#### SCENE 15

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY

MACHEATH Lucy, my dear Polly, whatsoever hath passed between us is now at an end. If you are fond of marrying again, the best advice I can

8. Kisses.

give you, is to ship yourselves off for the West Indies,<sup>9</sup> where you'll have a fair chance of getting a husband à piece; or by good luck, two or three, as you like best.

POLLY How can I support this sight!

LUCY There is nothing moves one so much as a great man in distress.

AIR 68. All you that must take a leap

LUCY *Would I might be hanged!*

POLLY *And I would so too!*

LUCY *To be hanged with you.*

POLLY *My dear, with you.*

MACHEATH *O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt!*

*I tremble! I droop! See, my courage is out.*

[Turns up the empty bottle.]

POLLY *No token of love?*

MACHEATH *See, my courage is out.*

[Turns up the empty pot.]

LUCY *No token of love?*

POLLY *Adieu.*

LUCY *Farewell.*

MACHEATH *But hark! I hear the toll of the bell.<sup>1</sup>*

CHORUS *Tol de rol lol, etc.*

JAILER Four women more, Captain, with a child à piece! See, here they come. [Enter women and children.]

MACHEATH What—four wives more! This is too much. Here—tell the sheriff's officers I am ready. [Exit MACHEATH guarded.]

#### SCENE 16

*To them, enter PLAYER and BEGGAR*

PLAYER But, honest friend, I hope you don't intend that Macheath shall be really executed.

BEGGAR Most certainly, sir. To make the piece perfect, I was for doing strict poetical justice. Macheath is to be hanged; and for the other personages of the drama, the audience must have supposed they were all either hanged or transported.

PLAYER Why then, friend, this is a downright deep tragedy. The catastrophe is manifestly wrong, for an opera must end happily.

BEGGAR Your objection, sir, is very just, and is easily removed. For you must allow that in this kind of drama 'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about. So—you rabble there—run and cry a reprieve. Let the prisoner be brought back to his wives in triumph.

PLAYER All this we must do, to comply with the taste of the town.

BEGGAR Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen. Had the play

9. In the sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, Polly does find a husband in the West Indies, where fortunes could be made.

1. Rung five minutes before the condemned were taken to Tyburn.

remained as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich, and that they are punished for them.<sup>2</sup>

## SCENE I7

*To them, MACHEATH with rabble, etc.*

MACHEATH So, it seems, I am not left to my choice, but must have a wife at last. Look ye, my dears, we will have no controversy now. Let us give this day to mirth, and I am sure she who thinks herself my wife will testify her joy by a dance.

ALL Come, a dance, a dance.

MACHEATH Ladies, I hope you will give me leave to present a partner to each of you. And (if I may without offense) for this time, I take Polly for mine. [*To POLLY.*] And for life, you slut, for we were really married. As for the rest—But at present keep your own secret.

## A DANCE

AIR 69. Lumps of pudding

*Thus I stand like the Turk, with his doxies around;  
From all sides their glances his passion confound;  
For black, brown, and fair, his inconstancy burns,  
And the different beauties subdue him by turns;  
Each calls forth her charms, to provoke his desires;  
Though willing to all, with but one he retires.  
But think of this maxim, and put off your sorrow,  
The wretch of today may be happy tomorrow.*

CHORUS *But think of this maxim, etc.*

FINIS

1728

2. *Unlike the rich.*