

THE
 COMICAL HISTORY
 OF
SIMPLE JOHN
 AND HIS
 TWELVE MISFORTUNES,

WHICH HAPPENED ALL IN TWELVE DAYS AFTER THE
 UNHAPPY DAY OF HIS MARRIAGE.



PAISLEY :

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1839.

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SIMPLE JOHN
AND HIS
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WHICH HAPPENED ALL IN TWELVE YEARS THE
FIRST MET ON HIS WEDDING



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THE COMICAL HISTORY

OF

S I M P L E J O H N .

SIMPLE JOHN was a widow's son, and a coarse country weaver to his trade : He made nothing but such as canvass for caff beds, corn and coal sacks, drugget and harn was the finest webs he could lay his fingers to : he was a great lump of a lang lean lad aboon sax feet afore he was aughteen year auld, and as he said himsel', he grew sae fast, and was in sic a hurry to be high, that he did not stay to bring a' his judgement with him, but yet he hoped it would follow him, and he would meet wi't, as mony a ane does after they'r married. He had but æ sister, and she had as little sense as himsel', she was married on Sleeky

Willie the wylie weaver, his mother was a rattling rattle scull'd wife and they lived a' in æ house and every body held them as a family of fools. When John came to man's state, to the age of twenty one years, he told his mither, he would hae a wife of some sort, either young or auld, widow or lass, if they had but head and hips, tongue and tail, he should take them, and weel a wat mither, quoth he, they'll get a lumping penny-worth o' me, tak me wha will.

His mither tells him o' the black butcher on Tivot side, who had three daughters, and every ane o' them had something, there was Kate, Ann, and Girzy, had hundred merks the piece, Kate, and Ann had baith bastards, Girzy the eldest had a humph back, a high-breast, baker-legged, a short wry neck, thrawn mouth, and goggle-ey'd a perfect Æsop of the female kind with as many crooked conditions within as without, a very lump of loun-like ill-nature, row'd a' thegither, as if she had been nine months in a haggies, a second edition of crook backed Richard the old English King, that was born with teeth to bite a' around about him, and yet the wight gaed mad to be married.

John's mither told him the road where to go, and what to say, and accordingly he sets out wi' his Sunday's coat on, and a' his braws, and a pair of new pillonian breeks o' his mither's making. In he comes, and tell'd his errand before he would sit down, says good day to you goodman, what are ye a' doing here; I am wanting a wife, an ye're a flesher, and has a gude sorting aside you, my mither says you can sair me, or ony body like me, what say ye till't gudeman? How mony daughters hae ye? Are they a' married yet? I fain wad tak a look o' some o' them gin ye like.

A wow, said the goodwife, come in by, honest lad, and rest ye, an ye be a wooer, sit down and gie's a snuff.—A deed goodwife, I hae nae mills but my mither's, and it's at hame.—whare win ye, I's no ken ye? I wat, quoth he, my name's Jock Sandyman, they ca' me Simple John the sack weaver I hae nae tocher but my loom, a pirn-wheel, a kettle pat, a brass pan, twa pigs, four cogs, and a candlestick, a good cock, a cat, twa errocks new begun to lay; my sister Sara is married on Sleeky Willie the wylie weaver, and I maun hae a hagwife or my mither die, for truly she's very frail, and ony harl o' health she has

is about dinner-time ; what say ye till't goodman ? can you buckle me or no ?

Goodman.) A dear John, ye're in an unco haste, ye wadna hae your wife hame wi' ye ? they're a' three before ye, which o' them will ye tak ?

Hout, tout says John, ony o' them will sair me, but my mither says there's twa o' them has fauts. And what is their fauts ? said the goodwife. Hout said John, it's no meikle faut, but I dinna like it, they got men or they were married. And what shall I do wi' them ? said the goodman.

John.) A deed, goodman, as ye're ay dealing among dead beasts and living beasts, I wad put them awa amang ither beasts, or gin ye be aun ony penny, let somebody tak them up o' desperate debt, I sud flie the fykes frae them, they anger'd you and shamed you baith wi' their bastards, a when daft jades it gets men or they be married, and bairns, or they get bridals.

Goodwife.) A wat weel that's true lad.

Girzy.) A weel John then, will ye tak me ; I hae nae bastards ; how will you and I do ?

John.) I watna gin you be able to get a bastard, yet ye may hae some waur faut ; but

ye maun be my pennyworth for ye're unco little, and I'm o'er muckle, and gin ye and I were ance carded through ither, we may get bonny weans of a middlen mak. I have nae fauts to ye, but ye hae a high breast, a humph back, a short neck, and high shouthers the hands and legs may do, tho' your mouth be a wee to the tae side, it will lie weel to the rock, and I hae a hantle of tow to spin, will be baith sarks and sacks till us, ye'll be my soney dauty up and down, a perfect beauty wi' cat's yellow een, black brows, and red lips, and your very nose is a purpy colour; ye hae nae fauts at a', Now, whan will ye be married;

Girzy-) Ha, ha, John lad, we manna think on that yet.

John.) What the yeltow lass, should na ye be ready whan I'm ready, and every body says, that the women's ay ready.

Goodman.) Ye'll hae to come back and bring somebody wi' you, and we'll gree about it, and set the day whan ye'll be married!

John.) A weel, goodman, I'll tell my mither o't, and come back on Monenday, and we'll hae a chapin o' ale, and roasted cheese on the chance o't: but I maun hae a word o'

the bride out by to convey me, an a quite speak to hersel about it.

Goodwife.) A woa na, John, the daft louns will laugh at you, and she'll think shame, gang ye out by, and she'll speak to you through the gavel window.

Out goes John, and the bride and her twa sisters, goes to the window within to hear the diversion; and what he would say. Now, says John, Girzy my dear, my braw pretty woman, an ye be in earnest, tell me, for by my suth I'm no scorning.

Girzy.) Indeed, John, I'm very willing to tak ye, but ye needna tell every body about it.

John.) Then gie me a kiss on that. He shoves his head in at the window, making a lang neck to win down to her, and she stood on a little stool to win up to him. O, cries he, an you were good flesh I could eat ye a'. I like ye sae weel, it's a pity there is sic a hard wa' atween us, I'se tell my mither sae bonny as ye're: O! gie me anither kiss yet, and then I'll go. One of her sisters standing by in a dark corner gets ha'd o' a cow's head, which wanted a' the skin but about the mouth, and shuts it out towards his mouth, which he

kiss'd in the dark. O cries he, but your mouth be cauld since I kiss'd ye last, and I think ye ha'e a beard, I saw nae that afore, or is't wi' spinning tow, that makes your mouth sae rough at e'en?

Hame he comes, and tells his mither the speed and properties of the marriage A' thing was got ready, and next week Sleeky Willie the weaver and him came to gree the marriage, and stay a' night wi' the bride, and teach John good manners, for whan John was hungry he minded his meat mair than his good behaviour, and he never was fu' till the dish was tume. Willie the weaver was to tramp on his fit, when he thought he had suppit aneugh; so all things being agreed upon short and easy terms, and the wedding day set, they were to be three times cried on Sunday, and quietly married on Monunday, neither piper nor fiddler to be employed, but swith awa hame frae the Minister, and into the bed amang the blankets; Ha, ha, cries John, that's the best o't a'.

Now every thing being concluded and proposed, the supper was brought, a large fat haggies, the very smell wad a done a hungry body gude, but John had only got twa or

three soups, until one of the butcher's meikle dogs tramping on John's fit, which he took to be the weaver, and then ne would sup nae mair. After supper they went to bed John and the weaver lay together, and then he abused the weaver for tramping sae soon which he denied; but O, said John, there's a hantle o't left and I saw whare it was set, they're a' sleeping, I'll go rise an tak a soup o't yet, and bring a soup to me too. Away then John goes to the amry, and lays to the haggies, till his ain haggies could haud nae mair; then brings the rest to Sleeky Willie, but instead of going to the bed where he was, goes to the bed where the bride and her twa sisters lay, they being fast asleep, speaks slowly, will ye tak it, will ye tak it? but they making no answer, he turns up the blankets to put a soup into Willie's mouth, but instead of doing so, he puts a great spoonful close into one of their backsides. Sleeky Willie hears all that past, comes out the bed, and sups out the remainder, and sets up the dish where it was leaves the amry door open, to let the cats get the blame of supping the haggies, and awa they go to bed; but poor John could get nae sleep for drouth; up he gets in search of the water

cann, and finding an empty pitcher, puts in his hand to find if there was any water in it, but finding none, he closed his hand, when it was within the pitcher, and then could not get it out, goes to the bed and tells Sleeky Willie what had happened to him, who advised him to open the door, and go out to a knocking-stane that stood before the door, and break it there, to get out his hand' and not to make a noise in the house. So out he goes, and the bride's sister who had gotten the great spoonful of the haggies laid to her backside, was out before him, rubbing the nastiness, (as she took it to be,) off the tail of her sark, and she being in a louting posture, he took her for the knocking-stane, and comes over her hardies with the pitcher, till it flew in pieces then off she runs with fright, round a turf stack, and into the house before him. John came in trembling to the bed again wi' the fright, praying to preserve him, for sic a knocking-stane he never yet saw for it ran clean awa when he brake the pig upon't.

Now John was furnished in a house by his father-in-law, the bed, the loom, heddles, treadles, thrums reeds, and pirn-wheel, was a' brought and set up before the marriage,

which was kept a profound secret ; so that John got the first night of his ain wife, and his ain house at ae time. So on the next morning after the marriage, John and his wife made up some articles, how they were to work, and keep house : John was to keep the house in meat, meal, fire and water ; Girzy was to mak the meat, and keep the house in clothes ; the father-in-law to pay the rent for three years ; they were to hae nae servants, until they had children ; and their first child was to be John, after his ain Daddy get it wha will, if a boy, and if a girl, Grizy, after its ain Minny, as he said, wha had wrought best for't.

MISFORTUNE 1.

THEN she ordered John to rise and begin his wark, by putting on a fire, and to tak the twa new pigs and gang to the well for water. No sooner had John opened the door, and gone out with a pig in every hand, than a' the boys and girls being gathered in a crowd to see him, gave a loud huzza and clapping their

hands at him, poor John not knowing what it meant, thought it was fine sport, began to clap his hands too, and not minding the twa pigs, clashes the tane against the tither, till baith went to pieces, and that was a cheerful huzza to baith young and auld that was looking at him; Girzel the wife draws him into the house, and to him she flies with the wicked wife's weapons, and made his ribs to crack, saying, "They told me ye was daft, but I'll ding the daffin' out o' ye, I'll begin wi' ye as I have a mind to end wi' ye. Poor John sat crying and clawing his lugs. "Ha ha," said he, "it's nae bairns play to be married, I find that already." His Mither-in-law came in and made up peace, went to a cooper, and got them a big wooden stoup to carry in their water.

MISFORTUNE. 11

Next morning John was sent to the flesh-market an errand to his Father-in-law, who gave him a piece of flesh to carry home, and as he was coming out of the Market, he saw

six or seven of the flesher-dogs fall on and worry at a poor country colly dog; "Justice, Justice, cries John to the dogs. "ye're but a when unmanerly rascals, that fa's a' on ae poor bea-t, heth ye sude a' be put in the toun-bouth, and ta'en to the bailies, and hang'd for the like o' that; it's perfect murder, "and in he runs amongst the dogs, "and be hang'd to you a' thegither, What is the quarrel? What is the quarrel? John flings down the flesh he had carrying, and grips the colly, who took John for an enemy too, and bites his hands till the blood followed, the whole of the tykes comes on poor John, till down he goes in the dirt amongst their feet, and one of the dogs runs off with his flesh, so John went hame both dirty and bloody and without his flesh, told Girzy how it happened, who applied her old plaister, her Tangs and Tongue, made John to curse the very Minister that married them, and wished he might ne'er do a better turn.

MISFORTUNE. 111

Next morning, John was sent to the well with the great stoup to bring in water for

breakfast ; and as he was pulling the stoup out of the well, in he tumbles and his head down, the well being narrow, he could na win out : some people passing, by chance, heard the slunge cried, and ran to his relief, haul'd him out half dead, and helped him into the house ; and getting a dry sark, he was comforted with the old plaister, her Tongue and the hard Tangs.

MISFORTUNE IV.

Next day, she says, John, I must go to the market myself, for if you go you'll fight wi' the dogs, and let them run away wi' ony thing you buy : see that ye put on the pat, hae't boiling gin I come hame. John promised weel, but performs very badly. She's no sooner gone, than he puts on the new pat, without any water in it, and a good fire to make it boil, and away he goes to the unhappy well, fills his stoup and sets it down to look at a parcel of boys playing at cat and dog they persuaded John to take a game wi' them, on he plays, till ane o' the boys cries Hey John yon-

ders your Girzy coming. John runs into the house wi' the water, and the pat being red hot on the fire, he tumes in the cauld water into it, which made the pat flee all in pieces, just as she was entering the door. John runs for it, and she runs after him, crying, Catch the thief some person stopped him; she comes up, and then she laboured him all the way hame, and he crying, "O Sirs, ye see what it is to be married! The Mither-in-law had to mak up peace again, and he promised good behaviour in time to come.

MISFORTUNE V.

On the next morning she sent him to the water to wash some cow's puddings, and turn them on a spindle, shewing him how he was to do or he went away. John goes to the water very willingly, and as he turned and washed them, he laid them down behind him, where one of his Father-in-law's big dogs stood and ate them up as fast as he laid them down, till all was gone but the very last ane, which

he carried home in his hand, crying like a child, and underwent a severe tost of the old plaister before any mercy was shewn.

MISFORTUNE VI.

His Father-in-law, next day, sent him away to bring home a fat calf he had bought in the country, and tied up the money in a napkin, which he carried in his hand for fear he should lose it, Being very weighty as it was all in halfpence, and as he was going alongst a bridge, he meets a man running after a horse, who cries to John to stop the horse; John meets him on the top of the bridge, and when he would not be stoped for him, he knocks the horse on the face with the napkin and the money, so the napkin rave, and most of the halfpence flew over the bridge in the water, which made poor John go home crying very bitterly for his loss, and dread of the old plaister, which he got very sickerly.

MISFORTUNE VII.

On the next morning, she sent him again to the bridge, to see if he could find any of it in the water, and there he found some ducks swimming and ducking down with their heads below the water, as he thought, gathering up his money, he kills one of them, and rips her up, but found none of it in her guts or gabbie; then says he, they have been but looking for it, I'll go do as they did; strips off his clothes and leaves them on the bridge, goes in a ducking, in which time, a rag-man came past, and took away all his clothes. So he went home naked to get a bath of the old plaister.

MISFORTUNE VIII

The next morning she sent him to a farmhouse, for a pig-ful of butter-milk and as he was returning through the fields, the farmer's bull and another bull was fighting: the farmer's bull being like to lose, John runs in behind him, and sets his head to the bull's tail,

on purpose to help him to push against the other; but the poor bull thought John was some other bull attacking him behind, fled, aside, and the other bull came full drive upon John, pushed him down broke the pig, and spilt the milk. So John went hame to get his auld plaister, which began to be a usual diet to him, and so he regarded it the less.

MISFORTUNE 1X.

His mother-in-law, with several auld witty wives, held a private council on John's conduct, and bad luck, and concluded he was bewitched. John was of the same opinion, and went to the Minister, and told him he was the cause of a' his misfortunes, ca'd him a warlock to his face, and said, he had put such a black bargain, in his hand, that he was ruined for ever, insisted either to unmarry them again, or send death and the bellman to take her awa, for she was a lump of mischief on her back and anither on her breast, and the rest o' her body is a clean deil. The Minister

began to exhort him to peace and patience, telling him that marriages were made in heaven: "Ye're a baist liar, says John for I, was married in your ain kitchen, and a' the blackguards in the town was there. an it had a been a heaven they wadna win in, ye teilt me that matrimony was sic a happy state, but hae ye gotten as money weel pay'd skins as I hae gotten, ye wad a kend what it is, ill chance on you sir; and out he goes, cursing like a madman, throwing stanes and breaking the Minister's windows, for which he was catcht and put twa hours in the stocks, and at last his lump of corruption came and rubbed his lugs, threw his nose, got him out, and drove him home before her, took a resolution never to set him about any business in time coming, but keep him on his loom.

MISFORTUNE X.

Now she gave him no sleep all that night for scolding. John got up in the morning lang or day and left his Tormentor in bed, fell asleep upon his loom with the candle in

his hand; and so set the web, heddles, reed and treadle cords in fire, by chance his old Vicer looked out of the bed, or the whole house had been gone. Up she got, and with her cries alarmed the neighbourhood who came to her relief; but poor John underwent a dreadful swabbing for this.

MISFORTUNE XI.

After the former hurry and beating being over, his wark being stopt, he went to bed and slept a' that day, and following night. On the next day, having nothing to do, she sent him in search of a hen's nest, which had ta'en some by-place to lay her eggs in: so as poor John was in an auld kill searching a' about the walls, the kill ribs brake and down he goes with a vengeance into the logie, cutted and bruised himself in a terrible manner; up he could not win, but had to creep out at the logie below, scarce able to get haine, his face and nose a' running o' blood, In this condition, she pitied and lamented for him very much, teid his sores and laid him in bed; then sat

down very kindly, saying, "My dear and my lamb, do ye think there is ony o' your banes broken? and what part o' you is sairest: and what will I get to do good?" "Oh!" said he, "Girzy, I'm a' brizzled atweeu the feet," "Are ye indeed," quoth she, "then I wish you had broken your neck, that I might a gotten anither, useless ae way, and useless mae ways, upon my word, ye's no be here, gang whare ye like."

MISFORTUNE XII.

Now as poor John was turned out o' doors next morning, to go awa hirpling on a staff, one came and told him his mother had died last night. On loch! said John, and is my mither clean dead! O an she wad but look down through the lift, and see how I'm guided this morning, I'm sure she wad send Death for me too. I'm out o' a mither and out o' a wife, out o' my health & strength, and a' my warklooms." His Mother-in-law came and pleaded for him: "Haud your tongue, Mither," said Girzy, if ye kend what ail'd

him, ye wadna speak about him he's useless no worth the keeping in a house, but to ca' him to die like an auld beast at a dykeside. Hout, tout, co' the auld wife, we'll mak o' him and he'll mend again. So John got peace made up after all, and he was easier mended than the burnt web, got all his tradles and warklooms set in order, the wifes tongue excepted, which was made of wormwood, and the rest of her body of sea water, which is always in a continual tempest.

So John apeals to a Jedburgh Jury if it be not easier to deal wi' fools than headstrong fashious fouks; owns he has but an empty skull, but his wicked wife wants wit to pour judgement into it, never tells him o' danger till it comes upon him, for his mother said he was a biddable bairn, if ony body had been to learn him wit.

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