

James Sheridan Knowles

The Love-chase

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Minden jog fenntartva!

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET, IN 1837.)

Sir William Fondlove, an old Baronet

Mr. Strickland.

Waller, in love with Lydia

Mr. Elton.

Wildrake, a Sportsman

Mr. Webster.

Trueworth, a Friend of Sir William

Mr Hemmings.

Neville, Friend to Waller

Mr. Worrell.

Humphreys, Friend to Waller

Mr. Hutchings.

Lash

Mr. Ross.

Chargewell, a Landlord

Mr. Edwards.

George, a Waiter

Mr. Bishop.

First Lawyer

Mr. Ray.

Widow Green

Mrs. Glover.

Constance, Daughter to Sir William Fondlove

Mrs. Nisbett.

Lydia, lady's Maid to Widow Green

Miss Vandenhoff.

Alice, Housekeeper to Master Waller

Mrs. Tayleure.

Phæbe, Maid to Constance

Miss Wrighten.

Amelia

Miss Gallot.

First Lady

Mrs. Gallot.

SCENE—LONDON.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—The Lobby of an Inn.

[Enter Chargewell, hurriedly.]

Charg. What, hoa there! Hoa, sirrahs! More wine! Are the knaves asleep? Let not our guests cool, or we shall starve the till! Good waiting, more than viands and wine, doth help to make the inn!—George!—Richard!—Ralph!—Where are you?

[Enter George.]

George. Here am I, sir!

Charg. Have you taken in more wine to that company?

George. Yes, sir.

Charg. That's right. Serve them as quick as they order! A fair company! I have seen them here before. Take care they come again. A choice company! That Master Waller, I hear, is a fine spirit—leads the town. Pay him much duty. A deep purse, and easy strings.

George. And there is another, sir;—a capital gentleman, though from the country. A gentleman most learned in dogs and horses! He doth talk wondrous edification:—one Master Wildrake. I wish you could hear him, sir.

Charg. Well, well!—attend to them. Let them not cool o'er the liquor, or their calls will grow slack. Keep feeding the fire while it blazes, and the blaze will continue. Look to it well!

George. I will, sir.

Charg. And be careful, above all, that you please Master Waller. He is a guest worth pleasing. He is a gentleman. Free order, quick pay!

George. And such, I'll dare be sworn, is the other. A man of mighty stores of knowledge—most learned in dogs and horses! Never was I so edified by the discourse of mortal man.

[They go out severally.]

SCENE II.—A Room.

[Master Waller, Master Wildrake, Master Trueworth, Master Neville, and Master Humphreys, sitting round a table.]

Wal. Well, Master Wildrake, speak you of the chase!
To hear you one doth feel the bounding steed;
You bring the hounds and game, and all to view—
All scudding to the jovial huntsman's cheer!
And yet I pity the poor crownéd deer,
And always fancy 'tis by fortune's spite,
That lordly head of his, he bears so high—
Like Virtue, stately in calamity,
And hunted by the human, worldly hound—
Is made to fly before the pack, that straight
Burst into song at prospect of his death.
You say their cry is harmony; and yet
The chorus scarce is music to my ear,
When I bethink me what it sounds to his;
Nor deem I sweet the note that rings the knell
Of the once merry forester!

Nev. The same things
Please us or pain, according to the thought
We take of them. Some smile at their own death,
Which most do shrink from, as beast of prey
It kills to look upon. But you, who take
Such pity of the deer, whence follows it
You hunt more costly game?—the comely maid,
To wit, that waits on buxom Widow Green?

Hum. The comely maid! Such term not half the sum
Of her rich beauty gives! Were rule to go
By loveliness, I knew not in the court,
Or city, lady might not fitly serve
That lady serving-maid!

True. Come! your defence?
Why show you ruth where there's least argument,
Deny it where there's most? You will not plead?
Oh, Master Waller, where we use to hunt
We think the sport no crime!

Hum. I give you joy,
You prosper in your chase.

Wal. Not so! The maid
In simple honesty I must pronounce
A miracle of virtue, well as beauty.

Nev. And well do I believe you, Master Waller;
Those know I who have ventured gift and promise
But for a minute of her ear—the boon
Of a poor dozen words spoke through a chink—
And come off bootless, save the haughty scorn
That cast their bounties back to them again.

True. That warrants her what Master Waller speaks her.
Is she so very fair?

Nev. Yes, Master Trueworth;
And I believe indeed an honest maid:
But Love's the coin to market with for love,
And that knows Master Waller. On pretence
Of sneaking kindness for gay Widow Green,
He visits her, for sake of her fair maid!
To whom a glance or word avails to hint
His proper errand; and—as glimpses only
Do only serve to whet the wish to see—
Awakens interest to hear the tale
So stintingly that's told. I know his practice—
Luck to you, Master Waller! If you win,
You merit it, who take the way to win!

Wal. Good Master Neville!

True. I should laugh to see
The poacher snared!—the maid, for mistress sought,
Turn out a wife.

Nev. How say you, Master Waller?
Things quite as strange have fallen!

Wed. Impossible!

True. Impossible! Most possible of things—
If thou'rt in love! Where merit lies itself,
What matters it to want the name, which weighed,
Is not the worth of so much breath as it takes
To utter it! If, but from Nature's hand,
She is all you could expect of gentle blood,
Face, form, mien, speech; with these, what to belong
To lady more behoves—thoughts delicate,
Affections generous, and modesty—
Perfectionating, brightening crown of all!—
If she hath these—true titles to thy heart—
What does she lack that's title to thy hand?
The name of lady, which is none of these,
But may belong without? Thou mightst do worse
Than marry her. Thou wouldst, undoing her,
Yea, by my mother's name, a shameful act
Most shamefully performed!

Wal. [Starting up and drawing.] Sir!

Nev. [And the others, interposing.] Gentlemen!

True. All's right! Sit down!—I will not draw again.
A word with you: If—as a man—thou sayest,
Upon thy honour, I have spoken wrong,
I'll ask thy pardon!—though I never hold
Communion with thee more!

Wal. [After a pause, putting up his sword.]
My sword is sheathed?
Wilt let me take thy hand?

True. 'Tis thine, good sir,
And faster than before—A fault confessed
Is a new virtue added to a man!
Yet let me own some blame was mine. A truth
May be too harshly told—but 'tis a theme
I am tender on—I had a sister, sir,

You understand me!—'Twas my happiness
To own her once—I would forget her now!—
I have forgotten!—I know not if she lives!—
Things of such strain as we were speaking of,
Spite of myself, remind me of her!—So!—

Nev. Sit down! Let's have more wine.

Wild. Not so, good sirs.
Partaking of your hospitality,
I have overlooked good friends I came to visit,
And who have late become sojourners here—
Old country friends and neighbours, and with whom
I e'en take up my quarters. Master Trueworth,
Bear witness for me.

True. It is even so.
Sir William Fondlove and his charming daughter.

Wild. Ay, neighbour Constance. Charming, does he say?
Yes, neighbour Constance is a charming girl
To those that do not know her. If she plies me
As hard as was her custom in the country,
I should not wonder though, this very day,
I seek the home I quitted for a month! [Aside.]

Good even, gentlemen.

Hum. Nay, if you go,
We all break up, and sally forth together.

Wal. Be it so—Your hand again, good Master Trueworth!
I am sorry I did pain you.

True. It is thine, sir.