

James Sheridan Knowles

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# The Hunchback

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# **The Hunchback**

James Sheridan Knowles

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Minden jog fenntartva!

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1832.)

*Julia*

Miss F. Kemble.

*Helen*

Miss Taylor.

*Master Walter*

Mr. J. S. Knowles.

*Sir Thomas Clifford*

Mr. C. Kemble.

*Lord Tinsel*

Mr. Wrench.

*Master Wilford*

Mr. J. Mason.

*Modus*

Mr. Abbott.

*Master Heartwell*

Mr. Evans.

*Gaylove*

Mr. Henry.

*Fathom*

Mr. Meadows.

*Thomas*

Mr. Barnes.

*Stephen*

Mr. Payne.

*Williams*

Mr. Irwin.

*Simpson*

Mr. Brady.

*Waiter*

Mr. Heath.

*Holdwell*

Mr. Bender.

*Servants*

Mr. J. Cooper.

Mr. Lollett.

## **ACT I.**

### **SCENE I.—A Tavern.**



On one side Sir Thomas Clifford, at a table, with wine before him; on the other, Master Wilford, Gaylove, Holdwell, and Simpson, likewise taking wine.

*Wilf.* Your wine, sirs! your wine! You do not justice to mine host of the Three Tuns, nor credit to yourselves; I swear the beverage is good! It is as palatable poison as you will purchase within a mile round Ludgate! Drink, gentlemen; make free. You know I am a man of expectations; and hold my money as light as the purse in which I carry it.

*Gay.* We drink, Master Wilford. Not a man of us has been chased as yet.

*Wilf.* But you fill not fairly, sirs! Look at my measure! Wherefore a large glass, if not for a large draught? Fill, I pray you, else let us drink out of thimbles! This will never do for the friends of the nearest of kin to the wealthiest peer in Britain.

*Gay.* We give you joy, Master Wilford, of the prospect of advancement which has so unexpectedly opened to you.

*Wilf.* Unexpectedly indeed! But yesterday arrived the news that the Earl's only son and heir had died; and to-day has the Earl himself been seized with a mortal illness. His dissolution is looked for hourly; and I, his cousin in only the third degree, known to him but to be unnoticed by him—a decayed gentleman's son—glad of the title and revenues of a scrivener's clerk—am the undoubted successor to his estates and coronet.

*Gay.* Have you been sent for?

*Wilf.* No; but I have certified to his agent, Master Walter, the Hunchback, my existence, and peculiar propinquity; and momentarily expect him here.

*Gay.* Lives there anyone that may dispute your claim—I mean vexatiously?

*Wilf.* Not a man, Master Gaylove. I am the sole remaining branch of the family tree.

*Gay.* Doubtless you look for much happiness from this change of fortune?

*Wilf.* A world! Three things have I an especial passion for. The finest hound, the finest horse, and the finest wife in the kingdom, Master Gaylove!

*Gay.* The finest wife?

*Wilf.* Yes, sir; I marry. Once the earldom comes into my line, I shall take measures to perpetuate its remaining there. I marry, sir! I do not say that I shall love. My heart has changed mistresses too often to settle down in one servitude now, sir. But fill, I pray you, friends. This, if I mistake not, is the day whence I shall date my new fortunes; and, for that reason, hither have I invited you, that, having been so long my boon companions, you shall be the first to congratulate me.

[Enter Waiter]

*Waiter.* You are wanted, Master Wilford.

*Wilf.* By whom?

*Waiter.* One Master Walter.

*Wilf.* His lordship's agent! News, sirs! Show him in!

[Waiter goes out]

My heart's a prophet, sirs—The Earl is dead.

[Enter Master Walter]

Well, Master Walter. How accost you me?

*Wal.* As your impatience shows me you would have me.  
My Lord, the Earl of Rochdale!

*Gay.* Give you joy!

*Hold.* All happiness, my lord!

*Simp.* Long life and health unto your lordship!

*Gay.* Come!

We'll drink to his lordship's health! 'Tis two o'clock,  
We'll e'en carouse till midnight! Health, my lord!

*Hold.* My lord, much joy to you!

*Simp.* All good to your lordship!

*Wal.* Give something to the dead!

*Gay.* Give what?

*Wal.* Respect!

He has made the living! First to him that's gone,  
Say "Peace!"—and then with decency to revels!

*Gay.* What means the knave by revels?

*Wal.* Knave?

*Gay.* Ay, knave!

*Wal.* Go to! Thou'rt flushed with wine!

*Gay.* Thou sayest false!

Though didst thou need a proof thou speakest true,  
I'd give thee one. Thou seest but one lord here,  
And I see two!

*Wal.* Reflect'st thou on my shape?

Thou art a villain!

*Gay.* [Starting up.] Ha!

*Wal.* A coward, too!

Draw!

[Drawing his sword.]

*Gay.* Only mark him! how he struts about!

How laughs his straight sword at his noble back.

*Wal.* Does it? It cuffs thee for a liar then!

[Strikes Gaylove with his sword.]

*Gay.* A blow!

*Wal.* Another, lest you doubt the first!

*Gay.* His blood on his own head! I'm for you, sir!

[Draws.]

*Clif.* Hold, sir! This quarrel's mine!

[Coming forward and drawing.]

*Wal.* No man shall fight for me, sir!

*Clif.* By your leave,

Your patience, pray! My lord, for so I learn

Behoves me to accost you—for your own sake  
Draw off your friend!

*Wal.* Not till we have a bout, sir!

*Clif.* My lord, your happy fortune ill you greet!  
Ill greet it those who love you—greeting thus  
The herald of it!

*Wal.* Sir, what's that to you?  
Let go my sleeve!

*Clif.* My lord, if blood be shed  
On the fair dawn of your prosperity,  
Look not to see the brightness of its day.  
'Twill be o'ercast throughout!

*Gay.* My lord, I'm struck!

*Clif.* You gave the first blow, and the hardest one!  
Look, sir; if swords you needs must measure, I'm  
Your mate, not he!

*Wal.* I'm mate for any man!

*Clif.* Draw off your friend, my lord, for your own sake!

*Wilf.* Come, Gaylove! let's have another room.

*Gay.* With all my heart, since 'tis your lordship's will.

*Wilf.* That's right! Put up! Come, friends!

[Wilford and Friends go out.]

*Wal.* I'll follow him!  
Why do you hold me? 'Tis not courteous of you!  
Think'st thou I fear them? Fear! I rate them but  
As dust! dross! offals! Let me at them!—Nay,  
Call you this kind? then kindness know I not;  
Nor do I thank you for't! Let go, I say!

*Clif.* Nay, Master Walter, they're not worth your wrath.

*Wal.* How know you me for Master Walter? By  
My hunchback, eh!—my stilts of legs and arms,  
The fashion more of ape's than man's? Aha!  
So you have heard them, too—their savage gibes  
As I pass on,—“There goes my lord!” aha!  
God made me, sir, as well as them and you.  
'Sdeath! I demand of you, unhand me, sir!

*Clif.* There, sir, you're free to follow them! Go forth,  
And I'll go too: so on your wilfulness  
Shall fall whate'er of evil may ensue.  
Is't fit you waste your choler on a burr?  
The nothings of the town; whose sport it is  
To break their villain jests on worthy men,  
The graver still the fitter! Fie for shame!  
Regard what such would say? So would not I,  
No more than heed a cur.

*Wal.* You're right, sir; right,  
For twenty crowns! So there's my rapier up!  
You've done me a good turn against my will;  
Which, like a wayward child, whose pet is off,

That made him restive under wholesome check,  
I now right humbly own, and thank you for.

*Clif.* No thanks, good Master Walter, owe you me!  
I'm glad to know you, sir.

*Wal.* I pray you, now,  
How did you learn my name? Guessed I not right?  
Was't not my comely hunch that taught it you?