

**WILLIAM TELL: A
PLAY IN FIVE ACTS**

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William Tell: a play in five acts by James Sheridan Knowles

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JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

**WILLIAM TELL: A
PLAY IN FIVE ACTS**

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WILLIAM TELL:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

By JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES, Esq.

FIRST PERFORMED AT THE

Theatre Royal Drury Lane,

MAY 11, 1825.

LONDON:

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DEDICATION.

TO GENERAL MINA.

ILLUSTRIOUS MAN,

TO YOU I DEDICATE THE PLAY

OF

WILLIAM TELL.

WHO WILL DEMAND MY REASONS?

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

GLASGOW, MAY 6, 1855.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TABLE.

AUSTRIANS.

Geisler, <i>Governor of the Waldstätten,</i>	-	MR. ARCHER.
Sarnem, <i>his Lieutenant,</i>	- - - -	MR. THOMSON.
Struth, <i>his Seneschal,</i>	- - - -	MR. GATTIE.
Rodolph, } <i>his Castellains,</i>	- - -	{ MR. COOPER.
Lutold, } <i>his Castellains,</i>	- - -	{ MR. HOWELL.
Gerard, } <i>his Castellains,</i>	- - -	{ MR. FENTON.
Braun, <i>Servant to the Seneschal,</i>	-	MR. KNIGHT.
Anneli, <i>Step-daughter to the Seneschal,</i>	-	MISS POVEY.
Agnes, <i>her Cousin,</i>	- - - -	MRS. YATES.

Archers, &c. &c. &c.

SWISS.

William Tell, - - - - -	-	MR. MACREADY.
Albert, <i>his Son,</i> - - - - -	-	MISS C. FISHER.
Meichtal, <i>Ernst's Father,</i>	- - - -	MR. YOUNGER.
Erni, } <i>Patriots in league with Tell,</i>	{	MR. WEBSTER.
Furst, } <i>Patriots in league with Tell,</i>	{	MR. ARMSTRONG.
Verner, } <i>Patriots in league with Tell,</i>	{	MR. MERCEL.
Waldman, <i>a Burgher of Altorf,</i>	- - - -	MR. HUGHES.
Michael, <i>his Son,</i> - - - - -	-	MR. WALLACK.
Jagheli, <i>Michael's Friend,</i>	- - - -	MR. PENLEY.
Pierre, } <i>Inhabitants of Altorf,</i>	{	MR. WARNOLD.
Theodore, } <i>Inhabitants of Altorf,</i>	{	MR. O. SMITH.
Saweyards - - - - -	{	MASTER EDMONDS.
	{	MR. FITZWILLIAM.
	{	MR. FOSTER.
Emma, <i>Tell's Wife,</i> - - - -	-	MRS. BUNN.

Burghers, Mountaineers, Women, &c.

SCENE—Altorf and the neighbouring Mountains.

WILLIAM TELL.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Outside of the Castle of Altorf.
Alpine Scenery in the back Ground.*

Enter WALDMAN and MICHAEL.

Wald. Don't tell me, Michael! thou dost lead a life
As bootless as a jester's—worse than his,
For he has high retaining. Every one
Calls thee his fool—the gallant and the boy,
The gentle-born and base! Thy graceless name
Is ever tagg'd to feasts, and shows, and games,
And saucy brawls, which men as young as thou
Discourse of with grave looks. What comes of
this?

Will 't make thee rich? Will 't give thee place
in life?

Will 't buy thee honour, friendship, or esteem?
Will 't get thee reverence against gray hairs?

Mich. Father!

Wald. The current of thy life doth counter run
To that of other men's. "Thy spirits, which
"Were reason in thee, when thou wast a child,
"As tameless still, now thou'rt become a man,
"Are folly! thriftless life, that may be call'd
"More rational when in the nurse's lap
"Than when in manhood's chair." Survey those
towers,

And act the revel o'er of yesternight.

Think of the tyrants whom they lodge, and then

Link hands with fools and braggarts o'er their
 wine,
 Fancy the sounds their dungeons hear, and tell
 Of such and such a jest of thine, that made
 Thy wanton comrades roar.

Mich. Dear father!

Wald. Pshaw!
 Thou canst not try to speak with gravity,
 But one perceives thou wagg'st an idle tongue;
 Thou canst not try to look demure, but, spite
 Of all thou dost, thou show'st a laughter's cheek:
 Thou canst not e'en essay to walk sedate,
 But in thy very gait one sees the jest,
 That's ready to break out in spite of all
 Thy seeming.

Mich. I'm a melancholy man,
 That can't do that which with good will I would!
 I pray thee, father, tell me what will change me?

Wald. Change thee!
 Hire thyself to a sexton, and dig graves:
 Never keep company but at funerals:
 Beg leave to take thy bed into the church,
 And sleep there: fast, until thine abstinence
 Upbraid the anchorite with gluttony;
 "List to the music of a passing bell!"—

Mich. But if
 The bells, that ring as readily for joy
 As grief, should chance to ring a merry peal—

Wald. Then take the rope,
 And hang thyself: [*crosses*] I know no other way
 To change thee.

Mich. Nay, I'll do some great feat yet.

Wald. You'll do some great feat! Take me Gesler's
 castle!

Mich. Humph! that would be a feat, indeed!—I'll
 do it!

Wald. You'll do it? you'll get married, and have
 children,

And be a sober citizen, before
 You pare your bread o' the crust. You'll do it?
 You'll

Do nothing! Live till you are a hundred,

When death shall catch you, 'twill be laughing.
Do it?

Look grave, talk wise, live sober, thou wilt do
A harder thing, but that thou 'lt never do. [*Exit*
WALDMAN.]

Mich. [*solus.*] Hard sentence, that! Dame Nature!
gentle mother,

If thou hast made me of too rich a mould
To bring the common seed of life to fruit,
Is it a fault? Kind Nature, I should lie
To say it was. Who would not have an eye
To see the sun, where others see a cloud;
A skin so temper'd as to feel the rain,
Gave other men the ague, him refresh'd;
A frame so vernal, as, in spite of snow,
To think it genial summer all year round;
And bask himself in bleak December's scowl,
While other's sit and shiver o'er a hearth?
I do not know the fool would not be such
A man! Shall I upbraid my heart because
It hath been so intent to keep me in
An ample revenue of golden mirth,
It hath forgot to hoard the duller coin
The world doth trade on? No, not I, not I.
Yet here comes that, despite my wealth of mirth,
Can make a beggar of me! Father, could
You see me now, you 'd find me sans a smile
In all my jester's scrip.

Enter Gessler's Archers, escorting some Swiss Peasants, Prisoners to the Castle, across the Stage, and enter a porch, TELL at a short distance, following them.

Tell. [*to Michael, who is looking after them.*] Do you
know them?

Mich. No.

Tell. Nor I, thank heaven! How like you that?

Mich. What?

Tell. That?

Mich. I like it not.

Tell. It might as well be you or I.

Mich. It might.