

LITTLE HUNCHBACK
from the
Arabian Nights Entertainments

In Three Cantos



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. HARRIS,
CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD

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1817.

H. Bryer, Printer,
Bridge-street, Blackfriars, London.

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CANTO I.

From the borders of Tartary not far removed,
A Taylor once lived with a wife whom he loved.
Whilst sitting at work at the close of the day,
A poor little Hunchback came passing that way,
Who stopt at the door, and without a word saying,
Began on his tabor most merrily playing.



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The Taylor, delighted his music to hear,
Invited him in to partake of his cheer.
His wife put before them some beautiful fish,
And with appetite keen they sat down to the dish.
But scarce were they seated, when, sad to relate,
Poor Hunchback experienced a terrible fate;
For so fast in his throat did a fish-bone remain,
That all his endeavours to move it were vain;
And though by them all every method was tried,

Little Hunchback was shortly a corpse at their side!

Aghast stood the Taylor! aghast stood his wife!
To see their poor guest thus deprived of his life;
And of punishment great they had reason to fear,
If the magistrates should of the accident hear.
To get rid of the corpse they must try, it was plain,
And this method to do so came into their brain:—
They lifted it up by the head and the feet,
And between them they carried it thus up the street.



And between them they carried it thus up the street.

At a Jew Doctor's house very soon they arrived,
Where a way to dispose of it thus they contrived;
They knock'd hard at the door (from which door it is said
A long night of stairs to the Jew's chamber led,)
At their rap came the maid, without bringing a light,

To know what they wanted at that time of night.
“To your master go up,” said the Taylor, “I pray,
“For we’ve brought a man here in a desperate way.”
He gave her some money to hasten the faster,
And up ran the maid with all speed to her master.
She was no sooner gone, than in violent haste
At the top of the stairs little Hunchback they placed,
And leaving him there, off they scamper’d with speed,
Well pleas’d with themselves at their impudent deed.

The Doctor was quickly inform’d by the maid,
That a patient below at the door for him staid,
And seeing the cash that she held in her hand,
He determin’d not long at the door he should stand.—
“A light, a light, quick,” to the maid did he say,
But till the light came not contented to stay,
He flew hastily on to the head of the stair,
Little dreaming, poor man, of the obstacle there,
And in speed to descend his sick patient to view,
From the top to the bottom poor Hunchback he threw!
On finding he gave some hard body a kick,
He roar’d out again, “bring a light to me quick.”
But what words can express, when she came with the light,
The Doctor’s confusion, surprize, and affright,
When he saw ‘twas a man down the stairs he had thrown,
Who, poor wretch! at the bottom lay dead as a stone!
“Oh wretch that I was!” exclaim’d he in a fright,
“To venture down stairs without bringing a light;
“For alas! it is plain ‘gainst my patient I ran,
“And instead of my curing, I’ve kill’d the poor man.
“Oh mercy upon me, ‘twill soon get about,
“And I shall be dragged as a murderer out.”
Then he shut the door quick, as he fear’d going by
That some people perhaps the dead body might spy;
To his chamber then dragg’d it without more delay,
And his wife at the spectacle fainted away!

When her senses returned, she cried out, “Oh my dear!
“We’re undone I’m afraid, for unless soon from here,
“A plan to remove the dead body we find,
“To our both being hung we may make up our mind.”
But for quickness of thought women always are fam’d,
And delighted she soon to her husband exclaim’d,

“To the leads of our house, without any delay,
“The body of Hunchback now let us convey,
“And lower it sllily, and still as a mouse,
“Down the chimney next door of the Mussulman’s house.”

This Mussulman, one of the Sultan’s Purveyors,
Sold butter and tallow, and all such affairs,
And for them in his house had a large magazine,
Where the rats and the mice had great pilferers been;
The Doctor the scheme of his wife much approv’d,
And between them they quickly the body remov’d.
And under his arms putting ropes as she bid,
Down the chimney poor Hunchback they silently slid,
And so cleverly did they to fix him contrive,
That any one else must have thought him alive.
The rope they pull’d up, when they found he was plac’d,
And made their escape with all possible haste.

To his store-room now soon the Purveyor came up,
Having staid out that night rather later to sup,
And was highly surpriz’d, when he saw by the light,
A man in his chimney was standing upright!
And concluding it must be a robber of course,
Took up a large stick, and approach’d him full force.



Took up a large stick, and approach’d him full force.

“Ho, Master!” said he, “why you impudent fellow,
“I thought ‘twas the rats ate my butter and tallow,
“But ‘tis you who come down here and rob me ‘tis plain,
“But you never shall come on this errand again.”

This said, on poor Hunchback he fell pretty quick,
And gave him some good heavy blows with his stick.
Down fell the dead man to the ground on his nose,
But still the Purveyor repeated his blows,
Till finding the body unmov’d to remain,
For a moment he paus’d ere he struck him again,
And soon was his anger converted to dread,
When he saw to his horror that Hunchback was dead.
“Oh what have I done,” exclaim’d he in dismay,
“I have taken the life of this fellow away!
“Such unmerciful blows to him why did I give!
“For I’ve kill’d the poor fellow, as sure as I live!
“You vile little Hunchback,” he furiously cried,
“Who my butter and tallow to steal have thus tried,
“With your plunder I wish you had made your escape,
“And then I should have miss’d getting into this scrape.”
But as grumbling to life would not Hunchback restore,
The unfortunate man on his shoulders he bore,
And contriving to carry him thus up the street,
He set him against a shop-door on his feet,
And whilst running home as much terror he feels,
As if the dead man had been close at his heels.

CANTO II.

Some minutes it chanced ere the dawning of day,
A rich Christian merchant was passing that way,
Who’d stept out of his house after drinking all night,
Intending to go to the bath before light.
Though the merchant was drunk, yet he very well knew
That it near to the hour of the morning prayer drew,
And he quickened his pace lest some Turks in the street,
In their way to the Mosques he should happen to meet,
As he feared if by them he was seen in that state,
To be thrown into prison would soon be his fate.
He hurried on fast, at each step more afraid,

But his breath being gone with the haste he had made,
He leant for a moment, by fatal ill luck,
'Gainst the door where the body of Hunchback was stuck.
The corpse in an instant came tumbling, good lack!
With no little force on the poor Merchant's back;
Who, struck with amaze, in the moment of fear,
Knock'd him flat to the ground with a box on the ear;
And repeating with fury the blows as he lay,
Kept crying out "Thieves," in a desperate way.
The watch being roused by the outcry he made,
In an instant came up to afford him some aid,
But found 'twas a Christian attacking a Turk,
Who caused all this outcry and loud piece of work.
"Pray why," he exclaimed, "are you making this fuss,
"And daring to treat a poor Mussulman thus?"
"Because," said the Merchant, "he made the attack,
"And designing to rob me, he jumped on my back."
"You have had your revenge," said the watch, "if he did,
"So release the poor man, and go home as you're bid."
Thus saying, to Hunchback he held out his hand,
On his legs once again to assist him to stand;
But alas! he perceived it was offered in vain,
For poor little Hunchback wou'd ne'er stand again!
"Hey dey, is it thus that a Christian," he said,
"Has been beating a Turk, till the poor man is dead!"
So his hands on the Merchant directly he laid,
And the best of his way to the Cadi's he made,
Where close he was kept in durance confined,
'Till this Judge to examine him leisure could find.
When the Merchant was sober, and came to reflect,
He wondered his blows could have had such effect,
Though he could not deny having knock'd down the man,
When the Judge on the business of question began;
But still did his fate undecided remain,
Till the will of the Sultan the Judge could obtain.

To the Palace he went; when the Sultan had heard
An account from his lips of what just had occur'd,
"No mercy," he answered, "to Christians I'll shew,
"Who ever dare treat any Mussulman so."
Then back to his office the Justice repaired,
Giving orders a gibbet should soon be prepared;
Whilst the news through the city was presently rung,

That for killing a Turk would a Christian be hung.

To the foot of the gallows the Merchant was brought,
And the hangman (who'd fasten'd a rope round his throat)
Was preparing to give him a swing in the air,
When quick through the crowd shoved the Sultan's Purveyor;
To the gibbet he hastened half ready to drop,
And loudly called out to the hangman to stop,
He himself had committed the murder he said,
For which the poor Merchant to die was then led.
By the Cadi on this many questions were asked,
The Purveyor informed him of all that had passed,
Of his killing poor Hunchback, and then having propt
Him against the shop-door where the merchant had stopt.
As his guilt without scruple he publicly owned,
The Cadi at once to the Merchant atoned.
"Let the Christian depart, and," said he, "in his room,
"Let this man. be hung up, as is justly his doom."
Round the Mussulman's neck they now fastened the string,
And just as the hangman was giving the swing,
A poor Jewish Doctor all trembling appear'd,
And implored him to stop till his tale could be Heard.

When he came to the Judge, "Oh my Lord," he began,
"You're now going to hang up an innocent man,
"Poor Hunchback, alas! had been kill'd long before,
"And the fault of his murder lies all at my door.
"Last night came a man and a woman to me,
"And brought a sick man whom they wished me to see;
"To the door in the dark the maid-servant went,
"And up with a message to me was she sent;
"In her absence, the people who brought the man there,
"Conveyed him, poor wretch, to the head of the stair,
"And in silence departed, whilst I in my zeal,
"The pulse of my patient the sooner to feel,
"Down the stairs without candle set off running quick,
"When I found all at once I gave something a kick,
"Which alas! all the way, from the rumbling sound,
"From the top to the bottom had fallen I found.
"But conceive with what horror my bosom was filled,
"When I saw by the light 'twas this man I had killed;
"With the aid of my wife I the body removed,
"And poor little Hunchback we silently shoved

“Down the Mussulman’s chimney, who lived at next door,
“Where by him it was found as he mentioned before.”

The Justice perceiving the matter was clear
That the Doctor in truth was the murderer here,
Desired them to let the Purveyor go free,
And hang up the Doctor as soon as could be.”

CANTO III.

To obey this command the hangman began,
And shortly the Doctor had been a dead man;
When quite out of breath the poor Taylor cried out,
“Stop, stop, for you know not the deed you’re about,
“Indeed my Lord Justice it must be confest,
“This Jew is as innocent quite as the rest,
“For you’ll find when you’ve heard what I have to relate,
“That Hunchback alone in my house met his fate.
“Last night being busy at work in my shop,
“He chanced at my door as he passed by to stop,
“And hearing him play, I for merriment’s sake,
“Then invited him in of my food to partake;
“A fine dish of fish for our supper we had,
“Which to make a good meal of he seem’d very glad;
“But alas! a great fish-bone soon stuck in his throat,
“Which we could not with all our endeavours get out,
“And though ev’ry method my wife and I tried,
“In a very short time he was dead at our side!

“Being charg’d with his death we had reason to fear,
“And knowing a Jew Doctor who liv’d very near,
“Between us we carried the corpse to his door,
“Which we left on the stairs, as he stated before
“So the Doctor is innocent quite, ‘tis a fact,
“And I ought alone to be hung for the act.”

The Justice, as well as the People about,
Were astonished when this from the Taylor came out,
“But ‘tis plain,” he declared, “that the story is so,
“Then hang up the Taylor, and let the Jew go.”

To do this, however, some time was required,
And the Sultan meanwhile for his Jester enquired;
As he kept little Hunch for his humourous pow'rs,
By way of buffoon, in his heavier hours.
An officer standing just then at his side,
To his Majesty's question directly replied,
"Little Hunchback got tipsey last night, as we hear,
"And went out of the palace when no one was near,
"And to-day a report through the city was spread,
"Of his being by somebody picked up quite dead.
"Before the Chief Justice a merchant was brought,
"Who it seems to have murder'd him strongly was thought,
"But as he was going to swing for the crime,
"Up came a Purveyor and owned just in time,
"Twas he who had kill'd him! So quickly instead,
"Of the Merchant was he to the gallows' foot led,
"When up came a Doctor, and begged to declare,
"That 'twas he murder'd Hunchback, and not the Purveyor,
"To die was he doom'd, when a Taylor appear'd,
"And strange to relate, all the other three clear'd,
"And the murder so openly did he avow,
"That the Judge is the Culprit examining now."

The Sultan on hearing this curious affair,
Sent off to the spot where the pris'ners were,
And ordered the body of Hunchback should then
Be convey'd to the palace, with all the four men.
At the place did the messenger quickly arrive,
Where the trembling Taylor he found still alive.
To the hangman to stop, in a moment he cried,
And ordered the Taylor should then be untied.
To the Justice he went with all due expedition,
And made known from the Sultan his present commission.

To the palace they went, and convey'd with them too,
The Merchant, the Taylor, Purveyor and Jew,
Whilst four of the men carried Hunchback along,
Surrounded of curse by a numerous throng.

When they came to the Sultan, the Judge at his feet,
Did faithfully all that happen'd repeat.

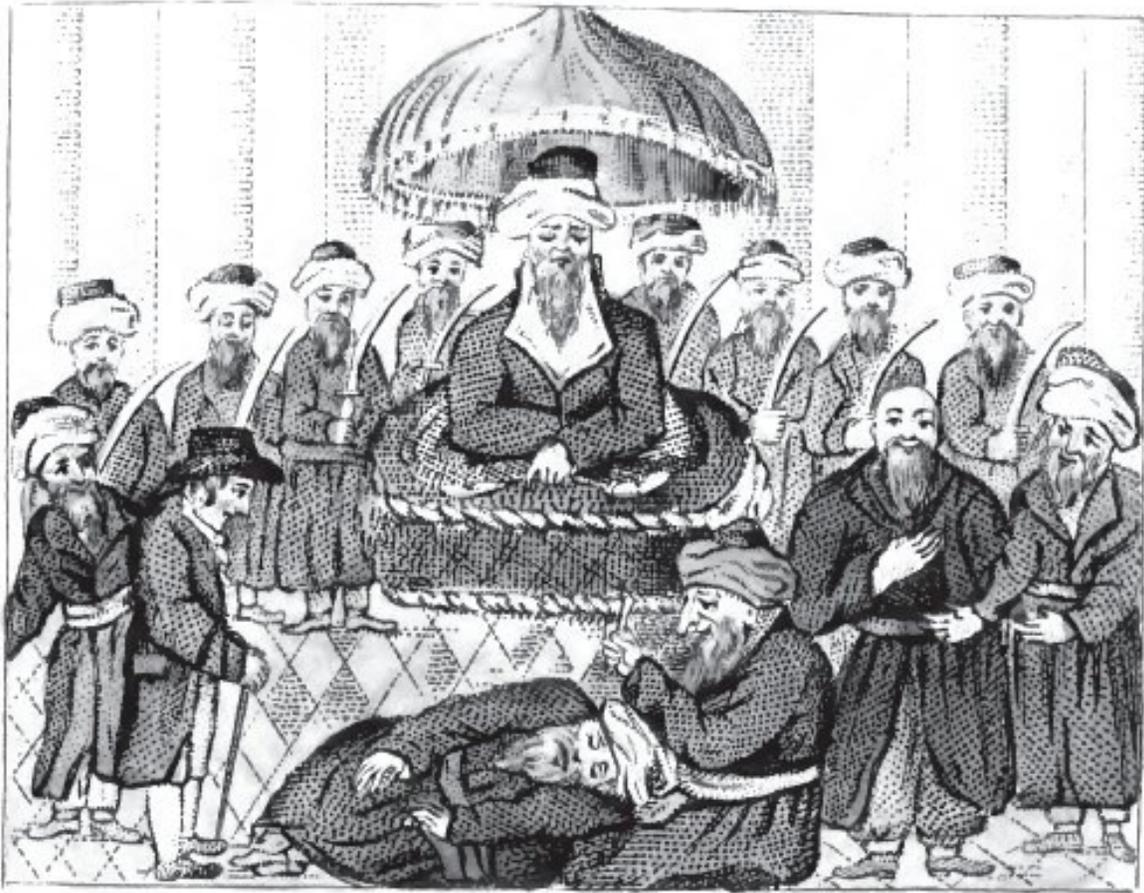
Amidst the great crowd to the palace that ran,

Was a Barber, a very odd looking old man,
Who would not for an instant stand still, 'till he knew
What they were with these four people going to do.
"And what can you Majesty want," exclaim'd he,
"With the corpse of the poor little Hunchback I see?"
The Sultan amazed with the questions he asked,
Desired that he now should be told what had pass'd.
"Why 'tis a strange business," he said, "it is true,
"But let me give Hunchback a narrower view."

He drew to him close, and sad down on the ground,
And examin'd him narrowly all round and round,
When into a fit of such laughter he fell,
That what cou'd possess him no creature could tell.
"Good man," said the Sultan, "do speak to me pray,
"And tell me now what sets you laughing that way."
"Why indeed," said the Barber, "I cannot forbear,
"For by your good humour, I vow, and declare,
"That Hunchback's not dead! and you soon shall all see,
"That as merry as ever he'll presently be."

On this from his pocket a box he took out,
In which were some med'cines he carried about,
A phial of balsam from this did he take,
And rub'd Hunchback's neck 'till he made his hand ache.
Then a small iron instrument took from its sheath,
Which he put very cleverly 'twixt the man's teeth,
And a long pair of pincers he thrust down his throat,
From whence a great fish-bone he quickly drew out!
On this little Hunchback immediately sneezed,
And stretched out his legs and his arms, highly pleased;
And soon to the wonder of hundreds and more,
Was Hunchback as merry and gay as before!

The sultan astonished this scene to behold,
Had the tale written fairly in letters of gold,
To the Taylor, the Merchant, Purveyor, and Jew,
He gave all rich robes as were justly their due,
And so pleas'd with the skill that the Barber display'd,
That of him a rich man from the moment he made,
And to honour him farther commanded beside,
That as long as he liv'd he should with him reside.



From whence a great fish-bone he quickly drew out!

The End.

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