

ament of the dramatist, and shoals of sordid leeches were ever ready to fasten upon him whenever he had a guinea in his purse. Much of the money thus disbursed was in the shape of loans, but as he seldom exacted acknowledgments of debt, the coin might as well have been buried in the recesses of the *Dominie's Hole*—the deepest pool in the River Clyde!

And so poor Paddy Knowles began to be in want!

It was whilst creditors were clamorous, and the demands of a numerous family pressing upon him, that he composed the beautiful play of the *Hunchback*. Having despatched it to London, the merits of the production were at once recognised by the parties to whom it was submitted, and it was accepted and put in rehearsal. At that period Fanny Kemble was in the full flush and zenith of her reputation, and she was cast for the character of Julia, the part of the wayward, but honest Master Walter being appropriated to Farren the elder.

Everything went on swimmingly for a season. Each succeeding post brought tidings to Glasgow that the knowing ones regarded the success of the drama as a matter of inevitable certainty: especially when its literary merits were backed by such commanding histrionic talent.

Brightly shone the hopes of the author. Already he felt his limbs freed from the meshes in which he had been so long entangled. By anticipation he breathed the delicious and bracing atmosphere of independence!

At this crisis Farren was smitten by the inexorable hand of sickness! An attack of palsy stretched the mine upon his bed, with the certainty that months, perchance years, would elapse ere he could again assume the exercise of his profession.

What was to be done?

Fanny Kemble's engagement was of limited duration, and the *Hunchback*, if played at all, must be produced within a week or two. No actor could be found willing to study the onerous part of "Master Walter" at such a brief notice, and more especially as the public had expected to see a long established favourite in the role. To walk in the shoes of Farren was like attempting to bend the bow of Achilles!

In these circumstances, the management of Covent Garden wrote to Knowles, suggesting, as a forlorn hope, that he should enact the embarrassing character himself!

Like mocking madness did that proposal sound to the sorely perplexed "Paddy." In

his "green and salad days" he had been for a brief period upon the stage, but for twenty years he had worn neither sock nor buskin. It is true that during that period he had been engaged in the practice and tuition of the elocutionary art, but every one at all conversant with such matters is aware that there is nearly as much difference between reciting detached pieces in a school-room, and representing a character upon the stage, as there is between a sham fight and a genuine passage at arms.

However, there was no help for it. Hobson's choice was the order of the day! Knowles or nobody, was the stern fiat of the fates!

With a heavy heart and care-clouded brow the poor author took his departure for the British metropolis. I accompanied him to the mail coach, and never shall I forget the desponding and non-elastic tones of his voice, as he bade me good-bye. "My dear boy," said he, "before the month is out my destiny will be sealed! I shall either make a spoon, or hopelessly spoil a horn!"

To cut a long story short, the eventful evening came round, and the green curtain rose upon the first scene of the *Hunchback*.

I need not dwell upon the success of this sterling play, or the reception of the author-actor. These are matters of dramatic history, and must be familiar to all who take an interest in such affairs. Enough to say that the enthusiasm of the audience found fresh fuel in every act, and that Knowles fairly divided the plaudits with Miss Kemble. At the conclusion, the house—and it was an overflowing one—rose to the representatives of Julia and her new-found father, and loud, hearty, and long-continued were the *vivas* which rendered that famous theatre vocal!

"How did you feel, sir," quoth I to my old master, when I first saw him after the achievement of his triumph, "how did you feel at the moment when your victory had reached its culminating point?" "I cannot tell you what I felt," was the reply, "but I shall tell you what I did. So soon as I could escape from the stage, I ran trembling and panting to my dressing-room, and bolting the door, I sunk down upon my knees, and from the bottom of my soul thanked God for his wondrous kindness to me! If ever I uttered the prayer of a grateful heart, it was in that little chamber!"

When the worthy fellow was thus speaking to me, the big tears were rolling down his cheeks, and so deep was his emotion, that it was