

wont to make it their especial boast that they never had performed, and never, upon any earthly consideration *would* perform out of London. If this qualification be necessary in order to found a claim upon the sympathies of London audiences, I am bound to admit, at the outset, that my raree-show will be deserving of no patronage at their hands, and that I must look for all my appreciation and emolument in the colonies: inasmuch as, with one trifling exception, to be duly noted by another hand in its proper place, all such of my performances as may be supposed to possess any general interest, have taken place not only out of London, but out of Great Britain, and in the province formerly known as Upper Canada. I shall introduce those ladies and gentlemen who may honour my exhibition with their attendance, to a class of actors and a variety of scenery which, so far as I am aware, have not hitherto been produced upon any stage. Notwithstanding this trifling drawback, if such it is to be considered, I hope to place before them an entertainment which they will be able to sit out to the end without weariness, and which they will acknowledge to be worth the price charged for admission. I will only add that should any one in the audience regret his or her investment after witnessing a few of the opening scenes, he or she will be at perfect liberty to retire from the hall; but under no circumstances whatever will any money be returned at the door.

The foregoing metaphorical and somewhat egotistical remarks having been indulged in by way of introductory overture, the clamour from the back benches becomes distinctly audible: whereupon the bell rings, the curtain rises, and the performance begins.

Looking back through the rolling years into the far-off vista of the past, one of my earliest recollections is of a tall, stalwart, square-shouldered, hazel-eyed, brown-bearded man rushing up to my mother and seizing her in his arms as she was in the act of descending from the canvas-covered waggon which had conveyed us—my mother, brother, sister and self—from Port Burlington, at the western extremity of Lake Ontario, to Johnson's Ford, a village about thirty-five miles inland. We had made the journey from Port Burlington at the exceptionally rapid rate—taking the condition of the roads into account—of three miles an hour; and the jaded horses had just been pulled up before the door of "The Shooting Star," the most pretentious of the three inns of which the village could boast. No sooner had the vehicle come to a stand-still than he of the brown beard sprang forward and embraced my mother as just mentioned. She, strange to say, so far from resenting this familiarity, threw her arms impetuously about his neck, and returned his caress with almost frantic eagerness, imprinting a rapturous kiss upon each of his sun-browned cheeks. It did not occur to me, however, to be in the least surprised at these exuberant manifestations of affection on the part of my mother, for two reasons: first, because she *was* my mother, and I felt absolutely certain that whatever she did must of necessity be right; and second, because I knew—though I then looked upon his face for the first time—that the man was my father.

"At last," he exclaimed, in a cheery, joyful tone.

"Yes, Robert; at last," replied my mother, in a very low voice, and smiling upon him through her tears.

He had no sooner deposited my mother safely on the ground than we three children came in for our share of his attentions; and having hugged and kissed us with a fervour not less intense than he had displayed towards my mother, he took me up in his arms, preparatory to leading the way into the tavern.

At this juncture there stepped forth from the doorway the most strange-looking figure it has ever been my fortune to foreground withal.

This figure consisted of a human being, presumably of the masculine gender; rather short in stature, but with shoulders broader even than my father's, and of very robust build. The face, entirely destitute of beard or whisker, was dark and swarthy, with high, prominent cheek-bones, and deep-set, lustrous, piercing black eyes that seemed to transfix while they looked upon you. Forehead broad, low, and retreating. The most noticeable feature, however, was the long, hooked nose, which curved down until it came almost upon a level with the thick, massive lips, through which the broken and half-decayed teeth here and there asserted

themselves unpleasantly. A few unkempt, matted colourless locks hung around the sides and back of the head, which at the top was quite bald, and devoid of any artificial covering in the shape of a hat. The upper part of the body was clad in a nondescript sort of tunic, made from undressed sheepskin, with the woolly side outwards. The throat, and part of the breast, were bare, and disclosed a dark, tawny skin, the texture whereof told of continued exposure to all sorts of weather. The limbs were protected by loosely-fitting trousers, apparently made from the remains of a superannuated blanket. The feet were encased in much-worn moccasins, confined round the ankle by thongs of deerskin. Altogether, the appearance of this singular being was suggestive of a limited wardrobe, and of long and hard service: a combination of Robinson Crusoe, Natty Bumppo, John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness, and Julius Cæsar in his decline.

Robinson Crusoe: on account of the unconventional character of the garments. Natty Bumppo: on account of the complexion and general *tout ensemble* of the man, which were unmistakably indicative of a wandering life, mostly spent in the open air. John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness: on account of the presence of the tunic, the absence of head-gear, and a pervading expression of earnest ecstatic wildness. Julius Cæsar in his decline: on account of the bald cranium, the aquiline beak, the lustrous eyes which glowed like carbuncles, and the general contour of the face, which last was of a decidedly Roman type, and not without a certain air of mournful majesty. Certainly, if an artist desirous of depicting "the mighty Julius" in insolvent circumstances had been then and there present, he would not have needed to look far for a model.

I do not mean to convey the idea that I—mere child as I was—took in all these things at a glance, or that any such reflections as the foregoing passed through my mind at that time. I had never heard of Julius Cæsar or Natty Bumppo. John the Baptist and Robinson Crusoe were even then familiar to me as mere names, but of their respective individualities it is not to be expected that I could have any definite conception. My astonishment was too great to admit of my being conscious of more than the general effect produced upon me by my first sight of this fantastic-looking personage; but as I had many subsequent opportunities of cultivating his acquaintance, and as his attire never underwent any material change all the year round, I have thought fit to avail myself of those opportunities, and to set him before the reader as he actually looked.

He placed himself directly in front of us, and came to an abrupt stand.

"Well, Sebastian," exclaimed my father, "what contrary wind has blown you to the Ford?"

"That your boy?" the man asked, disregarding the question, and pointing towards my face.

"Yes, this is my little boy—my youngest. You must come and see us some day, and be introduced to him; but we are in a hurry just now."

"Them yours, too?" he continued, indicating my brother and sister.

"Yes, these too; and this lady is my wife, of whom you have often heard me speak, and who will be glad to see you one of these days, when you call at the Crofts.—This is Sebastian Gee, my love,"—turning towards my mother with a smile: "you must learn to know Sebastian—he and I are sworn friends."

My mother bowed to him as respectfully as though he had been Autocrat of All the Russias, but he did not think it necessary to reciprocate her courtesy, and never even looked at her. His eyes were riveted upon my face, into which he gazed long and searchingly.

"Well, good-bye just now, Sebastian," resumed my father, after an uncomfortable pause: "don't forget to come and see us before long."

The stranger here withdrew his gaze from my face, and stepped aside; whereupon my father proceeded to enter the house. He had placed one foot upon the threshold, when the man again advanced towards us, and whispered, in a tone loud enough to be heard by us all, "Don't stay long. Git home afore dark."

And without uttering a syllable in the way of explanation or adieu, he stalked grimly away round the corner of the building