

# FIVE FARCES MUST HAVE FOUNDATION OF TRUTH

### Why Francis Wilson in "When Knights Were Bold" Makes Good—Patent Acting, Proprietary Drama and Writing Testimonials Thereof

By J. F. S.

AFTER a respite of two weeks, during which the constant readers of this page, my friends the managers, and my weary typewriter, have been given a chance to breathe, I renew my weekly task of Sisyphean—

"With many a weary step and many a groan,  
Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone."

long enough to assure my friends that I have not fallen a victim to the soft enchantments of the Oregon spring. From the theatres I directed my attention for a brief space to the Portland police—a digression that I feel amply repaid me for the tax on time and health. For it proved to me that there are depths of stupidity beyond anything the stage knows of. I can now turn to the efforts of our young romantic actors and our sparkling comediennees with the feeling that here, at least, there is a glimmering of reason, a faint desire to grow to better things.

If I have at any time heretofore suggested that I have sounded the depths of ignorance and incompetence, I now publicly acknowledge that I was mistaken. It is therefore with something like a sigh of relief that I turn to Francis Wilson and his farce, "When Knights Were Bold," which delighted some surprisingly large houses at the Heilig last week. The houses were surprisingly large that is, to the owners of the theatre. No one who has much knowledge of the public and what it wants was astonished. No doubt that Mr. Cort is still wondering why Wilton Lackaye and Hall Caine's "The Bondman" didn't draw. The producers gave it the London production and the London cast, Mr. Lackaye himself was there, spreading the light of his presence upon it and delivering himself of something more than the usual amount of sickening rant. And there was a large audience the opening night.

The simple truth is that no play will amount to much unless it is the truth. You can sit down and write yards of sparkling dialogue, have thrilling situations by the score and tell a most wonderful tale, but unless there is something more than dialogue, plot and tale your piece won't last long. Whether it be tragedy or comedy or even farce, it must depict with at least some of the elements of truth, life, humanity and character. The tragedy gives the grimmer side, the comedy the pleasanter side and the farce, no less, must stick to humanity, exaggerating it but not falsifying it.

Few farces will stand the test of examination as well as will Charles Marlowe's. It's mainly because her first idea was good. Little of the play as it now stands was written by her. The funny situations have been carefully developed through watching of audiences. It is said that when the piece was first put on in London by James Welch he had a stenographer stationed in the wings who took down every word and bit of business that was introduced and recorded just where the audience laughed. The next day, at rehearsal, the play would be changed to suit the latest liking of the audience. The prompt book of the play is a literary curiosity.

It will be remembered by those who saw the play in Portland on the opening night that Mr. Wilson introduced several very evident novelties—they even discomfited the members of his company for the moment—and doubtless he is constantly adding funnyisms of his own to the piece in the effort to keep it up to the mark and to continue his prosperity.

It is owing to the intrinsic value of the satire itself, however, that it is a success. The experience of Guy de Vere is no unusual one. There is a very strong psychological basis for the antics he is made to go through in trying to down once and for all that eternal talk of "the good old days." The incongruity upon which the plot is based is both spiritual and physical. The cold from which Sir Guy is suffering in the first act doubtless offended some, but it performed the task of assuring everyone that they needn't grow sentimental over this romping scion of nobility. It killed lurking sympathy in just about two minutes. Once that was safely driven out you were in a fit condition to see Sir Guy go about his work of smashing the images, which he did, it must be admitted, with rare good sense and success.

The appeal that lay in the dilemma of the relative-ridden, tyroized young baronet was a wide one. Hobbes calls the comic sense "a sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the inferiority of others, or with our own former." It's about as awkward a definition as you'll find outside of Allen and Greenough, but if you analyze it carefully you will see that it contains a germ of sense. Most of us who were born in the east or have lived there know what it means to be tied

down to traditions, to family and to memories of the past. A considerable portion of the population of New England still delights in contemplating its own antiquity, in supping with its great-grandfathers' silver spoons and lamenting the days of black stocks and ruffled shirt-fronts. A worthy but tiresome relative of mine insisted on putting-off the evil present as long as he could—at least so far as he was concerned—by riding in a Concord coach and wearing satin small-clothes to his dying day. Everyone has had similar experiences with the senseless effort to prevent the dead past from burying its dead. Therefore when Sir Guy went forth to do battle with the dragon of false sentimentality he took with him our hopes, our prayers and our laughing good-will.

So far as I was concerned his bold and devoted stand against blank verse won my heart as nothing else could. Those chapters in the history of English literature devoted to the praise of the early discoverers of blank verse have always been particularly detestable to me. It seemed that it would have been better had the chapters been tied around the necks of the discoverers and the whole dropped into the most convenient pond of sufficient depth to insure aquatic rescue.

And yet there was one incongruity that stood out glaringly—none of the playwright's making, but the product of our own times and styles. We thought it was funny enough when Mr. Wilson was thrust bodily into the clanking and highly uncomfortable armor of the twelfth century. Our shoulders ached in sympathy as we regarded his plight. How immeasurably superior we felt to our silly progenitors! And yet throughout it all Mr. Wilson wore without a murmur of complaint a specimen of the present day fashionable collar, starched within an inch of its life and imprisoning his naturally ample and, for all one could tell, graceful neck like a vise. It caught him so he could scarcely breathe. It seriously interfered with his resting. When he tried to lie down on the couch and take his 40 winks of sleep it choked him till he grew purple in the face. It seemed to be a much more horrible and useless and generally obsolete bit of wearing apparel than the steel helmet they brought him to put on. But, unless Colonel Wood was present, I fear no one appreciated his plight and made a mental reservation to the effect that in another 100 years they'll have more good old times to talk about and more curious relics to hang in the halls of country houses than a mail shirt and a metal casque.

Mr. Wilson seems to have bridged the gap that lies between musical comedy and musicless farce without much trouble. In fact he's more entertaining in farce supported by his own antics than in comedy supported by his own voice. He's decidedly preferable to Willie Collier, who in the part of Sir Guy would have been as vulgar as a fish-wife. The line of demarcation between vulgarity and humor that the farceur must draw is at times so fine as to require most careful acting, particularly in case of the satiric comedy.

Looking over the remaining events scheduled for the fast-waning season there are some incidents of interest to be noted. That eminently correct actor, John Drew, and the indescribable Billie Burke are coming soon. There is also a prospect of seeing the two great dramatic sensations of the season—Mrs. Fiske in "Rosmersholm"—that's just a bare perhaps—and another perhaps—Kyrle Bellew and Margaret Illington in "The Thief," Henri Bernstein's successful melodrama. Eugene Walter's "Paid in Full" is due in the fall, by a second company.

The Baker company is still holding out bravely and has probably made a very good season of it. It is undeniable that they deserve success—they give excellent entertainment as a rule. It's not their fault that all plays are not good and that they are not able to give all plays equally well. Their great trouble has been that they have got in the habit of considering themselves in that position where they actually think the sole duty of partakers of their compounds is to sit down and write testimonials of their merits. But patent acting is not infallible and there is no sound reason why its ingredients should not be made public in their true proportions. It won't hurt the market for the desirable brands and the public can do very well without the undesirable ones.

I wish respectfully to assure the individuals in the company that I shall continue tasting of their wares, proprietary drama though they be, as long as my constitution and the season hold out. Like the citizen of Kansas who remarked as he ordered another case of Peruna, "It may be bad, but it's got some whiskey in it," I feel that Mr. Baker's players, although they have their bad moments, are not entirely without redeeming qualities. I should hate to think that I had labored with them through six months for nothing.

follow a natural depression with a gradual descent from near Lewiston, Idaho, to the mouth of the Columbia. Now the navigation is already far above Portland, and thus she has one of the natural advantages which have made New York supreme—namely, a fine waterway both in and out.

But Portland has also the other great advantage which New York has enjoyed a most favorable topographical situation. Sixty-five years ago New York began its change into a big city. At that time Albany was flourishing. A railroad was planned to go down the Hudson from Albany, but the papers, thinking that New York was to always be a city, considered the undertaking as foolish. The railroad was built, however, and its terminus has now become the greatest city in the United States. Why? Simply because it had a fine port and was a natural gateway that was down grade from everywhere.

Commerce in our country breaks away from the great dividing wall—the Rocky mountains—and flows east and west along the lines of least resistance. Apart from the Mississippi valley in the east it moves generally along the line of the great lakes, through the Mohawk valley to the valley of the Hudson and down that river to New York. The traffic could not go to Boston without crossing the Catskills, nor could it go to Philadelphia without expensive grades, so it went to New York along the line of least resistance. Now Portland has precisely the same advantage—it is down hill from everywhere.

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## FOURTH AND ALDER STS.

### high and shows what kind of sticks Oregon grows to make masts for the shipping of the world.

Portland is the greatest lumber port in the world. Its sawmills annually cut about 650,000,000 feet of lumber, which goes to Australia, the Philippines, China and other parts of the world. When the lumber market is normal it is said the sawmills of Portland saw a profit of \$4,000 a day. The manager of one of the big local firms, in his testimony before the interstate commerce commission, stated that his concern had earned \$1,000,000 in five years. The investment in timber lands, mills, railroads and equipment in the territory tributary to Portland doubtless amounts to \$50,000,000. The notable feature of this section is that the trees will cut 100 feet to the acre, while less than

### 10,000 feet is the rule elsewhere. Some idea of the magnitude of our home market may be had from the statement that less than 10 per cent of the product of the Portland mills is for export. Exports estimate that it will be from 15 to 50 years before this great supply is exhausted—50 years if used at the present rate of consumption, and 15 if the supply should be exhausted elsewhere and this zone become the sole dependence of the general market.

### Valuable Dairying.

Dairying has developed into the most important purely productive industry in Oregon. Its products last year being valued at \$17,000,000. Ideal climatic conditions which permit of pasturing throughout almost the entire year, freedom from storms so that cows are out of doors instead of being confined in barns all winter, and the excellent water of Oregon, have given the cream and its products an excellence and richness that numbers never before heard of in the States. Many of Oregon's dairymen are from Switzerland.

### ONE OF GOTHAM'S NEWEST CITIZENS

If that parson ever gets tired of preaching he will make a fine real estate agent. But he had a good subject to exploit. The state of Oregon alone has more arable land than Japan, yet it has only 600,000 inhabitants. The territory known as the Columbia river basin has a population of 25,000,000 people, but up to this time the census takers have been unable to report the first million of population. Fully half of this prospective empire is capable of cultivation for wheat, fruit and other crops. It is said that this basin has depended upon to supply most of the wheat for all the population of the Pacific coast between Alaska and Patagonia.

The present milling capacity of this grain belt is 25,000 bushels a day during 10 months of the year. The mills are closed two months during the summer to make repairs and to work on the capacity of the wheat. At present half of the wheat grown in the territory is ground into flour and the other half shipped to various parts of the world. Oregon has one sixth of the standing timber of the United States. In Portland the forestry building of late Lewis and Clark exposition has been preserved as a permanent exhibition in park maintained by the city. It is a fine sight to see the logs of Oregon woods are on display, including the Pacific yew, from which the choicest bows are made for archery clubs all over the continent, mountain mahogany, which makes such a fine fire-wood, and a great variety of other woods. A fine exhibit of the forest is made. A fine exhibit of the forest is made. A fine exhibit of the forest is made.

## ONLY ONE WAGNER AND DAMROSCH IS HIS PROPHET

The programs for all three concerts to be given at the Armory by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony orchestra, June 3 and 4, have been received, and they embrace masterpieces of such diverse character that every class and kind of music-lover will be delighted. Such programs cannot be offered outside the great music centers of the world, for a symphony orchestra that is able to interpret the enchanting but difficult compositions written by the masterminds of all ages must comprise artists of the highest talent, and men whose whole hearts and minds are given to the work of the symphonic orchestra. Such men as Walter Damrosch has gathered about him, his rare genius as a great conductor, which has given him prestige as the most distinguished musician in America, enables him to give interpretations of splendid orchestral numbers never before heard in the west. The program for the opening night is to be as follows:

- Overture, "Oberon".....Waber Aris, "El pastor".....Mozart
- Mrs. Mary Hissem de Moss, Symphony No. 5 C minor.....Beethoven
- PART II
- Hungarian Rhapsodie, No. 1.....Liszt
- March from "The Tales of Hoffman".....Chopin
- Clarinet solo, Mr. Leroy.
- Cello solo, Mr. Bramson.
- Polonaise from "Polignone".....Thomas
- Mrs. Mary Hissem de Moss, Utiava, "The River Moldau".....Smetana
- Symphonic poem.
- Danzel has just opened his week's season in San Francisco and among the highly flattering notices of the first program was this concerning the symphonic poem of Smetana which will be played here on the opening night: "Utiava was a fine study in instrumental accompaniment, the whole suggestion and the marriage was as distasteful to Bambrick as to Miss Nelson. After one interview they did not see one another until they met in court to have the marriage annulled.

tion the sweep of the river from which the poem in tone took its name. The afternoon program for Thursday is one of rare delight, and contains the famous Slav March by Tchaikowsky. The full program will be: Overture, "Mignon".....Thomas Alton on the G string.....Beethoven Concerto in D minor for violin.....Vieuxtemps

March from "Le Prophete".....Meyerbeer The Sedan Chair.....Chaminade The Rain.....Larghetto from Symphony No. 2.....Beethoven Slav March.....Tchaikowsky On Thursday evening and the closing program will be a stupendous all Wagner one, as the San Francisco Call said: "There still is but one Wagner and Damrosch is his prophet."

### WEDS ON LARK; CAN'T GO HOME

Marriage is Annulled and Girl Loses Sweetheart She Hoped to Marry.

St. Louis, May 22.—As a result of her midnight marriage in Clayton at the end of an afternoon's dalliance with cocktails and such, Virginia Nelson has lost not only her home, but her former suitor in Kentucky, whom she hoped to marry. She was Mrs. Patrick Bambrick until Judge McElhinney annulled the marriage.

During the hearing of the facts in court, Mrs. Nelson was compelled to make public the fact that both she and Bambrick were intoxicated, and that her hands and feet were numb. The ceremony was that something unusual had happened, which did not impress her as being important. When Judge McElhinney announced in court that the marriage was annulled the newly made miss clasped her hands and exclaimed joyfully, for now she was freed from a hateful alliance and would return to her home with the love of her sweetheart in Kentucky. Said love had received a shock that would have to be tenderly nursed. But when she got to her home she found the door closed against her by her father, John Nelson, whose indignation broke bounds in the exposure of his daughter's conduct. "I do not know where she went or

## "DOWN HILL TO PORTLAND"

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN. (Copyright, 1908, by Frederic J. Haskin.)

The people of this fair Rose City are enthusiastic students of geography. The stranger soon finds that while the conversation may begin with the weather or the roses, it always ends in geography. "It's down hill to Portland from everywhere." The population of Portland is 94 per cent purely American, which is said to be a higher proportion than any other American city can show. Another significant peculiarity is that it is maintained almost entirely by local capital, there being only three buildings among the larger commercial structures of the entire city that were not built by home money. While these and other distinctive points are always brought out during the process of inculcating the stranger with admiration for this ambitious metropolis, the little lecture on geography is always the argumentative ace of trumps—no matter where you come from it's down hill all the way to Portland.

Not long ago a parson from Baltimore was taking a little jaunt through the west, and dropped casually a remark to look over the town. Of course he had not been there but a few hours until he encountered the usual monologue on geography. His attention was called to the fact that owing to the lay of the land everything that breaks its moorings in these western cities tends to go down hill into the lap of Portland. The reverend gentleman took kindly to the idea, in fact he wrote a piece for the paper in which he pointed out that Portland's topographical position was almost identical with that of New York. He made such a strong case in showing the similarity that it seemed the only thing the people of the western city could do to change the face of nature. This clever bit of municipal praise, reading much as it did of the Columbia and the chamber of commerce gave the parson a price of \$1,000. He said in part:

Portland is remarkably like New York in several particulars. It lies on the shores of the Willamette river, just above its confluence with the Columbia. The great body of land between the Willamette and the Columbia, running down to a point at their intersection, is strikingly like Manhattan. Across the river, on this second Manhattan, lie East Portland, spreading westward, and down toward until it will finally reach the Columbia and face the city of Vancouver, now resting on the northern side of that river in the same relative position which Jersey City sustains to New York.

Portland is already a notable port, and fresh water is a strong advantage to a port, as the water itself is strikingly like Manhattan. The government is now building jetties down the river which will give Portland a clear

waterway of 40 feet out to the Pacific. The Columbia and Willamette are both navigable already far above Portland, and thus she has one of the natural advantages which have made New York supreme—namely, a fine waterway both in and out.

Commerce in our country breaks away from the great dividing wall—the Rocky mountains—and flows east and west along the lines of least resistance. Apart from the Mississippi valley in the east it moves generally along the line of the great lakes, through the Mohawk valley to the valley of the Hudson and down that river to New York. The traffic could not go to Boston without crossing the Catskills, nor could it go to Philadelphia without expensive grades, so it went to New York along the line of least resistance. Now Portland has precisely the same advantage—it is down hill from everywhere.

Neither was in love with the other.