

MILTON SILLS MAKES INTERESTING REVELATIONS



MILTON SILLS AND ANN FORREST



THE CROWDS FLOCK TO BE HEALED

Popular Leading Man Tells Unique Human Interest Story Regarding His Past Connections With a Famous Play and Its Author.

ONCE in a while, an actor takes more than the ordinary amount of interest in the part he is to play. He feels inspired. He feels that he is to do something greater than he has ever done—the greatest thing he has never done. Milton Sills' portrayal of the title role in George Melford's production of William Vaughn Moody's great play, "The Faith Healer," is one of these cases. Mr. Sills has played many great parts, but no role in his entire career either on the stage or as a screen actor, has ever meant so much to him as the role of "The Faith Healer." His love for the play and reverence for the author are unusual and quite extraordinary. There is genuine romance back of his portrayal of this role. It was thus that he expressed himself on the subject:

A sweet-faced, middle aged lady who was sitting nearby studying the scenario, came over and held a little consultation with him about a certain point in the story. After she had returned, he turned to me and remarked: "Mrs. Moody—Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, the widow of the author of the play, and I, are collaborating on the scenario for the picture. That was she who just came over a moment ago. It is a labor of love for both of us, and I truly believe that we two, of all the people in the world, are best fitted to write this scenario, for we know the mind of the late author and his very thoughts and aims—the very inspiration which prompted him to write the play—better than any two other persons."

A Striking Coincidence.

"This is not my first acquaintance with Mrs. Moody. I have known her for twenty-one years. That is the delightful part of our work together. Mrs. Moody was one of my teachers when I was attending high school at 17 years of age. That was before she became Mrs. Moody. Her name at that time was Harriet C. Brainerd. It is a most striking coincidence that later, when I attended the University of Chicago, Mr. Moody was one of my professors in English. Knowing Mrs. Moody as I did, I came to know Mr. Moody very intimately—this being after their marriage. I used to go around to the house every day or two—was just like a member of the family. I thought a great deal of Mr. Moody. I held the greatest reverence and respect for him and thought then and still think that he was one of the greatest poets and playwrights we have ever had."

"I was still attending the University

Opportunity Arrives.
"At last I am to do 'The Faith Healer.' This play has been in and out of my life for the past thirteen years. On two occasions I almost played it on the stage, but fate intervened. Again, some time ago, I made all preparations to produce it on the screen. But my preparations were never completed. And now, here I am, all made up and ready to work, and it seems that at last I am really to play 'The Faith Healer,' if something strange doesn't happen again to prevent. I won't be at all surprised if I wake up and find I have been dreaming."

He was sitting on the set where Uncle George Melford had already begun filming of some of the scenes in the picture, dreamily smoking his pipe and in a perfect reminiscent mood. He was dressed in overalls, such as are worn by the sheep herder, an old faded shirt and short leather boots—his make up for the title part.



MRS. WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY—WIFE OF THE LATE AUTHOR OF 'THE FAITH HEALER'—COLLABORATES WITH MILTON SILLS ON SCENARIO FOR THE PRODUCTION

of Chicago, studying for my Ph. D. degree when William Vaughn Moody wrote 'The Faith Healer.' Mrs. Moody sent over to me the first penciled draft of the play, that I might read it, as I was very much interested in the play from the very moment that Mr. Moody began writing it. The moment I read the play I loved it. I kept the manuscript in my desk a few days and then returned it. I also had in my possession a manuscript copy of 'The Great Divide,' another play he had just written, and which has since been conceded to be his masterpiece.

Decides Upon Career.

"Some time later I obtained my University degree and was granted a fellowship in a society of philosophy.

But it was not long before I had made up my mind to go on the stage. I resigned my fellowship and was soon getting along fairly well in theatrical work.

"It was in the beginning of my second year on the stage, when one day I received a wire from Henry Miller asking me to come to New York to consult with him regarding an engagement. At the time I was making fifty dollars a week and as my engagement was about to terminate, I left immediately for New York. Arriving in the metropolis, I found that Messrs. Miller and Moody were just about to produce 'The Faith Healer.' They fairly swept me off my feet by asking that I play the title role. This had first been suggested by Mrs. Moody who had

visualized me in the part and thought I was the most fitting person for the role. I wanted to do the part, but I wasn't quite sure that I could do full justice to it. The responsibility was a pretty big one and I had too much respect for Mr. Moody to take a chance on a masterpiece like this one, not being entirely sure of myself. So I begged off, wired New Orleans, found that the stock company I had been with had closed, and came to the embarrassing realization that I was out of work. But the news that I had been offered the title role of 'The Faith Healer' had spread and that very same evening I received an offer over the telephone, accepted at a hundred and fifty dollars a week and soon began the engagement in the best part I had

up to that time. I also received five year offers from all the big managers in New York, including Belasco, Shubert, Brady and Frohman. So, although I didn't play 'The Faith Healer' at that time, it was through that play that I went to New York and made the biggest advance I had yet made.

Asked Second Time.

"The following season, Mr. Miller again sent for me to play 'The Servant in the House.' He told me that they had never yet produced 'The Faith Healer,' but were going to in the near future and again asked me to play the part. This time I thought I was capable of the wonderful part and would have gladly accepted, but I was under contract with Belasco for three years, and thus wasn't free to fill the engagement. So again, fate had prevented me from playing this ideal part which would have afforded me the greatest of pleasure and happiness. Later, Mr. Miller played the piece himself.

"Over a year ago, the play again came into my life. I planned to make it as an independent production for the screen. But my associates backed out and again I gave up hope of ever playing 'The Faith Healer.' When I signed a contract a few months ago to play in three George Melford productions for Paramount, imagine my surprise and pleasure when Mr. Melford told me that one of these productions was to be 'The Faith Healer.'

"At last, I was to do my favorite part. But would something happen again as had been my misfortune in the past? I had been taught by past experience not to bank my hopes too soon, so I didn't allow my enthusiasm to rise to a very high pitch, fearing that again I would be disappointed. But it was not to be. This time it is a reality. I have on my make-up and even now I am playing 'The Faith Healer.'

Working Together.

"Mrs. Moody was engaged to come out and help with the scenario. She didn't know that I was to play the title role, and I didn't know that she

was to work on the scenario. One day we met on the lot. She was delighted to learn that at last I was to appear in the play, in its screen form, and I was in turn delighted that she was to help with the scenario, knowing that in this way Mr. Moody himself would be well represented in the picturization of one of his greatest plays. And then they asked me to collaborate with Mrs. Moody upon the scenario, and nothing on earth could have pleased me better. It was a reunion with one of my best friends, the widow of an author to whom I had played the part of hero worshipper, and to work on the scenario of the play which had been so closely associated with my life and my career, was indeed a labor of love. Mrs. Moody and I knew intimately Mr. Moody's entire point of view in regard to the play, and I am sure that the scenario of the picture is just as it would have been had Mr. Moody himself been here to write it. My work in connection with this picture is the realization of an ambition cherished all through my professional lifetime."

Aids in Scenario Work.

Mr. Sills is not new to scenario work, having, on several occasions been a most important figure in the development of the scenario for certain big film productions. For "The Honor System," a picture which was accounted one of his greatest screen productions, and in which he played the leading role, Mr. Sills is credited with the principal work in the preparation of the scenario. The first George Melford production in which he appeared was "Behold My Wife!" a picturization of Sir Gilbert Parker's novel, "The Translation of a Savage," and in which Mr. Sills played the principal male role.

The cast of "The Faith Healer" includes other celebrities. Ann Forrest plays Rhoda Williams, Charles Ogle is Matthew Beeler and others are Loyola O'Connor, May Girard, Fontaine La Rue, Adolphe Menjou, Edward Vroom, Robert Brower, John Curry, etc.—Melvin M. Riddle.

Right Off the Reel

Some still call it "illum!"

A heaving chest never made a movie star.

"The Heart of Africa" in five gripping parts has been pronounced full of strong atmosphere and local color.

Osmun Liles blames a prominent Adam's apple for the fact that he has failed to reach stellar roles in motion pictures.

Percival Ramsbottom, whose work in "No Mother to Guide Her," was so strongly praised by all the critics, is disappointed in motion-picture life. There is no opportunity to pose in hotel lobbies.

During the death scenes in the third reel of "Lost in the Snow," the Buckeye Block Stringed Orchestra, especially engaged for the evening, got the wrong cue sheets, and played two

verses of "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight."

Worthington Kotsman Cook, who wore an oil-cloth cape and carried a leaky torch in the Blaine campaign, is a candidate for a censor of motion pictures. Mr. Cook believes that motion pictures are only in their infancy.

The Doorknob Film Company's wild-animal drama was almost ruined by scratches on the negative.

It is always canning season in motion-picture land.

Sylvanus Q. Smucker has announced his candidacy for president of the Order of United Movie Fans on an independent platform when interviewed at his bungalow at Walnut Grove by your correspondent. Mr. Smucker was discovered in the attic practicing on a B-flat cornet. He said in part:

"If elected, I promise to abolish illustrated songs and do away with arti-

ficial flowers in all movie theaters. The throwing of pie dough must be curtailed to reasonable bounds, and I would suggest that onion sets be substituted for many movie scenes, thus cutting down profiteering. Wall-paper patterns used recklessly, crimson rambler beards, and the pouring of coffee into saucers in banquet scenes must and shall be eliminated. The use of the expression "screen" is strongly objected to by the Confederation of Former Bartenders, and this reform will also be inaugurated should I be chosen by the electorate."

It was while recording secretary of Hodcarriers' Union No. 22, that Mr. Smucker was chosen to represent his state as a motion-picture censor, and his record in cutting out all the more intense and exciting episodes in the films attracted wide attention. Mr. Smucker eats with a fork, tucks his napkin under his chin in the good old-fashioned way, plays in Stamm's Pythian Band, and never misses a Chautauqua session.



A Favorite With the Children.



A Scene From "The Faith Healer."