



MR. J. FRANCIS BURSILL.

Glimpses of "Felix Penne"

Probably to many people interested in journalism and literature the most recent glimpses of Mr. J. Francis Bursill, whose pen-name is "Felix Penne," would be associated with a sick-room, a serious illness and an ominous questioning as to the patient's recovery.

It must, therefore, have been with genuine satisfaction that he was found able to return to his journalistic work. And though, following the accident and his serious illness, his connection with a local newspaper experiment had passed, and we find him now associated with another Vancouver Daily—he having with re-strengthened life surpassed Jules Verne and voyaged from the "World" to the "Sun"—all who value the genuine and entertaining journalistic and literary raconteur will be pleased to know that Felix Penne, (like Lucian and Diogenes) is still with us, and, with care, may continue to lighten and brighten social and literary gatherings of one kind or another for years yet.

Too often men (and publications) wait till personages have "passed" ere they make complimentary or pleasant criticisms of them. All the more because "F. P." is back to duty, the writer gives place to a note or two which, so far as the will is concerned, would have been published long before the subject of them was laid aside by sickness or accident.

In different ways, Felix Penne is an interesting study, and may, without offense, be said to demonstrate that "one man in his time plays many parts."

As an up-to-date press reporter and reviewer Mr. Bursill's years and experience qualify him for a position second to none. His knowledge of journalism and literature is on a par with his wide range of intimacies in the newspaper world at the centre of the Empire and beyond, and extends over a period of more than fifty years. His fluency in oratory is unrivalled, and if the lengthening years and changed conditions of life are responsible for little idiosyncracies, these may well be overlooked or forgotten in the wealth of journalistic and literary worth that is inwoven in his personality.

To some folk who have heard Felix Penne pun and jest at functions of that local literary Curiosity Shop (of young and old), the "Vagabonds' Club," he might seem a fit subject for the part of that character in Shakespeare who in some impersonations, comes on the stage shaking with laughter and utters the notable passage beginning "I met a fool i' the forest."

A well-known professional and literary man, in a happily worded reference to Mr. Bursill (published when the latter was dangerously ill) suggested that he had all kinds of abil-

ity but commercial ability. And all those who believe in the life of thought and action—that is in LITERATURE and LIFE indeed—and who recognise that ultimately ideas and ideals must dominate dollars, gold dust, and all other kinds of dust, will sympathise with that part of "F. P.'s" make up.

With his experience and tastes, it is not surprising that Mr. Bursill is occasionally found on the list of literary folk who have leisure enough to provide entertainment and enlightenment in reviews concerning worth while reading and who do honour to authors of our own and other days by giving one of those Saturday evening lectures at the Vancouver Carnegie Library—the arrangement of which reflects so creditably on Librarian Douglas and the Board associated with him.

It is, however, in relation to the social side, or something akin to it, that not a few may, like the writer, cherish their happiest memories of "F. P." More than once we have heard him, sprucely groomed and wearing that jacket—is it of velvet fabric?—recite "My cane-bottomed chair." To other lovers of literature who may be disposed to esteem (for their works' sake) all real literary workers, it may seem a fantastic suggestion to make, but when we have heard Francis Bursill recite such a piece he has somehow suggested not only the times but certain types of literary worthies of other days who met, it might be in Edinburgh, but particularly in Old London in Coffee Houses or resorts made famous by the visits or patronage of celebrated "Men of Letters."

"Come what, come may," the B. C. M. thinks it timely to bear independent and voluntary tribute to this journalistic patriarch among us. Had we needed any reminder to publish such notes, it might well have been found in the verses by Felix Penne published in the Vancouver Daily Sun on Armistice Day, which we think it fitting to publish in this Magazine as an evidence that hearts in this Farthest West British Columbia were stirred with British Empire memories on that historic day with its ever memorable service in the Abbey.

As we consider that the book-lover and literary worker—the man who influences THOUGHT which it is well occasionally to remind a blustering world, PRECEDES and governs all worth-while ACTION—is no less an asset and benefactor to his day and generation than the big merchant, manufacturer or public servant (in politics or elsewhere), we venture to suggest that such men should be honourably pensioned by the State, or commissioned to look after literary records affecting the past and present in so far as they are likely to be of use and interest to the future.—(D. A. C.)

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