

OUR CAPTIOUS CRITIC.

"WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD," AT WYNDHAM'S THEATRE.

AFTER Besant and Rice—was it not?—and German Reed and W. S. Gilbert, &c., &c. *When Knights Were Bold* does not come to us at Wyndham's Theatre altogether as a literary revelation. But it draws full houses, and the audiences are laughing all the while, proving once again that playgoers starving for a joke are less particular than first night critics. It is not all round an exceptionally powerful company which is found in support of Mr. James Welch and Miss Audrey Ford. Put these two have so much to do and do it so well that the rest, so it seems, does not matter, more's the pity; it is nearer akin to variety entertainment than to good

financier as a Jew under the ban, his ambitious daughter as a prisoner in chains, the local dean as the priest-prosecutor, the fortune hunting Irish baronet as a blustering knight in armour, the society jokist as a pre-Shakespearean clown, and so on. Among these figures of the times of the troubadours, Sir Guy

Miss Ford, who has the difficulties to overcome of the somewhat strained romanticism of her part, is also very effective as the heroine. If there were more by way of plot than there is, the other members of the company might, some of them, win more interest than they do. But there is so little left after the dream is deducted, that a few words will cover it. While Sir Guy and Lady Rowena—perhaps because the heroine lectures so much—are still not definitely engaged, Isaacson, a moneylender, plots with Ballymote, an Irishman, and tries to bribe Dean Pottleberry of somewhere, to bring about a match between Sir Guy and his ambitious daughter. The Irishman not only cheats at cards, but is smart enough to rob the Jew, his fellow-conspirator, of part of the money in-



THE
JEWESS
MISS DAISY
CORDELL



THE HON.
WIDDICOMBE
MR. H. J. FORD.



SIR BRIAN
BALLYMOTE
MR. CHAS.
WEIR



LADY
ROWENA
MISS AUDREY
FORD.

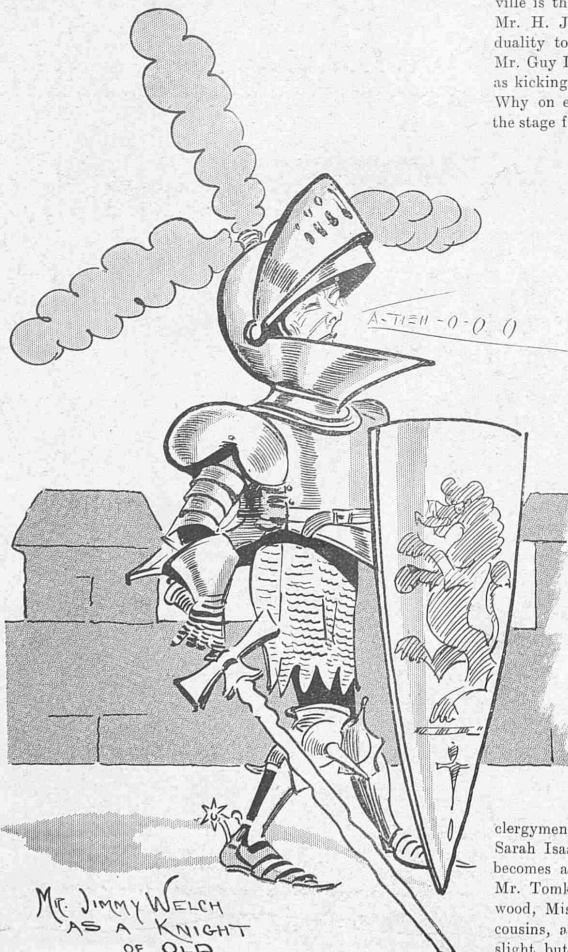
drama when those about the favoured couple are mere mirrors to reflect the sparkle of the principals. At all events, there is no reason that I can see why Mr. Welch and Miss Ford might not have been quite as effective as they are had the play been less to themselves, and some of those who are with them better off in their parts and stronger in the acting of them. Miss Ford represents the creature of romance, the very spirit of mediæval heroics. Mr. Welch, her lover, whom she would fain convert to her own way of looking at the past, is modern of the moderns, and notwithstanding his long line of distinguished ancestry is "popular" to audacity, both in his language and in his manners. And all the while he is the representative of the long line of the De Veres and lives in a castle which dates from the twelfth century. The dramatic interest of the play, which is not remarkable, and the fun, which is considerable, both come from the contrast between the anxious heroine, who almost thinks in blank verse, and the careless hero, who meets her with prose, not always to be found in the dictionary—

finds himself just as he is in 1906; and from what I have already indicated of his style and bearing in opposition to what the poets have taught us were theirs, the nature of the fun and complication will be understood. A new Brown among twelfth-century Brahmins, a male Alice in a mediæval Wonderland, a Blondel from Leicester-square among Crusader Christy Minstrels—any of these parallels will show the kind of fun that I mean. With unflinching spirit, quaintness, comedy, and pluck, whether his wit is good or less good, and all the while successfully, Mr. Welch plays the part of Sir Guy in a way that carries his public from first to last.

tended to further their joint scheme. In the end the pair of them are sent about their business, and the hero and heroine come to a proper understanding—although there is not a great deal to show how, in the absence of anything like actual love-making, either lady or gentleman contrives to ascertain what the other means. Mr. Grenville is the Jew, and Mr. Charles Weir the Irish baronet. Mr. H. J. Ford contrives to give some touch of individuality to the rather worn character of a society clown. Mr. Guy Lane, in clerical garb, is subjected to such things as kicking and prodding—and he is supposed to be a dean. Why on earth must church dignitaries be brought upon the stage for farce—there are some very good fellows among



SIR GUY
AND THE
BROAD SWORD
OF HIS
SIRIES.



MR. JIMMY WELCH
AS A KNIGHT
OF OLD



SIR GUY
DE VERE
ASSERTS
HIMSELF

with an occasional "blank" of a different character. The great joke of the performance is in the second act, when, in a dream, Sir Guy is carried back to the year 1196, and all the other personages of the play with him. The heroine appears as a conventual novice, her matronly chaperon as the mother superior, the city

clergymen. Miss Cordell makes a pretty and attractive Sarah Isaacson, the usurer's daughter—who in the dream becomes a kind of Rebecca of Ivanhoe. Mr. Tully and Mr. Tomkins are efficient as family retainers. Miss Winwood, Miss Sass, and Miss V. West, as the baronet's girl cousins, and Miss Emma Gwynne, as the chaperon, have slight but agreeably played parts.