

without wanderings in strange lands; agitated and impetuous without discordant voices; furious and wounded without the shock of battle; and that the secret thoughts of a man, his memories and fancies, incommunicable unless he pleases, compose, in the most profound and significant sense, his life itself, wherein as to friendly shelter he may withdraw, secure, unapproachable, supremely content, to give forth in due time the adventures of his soul.

THE BENGALI POET

Rabindranath Tagore gives His Impressions of Poetry

THE proper function of the poet," said Sir Rabindranath Tagore, "is neither to direct nor to interpret his fellows, but to give expression to truth which has come to his life in fullness of music."

This was the answer of the distinguished Bengali poet to my question as to whether the proper function of the poet was to direct or to interpret his fellows. It may be considered to be the poetic creed of the author of "Gitanjali" and "Chitra."

In this way Joyce Kilmer, in the New York Times Magazine, begins an account of a conversation with the famous poet.

I asked him if, in his opinion, a poet should depend upon his writings for a living, or should have some other means of support. He was silent for a moment. Then he said, slowly:

"Poets and artists need ample leisure to make their works true, and their Muses claim exclusive attention from them. Therefore, any distraction from their own line of work for the sake of livelihood is disastrous. On the other hand, to have to be dependent upon the favour of the public, who are not always the best judges of new creations of art, is an evil—but it is the lesser evil of the two."

"In the East," I said, "there is more general appreciation of poetry than in the West. What is the reason for this?"

"Appreciation of poetry," Sir Rabindranath replied, "is more general in the East, because in the Eastern countries poetry is the proper medium through which the deepest spiritual experiences of the people are expressed and disseminated."

"Sir Rabindranath," I said, "is there any radical difference between the soul of the East and the soul of the West? If there is, how does this difference show itself in literature?"

Again the Bengali poet answered slowly, with an air of grave thoughtfulness.

"I cannot believe," he said, "that the soul of the

ence, while your emphasis in the West is upon the world where God comes as a supplemental truth or not at all."

With his poem "Thanksgiving" in mind, I asked its author how the war, according to his observation, was affecting the poets of his native land and of England. I found that he was far from believing that the war stimulates literary expression and is a source of great poetry. In carefully chosen phrases, he replied:



THE BLACK PRINCE OF PICARDY.

The flower of British manhood once more maintains the traditions of honour and valour on the battlefields of the Black Prince.

—T. H. Robinson, in To-day, London.

"The war acts like a dust-storm in men's minds. It not only obscures the horizon, but injures the organ of vision itself. It cannot have a stimulating effect upon poetry so long as it lasts."

CHAPLIN IN FRANCE

How Charlie Acts on Parisians who never saw him before

DO you ever shut your eyes for a moment, at the movies—say when the villain's black-hand letter is being screened for the third time—and think how wonderful it is that the same film is perhaps holding audiences in New York and Buenos Ayres at the very time you are looking at it in Toronto? And if you do, are you interested to know what they think of it? What details strike them as strange and what features they like best?

The exchange of vaudeville and drama is, of course, nothing new, but it is limited by language; dancers and singers of world-reputation have a wider scope, but they are not for the many. Besides, they can only be in one place at the same time. But a movie artist can be almost as ubiquitous as a book, with the added advantage that he does not require translation and scarcely demands that his audience shall be able to read. (In fact most managers seem to assume that some of their patrons are half-illiterate, if we are to judge by the length of time allowed for the reading of letters and captions). That is why an article on Charlie Chaplin, in an intellectual French periodical, can appeal to the learned and the unlearned of all nations and tongues.

Charlie—Charlot they call him there—has arrived, with a big A, in Paris, and Paris has accepted him, despite certain misgivings due to the vigorous Americanism of the advertising campaign—that is where Americanism is most vigorous at present—and the obvious triviality of his setting. But the latter is the French high-brow objection and does not cut much ice with the crowd; though one likes to believe that Chaplin is too great an artist to have chosen the scenes in which his managers display him. What we want to know is, how did Charlie look to this calm and critical member of the clearest-minded race on the planet?

"At first sight," writes M. Dyssord, in the *Mercure de France*, "you want to plant a sound kick in the seat of the loose and floppy pantaloons that drape themselves abundantly round his queer-shaped legs. But you soon change your mind, because if you did,

Charlot would only make it the occasion of one of his renowned and acrobatic tumbles: he is resilience personified.

He wears a little billycock perched on top of his woolly locks, his tie like a toreador's, supports in some wonderful fashion a collar two sizes too big and two inches too high: he has a little bob-tailed coat and a minute tooth-brush moustache, and carries a cane in perpetual motion, now swinging in careless abandon, now switching in sharp, vicious flicks."

So much for Charlie's appearance—we all know about that, and could tell our French friend the same and more also. But he continues, in the analytical manner of his race, to examine the sources of our amusement.

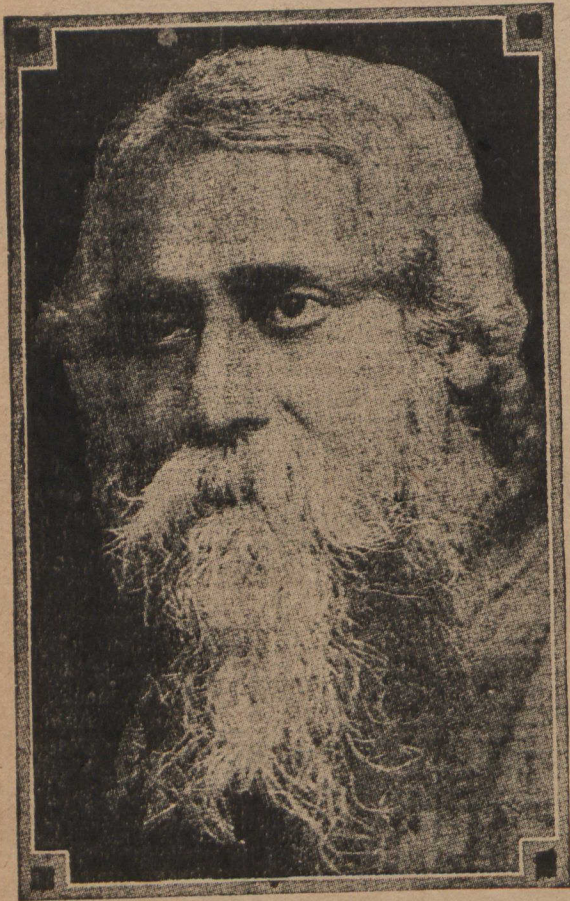
There are many theories about what is funny, and why, but the one that fits most naturally the peculiar talents of the great humorist of the screen is the following: The ludicrous seems to depend on a sense of superiority in the laughter, arising from physical, social or intellectual advantages. To take three simple instances from the "Floorwalker," the gambols on the escalator find the ultimate basis of their fun in the onlooker's feeling that he would not be so clumsy. This is the amusement caused by disaster. In the savage death and pain do not detract from the sense of the ludicrous, and we can imagine the chortles of the cannibal chief as his snicker-snee slithers into the squirming liver of a hostile man-eater. In more civilized minds disaster, to be amusing, must be free from painful results. If Charlie were to wind up his escalating with a broken leg the show would cease to be funny, especially for Charlie. Again, when he butts into a group without the formality of introduction and smothers them with a series of little frenzied puffs of cigarette-smoke, we find it funny because we should know better. Bad manners can be amusing if we don't have to live with them; contrariwise, one knows people who laugh at good manners if expressed in a fashion unfamiliar to them. Finally, in the action of watering artificial flowers we find an incongruity from which we should ourselves be preserved by acquaintance with the phenomenon of artificial flowers.

M. Dyssord finds Chaplin amusing primarily as a clown—in fact, his discussion opens with the sentence, "If Rigadin is an actor, Charlot is a clown"—and from this point of view a number of people might find interest in Charlot who now are turned away by the cheap vulgarity apparently inseparable from the comedy film. The French critic applies Bergson's definition of the ludicrous as the sudden passage from life to automatism, quoting the example of the celebrated clown Footit, who could win roars of spontaneous laughter by the simple expedient of pretending that his foot had become an independent instrument and guiding it to its next step with his hands. We can see much of this simple and universal source of mirth in Chaplin's work: Dyssord credits him with a long study of the famous clowns of the last century, Grimaldi and the rest, whose names have passed with the rise of vaudeville and the banalities of so-called burlesque. The last good clowning one remembers was in the pantomimic play of Sumurun.

But in all art, and therefore in the art of clowning, there must be some human touch, a glimpse of the performer's heart and personality. So Charlie must be shown in relation to the fair sex and we see him dealing with a bouquet intended for a jilting belle; with one significant stroke of the broom he sweeps it into the discard, demonstrating by that single gesture that love's sighs and jealousy find no lodgement in his psychological outfit. Which is also good business, for the audience knows very well that tears will come in quart-pots and sighs will blow in gummy hurricanes when the "drama" gets on the screen, and does not want any of the sob-stuff in its comedy.

The Parisian's fascinating study of the world's best-known humorist concludes with an enumeration of those little tricks and mannerisms that are part of every burlesquer's stock in trade, but which only become really funny at the hands of the true artist. "He cannot bring himself to mount a storey in the escalator; he would much rather miss a step, slide down a few feet on his stomach and repeat the performance again and again before reaching the second floor. Very careful of his fantastic clothes, he carries this dandyism to the length of brushing his hat with the first thing that comes to hand. He is all the time hitching his funny neck-tie. He is not shy and never waits for an introduction. Social conventions are not his concern, either to reform or to resist: he simply ignores them."

So on the whole Charlot makes much the same impression in Paris as Charlie Chaplin does in Toronto. But one wonders that nothing was said about that remarkable walk.



SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

East and the soul of the West are different. There happen to be differences in their outlooks such as may happen in the same people in different stages of its history. We in the East give all the emphasis of our life upon God Who is the Centre of all Exist-