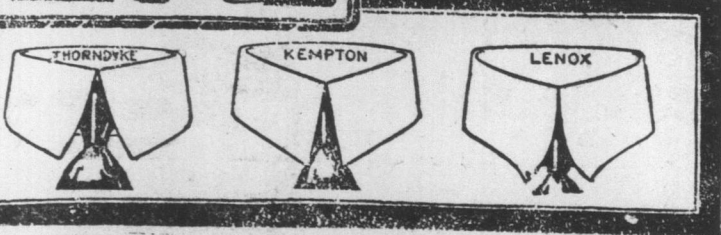




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The Real Charlie Chaplin.

One Who Knows, and at the time Disliked Him, Gives a Picturesque Pen-Picture of the Million Dollar Laughter Maker.

(By HAYDEN TALBOT.)

The Charlie Chaplin of fiction—that is, the Charlie Chaplin most of you have heard so many stories about—is as unreal as are Mary Pickford's curls!

(Mary's mother "bobbed" Mary's hair a long time ago, and then paid two hundred pounds for an especially fine wig, and that wig has remained a vitally important part of the make-up of "the world's sweetheart" ever since.)

To present the real Chaplin to readers of Answers is a task at once eminently pleasing to me and peculiarly reparational. For probably no one of his vast audience had a more instinctive dislike for him than I had—a dislike based on ignorance and unfounded rumours. His unequalled ability as a mimic I was willing enough to admit; it was his personal character for which I had taken an intense disfavor. My supposed reasons were something of this kind:

Poor Old Charlie!

He was arrogant and overbearing. He was ungrateful, and forgetful of his former colleagues. He was close-fisted. He was ignorant in the extreme. He was a renegade Englishman. He was a slacker.

After six months' daily intercourse with Charlie Chaplin, I can state positively that he is none of these things. On the contrary, I found: He is modest and unassuming. He is full of gratitude to the men who helped him in his music-hall days.

He is generous, albeit not like the average youth suddenly possessed of "easy" money, who flings it about. He is uneducated, and, in that sense, ignorant; but he puts in every spare moment remedying this defect, and is accomplishing marvels in the matter of self-education by omnivorous reading of the classics and the highest class contemporary literature. He is an ardent patriot.

Not a Slacker.

He offered his services repeatedly to the officer in charge of the British recruiting depot in Los Angeles, and continued to make pictures only when it was explained to him that his money-earning capacity could be turned to infinitely better effect than his services as a Tommy—not to mention the tonic value to nations beset by war-worries of his inimitable antics on the screen. This is what I know to be true. But until I had met Chaplin—ashamed as I am now to admit it—I readily

accepted the general "wise" estimate of the erstwhile lowly music-hall entertainer.

A week later, on the other edge of the continent, I met him.

It was at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. A mutual friend brought the little chap to my table in the lounge—a big-eyed, bushy-haired, frail youth with a sensitive mouth and slender white hands. Instinctively I glanced at his feet, those salary-expanding pedal extremities that have gone far to swell his annual earnings from three to seven figures! Like all the rest of him they were small and unobtrusive. In the first cursory glance I saw a conservatively, correctly-garbed youngster, whose outstanding characteristic was an eager, if shy, curiosity.

Pleased or Surprised?

We sat together until dawn—we were both living at the club—and went to our rooms as the clock was striking four. Alone in my room I reflected on the events of the evening. At that moment I was at a loss to determine which was the greater emotion—surprise at the discovery that Chaplin was everything I had thought he was not, or pleasure over the fact of the discovery.

In any event, I knew I owed him an apology—there was no getting away from that. My silly prejudices had been completely "squashed." Followed serious contemplation of a business proposition the comedian had made me. It was a tempting offer, and held immense possibilities. But other business claims compelled me to turn down the offer.

For six months thereafter Charlie sought my society almost nightly, and never ceased insisting that his constant nightmare was his own lack of "ideas," and his great desire to have me associate myself with him. But after that first night I took these vehement declarations smilingly. Time and time again I watched him in a party of four or more. Whenever he found a man or woman who unconsciously handled a salt-cellar, or a knife or fork in a fashion that struck him as having humorous possibilities, he would strive for hours on end to induce the individual to re-memorize the unconscious action, without letting him have an idea of what was in his mind.

"I get half my funny stunts this way," he confessed to me one night, when I asked him what his idea was in sticking about with a particularly boring individual for hours at a time.

Curiously enough, Chaplin considers himself anything but a good comedian. In his opinion pathos is his forte. One day, when he is finished with existing contracts, and can do what he pleases in a professional way, it may be confidently expected that he will appear in a screen version of some famous story in which romance and nothing at all of comedy will figure.

Felt Sorry For Himself!

"The best thing I've ever done before the camera," he repeated, in answer to a question. "Well, I think it is that first reel of 'The Immigrant,' in which every point I score is absolutely not comedy at all, but downright pathos. Of course, people who go to see me on the screen go expecting to laugh, and they laughed in that first reel of 'The Immigrant.' But when I saw it it made even me feel sorry for the poor chap in the restaurant facing the pretty girl, and with no money for either her or his own meal."

One thing Chaplin insists on in every picture he makes. And, parenthetically, there is no one engaged in picture-making more sober, serious, and sincere than Chaplin. Nothing in a Chaplin picture may be even faintly improbable. However ridiculous and absurd the situation of his conceiving, the fact remains that it could happen in real life.

Time and money play no part in the making of a Chaplin picture. On one occasion the comedian "shot" forty-two thousand feet of film in the making of a picture which, when released, could only measure two thousand feet! Although his present contract calls for his delivering eight pictures—and he is to receive his money irrespective of the quality of the films—and, obviously, the quicker he makes them the greater his rate of recompense, one of the series took almost four months in the making.

Chaplin's arrival at his studio in the morning is characteristic. He sneaks in the back way nine times out of ten! He was perfectly willing to explain this.

Scared of Girls!

"I haven't got the heart to go in through the front office," he said. "There are always a hundred or so people out there—all on the pay-roll, and all expecting big things of me. As a matter of fact, when I get to the office I haven't an idea in the world what I am going to do that day, with all these people on my hands, so I hustle to my dressing-room and into my make-up and out on 'location' as fast as I can, and pray hard that when we all get there I'll have an idea."

That especially attractive quality of Chaplin's which every girl—and such men as enjoy the confidence of some girl—knows—his film self-consciousness in the society of pretty women—is not at all assumed. In the presence of the fair sex Charlie is quite the most retiring, individual in the world. He is shy almost to the point of embarrassment. For which reason his marriage to Mildred Harris came as a bombshell to his friends.

For several years it was more or less generally known that Charlie continued to have Edna Purviance appear as his leading woman in every one of his pictures for something more than mere business reasons. Rumour had it that Charlie was, in fact, in love with the undeniably beautiful girl. However that may have been, it is said that Miss Purviance deliberately renounced her opportunity to become the wife of the million-dollar comedian—an opportunity few other girls in the California film world would not have jumped at eagerly. Miss Harris was a performer at the Universal Studio—relatively unknown to screen fans. To-day, as "Mrs. Charlie Chaplin," her pictures are in almost as great demand as those of Charlie's own make.

But those who know the little chap best freely predict that his becoming a benedict can never rob him of his eager desire to associate with, and study, as many different types of individuals as he can meet—Answers.

Couldn't Be Done.

"There was a sound of revelry by night" in a country village recently, for one of the leading lights in the local commercial world, who chanced also to be captain of the volunteer fire brigade, was giving his annual party. Just as the fun started there came a loud knock at the door and a panting inquiry for the chief of the fire-fighters. "There's a big fire up the street," gasped the messenger.

"Can't help it if there's 'arf-a-dozen," snapped the captain. "The engine ain't goin' to no fires to-night. I've got a party on."

"Surely you ain't goin' to refuse to try and save property just because you're giving a party?" was the query. The captain hesitated. "Not exactly because 'o the party," came the answer at length; "but, hang it all, I ain't goin' to show the missus up for nobody."

"Show your missus up?" "Yes, show 'er up. Everybody in the 'ouse 'as been admiring 'er new coal vase in the drawin'-room, and it 'appens to be my 'elmet!'"

Gumples of white organdie are a dainty accessory to the wee girl's school dress of wool.

Capes and coats are so similar in line that one cannot distinguish one from the other.



The Office Boy Has a "Blow--Out."

Automobiles.—In the first place I ain't got none. Now there is prominent autos for prominent people. For instance, "Our Big Boss" has got a Caddellack, while a feller in our office has got a Ford. Fords is Fords all the world over. Last summer, when we was in the country we had one what wouldn't crank, so the feller what run it always runned it backwards up a hill at night, then in the mornin' he jest took off the breaks an' let 'er rip.

When the feller what invented autos invented them, the saps livin' around him called 'em horseless carriages. Henry Fords goin' to make a auto for two hundred an' 50 plunks, so I guess I'll get one—when the Boss comes across with a couple of razors. The auto that I like best is a Stutz, because bear-cats always did appeal to me. Anyway they must be good autos 'cause the feller what makes 'em says they're good and he ort to know. Most autos hev four wheels and a steerin' wheel. A feller I know once told this to me—

A little spark, a little coil, A little gas, a little oil, A piece of tin and a small silver, Put 'em together and you've got a dinger.

Now that ain't ortful good poetry, but it tells yer what I want it to. Course they have autos in other countries besides this one. In England they have a Rolls-Rice, in Italy a Fry-it, and in France a Rain-ait, but ignorant people ain't never herd of them.

No matter what kind of a auto you got, it must hev tires. Tires is used so that when it bounces it won't bounce. Tires has got to have inside tires, and inside tires is ortful good fer sling-shots. Tires cost a whole lot of dough, and tack's don't, therefore the two don't agree. Tere is one funny thing about every auto, that is: Its got to be tired before it will be run, funny, ain't it?

Some people think it's hard to run an auto, but really it ain't, in fact I seen one go down a hill by its own self and it stopped of its own accord too—when it hit a tree.

Most every auto has a engin. Engins are ortful complicated things. I can take any engin apart, put it back together again, and have only twenty-seven parts left over. Now my father thinks I don't know nothin' 'bout a engin, but I do, in fact, I could tell yer the whole history of one but it will take too long; anyway I can tell yer the parts. It has 4 cylinders, 4 plugged sparks, a fan, for the summer (and winter.) It has a break, and another break, it has some carb-eaters an' a rady-atur. A Ford also has a lot of nuts, a crank, an' a rattle.—Rexall Magazine.

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