

Granville Redmond, Artist

By A. V. BALLIN

"GRANVILLE, REDMOND, artist, born 1871, educated California institution for education of Deaf, Dumb and Blind, studied art, received hon. mention and Brown gold medal for best study from life at San Francisco Art Association; entered Julien Academy, Paris, and studied under Benjamin Constant and Jean Paul Laurens. Exhibited at Paris Salon, Purchase Exposition, St. Louis; silver medal at Seattle Exposition, the picture being acquired by the government of Washington and hung in the Capitol at Olympia."

The above is copied from "Who's Who in America," regarding artists and sculptors.

Brilliant and comprehensive, though brief, it would serve as a lasting monument of praise to be engraved on a monument. But somehow or other it does not satisfy; it is like a chaste marble statue which inspires admiration and chilliness at the same time. We hunger for life and warmth; we seek the human, living side; and, therefore, I quote a small part of a long article, written for a magazine by a visitor calling on Mr. Redmond on Charlie Chaplin's lot in Hollywood, a studio within a studio, so to speak. It tells more about his work as an artist than his personality. Of the later I shall take care of later on.

***"I found him a striking personality and a sturdily built man with strong humorous face and a shock of thick grey hair. There was something in that first impression that conjured up a mind-picture of a long dead and gone Boheme, something that clings to every true disciple of art whose 'prentice years have been spent in the atmosphere of the Montmartre.

"He was very courteous and at once invited me to enter. His easels occupied one side of the large room. On the opposite side was a settee, in which a little slender man was seated, gazing with a kind of rapt interest at the largest of the canvases.

"My host scribbled something on his 'conversation pad' and made a gesture of introduction:

"'Mr. Charles Chaplin.'

"Since that altogether unexpected first meeting, I have gleaned from various sources that Mr. Charles Chaplin is about as easy to get at as the Grand Lama or His Holiness the Roman Pontiff. Possibly just because I had come to see another man and was not out to make a newspaper 'scoop,' I quite naturally drifted in where even the American pressman fears to tread. Possibly my ostensible interest in brush and palette reassured Mr. Chaplin on the subject of my comparative harmlessness; possibly also it

is an occasional relief to him to get away from his business of keeping the world amused and be an ordinary human being with interests of his own.

"Anyhow, that afternoon I discovered a Chaplin that the reporters and interviewers have somehow managed to overlook. Not one of them, I will swear, has ever run him to earth in Granville Redmond's studio.

"Mr. Chaplin chatted very pleasantly about every subject but moving pictures, and proved very helpful in interpreting conversation with the deaf and dumb artist without the aid of pad and pencil. We then turned our undivided attention to the pictures I had come to see.

"One of the largest of the three easels stood a big canvas which Chaplin told me had just been completed for his own collection. Beneath a moon-transfigured sky—although no moon is actually visible—a wide expanse of salt marshes stretch out to the silver of a distant horizon. A sluggish inlet from the sea gleams blue in the foreground against the purple earth and the dark green of the coarse grass. Far away, where that silver touch gleams on the horizon, you sense the mystery of the sea. The picture is called 'Low Tide.'

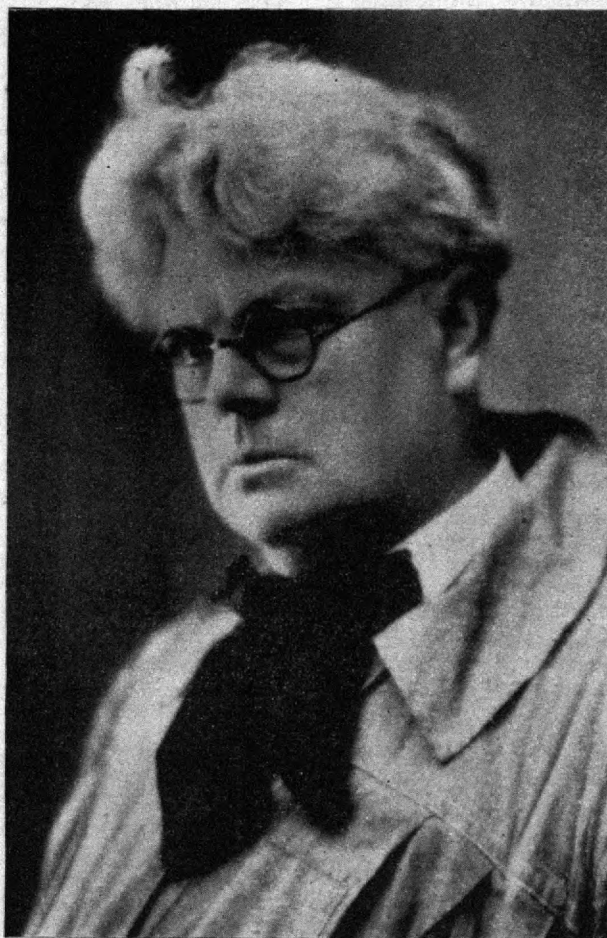
"'I could look at it for hours,' Chaplin said; 'it means so many things.'

"He said many things, too, that afternoon, which struck me as wonderfully apt. A professional art critic would

possibly have conveyed the same thoughts in different words, and robbed them of all their deep inner meaning by talking the technical jargon that critics delight to affect. Chaplin did not talk of 'high-lights' or 'values,' but went straight to the soul of the picture.

"'That sky, for instance,' he said, 'it's so brilliant, so alive, that stretch of marshland so inert—it makes you think of those hours before dawn when human vitality is at its lowest ebb. And yet you have the feeling that somewhere beyond there's the sea, and that when the tide rises, that bit of earth will awake refreshed for another day.'

***" 'You know,' Chaplin mused, 'something puzzles me about Redmond's pictures. There's such a wonderful joyousness about them all. Look at the gladness in that sky, the riot of color in those flowers. Sometimes I think that the silence in which he lives has developed in him some sense, some great capacity for happiness in which we others are lacking. He paints solitude as no one else can convey it, and yet, by some strange paradox, his solitude is never loneliness. It's some sort of communion with Nature, I suppose. The serenity of that sky, for instance,



GRANVILLE REDMOND

he continued, pointing to the picture of 'Low Tide,' of which he seemed unable to gaze his fill; 'it seems to hold a kind of promise. It sort of reconciles you to the bleakness of those marshes. And now I want you to see my favorite picture, for it just illustrates what I am trying to say.'

"The subject was very simple, its treatment just as simple, yet of that subtle *raffinement* which is the art of concealing art. A veiled yellow moon, the shadowy outline of a tall tree in the foreground with others looming phantomlike in the crepuscule of soft greens and grays, somewhat reminiscent of the translucent colors of Carot. Solitude with a subdued undercurrent of contentment and ineffable peace. Nothing of loneliness.

"Isn't it beautiful!" Chaplin breathed. "That moonlight—it makes you feel you ought to whisper!"

"I remember reading in one of Schumann's letters: 'It is only the genius who can understand the genius quite.'

The above reveals, at the same time, not only the very high quality of Mr. Redmond's talent as an artist, but also a side of Chaplin's own personality which escaped the notice of average spectators of his fun-making antics across the screen—only to thoughtful, keen ob-



Charlie Chaplin spelling on his fingers to Redmond

servers are discernable, the latent highly artistic, refined soul of this comedian. To my judgment, Chaplin is comparable to Mark Twain in the respect that beneath the surface of humor both are alike in unfathomable philosophy.

The beautiful soul inspiring comments, uttered in choicest phrases and expressions, scholar-like unfold to our gaze that he is something else, in private life, besides a mere fun-maker—therefore his praise of Redmond's talent is praise indeed!

The intimacy between Redmond and Chaplin is thick enough to influence the latter's acting in moving pictures. It is quite apparent. Did you not notice that Chaplin makes many gestures resembling those of a deaf-mute, and never opens his mouth to mimic speaking words—words which cannot be heard or understood; and which, if important, would have to be repeated as sub-titles—a most boring and wasteful method of explaining anything in motion pictures. It shows that Chaplin fully appreciates that in dumb pantomime every expression must be interpreted by gestures as far as practicable.

In frequent conversations with Mr. Redmond on the subject of motion picture making, in which both of us are deeply interested, he assures me that the gestures must not go beyond the comprehension of the spectators.

The use of gestures will prevail in proportion to its increasing usage by the public. The sign language is being appraised at its true value very slowly but surely. The whole cinema industry is groping blindly and cautiously about it, dimly aware without being clearly conscious of its great import. At present I am writing a lengthy treatise on this subject, and I hope it will interest the whole world when published (if ever!). While progressing with it I often consult Mr. Redmond, for he is now past master in sign making. We seldom meet his equal in this art—for it is an art in itself—still he knows its limitations, and he never exceeds the "natural signs" when he acts in pictures.

It may surprise many, for very few know the fact, that he did, and even now does, act in pictures. He does not take leading parts, though. The time for that has not yet arrived. Not his fault, but because there exists today not one director who makes signs or spells on his fingers fluently enough to guide any deaf-mute.

As you can see, by the first line of this article, where I betrayed the date of his birth, that he is still very young. There is plenty of time ahead for him to accomplish greater wonders, great as his past ones have been; and of the sort to make all of us, deaf-mutes mighty proud of him.

The best suggestion for better mailing week is; don't give them to your husband.

Types of Children of Deaf Parents



A. L. PACH PHOTO.

Catherine Lonergan, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Lonergan, New York City

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