

# No Talkies for Charlie

By Harry Lang

**C**HARLES CHAPLIN likes stewed tripe and hates whiskey. He does like good wines, and drinks cocktails when the occasion seems to require it. Before prohibition, he always had a well-stocked cellar, never drank much himself, and always was a perfect host alcoholically. Since prohibition came, the same is true.

Besides stewed tripe, he likes lamb stew. Those are two of his three favorite dishes. He dislikes seasoning, never uses sauces or violent condiments and doesn't care for highly spiced dishes. The one exception is curry, the hotter the better. That's his third favorite dish.

He is utterly inconsistent about eating. Sometimes he will go for twenty-four hours or longer without taking a morsel. Then he'll eat four or five meals within the next day. He goes on diets but never keeps them up. He went rabidly on a raw vegetable diet for several days. "Look at animals," he said, "they eat raw vegetables and are healthy. The elephant is the biggest and strongest animal; he eats only vegetables." That night, Charlie ate two beefsteaks, rare.

His cook will work for a day or two to prepare an epicurean meal for him. Charlie sits down and it is served. He doesn't like the looks or aroma of something before him. So he leaves the table and goes to a cheap lunch counter and eats ham and eggs. He likes to eat at drug store lunch counters. His favorite restaurant is Henry's. The proprietor is his assistant director.

When he is served something he likes very much, he takes as many as five helpings. It makes him violently ill.

Chaplin is very much afraid of illness. He has a wiry body. He takes cold very easily. Whenever he is ill, it frightens him and the best available physicians are called. The sight of a sick friend affects him so that he cannot work.

**H**E did not go to school. He has in his home a library of three thousand books. He reads them. He reads everything, but likes biographies best. He delights in unusual illustrations. He reads the Bible and likes it and has no religious faith of his own. A half dozen times a year, a sudden desire to go to church will seize him. Then he goes into the first church he comes to and doesn't know until he sees the clergyman what faith it is. Sometimes he doesn't know then.

Reading is one of his three favorite relaxations. The other two are walking and playing tennis. He plays tennis well. He wears partners out, because he insists on playing for five or six hours at a stretch. When he has no partner, he will play alone, against a wall, for as

*Some intimate and never-told facts about the screen's only practical genius*

long as five hours without rest. He plays, then, automatically. He is not thinking of the game; he is thinking of other things. With the racket, he is ambidextrous.

That is true too of his handwriting. He is naturally but not exclusively left-handed. He can write equally well with either hand, and writes very little. Within the past ten years, he has not written in his own hand more than a dozen personal letters. When he does write, he writes in short sentences—five or six words each.

He is rich. He could earn much more but does not take advantage of his earning capacity. He works only when he feels like it and rarely feels like it. He will go for months at a time, paying the salaries of a complete studio staff and company, but not turning a camera. Then he will suddenly appear and drive like a madman, doing ten days' work in each one and exhausting everybody, including himself. When a picture is being cut, he works as long as seventy-two hours at a stretch. He enters the cutting room clean shaven and comes out with a beard.

His studio employees never know, while a picture is in production, whether Chaplin will be down that day or not. He may not show up for days on end. When he does appear, although he has no one in the world to account to but himself, he acts like a guilty child, making silly excuses for his absence. Then he delights in finding some tiny prop missing on the set. A spoon is not where it should be, and he crows: "Where in Hell is that damn' spoon? See, you're holding me up! THIS is what's holding me up."

He swears now and then and doesn't care who is within hearing when he does. He has a fairly even temper.

He has a dictaphone beside his bed. Two or three times a night, he wakes up and shouts thoughts into the machine. Then he turns it off and goes back to sleep. The next day, secretaries transcribe what he has said, and very often Chaplin doesn't know what it's all about when he reads it. Mostly, from his bed, he



Chaplin locks every door of his bedroom each night before turning in. We do not know for sure whether he sleeps in his derby



dictates ideas for his pictures. Frequently, however, after an argument with someone earlier that evening, he will suddenly awake during the night thinking of an answer for something the other fellow said. Then he declaims it into the dictaphone, sometimes for several records full. When it is transcribed, he throws it away.

**R**ATHER than buy sheet music, he writes his own. He has composed more than twenty numbers, ranging from jazz to ballads and music of classical type. He has never published any of his own compositions. He has written a half dozen numbers for his current picture, "City Lights," including the theme song.

He never took a music lesson in his life and plays proficiently the piano, organ, violin, cello, concertina, saxophone, guitar and ukulele. He has a huge pipe organ in his home, and sits alone at it for hours, improvising. He bows his violin and cello with his left hand, fingering with his right. The instruments are strung "backwards."

He lives alone in a huge house with six male servants. The only feminine touches about the house are his own. He will not let anyone else make a fire in any of his fireplaces. He insists on building them himself, invariably.

Instead of burning logs, he burns huge chunks of coal.

His hair grows very fast. He has to have it cut at least four times a month. It used to be dark brown. Now it comes out grey, but for his pictures, he dyes it dark brown. Because it grows so rapidly, he has to have it dyed every ten days or so while making a film. He doesn't dye it at other times.

He has never worn a beard. He has only once had a mustache of his own and it wasn't much. He raised it while on a vacation with Douglas Fairbanks. When he got back to the studio, everybody laughed at it. He got mad and shaved it off at once. He has never raised one since.

**H**IS prop mustache has dwindled steadily through the years. When he first began in pictures, it extended beyond his lip-ends. Now it is a tiny double smudge under his nostrils. In three years, at the present rate, it should disappear entirely.

He hates to put on make-up, and he uses an unusually heavy one. To the eye, when in make-up, he does not look at all like the Charlie Chaplin you see on the screen. He does virtually all his own directing.

His eyes are blue. When he is happy, they are light blue. When he is worried, bothered or angry, they are dark blue. The iris changes from light blue to almost black, within a half hour.

He bathes as often as four times a day. When he rises, and at noon, and before dinner, and before bed. He sings opera in the tub or the shower. Baritone. He knows the tunes but not the words, so he makes up French or Italian or Spanish or German, or even Japanese or Chinese, as he goes along. He cannot speak any foreign language. The words he makes up are pure imagery.

He wears very loud pajamas and locks himself in his bedroom. He locks every door in his bedroom, even that to his private bathroom. He will not unlock one of these doors until he awakes for morning. He keeps his windows open.

When he awakes, Kono, his Japanese servant, brings two morning newspapers and his breakfast. He invariably breakfasts and reads through both newspapers before getting out of bed. He reads everything in each paper and has his own opinions. He gets vexed at editorials or news stories which disagree with his

views and sometimes calls the writers harsh names to his friends.

He has more than two dozen lounging robes. He always gets out of the right side of his bed at precisely the same spot. Kono is trained so that Chaplin's bedroom mules lie at the spot where his feet naturally fall into them when he swings his legs out of bed. If they don't, Charlie is annoyed.

**K**ONO has his clothes laid out for him, but frequently Chaplin feels that they do not fit his mood, so he brushes them aside and rummages through his wardrobe for his own choice. He has many suits. Each suit is pressed and hung in his closet immediately after he takes it off. He may wish to put the same one on again immediately. He is very fastidious about his clothes but he lets his beard go with abandon.

Sometimes he does not shave for five or six days at a stretch.

His pocket kerchief and his necktie must match. He hates breaking in new shoes. He has a favorite pair of shoes, black patent leather with grey cloth button tops. He has owned that pair twelve years and prefers them to all others.

They have been resoled and heeled beyond track.

He uses a great deal of a certain perfume for which he pays \$40 per two-ounce container. He sprinkles it around his dressing room. He always wears black silk socks. Black and dark blue are his favorite colors.

He likes to talk. He particularly likes to talk at the meal table. It is not unusual for him to sit down with friends at a café for dinner at six. At midnight, he has not moved from the table, and orders a second meal. He will frequently take an attitude directly at variance with his true belief, merely for the sake of argument, which he loves. He hates to talk about himself and avoids interviewers to an embarrassing extent.

**H**E likes women and likes to be in their company but is afraid of them. He fears he cannot please them. They are usually wild about him. He believes he is a good judge of women, but has been known to be notoriously wrong. He thinks he can analyze their characters by the shape of their mouths, ears, nostrils and other facial characteristics, and tries to criticize his friends' women on that basis. He will not stand for any criticism of the women he is with on any basis.

He rarely goes out alone with women, and when he does it is usually Georgia Hale. He denies he will marry her.

He autographs very few portraits or photographs with his own hand. Only for his very closest intimates. For the rest, he has had made a rubber stamp duplicate of his own signature.

He likes to be alone. He takes long walks alone. He will walk fifteen miles, then go to a telephone and call for his automobile. He excuses himself in the midst of a studio conference and leaves everybody waiting. He doesn't show up until the next day, or later.

Sometimes on his way home from the studio, he will stop the car about half way there, and run the rest of the way afoot. He has three cars—a roadster and a limousine and a town car. He prefers to drive himself, letting the chauffeur ride in the back seat.

He doesn't see any sense to golf because it's foolish to whack a ball away and then hunt for it. When he was seventeen, he entered without training into a twenty-six mile marathon



in England and came in second. He loves swimming and baseball, but thinks football is foolish.

He is a splendid boxer and a keen boxing fan and usually picks the winner of a bout before the first bell.

He plays bridge well and after a half hour, he quits. He doesn't care to concentrate on the game any longer than that. He does not gamble at cards or horses or dice and plays thousands in the stock market. He buys phonograph records by the dozen, frequently sneaking into an obscure record shop to listen to them by the hour before buying.

**H**E doesn't understand why people think he was born in Paris when he was born in London and in sixteen years he has only been back to London once. He didn't like it that time. It "depressed" him.

He is going back this year.

He loves traveling and dislikes flying. He was one of the first to fly in aviation's infancy and doesn't think it's "ready" now, so he doesn't fly any more.

During the war he tried to enlist in the army, but he was too short and underweight. He served in the army intelligence division and helped sell Liberty Bonds. He is a sincere American. He has never taken out his first United States naturalization papers. In politics he is faintly socialistic, if anything.

He is generous to an extreme with his friends until they double-cross him in anything. Then he is "off them" for life. The same with confidences. He trusts everyone until he is betrayed.

He cannot bring himself to hurt people, physically or their feelings. When he corrects the lowliest extra on his set, he does it privately

and not loudly.

He rarely goes to bed before midnight and then has no set hours for sleeping. On the nights he goes to bed latest, he is liable to wake up earliest and vice versa. He likes to play practical jokes if they do not hurt anyone in any way.

**W**HEN he reads, he wears horn-rimmed glasses. He does not smoke. Up to a year ago, he smoked between four and five packs of cigarettes a day. For no reason he decided to quit. He has never smoked since unless the action of a scene calls for it, and then he prefers a cigar.

He never wears jewelry or a watch. He owns ten watches. He never carries any money in his pockets. When he buys something, he is well enough known to charge it. His favorite café proprietor sends him a bill at the end of each month. He never signs checks nor tips waitresses. The café owner pays the tips and adds it to the bill. If he does need cash, he has to borrow it. His friends know this and always have extra cash along when they go out with him.

When he is with someone and steps into a shop to buy some article of clothing, he always buys the friend the same. Once he and a friend went to San Francisco for a short trip. They took no evening clothes. While there, Chaplin suddenly decided to go out dressed. He bought a complete evening outfit, and one for the friend, too, even though the friend wasn't going along. The friend still has it.

He doesn't like tale-bearers and doesn't bear any himself. He likes buttermilk and coffee and sometimes holds up production in the middle of a scene to have a cup of tea. He once tried to drink sauerkraut juice and couldn't swallow the stuff.

When he discusses how he appears on the screen, he doesn't say "I." He says "he," as though the Chaplin on the screen were another person entirely. When he is excited about a subject, he is utterly oblivious of himself. He has been known to stand in his dressing room stark naked for a half hour or more, excitedly arguing with an acquaintance who may have dropped in while he was undressing.

He likes to dance and his favorite dance is the tango. He dreads social functions until he gets there and then he's the center of the party, no matter how big it is. Whenever he gives a function himself, he gives it on a big scale and swears the next day he'll never give another.

He hates yes-men and loves arguments. He lays traps to see whether or not certain of his associates are yessing him. If they are, they soon go elsewhere.

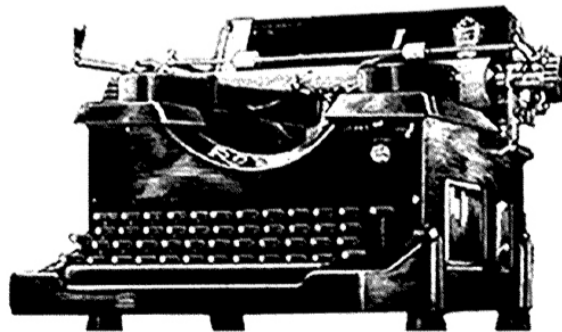
He has no pets. He had a parrot but when the newspapers began printing about parrot fever, he gave it away. He has no dogs but if he had one, he would have a mongrel because he prefers them to thoroughbreds.

**H**E likes good plays and silent pictures and newsreels. He takes newsreels home by the half dozen to run in his private projection room at nights.

He has never sat through a talking picture. He insists they are far inferior to silents. He says he will never, never, never make a talkie.

And he feels the same way about wide-film pictures. After he saw one in Hollywood, Chaplin said the public would lose its eyesight trying to follow the action on the big sheet—and that he'll never, never make one.

So there you are. Chaplin, the clown and genius. Just snapshots.



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