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# IF I MAY SAY SO

NEW YORK, JUNE 29.

I HAVE never looked upon myself as a Chicagoan, nor yet as a New Yorker; therefore it is possible for me to divide my residence between these cities and retain a proper regard for each without danger of becoming, if I may say so, provincial. (Though, as a matter of fact, I have discovered New Yorkers to be more provincial than Chicagoans.) I hold a vast affection for Chicago, which is easier on the nerves; yet I am at the same time immensely fond of New York, which is pleasanter to the eye. And on this subject I am reminded of an article on Chicago that popped out recently in the *New York Tribune*, by the English novelist, Ford Madox Ford (whom I have heard jocularly referred to in London as Freud Madox Fraud). Mr. Ford, after a profound survey of our civilization, made between trains, declares that Chicago harbors a seething hatred of New York. I do not believe it. The only Chicagoan I ever knew to hurl anathema upon New York was Ben Hecht, who could never be happy unless hating something.

It was this fantastic fellow's wont to utter loud and violent anti-Gotham denunciations, and at one time he planned to marshal a gigantic Coxeyan army, and march eastward to batter down the ramparts of Manhattan. But before that uncivil war could be commenced a New York magazine bought one of Mr. Hecht's stories, whereupon he magnanimously called off hostilities. Not long afterward he became a citizen of New York. And therein lies the history of many a great grudge.

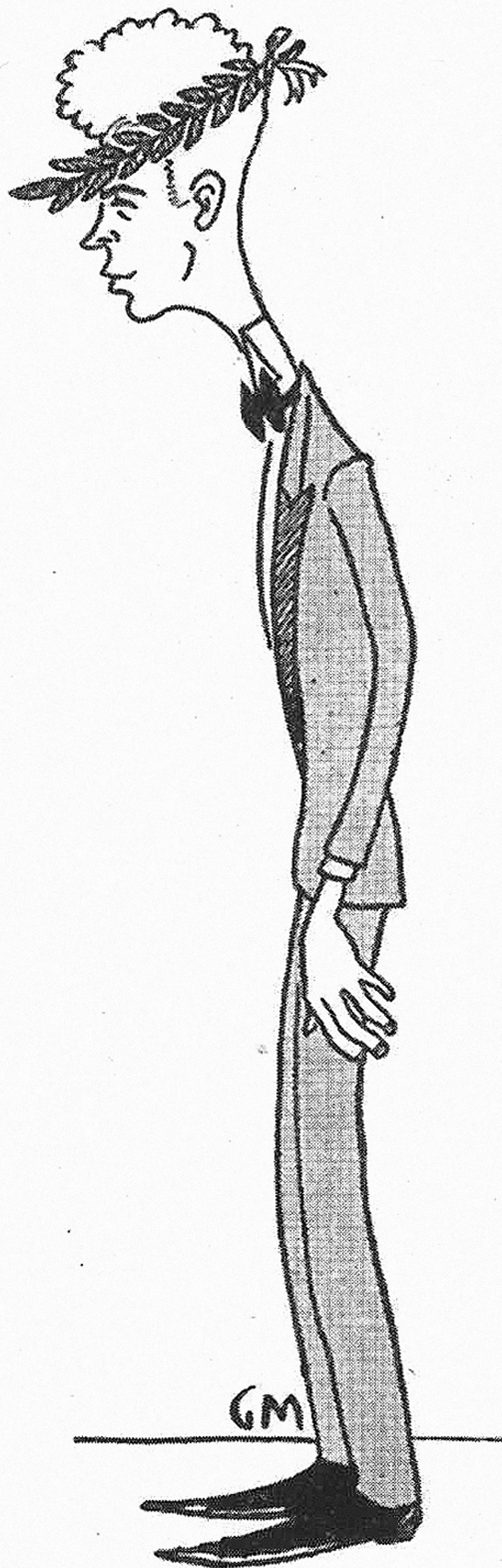
Several pages have fluttered from the calendar since last I set foot in this metropolis, and all unwittingly my arrival fell upon a fortunate day. I found flags a-flutter everywhere, bands were playing, and soldiers marching in the streets between dense, shouting crowds, clubbed back by blue lines of constables. From the windows of all the tall buildings that canyon Fifth Avenue protruded human heads, arms and legs, and the air was filled with a snowstorm of paper—silver atoms in the sun. I inquired of a friendly *gendarme*, who had just knocked flat a couple of old ladies trying to view the parade, the significance of this demonstration. It seems that a fellow named Charley Lindbergh. . . . .

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WELL, for several days Charley was kept busy accepting the keys of the city. That boy must have a key-ring as big as a ferris-wheel. All the boroughs echoed with plaudits and plauditudes: Manhattan and the Bronx, not to mention Brooklyn. (Though why not mention Brooklyn? It's good for a laugh on any stage.) Now, speaking of Brooklyn, it has always been said that the subway under the East River was built so that people could get over to Brooklyn without being seen; but on the day of Charley Lindbergh's Brooklyn parade everybody walked right across the Bridge—openly and unashamed.

One evening a Mr. Ziegfeld, a rising young theatrical producer, flung a party in Charley's honor at his new theatre, which is called, oddly enough, the Ziegfeld theatre. The party was by way of being an invitational performance of the current cantata on exhibition there, *Rio Rita*, and everybody who is anybody—and many who are not—had free seats. The social register, the registers of Dun and Bradstreet, even police register, were represented. The flower and chivalry of New York, you might say. (Well, you might say, but then again, you might not.) It was what is lightly called a brilliant gathering. Seldom have I beheld so many magnificent women and so few magnificent men collected under one roof. Celebrated beauties of stage and cinema, coruscatingly gowned and furred, all wearing clusters of orchids as large as hydrangea bushes, were



Charles Lindbergh

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being elbowed hither—and even thither—by renowned diplomats, politicians, polo players, playwrights, novelists, bankers, brokers, jurists, gynecologists and what-not. Everybody was craning his or her neck—and, indeed, some were not particular whose neck they craned (the osteopaths must have done a thriving business next day)—for a sight of the guest of honor. Just to give you a rough idea of who was in the audience, on the front bench sat Mr. William Randolph Hearst and a party, including a Miss Marion Davies, who they say is a very promising young motion-picture actress. At last, the curtain having been held till 9:35, flashlight cameras in the street were heard to boom softly, and Colonel Lindbergh (for such was our hero's name) made a personal appearance. Whereupon all Mr. Ziegfeld's invited guests rose to their feet (or their neighbors') cheering lustily, as down the aisle with boyish blushes sauntered the Immortal Kid. In front of him, behind him, all around him, scurried lord mayors, *polizei* and other attaches, and Charley was escorted to the third row, scarce half a dozen seats removed from my own point of vantage. It was a gala night for the gals. They feasted their eyes, as the saying goes, on Charley, and, in truth, I felt sorry for the romantic barytone of *Rio Rita*. Nobody paid much attention to him. He wasn't half so romantic as the Colonel, he wasn't even so handsome. And the Colonel didn't have to sing.

ONE poignant episode marked the evening for my more or less observant eye. The only lady to be presented to Colonel Lindbergh at the *fete galante* was the "lady friend" of a high Gotham dignitary, who had been "planted" just across the aisle. As the triumphal procession barged down to take its places, the high Gotham dignitary, marching beside Charley, hastily—and in full view—introduced Charley to the lady friend. And the h. G. d's wife sat calmly watching the procedure. Such is life in the more populous centers.

—GENE MARKEY.