

# Can a Genius be a Husband?

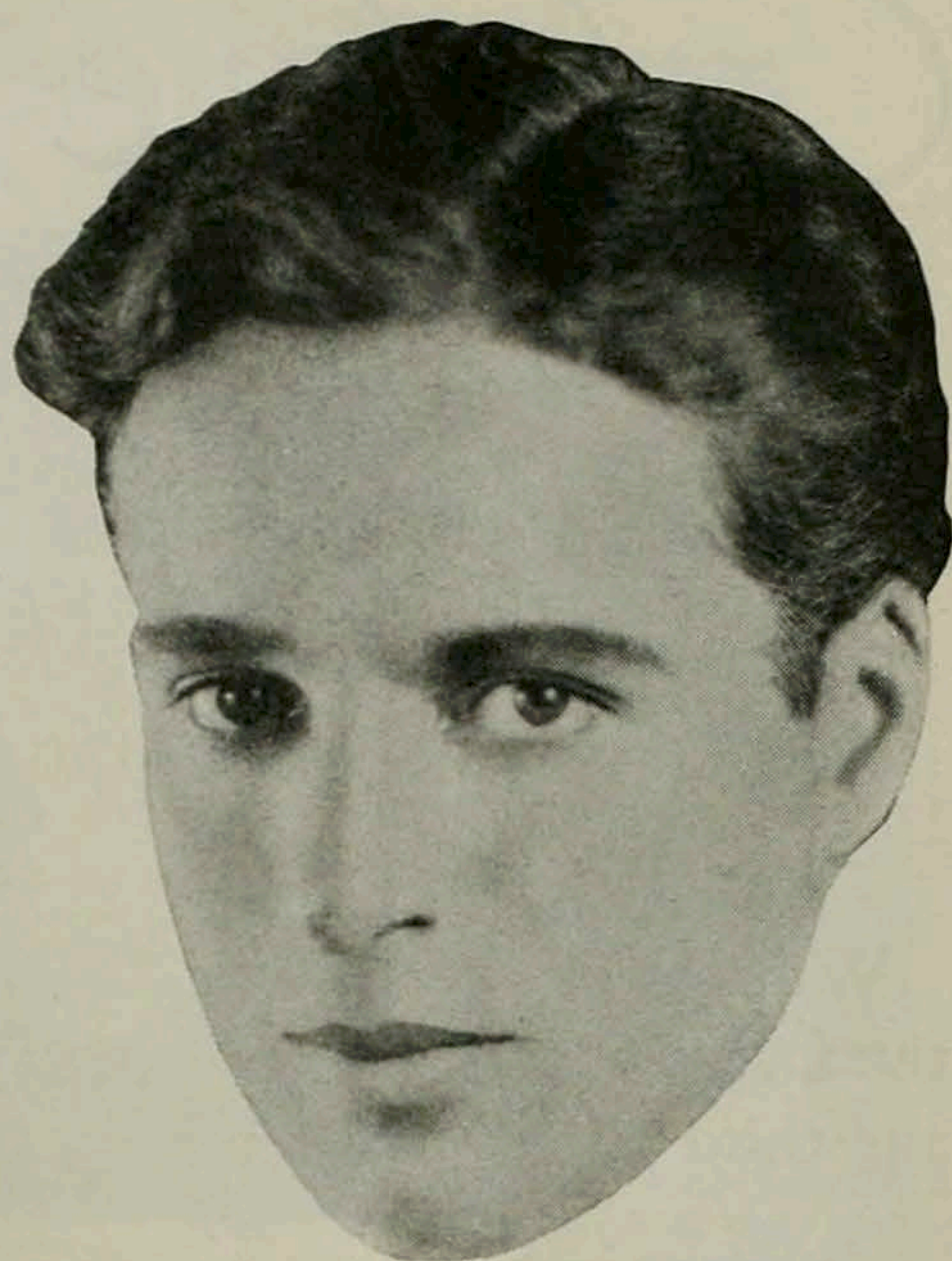
Charlie's Second Marriage  
Going on the Rocks of  
Temperament, says Hollywood

By



*Adela  
Rogers  
St. Johns*

**A**LL Hollywood is awaiting official news of a proposed divorce in the Chaplin family. Whether or not matters will get that far it is difficult to say just now, but the present separation is being unofficially discussed by everybody, including some people who ought to know.

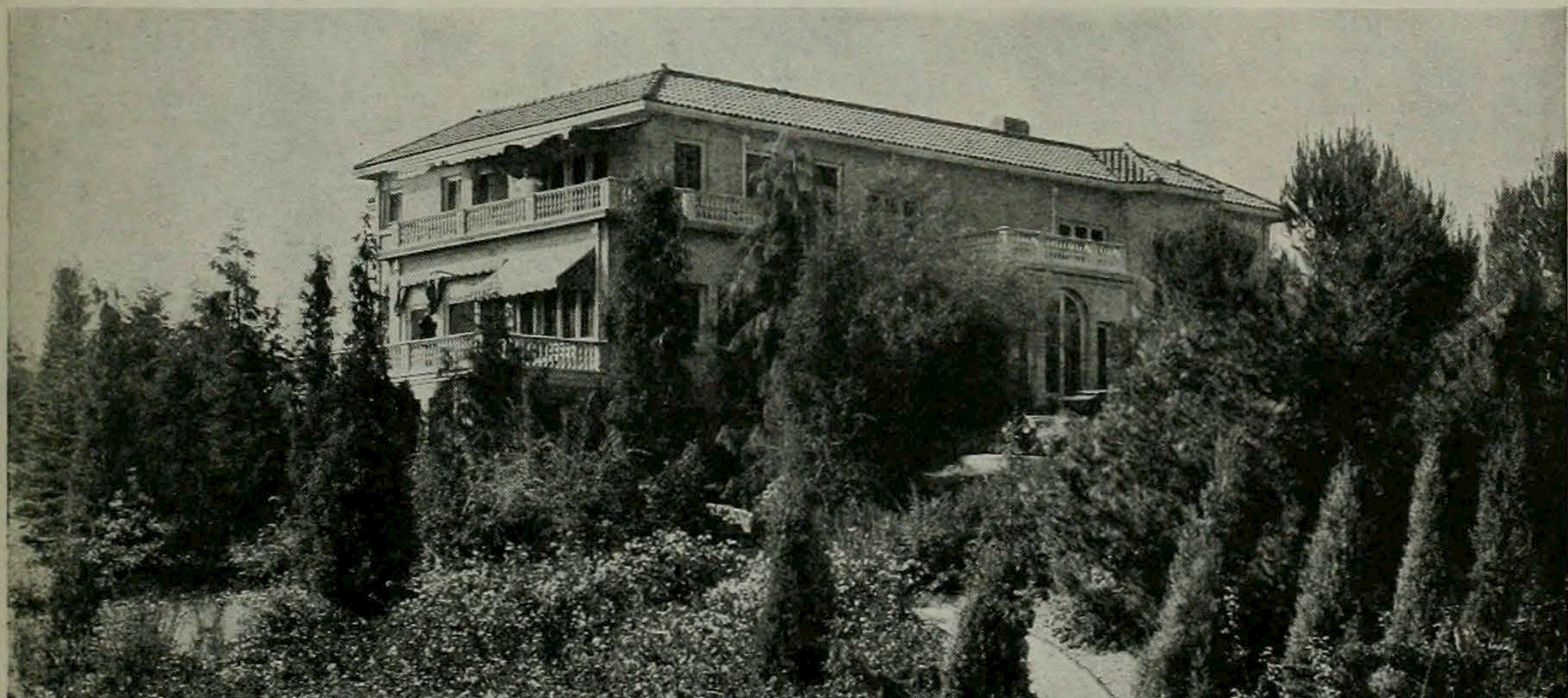


The strange aloneness that always marks genius exists to the *nth* degree in Chaplin. He stands off from his fellow men, wistfully, a little sadly. You see an amazing mixture of egotism and humility

What such freedom would cost Charlie Chaplin is also a matter of infinite speculation and though surmises as to the actual figures differ they all agree that it will be plenty. Which is as it should be, for nobody doubts that Lita Chaplin has done her very best since she married Charlie and if she isn't a superwoman that isn't her fault.

And unless she is a superwoman, the marriage is doomed and was doomed from the beginning.

It would take a superwoman to make a success of marriage to the one recognized genius of the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 115]



Here is the home of Charlie Chaplin. If Hollywood rumors are to be believed, it is a house divided against itself



addin', confidential-like, that I used to picture myself doin' the same thing with a certain young woman who lived on an Oklahoma ranch 'bout half an hour from where I was workin'. But nothin' serious come of it because I found out her father wasn't the objectin' kind and would have staked almost anybody to a getaway horse if he'd take the girl along and promise to feed her.

But my trip to England sure robbed me of my Lochinvar illusion. They took me to see a famous paintin' by a feller named Ben West which showed Lock ridin' off with his girl. In the first place I didn't like his ridin' clothes and if what I saw was a fair picture of the horse he rode, he couldn't have got away from a good burro. The poem allowed as how "in all the wide border his steed was the best" and if that was true it was a rotten horse country.

If I had been ridin' my horse Tony with the girl, and the old man chasin' me had been settin' on the horse Lock had in that picture, he'd have arrived about in time for the first christenin'.

At Christmas time down on the ranch, we boys got more kick out of givin' our gal a celluloid hand lookin' glass in a velvet case, that they held us up four-fifty for, than any rich man ever got out of presentin' his better half with a fifty thousand dollar string of pearls. I know, for I'm one of the birds has played both ends of the string and is willin' to admit it.

The first present I ever give Mrs. Mix cost less than twenty dollars—how much less I hope she'll never know. What Mrs. Mix's last present cost only me an' the bank clerk and the jeweler will ever find out. But she liked it and that made it cheap at any price. But she still keeps the little manicure set with the mother of pearl handles in the red plush box on her dressing table along side of the French enameled gold toilet outfit I grabbed off for her in Paris. Say, one of them little knives you use to fix your finger nails with in that French set costs twenty times as much as the whole manicure set. But between you and me, I get more kick when I notice that when Mrs. Mix is packing her jewelry to put it in the safe deposit box while we're away she always puts in the red plush box with the manicure set in it first, than out of anything I know. The day she puts her diamond dog collar in first I'll know romance is dead.

**W**HEN I first come to Los Angeles and worked in pictures as a cowboy for five dollars a day, I used to buy my clothes on Main Street. Right here I want to admit I always had a weakness for nice clothes. An' I reckon the Indian in me come out pretty strong when it came to selectin' color schemes. As a cowboy, I remember I always had the reddest shirt and the greenest and yellowest handkerchief on the ranch. Down in Ponca, Oklahoma, a man named Isidore Einstein operated the New York Dry Goods and Clothing Emporium, and he used to say he'd never get stuck with a suit of clothes because it was too loud as long as Tom Mix was around. He sure said the truth. What's more, I was always ready to try to lick any guy that didn't agree with my taste in such sartorial matters. Well, a little maturity has toned me down some, but I got

to admit I've still got a hankerin' after plaid suits.

I used to go window shoppin' on Main street in Los Angeles before I finally bought me a suit. Savin' money for me was considerable effort. I know a lot of boys that sported white jackets and aprons that weren't barbers. Anyway, after resistin' temptation to spend my money on other pleasures, and after pickin' me out the right raiment, I'd take it home and try it on in front of a two-foot square mirror, and then I'd canter out in the firm belief that Solomon and I was rivals and I had him licked.

Now I get my clothes made in London and New York and by gosh there's no use denyin' it, I don't get half the thrill out of them.

I want to tell you about the first time I arrayed myself in what was then known as a full dress suit. I had rented it from Wolf and Bean. I was takin' a young female out to the Oriental cafe on Main street, which was supposed to carry class to spare.

The only taxis Los Angeles could sport in them days were Ford sedans. I rented me one as near the gal's house as I could find it, hopin' by that diplomatic procedure to cut down the bill because I wasn't holdin' none too strong, and pretty soon me and the gal rolled up in state.

Since then I've been driven up to some of the most exclusive eatin' joints on this continent and Europe and in cars that'd stack up even with the taxi and the cafe thrown in, but they never succeeded in givin' me no such thrill. Say, even the girl—and you know when women are mixed up in anything it never comes out accordin' to Hoyle—though she's been around a lot since, still says that supper at the Oriental cafe was the great event of her life.

Anyway, she went in there free and unattached, but when she come out I sure had my brand on her for fair and we got married not very long afterwards.

**N**OW Mrs. Mix plays bridge and we've a butler, but there's a certain night in the year when we leave our string of cars feedin' in their stalls and rent us a Ford Sedan. We always drive down Main street and look at the buildin' that used to house the Oriental cafe. It's the least expensive evening we spend in the whole year, but it's the one we enjoy the most.

That's what I am aimin' at when I mentions previous about keepin' romance. You can't buy romance. But if you use a little ingenuity and don't get too hard-boiled, you can keep it sproutin' quite a while, as I've proved.

Personally, I got the idea that most folks consider it a heap wrong and indecent to admit to enthusiasms and enjoyments. They regard a poker-face as the proper expression with which to face life, and I'm not arguin' that they're wrong.

But for myself, I'm for romance and a lot of excitement and I hope I won't quit gettin' a kick out of anythin' and everythin' until I'm through kickin' altogether. I'd rather be all dead than half dead myself.

It's harder to find romance in a hard-boiled shirt than a flannel one, I tells you that straight and honest, but it can be done—if you get a little cooperation.



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## Can a Genius Be a Husband?

[ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31 ]

films, the great comedian whose art alone has won certain great critics to include the motion picture among the arts at all.

I don't know exactly what is back of the present split between Charlie and his girl-wife, but I am convinced that whatever the particular trouble is, the real trouble lies in those tremendous difficulties that always beset the marriage of genius.

Which brings us face to face in the flesh with some of the most interesting psychological questions in the world.

Should a genius marry?

What is it like to be the wife of a genius?

More specifically in this case, what has it been like to be the wife of the greatest comedian in the world?

As far as I know, Lita Gray Chaplin has



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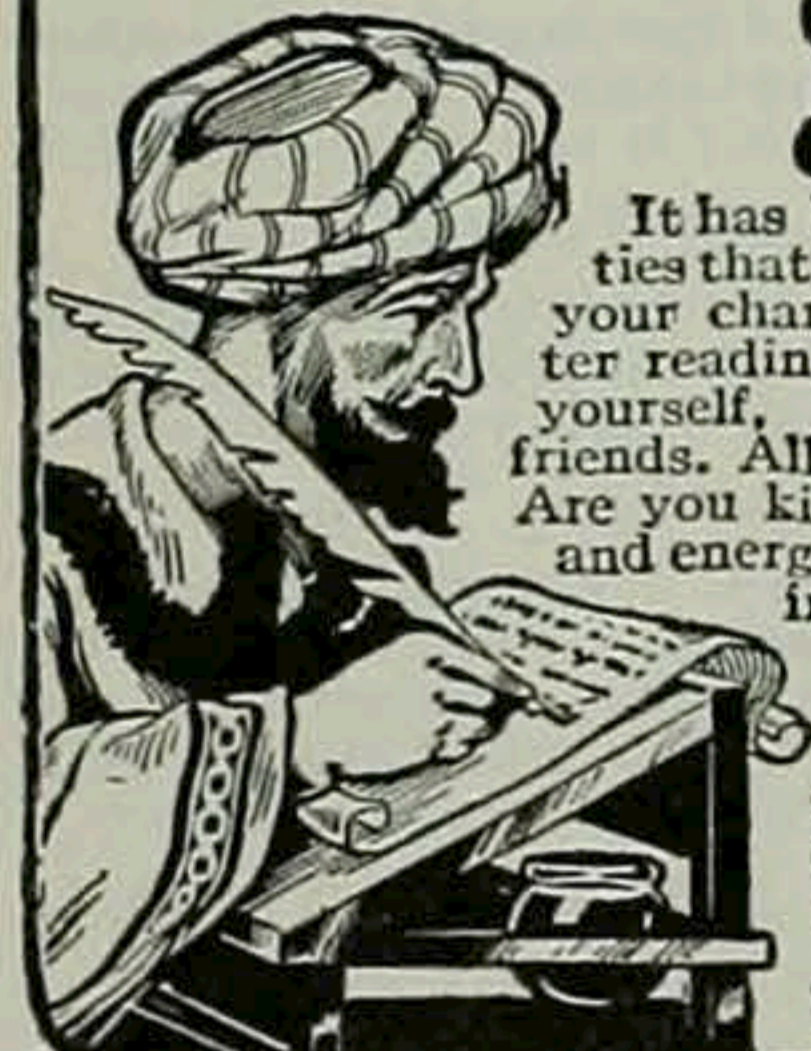
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never told anyone. She is very, very young and neither very analytical nor very articulate.

But it is possible just the same to get an awfully clear picture of the thing and to feel somehow a great throb of sympathy for them both, the little girl-wife and the great genius.

Any marriage is a great and dangerous adventure to a girl in her teens.

Marriage to Charlie Chaplin would, therefore, be a thousand and one adventures.

For to be married to Charlie Chaplin must mean living with all the known or imagined eccentricities of genius since the world began. Nobody who knows Charlie Chaplin can doubt that.

The strange aloneness that always marks genius exists to the *nth* degree in Chaplin. His soul stands off from his fellow man, wistfully, a little sadly. You see it in his eyes in the midst of a crowd. You see it in the amazing mixture of egotism and humility in his conversation. He can never find the happy medium, that common ground upon which exists the normal.

It must be an awful thing to live with a person whose soul you can never touch, either in its joys or its sorrows. It must give you an unbearable sense of strangeness and loneliness, like living in a solitary house without clock or calendar.

Somehow, I have a picture of Lita Chaplin watching her husband with those great, dark eyes, her young throat tight with tears.

No marriage can be a real success without some spiritual union.

**SPIRITUAL** union with a genius like Chaplin is almost impossible. The super-sensitiveness, the introspection, the nervous suspense, the colossal selfishness of all creative genius makes it a task only a superwoman, lit by the fires of a great passion, could accomplish.

Still, some marriages do manage to get by without being a huge success—that is, marriage manages to be a pleasant and convenient thing, without achieving great heights.

I think everybody has hoped very deeply that the Chaplin marriage would thus survive.

Two things will make that difficult in the case of the Charlie Chaplins.

One is that Charlie is the most supreme individualist I have ever come in contact with.

Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, for instance, have made a beautiful thing of their marriage by the great modern commandment

of 50-50. They are comrades, equals, giving and taking, exchanging, sharing. But neither one of them is a genius.

Charlie Chaplin, like every man endowed with that glorious and spontaneous ability to give out the new and fresh and unexpected, wants 99.01% all the time.

And just here, lest you misunderstand Charlie's side of this tragedy—for any broken marriage where there are children is a tragedy—let me explain just a little of what Charlie Chaplin means to the motion picture.

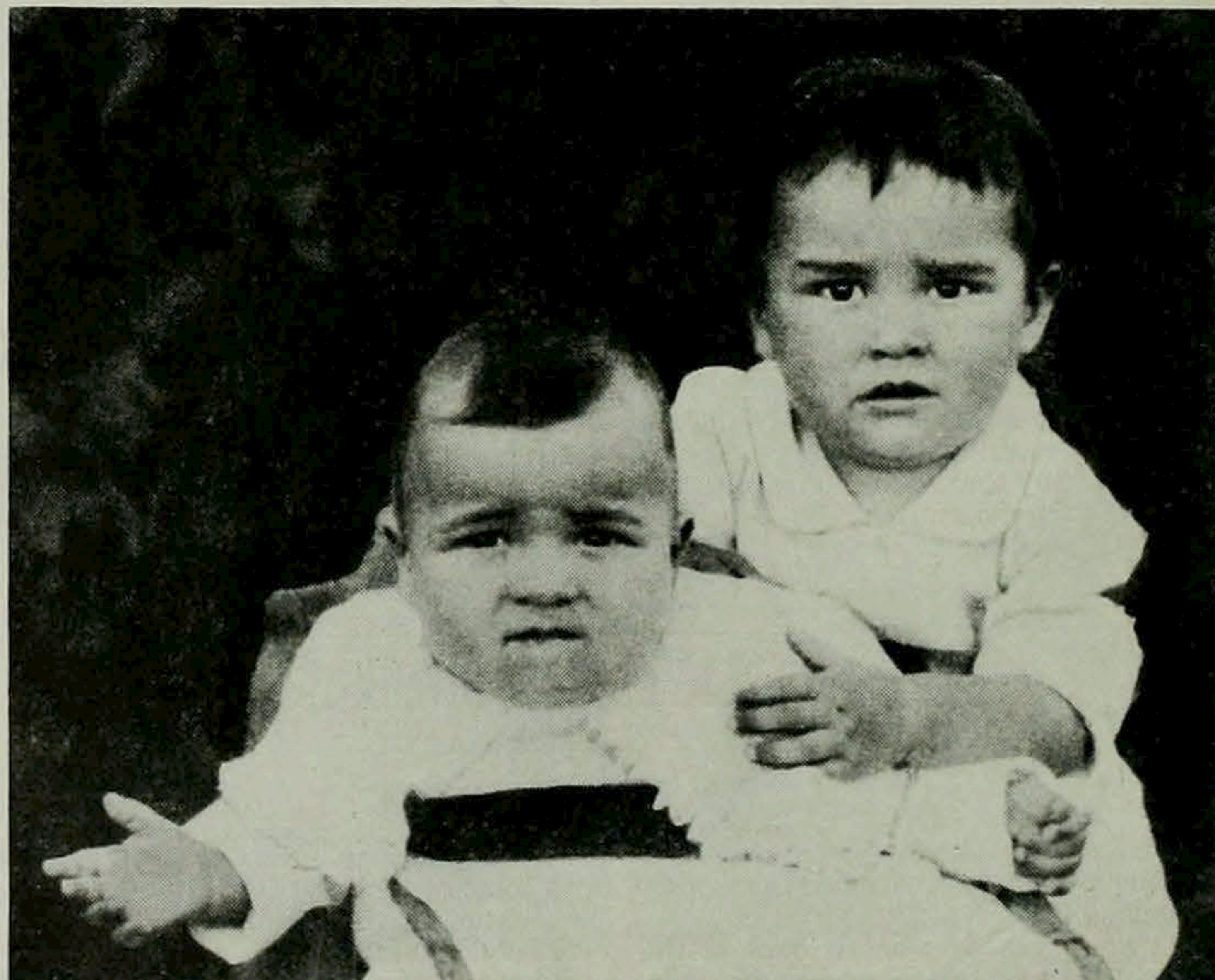
To the public, he is just the great comedian, who makes them laugh and weep.

To those of us working to make motion pictures, he is the way-shower, the trail-blazer. He is the master. Almost every new step in motion picture technique, every advance step in motion picture art, has come from Charlie Chaplin. He is the creator of the new forms, the new ideas. To the greatest directors and the greatest stars his pictures are like a text-book. I know directors, for instance, whose names stand at the very head of the list, who went ten and twelve times to see "The Gold Rush." And, when I asked them why, they explained that it was the greatest example of perfect motion picture timing ever seen, and that it opened new fields in that direction just as "The Woman of Paris" opened new dramatic and directorial fields.

His mind, therefore, is like a giant sponge, taking in everything, sucking up every idea, suggestion, emotion. And nothing stops him. Nothing.

For instance, I have known Charlie to do things like this. He has a friend—a young man of decided artistic talents—who lives in a funny house on a hillside, with a lovely balcony overlooking the whole of Los Angeles, from the mountains to the sea. The young man is a good listener, he has original ideas. Charlie will go to visit him and they will settle in the wicker chairs on the balcony and sit there—literally—for three days. A little Jap boy who understands these matters will bring them food and drink on a tray whenever it occurs to him. They will go off to sleep in their chairs—and awake to continue the idea where they left off.

**LITTLE** Mrs. Chaplin will sit at home, perhaps, watching the clock, listening to the sounds outside, just like any other wife. Charlie has forgotten her. He has forgotten



Here is the only existing picture of the two children of Charlie and Lita Grey Chaplin. Master Charles Spencer Chaplin is shown with his baby brother, Sidney Earle Chaplin



himself. He can't help it. The tremendous sincerity of the man in pursuit of his ideas makes you forgive him.

Charlie is just as reliable, in big things and little things alike, as a young hurricane. Time does not exist, so far as he is concerned. Nor do people, in the ordinary sense.

Yet when he finds a human brain that has something to give, or a human character that is new and worth studying, he grabs it like an octopus.

He may bring home a tramp, a great psychiatrist, a colored washwoman, an English duchess, and spend hour upon hour talking with them.

His moods are mad, terrific, uncontrollable. Sometimes he is gay as a diamond, he will hold everyone spellbound for hours with his wit, his mimicry, his delicate and ever-fresh clowning.

At other times he will be almost in tears with nerves and depression, unable to say a word, trembling with strange apprehensions, his face a mask of tragedy.

All this a woman can understand and forgive, if she is big enough. And there is so infinitely much of the maternal in Lita Chaplin that I think she has the understanding heart.

But that isn't enough.

A woman married to a genius must be wise enough never to let him know he has been forgiven. She must be clever enough not to bore him with her sweetness, and yet not to annoy him with reproach. She must be an individual and still be only 00.99% of a marriage. She must have charm, but never intrude it and she must be a lightning change artist in moods to follow his.

And then it won't be enough.

Did Lita Grey ever have a chance—has she still a chance—to make a success of her marriage to Charlie Chaplin?

Let us consider this Lita Grey Chaplin, who has tried, like the Empress Josephine, to be the wife of a genius.

In the first place, she is still—after three years of marriage and two experiences of motherhood—at the age when most girls are being graduated from high school.

She is a slim, dark beauty. For she is a beauty. She has now the perfect and arresting loveliness of a rosebud. Her eyes are enormous and dark as a blackbird's wing in her white face, and her dark curls cluster close about her perfect head. Her mouth is almost heart-shaped and she has slim legs, like a gazelle's.

Everyone likes her, and feels a little sorry for her. She is gentle and sweet, she is a nice little thing, quite interesting to talk to. She dresses with exquisite taste. I think she would have made a marvelous wife for almost any man, for she instinctively desires to please and there is much about her that is pleasing. Her nature is happy and placid and kindly. Her disposition is obviously domestic and maternal.

If she does succeed in averting this threatened break, it will be because she has developed, through suffering and motherhood, to the selflessness necessary to the wife of a genius.

At first, domesticity appealed to Charlie Chaplin. It was a new rôle. It soothed his heart, worn and frayed by intense and frequent emotional upheavals.

But as an ordinary man loves life, so a genius loves many lives.

**T**HE wife of a genius must either be great enough to supply all these herself—and the woman who can do that is rarer than a

mermaid—or she must be willing to sit at home and keep the fire burning and the children fed, until her husband returns.

Return he will. I believe that Charlie Chaplin loves Lita, his wife, as much as he could love any wife. I believe he means to be kind to her, and I know that he loves his children.

But that is not and can never be enough for him. He must be free—free to allow those impulses that bring created art into the world.

If Lita Chaplin can leave him free, if she cares enough to leave him free and to realize that she is playing a great part in great things by doing it, the marriage may still come through.

Tom Mix once made a profound remark to me. Tom is a profound thinker.

He said, "There are many things a woman may be to a man, some of them good, some bad. But there is only one thing she *must* be to him, if their love is to be successful—and that is an inspiration."

If Lita Chaplin can grow to the measure of that—but I do not know whether one woman could ever inspire Chaplin. His sense of the dramatic is so intense that he must have an entirely new phase of womanhood to inspire each new phase of his work. He is like Napoleon in that.

**T**HE greatest marriage of genius of which I know was that of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Personally, I am not yet convinced that Browning was a genius, but certainly Mrs. Browning was, for she wrote poems of a beauty surpassed only by Keats himself.

And to me she put into words the sort of love that must exist to make marriage to a genius a success, the sort of love without which no genius should ever marry.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.

I love thee to the level of everyday's Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.

I love thee freely, as men strive for Right; I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,

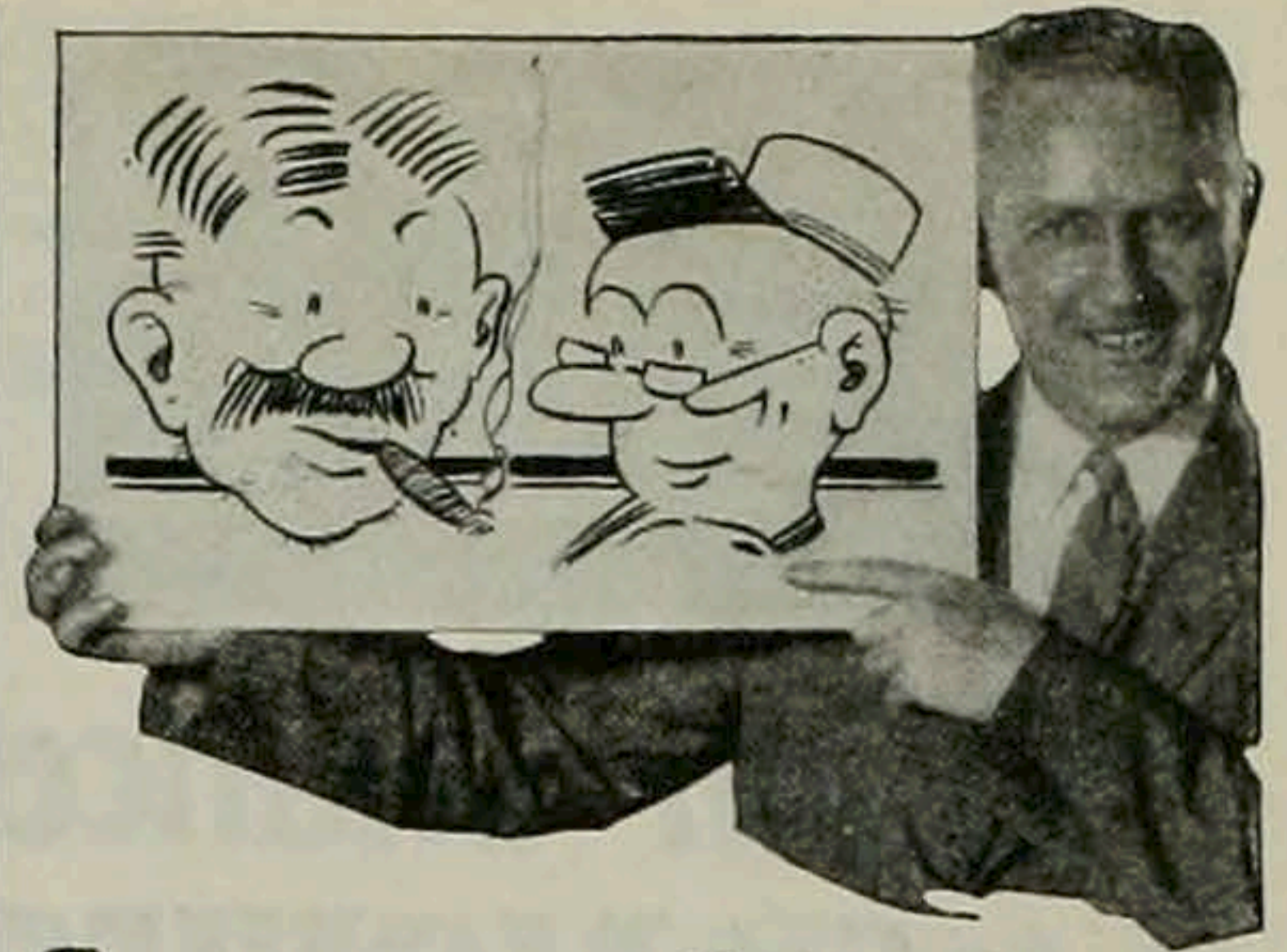
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and if God choose,

I shall but love thee better after death."

That's the only kind of love that can surmount the tremendous temperamental obstacles a woman encounters when she marries a genius. And it is the love of a superwoman, it is the divine fire that strikes, but too seldom into mortal clay.

If Lita Grey Chaplin is inspired with such a love, she may win through, and refine and inspire and increase the Chaplin genius. If she is such a superwoman as Elizabeth Barrett Browning was, she may be the thousand women in one woman, or the saint-and-mother woman, who alone can make a success of marriage to a genius.

Otherwise, this separation will be permanent, for the genius who burns up his whole heart and soul and mind in his work has nothing to give to help make a marriage a success. That must all be done by the woman.



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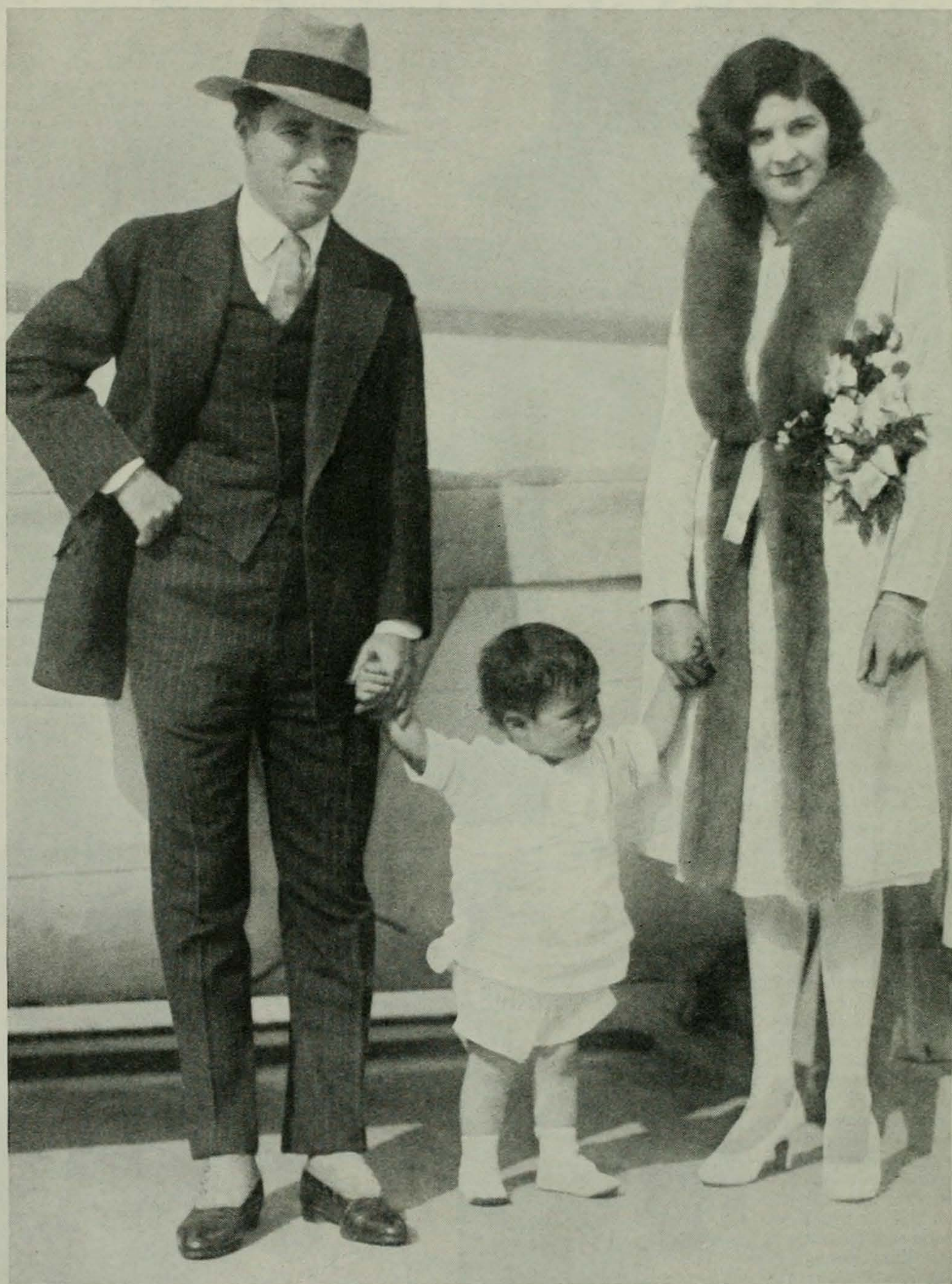
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comedy leads with a small company, but they were leads—in six months.

Just at that time Fox needed a girl to be

in "The Johnstown Flood." Janet was sent for and asked to weep. She niagaraed so effectively they gave her a contract. When





**B**ON VOYAGE. Charlie came down to the dock to bid goodbye to his wife, Lita Grey Chaplin, and his oldest son, Charlie, Jr., when they set sail on the City of Los Angeles for Honolulu. Mrs. Lillian Spicer, the baby's grandmother, accompanied Mrs. Chaplin, but Charlie stayed at home