



[Photo by courtesy African Consolidated Theatres.
Charles Chaplin.

CHAPLIN — EINSTEIN — MENUHIN

By "EXPULSUS"

THE writer of this absorbing article is a German Jew at present resident in South Africa. He was for many years an interviewer for a well-known Press agency, and in that capacity had the opportunity of studying some of the leading figures of our time. He has here chosen three Jews, and shown subtly the bond of their relationship with one another

I.

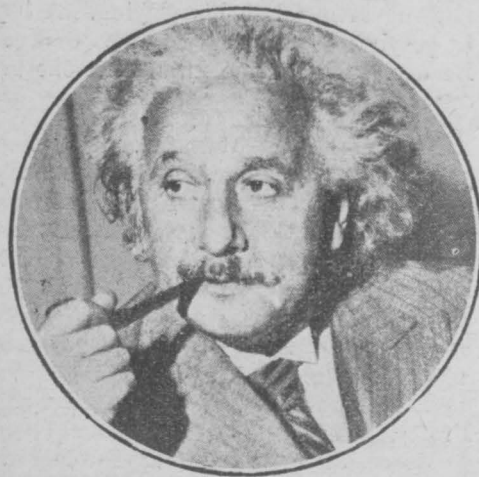
ONE day I received a cable from my Chief: "Cover Charlie Chaplin." Translated from Press slang, it meant that I was to report on a visit of Chaplin to Berlin. I admired Chaplin as an artist, but I was greatly prejudiced by all the Hollywood ballyhoo with which he was surrounded. He was staying in Berlin's most fashionable hotel, and I had found that it is easier to obtain access to the Pope than to a film star. While waiting in one of his drawing-rooms I had the opportunity of studying the elaborate train with which such a celebrity travels. A gentleman secretary, an American typist, a German typist, a Swedish masseur, a publicity manager, a sales manager and a film operator, and — Kioto, his famous Japanese valet, who was sacked a few months later when it was discovered that he had been in the habit of betraying his master's plans to a rival film company.

The publicity manager was the first I spoke to. He handed me a pile of brochures, papers, and typescripts. Here was real American publicity efficiency. All ready for journalistic use — even the backs of the papers were gummed ready for affixing to manuscripts. — were articles, pictures, and anecdotes, his last film, his next film, the programme of his Berlin visit, his opinions of this, that, and the other, and his latest New York and London criticisms. I told this marvel of a publicity man that though I was impressed I was by no means satisfied, and that only an exclusive interview would do.

"Okay!" he trumpeted. He went to his desk and brought me a perfect interview, ready made, and already written in cable form — witty and original — better than I could ever have done. I explained that I was very sorry, but even this would not do: I had to see Chaplin personally. Then, with a snort at my persistence and a resigned shrug of his shoulders, he led me into the "sanctuary."

I HAVE often been received during my interviews by people in various posi-

tions — lying in bed, shaving, dressing, eating, being made-up. But this was a novelty. I had to look right round the big room before I discovered the famous comedian lying on the floor playing with an



Albert Einstein.

electric toy railway he had just bought for his two sons.

He was like a small boy playing "Let's pretend." He acted the part of an old man, sitting in the train, searching through his pockets for his ticket. He did not utter a single word during this piece of mimicry. Words were unnecessary. Then he took a paper and pretended that the old man was trying to overcome sleepiness by reading. His mime was perfect. I had often seen his performance on the screen, but none of them seemed comparable to the one I was now witnessing in private.

Finally, instead of my interviewing him, he started to interview me. He wanted to know where he could find souvenirs of Napoleon. Though I was there to find out as much as I could concerning his intimate affairs, we were soon in a deep discussion of the meeting between Napoleon and Goethe and their mutual admiration. Beethoven

and Napoleon and the Berlin Jews and Napoleon were other subjects which interested him greatly. I soon realised that the "clown" was also a student of history. He told me that he had made the study of the life of the great Corsican his hobby and that he possessed a library which contained about 6,000 volumes dealing with Napoleon. With a melancholy air he confessed that it was his life's ambition to play Napoleon on the screen. He was unhappy that it was impossible for the public to visualise him in any role other than of the pathetic figure in bowler hat and oversized boots. No — he was not tired of always presenting the average little man fighting against the whims of Fate. He denied that there was any philosophy — any *weltanschauung* — expressed in his creation. It was just the comedy of the petty struggles and accidents of life.

I NOW had my interview, and with just the right human touch. In it I described the impression he had made upon me — a man who for twenty years had entertained millions of people over the

(Concluded on next page.)



Yehudi Menuhin.

