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CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S FUTURE IS CHILDREN'S SECRET.

By LUCIE BAUD.

Twenty years ago, as an inquisitive five-year-old, I used to play in the grounds of an imposing white-walled luxury house which my playmates and I used to respectfully call *le château*.

Today, the gardens are again echoing with childish laughter. While Papa Charlie and Maman Oona are holidaying in Britain, the Chaplin quartet — Geraldine (aged 8), Michael (6), Josephine (3) and little Victoria, who is now almost two — are holding court to the delight of all the kids in the neighbourhood.

To the youngsters from my hometown of Vevey, the little vineyard-haloed resort that lies on the sunny northern shore of Switzerland's Lake of Geneva, Charlie Chaplin's recent statement that he will never return to the United States only confirms what they have been telling their parents over breakfast tables for the last few weeks.

While refusing to divulge their source of information (although everyone has a good idea where it comes from!), they say they have it on good authority that "Charlot" and family are to stay in Switzerland for good.

If it is true it is great news for the Swiss. Chaplin's humour knows no language barriers, and his popularity among my countryfolk is as great now as it was 20 years ago.

It is fine news for Louis Giannotti and his wife heads of Charlie's new domestic staff, and their son Constant, young Michael's friend and admirer. And for gardener Walter Schellenberg, who — children permitting, of course — wants his master to have the smoothest lawns in all Switzerland. And even for crotchety old Madame Planner, the next-door neighbour, who once saw Chaplin on the screen and has never forgotten it.

But it is the children who have been causing the greatest fuss since the Chaplins moved to Vevey from the £5-a-day rooms of the Beau-Rivage hotel in nearby Lausanne in January.

They felt it was about time someone put a little more life in the stately old Manoir de Ban, for so long languishing in dignified loneliness on the vineyard-splashed hillside that overlooks the lake.

Sure enough, since the young Chaplins arrived on the scene all that has changed, as Madame Giannotti will ruefully admit. What with barricading the house against armies of prying reporters and photographers, she has hardly time to keep her eyes on what the *gamins* are doing.

What a house to be let loose in! Fourteen main rooms expensively furnished in Louis XVI rococo and restoration styles with rich Gobelin tapestries — not counting Oona's authentic Marie Antoinette boudoir — all befitting the one-time home of an aristocratic Frenchwoman who could trace her ancestors back to the great Charlemagne himself.

Right now Vevey is full of rumours about



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Chaplin's future plans. Some say he is to form a new film company and build his own studios somewhere along the lakeside. Others that he has already worked out a rough draft of a script for a historical film based on ancient Chillon Castle, not far from his new mansion, which the poet Byron first made famous in the English-speaking world more than a century ago.

And Chaplin? Apart from his stated decision not to return to America because of "lies and vicious propaganda" he is not talking about the future. He wants to be out of the limelight for a while. He parries questions by pleading: "Please, leave me in peace."

So the people of Vevey, whose ancestors in 1662 gave asylum to English republicans Andrew Broughton and Edmond Ludlow who had fled from England after sentencing Charles I to death, are proud today to act as hosts to another refugee — this time from McCarthyism, a doctrine that is entirely foreign to liberal Switzerland.

To us he is no longer Charlie Chaplin but *Charlot Châtelain* — "Charlie, the Lord of the Manor". We accept him as one of us.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, June 12th, 1953. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: E. A. Grau, Dr. H. Geissberger, H. Bingguely, W. B. Sigerist, J. Hofstetter, J. Bertschinger, J. Paravicini, Mrs. J. Stanton, A. Kunzler, E. Wey, W. A. de Vigier, W. Allenspach, H. Pfirter, A. Paris, E. Berner.

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