



LAUGH --- and the world laughs with you

Few of us realise how much we owe to "the man who makes us laugh," whether he be a story teller or writer, a comedian or an unconscious humourist. And so, at a time like this, when there is a tendency for us to lose sight of our sense of humour, this talk is a timely one.

A talk broadcast from 3YA
by E. J. BELL

ALMOST everybody can enjoy a good joke or a good story. The man or woman who cannot must be very rare. To-day when that word, depression, is so prevalent, I think a good story or a good joke must surely act as a tonic. Take a gathering of men, for instance. What happens? Someone tells a funny story, which is enjoyed by all those present, and it immediately puts them all into a good mood; they feel jolly, and for the moment cares and worries of business are entirely forgotten. Everyone is happy. That is just what we want to-day; plenty of fun, plenty of laughter. Whether or not a gathering of ladies is equally as jolly is difficult to say. It may be, of course, that the ladies possess a different sense of humour, and that some of our stories would make no impression upon them. I wonder?

Undoubtedly, England still possesses an abundance of humour and wit. In the past she has produced writers and poets who were born humourists, and we have enjoyed the entertainment which they have given us. Their world was different to ours, and their humour, too, was different. Going back to the last century, we have only to mention the humour of Charles Dickens, especially that of Pickwick, a great comic character and the creation of a master mind. Then, for a moment, take that master of fun, Jerome K. Jerome. Who could help being amused with his book, "Three Men in a Boat," a book which is still selling in thousands to-day? Think of Mr. Wodehouse with his comic characters, "Jeeves" and "Bertie Wooster," and many others too numerous to mention.

Mr. K. R. G. Browne is another writer brimful of fun. I wonder if you have made the acquaintance of Eve, a charming person in the book, "Suburban Days," by Mr. Browne? Eve goes to the tailor with her husband. She selects the colour of his suit for him, and makes him feel very uncomfortable when she tells the tailor to "give him plenty of room round his arms because he waves them about when he's excited." And later on, when the tailor suggests two pairs of trousers. "Certainly," said Eve. "Then he can wear one pair and sleep on the other." No wonder Eve's husband seized his hat and stumbled out into the street. Any man would, with a wife saying things like that to his tailor.

Another master of humour is W. W. Jacobs, with his merry nightwatchmen and his jolly sailormen and their wives and sweethearts. If you do not know Mr. Jacobs, then please try one of his many funny books. You'll feel all the better for it.

The English people have always been fond of comedians, and of fooling. Away back in the Elizabethan days, when the stage

was in its infancy, clowns, comedians, and jesters were favourites with the people. It is the same to-day. We most of us love the funny man, the man who can make us laugh. How many of us have laughed at the absurdities of Charlie Chaplin? We did not need to hear his voice, but one watched the shrugging of the shoulders, the lifting of the eyebrows, the tilt of his bowler hat, and the twirl of the cane. All these things brought laughter. Most likely many of my listeners can call to mind such folks as George Robey, Chirgwin, Gus Elen, Sam Mayo, and Wilkie Bard, all great humourists of their day, each with his own particular style of fun, each out to make laughter, and each succeeding.

Cockney humour, naturally, belongs to certain parts of London, but it must not be confused with English or London humour. The three are distinct. The cockney usually furnishes amusement with his ignorance, but in some ways he is very witty. A cockney street hawker was once selling toothcombs, and was worrying an old gentleman to buy one. "What," said the old chap, whipping off his hat, "What do I want a toothcomb for? I'm bald." "Lor, bless, yer, governor," replied the hawker, "yer don't want any 'air on yer 'ead for a toothcomb!"

SCOTLAND, I suppose, owes much to those comic characters, Jock and Sandy. The music-hall has developed both, and they are usually known in the ranks of the army, and at most gatherings of Scots. Humour abounds in Scotland, and countless stories have been told of ministers, elders, judges and lawyers. The Scottish people get all the credit for being canny. They always have the reputation of being very fond of the "bawbee." This is one of their characteristics, and they enjoy being bantered about it, just as they always enjoy a reference to their love of porridge, whisky, and the bagpipes.

Have you heard the story of Sandy, a Scottish lad who went to live in London? Sandy was very lonely. He was staying in a boardinghouse, and one evening he got out the pipes, walked up and down the floor of his room, and played some stirring Scottish music. Presently, a maid came up to ask him to cease, because the other boarders could not stand the noise. After a few moments Sandy commenced again. This time the proprietor himself went up and told him to stop. "Ah, weel," said Sandy, "I thought it was all right, as I had taken my boots off." Have you made the acquaintance of Mr. J. J. Bell, the Scottish author, who made his name with that amusing book, "Wee Macgregor," a story of Glasgow life? This book appeared in 1902, and since that date has probably reached a sale of 500,000 (Continued on page 9.)

