

Americans Are Funny Children and New York Is Pastoral, Says Rose Cecil O'Neill

A Gifted Woman Artist's Interesting Impressions of Her Own Country After a Five-Year's Exile in Europe

ROSE CECIL O'NEILL, the greatest artist for children in this country, and author of several novels, among them "The Loves of Idwy," has returned to this country after a long residence abroad. Because she has been so long absent from it, she says she is bringing to it the freshness of view of the new-born child. She makes some amazing discoveries about us which our European critics would do well to read, at least in part: Hard, shrewd, shrill-voiced, money-seeking, brusque, selfish? Not at all, not any of these are we, according to the distinguished young American "returned." What she thinks of us follows:

By ROSE CECIL O'NEILL,
The Famous American Woman Artist and Novelist.

WHEN the steamship that brought us home, strained and croaked into the slip in the North River and I looked down into the hundreds of men's faces upturned in greeting returning families, I saw there a welcome simplicity after bewildering complexity. What struck me most bewilderingly was the look of honesty in the faces as if they were saying:

"Of course I am occupied with all sorts of strenuous business, for which I am entirely inadequate, but, in the main, I am just kind and funny."

Refreshed acquaintance with my countrymen has deepened that impression into conviction. Despite the business mask which they wear during business hours, and which fits badly and has a perverse trick of slipping off, their faces reflect themselves, just "kind and funny."

"Kind and funny." What better or truer national motto could we have? Even New England faces, the hardest of the American type, have the same traits. In their grudging smiles, even in their more or less assumed frowns, the wrinkles betray them. Hard as they try to seem, and think they are, they are only "kind and funny."

The European has the subtler wit, but the American is more humorous. The American is always ready to laugh, but his laughter is never unkind. He will laugh at a man who has fallen in the street and who cuts a funny figure in his odd angles and curves, but he will not laugh until he has discovered whether the man has been hurt. If he has been injured there is no laughter. The national trait, fun, gives way to its twin trait, kindness.

We are a jocular race. Our playfulness sends an undercurrent of laughter rippling through all our activities. In situations that have no conspicuous element of the ridiculous, the European bystander, half mystified, half disgusted, will ask: "What is that American looking so funny about?" The American seems a ridiculous situation as a hound a rabbit.

And yet, despite this playfulness, there is an odd, aged attribute of the average American. Smith and Jones, Brown and Robinson, are curiously alike in that they are always seeking a joke and generally find it, and yet their faces are overlaid by a curious repression. The contour of their faces is childlike, in their eagerness. They look as though they were in quest of an adventure as a child of play. Yet the front view, the really truth-telling part of the face, tells a very different story. Notice the mouth of the American man. It is strangely straight and thin-tipped, resolute to the point of unyielding firmness, yet not to the verge of cruelty. It is the expression of a repressed nature. It is the index of a marvellous self-control.

But again there is a contradiction. Smooth-shaven, square of jaw, straight limbed and generally neat, he feels young, he looks young and he remains young for a very long time.

Another welcome attribute I noted on the dock and that has repeated itself endlessly as I have observed him in American cities, is that the American is extremely modest. He is so modest that he insists upon dressing precisely as other men dress, so that he will not seem unlike them. In Europe a man employs his beard to show his difference from others. He dresses his face according to his taste. By a European's moustache, by a Frenchman's whiskers, you recognize his personal characteristics. He expects you to recognize him. He dresses his face to please you, but more particularly to please himself. Here men share their faces into monkish monotony, and American modesty.

Sitting in a theatre in Paris, side by side, I saw an American woman of forty with her husband, and a Parisienne accompanied by her father and mother. As the two watched the scene on the stage, the middle-aged American woman had a younger eye than the French girl of fifteen.

The ever young eye of the American woman is the admiration of Europe. A German told me that his countrymen are at a loss to understand the ingenious faces of our women, whatever their age. He said: "They have the naive manner of children. They carry the physiognomies of angels, and they lift to the face of a waiter the eyes of a fawn."

I have heard a male flirt of the Old World say: "American women have beautiful eyes, but they do not know how to use them." According to his vision that is true. They use their eyes only for sight, seldom for effect. If a man approaches with gallantry, they either chill him with the interrogative gaze of an innocent child, or they turn their eyes away, the habit of the Puritan.

The European woman on the contrary is not Puritanic, but she knows how to use her eyes with depressing effect. She meets his gaze, as we say, with naive Americanism, looks him in the eye, with a clam, intelligent look. She disarms him by her intellectuality. She never evades his eye through Puritanism. She veils her eyes only when she deliberately coquettes with him.

Yet the platonic attitude is merely a de-

An eminent military man expressed his sympathy with American women and his contempt for American men.

"How dull it must be for you!" he exclaimed. "What a pity to treat such charming women with such brutal coldness."

The American woman does not lack an admirable firmness in the matter of making herself understood, and she labored long and well. The only result was the incredulous response:

"Well, if it is true that the men and women are like that, it simply means that you are children over there."

He added that our arts went far to prove our childhood—but that is another pair of sleeves.

Well, and why not face the truth? From our critics we learn. The wide open eyes are the eyes of a child. They, our most marked physical characteristic, are the seeking eyes. Not material gain, as has been claimed, are they seeking. The wide open eye is never the miser's eye. The eyes seek to learn. With ocular vehemence they demand information. They are the eyes of the intelligent pupil in school hours. They turn upon the world such a look as the one of awe as the under-class pupil for the student in a higher class. How often have I seen that look on American faces in Europe.

Dominant by its weakness, to use a paradox, is the American woman's nose. An Italian friend remarked to me that "the aquiline noses are continually amused and delighted by the little noses of American women." And indeed, returning after a long stay among the Gauls and Italians, I did not find myself astonished by the number of our prettiest women wearing these quaintly diminutive members. Said the Italian:

"Men will always have what they like. That is the law of the world. American men like in women what the little nose represents—playfulness, innocence, amiability, the childlike qualities."

Charles Dana Gibson has recognized this truth and in his drawings has combined the small aristocratic nose, and the projecting, emphatic chin in a marked degree. To my mind the childlike, undeveloped nose in a conjunction with the marked and advanced American chin, symbolizes youth, energy, aspiration.

The chin of the European has a languor. It slightly recedes. In union with and counterbalanced by the high nose, it makes the face strong enough, but it is the face of passivity. It outlines the face of thought, not of action.

I see in the faces of my countrywomen a truer beauty, because of that chin, the pushing chin of progress. But there need be no fear that she will lose her beautiful, wide open eyes, the eyes of a young race. She wants to know. She hungers and thirsts to know all things that are good and true and



The Wide-Open, Childlike Eyes and Nose and Determined Chin of the American Woman, Drawn by Rose O'Neill, and the Long-Nosed, Sophisticated Face of the Typical European Woman.



"The eyes of many an American woman of forty are younger than the eyes of a French child," says Rose O'Neill, illustrating her point with this drawing.

fense in Europe. That it really exists in this country is unbelievable to Europeans. In Munich, an American woman of remarkable descriptive talent spent two hours explaining to a group of Bavarians the social situation between American men and women. She took tremendous pains to make clear that our men and women associate together upon a basis of comfortable platonic understanding. She explained that it is quite usual for the most attractive young persons to see each other alone quite frequently without the slightest idea of embracing, and that American men had invented the term, "woman comrade," that in their high companionship they did not expect to be made love to.

beautiful. So she will look, look and look, for she must look to see. The European does not need to look to see. A sidewise glance, a second glance, a second flash, and that is all. The European has seen. The American will keep her playful little nose. And the smile will keep its little joke, its generosity, its innocence.

I see a greater kindness in the eyes of women for women. The woman's movement has caused this. The gentle look they cast upon each other, though strangers and passing in the street or crushing each other unavoidably in the subway, says "You are a woman. So am I. We have the same problem. We are of one sisterhood. Let us help



Rose O'Neill, the Distinguished Artist, Who Has Rediscovered America. Photo by Jessie Tarbox Beals.

each other." The American character seems to me artless as I become reacquainted with it. I see none of the artful, money-seeking quality in it. It is naive, jocular, amiable, philosophical, though half ashamed of its philosophy and benevolent. I amuse myself by with the idea that my kelpies are a symbol of the American spirit. I have tried to put into the little fellows, and make them show forth, the national valvete, jocularly, amiability, adventure, philosophy and benevolence.

The cities in the mass impress me by their pastoral quality. Their noise. I am not con-

scious of it. If our lives are busy and absorbed and happy, the distant roar is to us an undertone, like the deep-breathing of one we love in sleep. The sounds are harmonious. It is only the unhappy or the over-keved person who can complain of the giant heart-beats of a great city.

Even in the manner of the walk I detect a pastoral quality. There is an easy grace in movements of Americans, a freedom of confidence in themselves and of belief in others. Kind funniness? How could it exist unless there is an underlying pastoral quality in the national life?

G. K. Chesterton Explains Why There Is No Real Moral Force in Terror

By G. K. Chesterton,
The Distinguished English Publicist.

SOME of the freshest facts in life can be found most frequently in archaic quarters; in sacred books, in classical books—nay, in copy-books. And one of the truths that grow truer as a man's experience accumulates is this very old one: That men need a religion primarily to prevent them from worshipping idols.

However, to take the case in point. Mr. Bernard Shaw, who sees much deeper into the modern difficulty than the old-fashioned Agnostics do, said a thing that seems to me very true. He said that Secular Education will not work; because it really means that the reason for not doing wrong is that you will be camed if you do. It might be put another way: That if you want the child himself to struggle to save his soul, you must give him the idea of something that is present when he is struggling alone. This shocked poor Mr. Blatchford very much; and he proceeded to read Mr. Shaw

a lecture about the needlessness both of "Hell and the cane" to an enlightened educationist. Whether he was under the impression that Mr. Shaw is in the habit of incontinentally naming people, or of terrifying them with detailed descriptions of themselves in Hell, I could not quite make out. I have had many controversies with Mr. Shaw, and he has not yet tried either of these two weapons on myself. Anyhow, in some way Mr. Shaw is supposed to have encouraged the "Bible idea," that the greatest moral force is terror; a remark which will have no effect upon the rustiest reader of the Bible except literally to throng his mind with texts precisely to the contrary effect.

He is of opinion that what heaven and hell, not to mention the words and the powers of the world, have failed to do can be rapidly and conveniently achieved by playing cricket. He proceeds to praise this excellent game in terms that most of us have read in other quarters; but they were not the quarters in which veteran revolutionists are generally found. Cricket teaches boys discipline. . . .

Cricket encourages unselfishness. . . . it is not difficult to complete the catalogue from this or similar sources . . . plays the game . . . plays for his side . . . English Christian gentleman . . . good sportsman . . . Waterloo won on . . . and so on.

This is idiosyncrasy. This is travelling, servile superstition on the part of Mr. Blatchford. He had much better believe at once that the whale swallowed Jonah, or that Jonah swallowed the whale, than do a miracle himself by swallowing something more monstrous than both of the writers in Genesis, is asking me to believe something which I know to be untrue. There might have been a fish that swallowed Jonah. There are more fish in the sea than ever came out of it. Also, I fancy (even in modern shipwrecks) there are more Jonahs in the sea than ever came out of it, or ever will—unless there be indeed a day of justice and the sea give up its dead. But, anyhow, I never claimed that complete knowledge of marine zoology, at a rather indistinct date, that could enable me to deny on oath that any fish could swim in any sea at any time large enough to swallow a Jewish prophet. Not I do not know enough about it. I am agnostic—un-

like the Agnostics. I know there is a cable under the Atlantic, because it is tied at both ends. I have never heard a rag of reason for there not being a sea-serpent under the Atlantic, because it is not tied at both ends. But I leave such fish to fishermen, who have a reputation for catching a sea-serpent or a whale.

But does Mr. Blatchford suppose we have none of us played cricket? That we have none of us watched cricket or known cricketers? Does any boy who has been to school believe that cricket can cast out all the devils from the house of human nature? Are not things that are emphatically "not cricket" done by old and experienced cricketers? Is there not cheating, bullying, ambition and jealousy over cricket, amateur or professional, as over all other human energies? Is it faintly possible to reconcile the notion with reality? Is the First Eleven identical with the Twelve Apostles minus Judas? Of two forms of vulgar vegetable fetish-worship, I cannot see why we should burn cane and worship willow. No; I know nothing of a prehistoric fish's digestion; he may have swallowed a prophet with all his prophesies. But I know my own digestion. And I cannot swallow two bats, six stumps, and a hard leather ball in the belief that they will make me wiser.

But the oddest thing of all is only this. That Mr. Blatchford, in order to avoid Hell (by which he means Free Will) and the cane (by which he means the coercion common to all rule, but essential to Socialism), actually has to invoke an old gentile fiction of the aristocracy, the faded fashion plate of the young fellow in flannels, Cricket. It seems, gives men a sense of honor. And to whom does it give it? Why, to the very men Mr. Blatchford has been fighting all his life. Does he suppose a single swollen capitalist, a single shifty politician, a single slum-landlord, or wealthy White Slave has not got all the good out of cricket he could? Most of the masters of the modern social order go to private or public schools mechanically, and play cricket mechanically. But Mr. Blatchford, being a genuine artist, must worship something; so he worships three stumps. But this notion that we can turn our pleasures into virtues is what is weakening England, especially democratic England. The oligarch has been allowed to get into the saddle, solely because he said he could ride a horse. All Mr. Blatchford hates—privilege, segregated luxury, sham politics—has been protected for decades by that very "cricket" which he invokes. Waterloo was not won on Eton playing-fields. But Waterloo was