

That Droll Fellow Fields!

By CHARLES COLLINS

NARRATION of the complete story of W. C. Fields, puffy-faced comedian of the movies, is in order. He is one of the most eccentric figures on the screen, and his grotesque characterizations, unique in their vein of humor, have established a tradition which, in a lesser degree, resembles the Charlie Chaplin cult. The facts of his career as entertainer, now in its forty-second year, have not been exploited clamorously, for the bulk of cinema publicity goes to the beautiful women and handsome heroes of motion picture tales. The homely mug of this notable clown has not inspired the historians and gossips of Hollywood to any extended literary efforts.

• There is an odd quality in Fields' comic method which suggests a foreign origin, and many people have believed that

W. C. FIELDS SAYS—

"I will live to be 112 years old, and I deserve it, for I've gone out of my way to live the wrong way."

"Children are largely brats; youth should be reserved for old codgers like me."

"A man once said to my father: 'I've never met such a repulsive child as your son. He probably will grow up to be a juggler.'"

"I became a juggler because I wanted a job that didn't require me to get up early in the morning."

"A kidney needs a good alcoholic lining to stand up under wear and tear."

"My nose has an almost spiritual quality to its phosphorescence. A lot of liquor has flowed under the bridge of that nose."

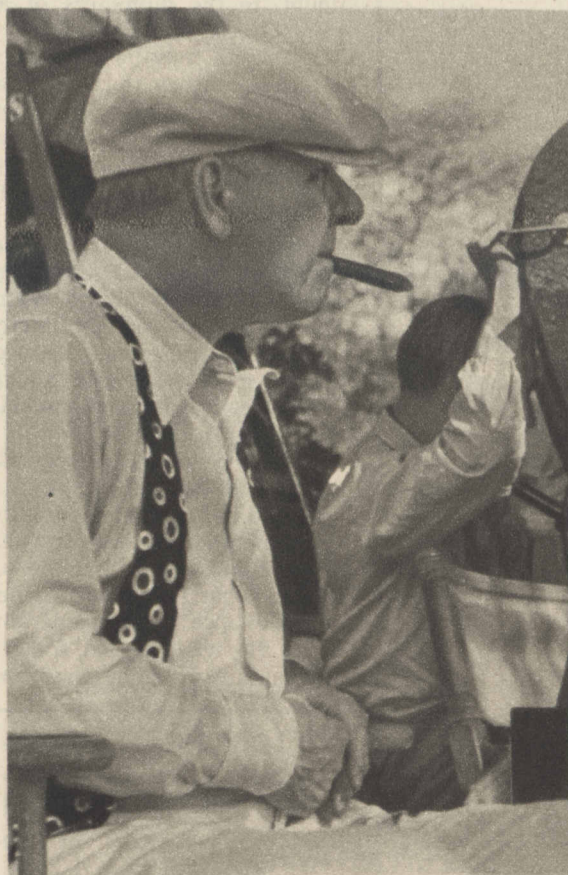
he is English. He is, however, more American than many of his colleagues and rivals; he was born in Philadelphia in 1879, and his ancestry runs back into the colonial stock. The idea that he might not be of the native born comes from the background of his technique. Fields is fundamentally a pantomimist, a dumb-play comedian, and in this branch of the art of entertainment English mummies have always been leaders. Charlie Chaplin, also a pantomimist, learned his tricks in the London music halls. Years in Europe and the British colonies as a vaudeville performer preceded Fields' rise to fame on the American stage. He was a vagrant cosmopolitan, plying his trade of comic juggler around the world.

• In 1914 Fields traveled from Fremantle, in western Australia, to Rochester, N. Y., a journey of twenty-nine days, to accept an offer to appear in "Watch Your Step," a revue in which Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle were starred under the management of Charles B. Dillingham. He was dropped from (Continued on page two.)

The Tribune color camera records the odd quality in the comic methods of W. C. Fields.



His stage sketches developed from mishaps with billiard balls.



He descends from the obsolete silent films.



As the Great McGargle, with Rochelle Hudson.



As a spectator at a movie rehearsal.