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wealthy, so capable of hitting its audience in the belly as well as between the eyes, can be credited to that fact all but entirely. For the materials of so-called surrealism are the commonest of all human property. And a man who cannot by mischance grasp a problem intellectually is grasped by it if it is presented through the subtler, more forceful, and more primitive logic of movement, timing, space, and light. The films of Pudovkin and of Pabst are tense, careful, tremendously able, and somewhat constrained by intellectuality. Those of Eisenstein are crackling like brush-fire with this irrational brilliance; those of Dovjenco, from what I have heard and read of them and seen in stills, are advancing into even more exciting territory.

Certainly there are exceptions, but here so far in general the Left artist is in a self-depriving state of mistrust (so are his audience and his critics), and the "surrealist" artist is ditto. Both insist they are revolutionists. Both are. They have a lot to gain from each other's company, and there are no valid reasons in the realms either of sense or nonsense why they should stay apart. JAMES AGEE.

### The Cartoon and Art Young

THE BEST OF ART YOUNG, with an introduction by Heywood Brown. Vanguard Press. **\$3.**

ON the subject of Art Young, I think too much has been written about the time he went to sleep during the *Masses* trial, and what might be called the good-gray-chronicler-of-the-revolution aspect of his art; and too little about Art Young as you see him today, walking down past Genung's Department Store on Main Street in Danbury, heading for a glass of beer at the Tavern on

White Street, or about the effect his work has had on the application of socialist thought to the field of cartooning in general.

I mention the Danbury aspect of Art Young because that is where I last saw him, and because of the curious feeling you get when you see him there, the feeling of surprise that a man who has done so much can look so placid and undisturbed. The matter of his influence on the political cartoon is, since it has to do with humor, a more serious affair, and must be gone into in greater detail.

At any rate, it is true, too true, that humor is intrinsically a deeply conservative, narrowly-limited field of expression. On the stage, on the screen, particularly on the editorial page, where the political cartoons are usually printed, its energies are mainly directed to the setting up of stock figures only to knock them down again; and since the joke, to be sure-fire, must be instantly recognizable, the only stock figures that can safely be employed are those that have long ago been accepted as *conventionally* ridiculous, in accordance with the tenets of established order. For if he strays from the field of the time-honored (or in this case, the time-dishonored), your cartoonist is likely to find himself tangled up with some tattered shred of "respectability" or traditional veneration still clinging to his subject, and so committing that worst possible breach of the jokester: "offending good taste." And good taste, for the generality, seems largely limited to vanilla.

That, roughly stated, is the reason why Weary Willie the tramp, and Sambo the roustabout, and, more recently, Lazy Dan, the lackadaisical W.P.A. worker, are good for a laugh any time, and the wealthy idler only rarely and under special conditions (as when, for instance, he is the effeminized son of a



"Amelia will have to go, Albert. She's becoming class-conscious."

hard-working Pa); why May Day parades are comic, but Preparedness Day parades are not; why, much as all the good people hate war, those Veterans of Future Wars got into very hot water as soon as they touched the subject of Gold Star Mothers (who might logically be expected to be the bitterest opponents of war); why you can't make jokes about religion, patriotism—but I am beginning to overstate my case.

I am overstating it, it seems to me, partly because Art Young happens to have lived and made his drawings. I imagine you still can't make jokes with impunity about religion, patriotism, honest thrift, respect for the Home and for Property, etc., for King Features, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the majority of the minority who voted for Landon; but you can attack these time-honored concepts—at least to the extent of showing up the hypocrisy underlying some of them and the evils they can be made to conceal—for wide audiences elsewhere. That you can do so, that "good taste" has widened to accept somewhat sharper flavors, is due to the fact that away back in the pre-war years Art Young, among others, had already perceived the shaky foundations on which so many of the contemporary shibboleths were built, and with quiet assurance and biting accuracy was engaged in showing them up.

To prove that, you have only to turn to his book, which is a selected collection of his drawings, from the earliest to the latest; they show clearly how many once-forbidden trails he helped open. Yet their value is more than merely historical: though even the cartoon for which, back in 1918, he was indicted for "conspiracy to obstruct the draft" (it shows an editor, a capitalist, a politician, and a minister tossing greenbacks back and forth and dancing a jig to the devil's brass band), seems innocuous today compared to what Gropper, Mackey, and even some of the regular newspaper cartoonists get away with. There is a grace, and a keenness of wit, and an ordered judgment discernible throughout the book that give it a more permanent value. Looking through its contents, at the non-political and purely "comic" drawings as well as the political ones, one feels that Art Young set up his own standards of "good taste"—standards based on sounder concepts of human dignity and honesty than those then obtaining—and not only stuck to them consistently throughout, but in so doing forced the world to come a little farther on his way.

ROBERT M. COATES.

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