

thinks he still deos. But most people objected when that snub-nosed, down-bearded young man turned out cartoons which attacked race prejudice; the lack of housing for veterans and the reasons behind it; settled, reactionary veterans' organizations; the black market; and those upper-case in quotes liberals who speak of the common man as if they themselves were the most uncommon of men.

Eventually, newspapers began dropping Mauldin's cartoons, some because they were disappointed in the quality, but more often because they objected to his ideas. The syndicate spoke to him quite seriously about the matter. Why didn't he tone down a little, they wanted to know; don't hit it quite so hard so often. Nobody who knew Mauldin in Europe would have made such a mistake, not after Bill's interview with Lieutenant General George S. Patton; Patton, too, objected to some of the cartoons, and Bill talked right back to him; at the time, Bill had one stripe for every one of Patton's stars. Mauldin won.

I realize that all this doesn't say much about the contents of "Back Home." It contains several tens of thousands of words of Mauldin prose and the best of the cartoons drawn since he was discharged at Fort Dix; it says, honestly and courageously, what Mauldin has done and thought and said since then; it's entertaining and exciting; it's funny and thoughtful. Only fools and bigots and dolts will object to it; and probably even they will want to read it.

At the end, Bill confesses that he wanted to get these matters off his

chest. Age, he says, is creeping up on him (he must be all of twenty-five now). "My bank account grows; my radical years are almost over. I want to stick this thing on my bookshelf as a reminder of my wild days so I can read it over and be a little more tolerant of the next generation of upstarts." Frankly, I think Bill Mauldin will always remain an upstart and a radical, and I'm glad.

## Day After Tomorrow

DAHL'S BRAVE NEW WORLD. By Francis W. Dahl and Charles W. Morton. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1947. 127 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by S. J. WOOLF

ORDINARILY I am not interested in comic strips. The exploits of Lil' Abner and of Steve Canyon hold no allure for me. Nor am I concerned with Joe Palooka's liberalism or Orphan Annie's conservative leanings. On the other hand "Dahl's Brave New World" held my attention and aroused many a chuckle. It is one of the most virulent, good-natured attacks on the machine age, the age of peace(?), of automobiles, of gadgets, and of fashion, housing, and radio since Philip Wylie brought out his "Generation of Vipers." It is the kind of book that engenders a desperate longing for the Fearful Old World.

It is difficult to decide whether Francis W. Dahl, the cartoonist of the *Boston Herald* who drew the pictures, or Charles W. Morton, associate editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* who provided the text in the form of

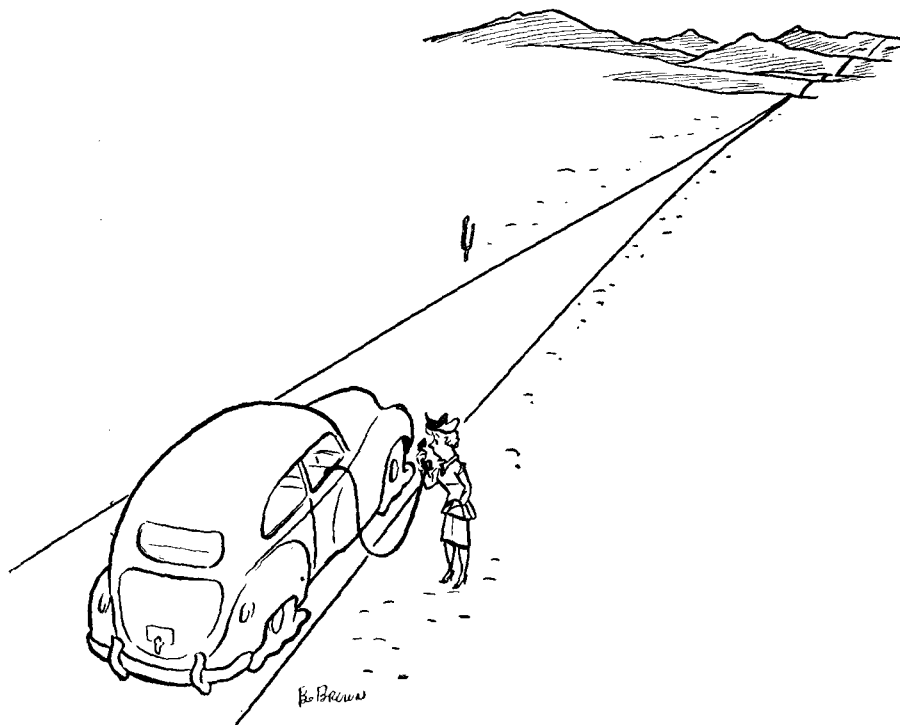
introductions to the different series of strips, is the more effective in ridiculing current thoughts and trends.

Among older readers the book will awake a strong feeling of nostalgia. The automobilist, who after a bout with his tire chains is compelled to take a bath in a removable fender, makes one regret the passing of the horse and buggy days. Even the gewgaws of ornate Victorian furniture become cherished memories compared with the functional, curved atrocities designed for Quonset-hut living, while the coarse black hosiery of a bygone age seems most attractive when looking at the stainless steel stockings of tomorrow.

In his general introduction Mr. Morton has picked on the man who owns a food freezer as the typical citizen of a time when "never were there so many wonderful machines and labor-savers at the beck and call of the prosperous American." But he is careful, to add, "never were so many prosperous Americans washing so many dishes." He goes on to point out that children are the major industry and for them Mr. Dahl has designed mechanical baby sitters. Nor has either neglected to stress the importance of psychiatry in the upbringing of youngsters. Yet, notwithstanding the marvelous advances which they have portrayed in words and lines, they are forced to confess that that great discovery, bubble gum, has not solved the parking problem.

And so these two iconoclasts go on making fun of an age of B.O., of Sanforized shirts, and of alarm clocks that lull one to sleep. They see no advantages in automobiles with jet propulsion, nor in homes with flat roofs which collect water and large plateglass sides providing interesting vistas both for dwellers and passersby. It is a world in which pajamas are not sleeping garments and instead of jewels electric lights gleam around the necks of demure debutantes, while everyone is urged to buy as much as possible "for by this time next year we may be at war with Russia."

To one brought up in the last glimmer of the gaslight era, who, having been through two wars, wonders if they really bring peace, who sleeps soundly through informative programs, who would rather meet an actress in the flesh than see her on the screen, and who prefers using a piece of wood tipped with chemicals to light his cigarette rather than make futile efforts to ignite a wick with a spark from flint, this book makes a strong appeal. It does this rather from its literary content than as a work of art. Yet the drawings carry out the spirit of the text and at times reinforce it.



"Long distance, please."

## The Saturday Review of Literature

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### Competition? Bring It On!

**M**OST of us tend to look upon this present age as offering the stiffest competition that has ever confronted the printed page, and specifically the page of a book. The motion picture, even though it derives much of its raw material, and some that is not at all raw, from books, nightly holds in thrall, more or less, millions of persons who might otherwise be sitting at home curled up with, at the worst, a movie magazine. Radio, though tossing out an occasional sop in the form of "music to read by," usually after midnight (an admirable time for reading, but no better than any other), keeps more books closed than any censor of any era has ever done. Baseball, football, and all of the other sports to which the American people are visually addicted were capable of being held at bay as long as they remained daytime activities; under the floodlights they have gone directly to war with reading. Bowling and its affiliates—all the not too rowdy or hair-mussing sports, most of them indoor, and most of them enterprises of the evening, in which Americans actually participate—have cut into book time that is never replaced. The automobile, the bridge table, and now television—but why elaborate?

Well, somehow books continue to sell, and to circulate, and to get borrowed, and to get read. Is this intense competition something new—a by-product, and a most sinister and devilish one, of the machine age? By no means. The competition, in one form or another, has always existed, and it is no tougher today than it ever was.

The book, indeed, thrives on competition. It has fought back by providing competition on its own, and it is still doing it. The printed book is only a few years older than a discovered America. As a social phenomenon of wide dissemination, and therefore influence, it is far younger than that. Literacy as a social factor of any statistical consequence is no older than the steam engine. The book came into the world as a novelty possessed of surpassing potentialities—here, indeed, was something new under the sun. Like all novelties, it was viewed with apprehension in some quarters, as, occasionally, it still is. A whole craft had to be learned, and then taught, before the book itself could be made available even to a limited quantity of customers. Doughty opposition was provided by the craftsmen themselves in seeking to safeguard the arcana of their calling. Authors and editors had to be discovered and then appeased, important personages cajoled into patronage. The right books had to be chosen, channels of distribution cleared and kept open. Even today there are publishers cynical enough to believe that perfection has not yet been attained in all of these departments.

Before there were books, people did something with their time. Even before there were books, there were twenty-four hours in a day. The book had somehow to grasp for its own some fraction of that adamantine

allotment. Agriculture and husbandry had never had to do that. War and politics had never had to do it. These went back to unrecorded beginnings. So did conversation, earliest of the amenities, and the most serious competitor of the first books, as it will be of the last.

Let us not be too hard on the movies and the automobile and the radio. The book was under just as severe competition long before they were invented, and just before they were invented. In the 1880's, to choose a date not too remote, the horse-drawn carriage rarely stopped in front of the public library (if the driver could find a public library). Today the automobile carries thousands of books to and from public libraries during every hour the libraries are open. In the 1880's it took a woman as long to dress as it now takes her to drive a hundred miles, and that is probably a conservative figure. No parlor was complete without its stereoscope—a weapon which was aimed squarely at the book. The time spent daily in filling kerosene lamps could have accounted for the absorption of thousands of volumes of Mr. Howells, Mr. Stockton, and Miss Jewett.

Yes, books thrive on competition, and they always will. But beware the age of leisure, if it ever comes. The availability of all the time in the world for reading would be the worst thing that could ever happen to a book.  
J. T. W.

## Sunday Afternoon

By Don Gordon

**S**LOW blue tepid  
time floats in the living room  
as innocent as soft as smoke.  
The afternoon bears a litter of musical moments;  
Promptly on the hour come in the dogged comedians;  
Brass knuckles fix the face of laughter  
as the murder opens.

The eye rolls like a marble through  
the colored forest,  
The jungle boy whistles for his lion;  
the ray gun,  
The crackle of the comics, recall the heroes  
lost in space.

Luckily the hired killers strangle the afternoon;  
The man might otherwise look at the woman  
or the woman at the man;  
Someone might notice the mushroom of cigarette smoke,  
the scientific elf at the window.

The man and the woman lock themselves in the room  
in the afternoon of an era.  
Everyone escapes but them.  
All figures are caught in the act of living; everything  
is normal in Herculaneum  
The instant before the ash.