

about Russia we do not seem really to get much information as to what she is doing. Had she told us what was actually happening to those sixteen "democratic" Polish leaders who so mysteriously disappeared I have often thought the episode might not have seemed so ominous and alarming as it did. Freedom in the exchange of information regarding what is actually happening within our two countries and in the lands we control should help us to understand what is in each other's minds. I trust that soon we may achieve such free exchange of information.

Because I have been occupied in illustrating difficulties about words I have given an unduly pessimistic picture of our dealings with the Russians at San Francisco. But for the most part we actually worked together effectively and cheerfully. I should like to pay warm tribute to my own "opposite numbers," the Soviet delegates in the technical committees on which I represented the United States. In this close association on details of the Charter I found them highly intelligent and agreeable associates. We seemed to understand each other and we became good friends.

What can we learn from all this experience? What can we do to help break down the barriers of words and make them precise and effective means of communication between nations?

First, we can insist more urgently than we do on precise and clear thought. In our schools we can require really rigorous intellectual discipline, logical thinking, accurate, definite expression. Is that dull for the students? Not at all. It is fun; hard mental gymnastics are good sport. And on the results of it the fate of the world may depend.

Second, we must improve our already considerable efforts to convey to all our students knowledge of other countries as well as our own, of their histories, their circumstances, their ideals, so that as future citizens our graduates can begin to understand what is in the minds of the peoples, what their words really mean, how we can communicate with them and so cooperate.

Third, we can concentrate, as many institutions are doing, on a few of our best students, train them rigorously in accurate thinking, in the clear use of English, in at least one foreign language, in a sound foundation of history and social sciences, and in a specialized knowledge of one country or region of the world. This selected group will presumably go on to some form of service abroad or at home and help fill our great national shortage of persons skilled in international relations.

Fourth, our scholars can continue to make studies in this field of semantics, —the meanings of words as affecting international agreement and cooperation. A colleague of mine at San Francisco has suggested that we should have for immediate American use an "Interdictionary of Charter Words," built primarily of careful translations of the words used in context by other nations. This need is very great, she points out. Without it we are suspicious and irritated by objections and interpretations for which we see no reason.

Virginia C. Gildersleeve, dean emerita of Barnard College, was a U. S. delegate to the United Nations Conference on International Organization at San Francisco in 1945. This essay is based on an address she delivered at the University of Pennsylvania.

HUMOR

(Continued from page 18)

with laughter. A fine team of researchers, they have combed through well over a thousand short stories and articles, more than a hundred books, scores of newspaper columns. Their eye-strain has resulted in a good selection of the more amusing pieces of the year. S. J. Perelman and John Lardner, Ogden Nash and Wolcott Gibbs, Billy Rose and John Mason Brown are among those present.

Mr. Perelman, in "Pain Counterpane," certainly brightens things with a crackling satire of a copywriter's hallelujah to a particular brand of bed linens. Mr. Lardner is represented by "On and Off the Road to Ruin"—a brisk lampoon of the chi-chi shopping columns in the swank magazines.

This book is not limited to the satirists. In addition to some verse and drawings the anthologists have included perhaps a half dozen stories in which some genuinely entertaining characters are created. In "Matthew and the Lace Curtain," Joseph Carroll's loquacious, puckish Irishman has made the jump from *Collier's* into the arms of some other funny people milling around in the book—and retained his humor, too, despite the scintillating company.

In their foreword the editors note that this "Best" is the first of what they hope will be an annual series. A good idea, if only because most of us will be able to clear our shelves of the dog-eared magazines, newspapers, and clippings we collect each year in an effort to preserve the best humor.

LAUGHTER INCORPORATED, by Bennett Cerf. Garden City Books. \$1.50. SRL readers need no introduction to Bennett Cerf—nor, for that matter, to much of the material in this book. "Laughter Incorporated" is perhaps the final resting place for the anecdotes, gags, puns, wisecracks, jokes, and all-around Cerfian humor that have appeared under his by-line in this and a half dozen other magazines since the publication of "Shake Well Before Using."

As you'd expect, Mr. Cerf has a fine collection of stories to tell. They deal with the humor of the man-in-the-street as well as that of celebrities of all types. The book is fun, even for those who have read some of the stories earlier. In a foreword Mr. Cerf modestly says "if even a quarter of [the stories] are new to you—if they provide you with a few real laughs—you've had your money's worth." Mr. Cerf is batting well above .250.

—BERNARD KALB.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
MAN WITH A CALICO FACE <i>Shelley Smith</i> (Harper: \$2.50)	Young mistress of British estate (replete with parasitic residents) found dead. A final hanging but the real criminal—lack of understanding between human beings—gets away.	Not a detective story in usual sense. The author is sleuthing into the blind clash of desires and fears.	By all means
MURDER IN MONTANA <i>Muriel Bradley</i> (Crime Club: \$2.50)	Scion of Helena first family killed by fiancée's car. M.D. friend suspects otherwise and dies. Family, friends, and police finally fumble into solution.	One of those where beautiful gals always get trapped through disobeying police, but pleasant enough with smooth writing, local color, and assorted chills.	Average entertainment

SRL Reader Poll

MR. AND MRS. COMIC AMERICA

IF BLONDIE were to marry LI'L ABNER, settle down in GASOLINE ALLEY, and have a daughter named PENNY it would be a romantic event which apparently would warm the hearts of a large majority of those *Saturday Review* readers who from time to time turn to the comic strips in their daily newspapers for relaxation.

These inimitable characters were the leading favorites in the SRL READER POLL's current study of America's most popular art form, the comics.

The poll also disclosed that the cartoon characters and the lives they lead are a source of considerable concern to SRL readers, many of whom are troubled by the impact on children of the scenes of violence, crime, sex, and unreal glamour that figure in many of the strips. Parents also object to the slangy, ungrammatical talk of their children's comic heroes.

However, 70.6 per cent of those answering the questionnaire reported that they approved on the whole of their local newspaper's publishing comic strips, while no comics at all were preferred by 25.2 per cent, and 4.2 were undecided.

When asked whether they read the comics in their daily newspapers, SRL's readers answered as follows:

Regularly	35.9%
Frequently	18.0%
Seldom	31.3%
Never	14.8%

Nominated as the ten top favorites in order of popularity were:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Blondie | 6. Steve Canyon |
| 2. Li'l Abner | 7. Pogo |
| 3. Gasoline Alley | 8. Gordo |
| 4. Penny | 9. Terry and the Pirates |
| 5. Dick Tracy | 10. Moon Mullins |

Principal runners-up were: Mr. and Mrs., Ferdinand, Alley Oop, Bringing Up Father, Prince Valiant, and Barnaby, with limited support for Pegler.

The following were recommended as best for children to read: 1. Blondie. 2. Gasoline Alley. 3. Nancy. 4. Donald Duck. 5. Henry. 6. Prince Valiant. 7. Pogo. 8. Napoleon. 9. Li'l Abner. 10. Katzenjammer Kids.

SRL readers by nearly a two-thirds majority considered comics on the whole suitable for children to read. Only 26.2 per cent voted the comics bad for children, while 8.7 per cent were undecided. President John R.



Daisy Mae's perennial chase after Li'l Abner.



Everett, of Hollins College, Hollins, Va., commented in answering this question, "Most children know more about understanding fantasy than their adults do. And fantasy is good for both." His favorite was Li'l Abner, with Mr. and Mrs. second. The majority of those answering this question noted that the impact of comics on children would be governed in great measure by the home environment, by the child's other reading, and by the fact that children are not inclined to translate the incidents in the strips into actual reality. Many added, in effect, the opinion that "comic books are bad, however, and are not to be confused with the newspaper comics." In a mood of "a plague o' both your houses" Fredric Wertham, psychiatrist and author, commented, "The best I can say for comic strips is that comic books are even worse."

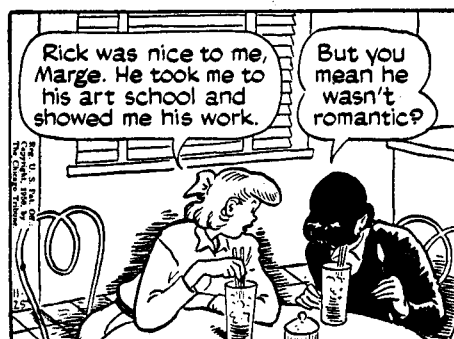
number of juvenile criminals."

In documenting their various objections to comic strips SRL readers referred most often to Little Orphan Annie and Dick Tracy as specific examples of what they had in mind. Nearly forty other strips were also mentioned, however.

The prevailing attitude of SRL readers toward the comics is best summed up by another New York lawyer, Alexander Hehmeyer, who commented at length:

As a parent I know that every child must, for better or worse, learn to live in his own culture and with his own generation. So long as comic strips are published and widely read they constitute part of the culture our children have to live in. Therefore, I believe it would be more harmful to prohibit them from reading comic strips than to permit some exposure.

—WILLIAM D. PATTERSON.



Gasoline Alley — "Too True."

—Chicago Tribune: New York News Syndicate, Inc.