

# A CARTOONIST'S TELLING ART

SISTER MAURA

THE modern cartoon has developed from the *caricatura* of seventeenth century Italy. In those days and in that land, painters began to amuse themselves and visitors to their studios by displaying comic sketches of their friends and enemies with the query, "Who is it?" These sketches, probably because they were charged with mockery and made their point by exaggeration, received the name *caricatura*, from *caricare*, to load, exaggerate, or blame. The taste for caricaturing spread through Europe, and its Italian name accompanied it as far as England; here, the anglicized form of the word was first used in 1748.

The caricature proper deals in personalities: its method is exaggeration, slight or gross. In Low's well known caricature of Barrie, for instance, there is little exaggeration; the inimitable master of whimsy appears very much as his friends must have known him, save that his head is somewhat larger than natural, and his gait more eccentric. At the other extreme are recent *Kladderadatch* depictions of Churchill and Roosevelt, so extravagant that they are quite unrecognizable. This is exaggeration defeating itself.

It was during the eighteenth century, in the hands of politicians, that the caricature began to take on a new character. It grew more symbolical and less personal, and became finally a pictorial, and usually satiric, interpretation of events rather than a satirizing of individuals. Now, it can be defined as "a leading article transformed into a picture." The name, cartoon, was first applied to full-page illustrations in comic papers in 1863. The word is derived from *cartone*, an artist's design on heavy paper; and *cartone* itself comes from *carta*, paper.

One fashion has survived through three centuries, as effective to-day as it was when good citizens of Bologna were first sketched as dogs or pigs or monkeys, or even as wine jugs. Early in 1940, *Marianne* represented Hitler as an apoplectic hog, wearing a distressed expression after gobbling up Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The British cartoonist, Low, makes Stalin a fox, Goering a hog, Ribbentrop a "carrion kite or jay," Goebbels a monkey and more recently a rat with unnaturally large ears.

proclaims in *King Lear*. And a myriad years ago, Aristophanes wrote *Wasps* and *Frogs* and *Clouds*.

Words cannot, of course, convey the entire effect of a picture; at best, they can suggest it. But the writer has this advantage. Time and space are his: days, months, and years can roll in his pages, and he can travel from the tropics to the pole in the twinkling of an eye, whereas the painter is bound to a moment of time and a circumscribed space. The choice is between range and intensity of impression.

The plastic arts, though they speak a universal language, bear also the impress of race. How Gallic in quality is, for example, the cartoon *Coiffure*, published a year or so ago in *Marianne!* It consists simply of Hitler's and Stalin's coiffures, faceless and quite unmistakable.

*La Libre Belgique*, that will-o'-the-wisp of journalism which defied German police throughout the first world war, has a distinctive cartoon under the caption, "*Son Excellence le Gouverneur von Bissing et Son Ami Intime.*" The "*ami intime*" in the case is *La Libre Belgique*, which Baron von Bissing reads with a stern countenance. It is cheering to know that this daring little paper is appearing once again in its "regularly irregularly" way, and that copies hot from press never fail to reach the Gestapo and the Nazi High Command.

The cartoon varies much in character and craftsmanship, but in the hands of men like Arthur Czyk, the Polish illustrator, and Bernard Partridge of *Punch*, it becomes definitely a work of art. Partridge's masterpiece, and one of the great cartoons of the century, is his *Unconquerable* of 1914. In this dramatic picture, the heroic, uncrowned Albert stands, sword in hand, against a war-stormy background. At his elbow leans the Kaiser, taunting, "So, you see—you've lost everything."

"Not my soul," returns the King of the Belgians.

Another cartoon that epitomizes history is Tenniel's *Dropping the Pilot* of 1890. In this, the stalwart figure of Bismark leaves the ship of state, while Wilhelm watches contentedly from the deck. Nast's famous *Tammany Tiger* of 1871 is historic in a somewhat different way; it condemns graphically a certain political organization and its methods. Here, the setting is classic, an amphitheatre rimmed with togaed figures; and in the foreground a most fearsome tiger, evidently a sabre-tooth, crouches over the body of a girl while a succession of female



A particularly happy Partridge cartoon, inspired by the destrcyer deal, depicts Churchill and Roosevelt as jolly tars, the former wearing the cap of the American navy, the latter of the British, over the caption: "The more we get together, the merrier we shall be." Still more recently, Mr Partridge pictures Hitler following a wild-eyed, phosphorescent Mephistopheles through the dark night into a swamp that is Russia. Beauty, charm, and dignity characterize Benard Partridge's cartoons, and an effect of completeness.

The latter feature is present in a more marked degree in the work of Arthur Cyzk; and naturally enough, as Mr. Czyk is an artist of international note. He began to paint at the age of four, and during the forty-three years that have intervened since then, series of his paintings have won fame at home in Poland, in France, in England, and in both Americas. His cartoons show the quality of race very distinctly. The cartoonists of the English-speaking world have the gift of laughter. Trenchant they may be, and satiric, yet they are jovial; but Mr. Czyk has dipped his brush in the tears of tragedy. His humor is irony. Sometimes his cartoons are terrible, sometimes even horrible.

As an illustration of the latter qualities, take the portentous *Madman's Dream*. Here, a dismal-looking Hitler slouches in his chair of state, above his head the blasphemous script, "*Ich Bin der Heilige Geist*." Between his knees he holds a terrestrial globe, with the swastika heavily imprinted on Africa, North and South America, Spain, Eastern Europe, and England. Before him, manacled and imploring, stand John Bull and Uncle Sam (it is a very mad dream). Mussolini, Goering, Goebbels, a Japanese, and a puppet Laval press around him, sitting or standing on a large bearskin. Attached to this is an agonized human head, on which Hitler rests his left foot. The inscription on the rug is, "*Der Untermensch Verecke*."

Still more ghastly is Mr Czyk's idea of *Pax Germanica*, as bodied forth in a cartoon of that title. A particularly gross and brutal person in Nazi uniform lolls in a large arm-chair; his left hand dangles a fat cigar, his right holds a long spit, and on this he slowly roasts over a flaming brazier (Europe) a plucked and mutilated dove of peace. What can words add to the idea of this picture?

*Hitler Acolyte* expresses the ultimate in debasement of the hu-

seis *Sitting Pretty* on his Ethiopian drum; *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*, a companion picture, is pure farce. Possibly the most humorous cartoon in Mr Czyk's book, though none the less tragic, is *The Barter System in Action*; and here the joke lies solely in the family likeness between the Nazi soldier and the huge hog he is carrying off. Perhaps the most ironic of these pictures is that of a Nazi officer explaining to a sad-eyed Weygand, "The English betrayed you—they did not surrender!"

The representative English cartoonist of the day is, beyond question, David Low. His work is humorous, timely, trenchant, spacious in treatment; his captions are vernacular utterances, that verge on slang when it is in character. Mr Low is a New Zealander by birth and education, and his mother was a Flanagan. His cartoons go around the world.

Perhaps the finest of Low cartoons is the *Hand of God*, a conception which unites a certain grandeur of simplicity with considerable humor. Upon the little finger of a mighty hand thrust through the cloudy firmament, stands a pigmy Hitler, brandishing his fist at the great Invisible, with the defiance, "You may have begun man—but I, Adolf Hitler, will finish him" The Fuehrer's appeal to common sense speech is commemorated in a group of bound and blindfold figures, with Hitler standing before them in an angel's costume, his eyes raised seraphically to heaven. He holds formidable fetters in his outstretched hands. The whole scene is described as the "dawn of a nice juicy future of wars against Russia, America, and whoever's about."

At the time the lease-lend bill was under consideration, Mr Low raised the curtain on deliberations in a committee room where the goddess of liberty in flowing robes, her torch across her knees, sat, all unconscious, on a Nazi time bomb. With her hand to her ear, she urged, "Hurry, boys, I think I hear a ticking". Still more amusing is *The Hot Seat of Berchtesgaden*, a cartoon in which Hitler is "practising for when he sends for Roosevelt." The Fuehrer stands beside a table in front of his overturned chair, gesticulating savagely, while clouds of hot air issue visibly from his lips. A picture of Roosevelt, wearing a beatific smile, bounces from the table with the force of his eloquence. Low interpreted the effect of the Japanese occupation of French Indo-China by depicting an English girl and an American sailor sitting very affectionately together on a bench labelled Singapore, while

"you don't mean to, but you make a swell cupid." In *Joy Ride to Moscow*, Hitler looks irritably at his watch as he says to Goering, "These treacherous Reds have deceived us again! They can fight!"

Strube's *Light Reading for Blackout Nights*, which dates to the fall of 1939, makes its point by a series of sketches. First, Goebbels is seen deep in a *Light of Ananias*, then Stalin laughing heartily over *Mein Kampf*, next Hitler devouring Karl Marx with fanatic interest, Churchill appearing much amused over *Secret Weapon by Adolf*, and finally the average Briton reading *Mein Tax* with some anxiety. A Strube cartoon of the crucial summer of 1940 presents a broad-chested bulldog standing foursquare over England; his face is that of Churchill, grim and confident. His military hat bears the inscription, "GO TO IT."

Marcus, of the *New York Times*, has a Hitler all his own—neurotic, somewhat ridiculous, but unmistakable. His cartoon of October the twentieth, 1940, is particularly apt. Der Fuehrer sits shivering in his office chair, his plans for South America spread on the desk before him. "Must be a draft somewhere," he is saying. And true enough, like an icy blast through the doorway behind him comes the news, "17 million register for military service in America."

The *Times* cartoon of last September the seventh pictures what the general public is wondering about these days. Japan in the array of a tightrope walker treads the air, juggling "Threats to Britain," "Anti-American Policy," "Threats to the Netherlands Indies" "Anti-Russian Policy," "China War," while a puzzled world exclaims, "But what's keeping him up?"

Sometimes these Marcus cartoons bring home an arrowy truth with delicacy and grace. The *Madame Butterfly* of last August is a winsome and pathetic Japanese girl who sits with bowed head as Reason takes his departure, past the blossoming cherry tree, on to the ship that rides at anchor near the shore. Occasionally, Marcus uses flower symbols effectively. In mid-September, 1940, he paid his tribute to British morale under the figure of a beautiful rose, radiating light and completely dominating a desolate scene. The caption was *Blooming 'mid the Ruins*. His *Easter Parade* of 1941 is simply the picture of a heavy Nazi foot crushing snowy lilies in its stride. Especially clever is *Ouch!* of September the seventeenth, 1940. Here, the boot-like peninsula of Italy is stubbing its toe on a top hat which is Greece.

Collins, of *The Montreal Gazette*, has an unusual gift for telling

October, 1940, when Hitler was urging Mussolini on in the African war, Collins depicted the Fuehrer fiercely pushing the Duce in the direction of Suez, while the latter demurred, "But it may be Suezide!" In another cartoon of about the same date, Mussolini appears in the rôle of a bald barber recommending Axis Herr Tonic to France. Collins's most apt quotation is "The face that launched a thousand ships," attached to a picture of Hitler at his desk studying the ship-building programs of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. A very large portrait of him adorns the back wall. In *Mussolini's Latest Speech* of February, 1941, the Duce is crying "Help!" as he sinks beneath the waters of the Mediterranean, and Hitler is preparing to dive off "the spring board" on the northern bank. A triumph of humor is the facial expression and gesture of the lion in *The Lion-tamers' Club*. Evidently, this king of beasts has just demolished Mussolini with much relish, and Hitler is inviting reluctant little Japan to put his head into the lion's mouth.

Chambers's cartoon commentary in *The Halifax Herald* is particularly interesting. His *British Naval Blockade*, for instance, is a genial and eloquent conception, but his most significant historic cartoon is *Over the Top*. This commemorates Poland's great daring, and the gallant friendship of England and France. In it, a Polish soldier has planted his flag on the crest of the hill and kneels to fire; close after him follow a French and an English soldier, bearing the Tricolor and the Union Jack. The three figures stand out against a bright sky, evidently the brightness of the sunrise.

Another single cartoon of historical significance is Edmund Duffy's *The Outstretched Hand*. This won the Pulitzer prize for 1939. The figure of a brutal, low-browed Hitler dominates the scene; unfortunate minorities crouch at his feet; his left hand clutches broken promises and treaties; his right, outstretched for the friendship of the United States, drips with the blood of the dove of peace.

The most memorable Canadian cartoon of the times is, undoubtedly, *The Winged Lion*, a glorious symbol of the R. A. F. This appeared in *The Family Herald and Weekly Star* over the caption, "Keeping the Seven Seas Clear." It is majestic in conception and execution.

An anonymous English cartoon, that catches the fancy, came



companion, "I'm telling you that's a genuine piece of Nazi parachute. Now call me a Goebbels." As the future will demonstrate, Doctor Goebbels's practices have enriched the vocabulary of the world with new synonym.

Very recently, *Dublin Opinion* had a cheerful caricature of De Valera, the Irish ruler who is an American by birth and a Spaniard by race. Low continues adding Hitler portraits to his gallery. One of a month or so ago shows der Fuehrer following his intuitions with the mien of a sleep-walker, and leading his reluctant generals to death amid Russian snows. In *The Catspaw*, Partridge makes Japan a muscular and rather villainous looking cat, drawing chestnuts from the fire. Herblock has a good Hitler cartoon without Hitler. It might be called "*Teppich-Esser*". At the door of a vacant room where rugs, globe, and other articles of furniture bear traces of Hitler's "gnawing" rage, the guard announces, "The Fuehrer does not wish to see anyone to-day". In *Dutch Stand*, the famous Raemaekers represents his dauntless country as a lion, fighting fierce, who defends Java against a fabulous winged monster that stretches its loathsome length over Borneo, Sumatra, Singapore, and Burma.

Cartoons can meet any mood. Gluyas Williams's light-hearted fun flickers playfully over the surface of everyday life; Bairnsfather's robust humor enlivens many a distant scene with rollicking laughter. Around the world, east and west, north and south, cartoonists make their pictorial comment on life and events, be it tragic or comic, and reach an ever-widening public. The present is the heyday of cartooning.

Serious or merry, these brethren of the graphic have an influence that cannot well be gauged, in shaping opinion, kindling emotion, and inciting to action. The daily cartoon, even at its most trivial, wings its shaft against what it sees as folly or evil; it is always something more than a pleasant turning of the pages of history. Through this medium, many a patriot nobly serves his country, and these are the men—Czyk, Partridge, Low, and the others—who best illustrate the cartoonist's telling art.