

On Reading "Comics"

Edmund Roche, '41

Of the many pastimes enjoyed by man in his present-day life, reading seems to be the most common. In the world of sport every country has its peculiar specialties. One favors hockey, another baseball, another football, and so on. Furthermore, in large cities most people are regular theatre-goers, college students everywhere like competition in any one of its many forms, and business-men derive particular enjoyment from their radios. All, however, in spite of their particular inclinations, can and do enjoy reading. But should free time be spent in reading "Comics"?

Before attempting to answer this question it might be well to consider three possible divisions of "comics". There is, first, the type that merely emphasizes the lighter side of every-day life. To this end the author creates characters and with them builds up the funnier or more ridiculous situations that ordinarily escape our notice.

Obviously, there is nothing to be lost in a moderate reading of these for relaxation—perhaps, on the contrary, much to be gained for those whose work does not permit them to dwell on the more humorous aspects of the life about them. As a second type might be classed those in which the characters, while still human, persist in accomplishing almost impossible feats of strength or skill. The improbability of the situations in these gives the imagination a little exercise and they cannot, therefore, be outlawed, for the development of the imagination certainly has its advantages.

The last type is that in which humans are, as it were, deified and depicted as doing works such as were attributed to the pagan gods of antiquity. While "comics" of the first two divisions are practically limited to sections of daily or weekly newspapers, those of this third type, having only quite recently won their appeal, are today being sold under separate covers in almost unbelievable quantities.

In the reading of such fantastic compositions grown people are merely removed in mind to the world of the unreal, and, if they indulge to any great extent in this sort of pastime, may be influenced by it in their daily lives. In their cramped imagination they will liken everything they see and do to some one of the mysterious incidents or characters of the "mile-a-minute" type, and, as a rule,

"day-dreaming" and distorted reasoning follow excessive doses of this drug. Children are filled with many strange ideas which they apply to the things of which they have heard their elders speak but of which they themselves have formed no concepts. As they grow older they find out, to their sorrow, that reading such "comics" has only created for them the task of proving these concepts to be false and of finding out and substituting the true ones.

The first step in education is a training of the mind to reason properly and to retain things which will be required at some future time. How does the reading of the impossible fit into this scheme of development? First, people do not intend to remember what they read along such lines and, secondly, there is nothing worth remembering even if they wanted to remember. In action "comics", for example, every page develops a new situation, a situation that is absolutely irrelevant to the one which just preceded it. In the reading of one page one line of thought is established only to be destroyed by the next. This provides a splendid training in how to forget quickly and one which may be very difficult to restrict to the field of "comics".

All the rewards to be gained from worth-while reading may be reduced to two: education and entertainment. Each of these has its own proper place and either one must not be pursued at the expense of the other. Accordingly, the moderate reading of "comics" of the first two classes is to be highly recommended for relaxation or entertainment. But, after considering the effects of the third or nightmare type, as well as the amount and variety of good reading matter at our disposal, it is evident that such trash should be left to keep the dust off the shelves on which it is displayed.

Easter

Gerald Mallett, ex' 40

Angels sang, a child was born,
Shepherds heard that first sweet morn.
Groans of men, a God was dead,
Dark clouds rushing overhead.
Apostles fell within their room—
Soldiers slept by an empty tomb.