



















DON'T LAUGH AT THE COMICS



Everybody has always said it is story value—the primitive thrill of danger and adventure - that makes such strips as "Superman" so popular. But that's not the real reason, says Dr. Marston, Family Circle psychologist, who tells what he thinks it is

WHEN Orson Welles announced in the course of a radio melodrama that octopus men from Mars were invading New Jersey, and people by the thousands believed him, I thought the world had gone mad. It seemed incredible that rational human beings could accept such a fantastic "news announcement" as truth, that they could dash about ringing fire alarms, telephoning hospitals and police, and calling out the National Guard to repel the Martians.

But this is how Dr. William Moulton Marston, THE FAMILY CIRCLE psychologist, explained it. "This episode in American spoofology is attributable almost entirely to the comics," he told me. "Comic-strip stories like 'Buck Rogers,' appearing in daily newspapers and Sunday comics sections, and recently in monthly comics magazines, have created a world of fantasy that is almost as real to adults as it is to children. And that means that sane grownups sometimes cannot tell the difference between fact and fancy. There are millions of normal men and women today who have no mental resistance at all to tales of the weirdly impossible. No supernatural being is too illogical to believe in. Orson Welles' fascinating radio experiment proved that Americans today are living an imaginary mental life in a comics-created world!"

I know from observation in my own household that children read the so-called funnies morning, noon, and - unfortunately - night, and that while they're doing it there are no childish quarrels. Naturally, I had come to enjoy those peaceful interludes that followed the purchase of the magazines, but then Dr. Marston's statement made me begin to wonder if comics magazines were poisonous mental

many I personally had been buying. I found that the number was constantly increasing. Other parents made the same check, and among us we counted 84 different comics magazines. And the more enterprising youngsters traded them among themselves so that they might read all of them.

Parent-teacher groups, women's clubs, and other parents' organizations were starting to be a little worried over the possible harm such assiduous comics reading might do our future generations, when Stirling North, in The Chicago Daily News, added to the foment with his scathing indictment of the comics magazines. North pulled no punches when he said, "The lurid publications depend for their appeal upon maybem, murder, torture, abduction, superman heroics, voluptuous females, blazing machine guns, and hooded justice." He added that parents and teachers throughout America would be forced to band together to break the hold of the comics.

With terrible visions of Hitlerian justice in mind, I went to Dr. Marston, whose common-



"The Gumos" was the first important strip tease. It marked the comics' departure from humor and piqued curiosity by never revealing quite all

sense and farseeing views usually quiet the tempest in the teapot.

"Do you know anything about comics maga-zines?" I asked, "Do you know how many are sold each month?"

If I thought the question might stick the Doctor, I was wrong - as usual. He said, "There are about 108 comics magazines on the newsstands. Sales figures show that between 10,000,000 and 12,000,000 magazines are sold every month. That means \$1,000,000 or more are spent every month by comics fans, There are, besides, another 3,000,000 or 4,000,-000 comics magazines sold quarterly. Surveys show that on the average four children read every book sold. That makes a total of somewhere between 40,000,000 and 50,000,000 juvenile readers per month. And another 12,000,000 to 16,000,000 readers every three months. The magazines sell for 10c apiece, which brings the yearly retail sales to between \$14,000,000 and \$15,000,000 *

When I professed amazement at the Doctor's detailed knowledge of the subject, he told me that he had been doing research in

pacifiers, and I counted how this field for more than a year-and that he had read almost every comics magazine published during that time! I told him that the figures were pretty big for me, but that I gathered that just about every child in America is reading these magazines.

"That's correct," Dr. Marston said, "And surveys show that 86% of the parents enjoy reading them also. Which is still more amazing. Nothing like the comics-magazine movement has ever been known before. The comics sections of Sunday newspapers long ago became the Sabbath-day bible of more than 10,000,000 children. But now the comics magazines have become their weekday textbooks and believe me, no youngsters ever studied their schoolbooks as they do these new

"How do you explain their appeal?" I asked. "I always assumed that the appeal of comics to children was humor. But you never see them laugh at the funnies. The one thing they take most seriously in life is their comics-magazine reading. Why is that?"

"The comics long ago ceased to be humorous," Dr. Marston said. "More than 30 years ago Bud Fisher (Harry Conway) originated the comic strip that is now the oldest one published-'Mutt and Jeff.' That was intended to be funny and thousands of readers laughed with Bud. A few years later, in 1917, along came R. Sidney Smith with a serious story continuity and grotesque characters - "The Gumps." You may think Andy Gump is a character to be laughed at, but Sidney Smith thought him an important human document. Even the humorous hangover which persisted in the laughable aspects of the chinless Andy was soon wined out by such cartoon strips as 'Orphan



Popeye might be considered the forerunner of Seperman in that he was one of the earliest characters to perform feats of strength that, although preposterous, captured the imagination of youngsten

Annie' and the avalanche of newspaper picture-stories which flourished during the 20 years following Andy Gump's debut. Less than half a dozen, of the whole lot were ever intended to be funny. And one of those-featuring Popeye-gained national popularity and made its creator Segar rich; not because readers laugh at it, but because Popeye eats spinach and from that previously despised vegetable draws colossal strength to perform feats that provoke admiration. As scores of newspaper story-strip characters devoted themselves to adventure with increasing scOCTOBER 25

THE "FUNNIES," LONG SERIOUS, ARE READ BY EVERY CHILD, MOST GROWNUPS, AND ARE A TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE. IS IT GOOD OR BAD?

BY OLIVE RICHARD



America clubs. At the New York World's Fair in July, Maureen Reynolds and William Aronis (shown here with Harvey Gibson, Fair head) were judged Supergirl and Superboy in a contest on Superman Day

riousness, the death knell of comedy appeal in the comics was sounded.

"FOR the better part of two decades," Dr. Marston continued, "about 200 story strips marched steadily along in the Sunday and daily newspapers, then-prestot-'Superman' appeared. Comics evolution took another huge jump ahead. Superman-the supernatural, the stupendous, the great and ultimate embodiment of all childhood dreams of strength and power! Until the advent of Superman nearly all story-strip characters had retained some human characteristics and limitations. Their adventures were real in the sense that they exposed themselves to danger as ordinary humans do and suffered various defeats, hard knocks, and painful injuries in the course of winning their inevitable victories. But Superman can't be hurt. His skin sheds bullets like raindrops; he can't be crushed, drowned, burned, poisoned, or otherwise injured. His strength is colossal; he leaps over skyscrapers,



Li'l Abner's hillbilly talk gets many parents down when they hear it coming back to them out of the mouths of their babes. But Dr. Marston thinks that it need not be viewed entirely with alarm

runs faster than a bullet, and pushes ocean liners ahead of him while swimming underwater."

Here I broke in. "Oh, I know about Superman!" I exclaimed. "I'm always hearing tales of his greatness, but I don't think children will go on liking that sort of character."

"That," said Dr. Marston, "is precisely what the editors and publishers thought when Superman was first offered to them four or five years ago. Superman was created by Jerry Siegel, a young comics continuity writer from Cleveland. Like most comics originators, Jerry was intensely serious. He believed that the real superman of the future would be somebody with vast power who would use his invincible strength to right human wrongs. Superman is created in the image of that ideal; a man who changes from weak-kneed, ordinary Clark Kent, newspaper reporter, to fabulously powerful Superman at the call of wrong to be righted. Siegel offered Superman to practically every syndicate in the country for five years, only to meet consistent rejection. But he persisted. Finally, three years ago, Siegel sent his brain child to advertising executive M. C. Gaines, a former school principal and the originator of the comics monthly magazine, Mr. Gaines, now publisher of a number of leading publications of this type, had the insight into fundamental emotional appeals which other publishers had lacked. He placed the 'Superman' story strip in Action Comics and also induced the McClure Newspaper Syndicate to distribute it. From that (Please turn to page 22)



"Mutt and Jeff." now the old est strip published, is one of the few that still try to keep a large following sole ly on the basis of humor



Jerry Siegel (above, right), a comics continuity writer from Cleveland, created "Superman" and then found (as usually happens) that no one wanted it-until he met M. C. Gaines, originator of the comics monthly magazine, who had more insight into fundamental emotional appeals. Joe Shuster (at the right) draws the "Superman" strip











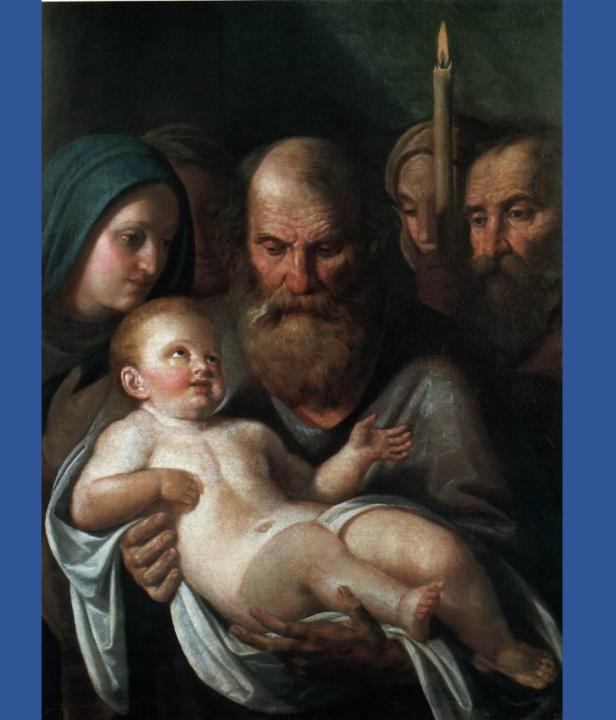
Luke 2:22-38 (ESV): "And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.'..."

"...25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,..."

"...28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.' 33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about

"...34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.' 36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher...."

"...She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."



BUT THE SPRING

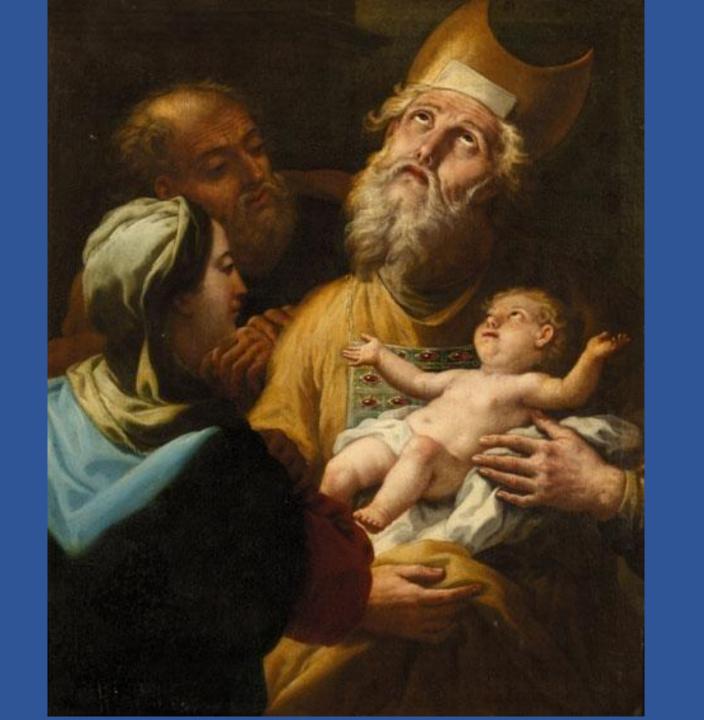
Numbers 24:17 (ESV): "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel."



Isaiah 7:14 (ESV): "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."



Micah 5:2 (ESV): "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."



BUT THE SPICE OF THE STRUCK OF



TRUTH NEEDS NO PROOF.





SUTTHE SPUTTINE STRUCTURE STRUCTURE





Luke 11:29-32 (ESV): "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Romans 1:19-22 (ESV): "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools."

1 Corinthians 1:19-23 (ESV): "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles."

Luke 12:35-37 (ESV): "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes."



DON'T JUST WAIT; ANTICIPATE.



John 12:26 (ESV): "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."



Romans 8:5 (ESV): "Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."





