

A National Disgrace

And a Challenge to American Parents

VIRTUALLY EVERY CHILD in America is reading color "comic" magazines—a poisonous mushroom growth of the last two years.

Ten million copies of these sex-horror serials are sold every month. One million dollars are taken from the pockets of America's children in exchange for graphic insanity.

Frankly we were not perturbed when we first heard about the rise of the action "comics." We imagined (as do most parents) that they were no worse than the "funnies" in the newspapers. But a careful examination of the 108 periodicals now on the stands shocked us into activity. At least 70 per cent of the total were of a nature no respectable newspaper would think of accepting.

Save for a scattering of more or less innocuous "gag" comics and some reprints of newspaper strips, we found that the bulk of these lurid publications depend for their appeal upon mayhem, murder, torture and abduction—often with a child as the victim. Superman heroics, voluptuous females in scanty attire, blazing machine guns, hooded "justice" and cheap political propaganda were to be found on almost every page.

The old dime novels in which an occasional redskin bit the dust were classic literature compared to the sadistic drivel pouring from the presses today. Badly drawn, badly written and badly printed—a strain on young eyes and young nervous systems—the effect of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant. Their crude blacks and reds spoil the child's natural sense of color, their hypodermic injection of sex and murder make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories. Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the "comic" magazine.

BUT, OF COURSE, the children must be furnished a good substitute. There is nothing dull about *Westward Ho* or *Treasure Island*. Sinbad the Sailor didn't need spinach to effect his feats of strength. The classics are full of humor and adventure—plus good writing. And never before in the history of book publishing have there been so many fine new books for children, or better edited children's magazines.

The shame lies largely with the parents who don't know and don't care what their children are reading. It lies with unimaginative teachers who force stupid, dull twaddle down eager young throats, and, of course, it lies with the completely immoral publishers of the "comics"—guilty of a cultural slaughter of the innocents.

But the antidote to the "comic" magazine poison can be found in any library or good bookstore. The parent (and the teacher—ed.) who does not acquire that antidote for his child is guilty of criminal negligence.—*Sterling North*. (Editorial in *Chicago Daily News*, May 8, 1940)