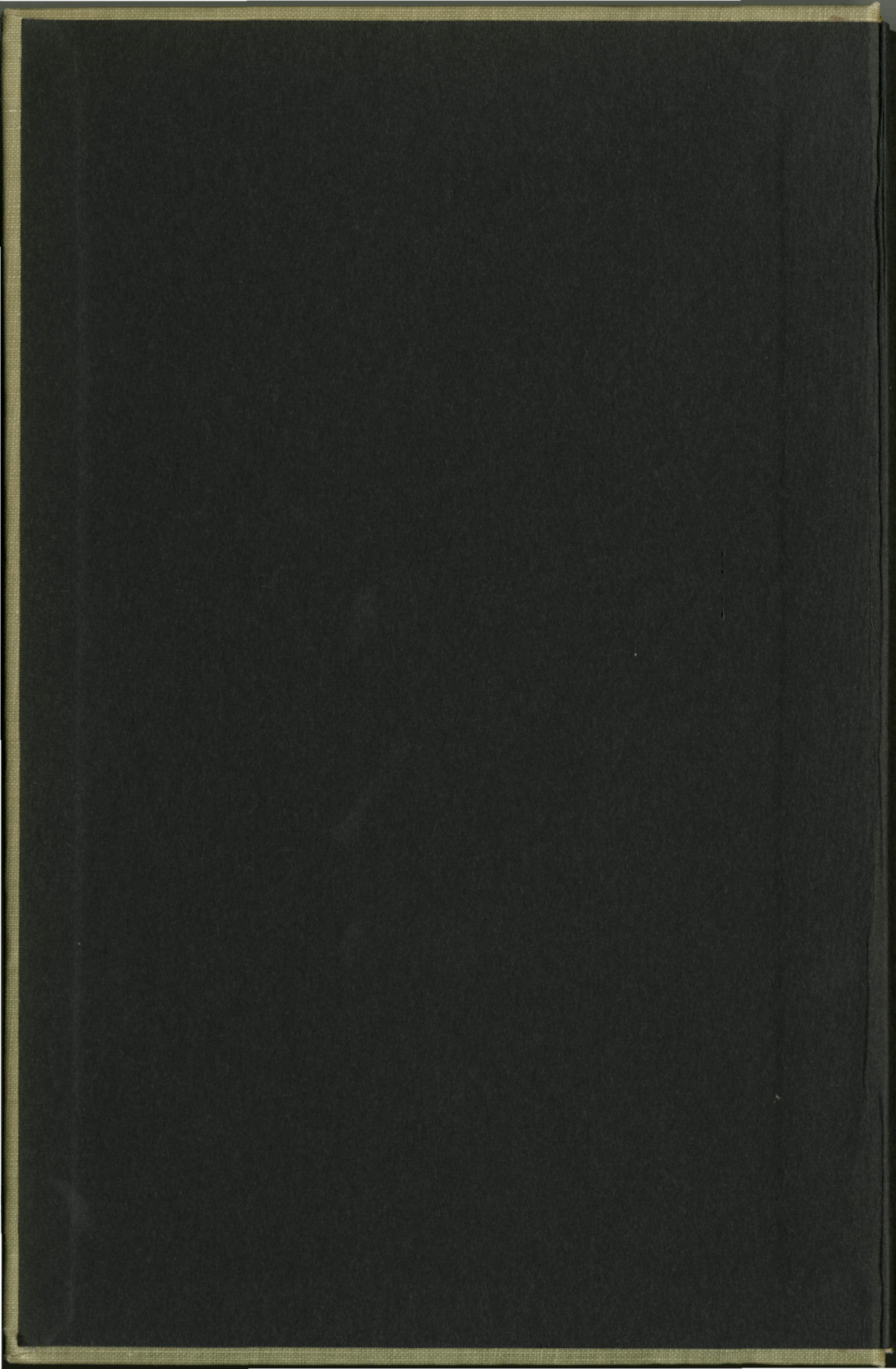
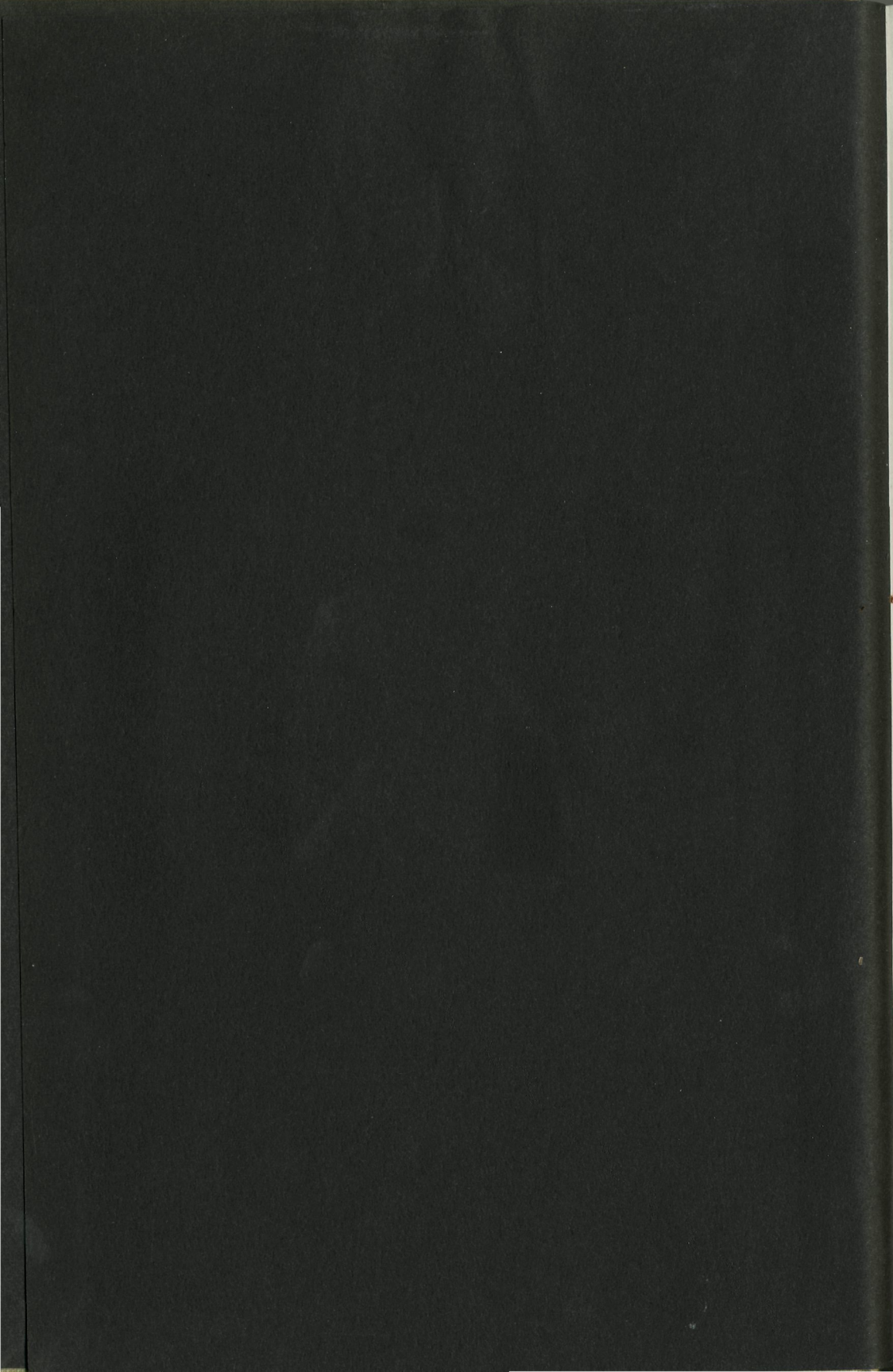


MAGAZINES  
IN THE  
TWENTIETH  
CENTURY







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MAGAZINES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

# MAGAZINES

*The University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1956*

Theodore Peterson

in  
the  
Twentieth  
Century



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TO HELEN



## Preface

The modern magazine, of all of the mass media of communication, has been perhaps the least subjected to serious study. One of the remarkable gaps in knowledge about the American magazine is its history since 1900, the period of its greatest development and greatest importance.

Histories of the magazine do exist, of course. Frank Luther Mott has written an excellent three-volume account of the American magazine from 1741 through 1885, and he soon will have pushed his study through 1906. Other scholars have carefully hoed this same early ground, but their works do not greatly enlighten the person curious about the contemporary magazine. True, James Playsted Wood has written a one-volume history of the magazine from 1741 through 1948; but about half of his book deals with the period before 1900, so the remainder is necessarily silent about many of the magazines and many of the developments in the industry since the turn of the century.

This book, which grew out of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois, is an attempt to remedy the deficiency. It seeks to trace the popular magazine from its origins in the late nineteenth century through 1955 by drawing on a variety of

sources—on the magazines themselves; on corporate records of magazine publishing houses; on records of the magazine industry; on reminiscences and observations of publishers, editors, writers, and business office personnel; and on the small body of research done by social scientists.

In general, I have limited my subject to commercial magazines edited for the lay public. Therefore, this book does not cover several categories of magazines. It does not cover trade and technical publications and scientific and professional journals. Nor does it treat in any detail the farm magazines, which are essentially trade journals for the farmer. Both of those important types of magazines demand full length studies of their own to do them justice. Also excluded are house organs, which are supported by big and little businesses to tell their stories to employees or to the public at large; fraternal and organizational magazines, which draw all or part of their support from the organizations publishing them; religious periodicals, which for the most part have church affiliations; and the so-called "little magazines" of literature and criticism, which generally are not published with commercial intent.

My aim has been to explore the major tendencies in the magazine industry and the social and economic forces which helped to shape them. Therefore, I have rejected a purely chronological arrangement of material. Such a plan, I think, would obscure the points I wish to emphasize. Yet this book does have a narrative, and the reader can best follow it if he reads it in summary before he approaches the detail.

The low-priced popular magazine of national circulation was born in the late nineteenth century as America made the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. It emerged as changes in the distribution of consumer goods brought about a growing volume of advertising. By joining the magazine with the system of marketing, national advertising affected many aspects of the magazine industry. As the volume of advertising increased, magazines grew in numbers and in circulation.

Also important to the development of the magazine was an expanding market both for magazines and for the goods advertised in their pages. The magazine audience was widened by a rise in population and by such fruits of democracy and industrialization as an increase in leisure time, an increase in the general

level of education, and a redistribution of income. Magazines of mammoth circulation became commonplace after World War I as a result of the expanding market, technological advances, and improvements in the logistics of magazine publishing.

Although a few magazines of large circulation carried the bulk of advertising, they were by no means invulnerable to competition. The magazine industry was relatively hospitable to those with talent and fresh ideas, and the new publisher often could experiment with less financial risk than the publisher of an established magazine. As new publishers introduced new magazines reflecting the changes in American life, many of the magazines which had once led in circulation and prestige were driven out of business. They were replaced by new leaders which achieved huge circulations in fairly short periods, especially after World War I. Since some of these new leaders were based on original approaches to publishing, and since other publishers imitated the successful innovations, whole new classes of magazines emerged during the twenties, thirties, and forties. Those are some of the points which the book will try to document.

Probably every author of a book such as this has wondered how free he should be with footnotes. I have tried to hold them to a minimum. I have used them to indicate sources of direct quotations, sources which some readers may wish to consult for additional information, and sources which might carry some bias. Since none of the footnotes amplifies textual matter, the reader not interested in sources can skip them all without loss.

A few words of explanation are necessary for an understanding of some of the revenue data. Most of the figures for gross advertising revenue were compiled by the Publishers Information Bureau and released by the Magazine Advertising Bureau, the clearinghouse for such information. Such figures are calculations which do not take into account advertising agency discounts and cash discounts; moreover, they are based on rates for single insertions. Consequently, the gross actually received by the magazine in each instance was slightly more than 80 per cent of the figure given.

Scores of persons in the magazine industry have left me in their debt by supplying me with raw material and answering my questions, sometimes as impertinent as pertinent. To name them all would be impractical. However, some deserve specific mention.

W. H. Mullen of the Magazine Advertising Bureau, New York, was extremely cooperative in supplying data not readily available elsewhere. Time, Inc., allowed me to spend a month studying its operations and freely interviewing at length some seventy of its personnel. Several publishing companies generously supplied the photographs from which the illustrations in the book were selected. They include Cowles Magazines, Inc.; Crowell-Collier Publishing Company; Curtis Publishing Company; Macfadden Publications, Inc.; McCall Corporation; Meredith Publishing Company; Popular Mechanics Company; and Time, Inc. To them all, I am grateful.

I also wish to record my debt to numerous persons who helped to steer the manuscript toward the press. Successive versions of the manuscript were read critically by F. S. Siebert, director of the School of Journalism and Communications, University of Illinois; Prof. William Porter, in charge of magazine courses at the State University of Iowa; and Donald M. Hobart, senior vice president and director of research, Curtis Publishing Company. All three gave valuable counsel. However, they should not be held responsible for the accuracy of my facts, and they do not necessarily agree with my interpretations. The typists of three versions of the manuscript—Miss Norma Carr, Mrs. Maxine Haworth, and my wife Helen Peterson—all spotted errors and inconsistencies. Mrs. Jean Cain of the University of Illinois Press was as understanding and patient an editor as any author could hope for.

THEODORE PETERSON

*Urbana, Illinois*  
*June 7, 1956*

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## *chapter 1* The Birth of the Modern Magazine

Sometime in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the modern national magazine was born. One may arbitrarily assign various dates to its birth: 1879, when Congress stimulated the growth of periodicals by providing low-cost mailing privileges; 1893, when S. S. McClure, John Brisben Walker, and Frank Munsey tapped a whole new reader audience by bringing the price of magazines within reach of the mass of the population; 1897, when Cyrus Curtis bought the feeble *Saturday Evening Post* for a thousand dollars and began reviving it; 1899, when George Horace Lorimer slid into the editor's chair of the *Saturday Evening Post* and set about attuning it to popular tastes. In fact, however, the modern national magazine was born in no one year but in a period stretching across more than a decade.

There had been magazines in America for some 150 years before the modern national magazine was born. One February day in 1741, Alexander Bradford brought out the first magazine in America, his *American Magazine, or A Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies*. It was born of competition, as magazines have been ever since, for it anticipated by three days the *Historical Chronicle*, which Benjamin Franklin had projected as the first

magazine in America. Neither magazine lasted long. Bradford's died in three months, Franklin's in six.

In the following century and a half, most American magazines were shaky ventures, low in income, low in advertising, low in circulation, short in life span. Few magazines circulated far from their places of publication; no general magazine reached a truly national audience before 1850. The two decades after the Civil War brought what one contemporary called "a mania of magazine-starting," a boom no doubt encouraged by the general spirit of expansion, by the availability of capital, by technological advances in the printing trades, and in the eighties by the favorable mailing rates for periodicals resulting from the Postal Act of March 3, 1879. The number of periodicals increased more than fourfold, from 700 in 1865 to 3,300 in 1885, in those two decades.<sup>1</sup> By 1900 there were no fewer than fifty national magazines, some of them with circulations of more than 100,000, some of them launched amid the quiet revolution in the magazine industry in the closing years of the century.

When the last decade of the nineteenth century opened, Americans could buy periodicals representing a wide range of specialized interests. There were such magazines of science as *Popular Science Monthly* and *Scientific American*; such magazines of travel and exploration as *National Geographic*; such magazines of fashions and homemaking as *Glass of Fashion*, *Home Arts*, and *Ladies' World*; and even a magazine on infant care, *Babyhood*. There were such forerunners of the modern picture magazines and news magazines as *Harper's Weekly* and *Leslie's* with their many topical illustrations. There were magazines devoted to phrenology, voice culture, the single-tax movement, and gardening. There were humor magazines, business and trade magazines, literary magazines, sports magazines, magazines of many types.

Yet the average citizen was not a magazine reader. Available to him at one end of the scale were the quality monthly magazines—so-called because they addressed an audience well above average in income and intellectual curiosity—magazines like *Harper's* and *Scribner's*, priced beyond his means and edited beyond his scope of interests. At the other end of the scale were the cheap weeklies, the sentimental story papers, the miscellanies. Between

<sup>1</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1865-1885* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 5

there were few magazines of popular price and general appeal.

In 1890, educated readers of substance, readers who could easily afford magazines, had a place on their library tables for perhaps only *Century*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*. In artistic and literary quality, in volume of respected advertising, in sales, these three magazines were the leading general monthly periodicals. Their editors edited not for the great mass of the population, which Munsey and others would later appeal to, but for gentlefolk of means. Yet their circulations, low by present standards, were respectable enough for the time; *Harper's*, for example, apparently had between 100,000 and 200,000 readers in 1891, and few other magazines had more than that.

Concerned as they were with editorial fare for the genteel, the magazines in retrospect seem curiously remote from the dramatic changes then taking place in American life. Literature, art, manners, travel, and history got their attention, and their editors often seemed to have had their eyes more closely on Europe than on America. Thus the reader of *Harper's*, skimming his copies for 1890, could settle down to subjects as remote from the contemporary American scene as Edwin Lord Weeks' "Street Scenes of India," "The Social Side of Yachting," Prof. F. B. Goodrich's "The Young Whist Player's Novitiate," and "Agricultural Chile." But even such topics held their perils: When *Scribner's* illustrated an article about French art with reproductions of nudes, an upstate banker wrote the editors in protest that a "young female of his household," on encountering the article, "uttered a low cry and fled from the room."<sup>2</sup>

Such content did not entirely represent an unawareness of reality. As Frederick Lewis Allen has remarked, it represented a valid ideal—"the ideal of the educated man, the philosopher, who is at home not merely in his own land and his own age, but in all lands and all ages; from whose point of perspective the Babylonian seal-workers are as interesting as the Pittsburgh steelworkers; who lives not merely in the world of food and drink and shelter and business and politics and everyday commonplace, but in the timeless world of ideas."<sup>3</sup> Nor should one undervalue the quality

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, "Fifty Years of Scribner's Magazine," *Scribner's*, 101 (Jan., 1937), 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, "Fifty Years of Scribner's Magazine," p. 21.

of their content. They printed the best and most popular authors of their times, and their illustrations were outstanding.

Yet beneath this high stratum of genteel readers was a tremendously large and ever-growing audience for low-cost magazines suited to less esoteric tastes. Frank Munsey, S. S. McClure, John Brisben Walker, George Horace Lorimer, and others realized that this large untapped audience existed, and they edited their magazines for it. As they did so, they laid down the patterns for the modern national magazine.

The times favored them; for as America shifted from an agrarian to an industrial economy, conditions were propitious for magazines of large, national circulations. Factories, growing in size and in number, had begun to produce for a national or regional rather than for a largely local market. Railroads, pushing their lines across the country, had helped to make a national market possible. So had changing techniques in retailing. The local media, the signs and handbills and newspapers which had sufficed when marketing was largely local, were no longer adequate. The need was for a medium which could take the advertiser's message simultaneously to large groups of consumers over a widespread area.

Consider the situation. The average manufacturing plant, in the sixty years from 1850 to 1910, increased its capital more than thirty-nine times, its number of wage earners nearly seven times, and the value of its output more than nineteen times. The consolidations and combinations which resulted in the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 continued to increase after 1896. And as manufacturing grew, so did the channels for taking mass-produced goods to the consumer. During the 1880's, railroads laid some 70,000 miles of track; and although the panic of 1893 briefly retarded expansion, mileage continued to mount by about 5,000 miles a year as the century turned. Communication with the farmer was facilitated by the growth in the number of rural free delivery routes—from 44 in 1897 to 4,000 in 1900 to 25,000 in 1903.

Moreover, changes in retailing assisted in the distribution of mass-produced goods. The department store, which made shopping convenient for the consumer, had a continuous growth between 1876 and 1900 and an accelerated growth in the new century. Chain stores began dotting the nation with retail outlets

after 1900. Up to 1900, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, for instance, had fewer than 200 stores; by 1914, it had 1,000 and by 1928 about 17,000. Founded in 1879, the F. W. Woolworth Company had fewer than 600 stores grossing about \$4,000,000 a year in 1900; by 1914, it had 737 stores grossing \$69,000,000 a year. In the new century, other chains began: United Cigar Stores in 1901, J. C. Penney in 1902, Piggly Wiggly before World War I, and so on. Then, too, both manufacturers and retailers were beginning to favor packaged merchandise. Before 1900, there were few packaged goods; druggists still sold perfume from large bottles on their shelves, and grocers still literally dipped into the cracker barrel. The shift from bulk to packaged merchandise led manufacturers to use brand names and trademarks to identify their products for consumers and thus to advertising campaigns to make their brand names known. Significantly, perhaps, the number of trademarks registered with the U. S. Patent Office jumped from 1,721 in 1900 to 10,282 in 1920.

By the last ten years of the nineteenth century, advances in the printing trades were making possible magazines of large circulations and were introducing to magazine publishing such mass-production methods as timed production scheduling, conveyor systems, and assembly lines. The slow flat-bed press began giving way to the swifter rotary press. In 1886, R. Hoe and Company built a rotary press for *Century Magazine* which could do ten times the work of a similarly sized flat-bed press; and in 1890, C. B. Cottrell and Sons Company turned out a rotary web perfecting press which was used by *Youth's Companion*, *Harper's*, *Lupton's*, *McCall's*, and other magazines. An enlarged, improved version of the Cottrell press was built for *Munsey's Magazine* in 1898.

Magazines no longer had to depend for their art work on reproductions of sketches, laboriously and expensively engraved by hand on copper or wood—and even colored by hand, as when *Godey's Lady's Book* hired 150 women to tint its illustrations. A Hoe rotary art press built for *Century* in 1890 printed the finest halftone illustrations from curved plates, and three years later Hoe built the first multicolor rotary press. The Curtis Publishing Company installed the first Cottrell multicolor rotary press in 1908.

The technological advances in printing favored the publisher who was enterprising enough to try for the large circulation that

developments in marketing and expansion in transportation had made possible. They enabled him to compete on fairly equal terms with the established publisher with large working capital. No longer did the established publisher have an advantage in magazine production because he could afford expensive engravings from drawings and sketches, engravings which alone cost the *Century Magazine* \$5,000 a month. Photoengravings from photographs were comparatively inexpensive. Furthermore, setting copy into type and getting the printing forms ready for printing represented fixed costs, the same regardless of circulation. Presses were efficient enough to turn out attractive magazines at a low unit cost; and the public, accustomed to price reductions on other commodities, was in a mood to welcome price cuts in its reading fare.

In such a setting, the low-priced, mass circulation magazine was born. Assisting at its birth, each in his own fashion, were S. S. McClure, John Brisben Walker, Frank A. Munsey, Cyrus Curtis, George Horace Lorimer, and Edward W. Bok.

Born in Ireland, S. S. McClure came to the United States in 1866 as a boy of nine; in his early life poverty was never far away. At seventeen, with fifteen cents in his pocket and with one suit of homemade clothes, he enrolled at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, to start what turned out to be a protracted struggle for an education. He drifted into journalism. Within two months of leaving college in 1882, he became the first editor of *The Wheelman*, a magazine published in Boston by Colonel Albert A. Pope, a manufacturer who held basic patents on the bicycle. He left to become proofreader at the De Vinne Press, a printing house in New York, and later joined the Century Company.

The idea for a newspaper syndicate came to McClure while he was working for the Century Company. He had often hungered for something inexpensive to read when he was a boy, and browsing through files of *St. Nicholas*, which the Century Company published, he felt that he had missed a great deal. He thought that it would be a good idea to syndicate old stories from *St. Nicholas* to weekly newspapers throughout the country. With little more than hard work and faith in his idea despite what at first seemed failure, he established a successful newspaper syndicate; in doing so, he aimed at a reading public which publishers had

largely ignored, a public lie was soon to reach as a magazine publisher.

McClure had not read magazines when he was a college student because they were too expensive. The success of such inexpensive magazines as the *Strand* and *Country Life* in England, and the success of *Ladies' Home Journal* in the United States, convinced him that an inexpensive popular magazine could succeed, especially as he thought that the development of photoengraving had broken the domination by established publishers. Early in 1882, with \$7,300 capital (of which he committed \$5,000 as the annual salary of his advertising manager), he began to plan a fifteen-cent monthly for readers who couldn't afford to spend twenty-five or thirty-five cents, the usual price of magazines. The first issue of *McClure's Magazine* was on the press when the panic of 1893 made additional capital hard to raise.

And McClure met unexpected competition in *Cosmopolitan*, edited by John Brisben Walker. Walker, who had made and lost a fortune manufacturing iron, bought the dying *Cosmopolitan* in 1889 and increased its circulation from 16,000 to 400,000 in five years. McClure had thought that it would be a year or two after *McClure's* first appeared before another inexpensive magazine would enter the field. But Walker left him no such lead; he cut the price of *Cosmopolitan*, long a 25-cent magazine, to 12½ cents, 2½ cents under the price of *McClure's*. That price cut produced a minor uprising.

The big revolution in the magazine industry came almost at once, in October, 1893. The New York *Sun* proclaimed it on a Monday morning in a black advertisement which announced that *Munsey's Magazine* had cut its price from twenty-five to ten cents, its yearly subscriptions from three dollars to one dollar. "We can do it," the advertisement said, "because we deal direct with news dealers and save two profits you pay on other magazines. No middlemen; no monopoly."<sup>4</sup>

The revolutionist was Frank A. Munsey, who vividly demonstrated a basic economic principle of twentieth-century magazine publishing—a principle which McClure, Walker, Curtis, and others were discovering in the late nineteenth century. It was sim-

<sup>4</sup> Advertisement from New York *Sun*, Oct. 2, 1893, reproduced by George Britt, *Forty Years—Forty Millions: The Career of Frank A. Munsey* (New York, 1935), facing p. 39.

ply this : One could achieve a large circulation by selling his magazine for much less than its cost of production and could take his profits from the high volume of advertising that a large circulation attracted. For not only did Munsey, like McClure and the others, make his appeal to a large mass of hitherto ignored readers ; he also made his appeal to a large and untapped class of advertisers, advertisers as eager for inexpensive space rates as readers were for inexpensive magazines. Not long after his announcement in the *Sun*, advertisers knew him for his famous rate of one dollar a page for each thousand of circulation.

Unlike McClure and Edward W. Bok, who sincerely wanted to carry inexpensive reading matter to the masses, Munsey wanted only profits from his magazines; his unprincipled quest for them earned him few admirers. One rival said that he was not a magazine publisher but a magazine manufacturer. When he died in 1925, William Allen White wrote of him: "Frank Munsey contributed to the journalism of his day the talent of a meat packer, the morals of a money changer and the manner of an undertaker. He and his kind have about succeeded in transforming a once-noble profession into an 8 per cent security. May he rest in trust." And one congressman made the superbly equivocal comment, "His death is as great a loss to the country as to his profession."<sup>5</sup>

After he had acquired wealth and power, Munsey had genealogists search out his family line so that, as he said, he could know his own history as he would know the pedigree of a horse he was going to bet on. He was born near Mercer, Maine, on August 21, 1854, the son of a moneyless farmer-carpenter. When he was twenty-three, he became manager of the office of the Western Union Telegraph Company in Augusta, Maine, and there he saw at first hand the money to be made from carlot publishing. Augusta was then the home of two inexpensive mail-order magazines of wide distribution, both of them filled with trashy editorial matter and even more trashy advertising but highly profitable to their publishers. One was Peleg O. Vickery's *Vickery's Fireside Visitor*; the other was Edward Charles Allen's *People's Literary Companion*, which in 1894 merged with *Comfort*, which in turn flourished well into the thirties with a circulation of a million or more. As a

<sup>5</sup> Britt, p. 17.



result of talks about publishing with Allen in Augusta House, Munsey gradually decided that his fortune lay in publishing.

Munsey started his first magazine, *Golden Argosy*, "Freighted with Treasures for Boys and Girls," in New York in December, 1882. For five years he was often broke, often in debt, and when he couldn't afford to buy manuscripts he wrote them himself. He dabbled in other publishing ventures which were uniformly unsuccessful. *Argosy* prospered for a while in 1887; but when the panic of 1893 struck, Munsey found himself with two failing magazines and with \$100,000 in debts. He was desperate.

In his desperation, Frank Munsey revolutionized magazine publishing and made his fortune. One of his failing magazines was *Munsey's*, which he had switched from weekly to monthly publication in October, 1891. In 1893 he slashed the price of *Munsey's* from twenty-five cents to ten cents and took space in the New York *Sun* to announce his decision. The September issue of his magazine also announced the cut in price:

At ten cents per copy and at a dollar a year for subscriptions in advance, *Munsey's* will have reached that point, a point below which no good magazine will ever go, but to which all magazines of large circulation in America must eventually come. The present low price of paper and the perfecting of printing machinery make it possible to sell at a profit a magazine at these figures—as good a magazine as has ever been issued, provided it is not too heavily freighted with advertisements.<sup>6</sup>

Munsey's reasoning was correct; like McClure, he realized that most readers had little middle choice between the inexpensive trash of the *People's Literary Companion* and the expensive elegance of the *Century-Harper's-Scribner's* triumvirate. But getting his magazines into the hands of his readers was quite another matter, for between Munsey and his public stood the American News Company, which distributed the bulk of American magazines. The company had branches throughout the United States and in Canada for wholesaling magazines to dealers, and it owned the Union News Company, one of the largest retailers of magazines. Its virtual monopoly of magazine distribution allowed it to dictate even the price of magazines. American News saw little commission for itself in a ten-cent magazine. When Munsey offered his magazine to the company at 6 ½ cents a copy, company officials told

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Britt, p. 81.

him that, they would pay him 4½ cents a copy as a favor. Munsey indignantly decided to go directly to the news dealers themselves. He wrote them letters and sent out broadsides by the thousand. His battle with American News was short and successful.

He won the contest because *Munsey's* itself was successful from the start. When readers heard of the ten-cent magazine, they asked dealers for copies; and as orders piled up, dealers who had remained unimpressed by letters and handbills asked Munsey for copies. Even the mighty American News Company yielded, but Munsey refused to come to terms, for he was getting so many orders from dealers that he had a hard time filling them. He stopped production of the first ten-cent issue to start work on the next. Circulation mounted: 40,000 copies of the first ten-cent issue in October, 1893; 60,000 in November, 1893; 200,000 in February, 1894; 275,000 at the end of the first year; and 500,000 by April, 1895. In March, 1898, Munsey boasted that his magazine had the largest circulation of any magazine in the world; in 1901, he claimed for it a circulation double the combined circulations of *Century*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*.

Munsey was not alone in his success. After a period of losses, debts, and scurrying to raise additional working capital, McClure established his magazine as a circulation leader and money maker. He cut its price from fifteen cents to ten cents and served up article after article that caught on with the public—Ida Tarbell's "Life of Napoleon" in 1894, for example, and her "Life of Lincoln." More and more readers bought copies. The first issue in 1893 sold but 8,000 of the 20,000 copies which McClure optimistically had had printed. At the end of 1894, however, circulation was 40,000 and a few months later 80,000. Before long, it was booming: 120,000 in August, 1895; 175,000 in November, 1895; 250,000 in December, 1895. Two and a half years after the first issue, *McClure's* far exceeded *Century*, *Harper's*, or *Scribner's* in circulation, and not long after that its circulation topped that of the three old leaders combined.

At first, however, *McClure's* was a financial flop. During its first summer, losses ran about a thousand dollars a month; as its circulation increased, losses mounted, and throughout 1895 the magazine was costing its publisher about four thousand dollars a month. As early as 1895, McClure was demonstrating what the Curtis Publishing Company was to learn in the first years of the

twentieth century with its *Saturday Evening Post* and what Time, Inc., was to learn in 1936 with its *Life*: success itself may threaten to kill a new or revived magazine. If circulation far outruns adjustments in advertising rates, as it did with *McClure's* and *Life*, the publishing costs of meeting the public demand for his magazine may ruin a publisher. *McClure's* low advertising rates and its rapidly climbing circulation cost its publisher thousands of dollars, as a similar situation was later to cost Time, Inc., five million dollars in a year and a half. But S. S. McClure, like Curtis and Time, Inc., brought his rates in line with his circulation; and in 1896 his magazine was clearing five thousand dollars a month and had established its prosperity and standing.

It was a happy time for magazines, that last decade of the nineteenth century, and fortunes were in the making as publishers reached persons who had seldom if ever before bought magazines. Cyrus Curtis, who had a genius for choosing brilliant editors and giving them a free hand, was building up three magazines which in the 1920's would take in a third or more of all money spent on national advertising in magazines. One cannot trace the emergence of the modern popular magazine without some mention of at least two Curtis publications. Curtis was alert to the new markets opening up for periodicals, and perhaps no publisher of his time had as profound a faith in advertising, the foundation on which the big national magazines were built.

In 1883 Cyrus Curtis, after indifferent success with a few publications operated on a shoestring, was partner in a four-year-old weekly, the *Tribune and Farmer*. Its women's department, taken over by Mrs. Curtis when she became exasperated with her husband's selections for it, had become so popular that Curtis decided to issue it as a separate publication. So in December, 1883, with Mrs. Curtis as editor, the *Ladies' Home Journal* first appeared. In a split over policy, Curtis gave his partner the *Tribune and Farmer*, which soon failed; he himself retained *Ladies' Home Journal*, which transformed the field of women's magazines and was one of the first magazines ever to reach a circulation of a million.

When Edward W. Bok took over the editorship from Mrs. Curtis in October, 1889, the *Ladies' Home Journal* was well established with readers and advertisers and had a comfortable circulation of 440,000. Bok continued to build on Mrs. Curtis'

success. Under the pseudonym "Ruth Ashmore," he originated a department "Side Talks with Girls," which he turned over to Isabel A. Mallon because the letters it evoked were too intimate for his eyes and which in sixteen years brought in some 158,000 letters from readers and kept three stenographers busy with replies. He advised women on how to raise babies, how to play the piano, how to understand and appreciate the Bible, how to improve the interiors of their homes. He campaigned against French fashions, against the killing of birds to adorn women's hats, against public drinking cups, against venereal disease. He published the best and best-known authors he could attract. And in doing so, he broke with the sentimentality, the moralizing and piety which had long characterized the women's magazine; he helped to make the women's magazine an organ of service to its readers, a publication keyed to their tastes and practical problems.

Of more general interest than the *Ladies' Home Journal* was the *Saturday Evening Post*, which Cyrus Curtis originally intended as a men's magazine but which, because men carried it home where their wives could read it, became in time symbolic of the reading fare of middle-class America. In 1897 when Curtis bought the magazine for a thousand dollars, with a down payment of one hundred dollars, the *Post* was dying; and Curtis' chances of resuscitating it seemed so slight that the advertising trade paper *Printers' Ink* remarked that he seemed bent on "blowing in all the profits" of the *Ladies' Home Journal* on "an impossible venture." For a time, Curtis did sink the profits of the *Journal* into the *Post*. To the dismay of the company treasurer, the new weekly showed a loss of a million and a quarter dollars before the public demand for it became so great that the presses could scarcely turn out copies fast enough. But once the *Post* caught on, both circulation and advertising revenue bounded:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Average Circulation</i>	<i>Advertising Revenue</i>
1897	2,231	\$ 6,933
1902	314,671	360,125
1907	726,681	1,266,931
1912	1,920,350	7,114,581
1917	1,883,070	16,076,562
1922	2,187,024	28,278,755

Curtis himself could take a good deal of credit for the *Post's* popularity. As the Curtis Publishing Company was to do in the

mid-1940's with *Holiday*, he was willing to suffer huge financial losses to keep alive a magazine in which he had faith; and he managed its business affairs well. Moreover, once he found a successful editor he gave him a free hand.

The editor was George Horace Lorimer, a Boston minister's son who at twenty-two had quit a job with the Armour packing company paying five thousand dollars a year, to prepare himself for journalism by taking a two years' course in general literature at Colby College. Curtis hired him for the *Post* at a thousand dollars a year, a salary which would increase one-hundredfold before he retired. Lorimer did so well that Curtis gave up his idea of luring Arthur Sherburne Hardy, a former editor of *Cosmopolitan*, to the *Post* as editor. Instead, in 1899, he made Lorimer editor.

Curtis founded the revived *Saturday Evening Post* on the proposition that a man's chief interest in life is the fight for livelihood—business. On the stage, in fiction, in articles, he thought, the business world was being misrepresented; and he reasoned that businessmen would welcome a magazine carrying authoritative articles and stories about business. Lorimer, translating Curtis' proposition into words and type, demonstrated that men—and women—did welcome such a magazine. Ex-presidents, premiers, senators, the best-known authors wrote for the *Post*, and when Lorimer couldn't buy what he wanted he wrote it himself; advertisers paid thousands of dollars to get their messages alongside the *Post's* fiction and its articles about romantic business and successful businessmen. From slim beginnings, the *Post* waxed fat and conservative, and at the end of World War I it had achieved the then fantastic circulation of two million.

As the century turned, then, the characteristics of the twentieth-century popular magazine were clearly discernible. What were they? First, magazines had become low in price. Their low price, ten cents and even five cents, put them within reach of an increased proportion of the American people. Frank Munsey, an astute observer, estimated that between 1893 and 1899 the ten-cent magazine increased the magazine-buying public from 250,000 to 750,000 persons. Secondly, as a result of their low price, as a result of mass production and of mass distribution over the entire nation, magazines had achieved undreamed-of circulations. Before the last decade of the nineteenth century, publishers had been extremely proud of circulations between 100,000 and 200,-

000; but by 1900, Bok's *Ladies' Home Journal* was moving rapidly toward a circulation of one million. Thirdly, advertising, attracted by large circulations as manufacturers quested for a national market, had become virtually essential for the success of a low-priced magazine. To attract many readers, the publisher needed a low price; to maintain his low price, he needed advertising volume. And, finally, magazine content had become "popular" as publishers and editors reached new audiences. This is not to suggest that magazines then were or now are edited for "the masses." Then, as now, magazines were edited for little publics within the population as a whole; but they were discovering new publics to which to appeal.

The change in content was important to the success of the new magazines which emerged in the late nineteenth century. Editorial matter became geared to the problems, perplexities, and interests of the readers as never before; neither highbrow nor lowbrow, it rode the large middle ground of public taste. The change is apparent to one who thumbs through the files of *Century* and *Munsey's*, of *Harper's* and *McClure's*, of *Scribner's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*,

The old leaders still looked across the sea and to the past. The newcomers looked at America and to the present—or future. In 1893 readers of *Harper's* could read such pieces as "An Artist's Summer Vacation" and "A French Town in Summer." But in 1894, when railroads were burgeoning, when coal miners were busily feeding the furnaces of industry, *McClure's* took its readers for a ride in the engine of "the swiftest train in the world" on its journey from New York to Chicago and into the depths of a coal mine with Stephen Crane. *Harper's* could run articles about "The Riders of Egypt"; *McClure's* wrote of circuses and the cattle brands of the West.

In an even more obvious fashion, magazines became a part of their readers' lives. Self-improvement had already become an American characteristic by the 1890's. Facilities for formal education were increasing faster than the population, public libraries were rapidly springing up, and the Chautauqua was drawing crowds. Magazines, whose success reflected this interest in education, made direct contributions. Edward Bok offered an expense-paid education at leading conservatories to young women who obtained the requisite number of subscriptions to *Ladies' Home*

*Journal* and later he extended the plan to include regular college scholarships. John Brisben Walker, somewhat impulsively, founded a correspondence university sponsored by *Cosmopolitan* and by May, 1898, had twenty thousand men and women on its rolls. In still other ways magazines sought to help their readers improve themselves and their ways of living. Bok commissioned architects to prepare building plans which would improve the small-house architecture of the country, and sold the plans by the thousand. He printed portfolios of art reproductions to improve the quality of pictures hanging on the walls of American homes.

Magazine illustration was being revolutionized. Both McClure and Munsey knew that photoengravings enabled them to compete with established magazines in art work and both, especially the latter, used photographs lavishly. From the first issue, *McClure's* had a success in its "Human Document" series, photographs from the lives of famous men. Frank Munsey discovered the nude female and took her into the American home. Like publishers since, he used subterfuge: he used her to illustrate such articles as his series, "Artists and Their Work."

In fiction, publishers were discovering that the story itself was more important than the literary skill with which it was told. Who told it was important, as Lorimer recognized, and some magazines sought showcase bylines; but, at bottom, the tale itself was the thing. Frank Munsey, an expert at tuning in on the public taste, outlined his prescription for the short story in 1895: "We want stories. That is what we mean—stories, not dialect sketches, not washed out studies of effete human nature, not weak tales of sickly sentimentality, not 'pretty' writing. . . . We do want fiction in which there is a story, a force, a tale that means something—in short a story. Good writing is as common as clam shells, while good stories are as rare as statesmanship." ' "

It was this gearing of content to the contemporary American scene, to the readers' interests and problems, that produced the era of muckraking which began in late 1902 and lasted, with ups and downs, for a decade. The biggest story in America at the time was Business. In the half dozen years after 1896, industrial consolidation was one of the outstanding features of American economic life, a movement encouraged by industrial and agricul-

tural prosperity. In this period of somewhat chaotic industrial expansion, politics at various levels and in various degrees became the handmaiden of business. Magazine editors knew it, and they tackled their big story in different ways. With a conservatism which was to guide him until his retirement, Lorimer steered his *Saturday Evening Post* on a steady course of romantic business, successful business, a course which left the magazine respected and prosperous when several of its muckraking contemporaries later were in their graves. As early as January, 1900, *Munsey's*, whose own publisher, in the spirit of the times, was bent on consolidating a publishing empire, ran two articles which reflected the public interest in trusts, although the magazine never became a muckraker. Other magazines, too, wrote of trusts and corruption in government.

Meanwhile, S. S. McClure sensed the big story of his day. It called for handling, for McClure believed that besides being an inexpensive source of good reading, a popular magazine should be an authoritative reporter of modern civilization. He encouraged Ida M. Tarbell in her *History of the Standard Oil Company*, a study which was to take her five years, and put Lincoln Steffens to work investigating municipal government. By coincidence, *McClure's* for January, 1903, carried three articles similar in theme and handling—Tarbell's third article on Standard Oil, Steffens' "The Shame of Minneapolis," and Ray Stannard Baker's "The Right to Work"—and the era of muckrakers officially opened. McClure later recalled: "It came from no formulated plan to attack existing institutions, but was the result of merely taking up in the magazine some of the problems that were beginning to interest people a little before newspapers and other magazines took them up."<sup>8</sup>

People were interested in the articles; as Ray Stannard Baker recalled in his autobiography, "everybody seemed to be reading them." And people had a multitude of articles to choose among, for magazine after magazine engaged in muckraking: *Arena*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Everybody's*, *Hampton's*. In 1906, several staff members of *McClure's*, including Baker, Steffens, and Tarbell, quit to buy the *American Magazine*, which they converted into a muckraking organ for a brief period.

<sup>8</sup>S. S. McClure, *My Autobiography* (New York, 1914), p. 246.



Militant from 1903 through 1905, the muckraking movement was an important force by 1906. Although it ebbed in 1908, it reached another high point in 1911 but by 1912 had spent itself. Why did it die? One historian of the movement, C. C. Regier, gives this explanation: "Because muckraking was to some extent merely a fad—of which the public grew tired, because of the pressure of financial interests, because some of the evils exposed had been remedied, and because of the inherent weakness in the movement itself, muckraking came to an end. Even liberalism, of which muckraking was but a part, received a stunning blow when the United States entered the World War."<sup>9</sup>

In his balance sheet, Regier credits the movement with a part in many reforms, among them a federal pure food law, child labor laws, a tariff commission, and workmen's compensation, as well as a part in the introduction of Congressional investigations and the development of sociological surveys. For the articles in *McClure's* and the other leading magazines were really exercises in popular sociology. They probed but did not advocate, and such an extraordinary amount of research went into them that McClure put the cost of Ida Tarbell's articles about Standard Oil at four thousand dollars each and of Steffens' articles at two thousand dollars each. Not all of the magazines that joined the muckraking crew were as thorough, and some were frankly sensational. Yet Regier has concluded that the general reliability of the muckraking magazines was high.

By the time that the muckrakers laid down their pens, the new journalism, with its pressure for huge circulations, its pitching of content to mass audiences, its scramble for the advertising dollar, was well on its way. Editors of national periodicals of broad appeal had found their market and had learned to give readers what they wanted. Advertising had appeared in sufficient quantity to give publishers a taste of the rewards for those who best won the reading public's approval and, as much as any one thing, had begun to shape the twentieth-century magazine and the industry which produced it.

<sup>9</sup> C. C. Regier, *The Era of the Muckrakers* (Chapel Hill, 1932), p. 214.

## *chapter 2 Advertising: Its Growth and Effects*

Between 1900 and 1955, magazine publishing was profoundly affected by changes in the American economy, particularly those in the distribution of consumer goods which led to the growth of advertising. As advertising grew it made the magazine a part of the system of marketing in the United States. This development had manifold effects on the magazine industry. It transformed the publisher from dealer in editorial wares to dealer in consumer groups as well. It helped to expand the sale of magazines, and it significantly altered the publisher's attitude toward circulation. It stimulated the publisher to research, especially in the characteristics of the market he served and in the effectiveness of his publication in reaching that market. It affected the format of magazines and their presentation of editorial copy. It raised the threat of influence by advertisers on editorial policy. In short, it affected virtually all aspects of the magazine industry.

The expanding volume of advertising as the century turned was a reflection of the shift of the United States from an agricultural nation to an industrial one. Until 1850 most manufacturing had been done in shop and household, and until the eighties agriculture was the chief source of wealth. But by 1890 manufacturing

had pushed ahead, and by 1900 the value of manufactured products was more than double that of agriculture.

As new inventions brought new industries into existence, as old industries stepped up their production and large factories turned out standardized goods in profusion, as an expanding system of roads and railways linked producer and consumer, there were important changes in methods of distribution. The small shops and households had produced for local or regional markets, and their methods of distribution were makeshift. But with the industrial revolution, which was one of the outstanding features of American economic life after the Civil War, the market became national, and by 1914 the conception of the domestic market had changed from specific places to widely scattered consumers.

The emergence of new industries and the expansion of old ones helped to swell the volume of magazine advertising in the last years of the nineteenth century and in the first years of the twentieth. Manufacturers found magazines an efficient means of spreading their sales messages over a wide area, and an advertiser could get good results from an annual advertising expenditure of \$25,000 when the new century opened. Through magazine advertising, the makers of established products such as Royal Baking Powder, Ivory Soap, and Baker's Chocolate reached new consumers; and manufacturers of new products such as the Eastman Kodak and the Gillette safety razor gained acceptance for their wares earlier than they could have without the magazine. The bicycle industry was the first to demonstrate the effectiveness of national advertising. In the eighties and nineties, rival manufacturers used magazines as well as other media not only to advertise their products but also to sell the bicycle as a form of transportation. Their success paved the way for advertising by the automotive industry, which was just coming into existence. Automobile manufacturers directed their first magazine advertising at consumers in 1889 when *Harper's* ran an advertisement for the Locomobile. Sixty-five years later, in 1954, the automotive industry spent \$53,899,000 on magazine advertising.

An important increase in magazine advertising revenues during World War I and after came from advertisers new to magazines, advertisers selling their goods and services on a national scale for the first time. As the economy expanded, the number of national advertisers grew, and new ones replaced the ones who disap-

peared as their companies merged or went out of business. Even at midcentury, the increase in the number of national advertisers was impressive. Between 1939 and 1952, the number of national advertisers went from 936 to 2,538, for instance, and the number of brands of merchandise which they were selling through advertising jumped from 1,659 to 4,472—increases of 171 per cent and 170 per cent, respectively. Newcomers since the start of World War II accounted for about one-third of all of the dollars spent on national advertising in magazines in 1952. Moreover, as the century wore on, advertisers could no longer conduct a national campaign on a budget of a few thousand dollars, as they could when the century opened. Of the hundred leading advertisers in 1954, about seventy spent at least a million dollars on magazine advertising. The General Motors Corporation alone spent \$20,-560,000 on magazine advertising in 1954, and the General Foods Corporation spent \$10,038,000.

Magazine advertising had existed in America, of course, long before the low-priced national magazine emerged in the last years of the nineteenth century. Almost as long as there have been magazines in America, there has been magazine advertising. In its issue of May 10, 1741, the *General Magazine and Historical Chronicle* carried a four-line reading notice, inserted at the cost of a few shillings. That seems to have been the first magazine advertisement in America.

But not until after the Civil War did advertising begin to appear in magazines in any volume. By then the advertising agency had appeared, if in somewhat crude form, and some of the agencies concentrated on developing magazine advertising. One of the first, founded in 1864, was the Carlton and Smith agency, which specialized in promoting advertising first for the religious weeklies, the major periodical medium in the third quarter of the century, and later for general magazines. J. Walter Thompson, who took over the agency in 1878, is often credited with being the one man who, more than anyone else, promoted the magazine as an advertising medium.

Well into the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, magazine publishers were almost exclusively purveyors of editorial matter, and many of them believed that advertising lowered the standing of their publications. Some publishers refused it altogether; others suffered it in limited quantities. Their attitude to-

ward advertisers and advertising men was often cavalier. George P. Rowell, a pioneer advertising agent, watched wide-eyed as Fletcher Harper turned down \$18,000 offered by Elias Howe's son-in-law for the last page of *Harper's* for a year to advertise the Howe Sewing Machine. Harper wanted the space to advertise Harper books. Another day the same George Rowell strode into the offices of *Harper's Weekly*, then in demand as an advertising medium, to coax the publishers into revealing its circulation. The publishers plainly regarded him as a prying busybody. One of them quietly remarked to his colleagues, "It seems to me that if Mr. Rowell talks that way we don't want to do business with him." Nor did they. They rejected the next advertisements that the Rowell agency submitted.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, timidly, some of the magazines which had declined advertising opened their pages to it. For a time, they made small effort to solicit advertising, however, and some of them rationed the space they allowed for it. One of the first magazines of high standing that actively sought advertising was *Century*. A dignified magazine edited for a dignified reader group, it imparted a certain decorum to advertising. Its devotion to advertising in the seventies and eighties has been credited with overcoming the reluctance of general and literary magazines to run ads.

By the turn of the century, general magazines had begun to seek and encourage advertising. The *Youth's Companion* and the *Century* had been doing so since the seventies, but now they were joined by others: the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Collier's*, *Delineator*, *McCall's*, *McClure's*, and *Munsey's*, to name a few. And as the general weeklies and monthlies cultivated advertising, the religious weeklies, for half a century a favorite advertising medium, lost ground. Sensing the change, some religious magazines, among them *Outlook* and *Independent*, converted themselves into secular magazines. To the delight of advertisers, to the dismay of some readers, advertisements began moving forward from the last pages of magazines to rest between divisions of editorial matter.

Changes also were taking place in the advertising business. Advertising agencies were expanding their services. Until about 1890, advertising agencies were generally space brokers which

<sup>1</sup> George P. Rowell, *Forty Years an Advertising Agent* (New York, 1906), pp. 28, 410-11.

bargained with publishers for large blocks of space and sold it, in smaller units, to their clients. Their prices were not standardized, and the agencies offered their clients no such services as copy-writing and layout. By 1890, however, advertising agencies were profuse, and they had begun to give their clients a hand with choosing media, writing copy, and even some rudimentary market analysis. Moreover, there was some standardization in advertising rates. Magazine publishers had begun to base their charges for space on circulation, and by 1900 Frank Munsey was already well known for his page rate of a dollar for each thousand of circulation. To get their money's worth, some advertisers tried to improve the effectiveness of their advertisements. They heard talks on the use of psychology in advertising, and they began to test the drawing power of their advertisements by key numbers and checking systems. More and more, they began to recognize the value of continuity in advertising. A few books on advertising began to trickle from the presses. In 1900 Professor Harlow Gale published his pamphlet on the psychology of advertising, and in 1903 Professor Walter Dill Scott brought out his *Theory of Advertising*.

As the century turned, magazines seemed full of advertising, although they carried nowhere near the volume that they later would. But to the readers of the time the increase seemed phenomenal. A statistician devised a table to show that in just one year—1900—*Harper's*, long an advertisers' favorite, carried a greater volume of advertising than in the entire preceding twenty-two years combined.

A discerning subscriber, especially if he subscribed to the right magazines at the right times, could have seen for himself the growth of magazine advertising in the twentieth century. When a reader of 1908 picked up a copy of a monthly magazine favored by advertisers, he encountered an average of 137 pages of advertisements, about 54 per cent of the total pages. When he picked up a similar monthly in 1947, he found 208 pages of advertisements, about 65 per cent of the total space. But the reader would have detected the greatest growth in the weeklies. In 1908 the leading weeklies carried an average of 19 pages of advertising an issue; in 1947 their average was 159 pages.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Printers' Ink*, 225 (Oct. 29, 1948) 108.

Throughout the twenties, the weekly in which the reader could have best seen the expanding volume was the *Saturday Evening Post*, which grew so fat on advertising that enterprising merchants reportedly bought up current copies for five cents as an inexpensive means of getting scrap paper. A monument of sorts was the issue of the *Post* for December 7, 1929. Weighing nearly two pounds, the 272-page magazine contained enough reading matter to keep the average reader occupied for twenty hours and twenty minutes. From the 214 national advertisers appearing in it, Curtis took in revenues estimated at \$1,512,000. Although new media arose in the thirties to contest the *Post's* top position as an advertising medium, the weekly nevertheless averaged almost \$1,610,000 an issue in advertising throughout 1955.

In the early twenties, a publisher whose magazine grossed \$2,000,000 in advertising in a single year accounted himself successful. After World War II, some magazines carried that much advertising in a single issue. The *Ladies' Home Journal* in its issue for October, 1946, which established something of a record, carried \$2,146,746 worth of advertising from 334 advertisers in its 246 pages. A single issue of the *Journal* two years later, in October, 1948, had \$2,677,260 worth of advertising. Those were records for single issues; in sustained performance the leader was *Life*, which averaged more than \$2,372,000 in advertising in each of its weekly issues throughout 1955. A monthly magazine, *Better Homes and Gardens*, averaged more than \$2,133,000 an issue that same year.

Reliable information on advertising expenditures is unavailable for the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. However, Table 1 shows the approximate amounts spent on national advertising in magazines from 1915 through 1955.

One can fairly well trace the economic fortunes of the United States in the amounts spent on national advertising in magazines from 1915 through 1955. Before World I, the table shows, magazines carried a comparatively low dollar volume of national advertising—\$28,000,000 in 1915, less than one-twentieth of what they would carry in 1954. In 1919, when wartime prosperity continued to give advertising a boost, magazines took in more than three times as much advertising revenue as in 1915. Although it

suffered from the recession of 1920 and 1921, the volume increased throughout the twenties to a peak of \$196,000,000 in 1929, a record not to be achieved again until World War II. In the thirties, depression and recession forced magazine advertising revenues below the happy levels of the prosperous twenties, yet the volume increased steadily as the country headed for World War II. Even network radio, which by the thirties had become a serious rival for the advertiser's dollar, evidently affected magazines much less than it did newspapers. During World War II, the dollar volume of advertising in magazines was probably much less than it would have been had not the paper shortage forced publishers to ration advertising space. After the war, with paper again available, magazines were taking in more advertising dollars than ever before, even if they were depreciated dollars. The \$653,000,000 spent on national advertising in 1955 was more than four times the sum spent in 1939.

By 1955, television, like radio years before, had appeared as a serious potential rival for the reader's attention and the advertiser's dollar. Yet there were few indications that television had cut into magazine advertising revenues. In 1955, the total advertising revenues of general and farm magazines were larger than those of the preceding year, and close to half again as large as they were when television started to boom. Three of the big weeklies, *Life*, *Look*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, which some observers had predicted would first feel the pinch of TV, in 1955 showed advertising increases over 1954, of 6, 7, and 14 per cent respectively.

Even as television boomed, some impartial observers and some spokesmen for the industry were fairly optimistic about the future of magazine advertising. Two college professors, J. Edward Gerald and George N. Ecklund, in a study of the probable effects of television on the income of other media, concluded in 1952 that magazines would probably lose little if any of their share of advertising to TV in the decade that followed.<sup>3</sup> The Magazine Advertising Bureau, looking back at television expenditures over the past few years, observed in May, 1953, that advertisers using network TV were paying for their shows with extra appropria-

<sup>3</sup> J. Edward Gerald and George N. Ecklund, "Probable Effects of Television on Income of Other Media," *Journalism Quarterly*, 29 (Fall, 1952) 394.



*Table 1***GROSS NATIONAL ADVERTISING IN GENERAL AND FARM MAGAZINES, 1915-1955**

Year	General Magazines	Farm Magazines	Total
1915	\$ 25,294,000	\$ 2,839,000	\$ 28,133,000
1916	33,405,000	3,455,000	36,860,000
1917	41,449,000	3,775,000	45,224,000
1918	54,652,000	3,780,000	58,432,000
1919	87,378,000	7,001,000	94,379,000
1920	119,875,000	9,591,000	129,466,000
1921	87,711,000	6,224,000	93,936,000
1922	91,735,000	6,031,000	97,766,000
1923	110,160,000	7,477,000	117,637,000
1924	123,911,000	7,858,000	131,769,000
1925	143,166,000	8,002,000	151,168,000
1926	155,694,000	9,348,000	165,041,000
1927	171,116,000	9,984,000	181,100,000
1928	171,046,000	9,953,000	180,999,000
1929	185,723,000	10,544,000	196,266,000
1930	182,484,000	9,634,000	192,118,000
1931	150,303,000	6,948,000	157,251,000
1932	104,907,000	5,667,000	110,574,000
1933	92,577,000	4,780,000	97,357,000
1934	111,254,000	6,405,000	117,659,000
1935	115,907,000	7,001,000	122,908,000
1936	133,015,000	8,633,000	141,648,000
1937	150,380,000	9,646,000	160,026,000
1938	132,736,000	8,428,000	141,164,000
1939	141,648,000	9,190,000	150,838,000
1940	156,276,000	9,368,000	165,644,000
1941	168,809,000	9,699,000	178,508,000
1942	164,171,000	9,422,000	173,593,000
1943	214,334,000	12,931,000	227,265,000
1944	254,048,000	14,896,000	268,944,000
1945	286,371,000	16,446,000	302,817,000
1946	361,189,000	18,248,000	379,437,000
1947	415,802,000	24,269,000	440,071,000
1948	429,993,000	28,684,000	458,677,000
1949	412,501,000	28,380,000	440,881,000
1950	428,419,000	30,032,000	458,451,000
1951	482,742,000	31,109,000	513,851,000
1952	519,709,000	32,990,000	552,699,000
1953	570,039,000	33,075,000	603,114,000
1954	565,347,000	31,795,000	597,142,000
1955	622,006,000	31,389,000	653,395,000

*Source:* Magazine Advertising Bureau. The calculations are based on the records of the Publishers' Information Bureau. Sunday supplements are excluded.

tions instead of cutting into the sums spent on other media, although network radio was feeling the competition.<sup>4</sup> The president of Crowell-Collier, Paul C. Smith, professed his faith in the future of magazines in early 1955. "Television is not any kind of danger," he said. "It's a fact of life. It's an opportunity, a promise. Magazines have to make an adjustment to it and those magazines which are properly edited and properly managed have and will use television to their own advantage."<sup>5</sup>

Advertising in large measure made possible the low-priced magazine of large circulation which emerged during the last years of the nineteenth century. Frank Munsey, S. S. McClure, and, above all, Cyrus Curtis with his *Saturday Evening Post*, effectively demonstrated what soon became a basic principle of publishing: that a publisher could lose millions of dollars on circulation by selling his magazine at less than production cost and yet could reap millions of dollars in profit from advertising. It was with this principle in mind that one publisher of the 1890's remarked: "If I can get a circulation of 400,000 I can afford to give my magazine away to anyone who will pay the postage."<sup>6</sup> As publisher after publisher applied the principle, magazine publishing became a mass production enterprise.

As magazines came to depend on advertising for economic support, the role of the typical publisher underwent a major change. No longer was he interested in the reader just as a reader; he became interested in the reader as a consumer of the advertiser's goods and services. No longer was he a producer of just a convenience good; he became also the seller of a service, that of carrying the advertiser's message to a group of consumers—as magazines became more and more specialized in editorial appeal, to a carefully screened, homogeneous group of consumers. As a specialist in groups of consumers, the magazine publisher became a part of the whole system of marketing in the United States, as a later chapter will show in some detail.

As advertisers began paying for space on the basis of circulation, as advertising agencies began extending their services to clients, advertising men began to take a keen interest in magazine

<sup>4</sup> *M.A. Briefs* (May 5, 1953) 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Tide*, 29 (Jan. 1, 1955) 41.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, 1929), p. 471.

circulation; passing was the day when a publisher could regard circulation as a business secret. In the scramble for circulation that the low-priced magazine unleashed, some publishers padded their circulation figures. Understandably, advertisers sought some sound basis for evaluating circulation claims.

In 1899 the Association of American Advertisers made the first attempt to verify circulations of magazines and newspapers on the basis of uniform standards. But because publishers were hesitant to allow examination of their records, because of their lack of standardization in methods of bookkeeping and accounting, because of a shortage of funds, the attempt ended unsuccessfully in 1913 with the Association heavily in debt to some of its sponsors. In 1913, however, the Association of National Advertisers set about establishing a new group to audit circulations. Meanwhile, the Association of American Advertisers, in conjunction with the Western Advertising Agents' Association, started a new audit association to replace the one which had failed. Out of these two new auditing groups, which merged in 1914, came the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

At first, publishers resented the advertisers' attempts to verify their circulation claims. Cyrus Curtis, when asked to join the Audit Bureau, remarked, "No one doubts the circulation statements of my company." He joined after A.B.C. representatives convinced him that by staying out he would be helping the cause of the circulation padders. The list of A.B.C. publications lengthened over the years so that by 1955 most of the large-circulation consumer magazines were members. The number of magazine publishers with membership in A.B.C. was 54 in 1914; 173 in 1924; 189 in 1934; 217 in 1944; and 267 in 1954.

Thus advertisers, through A.B.C., were a major force in changing the attitude of magazine publishers toward circulation. Far from being a trade secret, as in the days of *Harper's Weekly*, or something to be taken on faith, as when Curtis balked at joining A.B.C., circulation became a subject of close scrutiny. Advertisers wanted to know more than just how many copies a magazine sold; they wanted to know something about the quality of circulation as well. The A.B.C. reports told them how the circulation was obtained, how many subscribers actually paid for the magazine and under what arrangements, and a good deal of similar information that helped them to assess quality. For the publisher, of course,

membership in A.B.C. became an asset; it was a convincing guarantee.

The A.B.C. was given power to suspend members guilty of padding their circulation figures. Rarely did any large publisher do so. When a new management took over Macfadden Publications, Inc., in 1941, however, it discovered that during the previous year *True Story* had falsified its sales by an average of 76,697 copies, *Liberty* by 21,185. The new management, which was not involved in the falsifications and which did not know about them until a re-examination of the company's books, paid rebates to advertisers. Although A.B.C. sustained a charge of "fraudulent practices" against the company, it did not suspend the company from membership because the new management was not involved in the padding, because it cooperated fully with A.B.C. in the re-audit, and because it made full and voluntary refunds.<sup>7</sup>

Besides making publishers take a new attitude toward circulation, advertising to a large extent stimulated magazines to research, especially research to uncover data about the readers they served and their effectiveness in reaching those readers, research that had value in promoting their publications among advertisers.

Before 1920, advertisers and advertising agencies themselves, for the most part, accepted the efficacy of advertising largely on faith. They had seen the success of companies that spent large sums on advertising, and they concluded that advertising must be effective. Although some men even before 1920 wanted more conclusive evidence than that of advertising effectiveness, their suggestions were not generally accepted.

The decade from 1920 to 1930 was one of advances in merchandising generally. Marketing men learned a lesson from the plight of the Model T Ford. In early years, because it was cheap and durable, it sold well without much advertising. But after motorists began attaching importance to beauty, convenience, and comfort as well as to the prestige of owning an expensive car, the Model T sold poorly even with advertising. A conclusion was that advertising of itself was not enough; the product itself was important. Market research became an important basis of product improvement; national advertising, in turn, became important as a means of capitalizing on product improvement.

<sup>7</sup> *Tide*, 15 (June 15, 1941) 57-58; *Tide*, 15 (July 15, 1941) 14.

Then, too, after the crash of 1929, when advertising budgets were slashed, advertising men turned to research to document the effectiveness of advertising and to get the most for their clients' appropriations. Market research became an important part of the national advertising campaign.

As space came to be bought less on faith than on fact, magazine publishers, through their own staffs or through commercial agencies, undertook research of interest to the advertiser. Competition from other media and from other magazine publishers probably forced them to. By the late twenties, radio was rapidly becoming an important competitor for advertising appropriations; the gross advertising carried by networks jumped from \$4,000,000 in 1927 to \$10,000,000 in 1928 to \$19,000,000 in 1929. Magazines recognized the threat; the *Saturday Evening Post* ran many articles about stage and screen but paid the scantiest of editorial attention to radio. To convince advertisers that magazines were still important as a medium, publishers compiled evidence based on research.

Magazine research really dates from these efforts of magazines in the late twenties to sell themselves as a medium, according to W. H. Mullen, director of the Magazine Advertising Bureau. Later, in the thirties when publishers saw that radio was not eating into their share of total advertising appropriations, magazine research became competitive. Each individual magazine strove to convince advertisers that it was the best medium for reaching their markets, and to do so the publisher had to learn a great deal about his reader group and its buying and reading habits. The development of sampling and polling techniques by Dr. George Gallup and others, and especially the success of those methods in predicting results of the 1936 Presidential election, no doubt gave a boost to magazine research.

Although magazines generally turned to research only in the late twenties and early thirties, a few individual publishers had set up research staffs earlier than that. The first marketing research organization of any kind in the United States was established by the Curtis Publishing Company in 1911, when the company created a division of commercial research as a part of its advertising department and installed Charles C. Purlin as head. Cyrus Curtis had been among the first magazine publishers to recognize the potentialities of national advertising, and the com-

pany's interest in research seemed an outgrowth of this recognition. The Curtis Publishing Company itself has described the origin of its research in this way: "It began because the Company sensed the need for an understanding of markets. Curtis realized the need for obtaining information about its own publications and about the industries of the advertisers and potential advertisers in its publications. It needed to know about its own products and about the products produced by these advertisers, about the market for these products and about the people who bought and consumed them."<sup>8</sup>

When Parlin went to work, Curtis had just recently bought *Country Gentleman*, and no one in the company knew much about agriculture; so Parlin as his first project made a six months' study of the agricultural implement industry. After he had finished a 460-page report about it, he conducted other surveys—one of department stores, which involved 37,000 miles of travel and 1,121 interviews; a census of distribution; a year-long study of the automotive industry. So many other studies followed it, studies of industries, buying habits, reading habits, and a host of kindred matters, that four volumes were needed to condense the findings of the Curtis research staff from 1911 through 1949. Reorganized from time to time, the research division in 1943 was given full departmental status equivalent to that of advertising, circulation, manufacturing, editorial, procurement, public relations, and the business office, and made directly responsible to the president.

What sort of research did magazines do? Some, a comparatively small amount, was conducted to guide their editorial staffs in turning out publications with reader appeal. Such research is discussed in a later chapter. The bulk of the research was conducted with the advertiser in mind.

Much of it dealt with the market for advertisers' goods and services. Thus, for example, *Country Gentleman*, of the Curtis Publishing Company, issued a number of reports on the number of farms and their geographical distribution, the purchasing power of farmers, the types of purchases farmers were contemplating, and so on. After 1945, Curtis published a monthly publication, *Rural Marketing*, to give advertising and marketing men

<sup>8</sup> Curtis Publishing Company, Research Department, "Research Department of Curtis Publishing Company" (Philadelphia, n.d.), p. 1.

"news and trends of the farm market." *Seventeen*, of Triangle Publications, issued a number of brochures showing the number of women between the ages of thirteen and twenty; the percentage of them who were married, planned meals, gave parties; the influence they exerted on family purchases, and similar information. *True*, a man's magazine, conducted studies of beer and liquor consumption.

To convince advertisers that their publications reached the market that the advertisers wanted to reach, magazines gathered voluminous data on their readers' geographical distribution; their standard of living; their age, sex, and marital status; their possessions; and so on. *Life* issued such studies in 1946 and 1952. *True* published reports of its readers' interest in hunting, fishing, and hobbies, and their purchases of automotive and other equipment.

Magazines also examined the readership of their own and competitors' publications; and while such studies might be termed editorial research, they seem to have been undertaken primarily to impress advertisers with the acceptance of a publication by its readers. In 1935, for instance, *McCall's* had been studying the magazine reading habits of American women for about twenty years. In a survey in 1946 it tried to learn which of twenty-two magazines women preferred and what sort of content in those publications most interested them. Its study in 1953 sought to learn just who read *McCall's* and just what part the magazine played in their daily lives. *Good Housekeeping* in 1954 sponsored a study to learn the attitudes of women toward eight magazines and their responses to advertising in those magazines.

Obviously a large amount of such research was competitive and promotional. By implication, it was designed to show that Magazine A reached a more select group of consumers than Magazines B through Z, that the readers of Magazine A studied its pages with fanatical devotion but just casually flipped over the pages of other magazines. By implication, it was designed to show that any advertiser who wanted his money's worth would wisely choose Magazine A to reach his market.

Although advertising support as much as anything else seems to have brought about research within the magazine industry, many advertising men in 1955 seemed skeptical of a good deal of media research. They were becoming increasingly critical of re-

search intended to show the strengths of a given medium or to show the strengths of an individual publication or radio station. Such research, critics said, was conflicting, misleading, and self-seeking. In 1950 some two hundred leaders in advertising, marketing, public relations, and allied fields were questioned by *Tide*, an advertising trade magazine, on the objectivity of media research. More than 75 per cent of those replying agreed that criticism of media research was largely justified; 85 per cent believed that an impartial group should be set up to evaluate such research. One of the men who replied pretty well summed up objections to media research: "Too many surveys start out with intent to prove a specific point rather than to discover the truth about the point in question. Too many surveys use shoddy techniques or misuse known and reliable techniques. Too many media studies are conducted by the media themselves rather than have the work done by reputable and objective independent research organizations."<sup>9</sup>

In format and in layout, magazines also were influenced by advertising, which can take a good deal of credit for their improved appearance and legibility in the past half-century. The development of advertising affected makeup and format in at least four ways: (1) it caused standardization of page sizes; (2) it caused editorial matter and advertising to be run side by side; (3) it stimulated the attractive presentation of editorial features; and (4) it increased the use of color in magazines.

When respected magazines first allowed advertisers to buy space, the publications confined advertising to a special section in the rear of the book. As the volume of advertising grew, at the turn of the century, the individual advertiser suffered; for his message, surrounded by other advertising, had an increasingly difficult time attracting the reader's attention. Consequently, many advertisers took their business to magazines with large pages, such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and some of the women's magazines. The large pages gave them room to experiment with arrangements of art and copy for the best display of their message and could easily accommodate editorial matter alongside the advertising. When Time, Inc., was planning *Life* for its debut in 1936, Daniel Longwell insisted on a large page

<sup>9</sup> *Tide*, 24 (July 28, 1950) 20.



size not only to give pictures good display but because he knew that *Life* would be competing with large-paged *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Most magazines seeking advertising, however, increased their pages to about nine by twelve inches, a size adequate for display and for handling editorial matter alongside advertising.

Some standardization of page size held down the advertiser's costs; for once he had an advertisement prepared, he could use duplicate plates to run the same ad in several magazines. If a publisher expected to get advertising, he virtually had to adopt a standard page size. In 1929, when *World's Work*, *Golden Book*, *Review of Reviews*, and *Forum* simultaneously increased their page sizes, they did so in part to give the advertiser ample display space but also to permit him to use one set of plates in his advertising campaigns. At midcentury, magazines were still changing page sizes for the same reason. Magazines by then had so settled on a few standard sizes for their pages that the printer of *Harper's*, believing that few modern presses could handle its outdated page size, raised his prices 27 per cent. Instead of paying the increase, *Harper's* changed printers and page size.

Pocket magazines did not conform to the standard size, but then they had not become major advertising vehicles by 1955. When the *Reader's Digest* began to accept a limited amount of advertising in 1955, advertisers presumably thought that its large circulation justified the expense of preparing special advertisements and plates. It seemed conceivable if not probable that the *Digest's* acceptance of advertising might increase the volume of advertising in other pocket-sized magazines. *Coronet*, for example, reported a sharp increase in lineage when the *Digest* began running advertising because some *Digest* advertisers also bought pages in *Coronet*.

Yet the way was hard for the publisher who did not adopt a standard format. What happened to one off-sized magazine that was forced to seek advertising may be instructive. The Cowles's *Quick*, begun in 1949 as a vestpocket-sized news magazine, ran up a circulation of a million in a short time; but rising production costs made it impossible for the magazine to survive profitably without advertising. Advertisers hesitated to use *Quick*, however, because preparing special plates for its small pages ran up their expenses and because the additional cost seemed justified

only if circulation exceeded two million. The publisher, unable to obtain sufficient advertising, disposed of the magazine in 1953. Although *Quick* was still being published in 1955, neither it nor the magazines which copied its format had attracted any significant amount of advertising.

The page sizes that magazines settled on were large enough to accommodate editorial copy alongside advertising. At first, the aim of the advertiser seems to have been to get his message out of the special advertising section in the rear of the magazine, where it was lost among others. On a page along with or adjacent to editorial copy, the advertisement would be more likely to catch the reader's eye. In time, advertisers decided that certain positions were more certain of reader attention than others: pages 1, 3, 5; the page facing the first page of editorial copy; the first page following the body of editorial matter; and so on. The Campbell Soup Company for so many years bought the first right-hand page after the body of editorial matter that the page became known in magazine and advertising offices as "the Campbell Soup position."

When the national magazine was still in its infancy, publishers began running editorial copy alongside advertisements. From then on, editors experimented with techniques to build reader traffic throughout the entire magazine—running cartoons in the rear of the book, for instance—so that advertisers in all positions would benefit. It was to increase reader exposure to advertising that Otis Weise, editor and publisher, completely redesigned the makeup of *McCall's* in 1950. He compared his plan for increasing the amount of timely copy alongside advertising to traffic planning by cities to give stores in every neighborhood a fair chance in attracting customers.

Two things forced the editor to pay increasing attention to the attractive presentation of editorial material—the larger page sizes magazines settled on, and the advances of advertisers in displaying their sales messages. There was a limit to the size of page that the reader would accept with little or no typographical adornment; and as many magazines adopted standard pages of about nine by twelve inches, editors had to use such devices as hand-lettered titles, white space, drawings and photographs, and so on to break up the gray monotony of their pages. Moreover, editorial copy had to compete with advertising copy for the

reader's attention; and as advertisers made increasingly skillful use of art work, typography, and white space, editors were encouraged to dress up their own pages.

As advertisers sought maximum effectiveness for their advertisements, they began using color to attract attention; to contribute toward realism in photographs of their products; to identify their products or trademarks; to suggest qualities associated with their products, such as warmth or coolness; and so on. In the 1880's, color in magazines was a rarity; by the early 1930's it had become commonplace, but its big growth was after the mid-thirties.

A reader who compared copies of magazines of 1936 with those of 1946 could see for himself how the use of four-color advertising had grown. In 1936, for instance, the *American* magazine ran 121 pages of four-color ads, which comprised 20 per cent of total advertising space; in 1946 it ran 369 pages, which comprised 43 per cent of the total. In 1936 *McCall's* ran 256 pages, comprising 35 per cent of total ad space; in 1946, it ran 552 pages, comprising 54 per cent of the total. In 1936, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran 793 pages, comprising 29 per cent of total ad space; in 1946, it ran 1,770 pages, comprising 44 per cent of the total. The story was the same for magazine after magazine—*Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Popular Science*, and others. Doing some rapid calculations, the reader could have noted tremendous increases in the proportion of four-color advertising space to total advertising space—183 per cent for *True Story*, 164 per cent for *Vogue*, 142 per cent for *Collier's* and similarly large percentages for other magazines. By 1948, nearly one in every three pages of advertising in magazines was a four-color page, and nearly half of the advertising pages were in two or more colors.

Another influence of advertising between 1900 and 1955 was on the editorial content of magazines. The amount and nature of advertising pressure on editorial policies, and the amount of resistance to it, can scarcely be estimated with any accuracy. One can collect instances of suppression to please the advertiser, as George Seldes and Upton Sinclair have done for newspapers; but one often cannot clearly distinguish between what was "suppression" and what was rejection for sound editorial reasons. And how to gauge indirect editorial pressure? Independent as an editor may have

been consciously, to what extent may he have been subconsciously influenced by the mere existence of advertising support? Certainly some publishers yielded to pressure, direct or indirect; certainly others resisted it. A safe generalization perhaps is that direct advertising pressure—especially successful pressure—has been much less than the average reader may guess; that most advertising pressure has been subtle and just a part of a greater pressure, the economic struggle for survival, a point developed at length in a later chapter.

A number of editors and publishers have shown attitudes toward advertisers ranging from indifference to downright belligerence. From the founding of the *New Yorker*, its editor, Harold Ross, insisted on an editorial department free from any domination by the business office; and he was fortunate in having as a major financial backer Raoul Fleischmann, who believed in separation of the editorial and business functions. A story that business office personnel could enter editorial offices only with permission is apocryphal, but that it should persist is a credit to the editorial integrity of the magazine.

Editorial staff members of Time, Inc., from its first lean years onward, are said to have viewed advertisers with what amounted almost to hostility. Briton Hadden himself, one of the founders of *Time*, seemed to delight in running stories that advertisers would object to; and in 1925, after his advertising manager had just landed the Fisher Body account, Hadden so antagonised Fisher Body and Packard with a story that they at once cancelled fifty-two pages of advertising.<sup>10</sup> Other advertisers, among them Chrysler and Boeing, withdrew their business because of stories they objected to; but like Packard and Fisher, they later returned. An official of Union Carbide and Carbon, which spent about \$100,000 a year in *Time*, once remarked: "The last time they ran a big chemical story I didn't know about it in time to get one of our ads into the issue."<sup>11</sup> Even so disenchanted a former employee of Time, Inc., as Dwight MacDonald, who was on the staff of *Fortune* from 1929 to 1936, stated that in the early thirties the *Fortune* management stood firmly against attempts at advertising pressure. For calling the Matson liner *Malolo* by its

10 Noel F. Busch, *Briton Hadden: A Biography of the Co-Founder of Time* (New York, 1949), pp. 190-91.

11 "Life with Time" *Forbes*, 72 (Aug. 15, 1953) 12-13.

nickname among travelers, "Malolo the Roller," he said, *Fortune* lost Time, Inc., some \$50,000 in advertising. MacDonald's complaint was that Henry Luce and his editors, defiant to crude forms of pressure, were susceptible to subtle forms of influence, such as a discreet word from a banker or businessman.<sup>12</sup>

Editorial independence at the Curtis Publishing Company was established under Cyrus Curtis, Edward Bok, and George Horace Lorimer, according to Ben Hibbs of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and thereafter was taken for granted.<sup>13</sup> Most national advertisers, he thought, were sold on it as a matter of sound business.

And indeed both editorial and business staff members of various magazines have justified editorial independence on a business basis, apart from responsibilities to their readers, which they also acknowledge. In the long run, they have held, editorial purity is profitable to publisher and advertiser alike. Their arguments have gone something like this: "The advertiser's money is wasted if his ads aren't believed. To be believed, his ads must be in a publication that readers trust. And if advertisers start having a say-so about editorial content, then it's not going to be long before readers find out and lose respect for the magazine." An advertising executive on one large magazine once explained to the author why he has been pleased with a sharp division between its editorial and business functions: "We do business with a lot of advertisers, and if I start to use a little influence on the editorial staff for one advertiser, I'm in a spot where every advertiser can ask me to do him a favor. This way is easier. They know now that I don't have any influence, and I can treat them all alike."

On the other hand, the record is dotted with instances of successful business office pressure on editorial policies. Advertising pressure in 1937 kept *Ken* from becoming the liberal magazine that some of its founders intended, according to George Seldes, for a time one of its editors.<sup>14</sup> *Ken* was published by David Smart of Esquire, Inc., who originally saw it as a cross between the *Nation* and *Life*, a lively liberal magazine telling "the truth be-

<sup>12</sup> Dwight MacDonald, "'Fortune' Magazine," *Nation*, 144 (May 8, 1937) 527.

<sup>13</sup> Ben Hibbs, "You Can't Edit a Magazine by Arithmetic," *Journalism Quarterly*, 27 (Fall, 1950) 370.

<sup>14</sup> George Seldes, "'Ken'—The Inside Story," *Nation*, 146 (Apr. 30, 1938) 497-500.

hind the news" and tapping a mass circulation among American liberals. But, Seldes charged, Smart kept watering down its content, kept scrapping its best features, as advertisers threatened not only *Ken* but also Smart's prosperous *Esquire*.

*Esquire* itself, in April, 1941, publicly apologized to its advertisers after running an article, "Go Get a Guitar," a plea for group singing in which the author said a guitar is better accompaniment than the piano. Six months after the article appeared, *Esquire* ran a full-page editorial which said: ". . . We lost all our piano ads, like so many clay pigeons. . . . We can and do beg the pardon of the piano makers, severally and collectively, but we have no kick coming as we kiss the ads goodbye. We earned the rap we're taking. . . ." <sup>15</sup>

Certainly it was advertising pressure, direct or indirect, that in 1948 and 1949 inspired several magazines to campaign against the tax of 20 per cent on cosmetics. The cosmetics industry was a large advertiser; in 1949, advertisements for toiletries and toilet goods accounted for \$37,484,000 of the \$413,000,000 spent on national advertising in magazines. The women's magazines, of course, got a large share of it; and among movie magazines, cosmetics advertising was the single largest source of advertising income.

In 1948 and 1949, *Tide*, the advertising trade paper, reported a campaign conducted by several magazines for repeal of the 20 per cent tax on cosmetics. One of the first moves was by William Cotton, president of Ideal Publishing Company, which published *Movie Stars*, *Movie Life*, *Personal Romances*, and *Intimate Romances*. In an editorial in all four of those magazines and in newspaper advertisements in five cities, Mr. Cotton urged women to combat the "man-made tax on feminine necessities."<sup>16</sup> His magazines played such themes as "protest the tax on your attractiveness" and "is it a luxury to be attractive?" The promotion manager of Ideal Publishing Company prepared kits of antitax materials for forty thousand women's clubs. Other magazines joined in the campaign. The beauty editor of *Screenland* and *Silver Screen* asked readers to protest the tax to their Congress-

15 "Torch Song, Pianissimo, to the Piano Makers," *Esquire*, 15 (Apr., 1941) 6.  
16 *Tide*, 22 (Sept. 24, 1948) 44.

men. Fawcett Publications in its *Today's Woman* ran an article in which "an angry housewife sounds off on luxury taxes."<sup>17</sup>

Advertising, then, came to magazines in the third quarter of the nineteenth century as a timid guest, shut off in its own room, tolerated rather than welcomed. In the 1890's, publishers discovered that the guest, far from just paying its own bills, could foot the bills of the entire establishment. The guest became an important member of the household—in time one with a voice in just how the household should be managed.

<sup>17</sup> *Tide*, 23 (Jan. 28, 1949) 49.

### *chapter 3* The Expanding Magazine Market

Four times within the first half of the twentieth century, gloomy observers shook their heads and speculated over a drop in the extent of magazine reading. The first time was after World War I when the automobile became a pleasure and business vehicle for all classes of people instead of a novelty for the well-to-do. "The automobile will take people out of their homes," observers said, "and they won't have time for magazine reading." The second time was in the mid-twenties when radio aerials sprouted from housetops across the country and stations scrambled to affiliate with national networks. The third time was in 1927 when the movies found their voice. The fourth time was after World War II when television boomed as radio had a quarter of a century earlier.

Despite pessimistic forecasts from time to time, however, magazines had a tremendous growth between 1900 and 1955. The number of magazine readers increased remarkably. When Frank Munsey brought out his *Mimsey's Magazine* in 1893, he later estimated, there were about 250,000 magazine purchasers in the United States. By 1899, the ten-cent magazine, he further estimated, had increased the number to 750,000. In 1947, in its na-



tionwide audience study, the Magazine Advertising Bureau found 32,300,000 magazine reading families—those in which members could identify specific items from recent issues. The number of individual magazines also increased; there were well over a thousand more magazines in the United States in 1955 than in 1900. The aggregate circulation of all magazines in the United States mounted steadily, and the sales of individual publications soared from thousands to millions. In 1900 there seems to have been no magazine with a circulation of a million; in 1955 there were at least forty-six general and farm magazines with circulations of one million or more, and one of them had a circulation of more than ten million for its domestic edition alone. Before examining the growth of the magazine industry in detail, let us look at some of the reasons for its growth.

The burgeoning of the magazine industry was the result of an expanding market in a twofold sense: a growing demand for advertisers' goods and services, and a growing demand for the publishers' own products, magazines. The magazine industry shared in the expansion of the American economy as a whole in the first half of the twentieth century, just as did the manufacturers of automobiles, refrigerators, and dentifrices, and such other communications media as newspapers and radio.

Under a system of advertising support, in which the publisher performed a marketing function, the fortunes of the magazine industry became closely dependent upon the health of the economy in general. With the emergence of the national magazine in the late nineteenth century, as already noted, the magazine publisher became a dealer in consumer groups as well as a dealer in editorial matter. He decided upon a group of consumers which advertisers wanted to reach, and he attracted the consumers to his magazine with a carefully planned editorial formula. Just as often, perhaps, he issued his publication and let it find its audience. Then he sold advertisers space in his magazine to tell their sales stories to the readers he had collected. Selling his magazine for less than production cost, he took his profits from advertising.

Counting on national advertising for his revenue, the magazine publisher became dependent upon the demand for advertisers' goods and services. Economists have shown that over the years magazine revenues from national advertising have matched consumer spending. In fact, Richard G. Gettell, chief economist for

Time, Inc., has suggested that consumer spending is an important forecasting tool; for if one can obtain reasonable predictions about the economy as a whole, he can pretty closely guess how many dollars magazines will get from national advertising.<sup>1</sup>

From 1935 onward, Gettell noted, changes in the amounts that consumers spent for goods were matched by almost exactly proportional changes in amounts spent on national advertising in all principal media. Consumer spending and national advertising paralleled one another through depression and recession in the thirties, through mobilization and war in the early forties, through reconversion in the late forties. The media did not share alike in national advertising throughout the whole period. But the share that magazines received was the most stable of that of any medium in relation to both consumer spending and total advertising expenditures. Year after year, except for a dip in World War II, magazines took in from \$3.50 to \$3.75 for every \$1,000 that consumers spent for goods; year after year their percentage of total advertising revenues fluctuated the least. What Gettell was saying in substance, then, was that the revenues which magazines derived from advertising were exceedingly sensitive to changes in the overall level of consumer spending. As consumer spending rose or fell, so did magazine income from advertising, hence the usefulness of consumer spending as a predictive tool. Others have commented on the same point. Economists of the Federal Communications Commission concluded in 1947: "Of the three media, broadcast appears to be the least sensitive to changes in disposable personal income, magazines most sensitive."<sup>2</sup>

As Americans spent increasing sums to raise their material standard of living, magazines benefited from the expanding market for advertisers' goods and services. But the publisher, besides selling his service to advertisers, had his own product to market in competition with claims on readers' time by other media and activities. Helping him to sell his magazines despite this competition were a number of changes in American life in the twentieth cen-

1 Richard Glenn Gettell, "What Will Advertising Be Like in a Mobilized Economy?" (talk at thirty-third annual meeting, American Association of Advertising Agencies, Hotel Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., Apr. 20, 1951).

2 Federal Communications Commission, *An Economic Study of Standard Broadcasting* (Washington, 1947), p. 60.

tury, among them a great increase in leisure time and advances in education and literacy.

Marketing men are fond of saying that "the market is a diamond." People comprising the horizontal band across the middle of the diamond—those belonging to what is loosely termed "the middle class"—buy the great bulk of consumer goods and the great bulk of magazines. During the first half of the twentieth century, as the population increased and as purchasing power became more and more equitably distributed, the diamond grew in size and changed in shape: the top and bottom of it drew together and flattened out the center. Let us see what happened.

In raw numbers, the market expanded as the population of the United States increased enormously. The estimated population in 1893, when Munsey brought out his low-priced magazine, was 66,970,000. In 1954 it was more than 162,414,000. Between those years, the upward climb was by big steps, as census figures for the intervening years indicate: 77,995,000 in 1900; 91,972,000 in 1910; 105,711,000 in 1920; 122,775,000 in 1930; 131,669,000 in 1940; and 150,697,000 in 1950. Between 1920 and 1954, the nation grew as if it had taken on another sixteen Midwest and Southwest states with their 1920 populations; between 1950 and 1954, it grew as if it had added another six of its largest cities. There were many more persons to buy things at midcentury than in 1900.

But of greater importance, there were more people with money to buy things. The graduated income tax, increasing productivity, the powerful bargaining position of labor unions after 1932—those and other things narrowed the extremes in purchasing power and widened the American middle class, a widening that has been documented by several writers. *Fortune* magazine, studying the changing American market since 1900, concluded: "The U. S. is becoming a one-class market of prosperous middle-income people."<sup>3</sup> One major reason, *Fortune* said, was that the nation's productivity, or output per man hour, increased unevenly but incessantly by an average of about 2 per cent a year. As productivity rose swiftly, the market expanded faster than the population.

American pocketbooks fattened, and there was less disparity in

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Burck and Sanford Parker, "The Changing American Market," *Fortune*, 48 (Aug., 1953) 98.

the amounts contained in those pocketbooks in 1955 than in 1900. Real income per capita, after taxes, approximately doubled in the first half of the century, although the rise was not a steady one. Between 1900 and 1929, it increased perhaps more than 50 per cent, according to *Fortune*; it flattened out during the thirties, but it mounted again during World War II and after. Figures released by the U. S. Department of Commerce illustrate the point. Disposable income per capita, after taxes, rose from \$680 in 1929 to \$1,570 in 1953. Even though consumer prices in 1953 averaged about 59 per cent higher than those in 1929, the increase in real disposable income was still about 45 per cent. And several studies document the point that at midcentury income was more equitably distributed throughout the population than it was even two decades earlier. *Fortune*, in the article already cited, for instance, compared family incomes, after taxes and adjusted to 1952 dollars, in 1929 and in 1953. In 1929, it found, 29 per cent of all family units had a real income of \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year; in 1953, the figure was 58 per cent. All of those data make one thing plain: more and more persons could afford magazines, which were no longer the expensive luxury they had been before the days of Frank Munsey, and more and more persons were a market for the advertisers who supported magazines.

Advances in education also were important to the magazine industry and its advertisers, for studies have shown a correlation between education and magazine readership. In 1890, just before the national magazine was born, only seven out of every hundred boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were enrolled in high school. Sixty-two years later, in 1952, eighty-six out of every hundred were in school. Between 1930 and 1948, there was almost a fourfold increase in the number of Americans aged twenty or over who had been graduated from high school—a jump from 9,400,000 to 35,700,000. And there was an enormous growth in the number of college graduates. The number rose slowly from 1900 to 1920, spurted between 1920 and 1940, dropped during World War II and shot up after 1946.

Certainly another factor in the growth of the magazine market was an increase in the amount of leisure time resulting from a shorter work week in business and industry, from a lightening of household tasks by electrical appliances, from improvements in transportation, and so on. No doubt the spread of inexpensive

electricity, which meant convenient home lighting, induced many persons to increase their amounts of spare-time reading. In the nineties, magazines circulated primarily among the upper and middle classes. One reason, no doubt, was that they had the most time to read them, for they could best afford the cheap domestic help to perform many of the jobs done by electricity in the average home of 1955.

The typical homemaker of 1955 surely had more free time than her counterpart of 1900. The family she cared for was smaller. Her household tasks had become less burdensome, if no less monotonous, over the years as appliances—vacuum cleaners, washing machines, clothes dryers, ironers, waste disposers, dishwashers—did many of the jobs she had once done by hand. Her problems of cooking and storing food had become lightened by gas, then electric ranges, by electric refrigerators and food freezers. Many of the tasks she had once performed in the home were in 1955 performed by manufacturers and service establishments—by commercial bakeries (which even sliced bread for her), by food processors, by laundries and dry cleaners, by manufacturers of baby food, and so forth.

The husband of 1955, too, surely had more free time than his counterpart of 1900. In the manufacturing industries, the average worker at midcentury was producing four or five times as much as the worker of 1900, and this increased productivity was reflected in a declining work week. Most workers in 1900 had a six-day week, some a seven-day week. The average factory employee worked 51 hours a week in 1909, 44.2 hours in 1929, and 39.2 in 1954. Many office employees who worked 40 hours a week in 1935 were working but 35 in 1955. Moreover, by 1955 the paid vacation of two or three weeks was a standard benefit for both office and factory workers. Even a quarter of a century earlier, few factory workers got paid vacations, although some office workers did. Partly as a result of demands by unions and of policies of managements, the situation changed, and in 1955 almost all workers under union agreements got paid vacations.

Both the husband and wife probably had more free time in 1955 than in 1900 as a result of advances in communication. Automobiles, airplanes, and streamlined trains cut the amount of time needed to travel (and in doing so increased the amount of travel).

The telephone saved time by doing many of the jobs once done by letters and notes.

This increase in leisure was accompanied by an increased competition for the typical American's time and attention. Consider, for instance, the competition that the magazine received from just the other mass media of communication.

In 1900, newspapers and books were the chief competitors of the magazine, and as public libraries were neither as numerous nor as large as they were to become—in 1900 there were only 210 libraries, including those of schools and societies, as compared with 7,500 public libraries alone in 1948—the newspaper was probably its principal rival. Competition multiplied in the half-century that followed. Movies, which in the early years of the century still were used to round out vaudeville bills or to entice coins from the curious in nickelodeons, emerged as a major form of popular entertainment. In fifty years the number of movie theaters in the U. S. climbed from none to more than 18,000. Between 50 and 60 per cent of the population were moviegoers in 1952, when Americans bought some 45,000,000 theater tickets a week.

About twenty years after movies began flickering across theater screens, radio came along and in a short time developed into perhaps the most pervasive of all of the media of mass communications. The number of broadcasting stations climbed steadily: 30 in 1922; 556 in 1923; 608 in 1932; 923 in 1942, 2,917 in 1948. So did the number of homes with radio sets: 60,000 in 1922; 1,000,000 in 1923; 16,800,000 in 1932; 30,800,000 in 1942; 42,000,000 in 1949; 46,000,000 in 1954. And about twenty years after radio, magazines got still another competitor in television, which grew so fast after World War II that statistics on the number of sets and stations were outdated before they could be compiled. Early in 1955 there were more than four hundred stations and some 33,000,000 homes with receivers, or about 68 per cent of American households.

As the century grew older, printing presses ground out an increasing volume of newspapers and books, with which magazines had to compete for the reader's leisure. Although the number of newspapers steadily declined from its peak in 1909, the total daily circulation rose from 15,102,000 in 1900 to 55,072,000 in 1954. The methods of marketing books were revolutionized in 1926 when

the Book-of-the-Month Club began operations by sending out 4,700 copies of Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes*. In the next twenty-three years, the Book-of-the-Month Club distributed more than 100,000,000 books, including copies of 14,264 titles other than regular club selections, according to a supplement to the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* for April, 1949. Other book clubs sprang up, and in 1955 there were agricultural book clubs, children's book clubs, detective book clubs, humorous book clubs, religious book clubs, executives' book clubs, book clubs for every taste.

Not long before World War II, publishers began loading newsstands in bus stations, depots, and drugstores with twenty-five-cent paper-bound reprints of hard-bound books. One of the pioneers, Pocket Books, Inc., sold more than 200,000,000 copies of 475 titles in eight years, and other publishers reported impressive sales. The paper-bound reprints and magazines had much in common in distribution methods and in potential reader market. Perhaps for that reason a number of magazine publishers, among them Curtis Publishing Company, Dell Publishing Company, Fawcett Publishing Company, and Popular Publications, became publishers of these inexpensive paperbacks.

Especially during and after World War II, magazines got some competition for their readers' time from house organs, newspapers or magazines published by industries and businesses for their employees and customers. There were a few house organs as the century turned, and a rash of them appeared during World War I but died with the peace. A number of forces during the twenties and thirties encouraged the growth of the house publication. The gains of labor unions and a widening audience for the labor press; trends in government, which some segments of management saw as a threat to the free enterprise system; a sharpening sense of public relations in the business world; the growing complexity of industry, with its widely dispersed plants and its system of subcontracting, all of which made it hard for the worker to see how he contributed to the finished product—all of those things help to explain the emergence of the house organ as an important means of industrial communication. There were perhaps 2,400 house organs in the United States in 1940. During World War II, they multiplied at a fantastic rate, a rate accelerated by tax policies and by the need to train new workers in defense industries.

In 1955 there were somewhere between 6,500 and 10,000 of them, several with circulations of a million and a half, many as slickly elegant as commercial magazines, a few attracting authors that commercial magazines would have gladly published—George C. Marshall, for instance, and Stuart Chase—and paying as large sums for manuscripts as most commercial publications.

More and more, as the century advanced, the mass media filled the American's eyes and ears with sights and sounds, and a spate of other activities—mahjong, contract bridge, and canasta; miniature golf, full-scale golf, and bowling; candid camera photography, model airplaning, and hot rod racing—rushed in to plug any gaps in his leisure time.

Why was the magazine industry able to grow in the face of such competition? One good guess, and there is some documentation to support it, is that each new medium has stimulated rather than diminished use of the existing media. Book publishers learned that a Hollywood dramatization of a book spurred rather than harmed the sale of copies. Newspapers feared infant radio so much that some of them would not run program listings (one reason of course was that broadcasting stations competed for advertising as well as audience); yet as a larger number of persons listened to radio newscasts and to broadcasts of current events, newspaper circulations increased at a rate faster than the population. When television began to turn its camera on news events, many publishers no longer feared the new medium as a threat to circulation; television, they thought, sharpened their readers' appetites for printed news.

A clue to understanding this phenomenon may lie in the communications behavior of Americans. One general principle emerging from many audience studies is what Paul Lazarsfeld and Patricia Kendall have called "the all or none tendency," the tendency for a person who is above average in exposure to one medium to be above average in exposure to all media. For example, Lazarsfeld and Kendall found that the great majority of book readers read magazines in addition to books, that radio fans are likely to be both movie fans and regular magazine readers as well.<sup>4</sup> There was some corroboration of this point in a readership study of nine

<sup>4</sup> Paul Lazarsfeld and Patricia Kendall, "The Communications Behavior of the Average American," in Wilbur Schramm, editor, *Mass Communications* (Urbana, 1949), pp. 389-401.



leading magazines which *Tide* reported in its issue of May 7, 1955. More magazines were read in homes with television than in homes without it, according to the study; all nine magazines were read in three times as many homes with television as in homes not having it.

Two possibilities, interest and opportunity, Lazarsfeld and Kendall suggest, may partially account for that general finding about communications behavior. If a person is interested in a particular type of content, he may better satisfy his interests by using all media instead of just one or two; therefore, if he has time, he will divide his attention among all media. If a person is so busy with his job or hobby that he has little time to devote to any one medium, he probably will make little use of all media.

The "all or none" tendency seems to apply not just to the use of all of the media but also to the use of magazines alone; a person who regularly reads magazines at all is likely to read not just one but several. Lazarsfeld and Wyant commented on this tendency in their study of overlapping magazine audiences, published in 1937.<sup>5</sup> And a decade later, there was evidence of it in the national magazine audience survey conducted by the Magazine Advertising Bureau, which reported that approximately half of all magazine readers read four or more magazines, that about 32 per cent read two or three, that about 18 per cent read only one.

Perhaps one other reason that magazines were able to grow despite competition from other media was that magazines over the years appealed to an expanding range of tastes and interests, as later chapters will show in some detail. Magazines, as we have seen, generally are published for homogeneous groups of readers. The number of magazines, then, has probably been somewhat related to the number of interest groups or little "publics" within the public as a whole. If a publisher found a sufficient number of persons with interests in common, especially persons whom advertisers would pay to reach, he felt justified in bringing out a magazine for them.

Publishers were quick to sense new interests of the public and also quick to establish new magazines catering to them. For example, when moviegoers grew curious for glimpses into the private lives of film stars, *Photoplay* appeared to satisfy their curiosity;

<sup>5</sup> Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Rowena Wyant, "Magazines in 90 Cities—Who Reads What?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1 (Oct., 1937) 35-36.

from a skimpy booklet, the magazine developed into one of the leading publications for movie fans. In 1923, when intellectuals protested the Babbitry they saw abounding in American life, H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan started the *American Mercury*, a green-covered little organ of dissent which delighted the iconoclasts and outraged the conventional with its attacks on provincialism, prohibition, the Bible Belt, and boobs. In 1934, when model railroad fans were still numbered in the hundreds, A. C. Kalmbach was so sure that their hobby would become widespread that he gambled on a magazine for them, *Model Railroader*; his fortunes grew with the hobby, which by 1950 had attracted more than a hundred thousand men and women. In 1944, when the wartime boom created an acute manpower shortage on the West Coast, Harold Dreyfus founded *Jobs*, a ten-cent magazine to help workers find jobs and employers to find workers. Examples of that sort could be cited by the score.

Whole new categories of magazines sprang up as imitative publishers copied the most successful ideas of their competitors—the confession magazines, the digest magazines, the movie and radio fan magazines, the news magazines, the picture magazines and others, which will be covered in detail in subsequent chapters. In 1955 one could scarcely name a specialized subject, from game-breeding to geriatrics, that some magazine did not attempt to cover. On many of the subjects, magazines were the main source of current information; and partly for that reason, perhaps, the industry was able to compete successfully with the other communications industries.

But probably the market for magazines grew primarily as a result of the factors already mentioned: the increase in population, the redistribution of purchasing power, the advances in education, the increase in leisure time. It is possible to show a relationship between some of those factors and increases in circulation.

A growing population provided a growing market for magazines, and by midcentury the vast majority of adult Americans were magazine readers. Estimates of the actual percentage of magazine readers in the population ranged from 68.9 per cent to 85.8 per cent, partly because different studies used different research techniques and different definitions of the term "magazine reader." Most if not all attempts to measure the size of the magazine reading public have been conducted or sponsored by maga-

zines, alone or jointly. Although sponsored by interested parties, such studies give the best available estimates of the number of magazine readers.

In 1946, after reviewing what it called the "scanty data" on magazine readership, the Magazine Advertising Bureau concluded that from 70 to 80 per cent of all persons aged fifteen or older read one or more of the thirty-five or forty leading magazines in the United States with "a fair degree of regularity." A year later, the M.A.B., for its members, sponsored a nationwide readership survey. On the basis of that study, it gave more precise information about the size of the audience. Nearly seven out of every ten Americans aged fifteen or older, 68.9 per cent, were magazine readers, it reported, and the average reader read an average of 4.6 separate magazines. In actual numbers, there were 71,500,000 readers, 32,300,000 non-readers. There were more women than men readers, 73.5 per cent against 63.6 per cent. There was no huge difference between the percentage of readers living in urban areas and those living on farms. Of the urban population, 70.6 per cent were magazine readers as compared with 65.9 per cent of the rural nonfarm and 66.7 per cent of the farm populations.<sup>6</sup>

Although the increase in population may have improved the health of the magazine industry, that by itself was certainly not enough; for magazine readers were not evenly distributed throughout the population. Income and magazine readership tended to go hand in hand. Therefore, the redistribution of purchasing power was perhaps of major importance to the growth of magazines.

On several occasions, spokesmen for the magazine industry have shown a relationship between buying power and circulations of leading magazines. They also have correlated increases in circulation with increases in retail sales to suggest the relationship between buying power and magazine sales. Audience studies also indicate that purchasing power and circulation are related, for magazine readership correlates with income. The audience survey made by the Magazine Advertising Bureau in 1947, for instance, showed that 98.2 per cent of families with total annual incomes of \$5,000 or more were reader families but only 1.8 per cent were

<sup>6</sup> Magazine Advertising Bureau, *Nationwide Magazine Audience Survey: Report No. 2—Individuals* (New York, 1948), pp. 11-12. Excluded from the survey were persons in the armed forces and in institutions.

nonreader families. On the other hand, 41.5 per cent of families with annual incomes of \$500 to \$1,000 were nonreader families and 58.5 per cent were readers. Moreover, the number of magazines read by each hundred reader families rose sharply with ascending economic status. It moved up gradually from five hundred copies for each hundred reader families in the lowest income group to nine hundred in the highest.

There also seems to be a relationship between education and magazine readership. As the level of formal education rose, so did magazine readership, according to Lazarsfeld and Kendall in their study of communications behavior, which was cited earlier. They found that 86 per cent of all college educated respondents regularly read magazines, as did 68 per cent of those with high school educations, but only 41 per cent with grade school educations were regular readers. The national survey by the Magazine Advertising Bureau in 1947 showed that the median educational level of magazine readers was three years of high school, that the median of nonreaders was less than six years of grade school. The average number of magazines read by each one hundred persons, readers and nonreaders, rose swiftly with education; 155.2 magazines for each hundred persons with eighth grade education or less, 451.4 for each hundred with high school education, and 528.8 for each hundred with four or more years of college.

With changes in population, purchasing power, education, and leisure, then, the market for magazines expanded, and the expanding market was able to support a larger number of magazines, and magazines of larger circulation than in 1900. Individual publishers, who at the turn of the century numbered their readers in thousands, began to talk in terms of millions of readers. Indeed, one magazine, *Life*, could report in 1950 that each issue was read by about one in five Americans aged ten or older.

From the turn of the century onward, the number of magazines fluctuated as some died and others were born, but it is fairly certain that there were approximately a thousand more magazines in the United States in 1955 than in 1900. Just how many magazines existed in 1900, no one knows. One estimate, perhaps not far off, puts the number at 3,500. Of those, at least fifty were national magazines. By 1947, according to the census, the number of periodicals had grown to 4,610. Although census figures are not yet available, Ayer's *Directory* reported 7,648 periodicals in

1954; but as different fact-finding agencies use different meanings of the term "periodical," this number does not necessarily reflect nearly as large an increase over 1947 as may appear at first glance.

Because of difficulties in definition and the lack of reliable data, it is practically impossible to chart the growth of magazine numbers over the years. The U. S. census is of small help for the early years of the century, as it lumped magazines under the general heading "periodicals," a term which embraced newspapers as well as magazines. However, making necessary adjustments in U. S. census figures, one can estimate the number of periodicals as 3,085 in 1923; 3,635 in 1925; 3,860 in 1927; and considerably more than 4,500 in 1929. The census itself gives the number of periodicals as 4,887 in 1931; 3,459 in 1933; 4,019 in 1935; 4,202 in 1937; 4,985 in 1939; and 4,610 in 1947.

Those seem to be conservative figures. The Ayer's *Directory* gives larger numbers. In Ayer's also, magazines are tabulated under the broad heading of "periodicals," which covers other publications as well. If one excludes periodicals which are published more frequently than once a week on the grounds that they probably are not magazines, he gets the following numbers of periodicals: 5,483 in 1936; 6,261 in 1940; 5,704 in 1944; 6,657 in 1948; 6,920 in 1952; and 7,429 in 1954.

The number of monthly periodicals is perhaps a good barometer of trends in the number of magazines. According to Ayer's, there were 2,369 monthly periodicals in 1900; 2,977 in 1910; 3,415 in 1920; 4,110 in 1930; 3,501 in 1940; 3,655 in 1950; and 3,782 in 1954. Conflicting as the various data are, all figures seem to point to a significant growth in the number of magazines in the first fifty-five years of the twentieth century.

It is in circulation, not in numbers, however, that magazines had their most remarkable growth. Four sorts of estimates help to show that growth: aggregate circulations of all magazines published in the United States, aggregate circulations of all magazines belonging to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, circulations of individual magazines leading in sales, and the number of magazines with circulations of a million or more.

Estimating the aggregate circulations of magazines in the United States over the years is a highly speculative pastime. Yet even crude estimates can point up the large climb in magazine

circulations. In 1900, according to one estimate, the combined circulation of all 3,500 magazines was 65,000,000 an issue. In 1955 just the twenty leading consumer magazines surpassed that total with a combined circulation of about 78,627,000 an issue. Using various census data, the present writer estimates the aggregate per-issue circulation of all magazines in the United States over the first half-century as follows:

1900 . . . . .	65,000,000
1923 . . . . .	128,621,000
1925 . . . . .	153,375,000
1927 . . . . .	165,702,000
1929 . . . . .	202,022,000
1931 . . . . .	183,527,000
1933 . . . . .	174,759,000
1935 . . . . .	178,621,000
1937 . . . . .	224,275,000
1939 . . . . .	239,693,000
1947 . . . . .	384,628,000

Since the founding of the Audit Bureau of Circulations in 1914, reliable records are available for a limited number of magazines, including most of those leading in circulation. The magazine industry has often charted the aggregate circulation of A.B.C. members to dramatize the growth of magazine sales. Such charts and tables must be regarded warily; their figures are inflated because they are not adjusted to allow for the lengthening roster of A.B.C. members—54 magazines in 1914, 267 in 1954. Even so, the figures give a fair picture of the aggregate circulations of the major farm and consumer magazines, especially after 1942 when magazine membership in A.B.C. took a sharp upturn, for most of the general magazines which led in sale of copies and in advertising volume then belonged to A.B.C. Table 2 shows the aggregate circulation of A.B.C. magazines for selected years.

The most abrupt rise in magazine circulations probably came during and after World War II. Some industry spokesmen have mentioned a 50 per cent gain in circulation for all magazines between 1940 and 1949, although their figures were probably based on A.B.C. records, which covered fewer magazines in 1940 than in 1949. There seem to be no data that give a precise picture of how much magazine circulations in aggregate grew during the war, but the limited statistics that can be compared do point to

impressive gains. For instance, reliable circulation records are kept on the twenty-nine members of the Magazine Advertising Bureau. Their circulations went up early in the war, despite paper shortages ; they sold 21.5 per cent more magazines in the first half of 1943 than during the last half of 1939. Their gains continued after the war; in the third quarter of 1946, they were selling 10 per cent more copies of each issue than during the same period of 1945.

Table 2

AGGREGATE CIRCULATIONS OF A.B.C. MAGAZINES, EXCLUDING COMICS: 1914-1954

Year	Average Circ. per Issue (In millions)	U. S. Population (In millions)	Circ. per Hundred Persons
1914	17.9	99.1	18.1
1924	54.2	114.1	47.5
1934	74.5	126.4	59.0
1944	116.0	132.6	87.5
1949	143.7	148.7	96.6
1950	147.3	151.2	97.4
1954	165.0	162.4	101.6

Source: Magazine Advertising Bureau, *M.A. Briefs* (Dec. 11, 1952) 3; (May, 1955) 3.

The records of major publishers also give an idea of how circulations grew during and after the war. Between 1941 and 1955, the circulation of *Time* increased by 124 per cent, from 856,000 to 1,921,000, and that of *Life* by 72 per cent, from 3,291,000 to 5,655,000. Between 1941 and 1955, the circulation of the *Saturday Evening Post* went up by 38 per cent, from 3,349,000 to 4,638,000, and that of the *Ladies' Home Journal* by 26 per cent, from 3,823,000 to 4,818,000.

The circulation records of individual publications also show how magazine sales have grown since the birth of the national magazine in the eighties and nineties. Circulation figures for the nineties are neither plentiful nor reliable; but one signpost is that *Harper's*, among the leaders in sales, was distributing between 100,000 and 200,000 copies in 1891. In the mid-nineties, Munsey, McClure, and Curtis turned loose the low-priced magazine, and the scramble for distribution was on. In 1900 and the years im-

mediately following, circulations began to soar toward undreamed of figures. In 1900, the circulation of *Munsey's*, which had begun with initial sales of 60,000 seven years earlier, was 700,000; of *Delineator*, 500,000; of *McClure's*, 360,000; and of *Cosmopolitan*, 300,000. *Pearson's*, which started in 1899 with a distribution of 100,000, was selling nearly 300,000 in 1906. In just a year or two, *Everybody's* ran its circulation from 197,000 to 735,000 in 1904 and 1905. The circulation of *Hampton's* zoomed from 13,000 in 1907 to 444,000 four years later. The sale of *Collier's* rose from 500,000 in 1909 to more than 1,000,000 in 1912. To appreciate how the circulation of one leading publication grew with the century, one needs only to look at the record of *McCall's*, which outlived most of its nineteenth-century contemporaries :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Circulation</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Circulation</i>
1900	201,200	1930	2,505,100
1905	682,200	1935	2,400,500
1910	1,060,300	1940	3,116,700
1915	1,262,600	1945	3,400,600
1920	1,350,100	1950	3,807,100
1925	2,115,200	1955	4,522,500

Circulations that were heady on the eve of World War I were commonplace in 1955. Few things underline that point as well as the increase in the number of magazines with circulations of a million or more. No magazine had sales of a million in 1900. The *Ladies' Home Journal* passed that mark in 1904, but up until World War I it had been joined by only a handful of other publications, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *McCall's*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* among them. In 1955 there were forty-six general and farm magazines with circulations of at least a million, and half of them had circulations of at least twice that. Several of the forty-six publications had sales of several times a million. The *Reader's Digest* in 1955 sold more than 10,000,000 copies of its domestic edition alone. *Life's* circulation was 5,655,000. *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Woman's Home Companion* all had more than 4,000,000.

Nor do those figures tell quite the whole story of how circulations had grown, for not counted among the forty-six publica-



tions were a number of magazine groups with circulations exceeding one million. Several publishers who owned strings of publications, usually comic books, pulps, movie magazines, confession magazines, and detective magazines, sold advertising space in the whole group as a unit and reported the combined circulation of the group. In 1955 trade directories listed about twenty such groups having circulations of at least a million, and one of them, a group of comic magazines, had a circulation of 9,115,000. In addition, there were seven groups which did not report their circulations, some of which perhaps exceeded a million. Nor are national magazines distributed with Sunday newspapers counted among the forty-six publications with circulations of a million or more, although four such Sunday supplements had tremendous circulations in 1955 : *American Weekly*, 9,958,000 ; *Parade*, 6,978,000; *Pictorial Review*, 5,248,000; and *This Week*, 11,143,000. And house organs, since this study does not deal with them, were not included among the forty-six publications having circulations in excess of a million ; yet perhaps ten house organs had circulations of between one and two and a half million, among them such magazines as *Ford Times* of the Ford Motor Company, *Friends* of the Chevrolet Division of General Motors, *People and Places* of the DeSoto Division of the Chrysler Corporation, and *Hometown* of the Rexall Drug Company.

By analyzing a number of records, the author has been able to chart the growth of magazines with circulations of a million or more after 1925. His findings are summarized in Table 3.<sup>7</sup> In the first eleven years, 1926 through 1936, the number wavered around twenty-five. It dipped as low as twenty-three in 1933 and twice went as high as twenty-seven, once in 1931 when *Ballyhoo*, a humor magazine which consisted largely of cartoons and parodies of advertisements, flashed momentarily as a sales leader, and once again in 1935.

Mammoth circulations, the chart suggests, were not war-born, as some industry spokesmen have intimated. They seem to have

<sup>7</sup> The table was constructed after a careful analysis of circulations for the first six months of each year as reported in *Standard Rate and Data*. Circulations for the *Reader's Digest* for 1920-36 are from *Fortune*, 14 (Nov., 1936) 128; those after that were supplied by the magazine itself. *Coronet* is included in the tabulation only from 1947 on; although it probably had a circulation of at least a million, 1943-46, the magazine reports that its circulation figures for that period are unavailable.

Table 3

NUMBER OF MAGAZINES WITH CIRCULATIONS OF ONE MILLION OR MORE, 1926-1955

Year	Total	Number of Magazines with Circulations of:*																			
		1-1.99	2-2.99	3-3.99	4-4.99	5-5.99	6-6.99	7-7.99	8-8.99	9-9.99	10 or MORE										
1926	25	19	6																		
1927	25	18	7																		
1928	26	19	7																		
1929	25	17	8																		
1930	25	15	10																		
1931	27	17	10																		
1932	25	16	9																		
1933	23	15	8																		
1934	25	17	8																		
1935	28	19	9																		
1936	27	17	10																		
1937	28	17	9	2																	
1938	30	20	6	4																	
1939	28	15	9	4																	
1940	26	12	9	5																	
1941	27	12	9	6																	
1942	28	12	10	4	1																
1943	30	13	11	4	1																
1944	30	14	10	3	2																
1945	32	16	10	4	1																
1946	31	14	11	3	2																
1947	40	20	12	5	1																
1948	42	22	10	7	1																
1949	44	24	8	8	2																
1950	42	22	8	7	1																
1951	46	24	11	7	2																
1952	47	27	8	7	3																
1953	47	23	10	8	3	2															
1954	46	23	10	6	5	1															
1955	46	22	11	4	7	1															

\* Excludes magazine groups, comic books, Sunday supplements, and house organs.

begun in 1937 when the *Saturday Evening Post* first topped three million, as did *Pictorial Review* as the result of a merger with *Delineator*, and when *Life* started its climb toward the top-circulation bracket. Despite paper shortages, the circulation giants grew larger during the war years, 1942 through 1945. But the greatest expansion, both in the number of magazines with circulations exceeding a million and in circulations of individual magazines, came between the end of the war and 1949.

What kinds of magazines achieved circulations of a million or more? There was a fairly consistent pattern of types of magazines on the list. From 1926 until 1941, the list each year included three general interest weeklies, *Collier's*, *Liberty*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and a varying number of general interest monthly publications, such as *American*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Reader's Digest*. Nearly every year there was one travel magazine, *National Geographic*, and about half the time a current events magazine, *Literary Digest*. Almost every year from 1926 to 1941, there were two home service magazines, *Household* and *Better Homes and Gardens*, joined by *American Home* in 1937. A confession magazine, *True Story*, was on the list each year. More women's magazines than any other type amassed circulations exceeding a million, and they were among the top leaders in circulation. Four or five farm magazines regularly appeared on the list. After the birth of the picture magazines in 1936, *Life* and *Look* were consistently present. That pattern scarcely altered during the war and in the postwar boom, but a few other types of magazines then regularly appeared on the list: a news magazine; men's magazines, which before the war had rarely hit circulations of a million; one or two science magazines; and a spate of movie and confession magazines.

Significantly, several magazines with circulations of more than a million died or were merged with other publications during the quarter century. *Literary Digest*, *Liberty*, *Delineator*, *Farm and Fireside*, *Pictorial Review*—they all vanished, although the name *Pictorial Review* survived as title of a Sunday supplement in 1955. Their passing, in a period when circulations were growing steadily, indicated that the quest for the advertiser's dollar and the reader's time and attention was highly competitive. In the next chapter, let us see just how competitive the magazine industry was.

## *chapter 4* The Economic Structure of the Industry

In December, 1947, the presses of a Los Angeles printer, who had prudently collected half of his bill in advance, turned out five thousand copies of a slim twenty-five-cent magazine named *Hot Rod*. Its publishers were two publicity men for a movie company, Robert Lindsay and Robert Petersen, who had decided to bring out a magazine for fans of stripped down, speeded up automobiles. With \$859 capital they had formed a publishing company, Motor Trend Publications, and had flipped a coin to decide which of them would be president. From an engraver, they had learned page layout; from a printer, they had learned proof-reader's marks; from hanging around race tracks, they had learned the jargon of the hot rod fan. It took Lindsay and Petersen about five months to sell the last of the copies of that first issue, which had carried only \$125 in advertising, but they stuck with their magazine even though it lost money throughout the first year.

In 1950 they looked to their Motor Trend Publications to gross between \$700,000 and \$800,000. The company had moved from its original two-room office, where one of the publishers had lived for a time, into an entire office building. *Hot Rod* was flourishing

with a circulation of 285,000, and the company was publishing two other magazines. The publishers were driving Cadillacs.

At midcentury, one could still find a publishing company as informally as that. John H. Johnson, a Negro employed by an insurance company in Chicago, broke into publishing almost that casually in 1942. His idea was the simple one of adapting formulas which had proved successful with white readers to a Negro audience. On a capital of \$500, he collected an assortment of articles into a small magazine which he called *Negro Digest* and then found a printer willing to print the first issue on credit. The magazine did so well that Johnson was able to start three others: *Ebony*, a picture magazine, in 1945; *Tan*, a service magazine for women, in 1950; and *Jet*, a vestpocket-sized magazine of news and features, in 1951. In a typical publishing practice, Johnson killed off *Negro Digest* in 1951. But the combined circulation of his other publications was more than a million in 1955, and the company which grew out of *Negro Digest* was the leading publisher of national magazines for Negroes.

Not only were *Hot Rod* and *Negro Digest* new magazines, it should be emphasized, but their publishers also were new to the magazine industry. Despite a concentration of economic power, the magazine industry in 1955 was not closed to the outsider. Throughout the first fifty-five years of the twentieth century, it represented the freest of free enterprise. It was a bitterly competitive industry in which magazines fought with one another for the small pool of talent on which they drew, for their share of the advertiser's dollar, for the reader's time and attention, for display space on the newsstands. It was an industry so lacking in homogeneity that although it provided trade magazines for coin machine operators and store window dressers it was rarely able to support a business paper of its own. It was an industry of such swiftly changing fortunes that an aggressive outsider with few more assets than a headful of ideas could hope to found a publishing empire. It was an industry filled with broken dreams and quick failures, with shining promise and fantastic successes.

The industry always had room for the venturesome newcomer. He could hope to succeed as a result of the growing volume of advertising, the expanding market for magazines, the new interests which the public was forever discovering, and the nature of the industry itself. The number of publishers rose and fell, but

there was no evidence that it was diminishing. New publishers continued to enter the field. Many of them failed. Yet many others flourished and jockeyed for position with the established leaders, some of which lagged, some of which toppled.

True, the small publisher could see that a handful of mammoth publishers took in the bulk of the money spent on national advertising and issued a large share of the total copies of magazines. But the giants did not cast their shadows over his own operations as, say, the General Motors Corporation did over those of the small manufacturer of automobiles. There were various levels and arenas of competition. At the top, the big leaders fought among themselves to hold or to improve their positions. Beneath them, smaller magazines scrambled for existence and tried to pull themselves upward. In one sense, then, the huge publishers were not competitors of the small publisher at all. Moreover, there were many battlefields, not just one. Each publisher produced a unique product, one designed for a very special group of readers. His struggle was chiefly for his share of the advertising and reader market which he had chosen to serve. His competition was with publishers whose magazines were roughly similar to his own and who threatened to take away his advertising and readership.

Thus the publisher of *Sports Afield*, for example, probably was little affected by much of the warfare in the magazine industry over the years. He may have noticed that George Horace Lorimer of the *Saturday Evening Post* and Ray Long of *Cosmopolitan* were trying to outbid one another in the late twenties for the most famous authors. He may have noticed that the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* changed their on-sale dates to gain a competitive advantage in the big-weekly field. He may have noticed that *Newsweek*, *Time*, and the *United States News* each was trying to convince advertisers in 1955 that it reached the largest audience of influential business executives. Yet it is hard to imagine that he worried when *Life* picked up another hundred thousand readers or when the *Post* gained another million dollars in advertising. Probably much more important to the conduct of his business were considerations which had no effect on the policies of the big general magazines: that *Field and Stream* had become strong enough in 1930 to buy out the oldest of the outdoor magazines, *Forest and Stream*; that *Hunting and Fishing* was able to increase its circulation guarantee by 450,000 in 1950 after merging with

*Outdoorsman*; that *Outdoor Sportsman* had suspended publication in 1955 ; and that his own magazine had emerged as a leader in a segment of the publishing industry.

If the giants had little effect on the day-to-day operations of the smaller publisher, neither did their presence keep new publishing companies from starting in business nor prevent small firms from moving into higher levels of competition. Despite the growth of a few magazine empires, there is no evidence that the number of magazine publishing companies showed a downward trend during the twentieth century, although any generality about the number of publishing companies must be based on scanty information. Figures in the census of manufactures, which seems to be about the only source, suggest that the number of periodical establishments fluctuated with the state of the economy from 1925 through 1947. The number varied from a high of 2,925 in 1929 to a low of 2,002 in 1933 and was 2,166 in 1947.

The really significant characteristic of the magazine industry between 1900 and 1955 was its fluidity. The significant characteristic was that magazines with circulations of more than a million could vanish with scarcely a trace, as did the *Literary Digest*, *Pictorial Review*, *Today's Woman*, and others ; that on a capital of \$86,000 young men like Briton Hadden and Henry Luce could establish a publishing company which twenty-five years later achieved the largest gross income of any magazine publishing firm up until that time; that on a borrowed \$5,000, DeWitt Wallace could launch his *Reader's Digest*, which in a few years was pouring millions of dollars into the bank accounts of its two owners and was blanketing the world with copies.

What counted most was the Big Idea. If one had a fresh idea for a magazine there were often persons willing to help him finance it; and if he had the faith to sustain himself while he sought acceptance of his magazine by readers and advertisers, there was always some chance that he could achieve a modest success and a remote chance that he could wind up in company with the giants.

To understand the freedom of opportunity that the magazine industry offered the inventive entrepreneur, one must understand the role of the publisher, which goes a long way toward explaining many of the developments in magazine publishing since the nineties. Although there were other explanations as well, the role of the publisher helps to clarify such points as the diversity of maga-

zines, the fewness of certain kinds of magazines, and the sameness of editorial content in a given magazine.

The role of the publisher underwent a major change with the development of modern advertising; for as magazines turned to advertising for support, they became inextricably linked with the marketing system. Advertising converted the magazine publisher from a dealer in reading matter into a dealer in consumer groups as well. Before the low-priced magazine came along, the publisher was essentially a dealer in editorial copy. His eye on his budget, he got together stories and articles which he thought would interest his subscribers. Before the days of international copyright agreements, he took much of his material from British periodicals, and he paid his domestic contributors as little as possible; in the 1870's, quality magazines paid contributors only about ten dollars a page. Art work was more expensive. But if he were lucky, the publisher held down his costs so that his sales to the reader brought him a profit. Some magazines in the nineteenth century were adjuncts of book publishing firms, and one of their functions was to stimulate interest in the publisher's books.

A number of publishers, notably those of pulps and digests, remained essentially dealers in reading matter even after advertisers were spending large sums in magazines. They derived their income from a small unit profit on a high turnover of copies instead of from advertising. Still other magazines relied on a trade association, a fraternal organization, or a professional group to make up any deficit.

But with the rise of national advertising, by far the greatest percentage of magazines came to count on advertising for their income. As they did so, the publisher became closely affiliated with the marketing system. He continued to sell the reader an editorial product, but he also sold the advertiser a service—that of carrying the advertiser's message to a carefully screened, homogeneous audience of consumers.

In essence, magazine publishing came to consist of the publisher's deciding on a consumer group which advertisers wished to reach, devising an editorial formula to attract and hold it, and then selling advertisers access to it. Sometimes, of course, the publisher first designed his magazine and then let it seek its audience. Some publishers chose relatively small audiences high in



purchasing power, a market for high-priced necessities and luxuries; others chose large audiences of middle income, a market for mass-produced necessities and minor luxuries. But in any event, the publisher became a dealer in consumer groups. Condé Nast, who achieved success as a magazine publisher, made that point in 1931:

Before embarking on the publishing business I had thought of periodical publishing as something very grand—even very mysterious. But a little clear thinking led to the conclusion that such a publisher is only a name-gatherer; that the publishing business, analyzed to its basic elements, resolved itself into nothing more nor less than a Name-Brokerage Business.

The publisher fills a certain number of pages with reading matter, drawings and photographs. He, so to speak, baits his pages with such editorial matter as he believes will attract either a great number of readers, or a specific class of readers. Then he offers these pages to the reading public at a price considerably lower than his cost of gathering and manufacturing them.

At this stage . . . he has a very considerable loss; but he then turns to the advertisers and merchants of the country, in the manner of a Name-Broker, and says:

"I have gathered together a list of names. Access to these names will enable you to promote your business. I will let you have such access to them. When I am sending my editorial message to these names, I will permit you, for a consideration, to include a page in which you may deliver to them your own message about your merchandise."<sup>1</sup>

In an unpublished speech after World War II, Willard Chevalier, executive vice president of McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, succinctly outlined what he regarded as the "essence of publishing." To succeed, he said, a magazine needed three common denominators of interest: a common denominator of reader interest, i.e., the editorial fare had to appeal to most of the chosen reading public; a common denominator of buying interest, i.e., the readers had to be interested in buying the same things; a common denominator of market interest, i.e., the publisher had to attract a sufficiently large group of readers who bought enough of a wide variety of things, to attract a volume of advertising which would support his publication.

That is the essence of publishing: to establish an editorial formula

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in John Bakeless, *Magazine Making* (New York, 1931), p. 5.

that will enable [the publisher] to develop a reader group, then to assemble an advertiser group who wants to address that audience. . . .

Suppose, for instance, that somebody wants a publication that is only going to secretaries with red hair and blue eyes. The advertiser says "That is our market. That is the kind of readers we want—red haired secretaries with blue eyes."

All right, you say, "We will get out a paper for them." That's . . . a chore, because you have to get editorial matter that is only going to appeal to secretaries with red hair and blue eyes. Don't ask me what it is. . . . You have to find it. You have a highly selective circulation effort that is going to cost a lot of money. The result is that when you have figured up your cost of rendering your particular service to that group of advertisers, it is very high per thousand readers. But if those readers are what he wants and you deliver them, he will pay you the price, presumably in the form of an advertising rate that justifies the effort you put in to get them.

A homogeneous reader group simplified editing and gave the magazine its value as an advertising medium. By addressing like-minded individuals, the editor was able to capitalize on the tastes and interests of a large share of his audience. Indeed, those tastes and interests helped to establish a magazine's *raison d'être*. Readers turned to *Yachting* for its plans and tips on pleasure sailing; to *Gourmet* for its articles on good food, good wine, and culinary esoterica; to *Antiques* for the newest ideas and information on the oldest of furnishings and bibelots. Advertisers benefited because magazines screened out potential buyers of their goods and services. The screening process simplified the task of the advertising copywriter; he could use the advertising appeals most likely to prove effective with a given audience. Although some dealers of mass-produced goods wished to reach as many consumers as possible and there were magazines for them, the industry as a whole was characterized in the first half of the twentieth century by its selectivity of audience.

Thus virtually every magazine came to be designed for some homogeneous public within the total population. The publisher would try to saturate his chosen market, but ordinarily he could not expect to extend his circulation beyond it without altering the editorial pattern which attracted his original readers. For example, *Seventeen* was begun in 1944 as a magazine for girls aged

thirteen through nineteen; 80 per cent of its readers were aged fifteen through nineteen. The publisher estimated that his total market was 7,500,000 in 1951 and would be 10,000,000 in 1960. To attract his reader group, he worked out an editorial formula, a balance of certain types of editorial features, to which the magazine gave its own distinctive approach. Should the publisher have decided to enlarge his reader group to include women of, say, thirty-five, he would have had to change the editorial pattern of the magazine. One result, no doubt, would have been the loss of a large number of young readers.

In choosing the audience he would serve, the magazine publisher was not limited by geography, as were broadcasters and newspaper publishers. Individual members of his reader group were usually scattered across the nation. True, he may have found it profitable to restrict his circulation to a circumscribed area. *Successful Farming* and *Capper's Farmer*, for example, were aimed primarily at farmers in the Midwestern states so that their publishers could attract advertisers on the basis of their concentrated circulations in the most prosperous agricultural region of the United States. *Sunset* magazine borrowed editorial techniques from nationally circulated *Better Homes and Gardens* to reach an audience on just the West Coast. But such geographical restrictions were from choice, not from necessity.

This role of the publisher in appealing to little publics within the entire population helps to explain why the gates to the industry were open to the new entrepreneur. The important thing was that a publisher have an idea for a magazine which would capitalize on the latent or burgeoning interest of a public which other publishers were not serving at all or were serving inadequately. In effect, the number of magazines was limited by only two considerations: first, by the number of special interests with enough potential buyers of advertisers' goods and services and, second, by the number of advertisers willing to pay an adequate sum for reaching the consumers whom the publisher had chosen.

Publishers astute enough to recognize the profound changes taking place in American life in the first half of the twentieth century were sometimes able to build up valuable properties from small initial investments. The speeded up tempo of life after World War I, for example, probably accounted in part for the rapid acceptance of the digest magazines, the news magazines, and

the picture magazines. The emancipation of American women, who began holding down positions which had once been the prerogative of men, opened up a market for magazines aimed at the career girl—magazines such as *Charm* and *Glamour*. The increasing number of older persons in the population brought magazines for persons in their middle years, *Journal of Living* and *Lifetime Living*, with which the former merged in 1955. Publishers also were able to build up at least short-term successes by capitalizing on passing fads and fancies. For example, magazines arose to profit from the self-improvement boom in the thirties, from the "do-it-yourself" boom after World War II, and from the craze for diving underwater with aqualungs in the early fifties.

The principle of audience selection, then, helps to explain the diversity of American magazines after 1900. The number of publics in the nation was reflected in its periodicals. Just a short listing of random titles published at various times since 1900 illustrates the wide range of interests which magazines appealed to: *Catholic Boy*, *Modern Youth*, *Stage*, *National Recovery Survey*, *Economic Forum*, *Garden Gossip*, *American Rifleman*, *Saddle and Bridle*, *American Swedish Monthly*, *Home Craftsman*, *Wedding Bells*, *Dog World*, *Cats*, *National Motorist*, *Natural History*, *American Photography*, *Dance*, *Eastern Skier*, *Evangelist*, and *Independent Woman*.

Just as it helps to explain the diversity of magazines, the principle of audience selection also makes understandable the absence or relative fewness of certain kinds of magazines. The publisher's aim was to deliver to the advertiser a screened group of good potential buyers. Therefore, publishers often found it unprofitable to pioneer among low-income groups, and even assembling an audience of desirable consumers was often too costly to justify the effort.

Once a publisher had struck upon an editorial balance which drew the readers he wanted, his profitable policy was to continue that same formula month after month, year after year. Consequently, there was a certain sameness to the editorial content of a given magazine. For example, in each issue of *Collier's* in the thirties, a reader could expect to find an article each about politics or economics, sports, a personality in the entertainment world, and some topic of interest chiefly to women; three short stories, one of them filling less than a single page; two serials,

usually dealing with mystery or romance; a column of miscellany; an editorial; and a scattering of cartoons. For years, *Good Housekeeping* used a formula based on a mixture of such ingredients as food and nutrition, beauty and toiletries, apparel and accessories, home furnishings and management, home building and modernization, and children, all laced with a strong gob of light fiction. The good editor was one who could sense when a formula was weakening and could shift to an equally good balance of material without losing his readers.

Several characteristics of the industry made it relatively easy for the publisher to originate a magazine for a promising group of consumers. A magazine could be begun as a small business. The publisher needed to make no large capital investment in equipment, and often he could find printers and suppliers who were willing to stake him in his venture.

Apart from the few giants in advertising and circulation which battled among themselves on the heights far above the rest of the industry, magazine publishing firms in the twentieth century were relatively small businesses. In 1947 more than half of the 2,166 periodical establishments recorded by the census had fewer than ten employees each, and 95 per cent had fewer than one hundred; only ten companies had a thousand or more employees.

There was no reason that a magazine publishing firm had to be large. The publisher could get his articles and stories from freelance writers; and advertising agencies, retained by his advertisers, prepared the advertisements which he ran. He did not have to maintain a staff to distribute copies to newsstands. Most publishers, as we will see, depended upon the American News Company or the S-M News Company to get their copies to retailers, although a few big ones, among them Curtis, Fawcett, and Macfadden, had organizations for distributing their own magazines and those of other publishers. Indeed, the publisher did not even need a staff to solicit subscriptions; he could plan to circulate most of his copies by newsstand, or he could engage a subscription agency to build his list of subscribers.

Unlike the newspaper publisher and the broadcaster, the magazine publisher did not have to invest in equipment for production. The large majority of publishers did not own printing facilities. The best available source of information, the census of manufactures, reported that in 1925 there were 616 periodical establishments

with printing facilities, 2,032 without; that in 1939 there were 600 with, 1,958 without. In 1955 even some of the largest publishers, including Time, Inc., and the Reader's Digest Association, let their printing out on contract instead of maintaining their own presses. Some publishers owning printing plants kept their presses busy turning out magazines for other publishers. For instance, Condé Nast Publications, Inc., did a large volume of printing for other publishers. At its plant in Dayton, Ohio, the McCall Corporation printed more than forty magazines of other publishers, among them *Argosy*, *Charm*, *Christian Herald*, *Elks*, *Mademoiselle*, *Newsweek*, *Nation's Business*, *Outdoor Life*, *Popular Science*, *Progressive Farmer*, *Reader's Digest*, *Reporter*, and *United States News*. Printing magazines accounted for a sizable portion of the business of such large printing firms as Cuneo Press, Inc., R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, and the Kable Brothers Printing Company.

What the publisher did need, however, was an idea for a magazine and sufficient capital to finance the publication until it was accepted by advertisers and readers. The largest share of that capital went for production costs; and because it did, publishers often turned to printers and suppliers for financial aid in launching a new publication or in keeping an ailing one alive. Printers were frequently willing to gamble on a magazine to keep their presses busy, and paper manufacturers were sometimes willing to extend credit to a publisher with a promising idea. To tide himself over when he was building up his company, for example, Cyrus Curtis got \$100,000 credit from Crocker, Burbank and Company of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, a paper firm. In 1932 the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company gave William H. Eaton financial aid so he could lease *American Home* from Doubleday, Doran and revitalize the magazine. In 1939 Norman H. Anthony found a printer and paper dealer who would speculate on three issues of a magazine he had in mind, *Hellzapoppin*.

Not uncommonly printers and suppliers found themselves owners of a magazine to which they had overextended credit; and in the hope of recovering their losses and keeping the magazine's business, they sometimes staked a new publisher, even to the extent of ploughing new capital into the magazine. John Cuneo, the printer, and the International Paper Company in 1932 became owners of Screenland Magazine, Inc., as a result of overdue debts.

They installed Paul Hunter, an experienced magazine man, as publisher and transferred stock to him each year until he was majority owner of the publishing house. Unpaid bills gave the Kable Brothers Printing Company control of *Judge* in 1936, and for at least a year, the company sought a new publisher to whom it could sell the humor magazine. In 1941 when Bernarr Macfadden withdrew from Macfadden Publications, four printing and paper supply houses—Cuneo Press, W. F. Hall Printing Company, Kimberly-Clark Paper Company, and West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company—advanced the money so that a group of management employees could buy the property. The four companies were represented on the board of directors. *Liberty*, for a time a Macfadden publication, was kept alive for several years by financial injections from its suppliers. John Cuneo and Kimberly-Clark in 1942 reportedly were so anxious to retain the business of the moribund weekly that they put up a million dollars to keep it going. In 1944 they turned their holdings in the magazine over to Paul Hunter, who had rescued *Screenland* for Cuneo in 1932.

Although access to the magazine industry was relatively easy, survival was quite another matter. The characteristics which made it easy for one publisher to enter the industry made it easy for competitors to enter. Furthermore, a publisher had to count on operating at a loss at least until he learned just what the response to his new magazine was. Books and movies were reviewed soon after their issue, but not so magazines; there was little feedback from reader to publisher. A publisher sent his magazines into the world and waited for them to succeed or fail. If readers did not share his enthusiasm for a new publication, he often had a hard time knowing just wherein his idea had failed. Advertisers were cautious about buying space in an untried publication. Even if the magazine soon won a reader following, advertisers often were slow to find a place for it in their allocations.

If the publisher did devise a brilliantly successful magazine, he could not entirely hide the pattern for its success, since he was forced by the nature of publishing to exhibit his best ideas in public; and a successful magazine invariably bred imitators. Then, too, readers were fickle. Their tastes and interests changed, and it required a brand of editorial genius to anticipate those changes before they were reflected in a declining circulation. Over all else

hung the threat to the balance sheet which arose from the economics of publishing. A publisher, in consequence, was tagged by the threat of failure—failure to hold his readers, failure to hold his advertisers, failure to hold the position of his magazine, failure to maintain its very existence.

This threat was reflected in the day to day operations of magazines. They fired a steady barrage of research and sales talk to convince the advertiser that they best served the market which he wished to reach. They fought for the best display positions on newsstands and on rare occasions engaged in open warfare. They studied the rises and dips in circulation of their own and competitors' magazines as closely as ever a physician watched a patient's temperature, and a few used readership studies to measure the response to editorial features. On many a magazine, the tenure of top personnel was short. When circulation or advertising fell ominously, the reaction of many publishers was to fire key staff members and to bring in fresh minds. Such staff upheavals, to an outsider, seemed a frantic game of musical chairs, for magazines drew their ablest personnel from a small reservoir of talent, and when staff members were crowded out of one magazine they dashed for seats on others. At least one major publisher, to forestall stagnation, frequently transferred staff members from one position to another within the organization as a matter of company policy.

Intensifying the struggle for existence was the economics of publishing and its eternal paradox: A publisher needed a large circulation to make a profit, yet this same large circulation could conceivably ruin him financially. The paradox was inherent in the system of magazine support. Nearly all publishers depended on advertising for most of their income. They sold their magazine to the reader for less than cost of production and took their profits from the advertising which their circulation attracted. As a carrier of advertising, the magazine was sensitive to changes in business conditions. Yet when advertising volume dropped suddenly, when production costs rose suddenly, the publisher had to continue publishing a magazine of essentially the same size and quality as ever, if only in the hope of regaining the advertising lineage he had lost. A publisher could rarely trim operating costs rapidly enough to compensate for losses in advertising. In fact, his production costs sometimes rose when advertising declined, for then



he had to pay for editorial material to fill the space formerly occupied by advertising. Even when advertising volume was high, as in the decade after World War II, production costs often outran revenue.

Partly because they sought economic stability, partly because expansion was an outward sign of success, companies ordinarily published not just one magazine but several. Time and again a company began with one publication, nursed it along to modest or spectacular financial success, and then originated or bought other publications, just as Frank Munsey increased his holdings after the success of *Munsey's*. It was natural for a publisher to exploit a market to the fullest once he had learned what it liked in a magazine. Therefore, a publisher frequently aimed a variety of publications at a reader group with which he had had some experience. Motor Trend Publications did so with *Hot Rod* and *Motor Trends*; John H. Johnson did so with *Ebony*, *Tan*, and *Jet*; and other publishers did so by bringing out both confession and movie fan magazines, both of which were read by the same sort of women. On the other hand, a number of companies each produced several publications for widely dissimilar audiences.

Like Munsey, the typical publisher endured over the years by killing off titles that slipped in public favor and replacing them with new ones. Street and Smith, a leading publisher of pulp magazines after the nineties, was ever quick to drop titles when readers began to lose interest in them, just as quick to replace them with new ones. In 1949 the company in one blow wiped out its last four pulp magazines and five comic books to concentrate on its more profitable slick magazines, *Charm*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Living for Young Homemakers*.

In general, the lower the profit margin on each copy sold, the more titles a publisher had in his stable. During the thirties, for instance, the publishers of pulp fiction magazines walked a thin line between profit and loss. The net on an issue of 100,000 copies often amounted only to somewhere between \$460 and \$730. To have even a modest income, therefore, the publisher had to own a number of magazines. In the forties and early fifties, the owners of the longest lists of titles were publishers of pulps, comics, detective magazines, movie fan magazines, and confession magazines, most of which were lean on advertising and depended on sales for much of their revenue.

In the struggle to hold their shares of the market, many publishers and many magazines failed. The mortality rate of magazines has always been high. "The expectation of failure is connected with the very name Magazine," Noah Webster wrote in 1788; and Herbert Hungerford, drawing on his many years' experience in the magazine industry, wrote in the 1930's: "With the exception of theatrical ventures, I doubt if there is, in any other field of endeavor, such a large proportion of failures among all the new projects that are started."<sup>2</sup>

Just what proportion of the new ventures ended in failure, it is impossible to say. There is no central clearinghouse reporting on all the magazines established; even if there were, it would probably overlook the many publications which reached trial dummy issues but died before their first public appearance. A writer working for the publisher of directories of periodicals once estimated that only one magazine in every three hundred attempted ever attained commercial success. Hungerford, writing in the thirties, concurred in that estimate. But in 1953 a veteran in the magazine industry who wished to remain anonymous estimated a much lower proportion of failures. "You have to distinguish between the outright gambles and the magazines carefully planned and adequately financed," he said. "I'd guess that perhaps no more than half of the magazines of serious intent fail."

Certainly the mortality rate for magazines was high, even if it were considerably lower than Hungerford's estimate. Hundreds upon hundreds of magazines were begun only to be killed off, sometimes after a single issue, sometimes after several years' publication. The fact that a magazine survived for a number of years was no evidence of its financial success. *Success* magazine, which consistently failed to live up to its name, stayed alive for years only because at least seven different backers, one of whom sunk more than a million dollars into it, were willing to take chances on it. *Liberty*, too, seems to have spent much of its lifetime of more than a quarter century in the red. *Liberty* was begun in 1924 by Colonel Robert McCormick of the Chicago *Tribune* and Joseph M. Patterson of the New York *Daily News*, who reportedly lost some \$12,000,000 on it in their seven years of ownership. In 1931 Bernarr Macfadden took it over and operated it, sometimes in the

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Hungerford, *How Publishers Win* (Washington, 1931), pp. 22-23.

red, sometimes in the black, until he withdrew from Macfadden Publications. Throughout the forties, several new owners, each apparently more optimistic than the last, tried to make a go of *Liberty*; but in 1951, after having been taken over by a publisher of cheesecake magazines, it finally died.

On the other hand, there were publishers who had little patience with magazines that needed nursing along, and their practices helped to account for the large turnover in magazine titles. Such publishers launched their new publications largely on a sink-or-swim basis; they allocated comparatively small sums to keep the magazine afloat until it acquired acceptance by readers and advertisers. If the magazine caught on, it was retained until it slipped; if it did not catch on at once or at least show promise, it was promptly abandoned. The Dell Publishing Company and Fawcett Publications, both of which concentrated on publications depending on newsstand sales rather than on subscriptions, rapidly disposed of magazines which did not operate in the black. They were continually starting new magazines and killing off old ones; Dell designed many of its new publications as one-shots.

There were a number of reasons for the high mortality rate of magazines. No two magazines ever died for exactly the same reasons; but the magazines that failed had certain common weaknesses, according to Harlan Logan, a former publishers' consultant and a former editor of *Scribner's*.<sup>3</sup> Examining a long list of failures, he noted that several of the following weaknesses were always present:

1. Lack of editorial reason for existence
2. Lack of clearly defined editorial pattern
3. Lack of advertising reason for existing
4. Lack of realistic budget projections
5. Lack of realistic schedule of time required to gain either reader or advertising acceptance
6. Lack of knowledge of the magazine field in general and of the specific competition
7. Lack of accurate information about the personnel which is hired to produce the new magazine
8. Lack of an objective and independent (non-staff) audit of the potentialities of the new magazine and of the publishing program that has been set up

<sup>3</sup> Harlan Logan, "Tomorrow's New Magazines," *Magazine Industry*, 1 (Summer, 1949) 19.

Logan also estimated the costs and risks of starting a new magazine in 1949. His calculations, which appear in Table 4, were based on the capital necessary to sustain a publication for four years, the time thought necessary for it to achieve acceptance by readers and advertisers. His figures were intended only as general estimates, not as guides in specific situations.

Table 4,

INVESTMENT REQUIRED TO FINANCE A MAGAZINE  
ADEQUATELY FOR FOUR YEARS  
(Money figures in millions)

Magazine Group	FOR ESTAB. PUBLISHER	FOR NEW PUBLISHER	Odds Against Success Even With This Investment:	
			FOR ESTAB. PUBLISHER	FOR NEW PUBLISHER
General Weekly:				
Competition for <i>Life, Satevepost, etc.</i>	\$5 to \$10	\$7.5 to \$15	2 to 1	3 to 1
General Monthly:				
Competition for <i>American, Cosmo- politan, etc.</i>	\$2.5 to \$5	\$4 to \$7	7 to 1	10 to 1
Women's Service:				
Competition for <i>Good Hskp., L.H.J.</i>	\$3.5 to \$7.5	\$5 to \$10	2 to 1	3 to 1
Pocket Size:				
Competition for <i>Reader's Digest, Pageant, etc.</i> (No adv.)	\$1 to \$2	\$2 to \$3	3 to 2	2 to 1
News Weekly:				
Competition for <i>Time, Newsweek</i>	\$2.5 to \$5	\$5 to \$10	2 to 1	3 to 1
Specialty Service:				
Competition for <i>Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, etc.</i>	\$2 to	\$2.5 to	Even	2 to 1
Miscellaneous Monthly:				
Scientific, travel, youth, the arts, etc.	\$1 to \$4	\$2 to \$5	Even	2 to 1

Source: Harlan Logan, "Tomorrow's New Magazines," *Magazine Industry*, 1 (Summer, 1949) 17.

If the death rate of new magazines was high, so was the death rate of those which had established themselves. The magazine industry was one of continual entrances and exits, and success was never permanent. Newcomers in the twentieth century challenged and often unseated their longer-lived contemporaries, just as *Munsey's* and *McClure's* had surpassed many of the leaders of their time. There seemed to be an ebb and flow in the lives of magazines and a point at which they were vulnerable to attack. Edmund Wilson, the literary critic and himself a magazine writer, noticed in 1935 that magazines, like other living organisms, have a youth, a maturity, and an old age: "In its earliest years, a magazine may seem spontaneous, novel and daring; but by the time it has reached its maturity it has, as the French say, 'taken its fold,' and it succumbs to the force of inertia against which the youngest and freshest editor is as powerless as the oldest and stalest. Thereafter, it grows old, declines and dies."<sup>4</sup>

There is some documentation of that point in the following chapters that give short histories of some of the well-known magazines which toppled and of some of the new publications which replaced them. But here let us illustrate that remark in a general way; let us consider the changing positions among the leaders in advertising and circulation. From 1900 through 1955, a small number of magazines took in the great share of national advertising and sold a high percentage of total copies. But many of the magazines which were at the top in the early years of the century had vanished by the forties and fifties. The magazine industry was so competitive and fluid that even new periodicals started with little financial backing could work their way up into the small circle of leaders.

One can easily show that a few publishers and a few magazines collected a large share of the money which national advertisers spent in magazines from 1918 onward. It is much harder to show that advertising revenue was concentrated in few hands between 1900 and 1918, as data are sketchy and unreliable. However, since the advertising revenues of the Curtis Publishing Company began a sharp increase in about 1908 and since its publications had emerged as the leading advertising media in the United States by 1918, one can conjecture that by the early years of the cen-

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Wilson, "The Literary Worker's Polonius," in *The Shores of Light* (New York, 1952), p. 593.

tury a handful of publishers was receiving a very high proportion of the money spent on national advertising.

By 1918 the concentration of advertising revenues was clearly apparent. In that year, about 43 per cent of all dollars spent on national advertising in general and farm magazines went to the three publications of the Curtis Publishing Company, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Country Gentleman*, which together took in \$25,288,000 of the \$58,432,000 total. Each year from then until 1930, the Curtis publications accounted for from 38 to 43 per cent of the money which national advertisers spent in general and farm magazines. The weekly *Saturday Evening Post* alone took in from 27 to 31 per cent of such funds each year from 1918 through 1929.

Although the Curtis Publishing Company led by far in advertising income in the twenties, other publishers also accounted for good-sized shares of national advertising revenues. For instance, the Crowell Publishing Company in 1920 grossed \$15,449,000 or 12 per cent of the total, and in 1925, its *American*, *Collier's*, *Farm and Fireside*, and *Woman's Home Companion* took in \$16,754,000 or 11 per cent.

The concentration of advertising in that period is underlined by a few additional figures. Just Curtis and Crowell shared 51 per cent of the dollar volume of national advertising in general and national farm magazines in 1920, and 54 per cent in 1925. The top five leaders in advertising revenue in 1920—the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Literary Digest*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Woman's Home Companion*—grossed \$71,922,000 or 56 per cent of the total, and the top ten accounted for 70 per cent. In 1925, the top five accounted for 55 per cent, the top ten for 70 per cent.

The bulk of national advertising continued to gravitate to the columns of just a handful of magazines throughout the thirties, forties, and early fifties. During the thirties, Curtis magazines carried from one-fifth to one-third of the dollar volume of all national advertising in magazines. In 1947, about 47 per cent of all money spent on national advertising in magazines went to just five magazines of three publishers and about 83 per cent of it to the ten magazines leading in advertising revenues. In 1955 the gross revenues of just three publishers—Crowell-Collier, Curtis, and

Time, Inc.—amounted to almost half of the total sum spent on national advertising in consumer magazines.

However, despite that concentration of advertising, the life blood of the great majority of commercial magazines, new publishers launched publications that were able to achieve mammoth circulations and large volumes of advertising. One of those new publishers was Time, Inc., which was established in 1923 and which during the forties took an even greater share of national advertising than Curtis itself. By 1940, Time, Inc., was approaching Curtis in its gross advertising revenues; in 1942 it surpassed Curtis, \$39,625,000 to \$35,439,000. Table 5, which compares the gross advertising revenues of Curtis and Time, Inc., graphically illustrates how a new company overtook and passed the foremost publishing organization in America.

The position of an advertising leader was never secure. Of fifty magazines leading in advertising revenues in 1920, twenty-two no longer existed thirty years later. They had died or been merged with other publications. On the other hand, of fifty magazines leading in advertising revenue in 1954, nearly half—twenty-three—were not in existence before 1920. A few of them were published by companies which existed before 1920, but most were not.

In circulation as in advertising revenue, a few publications accounted for the great share of the total. To document that point, however, one must use data from different sources which are not strictly comparable; therefore, although the general conclusion seems valid, the details are highly approximate.

In 1927 the aggregate per issue circulation of the 3,859 periodicals covered by the census was about 165,702,000. That year the twenty-five magazines with sales of a million or more had an aggregate circulation per issue of approximately 39,158,000, according to figures in *Standard Rate and Data*. Therefore, those twenty-five magazines had sales equal to about 24 per cent of the total magazine circulation. Six years later, in 1933, the 3,459 periodicals had an aggregate circulation of 174,759,000 per issue, according to census data. The twenty-three magazines with circulations in excess of a million accounted for about 23 per cent of that total. The situation was much the same in 1947. Then forty magazines with circulations of at least a million had combined sales of approximately 90,068,000 an issue, or about 23 per

Table 5

ADVERTISING REVENUES OF CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY AND TIME, INC., and Their Percentages of the Total Sum Spent on National Advertising in General and National Farm Magazines, 1918-1955

Year	Curtis Publishing Co.		Time, Inc.		
	GROSS ADVERTISING REVENUES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NATL. ADV.	GROSS ADVERTISING REVENUES*	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NATL. ADV.	
1918	% 25,288,133	43 %			
1919	40,670,255	43			
1920	51,162,722	40			
1921	38,132,102	40			
1922	41,783,954	43	Founded 1923:		
1923	50,857,288	43	\$ 14,635	Less than	1%
1924	56,465,763	43	52,827	"	
1925	64,221,872	42	129,074	"	
1926	64,808,922	39	283,047	"	
1927	74,132,790	41	501,268	"	
1928	70,123,476	39	772,729	"	
1929	73,644,718	38	1,860,443		1%
1930	67,660,118	35	3,388,836		2
1931	51,562,381	33	3,458,546		2
1932	32,404,173	29	2,945,115		3
1933	26,120,844	27	3,252,281		3
1934	31,097,442	26	5,429,547		5
1935	31,654,924	26	6,647,867		5
1936	36,316,597	26	9,301,508		6
1937	36,394,532	23	14,927,492		9
1938	30,869,705	22	14,489,497		10
1939	33,485,338	22	20,093,012		13
1940	36,659,454	22	27,660,546		17
1941	39,335,594	22	35,235,449		20
1942	35,438,845	20	39,624,927		23
1943	44,062,678	19	49,708,203		22
1944	48,057,253	18	56,076,904		21
1945	51,707,078	17	60,103,079		20
1946	73,197,785	19	79,601,583		21
1947	93,998,148	21	103,733,343		24
1948	99,078,354	22	111,710,652		24
1949	94,927,685	22	104,421,011		24
1950	98,465,378	21	108,249,207		24
1951	102,167,246	20	126,604,206		25
1952	108,065,117	20	135,757,054		25
1953	114,088,632	19	152,071,310		25
1954	111,339,119	19	156,862,358		26
1955	117,600,205	18	168,716,359		26

\* Excluding *Architectural Forum*, a business paper.

Source: Calculations by author on data supplied by Magazine Advertising Bureau.



cent of the aggregate per issue circulation given by the census for all 4,610 periodicals in the United States.

Another indication that a few publications had the bulk of total circulation appeared in the report of a Senate committee during hearings on postal rates in 1950. In one three-month period in 1949, according to the report, 43.6 per cent of the weight and 43.2 per cent of the revenue in second-class mail, the class giving preferential rates to periodicals, was derived from the eighteen largest magazines and two of the largest newspapers. Ten corporations published those twenty publications, the nine largest of which were controlled by three corporations.<sup>5</sup>

But in circulation as in advertising, magazines fell from the top and new ones took their places. In 1926, twenty general magazines had circulations of at least a million. Nine of them, almost half, vanished in the next fifteen years. Conversely, forty general magazines had circulations of a million or more in 1955. More than half of them were launched after World War I, as Table 6 shows.

The speed with which some of the new publishers and new magazines grew into circulation giants was remarkable. It took the *Literary Digest* some thirty years to achieve a circulation of two million. Bernarr Macfadden's *True Story*, which first appeared in 1919, cornered almost two million readers in about seven years. It took the *Ladies' Home Journal* approximately twenty years to reach a circulation of a million. *Better Living* guaranteed advertisers a million circulation from its first issue in 1951.

Although the magazine industry was freely competitive and publishers rose and descended rapidly, there were some surface indications of concentration of resources and market. Individual companies tended to publish several magazines. There was some cross-media ownership; magazine companies published books and newspapers, operated radio and television stations, and produced educational and industrial motion pictures. There was some vertical integration as large publishers invested in paper mills, marketing services, and subscription and distributing agencies. A few huge organizations controlled the distribution of magazines to retailers.

Cross-media ownership existed in the magazine industry even before the national magazine emerged. Such ownership of a sort,

<sup>5</sup> *Tide*, 24 (March 17, 1950) 38.

Table 6

## MAGAZINES WITH CIRCULATIONS OF AT LEAST A MILLION IN 1955 AND DATES OF THEIR FOUNDING

Year of Founding	Name of Magazine	Approx. Circ., 1955 (In millions)
1821	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>	4.6
1870	<i>McCall's</i>	4.5
1872	<i>Popular Science Monthly</i>	1.2
1873	<i>Woman's Home Companion</i>	4.2
1876	<i>American Magazine</i>	2.7
1882	<i>Argosy</i>	1.3
1883	<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>	4.8
1885	<i>Good Housekeeping</i>	3.4
1888	<i>National Geographic</i>	2.2
1888	<i>Collier's</i>	3.7
1894	<i>Town Journal</i>	1.6
1900	<i>Household</i>	2.5
1902	<i>Popular Mechanics</i>	1.4
1903	<i>Redbook</i>	2.2
1911	<i>Photoplay</i>	1.4
1912	<i>Boy's Life</i>	1.1
1914	<i>V.F.W. Magazine</i>	1.1
1919	<i>True Story</i>	2.5
1919	<i>American Legion</i>	2.8
1922	<i>Reader's Digest</i>	10.2
1922	<i>Better Homes &amp; Gardens</i>	4.1
1922	<i>True Confessions</i>	1.4
1922	<i>Elks Magazine</i>	1.1
1923	<i>Time</i>	1.9
1926	<i>Parents' Magazine</i>	1.6
1928	<i>American Home</i>	3.0
1930	<i>Modern Screen</i>	1.2
1932	<i>Family Circle</i>	4.2
1933	<i>Newsweek</i>	1.0
1935	<i>Workbasket</i>	1.6
1936	<i>Life</i>	5.7
1936	<i>Look</i>	4.1
1936	<i>Coronet</i>	2.7
1937	<i>Woman's Day</i>	3.6
1941	<i>Western Family</i>	1.2
1944	<i>True</i>	1.8
1948	<i>TV Guide</i>	3.0
1951	<i>Better Living</i>	2.3
1951	<i>Everywoman's</i>	1.7
1952	<i>Confidential</i>	2.3

Source: *Standard Rate and Data*. Farm magazines are excluded from this table.

existed in the nineteenth century when several of the leading magazines were offshoots of book publishing houses. In the twentieth century, magazine publishers owned book publishing firms, newspapers, newspaper syndicates, radio and television stations, motion picture studios, and even a book club. Yet one gets the impression that over the years magazine publishers were interested primarily in magazines; with very few exceptions, even those who owned other communications media regarded them as sidelines and gave their major attention to their magazines. In short, few magazine publishers were interested in building communications empires resting on ownership of different kinds of media; if anything, magazine publishers were interested in building magazine empires.

It is perhaps significant that the two publishers who built up vast communications empires, Frank Munsey and William Randolph Hearst, both hit their stride in publishing at a time when consolidations, trusts, and concentrations of economic power were an outstanding characteristic of American economic life. The times encouraged dreams like Munsey's of a single large corporation operating hundreds of newspapers and magazines on a mass-production basis from a central headquarters. Starting as a magazine publisher, Munsey chased his dream of a long chain of periodicals by buying up newspaper after newspaper, magazine after magazine. And, with an eye on his ledger, he killed off or combined the ones that weakened. In time, magazines and newspapers were but part of his extensive holdings, which included banks, hotels, and stores.

William Randolph Hearst entered journalism in 1887 as publisher of the San Francisco *Examiner*, a newspaper belonging to his father. After almost a decade of experimenting with techniques to attract a mass audience, he invaded New York in 1895 with the purchase of the *Journal*. He broke into the magazine field in 1903 when he founded *Motor*. Thereafter, he began or bought, combined or killed off, a number of magazines. At his peak in 1935, he owned twenty-six dailies in nineteen cities, their combined circulation amounting to 13.6 per cent of total daily circulation in the country; thirteen magazines; eight radio stations; two motion picture companies; the Sunday supplement *American Weekly*; International News Service, Universal Service, and In-

ternational News Photos; and the King Features Syndicate.<sup>6</sup> By midcentury the empire had melted considerably, but in 1955 the Hearst Corporation and its subsidiaries still owned nine magazines, fifteen newspapers, three radio stations, two television stations, the International News Service, King Features Syndicate, and numerous other properties at home and abroad.<sup>7</sup>

By comparison, the cross-media holdings of other publishers between 1900 and 1955 were modest. Let us get an idea of their nature and extent by seeing just what properties some publishers owned besides magazines.

Some newspaper publishers, like Hearst, moved into the magazine field and some magazine publishers, like Munsey, moved into the newspaper field, although all on a more modest scale than either of those two empire builders. Cyrus Curtis, Arthur Capper, W. H. Cowles, the New York Times Company, Marshall Field III, Moses Annenberg, John and Gardner Cowles, and others owned both newspapers and magazines; some of them also owned radio and television stations.

In 1913 Cyrus Curtis branched from magazine publishing into newspaper publishing by buying the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* for \$2,000,000. Evidently to keep the *Ledger* alive, he bought and killed three other Philadelphia newspapers, the *Evening Telegraph*, the *Press*, and the *North American*. He acquired the New York *Evening Post* in 1923 and the Philadelphia *Inquirer* in 1930. In 1926 Cyrus Curtis told an interviewer: "I've really just started to become a newspaper publisher. As I've said before, I don't want to become owner of a chain of newspapers. . . . I want to make what I have the very best in the daily field. . . . I've realized my ambitions as a magazine publisher. Now I'm tackling the daily field. I want to make a go of it."<sup>8</sup> But he was never as fortunate with his newspapers as with his magazines. When he died in 1933, his newspapers were valued at more than \$50,000,000, but they were a drain on his finances instead of money-makers. In 1933 J. David Stern bought the New York *Post*, and three years later Moses L. Annenberg bought the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. By the time the *Ledger* finally died in 1942, the last of the Curtis news-

6 Edwin Emery, "William Randolph Hearst: A Tentative Appraisal," *Journalism Quarterly*, 28 (Fall, 1951) 431.

7 *Advertising Age*, 26 (Apr. 4, 1955) 1-2.

8 *Editor & Publisher*, 59 (July 10, 1926) 11.

papers, Cyrus Curtis and his heirs had spent a reported \$42,000,000 on their excursion into newspaper publishing.

In 1893, about the time that Cyrus Curtis was getting his publishing company well under way, a young Kansan named Arthur Capper returned to Topeka from Washington, where he had been correspondent for the *Topeka Capital*. He set himself up as publisher of the *North Topeka Mail*, a small weekly for farmers, and with profits from it he was able to buy the *Topeka Capital*. In 1955 Capper Publications, Inc., and its subsidiaries published magazines and newspapers reaching about five million subscribers and operated two radio stations and one television station. Its periodicals included *Household*, a monthly home-service magazine; *Capper's Farmer*, a farm magazine circulating mainly throughout the Midwest; *Kansas Farmer* and *Missouri Ruralist*, semimonthly magazines with statewide circulations; and *Capper's Weekly*, a weekly feature publication. Its newspapers were the *Topeka Daily Capital*, a morning and Sunday paper, and the *Kansas City Kansan*, an afternoon and Sunday paper. A subsidiary, Capper-Harman-Slocum, Inc., published three semimonthly farm magazines, *Michigan Farmer*, *Ohio Farmer*, and *Pennsylvania Farmer*. Other subsidiaries operated radio stations WIBW in Topeka and KCKN in Kansas City, Kansas, and WIBW-TV in Topeka.<sup>9</sup>

While Arthur Capper was building up his magazines and newspapers in the Midwest, William H. Cowles was acquiring similar holdings in the Pacific Northwest. A former Chicago police reporter, Cowles became business manager of the Spokane *Spokesman* in 1891. A half dozen years later he owned both it and the evening *Chronicle*. At midcentury, his heirs owned the only two newspapers in Spokane, the *Spokesman-Review* and the *Chronicle*, and four magazines, *Idaho Farmer*, *Oregon Farmer*, *Utah Farmer*, and *Washington Farmer*.

Farm magazines seem to have had a special attraction for newspaper publishers. Early in 1934 Prank Gannett, then publisher of the third largest chain of dailies in the United States, bought his first magazine, the *American Agriculturist*. Marshall Field III in 1945 added *Southern Agriculturist* to his growing list of publishing interests. The Seaton family of Kansas and Nebraska, which

<sup>9</sup> Standard and Poor, *Standard Corporation Descriptions*, 16, No. 17, Sect. 3 (June 17, 1955) 7125-26.

already owned ten newspapers and two radio stations, in 1949 bought a fifty-year-old magazine, *Western Farm Life*.

A few newspaper publishers brought out magazines of wider appeal than farm magazines. Gardner and John Cowles, members of a family long important in the newspaper business, turned to magazine publishing in 1936 when they brought out *Look*. Besides *Look*, their holdings in 1947 included the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, the *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, and radio stations KRNT (Des Moines), WCOP (Boston), WOL (Washington, D.C.), and WNAX (Yankton, South Dakota). In 1949 they began *Quick*, which they disposed of a few years later, and in 1950 *Flair*, which died after a year.

Moses Annenberg, who bought the Philadelphia *Inquirer* from Curtis in 1986 and who published a string of racing sheets, owned a number of magazines, among them *Radio-Movie Guide*, which was killed in 1943 to allow more paper for *Click*, which in turn, despite its circulation of more than a million, was killed in early 1945 to allow more paper for *Seventeen*, a highly successful magazine for young women. The \$25,000,000 Annenberg empire in 1955 included the *Inquirer*, *Daily Racing Form*, *Morning Telegraph*, *Official Detective*, *Seventeen*, and *TV Guide*.

The publishers of the three largest Sunday newspaper supplements, *American Weekly*, *Parade*, and *This Week*, all had affiliations with the magazine industry. Hearst, the publisher of *American Weekly*, has already been mentioned. *Parade*, which was started in 1941 and which in 1955 had a circulation of more than 6,978,000, was owned by Marshall Field III, who in 1945 bought the *Southern Agriculturist*. *This Week*, founded in 1935 and having a circulation of 11,143,000 for its national edition in 1955, was controlled by Joseph Palmer Knapp's Publications Corporation, which also controlled the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company and Alco-Gravure, the world's largest rotogravure printers.

A number of magazine publishers became book publishers and vice versa at various times between 1900 and 1955, as when Alfred Knopf published the *American Mercury* in the twenties, Doubleday published *American Home* and *Country Life* in the twenties, and Ziff-Davis Publishing Company in 1942 created a book division for itself by buying the Alliance Book Corporation. The McGraw-Hill Publishing Company was a major publisher of both books and magazines, chiefly trade periodicals and scientific journals.

Its trade-book division published and distributed fiction and non-fiction for the general reader, and other divisions published texts for secondary schools, business institutes, and colleges. The company in 1955 was also bringing out twenty-nine trade and scientific magazines for distribution in this country, another eleven for circulation abroad. Crowell-Collier also was a large publisher of books and periodicals. Its book list included the National Encyclopedia, Collier's Encyclopedia, the Junior Classics, and the Harvard Classics, and its book sales in 1954 amounted to \$12,-460,000.

But by midcentury most of the magazine publishers producing books had concentrated on publishing cook books or other service publications, which arose as by-products of their magazines, or inexpensive paper-back reprints. Among the publishers of reprints were Curtis, Dell, Fawcett, Martin Goodman's Magazine Management, and others.

In 1945, Curtis Publishing Company joined with Grosset and Dunlap to form Bantam Books, Inc., publishers of twenty-five-cent reprints. Curtis, which owned 48.5 per cent of the stock, distributed the Bantam books through its Curtis Circulation Company and Grosset and Dunlap held editorial control of the books. With Grosset and Dunlap, Curtis also shared control of two firms which published inexpensive story and picture books for children. It owned 40 per cent of Wonder Books, Inc., formed in 1949, and 50 per cent of Treasure Books, Inc., established in 1952. The children's books also were distributed through Curtis channels. During World War II, George T. Delacorte's Dell Publishing Company found a bonanza in the reprint field; and by 1944, according to a company spokesman, its revenues from reprints and comics had become larger than those from its screen, romance, and detective magazines.<sup>10</sup> Between 1943 and 1950, Dell published approximately five hundred different titles of paper-back books, and their sales rose from 3,720,000 copies in 1943 to more than 30,000,000 in 1950. The company was publishing new titles at the rate of ten or twelve a month in 1955.

A few magazine publishers besides Hearst tried their hands at producing movies. Time, Inc., in 1934 formed its cinema unit, the March of Time, which produced film documentaries released

<sup>10</sup> *Tide*, 18 (Sept. 1, 1944) 54.

through Twentieth Century-Fox and which prepared special films on assignment for such clients as the State of New York, the New York Stock Exchange, and the Standard Oil Company of Indiana. Its first documentary, "Speak-easy," was shown in 417 theaters; eventually its releases were shown every four weeks by more than 9,000 theaters around the world to an audience estimated at 30,000,000. In the early fifties, when its business with theaters had fallen off, the March of Time turned to producing movies for television. It closed its production offices entirely in the spring of 1954. The National Broadcasting Company took over its collection of films, McGraw-Hill its collection of theatrical shorts, and Twentieth Century-Fox the television rights to its TV productions.

As a personal venture, David Smart of Esquire, Inc., in 1940 formed a company to film color-sound instructional movies for schools. During the war, the company produced training films for the Navy. In the fall of 1944, Smart reorganized his private project as Coronet Instructional Films, a division of Esquire, Inc., which invested \$1,000,000 in it. In 1949 Esquire, Inc., acquired control of Ideal Pictures Corporation and its affiliates, rental distributors of 16-mm. nontheatrical films of all types with twenty-nine branches in the United States and Hawaii. *Look* magazine, in cooperation with a Manhattan firm, in October, 1943, began producing "*Look's* World Spotlight," a ten-minute feature which appeared monthly for about two years and which was shown in about fifty theaters.

There seems to have been almost no vertical integration in the magazine industry between 1900 and 1955. As we have seen, most publishers during that period owned neither printing facilities nor means of distributing their copies to newsstands. Indeed, one gathers that many publishers regarded integration as a handicap rather than as a blessing. Some publishers, however, did move slightly towards self-containment. In a program to build up paper supplies and printing capacity after World War II, Time, Inc., branched out by acquiring several paper mills. In 1945 it bought the Maine Seaboard Paper Company, the Hennepin Paper Company, the Bryant Paper Company, and the Bucksport Water Company. It sold them all in December, 1946, to the St. Regis Paper Company, in which it retained an interest. Although it did not buy printing plants, it did assist its contract printers in en-



larging their establishments ; and it set up a wholly owned subsidiary, Printing Developments, Inc., to develop and market technical improvements in the printing and allied trades. Its research in graphic arts was done at a laboratory in Springdale, Connecticut.

One of the few self-contained magazine publishers in the United States, probably the only one, was Curtis Publishing Company. As the company expanded after 1900, it added to its holdings so that in 1955 it or its subsidiaries controlled every step of its magazine production from raising trees for paper to distributing copies to newsstands in the United States and Canada.

Wood for making the paper in Curtis magazines came from more than 107,000 acres of woodland in Pennsylvania and 48,000 in Ontario, owned by the New York and Pennsylvania Company, a wholly owned but unconsolidated Curtis subsidiary. About four-fifths of Curtis' wood fiber paper came from wholly owned subsidiaries, which processed the wood in their own pulp mills, made their own chemicals used in the pulping process, and manufactured the paper itself in four mills—two in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, one in Johnsonburg, Pennsylvania, and one in Willsboro, New York.

Curtis magazines were printed in Philadelphia. Curtis' main manufacturing departments, as well as administrative, editorial, and advertising offices, were housed in a twelve-story building fronting on Independence Square. In its thirty acres of building space at Independence Square, Curtis maintained its own composing rooms, press rooms, bindery, and plate service department. It owned another plant, opened in 1948, at Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania. A substantial portion of the electrotype plates used in the plants came from the Colonial Electrotype Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Curtis. Other Curtis buildings included a full-block property in South Philadelphia, used for manufacturing and storage, and a garage in Philadelphia for housing the company's trucks.

Wholly owned subsidiaries of Curtis conducted market research and sold magazine subscriptions. National Analysts, Inc., made market surveys and prepared statistical studies. The Moore-Cottrell Subscription Agencies, Inc., solicited magazine subscriptions for Curtis and other publications. Premium Service, Inc., operated a premium merchandise business.

Still other completely owned subsidiaries distributed magazines

for Curtis and other publishers and solicited subscriptions for them. The Curtis Circulation Company, with a field staff of four hundred, handled newsstand distribution for several Canadian publishers as well as Curtis. The Curtis Publishing Company also owned 50 per cent of the capital stock in the National Magazine Service, Inc., formed early in 1950 with the S-M News Company to distribute magazines directly to retail outlets not serviced by regular truck routes of the established wholesalers.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Curtis, most magazine publishers between 1900 and 1955 did not handle their own distribution of copies to retailers. From the nineteenth century onward, such distribution was controlled by a very few organizations. A publisher had no trouble getting his copies to regular subscribers; the Post Office Department delivered them at preferential rates. But getting copies to dealers throughout the United States and Canada, shifting copies from places where they sold slowly to places where the demand exceeded the supply, and recalling copies that dealers were unable to sell—those tasks were too big for most publishers.

Even before the national magazine appeared, the distribution of magazines to retail outlets was dominated by the American News Company, which in 1955 serviced some 95,000 dealers from more than 350 branch offices. Founded in 1864 to distribute periodicals to retailers, the American News soon branched into wholesaling stationery, books, toys, and eventually hundreds of other items; and to selling periodicals and foods on railroads. In 1872 its subsidiary, Railroad News Company, bought the Union News Company, also established in 1864 to sell reading matter and other merchandise to passengers on Commodore Vanderbilt's New York and Harlem Railroad. Meanwhile, American News expanded its network of branches across the United States and into Canada. The company practically monopolized the distribution of periodicals when the low-priced magazine appeared in the nineties, but at midcentury it had some competition from the few other distributing agencies, S-M News Company, and organizations controlled by Curtis, Fawcett, and Hearst.

In 1955 the activities of American News were manifold. Directly or through its subsidiaries, it not only imported and exported, wholesaled, and retailed newspapers, magazines, and

<sup>11</sup> Standard and Poor, *Standard Corporation Descriptions*, 16, No. 17, Sect. 3 (June 17, 1955) 7213-15.

books; it also operated newsstands, restaurants, lunchrooms, cafeterias, soda fountains, bakeries, coffee shops, tobacco shops, book shops, toy shops, drugstores, barber shops, parcel checking facilities, weighing and vending machines, ice and roller skating rinks.<sup>12</sup>

American News sold more than half of the total number and dollar value of magazines distributed throughout the United States by national independent distributors. It was the largest wholesaler of books in the world; through its book department it accounted for from 25 per cent to 35 per cent of the total sale of a popular best seller. Its foreign department handled wholesale distribution of periodicals in Central and South America, the West Indies, Newfoundland, Iceland, Spain, Portugal, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Asiatic countries, and the U. S. possessions.

The largest wholly owned subsidiary of American News was the Union News Company, which operated concessions in hotels, transportation terminals, office buildings (including Rockefeller Center in New York), public parks, and golf courses in thirty-two states and the District of Columbia. Its system of newsstands made it the largest retailer of magazines in the world; its gross sales volume of magazines in 1950 was about \$7,500,000. It had about 170 contracts giving it the exclusive concession to sell magazines in certain department stores, hotels, and transportation systems. Early in 1949, it acquired all of the restaurant business of the Savarins Company, which operated a chain of restaurants in New York City.

Another subsidiary of American News was the International News Company, which by the thirties was the world's largest importer and exporter of reading matter. One of its functions was to stimulate interest abroad in American books and periodicals. It also distributed foreign magazines, newspapers, and books in the United States; before World War II, it handled the retail distribution in the United States of more than nine hundred foreign publications from all over the world. Still another wholly owned subsidiary was American Lending Library, Inc., which operated a system of lending libraries.

In June, 1952, the Department of Justice, filing suit, under the

<sup>12</sup> Standard and Poor, *Standard Corporation Descriptions*, 16, No. 10, Sect. 2 (April 7, 1955) 3438-39.

Sherman Anti-trust Law, charged American News and Union News with monopolizing the distribution of magazines from publishers to news dealers through independent distributors. American News, according to the complaint, used its relations with Union News to obtain exclusive national distribution rights. Union News refused to sell magazines not handled by American unless the parent company consented, the government charged; it gave preferential display to periodicals for which American held exclusive national distribution rights. The action ended with a consent decree three years later. Under the consent decree, Union News would buy, display, and sell magazines solely on the basis of its own interest as a dealer in periodicals. American News would not claim that it could obtain preferential treatment in the sales of magazines by Union News.

When Henry Garfinkle became president of American News in June, 1955, two months before the consent decree, he made a fundamental change in company policy. Garfinkle, who had quit school at thirteen to help support his family, had risen from newsboy to one of the largest newsstand concessionaires in New York City. Early in 1955 he and some 200 business associates began quietly buying up American News stock. By summer they had emerged with working control of the company and its subsidiary, Union News. Immediately on assuming the presidency, Garfinkle announced that American News was abandoning its traditional policy of handling magazines only if it had exclusive rights to national distribution. In the future, he said, the company would also distribute magazines locally or regionally without insisting on national distribution rights. In effect, then, the company sought to serve other distributing agencies in communities and areas in which they wished wholesale representation.

Despite the basic changes in policy, however, Union News in early 1956 was still not selling a number of large-circulation magazines on its newsstands in such important terminals as Grand Central and Pennsylvania stations in New York City. Commuter trains to and from New York carried posters announcing that Union News stands did not stock magazines distributed by S-M News but that neighborhood dealers could supply them. Some newsstands carried other posters telling commuters that here was the last chance to buy certain magazines before the journey home. Following an agreement between S-M News and American News

in March, however, Union News resumed handling the seventeen magazines it had barred from its stands.

The S-M News Company was formed in 1919 by the Popular Science Monthly Company and the McCall Company to handle the distribution of their publications after they discontinued relations with American News. S-M News, which at first handled only the publications of its founders but later took on those of other publishers, developed its own contacts with wholesalers and, in small towns, directly with retailers. The original two founders owned the company until 1947 when the Reader's Digest Association bought a one-third interest and in 1948 the Meredith Publishing Company became a fourth owner. When Meredith joined the company, S-M News was handling the distribution of twenty-eight magazines plus special publications; the number was swelled the following year when Street and Smith transferred its business from American News to S-M News. Time, Inc., also became a part owner in S-M News in 1955, when that agency replaced American News as its distributor.

S-M News and the other distributing agencies attracted some business away from American News. Whether as a result of such competition or of other factors, as company spokesmen declared, American News suffered a sharp decline in business in the fifties. Its net income dropped from \$4,495,000 in 1948 to \$817,000 in 1953 and \$434,000 in 1954. Even in distribution, the area in which concentration was most pronounced, then, there were signs of some shifts in power in 1955.

The magazine publishing industry itself was still highly fluid in 1955. Magazines, large and small alike, were still appearing and disappearing, and today's success could still be tomorrow's failure. The odds in starting a new magazine favored the established publisher, and a newcomer could not expect to challenge the large-circulation weeklies on a shoestring budget. But new companies continued to enter the industry in 1955, and publishers of long standing continued to prepare new publications for the stands. Some of both, as ever, would probably be phenomenally successful.

## chapter 5 The Logistics of Magazine Publishing

Magazines of large circulation were made possible not only by the rise of advertising and the expanding consumer market but by a number of developments which can be grouped under the heading of "logistics."

Producing a million or more copies of a magazine each week or month was a highly complex operation which demanded the close coordination of a multiplicity of activities. Before magazines of mammoth circulation could become commonplace, the industry had to develop systematic methods of obtaining subscriptions and of keeping rosters of subscribers up to date. A system of rapid and orderly distribution had to be organized; copies had to be delivered simultaneously across the nation both to subscribers and to nearly a hundred thousand news dealers without too many or too few copies to each. There had to be presses capable of printing millions of copies in a matter of hours and paper to feed the presses. Strongly responsible for the success of *Life* was what Roy Larsen, its publisher, in 1939 called a "two-year revolution in the paper, printing, and distribution business." "The magazine *Life*, as we know it today, printed on its kind of paper, with its grade of printing, and in a four-day span," Larsen said, "would have

cost a minimum of fifty cents and possibly even a dollar a copy in 1913. Today's current issue costs well *under* the ten cents we charge for it."<sup>1</sup> The editorial techniques of popular magazines, under the pressures of speed and competition, also acquired some of the features of mass production, and the role of the editor was altered in consequence.

An important aspect of logistics was getting one's magazine into the hands of readers. In 1955 magazines were sold principally by the single copy at retail outlets or by subscription. In the nineties the chief means of distribution was through newsstands in railway terminals and in bookstores, but systematic methods of gathering subscribers were also beginning to emerge.

Catalog agencies, which had existed in the United States since the 1850's, represented perhaps the first attempt at organized subscription solicitation. They were a major source of subscriptions in the nineties. The agencies bought subscriptions to the periodicals of many publishers at less than the usual rate and sold them at the regular price. They depended on hundreds of part-time agents, housewives, school teachers, drygoods merchants, postmasters, and news dealers, to sell subscriptions for them. The three oldest such organizations still operating in 1955 were the American News Company; the Moore-Cottrell Subscription Agencies, Inc., which had become a subsidiary of Curtis Publishing Company; and Hanson-Bennett, which had become a subsidiary of Crowell-Collier.

After World War I, when publishers scrambled for large circulations in order to get their share of the mounting volume of advertising, there was a blossoming of field-selling agencies which sent crews of aggressive young door-to-door salesmen throughout the country. Some publishers organized crews of their own. The magazine salesman who was working his way through college became a part of American folklore and contributed in large measure to the huge circulations of the twenties and thirties. The crews could penetrate into areas beyond the reach of newsstands, and their salesmen were so persuasive and the market so fertile that a fresh crew could often set a sales record in a territory which had just been worked over. About twenty thousand field salesmen of independent agencies journeyed about the United

<sup>1</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 72 (May 13, 1939), Sect. 2, p. 10.

States before World War II. During the war, door-to-door solicitation languished because of shortages of gasoline, manpower, and magazine paper. However, it was revived after the war. At mid-century there were eighteen major independent field agencies and six operated by publishers, and they sold more than 10,600,000 subscriptions a year for the fifty-eight leading magazines.

Many field salesmen used high pressure, sob stories, and trickery to get subscriptions, and their tactics reflected unfavorably on the magazines they sold and on the industry as a whole. In 1940 magazine publishers created the Central Registry of Magazine Subscription Solicitors to enforce a code of sales practices acceptable to Chambers of Commerce and Better Business Bureaus. Penalties for violations of the code included reprimands, damages of up to \$500 for each offense and up to \$2,000 for certain repeated offenses, and expulsion from the organization. Central Registry was maintained cooperatively by the Magazine Publishers Association, independent field agencies, and the subscription agencies of individual publishers.

Other methods of subscription solicitation developed. Direct mail, seldom used in the nineties because of the difficulty of finding suitable lists for circularization, was adopted by some publishers in the twenties and by an increasing number after World War II. Newspaper carriers in many towns and cities sold magazine subscriptions in conjunction with subscriptions to the newspapers they delivered.

Magazines to subscribers could be mailed under special low postal rates authorized by Congress in March, 1879, to encourage the dissemination of knowledge. Postmasters General repeatedly complained that this second-class mail was being carried at a loss to the government. Publishers challenged such statements so vigorously that from 1906 onward there were numerous attempts to ascertain the costs of the various postal services. After 1910, Congress held frequent hearings to consider raising postal rates so as to make the second-class service self-sustaining, moves which publishers resisted strenuously. While most publishers said that they were willing to bear their fair share of costs in handling mail, they contended that the cost ascertainment methods did not reveal their fair share of the burden and that sharp increases in rates would force many of them out of business. A doubling of rates, they said, would wipe out the profits of a company like



Curtis, which in the early forties had a postal bill of about \$3,000,000 a year and profits of less than \$1,000,000. Moreover, publishers said, they might conceivably adopt some new means of distribution if rates became excessive and the Post Office Department, because of its fixed charges, would incur even greater losses.

Congress had not made the second-class service self-supporting in 1955, but the perennial threat of rate increases had caused publishers to explore possibilities of circumventing the postal service. The Curtis Publishing Company in 1950 experimented in Reading, Pennsylvania, with a plan under which salaried agents delivered copies of its magazines to subscribers. The National Association of Magazine Publishers in March, 1950, appointed a subcommittee to study similar plans of distribution.

News dealers were responsible for a steadily increasing proportion of sales of A.B.C. magazines from 1925 through 1945. Single-copy sales accounted for 32.3 per cent of the total circulation of such magazines in 1925, for 44.2 per cent in 1940, and for 62.3 per cent in the last half of 1945, according to a study made by the Magazine Advertising Bureau. Put another way, single-copy sales in that period increased 365.6 per cent while subscriptions increased 34.4 per cent. After World War II, however, the ratio of subscriptions to newsstand sales began to increase, but in 1953, single-copy sales still accounted for about 41 per cent of the total for A.B.C. general magazines with circulations of a half million or more.

There were several reasons for the shift from subscriptions to newsstand sales after 1925. Most publishers found single-copy sales more profitable than subscriptions. Many advertisers were more impressed by newsstand sales, which they regarded as an indication that the reader bought the magazine because he really wanted it, not because he had been inveigled by high-pressure sales talks, premium offers, or bargain rates. Some editors—Ben Hibbs of the *Saturday Evening Post* was one—used single-copy sales as an informal measure of the popularity of their magazines. Then, too, the mobility of the population during World War II caused many readers to buy their copies on newsstands instead of by subscription. Indeed, many publishers discouraged subscriptions during the war, when paper was rationed.

Although there seemed a broad trend toward an increased use of newsstands, there was nevertheless a good deal of variety in the

methods by which individual publications sold copies of their magazines. Each magazine was aimed at a special audience, and it had unique problems; the methods which served it best were not always best for other publications. Some magazines over the years favored a high ratio of subscriptions to single-copy sales. In 1958, subscriptions accounted for 99 per cent of the total circulation of *Town Journal*, 98 per cent of *National Geographic*, 91 per cent of *Household*, 86 per cent of *Time*, and 85 per cent of *Newsweek*. Other magazines, such as those of Dell Publishing Company, for years sold about 95 per cent of their copies on newsstands. The magazines depending on subscriptions in any appreciable amount seemed divided on how best to obtain them. Some magazines, seeking a relatively small audience of cultured, well-to-do consumers, as did the *New Yorker*, counted largely on the reader's initiative. Other magazines, like the Luce publications, relied heavily on direct-mail advertising. Still others, especially those owning field-selling agencies, favored door-to-door sales; and some publications which found fault with such direct selling nevertheless used it for obtaining some of their subscriptions.

In the forties and fifties, a few magazines experimented with vending machines to expand their sales, but the method was still experimental in 1955. *Time* tried to sell subscriptions by vending machines in the early fifties, but the results failed to cover the cost of the machines. Other publications were interested in automatic venders to merchandise single copies. From the mid-forties on, *Newsweek* experimented with such machines; and in 1954 they had begun to interest the circulation staffs of *Life*, *Look*, and *Reader's Digest*.

Newsstands remained a major outlet for single-copy sales. Yet no newsstand could possibly handle more than a small fraction of American magazines and display space for even them was limited. Venders sometimes complained that distributors refused to supply them with best-selling magazines unless they accepted certain publications they did not want. Circulation men complained that newsstands were so laden with magazines that good display was impossible. Prominent display was important to circulation, and publishers' agents sometimes went from stand to stand pushing their own magazines to the forefront, their competitors' magazines to the background. Venders ordinarily paid little attention

to such tactics, as they customarily made as much profit from one magazine as from another of the same price.

Tactics of that sort were perhaps most common among publishers who depended largely on single-copy sales for their circulation. Warfare broke out periodically between two such publishers, Fawcett and Macfadden. In 1938 Fawcett bought space in newspapers of six large cities to urge its readers to report instances in which they had been prevented from buying copies of *True Confessions* for February. Meanwhile the company attempted to prove that some of the 265 organizers of boy sales for Macfadden had covered up copies of *True Confessions* on the stands and had thrown copies into dealers' return bins. After a meeting of circulation directors of the two companies, S. O. Shapiro of Macfadden explained, "With such a flock of new magazines on the stands, it has become almost impossible to get good display for any magazine. All publishers are constantly engaged in a struggle to maintain their places, and this is just a fight for display, such as goes on regularly."<sup>2</sup> The two companies skirmished again in 1941. A promotion man for Macfadden then allegedly planted a secret microphone in a Louisville hotel to eavesdrop on a meeting at which Fawcett representatives were planning their sales campaign for the next year.<sup>3</sup>

Whether sold by newsstand or by subscription, magazines were a highly perishable product which had to be distributed simultaneously across the entire nation. Costs, competition, and the necessity of speedy distribution directly and indirectly influenced the dispersal of operations in magazine publishing. They encouraged publishers to select New York as headquarters for their editorial and advertising operations, some outlying city as their printing and distribution point.

New York had replaced Boston and Philadelphia as the center of magazine publishing long before 1900. Editorial and artistic talent clustered there, and the largest part of the nation's advertising came from there. Consequently, even magazine publishers who began elsewhere, like the Fawcetts of Minneapolis, David A. Smart of Chicago, and Gardner Cowles, Jr., of Des Moines, moved their editorial and advertising offices to New York.

<sup>2</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 71 (Jan. 29, 1938), Sect. 1, p. 24; *Time*, 31 (Jan. 31, 1938) 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Time*, 38 (Dec. 15, 1941) 55.

But publishers moved their printing and distribution operations out of New York. Costs, which were important in so competitive a business as magazine publishing, were one factor. By choosing a centrally located production point, a magazine could reduce its postage bill; and labor, at least when the exodus from New York began, was thought to be less costly in outlying areas. Distributing from the Midwest also cut the time necessary for getting copies into the hands of readers.

The move from New York seems to have begun in the early twenties when Hearst and several other magazine publishers transferred their printing operations to the Midwest. The McCall Company closed down its printing shop in the East and opened its large plant in Dayton, Ohio, in 1923. Crowell-Collier, which for many years had done its printing in New York, moved its printing plant to Springfield, Ohio, in 1924. Time, Inc., then a struggling little company, moved its entire operation to Cleveland in 1925 partly because it wanted the economies of Midwest printing and distribution but could not afford the telegraph tolls involved in a split operation. However, the company could afford to work from a distance with a Chicago printer in 1927 when it moved its editorial office back to New York. As Time, Inc., grew larger, it carried its dispersal of printing even further. In 1940 it had its copies for Eastern distribution printed in Philadelphia. In 1943 it became one of the first publishers of a leading national magazine to print west of Chicago by using facilities in Los Angeles for printing its copies distributed on the West Coast. Not surprisingly, some of the largest printers of magazines arose in the Midwest: Cuneo Press, R. R. Donnelley and Sons, and W. F. Hall Printing Company, all of Chicago, and Kable Brothers of Mount Morris, Illinois.

By printing in centrally located plants and by utilizing advances in technology, magazines narrowed the gap between deadline and publication date. *Time*, for example, had a four-day spread between its deadline and on-sale date before it began printing in Philadelphia and Los Angeles; afterwards, it went on sale the third morning after forms had closed. As early as the mid-thirties, *Farm Journal* boasted that it reached readers four days after its editorial deadline. Other magazines also reduced the time necessary for production and distribution. Editors, driven by competition to keep their contents fresh, and advertisers, wishing

for flexibility in planning their campaigns, both benefited from increases in timeliness. Even so, however, advertisers sometimes complained in the fifties that magazines generally had done little in the previous twenty years to shorten the period between the closing of advertising forms and the distribution date. In 1955 Frank Braucher, president of the Magazine Advertising Bureau, explained why magazines seemed to have progressed so little. For one thing, no other industry had so complicated a problem of distribution, he said. For another, the circulation of the average magazine had more than doubled in the previous decade; therefore, if publishers had not adopted every technical advance, magazine closing dates in 1955 would have to have been at least twice as far in advance as ten years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

The life of a magazine on the newsstands was short. Therefore, publishers were guided by the habits of the reading public and by the tactics of competitors in setting their on-sale dates. The *Saturday Evening Post* for years went on sale on Thursday because in the nineties most retail shopping was done on the weekend. In 1931 it gained two days' display on the stands and an advantage over its competitors by appearing on Tuesday, although it later shifted to Wednesday. The five-day work week and the increased importance of grocery stores as outlets for magazines were partly responsible for a change in the on-sale dates of several leading magazines in 1954. Grocers were so busy at the end of the week that they often did not have time to unbundle magazines and put them on the racks. To gain an extra weekday on the stands, the *Post* went on sale on Tuesday instead of Wednesday; *Newsweek* and *Time* on Wednesday instead of Thursday; and *American*, *Collier's*, *Life*, and *Woman's Home Companion* on Thursday instead of Friday.<sup>5</sup>

Publishers thought that sales of a magazine would be negligible after the date of issue on its cover. As early as the 1870's, their practice was to put magazines on sale far in advance of the official publication date, and the custom persisted into the twentieth century. In the thirties, the general weeklies *Collier's* and *Liberty* appeared more than a week before their cover dates; and in 1955 *Collier's*, then a biweekly, went on sale fifteen days in advance of its date of issue. It was not unusual for the Christmas

4 *M. A. Briefs* (Jan., 1955) 4-5.

5 *Tide*, 28 (Feb. 27, 1954) 51; 28 (Aug. 14, 1954) 49.

issue of a monthly magazine to reach readers before Thanksgiving, the Easter issue before the new year had begun.

The tactic of bringing out issues weeks or months before the cover date resulted in manifold troubles for advertisers and editors. Advertisers, trying to merchandise their goods according to seasonal buying habits, found that the practice seriously complicated their schedules. Editors were often embarrassed by articles which had seemed a good idea at deadline time but which were outdated or in bad taste by publication day.

Most such embarrassment arose from the delay inevitable in printing and distributing thousands of copies of a magazine, of course, and some came about from coincidence; but the custom of advanced dating was certainly an aggravating factor. The editor of almost every major magazine had at least one such incident that he would have preferred to forget. When William Jennings Bryan died in 1925, *Life* scrapped twenty thousand copies of an issue making sport of him in jokes and cartoons. The *Saturday Evening Post* in March, 1925, carried a photograph of a prominent manufacturer who had died several weeks earlier. *Vanity Fair* in 1928 published a vicious burlesque of a novel by Frances Newman, whose death was in the news just as the issue went out to readers. Huey Long's death in 1935 coincided with an issue of *Life* which contained a number of unfavorable remarks about him, including the news that he had led all candidates in a "public nuisance" poll. Two days after the surrender of the Japanese in World War II, *Collier's* came out with Quentin Reynolds' "authoritative picture" of how difficult the invasion of Japan would be. Editors of a number of magazines, forgetting their usual prudence, guessed wrong on the 1948 Presidential elections in which Harry S. Truman won an unexpected victory over Thomas Dewey. *United States News* went to press ahead of the elections with an interpretation of Dewey's victory. The *Kiplinger Magazine* published a thirty-two-page analysis, "What Will Dewey Do?"

High-speed printing and rapid distribution reduced the chances of such embarrassments, but they remained a possibility so long as magazines appeared far in advance of their issue date. A number of women's magazines in 1941 began to bring their appearance on the stands and in subscribers' mailboxes into closer alignment with the dates on their covers. They apparently did so, however, as much in the interests of advertisers and merchandisers as in the

interests of their editorial staffs. Once the largest magazines had made known their plans, several other publications adopted similar policies. *McCall's* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* both eliminated a gap of about twenty days by making their on-sale dates more closely correspond to the dates on their covers. At the same time *McCall's*, as a result of its new presses, moved its printing deadline closer to the date of issue. After those two magazines had announced their plans, their competitor, *Woman's Home Companion*, changed its on-sale date so that it appeared about five days before *Ladies' Home Journal* and ten before *McCall's*. It also announced that a change in deadlines would trim five days off the time needed for printing black and white advertisements, fifteen days off that for printing color. *American Home* and *Glamour* also went on sale closer to their dates of issue, the latter by an entire month.

As publishers competed for readers and as the demand for magazines grew, there was a large increase in the number and types of retail outlets at which Americans could buy periodicals. In 1915 an estimated 50,000 to 55,000 retail outlets sold magazines as a part of their stock. The number had risen to about 80,000 by the mid-thirties, and to more than 110,000 by 1955. After 1930, many drugstores, department stores, and grocery stores began to carry magazines for the first time.

The most important new outlet that circulation men discovered was the supermarket. Practically no grocery stores stocked magazines before 1930. Then in the thirties several grocery chains began to sell or give magazines of their own to customers. The success of those magazines, the great growth of supermarkets, and the development of shopping centers around supermarkets all led to the emergence of the grocery store as a major retail outlet for magazines, especially after World War II. Although the grocery chains at first handled only their own publications, they eventually set up racks for regular commercial magazines. Wholesalers of periodicals promoted the installation of racks by reminding grocers that the markup of 23 per cent on magazines was greater than that on most comestibles. More than fifteen thousand grocery stores stocked magazines in 1955.

Merchandising commercial magazines through grocery stores was a natural outgrowth of a type of publishing which began to flourish in the thirties. From 1930 onward, several publishers pro-

duced magazines for exclusive distribution by variety and grocery chains and by department stores. One of the pioneers was Catherine McNelis, an advertising woman, who persuaded the F. W. Woolworth Company in 1929 to be sole distributor of a string of publications which would advertise products sold by the chain. She formed Tower Magazines, Inc., to publish the periodicals, which included screen, detective, love story, and children's magazines. Although the venture seemed astonishingly successful on the surface, the company filed a bankruptcy petition in 1935. High production costs and the large percentage of unsold copies, the company reported, had forced it to insolvency. The government charged that Miss McNelis and associates had defrauded advertisers of \$1,000,000 by falsifying circulation figures of their various periodicals. They were convicted in 1939 of using the mails to defraud.<sup>6</sup> The Woolworth Company, in no way implicated in the illegal transactions, nevertheless refused to handle any magazines for several years. In the forties, however, it began to sell comic books and similar publications of Dell, Fawcett, and Macfadden.

Impressed by the apparent success of Tower in its early years, other publishers arranged to produce magazines exclusively for competing chains. The Dell Publishing Company in 1930 agreed to publish *Modern Romances* and *Modern Screen* for sole distribution by the S. S. Kresge and S. H. Kress variety chains in towns where they had stores and for newsstand sale elsewhere. Futura Publications, Inc., was formed in 1931 to publish movie and romance magazines for a number of smaller chains with a total of 1,345 stores.

Apparently among the first to recognize the potentialities of the grocery store as a dealer in magazines were officials of the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company, which operated several thousand stores in the Midwest. In 1930 they argued that the typical chain grocery was handier to the home than the typical drug-store and invited publishers to supply them with magazines. Curtis marketed the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal* in Kroger stores for a time, but the plan was eventually dropped. Each magazine was in a wrapper bearing the Kroger name and saying that most of the advertised foods could be bought at the store. Curtis sold through only a few stores when it inaugurated

<sup>6</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 71 (July 23, 1938) 10; 73 (Jan. 6, 1940) 46; 73 (Jan. 20, 1940) 37.



the plan in February, 1930, but it increased the number to about 1,800 by the end of the year.<sup>7</sup>

The big boom in store distributed magazines was started by Harry Evans, a former managing editor of *Life*, who in 1932 brought out *Family Circle*, a gravure-printed tabloid of twenty-four pages with features for the homemaker. *Family Circle*, given away in Piggly Wiggly stores, had a circulation of 350,000 for its first issue, but Evans foresaw a possible distribution of 3,000,000. At the end of its first year, the publication was being distributed by more than a half dozen chains, and its circulation was reported at about a million. *Family Circle* was changed in 1946 from a free-distribution weekly to a monthly women's service magazine selling for five cents. In 1955 it was the leader of the store-distributed magazines. It was distributed through stores of fourteen chains, the largest being Kroger, Safeway, American, and First National. Its circulation was 4,153,000, its advertising gross \$12,107,000.

The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company formed a subsidiary to publish its own magazine in 1937. *Woman's Day* made its debut in October, 1937, with a circulation of 815,000 and with most of its advertising from A. and P. and its manufacturing subsidiaries. Far from being an organ to promote its publisher's wares, *Woman's Day* developed into a first-rate women's service magazine which carried regular advertising. In 1955 it had a circulation of 3,575,000 and advertising revenues of \$9,279,000. It was sold only at A. and P. stores except in Colorado, where the chain had no outlets; there it was sold on newsstands for fifteen cents.

Those magazines led to others. Perhaps a hundred such publications were attempted in the twenty years after *Family Circle* first appeared, but only a few of them survived. A half dozen or so dominated the field in the 1950's. *American Family*, which was distributed by the Independent Grocers Alliance, died soon after its first issue in 1942, reappeared in 1948, but was suspended again for reorganization in 1954. *Better Living* was sponsored by the Super Market Institute and was backed in part by the McCall Corporation. Its first issue appeared in 1951 with a circulation of 1,500,000. *Everywoman's* was taken over by John Cuneo of the

<sup>7</sup> *Time*, 16 (Nov. 3, 1930) 30.

Cuneo Press and in January, 1951, began distribution through 2,800 supermarkets of thirty-three chains. *Western Family*, started in 1941, confined its circulation to the West Coast. Such magazines were partly responsible for extending the channels of distribution for regular commercial magazines.

The expansion of the market for magazines as a result of international publishing after World War II, however, had far greater implications than the opening up of new avenues of distribution, for it promised to extend the influence of the American press over large areas of the world. By promoting the sales of their titles abroad, some publishers uncovered a whole new market for magazines in the forties just as Munsey had in the nineteenth century.

Only a few American companies published abroad before World War II, and their activities were limited. *Harper's* had maintained a British edition for a time as early as the eighties. Condé Nast, Hearst, and Macfadden all issued foreign editions of some of their magazines in the twenties and thirties. The *Reader's Digest* started to publish editions abroad in 1938, and Time, Inc., began its overseas operations on a modest scale in 1941.

But most of the American magazines which reached foreign readers before World War II were back numbers. In the twenties and thirties a man could earn a comfortable living by buying up old magazines which dealers had been unable to sell and marketing them in foreign countries. Irving Manheimer, who became a major stockholder in Macfadden Publications in 1951, started to sell back-number magazines abroad in 1927. His Publishers Surplus Corporation was soon shipping five million copies of magazines a month to London and thousands of others to Australia, Egypt, New Zealand, South Africa, and Palestine. His company was leading exporter of old magazines until World War II ended the traffic in them.

American troops acquainted the peoples of many nations with American periodicals and intensified their curiosity about American life. Under an arrangement with the army, twenty-seven magazines supplied overseas editions for servicemen in 1944. Some magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek* among them, produced six-by-nine inch address "pony" editions which were sped to military installations. The *New Yorker* and *Saturday Evening Post* culled the best material from four weekly issues and brought it together in

an adless monthly edition. Still other magazines like *Coronet* and *Reader's Digest* furnished their regular editions.

American magazines were also introduced to people of the world by the government, which published several periodicals edited by professional magazine men as a part of its information program. One of the best-known of its magazines was *Victory*, a bimonthly published by the Office of War Information under a nonprofit arrangement with Crowell-Collier. The magazine carried a limited amount of advertising to keep it from looking like a propaganda organ, and it was sold instead of given away. Published in six languages, *Victory* circulated 875,000 copies in forty-six countries in 1944. Response to it abroad was enthusiastic. In Lisbon readers bought all available copies in forty-eight hours, and potential purchasers were so numerous when one issue appeared that dealers required police protection. In Italy black market operators bought copies from the stands, rented them until they were dog-eared, then sold them. There were several other such government periodicals: *Amerika*, *Choix*, *Kijk*, *Photo Review*, *U.S.A.*, and *Voir*. In addition, scores of American magazines granted the O.W.I. permission to syndicate their contents among foreign periodicals and radio stations.

Publishers gained experience in global publishing from their editions for servicemen and from the government magazines. Despite paper shortages, American publishers had far greater technical resources than the publishers of any other nation. And they could see that both readers and advertisers would support American magazines circulated in foreign lands. The United States had emerged from the war as one of the two leading powers in the world, and interest in its affairs and way of life was intense. Its exports had increased significantly in dollar volume if not in percentage of the national income, and it had acquired some new customers. South America, for example, spent more than four dollars on imports from the United States in 1947 for every dollar it had spent in 1939. The number of business firms in the United States which advertised abroad had grown; so had the number of advertising agencies operating on an international basis. Before the war, according to *Tide*, \$25,000 was considered a good appropriation for an advertising campaign abroad; in 1947, an appropriation of \$100,000 was considered only fair. Although data were sketchy, *Tide* estimated that American firms would spend be-

tween \$25,000,000 and \$50,000,000 on advertising in foreign countries in 1947 and noted that the sum was rising.<sup>8</sup> International advertisers expected to spend \$280,000,000 to advertise in foreign markets in 1954, according to a survey reported at the sixth annual International Advertising Convention in New York. International magazines published in the United States ranked second to foreign newspapers as the favored medium of such advertisers with headquarters in this country.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after the end of the war, scores of representatives of American publishers journeyed about the world assessing the demand for American periodicals and the facilities for printing and distributing them. Some publishers looked upon foreign editions as an additional source of profit, others largely as a source of prestige. A few of the major publishers, notably Macfadden, Time, Inc., and *Reader's Digest*, greatly enlarged their overseas operations and increased the number of editions they had been publishing abroad. One or two companies flirted with the idea of international editions but never actually produced them. A great many publishers launched new magazines primarily for readers outside of the country, especially for readers in South America.

Before the war, Macfadden had published *True Romances* in Britain and editions of *True Story* in Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and Sweden. It reopened its international operations in the spring of 1947 and a year later had eleven editions of its confession, detective, and movie fan magazines in foreign countries. *True Story*, the leader, was published in seven countries: Argentina, Australia, Britain, France, Mexico, Sweden, and Switzerland. All of the magazines were produced in cooperation with publishers native to the countries in which they circulated. The native publisher received advance material from Macfadden's domestic edition and chose whatever he wanted from it, although at least three-fourths of the content of his magazine had to be from the U. S. edition. The publisher was responsible for printing, promoting, and distributing the magazine. Macfadden solicited advertising originating in the United States, the publisher that originating in his own country.

The *Reader's Digest* in 1955 was printed in twelve languages and circulated in more than a hundred countries. In some of them

<sup>8</sup> *Tide*, 21 (June 13, 1947) 28, 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Advertising Age*, 25 (May 17, 1954) 1, 88.

—France, Belgium, Finland, Italy, and throughout South America—it was the largest selling monthly. Most of the editions were published by local firms, subsidiaries of the American company, and they were managed and staffed largely by foreign nationals. The companies bought printing and supplies locally wherever they could. They were furnished advanced proofs of the domestic edition, from which they selected and sometimes translated the articles they wished, but the American headquarters was the final authority on any question of content.

Time, Inc., had virtually no foreign operations before 1941, when it published only domestic editions of *Time* and *Life*. By the end of the war, it had twenty-three different editions. The number of international editions was reduced to five by 1950—four weekly editions of *Time* and one fortnightly edition of *Life*, all in English. Two of the editions of *Time*, the Atlantic and the Pacific, were identical with the domestic edition. The other two, the Canadian and the Latin American, gave augmented coverage to the territories they served. *Life* carried the best features of the two preceding domestic issues. Late in 1952 the company introduced *Life en Español*, its first foreign language publication, a fortnightly for distribution in Latin America.

Although some of the copies which Time, Inc., distributed overseas were printed in the United States, the editions also were printed in Paris, Tokyo, and Honolulu. Acetate proofs or negatives of each page were sped to the plants by air. The company tried to develop sources of paper and supplies in the countries where the editions were printed, but it could find few mills capable of supplying the vast amount of the kinds of paper it required.

Crowell-Collier twice made plans for international distribution, but both times the world situation interfered with them. In 1938, before the war curtailed some of the attempts at global publishing, the company proposed to fly page proofs of *Collier's* four weeks in advance to London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Rome, Moscow, Shanghai, and fourteen other cities where local personnel would write additional copy, handle the printing, and supervise distribution. After the war, largely on the basis of its experience with *Victory*, the government magazine, the company laid plans for an international pictorial magazine which would be edited in various countries by associated publishers. The bulk of the magazine would be supplied by Crowell-Collier, however, and would be iden-

tical in all editions. Plans called for the multilingual magazine to circulate in thirty nations. Crowell-Collier sponsored a meeting of publishers from nineteen countries to discuss the magazine in 1947. Later that year, however, the company suspended the project because, it said, of restrictions on trade and currency in many countries.

Smaller publishers also experimented with magazines which sought a world-wide rather than a purely American audience. One of the first international magazines was *Free World*, begun in 1941 on five thousand dollars as a magazine of comment and opinion to promote a democratic victory and a world organization. It claimed a circulation of 100,000 in 1944 from seven editions—American, French, Mexican, Chinese, Chilean, Puerto Rican, and Greek. *Free World* was merged into a more elaborate international magazine, the *United Nations World*, which was launched as a commercial enterprise by Michael Straight, John Hay Whitney, and Nelson Rockefeller in 1946. The *United Nations World* aimed to report the news of the world without national bias. In 1950 it had a circulation of 75,000 throughout the world and was carrying some advertising, but it consistently failed to earn money. When the original backers of the magazine dropped out, it was taken over by Roger Phillips, a wealthy Philadelphian, who in November, 1953, converted it into the *World*, a monthly of information about international politics and business.

Magazines edited in the United States for South American audiences proliferated during the forties as a result of the Good Neighbor Policy and an increase in inter-American trade. Their mortality rate was high, but publishers hopefully started new publications to replace the ones which failed. Among the magazines for South American readers were *Norte*, a slick-paper picture magazine, established in 1940; *Americana*, a women's magazine begun in 1947; and *Heydays-Dias Felices*, designed in 1949 "to promote a closer cultural, touristic, and business tie-in between the peoples of the Western Hemisphere." *Popular Mechanics* inaugurated a Spanish-language edition, *Mecanica Popular*, in 1947. *Vision*, a fortnightly news magazine in Spanish, first appeared in 1950; three of its founders had gained their experience in international publishing from the Latin American editions of Time, Inc.

The publisher who looked outside the borders of the United

T H E L A D I E S '  
HOME JOURNAL

10¢



*In This Issue:* BOOTH TARKINGTON—JOSEPH C. LINCOLN—OLIVER HERFORD  
HUGH MACNAIR KAHLER—N. C. WYETH—BERNICE BROWN—ROSE O'NEILL

AUGUST, 1925

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

10 CENTS

By Curtis  
in the Curtis Publishing Co. Building

States for all or some of his readers encountered a number of obstacles. The obstacles varied with time and place, with whether he simply shipped copies of his magazine abroad or printed them in a foreign land. They included the hostility of foreign publishers, who resented penetration of their market, and the antagonism of intellectuals, who feared cultural domination by the United States; they included import restrictions, censorship, blocked currencies, and a lack of facilities for printing and distribution.

American magazines had long circulated in Canada, which publishers regarded more as an adjunct of the domestic market than as a foreign one. Deputations of Canadian publishers and printers periodically descended upon Ottawa to protest unfair competition from south of the border and to petition restrictions upon it. Canadian publishers in the mid-twenties, for instance, asked for curbs on unfair advantages which enabled eight copies of United States magazines to circulate in Canada for every copy of a Canadian magazine. The Canadian publisher, they protested, was obliged to pay duties on paper, ink, and engravings which he imported from the United States; but the United States publisher could send those things into Canada duty-free in the form of finished magazines. Moreover, advertising entering Canada for inclusion in Canadian-produced booklets and catalogs was taxed, they said, but was untaxed when it appeared in magazines from the United States.<sup>10</sup> A decade later the printing trades union claimed that the free entry of magazines from the United States had thrown many Canadian printers out of work.<sup>11</sup> And in 1947 Canadian publishers again asked for tariff protection because United States publishers enjoyed the advantages of longer press runs, better machinery, and better paper; because aid to Canadian magazines would benefit the entire graphic arts industry in Canada; and because restrictions on United States magazines would increasingly cause advertisers to use Canadian media.<sup>12</sup>

Reciprocal trade agreements after 1930 governed the entry of United States magazines into Canada. In 1931 Canada imposed an excise tax on magazines according to the percentage of advertising they carried. One major publisher, Bernarr Macfadden,

<sup>10</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 58 (Mar. 27, 1926) 12; 58 (Apr. 3, 1926) 38.

<sup>11</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 69 (Mar. 21, 1936) 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Tide*, 21 (Feb. 28, 1947) 28-31.



circumvented the tax by forming a Canadian company to publish his weekly *Liberty* and other magazines for distribution in Canada. In 1938 an agreement between the United States and Canada provided for free entry of periodicals and abolished an excise tax of 3 per cent which had been in effect since 1936. However, Canada embargoed certain types of magazines—confession, sex, Western, detective, and comic—in December, 1940.

The objections raised by Canadian publishers from time to time were heard from other parts of the world when American magazines vigorously sought foreign markets at the close of the war. Some publishers and members of the intelligentsia feared that the superior technical resources of American magazines and their wealth in a war-impooverished world could lead only to American cultural imperialism, and there were cries against "Coca-Colonization" and the spread of "a *Reader's Digest* culture." Britain responded to such cries after the war by restricting the importation of American magazines into the British Isles. Magazine men in Mexico lobbied for a tax on American periodicals in 1952, and the Cuban Association of Newspaper Men spoke of its "most resolute and determined opposition to the continued tolerance of this illegitimate penetration in Cuba of these foreign publications."<sup>13</sup> Even at home there were instances of protest, as when Senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania called the *Header's Digest* a "world cartel" and spoke of an antitrust suit, which, however, never came about. The majority of foreign readers, however, seemed to share little of his concern, for circulations of American magazines abroad continued to rise.

Getting their magazines into foreign lands was less a problem for American publishers after the war than getting their profits out. Many nations, in trying to rebuild their economic strength after the war, rigidly controlled the amounts of money which could be taken outside of their borders. To convert their blocked foreign currencies into American dollars, some publishers availed themselves of a provision of the Economic Cooperation Act which set off a brief but shrill cry of "subsidy." The federal government had decided to make the fullest use of private media in telling the story of America abroad during the cold war. The Economic Cooperation Act, as a part of this plan, in 1948 set aside \$15,000,-

<sup>13</sup> *Tide*, 26 (Aug. 1, 1952) 39.

000 for converting into dollars the blocked foreign currencies of American publishers doing business overseas. Publishers who used this service were to pay for it according to the size of the sum converted. The Chicago *Tribune*, however, saw in this arrangement a giant subsidy for media "which shouted the loudest for the six billion dollar Marshall Plan," a position echoed on the floor of the House by Representative John E. Rankin. Publishers indignantly denied that any subsidy was involved, government officials clarified the intent of the provision, and the clamor subsided. Some publishers used the service; others did not.

Censorship, official and unofficial, was another threat to publishers who circulated their magazines in foreign countries. On occasion only a single issue would be proscribed; at other times publications were forbidden to circulate within a country for extended periods.

Argentina banned *Time* in 1948, and the Peron regime announced in 1952 that import permits would be required henceforth for many United States magazines and that thirteen would be barred from the mails—*Business Week*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Cue*, *Editor & Publisher*, *Harper's*, *Life*, *Look*, *Quick*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *United Nations World*, *United States News*, and *Vision*.

Canada at times denied entry to certain magazines from the United States. Its Department of Customs and Excise kept out issues of *Liberty* in 1926 because of articles about the late Queen Mother Alexandria which it deemed libelous, but allowed subsequent issues to circulate. That same year *Art Lover* and *Film Fun* were barred as salacious. The Canadian Parliament in 1949 outlawed all crime comic books, including those published in Canada from mats and plates shipped in from the United States.

Germany officially prohibited *Look* from circulating "until further notice" early in 1937, presumably because of articles about Hermann Goering. Single issues of *Time* were often kept from the newsstands, and all future issues were banned in May, 1939, about a month after its cover story on Heinrich Himmler. In 1939 Italy also ordered *Time* off all newsstands "until further notice" after it had carried an article about Edda Ciano, Mussolini's daughter. The circulations affected were small, however: about seventy-five copies in Germany, about fifty in Italy. In Ireland the board of censorship banned *Esquire* in 1950 as "indecent and obscene"

and the following year proscribed fourteen magazines with such titles as *Nifty* and *Special Detective* for periods of six months to a year.

In the British Isles, an unofficial censorship was imposed on American periodicals on occasion by magazine distributors, the largest of which was W. H. Smith and Son. In 1936 distributors refused to handle American newspapers and magazines which mentioned the romance between King Edward and Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson. The issue of *Time* for August 31, 1936, appeared on British stands minus a page containing references to Mrs. Simpson; it apparently had been deleted by distributors. The Wholesale News Agents Federation announced in 1939 that it would no longer distribute *Time*, which lost about 1,500 circulation as a result, although 750 copies still reached the stands through other channels.

After World War II, magazine men were interested not only in special editions for foreign audiences; some large publishers were interested in special editions for various sections of the United States. Their reasons were economic. Separate editions for various parts of the country enabled publishers to tap three levels of the advertising market—national, regional, and local. They helped publishers to overcome one shortcoming of the magazine as an advertising medium, the difficulty of tying in national advertising with the local distributor, and they thus put magazines on a more favorable competitive basis with the Sunday supplements distributed with newspapers and the metropolitan dailies. Further, they were a means of avoiding the possibility that a magazine would become so successful in attracting readers that it would price itself out of the advertiser's market. The number of advertisers who could afford or wished to advertise in such circulation giants as *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* was somewhat limited, and television had arisen as a competitor of the publications reaching a mass audience. After the war, *Family Circle* was publishing twenty sectional editions, *Woman's Day* seven regional editions. *Sports Illustrated*, launched by Time, Inc., in 1954, was published in three editions. Curtis inaugurated *Bride to Be* in 1955 with four regional and fifteen sectional editions.

As magazines competed for ever larger audiences and as they were turned out with increasing speed, their editorial staffs, perhaps inevitably, adopted a basic principle of mass production—

standardization. Magazine content became increasingly reduced to formula. At work, too, was the magazine's selectivity of audience ; for a magazine adopted the tone and the editorial features which would win and hold the readers it wanted.

A magazine to draw and hold its audience, had to give its readers what they wanted. Once the editor had struck a combination of features which readers liked, his profitable policy was to continue it. What emerged was an editorial formula, a balance of different types of material, which the editor adhered to issue after issue. The reader of the *New Yorker* for most of its life, for instance, could expect a typical issue to contain "The Talk of the Town," a column of comment and anecdotes ; a "Profile" or "Reporter at Large" feature; reviews of books, plays, records, movies, and radio programs ; two or three short stories ; an assortment of cartoons; and so on. Virtually all magazines, even those denying that they had a formula, had some such pattern to their content.

This editorial formula, along with the tone of the writing and the approach to the subject matter, gave a magazine the "personality" which distinguished it from other magazines and maintained continuity from issue to issue. As standardization invariably does, it also simplified the task of choosing material.

Research became an aid of some editors in working out their editorial formulas after the mid-thirties when the success of Dr. George Gallup in predicting the 1936 elections stimulated the use of his polling technique. Although the large bulk of magazine research was done primarily in the interests of advertisers, some magazines used it to learn the reading habits of subscribers and to find out their readers' preferences in art work, layout, and editorial content.

Crowell-Collier in 1935 set up the *Woman's Home Companion* Opinion Poll, a monthly survey of a panel of two thousand readers, who were questioned on a wide variety of subjects. Although the panel at first was intended chiefly to publicize the magazine, it gave the editors an idea of what women were thinking, and a number of articles resulted from it. In 1940 the company began a three-year study of the editorial policies of the *American*. As a result of the findings, the *American* dropped its serial fiction, eliminated crossword puzzles and similar features, began to emphasize informative articles by nationally known authorities as distinguished from professional writers, increased its number of

women authors in order to attract women readers, and redesigned the lettering of its title for newsstand appeal. The *American* hired two psychologists in 1942 to psychoanalyze three consecutive issues and to compare their findings with the results of readership studies.

Many of the changes in the *Saturday Evening Post* after 1940 were based on editorial research. Twice each month research workers interviewed a sample of *Post* readers from coast to coast for information that would guide the editors in their selection and presentation of material. The director of research for Curtis has indicated the sort of questions to which he and his staff sought answers:

Do readers find a Western adventure story more entertaining than a tale of romantic love? Is there a variation between men and women in their response to historical fiction, or to humor, or to poetry? Will more or fewer readers be attracted by a discussion of domestic politics than by a serious study of the international situation? How many people read and enjoy a "who dunnit" run in weekly installments? Can the editors expect a large percentage of their audience to be pleased with the treatment one writer has accorded his factual story of activities centered in one geographical region? <sup>14</sup>

Curtis research workers discovered a high intrinsic reader interest in articles about science, especially medical science, and about "people and places." Therefore, editors of the *Post* hired a special science editor and began paying increased editorial attention to scientific developments. To capitalize on the interest in "people and places," they introduced a series of articles on the cities of America.

Research also helped the *Post* make the transition from war to peace. During World War II, Ben Hibbs, editor of the *Post*, remarked that anyone could edit a magazine in wartime when customers needed no coaxing to plunk down their coins for copies and advertisers begged for space; the real test of editorship, he said, would come after the war. As the war ended, Hibbs turned to the research department for aid in adjusting the *Post* to postwar competition. Studies of reader likes and dislikes were responsible for changes in typography, inclusion of a column of letters to the editor and a short feature commenting on the cover of the current

<sup>14</sup> Donald M. Hobart, Editor, *Marketing Research Practice* (New York, 1950), pp. 285-86.

issue, and the addition of complete novelettes and long features complete in one issue. Research studies indicating that reader interest in the war lingered well into the peace weighed heavily in the *Post's* decision to buy General Eisenhower's diaries and Admiral Halsey's story. One member of the research staff, using accumulated information on readers' editorial preferences, even invented a "Predictograph" which allowed the editors to predict, with considerable success, before publication, the percentage of *Post* readers who would read a given article.<sup>15</sup>

Some magazines edited their articles and stories in accordance with the readability formulas which grew out of the research of Rudolf Flesch, Irving Lorge, Edgar Dale, and others and which had their vogue in the first years after World War II. Macfadden Publications, for instance, hired Rudolf Flesch to analyze the editorial matter and advertisements of its women's magazines and applied his readability formula to their contents. Such formulas were used to produce copy that the large majority of Americans would find easy reading, the assumption being that "easy to read" articles would attract more readers than "hard to read" articles. The formulas, which gave the best scores to writing containing short words, short sentences, and references to people, seem a reflection of the trend toward condensation which saw the rise of the picture magazine and comic book and of the tendency of magazines to emphasize personalities in their articles.

Some publishers also used research to determine the sales potential and editorial appeal of a new magazine. As *Holiday* moved from blueprint to newsstand, research studies helped to guide its way. Once Curtis had decided to publish a magazine dealing with recreation, the research staff collected a large amount of information on the size of the recreation market, on magazine readers' plans for travel and their interests in a travel magazine, and on readers' reactions in the past to various kinds of art and editorial appeals. After the editorial staff had prepared its first prepublication dummy, the research department analyzed it, item by item, in the light of previous editorial research. In November, 1945, three months before the first issue appeared, the research department used a second dummy to learn consumer reactions to

<sup>15</sup> Herbert C. Ludeke, "The Role of Research in the Editorial Reconversion Problems of a Magazine," *Journalism Quarterly*, 25 (Sept., 1948) 214-17.

the magazine. Copies of the dummy were left in homes of representative magazine readers in selected cities across the United States, and interviewers questioned the families on their reactions. Even after *Holiday* first appeared on the newsstands in February, 1946, it was still subjected to close research scrutiny.

Although a number of editors found research useful in starting new magazines or in keeping old ones in tune with readers' interests, some editors of major magazines had small use for editorial research. It seems a safe generalization that editors as a group made far less use of research than the other departments of the magazine, especially the advertising department. The editor knew who his readers were, to be sure, and worked out an editorial formula which would interest them; but he preferred empathy with his readers to statistical analyses in getting together his magazine.

Time, Inc., had research staffs which conducted a great deal of research of interest to its advertisers, but its editors evidently made no use of studies of readership and readers' preferences. Indeed, some staff members of Time, Inc., viewed such studies as a threat to the experimentation they thought essential if a magazine were to survive. Their protest was a familiar one: that the reader is incapable of imagining what he would like and therefore must vote for "what is." One staff member, in a conversation with the author, put the objection this way: "If anyone had asked the average person of a century ago what sort of home lighting he wanted, he probably would have said that he wanted a lamp that would be cleaner and that would burn less fuel and things like that. It never would have occurred to him to say that he wanted electric lights that he could click on with a switch. The same sort of thing holds true in the magazine field. It just never occurs to the average person that he might like some kinds of features or magazines until an editor with imagination tries them out on him."

Even some editors using editorial research denied that it was a substitute for editorial judgment. Commenting on the trend toward editing by mathematical formula, Ben Hibbs of the much researched *Saturday Evening Post* said in 1950: "Despite all the help we get from readership surveys, I think the greatest folly an editor could commit would be to follow such indices too slavishly. . . . There are times—and these times come almost every

week—when the editor must fly in the face of known popular appeal if he is to maintain the character and responsibility of his publication." <sup>16</sup>

The intensified use of the editorial formula, whether such formula was evolved from research or from empathy, affected both editor and writer. The formula, one can hypothesize, reduced the editor from a chef who created original masterpieces to a cook who simply gave his competent individual touch to standard recipes. As it did so, it shortened the tenure of editorships. At the same time, the formula diminished opportunities for the freelance writer by increasing the proportion of magazine material planned by the staff.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the hypothesis runs, the successful editors were men who impressed their personalities on their magazines. They were often associated in the public mind with the magazines they edited—Bok of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, for instance, and Lorimer of the *Saturday Evening Post*. A magazine derived its uniqueness from the personality of its editor and its continuity from his long tenure. The leading magazines were characterized by editors who spent long periods in their service: Henry Mills Alden of *Harper's*, fifty years; Dr. Albert Shaw, Sr., of *Review of Reviews*, forty-six years; George Horace Lorimer of the *Post*, forty years; Edward Bok of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, thirty years; William Seaver Woods of the *Literary Digest* and Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century*, twenty-eight years; and E. L. Burlingame of *Scribner's*, twenty-seven years. True, in 1955 there still remained editors like Dewitt Wallace and Henry Luce whose personalities dominated their magazines, but they seemed a decreasing minority.

As magazines became increasingly edited to formula, as competition made editors increasingly concerned with giving the reader what he wanted, the situation was reversed. The formula, not the editor, gave a magazine its character and continuity. The editor became an anonymous technician, skilled but highly expendable, whose task was to achieve maximum results with the formula. Editors could come and go, but the essential personality of the magazine could remain virtually unchanged; and if the

<sup>16</sup> Ben Hibbs, "You Can't Edit a Magazine by Arithmetic," *Journalism Quarterly*, 27 (Fall, 1950) 371.



original personality of the magazine paled, a new editor could be called in to give it a new one. Frequent changes in key personnel came to be the custom. Thus *Pageant* had three editors in the five years between its birth and 1950, and the first editor of *Holiday* lasted less than a year. An editor skilled in the art of winning readers moved from magazine to magazine, as Kenneth Purdy transferred from the Annenberg publications to *Victory* to Crowell-Collier's proposed international magazine to *Parade* to *True* to *Argosy*, all in little more than a decade.

The change in the role of the magazine editor had its counterpart in other media. Newspapers in an earlier period had been transformed from personal organs of editors like Horace Greeley into corporate organs of anonymous voice. The mention of a newspaper in the twentieth century rarely called to mind its editor, as it had in the days of Henry W. Grady or Joseph Pulitzer. One can argue that motion pictures underwent a similar change as their stars eclipsed their directors, who had stamped films with their personalities in the days of D. W. Griffith, King Vidor, and Mack Sennett.

In a business as competitive as magazine publishing, the editor with a talent for winning readers could command a substantial salary. At his peak in the late twenties, Ray Long of *Cosmopolitan* earned \$100,000 a year and had his pick of jobs. Lorimer, as top editor at Curtis, drew a similar salary. Both of them were at the top, of course, and they did more than edit a single publication. In 1950 *Tide* commissioned J. K. Lasser to study editorial salaries. He found no great differences in the salaries paid editors of business periodicals and consumer magazines doing a comparable volume of business. On publications with a total annual revenue of more than \$2,500,000, the editors' salaries averaged \$21,200 and went as high as \$24,000; on those grossing from \$1,000,000 to \$2,500,000, salaries averaged \$16,600 and reached a maximum of \$21,000. Salaries of editors supervising more than one magazine were higher.<sup>17</sup>

Editors do not seem to have been paid excessively when one considers the size of the investment for which they were responsible and the insecurity which hung over their jobs. The ability of an

<sup>17</sup> *Tide*, 24 (Mar. 10, 1950) 47.

editor was measured pretty much by circulation and reader interest. When they fell, so did he. Not all publishers were capricious in hiring and firing editors, but at least a few were. In the early fifties, a young man with a few years' experience in house organ editing applied for a minor editorial position on a large magazine undergoing editorial reconversion. There were no minor positions open, the publisher told him. "But if you think you can get us the kind of readers we want, you can have the editor's job at \$25,000. We'll try you for a few months, and if you don't make the grade, you're out." The publisher of another major magazine in the forties and fifties periodically fired his editors, along with other executives, because he thought that unexpected changes of that sort "toned up the staff."

The practice of editing by formula was accompanied by a system under which staff members planned the bulk of the magazine and either wrote the articles themselves or assigned them to reliable free-lance writers. The typical editor of a leading magazine in the latter half of the nineteenth century was an aloof individual who plucked what interested him from among the manuscripts that authors had hopefully submitted. It was beneath his dignity to solicit contributions; authors had to seek him out. One of the first editors to break with that practice was Walter Hines Page. A capable editor could not withdraw from the company of men, Page believed, nor could he wait for articles to come to him. While he was editor of the *Forum* from 1887 until 1895, Page shocked his colleagues by jotting down his table of contents a month or two in advance of publication and then asking qualified authors to write the articles.

The Page method made good sense. Amidst the competition and specialization which characterized twentieth-century publishing, an editor could not count on free-lance authors to furnish the kinds of articles he wanted when he needed them or even to capture the peculiar tone and slant which gave his magazine its personality. The sensible thing was to plan articles that fitted into his balance of content, then to assign them to staff writers or to free-lance authors who had demonstrated their ability to produce the sort of copy the editor wanted. "We must make up twelve balanced issues a year, being a monthly," the editor of *American Legion Magazine* said in 1950. "They must be planned—for no

# THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

An Illustrated Weekly  
Founded A. D. 1825 by Benjamin Franklin

NOVEMBER 21, 1925

5cts. THE COPY



May Edginton—Arnold Bennett—P. G. Wodehouse—Marjory Stoneman Douglas  
Isaac F. Marcossou—Will Levington Comfort—Hugh Wiley—Maude Parker Child

magazine can be successful if it depends for its editorial balance and quality on what just comes in over the transom." <sup>18</sup>

By creative editing, editors assured themselves of features and fiction which would win readers by their variety and timeliness. Far more features than fiction were written to order, but even stories were composed to specification, as when the editors of the *Saturday Evening Post* decided against an article on professionalism in athletics and assigned a writer to cover the subject in a serial instead. The percentage of articles originating with the staff varied from magazine to magazine. Many magazines of small circulation and small budget depended largely on contributions for their material. But the leaders in circulation and in advertising planned by far the greatest proportion of their nonfiction. In the middle thirties, for instance, *McCall's* and *Pictorial Review* originated all of their nonfiction and the *American Mercury* virtually all; *Collier's* and *Nation's Business*, 90 per cent; *Better Homes and Gardens*, 50 per cent; *Scribner's*, 40 per cent; and *Field and Stream* and *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 25 per cent.<sup>19</sup> In 1950 magazines planned similarly large amounts of their nonfiction: *Holiday*, 99 per cent; *House Beautiful*, 98 per cent; *Seventeen*, 95 per cent; *American Legion*, *American Home*, *American Charm*, *Collier's*, and *Look*, all 90 per cent; and *Photoplay*, 80 per cent.<sup>20</sup>

Staff planning meant that magazines bought only miniscule percentages of the articles and stories with which free-lance contributors filled their mails. Editors relied largely on professional free-lances with whom they maintained close liaison. The percentages of unsolicited contributions which earned checks instead of rejection slips in the mid-thirties should have discouraged any but the most optimistic of writers. *McCall's* and *Pictorial Review*, for instance, bought no unsolicited articles whatsoever; the *American Mercury* bought .001 per cent; *Ladies' Home Journal*, .01 per cent; *Collier's* and *Scribner's*, 1 per cent; and *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Good Housekeeping*, 5 per cent. The author who sent off a story or article in 1950 could have been

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Marne Baker, "Editorial Requirements for Higher-Paying Magazines" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1951), p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Mitchell V. Charnley and Blair Converse, *Magazine Writing and Editing* (New York, 1938), p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> Baker, K. M., pp. 60-61.

equally certain that the mailman would bring it back. Typical magazines and the percentages of nonfiction they rejected included the *American*, 99 per cent; *Argosy*, more than 99 per cent; *House Beautiful*, 98 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 99 per cent; *Sports Afield*, 90 per cent; and *True Confessions*, 90 per cent. Nor were the figures for fiction any more encouraging, since the *American* rejected 98 per cent of the unsolicited stories it received; *Astounding Science Fiction*, 95 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 99 per cent; and *True Confessions*, 95 per cent. This is not to say that unknown writers did not sell a part of what they wrote to magazines. They did. But the number of free-lance authors who could earn a living entirely by writing for magazines was exceedingly limited.

But then, the free-lance writer seems to have been much more myth than reality throughout the entire history of American magazines. It is extremely unlikely that any significant number of authors ever managed to earn a living from magazines unless they held staff positions. The myth of the free-lance writer persisted tenaciously; it was encouraged by teachers of writing, by the spate of books on magazine writing which rolled from publishers' presses from the thirties on, by the roseate journals for amateur authors, by the correspondence schools which promised to make anyone a writer in ninety days, and by the editors themselves.

In the nineteenth century the magazine writer was denied a living by the copyright situation and by the customarily low rates of payment. So long as publishers were able to reprint British material which was not protected by copyright in America, they hesitated to buy from native writers. Even after copyright agreements prevented publishers from helping themselves to British writing, magazines were impecunious from want of advertising and their rates to contributors were perforce low. "If the average magazine writer could readily place all that he can conscientiously write," Charles Astor Bristead said in 1870, and his complaint was a familiar one, "then with three hundred working days in the year he could make a fair clerk's wages. . . ." <sup>21</sup>

In the twentieth century competition forced the leading magazines to pay good rates for contributions, and advertising made

<sup>21</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1865-1885* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 15.

those rates possible. No longer could major magazines take months to reject or accept a contribution, as they had in the nineteenth century when Frank Parker Stockbridge was paid in 1895 for a story he had sold four years earlier. George Horace Lorimer of the *Post* began the practice of giving the author a decision in no more than a week and of paying for material on acceptance.

At least from the early twenties onward, the big magazines competed fiercely for authors whose names had showcase appeal and for authors who could deliver the kind of copy which editors wanted. Ray Long nagged and bid for an article by Calvin Coolidge from the day the President announced, "I do not choose to run." When he got the article for his issue of April, 1929, he took elaborate precautions to keep the scoop from competitors until *Cosmopolitan* appeared on the stands. At the printing plant, only John Cuneo and his chief assistant knew what the article was; printers set incomprehensible fragments of the article into type, and a private detective stood on guard while the pieces were assembled and plates made. In late 1939, after months of negotiation, *Collier's* got Franklin Roosevelt to agree to write a weekly or fortnightly piece for an annual salary of \$75,000 once he had left the White House. *Life* and the *New York Times* jointly paid Winston Churchill more than \$1,000,000 in 1947 for his then unwritten memoirs, and *Life* alone in 1958 paid more than half that sum to Harry S. Truman for his memoirs.

In the twenties and thirties, when magazines were heavy with fiction, much of the battle was for the relatively small circle of storytellers whose bylines were magnets which drew readers to magazines. For the fiction it wanted, *Cosmopolitan* in the early thirties paid authors up to \$5,000 for a short story, and up to \$40,000 for a serial, although reasonable averages were perhaps \$2,500 and \$25,000 respectively. Fiction comprised an increasingly smaller part of magazine content during the war and after it; and in the fifties, when about three-fourths of magazine copy was nonfiction, the battle was for the top professional free-lance reporters. The rewards were high for reporters who could produce what editors were looking for. The *Reader's Digest* paid an average of \$2,000 an article and often sent bonuses to favored authors. *Collier's* paid about \$1,500 an article, sometimes more; and the *Post* paid authors \$750 for their first article and raised them

in steps of \$250 to as high as \$3,000. Editors used lures other than money. Some painstakingly coached and encouraged promising professionals. The *Post* built up goodwill by trying to give a decision on an article or idea thirty hours after getting it.

But contributions were a raw material on which magazines spent only a few cents of every dollar they took in. Jerome Ellison, former managing editor of *Collier's*, estimated in 1946 that popular magazines spent from 2 to at most 10 per cent of their profits on contributions. "One magazine clears \$200,000 an issue and pays \$10,000 an issue for material," he said. "Another, generally considered fantastically generous, clears \$900,000 an issue and pays its contributors \$45,000."<sup>22</sup> His remedy was a magazine named *47* which was owned on a profit sharing basis by 368 writers, artists, and photographers; but it filed a bankruptcy petition a little more than a year after its first issue appeared in March, 1947, and it ceased publication in July, 1948.

Ellison's calculations do not appear to have been far off. In the early thirties a typical monthly magazine spent probably 8.3 per cent of its total budget on features, short stories, and serials; more than 45 per cent went for paper and printing. And in 1949 J. K. Lasser estimated that a typical consumer magazine spent four cents of each dollar of revenue on stories, articles, and pictures, while the paper dealer got thirty-four cents, the printer got thirty-nine.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, for every magazine which paid \$1,000 for articles, there were hundreds which paid \$100 or less. Only the large-circulation magazines paid big money, and a handful of authors competed for it as keenly as the magazines competed for authors.

A more substantial effort to raise the economic and professional status of the magazine writer than *47* was the formation of the Society of Magazine Writers. Members of the society were serious professionals, not the amateurs who belonged to the hundreds of other writers' organizations throughout the country. The sixty-five members of the society in 1951 had a total income of more than \$750,000. In 1952 the society adopted a code of ethics which it hoped would improve the precarious financial position of the professional free-lance and would standardize relationships be-

<sup>22</sup> *Newsweek*, 27 (Jan. 21, 1946) 84.

<sup>23</sup> J. K. Lasser, "How Good Publishing Management Works Today," *Magazine Industry*, 1 (Winter, 1950) 19-20.

tween writers and editors. The society was also an important force in the establishment of the Benjamin Franklin Magazine Awards, which were intended to honor achievements in the magazine field as the Pulitzer Prizes and Peabody Awards recognized outstanding work in other areas. An anonymous donor contributed more than \$50,000 to establish the awards, which were administered by the University of Illinois. President Lloyd Morey of the University presented a gold medal, certificates, and checks to winners in several categories of magazine journalism at the first annual Benjamin Franklin Magazine Awards banquet in New York in May, 1954.

The money magazines spent on contributions could support only a few free-lance authors. Magazines bid thousands of dollars for the memoirs of generals, admirals, former Presidents, and abdicated kings, but those persons did not depend on their pens for their livelihoods. The magazine industry could provide a living for only a thousand free-lance writers at \$13,000 a year apiece, Jonathan Norton Leonard calculated in 1935; but since payments to authors were unequally distributed, he thought that the industry could support only about fifty-four professionals.<sup>24</sup> The situation had not greatly altered by 1950. The editors of *See* estimated that about a hundred writers supplied 90 per cent of the material to American magazines, the editors of *Better Homes and Gardens* that 250 wrote 50 per cent of what magazines published.

A safe guess is that no more than three hundred authors wrote virtually all of the fiction and nonfiction which magazines published in 1955 and that fewer than half of them were able to support themselves by their writing. Only about seventy or eighty free lances earned at least \$10,000 a year, the amount which some writers considered the minimum for living in New York, the center of publishing. Others held jobs as newspaper reporters, college teachers, business men.

Even the successful free-lance lived in uncertainty. From time to time, he was obsessed by the idea that editors did not appreciate him. He sometimes submitted four article ideas for every one that editors liked. He often earned but \$3.50 an hour while writing articles for major magazines, and the money had to support him

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Norton Leonard, "Learning How to Write," in Norman Cousins, editor, *Writing for Love or Money* (New York, 1949), pp. 14-18.



when editors were not buying his output. He frequently got no more than expense money when commissioned articles did not turn out as editors had expected. He knew that the editors who favored him today might be jobless tomorrow and then he would have to rebuild his contacts in editorial offices. Two professionals have summed up the discouraging side of free-lancing. "Since the decline of the oldtime prospector, few people have worked with less companionship, few have had to rely more on their own resources," said Morton Sontheimer, former president of the Society of Magazine Writers; and John Bartlow Martin, who had worked his way from the penny-a-word rates of the minor leagues to the high rates of the big slicks, said, "I like everything about freelancing, with the exception of the lack of security. Sometimes it's four to six months between checks, and that creates problems for my grocer and everybody else."<sup>25</sup>

If they could adjust to the insecurity, successful free-lances led comfortable if arduous lives, and few of them would have traded their jobs for anything else. Frank J. Taylor, in semiretirement in 1955, still sold ten or twelve articles a year to major magazines and in his prime wrote thirty-five or forty. Frederick S. Faust, who was killed in 1944 while serving as a war correspondent in Italy, was the king of the pulps in the twenties and thirties. For years he lived with his wife and family in an Italian villa staffed with servants, and he once calculated that he needed at least seventy thousand dollars a year to maintain his standard of living. He maintained it, at his peak, by writing some two million words a year for the pulps at the top rate of four cents a word. His pseudonyms included Max Brand, Evan Evans, George Owen Baxter, Nicholas Silver, Frank Austin, Hugh Owen, Walter C. Butler, George Challis, John Frederick, Lee Bolt, Dennis Lawton, Henry Uriel, Peter Henry Moreland, and David Manning.

Only a tiny band of authors reached the top, and the climb was difficult and treacherous. Yet the *Saturday Evening Post* in the fifties received between sixty thousand and a hundred thousand unsolicited manuscripts a year from hopeful authors, and the mails brought contributions by the thousands to other magazines: *Jack and Jill*, fifty thousand; *Today's Woman*, ten thousand; *Charm*, four thousand; *Outdoor Life*, three thousand. The myth of the free-lance author refused to die.

<sup>25</sup> *Time*, 65 (May 30, 1955) 60, 03.

## chapter 6 The Old Leaders That Died

By World War II most of the magazines that had led in prestige and circulation when *Munsey's* and *McClure's* first appeared had long since vanished. The magazine world was a little like life itself. *Harper's* was still around, and the *Atlantic*, like wise old men who had outlived their contemporaries. Yet many old and once eminent magazines had died and had been succeeded by the young and active; the young themselves had aged, and many of them too had died. Not all had; some, such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *McCall's*, carried their age well even in 1955.

But after World War I the trade press carried the obituaries of leaders among all classes of magazines—the respected quality magazines, current affairs magazines, general interest magazines, humor magazines, women's magazines, children's magazines—and one recalls their names with nostalgia: *Scribner's* and *Century*, for instance, and *Literary Digest*, *Delineator*, *Judge*, and *St. Nicholas*.

Until illness overtook them, many of them seemed a permanent part of the American scene. But the magazine industry represented the freest of free enterprise, and publishers were forever

gambling on magazines which they hoped would be so excitingly new, so responsive to latent public interest that readers and advertisers would come flocking. Some publishers created such new magazines, and their periodicals helped to push a number of recognized leaders into the background or into their graves.

The twentieth century brought an end to many magazines of high literary quality, to journals of comment and opinion, to weeklies and monthlies backgrounding and analyzing current affairs. One by one, during the thirties and forties, magazines such as the *North American Review*, *Living Age*, *Forum*, and *Independent* quietly disappeared. The publisher of a sick magazine usually tried to prolong its life by merging it with a moribund rival, thereby decreasing its immediate competition and strengthening it temporarily by an increased circulation. In time, however, a magazine which had taken over its competitors was invariably swallowed by a stronger magazine. Thus, for instance, *World's Work* was absorbed by the *Review of Reviews*, which was absorbed by the *Literary Digest*, which on its deathbed was absorbed by *Time*.

No doubt some of the magazines of quality died because their audience was limited. True, advances in education increased the number of Americans who could read and write, but schools were not producing the sort of educated reader that the best nineteenth-century magazines were edited for, the man at home in all ages and in all lands; rather they were producing persons whose interests were best served by the popular weeklies and monthlies. Readers themselves could support but few quality magazines. And such publications were not attractive to advertisers, who, with the growth of a mass market for consumer goods and services, could much more economically reach their potential customers through the organs of mass circulation.

Because of their small circulations, the quality publications could not share in the economies of mass production, and they had to compete with the affluent mass-circulation periodicals for authors. In the nineteenth century, before the development of advertising, magazines could buy the works of Mark Twain for two cents a word; in the twentieth century, magazines spent thousands of dollars on works they wanted, as when *Collier's* paid \$50,000 for James Farley's history of the New Deal and when *Reader's Digest* reportedly paid Eric Johnston \$25,000 plus a

\$15,000 bonus for an account of his wartime interview with Stalin. The best authors still wrote for periodicals of small circulation, but they wrote for the mass-circulation magazines as well. Moreover, the copyright agreements between the United States and Great Britain after 1891 closed an inexpensive source of material to the quality magazines—British periodicals, from which many nineteenth-century American magazines had clipped freely without paying royalties to the authors.

Two quality magazines that had been among the most respected in the United States, *North American Review* and *Living Age*, died on the eve of America's entry into World War II. Their last publisher was Joseph Hilton Smyth, who pleaded guilty in 1942 to serving as an agent of the Japanese government without registering with the State Department. Two other men who also received pay from the Japanese were involved with Smyth in his publishing activities.<sup>1</sup>

Between June, 1938, and December, 1941, the Japanese government had provided Smyth and his associates with more than \$125,000 to establish or buy publications as vehicles for Japanese propaganda. Smyth acquired *Living Age* in June, 1938, and *North American Review* the following September. He also was involved with *Scribner's Commentator*, a strongly pro-isolationist magazine, but it seems to have taken its policies not from him but from others associated with it.

When the *North American Review* suspended publication in 1940, it was one of the oldest magazines in America. In its century and a quarter of existence, it had had such distinguished editors as Richard H. Dana, James Russell Lowell, Henry Adams, and Henry Cabot Lodge, and its contributors had included some of the world's most famous writers. Bryant's "Thanatopsis" first appeared in it, and so did Alan Seeger's "I Have a Rendezvous with Death"; Mark Twain, a regular contributor, prepared chapters of his autobiography for it, and in it Henry James serialized his *The Ambassadors*.

Although the *North American Review* was a ponderous and somewhat provincially New England magazine for the first sixty years after its founding in 1815, it became a lively journal with a wide range of subject matter in the late 1870's. In 1891, when

<sup>1</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 75 (Sept. 12, 1942) 8; *Time*, 40 (Sept. 14, 1942) 46.

**COLLIER'S WEEKLY**  
 PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
 ESTABLISHED 1843

NO. 1123  
 PRICE 10 CENTS

**"WHEN LIFE'S WORTH LIVING"**

**Hero's Son** A Story of the War  
 By Frederick Hazlitt Brennan

DECEMBER 6, 1914

**Collier's**  
 THE WEEKLY

**More than 2,400,000 Circulation**



**Miner Prophet**

The chief boss of the year is **Samuel John Lewis**, president of the United Mine Workers of America, and **William Green**, head of the A. F. of L. *Interviewed in their own way* are two leading personalities of labor organizations—the industrial union vs. the craft union. We find also here the economic development of this country will hinge upon the decision in this fight

By **George Creel**

THE most thoughtful men have ever lived have been the great labor leaders. William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, and Samuel John Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America, are two of the greatest labor leaders of our time. They are the two men who have done more than any other men to bring about the economic development of this country. They are the two men who have shown the way to the future of this country. They are the two men who have shown the way to the future of this country.

**William Green**, president of the American Federation of Labor, is shown in the illustration above.

...the United Mine Workers of America... the industrial union... the craft union... the economic development of this country...

...the United Mine Workers of America... the industrial union... the craft union... the economic development of this country...



**William Green**

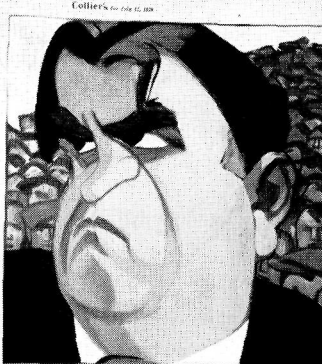
**John Lewis**, president of the United Mine Workers of America, is shown in the illustration above.

...the United Mine Workers of America... the industrial union... the craft union... the economic development of this country...

...the United Mine Workers of America... the industrial union... the craft union... the economic development of this country...



**John Lewis**



...the United Mine Workers of America... the industrial union... the craft union... the economic development of this country...

its circulation was at a peak of 76,000, *Review of Reviews* wrote of it: "It is unquestionably true that the *North American Review* is regarded by more people, in all parts of the country, as at once the highest and most impartial platform upon which current public issues can be discussed, than is any other magazine or review."<sup>2</sup>

In 1899 Colonel George Harvey, a former managing editor of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* who had made a fortune in electric railways, bought control of the *North American Review*. As editor until 1921, when he was appointed ambassador to the Court of St. James, Colonel Harvey upheld the distinction which the magazine had achieved in the late nineteenth century and made it a political influence. On his return to the United States in 1924, he again took over the active editorship and, finding the circulation at a low of 13,000, changed the magazine to a quarterly.

Colonel Harvey sold the magazine in the fall of 1926 to Walter Butler Mahony, a corporation lawyer. Under the new owner, the magazine announced that it would become more sprightly and timely, and it again became a monthly. Mahony's ownership continued into the 1930's, and the magazine maintained high standards, although it slipped far from the leadership it had once held. Smyth bought the magazine in September, 1938.

Like the *North American Review*, *Living Age* was an old and respected magazine when Smyth became its publisher. Eliakim Littell founded the magazine in Boston in 1844 as *Littell's Living Age*, and each week he filled it with material clipped from British publications. After he died in 1870, his son Robert continued the magazine under the same policies until his own death in 1896. Then Frank Foxcroft took control, dropped the word "Littell's" from the title, and somewhat broadened its scope by adding sections on American books and authors.

The Atlantic Monthly Press bought the weekly in 1919, and Ellery Sedgwick, longtime editor of the *Atlantic*, served briefly as its editor. In 1924 the publishers dressed up the cover and typography and promised readers to bring out an occasional issue carrying longer articles of enduring significance. But the magazine continued to be chiefly a repository of ably selected material from foreign publications. It went from weekly to monthly pub-

<sup>2</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1850-1865* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 255.

lication in 1927. The following year a new company, World Topics Corporation, took over the magazine and gave it a new format and a new editor, John Bakeless, former managing editor of *Forum* and late of the infant *Time*. Smyth bought into *Living Age* in 1938 when the Japanese government supplied \$15,000 for the initial purchase and \$2,500 a month to underwrite losses. The magazine stopped publication in 1941.

*Scribner's Commentator*, which began steering a strongly pro-isolationist course in mid-1940 and then vanished under a cloud of suspicion and distrust, had little resemblance except in name to the monthly magazine that once had proudly carried the title *Scribner's*. It was a merger of the titles of *Commentator*, a pocket-sized monthly, and *Scribner's*, a magazine of quality which to all purposes had already died.

*Scribner's* had passed its fiftieth anniversary when it ceased publication in 1939. In 1886 Charles Scribner of the book publishing house decided to bring out a new illustrated magazine of general interest. Some years before he had lent his name to the magazine which eventually became the *Century*, and when he had withdrawn from that periodical, he had agreed that no magazine should bear his name for five years. When the five years were up, he had E. L. Burlingame put together a new magazine in an office over the Scribner bookstore on Broadway. The first issue of the new *Scribner's* appeared in January, 1887. Burlingame and Robert Bridges, who succeeded him as editor in 1914, solidly established the reputation of *Scribner's* for literary excellence. It ran the early works of many well-known authors, among them Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway, and published dozens of short stories and novels that have endured, among them Richard Harding Davis' "Gallagher" and "The Bar Sinister," Hemingway's "The Killers," Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, James Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*.

On Bridges' retirement in 1930, Alfred Dashiell held the editorship until 1936 when he joined the *Reader's Digest*. Circulation of *Scribner's* had once reached 200,000; but the magazine was unable or unwilling to compete with livelier popular journals, and fewer and fewer persons bought copies, which still bore the ugly anachronistic yellow cover that Stanford White had designed for its first issue. In 1936 when Dashiell quit, sales were down to 43,000.

As its new editor, the publisher hired Harlan Logan, a former teacher of English who had drifted into the business of analyzing magazines to help them rebuild sagging circulations. The magazine was divorced from the Scribner book publishing firm, which however held a controlling interest in the new publishing company. Logan, believing that the day of the small circulation class magazine was over, aimed at a circulation of a quarter of a million. To get it, he enlarged *Scribner's* and broadened its editorial appeal. But although he more than doubled its circulation and cut operating losses from \$2,500 to \$700 a month, he could not make the magazine show a profit, and it ceased publication in May, 1939. David Smart of Esquire, Inc., bought its circulation of 80,000 for a reported \$11,000. The pocket-sized *Commentator* acquired its name.

*Commentator* had first appeared in January, 1937, with Lowell Thomas, the radio commentator, as editor. When the magazine telescoped the name *Scribner's* with its own, Thomas left, and the magazine underwent changes in financial backing, staff, and policy. By mid-1940 *Scribner's Commentator* had emerged as a vigorously pro-isolationist journal. In 1942, the year that it died, one of its staff members, Ralph Townsend of San Francisco, pleaded guilty to serving as an unregistered agent of the Japanese government, and the magazine itself was listed by the Attorney General of the United States in connection with a sedition conspiracy for which twenty-eight persons were indicted, a case ending in mistrial because of the death of the presiding judge.

So died the *North American Review*, *Living Age*, and *Scribner's*, all magazines of quality in their day. *Scribner's* had survived by a decade an earlier quality magazine which had carried the same name. The name of the earlier *Scribner's* had been changed to *Century* in 1881. As *Century*, the magazine was a giant in prestige and a comparative giant in advertising lineage in the decade before Munsey and McClure began publishing their popular magazines.

The first *Scribner's* was conceived by Roswell Smith and Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland, a well-known literary man, who met in Switzerland in 1869 and fell to talking about the magazine they would like to publish on their return home. Back in the United States, they took their plans to Charles Scribner, who bought four-tenths of the stock in the magazine and lent it his name to



inspire confidence. Some 40,000 readers received copies of the first issue in November, 1870. Under Holland's editorship, *Scribner's* ran serials by such authors as Frances Hodgson Burnett, Henry James, and Bret Harte, and short stories by Julian Hawthorne, Frank Stockton, and Helen Hunt Jackson. Circulation mounted, and by 1880 it was more than 100,000.

In 1881 both the Scribner publishing firm and Holland withdrew from ownership of *Scribner's*, and Roswell Smith took control. As part of the transaction, Smith agreed to change the name of the magazine, which he altered to *Century*; the Scribner firm agreed not to publish another magazine for five years, after which time it did publish the *Scribner's* that died in 1939.

Holland lived to edit but one number of the *Century*; his successor was Richard Watson Gilder, who served as editor until 1909. *Century* reached its zenith under Gilder. It ran a remarkable series on the Civil War by important participants, including Generals Grant, McClellan, Longstreet, and Beauregard, and the articles plus the book growing out of them earned the Century Company more than a million dollars. The magazine published, as a sequel, a serial life of Lincoln by Nicolay and Hay.

Circulation rolled upward to a peak of 200,000 in the late 1880's, and the magazine was packed with advertisements in the 1890's. On Gilder's death in 1909, the *Century* got new editors in fairly rapid succession, considering Gilder's tenure of twenty-eight years—five editors in a dozen years. In 1921 Glenn Frank took over as editor, changed the cover, raised the newsstand price from thirty-five to fifty cents, and tried to inject vitality into the magazine, but he never quite succeeded in striking the editorial formula requisite for a healthy circulation. When Frank resigned in 1925 to become president of the University of Wisconsin, he was succeeded by Hewitt H. Howland, for many years literary adviser to the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

In 1929, a lush year for magazines generally, the *Century* was sick in circulation and ailing in advertising. After sixty years as a monthly, Howland announced, *Century* would appear quarterly because the world was going at "too fast a pace" and he wanted to give people a longer time to read the magazine. But the switch to quarterly publication was no more effective in holding readers than had been an attempt to make the magazine journalistic in 1913. Despite the policy changes as editor succeeded editor, cir-

ulation and advertising volume slid gently but steadily downward. Sales dropped from 150,000 in 1906 to 20,000 in 1930; advertising volume slumped from fifty pages an issue in the 1880's and double that in the 1890's to but five pages in the final issue in the spring of 1930. *Forum*, a competitor, bought *Century's* name but eventually even that disappeared.

It was on the *Forum* that Walter Hines Page established his reputation as an editor. In 1887, when Page was working for a New York newspaper, he was approached by a stranger who offered him the job of putting *Forum* on its feet. An infant publication, a review founded in the hope that it would become a major influence in art, literature, politics, and science, the *Forum* until then had shown little but a propensity for losing its founders' money. Page joined the magazine, first as manager, then as editor, and he stayed with it until the summer of 1895.

The purpose of *Forum*, in Page's words, was "to provide discussion about subjects of contemporary interest, in which the magazine is not partisan, but merely the instrument."<sup>3</sup> To make the magazine timely, Page held open its pages until a week before the day of publication; to make the magazine authoritative, he sought articles from men famous in their fields, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, William Graham Sumner; to make the magazine measure to high standards, he often threw away contributions for which he had paid.

Although the influence of *Forum* was probably far greater than its circulation indicated, Page did succeed in attracting some 30,000 subscribers, a good showing considering the type of magazine; and before he resigned, the magazine was making a profit. A succession of editors followed Page. When *Forum* took over *Century* in 1930, its editor was Henry Goddard Leach, who had trebled the highest circulation that Page had achieved.

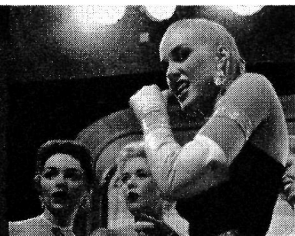
A decade after *Forum* swallowed *Century*, it in turn was swallowed by *Current History*, which annexed its title with the issue for July, 1940, and for about a year published under the name *Current History and Forum*. Still in existence in 1955, *Current History* was established by the New York Times Company in 1914 to carry source news on the war and on the international situation. In 1936, disposing of two of its special publications, the

<sup>3</sup> Burton J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page* (Garden City, 1922), I, 49.

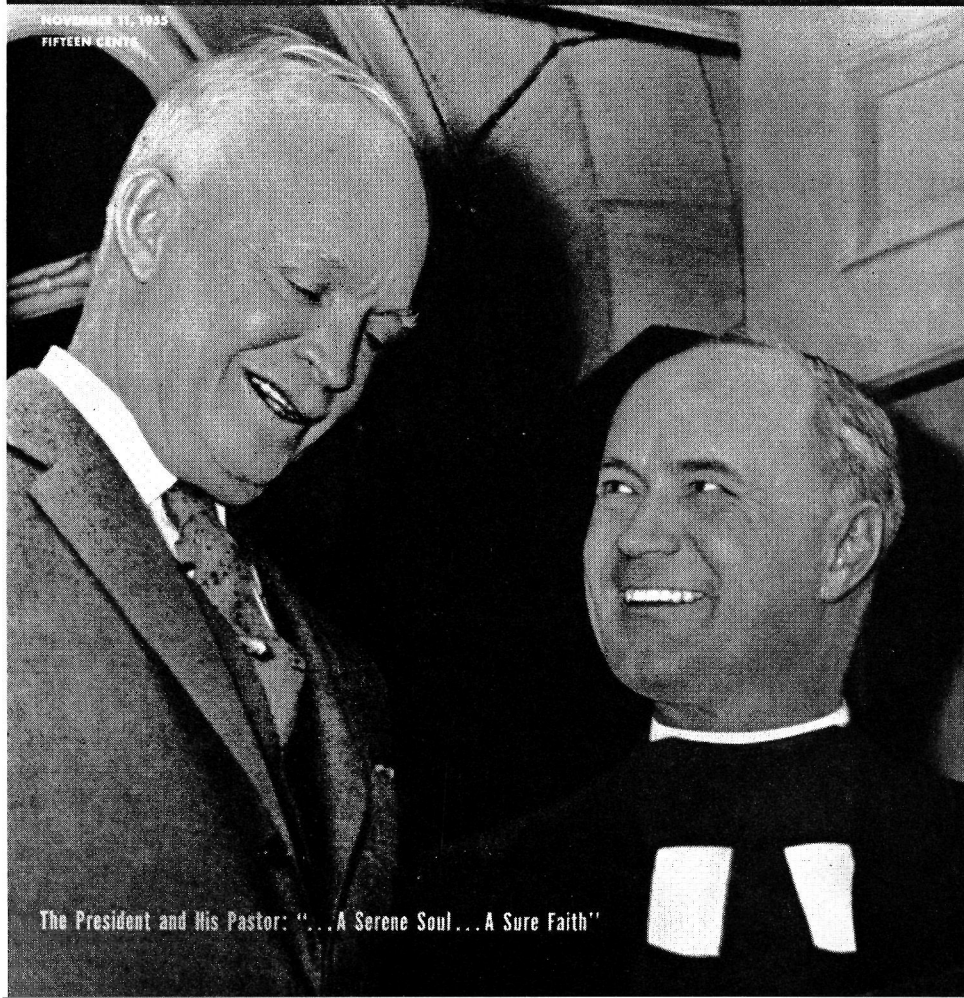
# Collier's

THE GOLDWYN GIRL

THIS TIME SHE'S A DOLL IN "GUYS and DOLLS"



NOVEMBER 11, 1935  
FIFTEEN CENTS



The President and His Pastor: "... A Serene Soul ... A Sure Faith"

New York Times Company sold the magazine to M. K. Tracy, who for many years had been associated with the Scripps-Howard newspapers. Tracy released the staff writers of the magazine because he thought them too stuffy. One of the deposed men, Spencer Brodneyn, the former editor of *Current History*, began his own magazine, *Events*, in 1937; and in it he sought to perpetuate the policies of *Current History*. His offshoot lasted but a few years. In 1941, *Current History and Forum* took over *Events* to become *Current History*, "Incorporating *Events, Forum & Century*."

Throughout the twentieth century, one quality magazine after another swallowed its shaky competitors, just as *Forum* swallowed the *Century* and in turn was taken over by *Current History*. After more than thirty years of publication, *World's Work* vanished into *Review of Reviews*. A few years later *Review of Reviews* was merged with the *Literary Digest*, and later still the *Literary Digest* sold its name to *Time*, which once a year thereafter ran the nameplate, "*Time, Incorporating the Literary Digest*," to preserve its legal claim to the title.

In 1900 the young publishing firm of Doubleday, Page and Company decided to bring out a new magazine, *World's Work*, devoted to the "activities of the newly organized world, its problems and even its romances." Its editor from the start was Walter Hines Page, a partner in the firm, and he guided the magazine until he was appointed ambassador to Great Britain in 1913.

*World's Work* scored its first great scoop in 1907 when it published the reminiscences of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., in a series of six articles. When Page relinquished the editorship, he was succeeded by his son, Arthur Wilson Page. Arthur Page displayed his initiative as editor when war broke out in 1914. Halting the issue already on the presses, he quickly replaced it with a war manual which contained a thorough picture of the international scene. That issue just about trebled the magazine's circulation of 100,000.

A number of editors followed Arthur Page: Burton J. Hendrick, Edgar F. Strother, Barton W. Currie, Russell Doubleday, and Alan C. Collins. By 1929, when Russell Doubleday took over as editor, even the publishers admitted that the magazine had fallen by the wayside and promised a renewed vigor. Advertising volume had been slipping throughout the twenties. It plummeted from \$510,000 in 1929 to \$219,760 in 1932, when circulation was

about 77,000. In July, 1932, *Review of Reviews* announced that with the August issue it would carry the name *World's Work* besides its own on the cover but that its own policies would remain unchanged.

*Review of Reviews* was founded in 1891 by Dr. Albert Shaw, Sr., who edited the magazine until it became buried in the *Literary Digest* in 1937. Shaw, a former editorial writer for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, decided that readers had to plow through far too many magazines to keep well informed about world affairs. To simplify the job for them, he rounded up a staff of editors and set them to condensing material for a publication he called *Review of Reviews*. He himself wrote the lead editorial, "The Progress of the World," and he continued to write editorials for virtually every issue in the forty-six years that the magazine existed.

*Review of Reviews* had its greatest influence and circulation during World War I, when its sales were about 250,000 copies. During the twenties, its advertising revenues slipped steadily—from \$670,902 in 1920 to \$461,040 in 1927. When it absorbed *World's Work* in 1932, *Review of Reviews* had advertising revenues of \$195,000, a circulation of 167,000.

In the 1930's, the *Literary Digest* also was ailing; and when it became known that the publishers wanted to dispose of it, the magazine industry buzzed with rumors that William Randolph Hearst would buy it, that George Hecht of *Parents'* would buy it. The purchaser, however, was Albert Shaw, Jr., president of the Review of Reviews Corporation, who paid a reported \$200,000 for it in June, 1937. The Shaws merged the *Literary Digest* with their *Review of Reviews* and on July 17, 1937, brought out the result of the union, *The Digest*, a weekly that proposed to give a summary of the news of the week, eight pages of "stories in pictures," a digest of books, and a digest of magazine articles in important United States and foreign publications. *The Digest* started out bravely with an initial press run of 600,000, but it lasted only until the following autumn. In November it vanished, and in its place re-emerged the *Literary Digest* with a new set of owners. The new owners, who paid about \$200,000 to the Shaws for the Review of Reviews Corporation, were headed by George F. Havell, who had once been circulation manager, business manager, and later managing editor of *Forum*. The Shaws had called him in to help start *The Digest*, and he had invested in

the venture. When *The Digest* failed to find an audience, Havell and a group of others bought it to revive the *Literary Digest*. But Havell's revived *Literary Digest* lived only about six months; then the magazine finally died, and its name was bought by Time, Inc.

The *Literary Digest* was founded in 1890 by Dr. Isaac K. Funk and Adam W. Wagnalls, both former Lutheran ministers. Wagnalls had been pastor of a church in Kansas City for two years, then city clerk in Atchison, Kansas, for another two years before he went to New York to join Funk in a book publishing company. In 1878 Wagnalls became a partner in Funk and Company; in 1891 the firm became Funk and Wagnalls Company. Its output depended heavily on reprints of European authors, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and religious works. Funk died in 1912, his partner in 1924..

In 1890 the two publishers brought out a magazine that they thought would be especially helpful to educators and ministers—the *Literary Digest*, "a repository of contemporaneous thought and research as presented in the periodical literature of the world." The magazine extended its editorial scope to cover general news and comment in 1905. The same year William Seaver Woods, a minister's son, became editor, a post he held until 1933.

The man who probably did most to guide the *Literary Digest* into becoming a national institution was Robert J. Cuddihy, its publisher. Cuddihy had joined the company in 1878 as an office boy, and eventually he came to own (50 per cent of the stock in the company. Mailing out barrage after barrage of subscription offers to names in telephone directories and on other lists, plowing profits back into the business, Cuddihy pushed up both circulation and profits. Beginning with the 1920 election, the *Literary Digest* conducted its famous straw votes, which provided it with thousands of new subscribers as well as prestige and good editorial copy. The magazine mailed out millions of ballots—twenty million in 1932, half that many in 1936—and from the returns accurately foretold the major election results in 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932. Subscription offers accompanied the ballots. The magazine acquired seventy thousand new subscribers from a poll on the Prohibition question in the spring of 1930.

In 1920 the *Literary Digest*, with gross revenues of \$12,720,000 from its lineage, was second only to the *Saturday Evening Post* in

dollar volume of national advertising. Although its revenues dropped to \$7,866,000 in 1925, it remained among the leaders in advertising. In 1925 the magazine was able to buy out a minor rival, *Current Opinion*, for a rumored \$250,000. Annual profits reached an estimated \$2,000,000. Just before the crash of 1929, Cuddihy is said to have unsuccessfully offered \$5,000,000 to Wilfred J. Funk, son of the co-founder, for his share in the company.

Circulation slid downward through the 1920's and early 1930's, although it remained above the million mark. The magazine tried a number of devices to keep up its sales. It offered gift premiums to subscribers; for a dollar more than the usual subscription price, subscribers in 1930 could get an accident insurance policy.

In 1933, when circulation had sagged to 978,000, and when Woods resigned, the publishers let the new editor, Arthur Draper, make some changes in the tradition-bound magazine. Draper brightened the typography, threw out some old features and added some new ones, introduced signed contributions on current affairs, and made other changes. But circulation dropped to 686,000 in 1936, when the circulation guarantee was the lowest since 1917. Draper resigned as editor in 1935 because of differences over matters of policy. Morton Savell briefly followed him as editor and then was replaced by Wilfred Funk.

There is a popular notion that the *Literary Digest* died because it incorrectly forecast the Presidential election in 1936 when its straw poll showed 1,293,669 votes for Alfred Landon and 972,897 for Franklin Roosevelt; but the ill health of the magazine in the years before suggests that the poll was but the blow that finished an already tottering publication. Despite the efforts of the Shaws of the *Review of Review's* and of George Havell to revive the moribund magazine, it finally had to cease publication in February, 1938, when it laid off all but twenty of its two hundred employees. The magazine never reappeared, although George Havell said he hoped to resume publication within sixty days. He got some revenue by renting the mailing lists of the magazine to advertisers, while he scouted for new working capital, and he appealed to subscribers to send in a dollar apiece to keep alive "an American institution." Other publishers who had sold subscriptions to the magazine in combination with their own objected to the appeal to subscribers, and the Audit Bureau of

Circulations reproved the managers of the *Digest*, who returned the contributions they had received.

In March, 1938, the publishers petitioned the United States District Court for permission to reorganize under the bankruptcy act. For a magazine that had been valued at millions of dollars in its prime, the publishers listed liabilities of \$1,492,067.67 and assets of \$850,923.72. Since the suspension of the *Digest* in February, Time, Inc., had been negotiating with Havell for its purchase. With its issue of May 23, 1938, *Time* added the name of the *Literary Digest* to its own and began fulfilling the quarter of a million subscriptions on the books of the defunct publication.

Again and again the process was repeated: on its deathbed, an old magazine of quality sought to regain its vitality by devouring its faltering competitors but instead of fattening it died with them. The *Outlook*, edited in its early years by Henry Ward Beecher and in its last years by Alfred E. Smith, the defeated Presidential candidate, absorbed the older *Independent*—and even a stripling as well, the *International Interpreter*—but within a few years after the mergers it was dead.

When the *Outlook* first appeared in 1867, it was a Baptist paper called the *Church Union*. Its circulation dropped from 16,000 to 2,000 within a few years, and its debt-saddled owner gave the publication to J. B. Ford and Company, publishers of Henry Ward Beecher. They installed Beecher as editor and on his advice changed its name to *Christian Union*, which it retained until 1893.

The publication was changed from a specialized religious paper into a general family weekly with sermons, essays, fiction, puzzles, and jokes. By giving away premiums and by sending out door-to-door canvassers, the publisher between 1870 and 1873 built for it the largest circulation that a religious publication had ever attained, more than 130,000. A series of misfortunes drove the circulation down to ten thousand in 1877, and it stayed at about twice that figure throughout most of the 1880's.

After several changes of ownership, *Christian Union* appeared in July, 1893, under a new name—*Outlook*—and with a new policy: It became a regular journal of opinion rather than a family publication with a religious emphasis. The magazine attracted important contributors and important works. Theodore Roosevelt, after leaving the Presidency, became a contributing



editor for a time, and the weekly carried such serials as Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* and Jacob A. Riis' *The Making of an American*.

From the turn of the century until after World War I, a period during which its circulation played between 100,000 and 125,000, the *Outlook* had its greatest prestige and prosperity. Its golden age closed in 1923 with the death of Lyman Abbott, its editor for forty-seven years and its principal owner for thirty-two.

To bolster its slipping circulation—105,000 in 1920; 84,000 in 1925—the *Outlook* took over two other publications. In June, 1924, *Outlook* absorbed the *International Interpreter*, founded two years and two months earlier, as it said, "to foster amity among nations; cooperation between Capital and Labor; equal opportunity for all; and liberty under law and order." *International Interpreter* bequeathed *Outlook* a circulation of 10,000.

In October, 1928, the *Outlook* merged with the eighty-year-old *Independent*. Like the *Outlook*, the *Independent* had been established as a religious paper, had shifted to content of more general scope, and had once been edited by Henry Ward Beecher. The *Independent*, credited with playing an important part in developing American sentiment in favor of the League of Nations, had been in difficult straits since 1919. In February, 1924, when an involuntary petition in bankruptcy was filed against its publishers, its estimated liabilities were \$230,000, its assets \$58,000. Although a reorganization followed, the new venture also failed.

The *Outlook and Independent*, as the magazine was called after *Outlook* and *Independent* joined forces in 1928, was little strengthened by the merger. Its circulation was down to about 85,000 even before the depression struck. In March, 1932, feeling the pinch of the depression, it went from weekly to monthly publication; and fattened by the change in periodicity, it sought to increase its newsstand sales.

The change failed to help. *Outlook and Independent* suspended publication in May, 1932, and was put on auction by a bankruptcy referee. Among those interested in acquiring it was Funk and Wagnalls, which bid \$2,000 to get its subscription list for the *Literary Digest*. The new owner, however, was Frank A. Tichenor, publisher of *Aero Digest*, *Sportsman Pilot*, *Spur*, *Port*, and *Plumbers' and Heating Contractors' Trade Journal*. He got *Outlook and Independent* for \$12,500 and sought to recapture for it

the political influence it had enjoyed in Theodore Roosevelt's time.

In August, 1932, Tichenor hired Alfred E. Smith, the defeated Presidential candidate in 1928, as editor. Smith was to help set the policies of the *New Outlook* and to contribute editorials and articles; Francis Walton, the managing editor, planned to have much of the magazine's comment on world affairs written by newsmen on the spot instead of at second hand. Smith held the editorship until March, 1932, when he resigned, ostensibly because of other business interests, although he was said to have differed with Tichenor on matters of policy. Walton replaced him as editor-in-chief. The magazine never regained its onetime prestige, however, and it died with its issue of June, 1935.

Quality magazines, journals of comment and opinion, reviews—they have traditionally had a difficult time surviving in America. It is perhaps less surprising that they faded away one by one than that a number of weekly and monthly magazines of general interest also died. Some were among the circulation giants that had survived from the nineteenth century into the twentieth, *Leslie's Weekly*, *McClure's*, *Munsey's*; others, like *Liberty*, were founded in the twentieth century, achieved large circulations, but never quite succeeded financially.

*Leslie's Weekly*, established in 1855, lasted until the 1920's. A pioneer news-in-pictures publication, it ran up a circulation of 100,000 within a short time of its founding, and it occasionally doubled or trebled sales during the next decade or so when it made the most of an exciting sports event or sensational crime. It gave a good pictorial record of the Civil War—at one time it had twelve correspondents at the front—and of the Spanish-American War. For a time, in the first years of the twentieth century, it had a circulation as large as any in its heyday. From 75,000 in 1900, its circulation mounted to 379,000 in 1914. After World War I, it came upon hard times, and died in June, 1922.

*McClure's*, one of the first of the low-priced national magazines, flourished only briefly in the new century. Decay set in after several of its outstanding staff members, Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, John Siddall, and Albert Boyden, resigned in March, 1906, as a result of disagreements with S. S. McClure. The trouble, according to Ida Tarbell, stemmed from McClure's plan to correct the abuses of society by forming a model community and a string of commercial enterprises including

a bank, a life insurance company, and a company for publishing school books. The plan became an obsession with McClure; his associates looked upon it with a good deal less than enthusiasm. Eventually the plan split McClure and his partner, John S. Phillips. When Phillips left *McClure's*, several of the editorial staff also resigned, and soon afterward they were reunited on the *American*.<sup>4</sup>

A few years later, McClure disposed of the magazine that bore his name, and thereafter it had several owners, none of whom appears to have made much of a success of it. Several times it suspended publication—for a year after October, 1921, for a half-year in 1924-25, and for a few months in 1926. McClure himself bought the magazine again in 1924, supposedly with financial assistance from Lewis E. Myers, a manufacturer of toys. But the fire was gone from *McClure's*, and after that last brief try for a comeback, its founder left the magazine to others, narrowed his world to the musty Murray Hill Hotel and the Union League Library, and worked on a history of freedom and other books until he died of a heart attack in 1949 at the age of ninety-two.

William Randolph Hearst purchased *McClure's* in 1926 and in June brought it out with the subtitle, "The Magazine of Romance." A little more than a year later, the publication dropped the subtitle and got a new editor, Arthur S. Hoffman, who had built *Adventure* into one of the top men's magazines. Hoffman stayed with *McClure's* for about a year. In April, 1928, Hearst sold the magazine to James R. Quirk, publisher of *Photoplay* and *Opportunity*. Degenerated into a magazine of snappy stories, merged with *Smart Set*, the once proud, once excellent *McClure's* died for good in 1933. Ida Tarbell, remembering the magazine as it had been in its youth, not in its senility, wrote its valedictory: "It was a magazine which from the first put quality above everything else. . . ." <sup>5</sup>

The twentieth century saw the eclipse of three outstanding satirical weeklies, *Puck*, *Life*, and *Judge*. *Puck*, which had commented on the American scene with sharp words and pointed cartoons since its founding in 1877, died at the close of World War I. *Life* and *Judge* were growing while *Puck* was dying. They

4 Ida M. Tarbell, *All in the Day's Work* (New York, 1939), pp. 256-59.

5 Tarbell, p. 257.

hit their peak circulations, about a quarter of a million, in the early 1920's. *Life*, after a long decline, died in 1936, when it sold its name to Henry Luce's new picture magazine. *Judge* struggled on alone, impoverished, dying and being revived, a ghost of its former self.

It is hard to say why they died, but certainly their position was weakened by competition from the *New Yorker* after 1925, from *Esquire* after 1933, and from *Ballyhoo* and *Hooey*, magazines of crude burlesque, during the depression. Conceivably the ubiquitous radio comedian diminished the demand for their editorial offerings; conceivably their drawings lost some of their appeal after general magazines began sprinkling cartoons throughout their pages. Whatever the reason, their decline was inexorable.

*Puck* entered the new century with a circulation of 90,000 and with Harry Leon Wilson as editor. Editors following Wilson were John Kendrick Bangs, the well-known humorist, and Arthur Hamilton Folwell, the first for a couple of years, the latter for more than a decade. Before World War I, *Puck* was a lively weekly, brightened with the work of George Jean Nathan, John Held, Jr., Franklin P. Adams, Arthur Guiterman and others. William Randolph Hearst bought the weekly in 1917, and, no doubt with his eye on its declining circulation, he changed it first to a fortnightly and then to a monthly publication. He discontinued it entirely in September, 1918, although at midcentury its name still appeared on a newspaper comic section.

When Time, Inc., bought the name *Life* for its new picture magazine in 1936, Clair Maxwell, the former owner, remarked: "We cannot claim, like Mr. Tunney, that we resigned our championship undefeated in our prime. But at least we hope to retire gracefully from a world still friendly."<sup>6</sup> *Life* indeed had passed its prime almost a decade earlier, but the world was still friendly; even as *Life* ceased publication, it was still earning a small profit.

*Life* began its fifty-three years as a satirical weekly on January 4, 1883, the product of three Harvard men—John Ames Mitchell, an artist who rashly sank a legacy of \$10,000 into the magazine to have a medium for his pictures; Edward Sanford Martin, a former editor of the *Harvard Lampoon* with literary aspirations; and Andrew Miller, who became business manager of the new mag-

<sup>6</sup> *Time*, 28 (Oct. 19, 1936) 63.

azine shortly before the first issue. Henry Holt, the book publisher, who had warned Mitchell against starting a magazine in a field in which *Puck* and *Judge* were already established, skeptically dubbed the first issue *Short Life*. For a time it looked as if *Life* would be short. Three-fourths of the second issue and practically all of the third were returned from the stands unsold. Worse, the publishers discovered with alarm that returned copies of the fourth and fifth issues exceeded by two thousand the number of copies they had had printed—until they noticed that the extra copies were from previous issues.<sup>7</sup>

As *Life* began to show promise, ill health forced Edward S. Martin out as part owner and away from the magazine for a few years. But he returned to the staff, and for the next forty years he contributed editorials to the magazine. Mitchell and Miller published *Life* as partners until Mitchell's death in 1918.

Under them, *Life* attracted some impressive literary and artistic talent. John Kendrick Bangs joined the staff as literary editor, and James Whitcomb Riley was a contributor. In 1887 *Life* paid a youth named Charles Dana Gibson four dollars for a drawing, his first sale to a magazine; in a few years Gibson became perhaps the most important contributor to *Life*. Week after week his Gibson girl and Gibson man adorned the pages of *Life*, and thousands of young women and young blades aped their dress and carriage.

Setting *Life* apart from *Puck* and *Judge* were its crusades, some of them quixotic. It got in licks against trusts, rigid Sabatarians, serums, Anthony Comstock, "dudes," Christian Science, and vivisection, among other things. From the start of World War I, *Life* took up the Allied cause. Both Mitchell and Gibson were ardent Francophiles who, as the writer of *Life's* obituary in *Time* put it, "took it as a personal affront when Germany invaded Belgium." In 1916 *Life* appealed to the United States to arm, and it showed little restraint in trying to gain sympathy for the Allied cause. Mitchell lived long enough to see that his last great crusade culminated in the declaration of war by the United States but not long enough to see the armistice. He died in July, 1918; Miller died the following year.

Charles Dana Gibson bought a controlling interest in the com-

<sup>7</sup> Frank Luther Mott, "Fifty Years of *Life*: The Story of a Satirical Weekly," *Journalism Quarterly*, 25 (Sept., 1948) 226.

pany in 1920 for a sum which press accounts said was \$1,000,000. Early in 1925, Miller's widow asked the court to appoint a receiver for the company and to set a "reasonable" salary for Gibson, who was said to be drawing \$30,000 a year for his contributions to the magazine and \$20,000 as president. She withdrew, the suit almost immediately.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, Robert Sherwood had become editor. There was a luster to the roster of contributors: Franklin P. Adams, Robert Benchley, Percy Crosby, Will James, Rollin Kirby, Dorothy Parker, Frank Sullivan, and Gluyas Williams. In 1929 Norman Hume Anthony quit the editorship of *Judge* to succeed Sherwood as editor of *Life*.

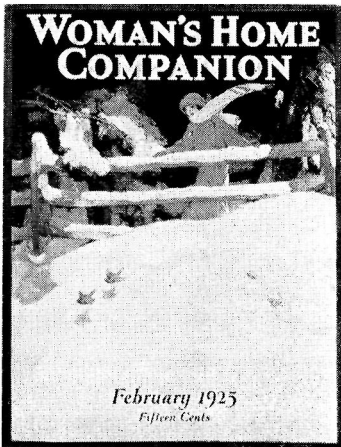
Thereafter changes came to *Life* in quick succession. Anthony's tenure was brief—he left to establish *Ballyhoo*, which had a short but highly successful existence—but in his stay on *Life* he threw out some old features, added new ones, and in general changed the tone of the magazine. Replacing him as editor was Bolton Mallore, soon succeeded by George Eggleston. Presumably because circulation was slipping—it dropped from 227,000 in 1922 to less than half that in 1930—*Life* switched to monthly publication late in 1931. Charles Dana Gibson retired from the company in 1932, and full ownership passed to Clair Maxwell and Henry Richter.

But *Life* was beyond recall. In 1936 its publishers jumped at the chance to sell its name to Time, Inc., for \$92,000, and its list of subscribers to *Judge*.

A running mate of *Life* and a dozen years older, *Judge* began existence in October, 1881, by announcing editorially that it was "started . . . for fun" and that "money is no object." Fun the first issues were; but circulation remained low, and money became an object, money to stay alive. The Republican party, having recognized the value of a satirical weekly in political campaigning, in 1885 gave substantial aid to William J. Arkell, who reorganized the Judge Company. *Judge* is generally given credit for coining the "full dinner pail" slogan in the McKinley-Bryan Presidential campaign of 1896. A close affiliation with the Republican party existed until 1910, when the company was again reorganized.

*Judge* began the new century with a circulation of 85,000. Like

<sup>8</sup> *Time*, 5 (Mar. 9, 1925) 22.



*Life*, it hit its circulation peak in the early 1920's, a happy time for humor magazines; its high point was 250,000 copies in 1922.

Norman Hume Anthony assumed the editorship of *Judge* in 1922, the same year that the magazine absorbed *Leslie's Weekly*, and held it until he went to *Life* at the start of 1929. Among the talented crew contributing to *Judge* were Heywood Broun, Walter Prichard Eaton, John Held, Jr., Ring Lardner, George Jean Nathan, and, for a short time as editorial writer, William Allen White.

The depression hit *Judge* as it hit *Life*. Circulation dropped to 172,000 in 1930. In March, 1932, with liabilities of \$500,000, *Judge* went bankrupt. Although Clair Maxwell of *Life* and George T. Delacorte, Jr., of *Ballyhoo* both hoped to acquire *Judge* at bankruptcy proceedings, members of its own staff, headed by Fred L. Rogan, a former advertising man for Curtis Publishing Company, raised \$17,000 and bought the magazine, which they continued as a monthly.

But *Judge* was up against a good deal of competition and not only from its old rival *Life*. The *New Yorker* had established itself as a weekly of urbanity and wit. A flock of magazines of earthy humor followed in the wake of *Ballyhoo*, which under Anthony had quickly acquired almost two million readers with its parodies of advertisements and its cartoons with sex rampant. *Judge* had neither the quality and sophistication of the *New Yorker* nor the slapstick appeal of *Ballyhoo* and its imitators.

In 1936 *Judge* was ready for a new publisher and found one in Monte Bourjaily, a former executive of United Features Syndicate who also was trying to make a success of the waning picture magazine *Mid-Week Pictorial*. Bourjaily bought title to *Judge* from the Kable Brothers Printing Company, which had taken over stock control of the magazine to satisfy a printing bill. The magazine got a slight boost when it acquired the subscription lists of *Life* and simultaneously lost a major competitor, but it never again exhibited its old vitality. After a year of *Judge*, Bourjaily withdrew and ownership reverted to the printers. They found a new publisher in Harry M. Newman, a former publisher of *Fourth Estate*, trade paper for newspapermen. But Newman could not get *Judge* back onto a successful course. After he left, the magazine periodically died and was periodically revived but never with more than a modest circulation.



There were shifting fortunes among the women's magazines, too, and some of the largest of them merged with others or died. Theirs was a highly competitive segment of the industry. Their basic aim was to help the reader manage her household, and since they relied on the same general formula of fashion, foods, family, and fiction, there was little to distinguish one magazine from the others. As "trade papers" for the homemaker, they made the home their world until the mid-thirties, when they broadened their editorial scope to pull out of a slump. With so many publications offering such similar editorial material and reaching an identical consumer market, it is not surprising that some of the magazines were weeded out.

In 1928 the Butterick Publishing Company merged its *Designer* with *Delineator*, which was among the top five women's magazines in circulation and in advertising revenue. The *Delineator*, still fifth among women's magazines, in turn was absorbed in 1937 by *Pictorial Review*, which achieved a circulation of more than three million as a result of the merger, one of the first magazines to reach so high a figure. Although its circulation slipped, it was still selling more than 2,500,000 copies when it ceased publication in 1939.

After Ebenezer Butterick devised the first tissue paper pattern in 1863, he began publishing a little magazine to promote the sale of his patterns. He called his magazine *Ladies' Quarterly Review of Broadway Fashions*, and he later brought out a similar publication, *Metropolitan*. Out of a merger of those two publications in 1873 came the *Delineator*, which devoted itself to fashions for the next thirty years. In 1894 it broadened its editorial appeal; in 1897 it ran its first fiction; and in the first years of the new century, fashions, which once had accounted for three-fourths of the contents, gave way to home departments, general articles, and fiction.

The company was reorganized in 1902—Butterick himself had withdrawn in 1899—so that the Butterick Company devoted itself to patterns and the Butterick Publishing Company to periodicals. Within a short time the Butterick Publishing Company, which issued thirty-two periodicals, ranked as one of the largest magazine publishers in the United States.

Meanwhile the *Delineator* flourished. Its circulation mounted from 480,000 in 1900 to slightly more than a million in 1920. By

1929 it was more than two million, a level it held until 1935, when it began to fall. Throughout the 1920's, gross advertising revenues varied, but they were generally between \$2,000,000 and \$3,500,000 a year, a highly creditable showing for a women's magazine during that period.

Theodore Dreiser, who had already published *Sister Carrie* and was working on *Jennie Gerhardt*, edited *Delineator* from 1907 until 1910, when he left to devote himself to his literary work. He set out to corral "name" authors and attracted, among others, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Oscar Hammerstein, and Woodrow Wilson. The editor during World War I and until 1921 was Honoré Willis Morrow, later well known as a novelist, who was followed by Mrs. William Brown Meloney, the editor who later guided *This Week*, the Sunday newspaper supplement, to success.

Like other women's magazines, *Delineator* had its share of causes. It raised \$100,000 to get a gram of radium for Madame Curie, placed 21,000 children for adoption in its Child Rescue Campaign, and conducted a Better Homes Campaign. During World War I, it carried on a campaign to aid war victims in France; after the armistice, it helped to rehabilitate French towns ruined in the war.

Crusading was diminished after 1926, and *Delineator* strove for an air of sophistication and exclusiveness. The exclusiveness became even more apparent in April, 1935, when, according to Oscar Graeve, its last editor, *Delineator* "decided to abandon the mad struggle for the largest circulation claim and limit its circulation to women who really wanted it." To this end, the magazine raised its circulation price and keyed its copy "to the modern scene, the modern woman, and her staccato mood" by running shorter articles, stories, and serials, and by striving for greater variety.<sup>9</sup>

With almost no warning, *Delineator* ceased publication with its issue for April, 1937. It was merged the next month with William Randolph Hearst's *Pictorial Review*, in which its identity was completely lost.

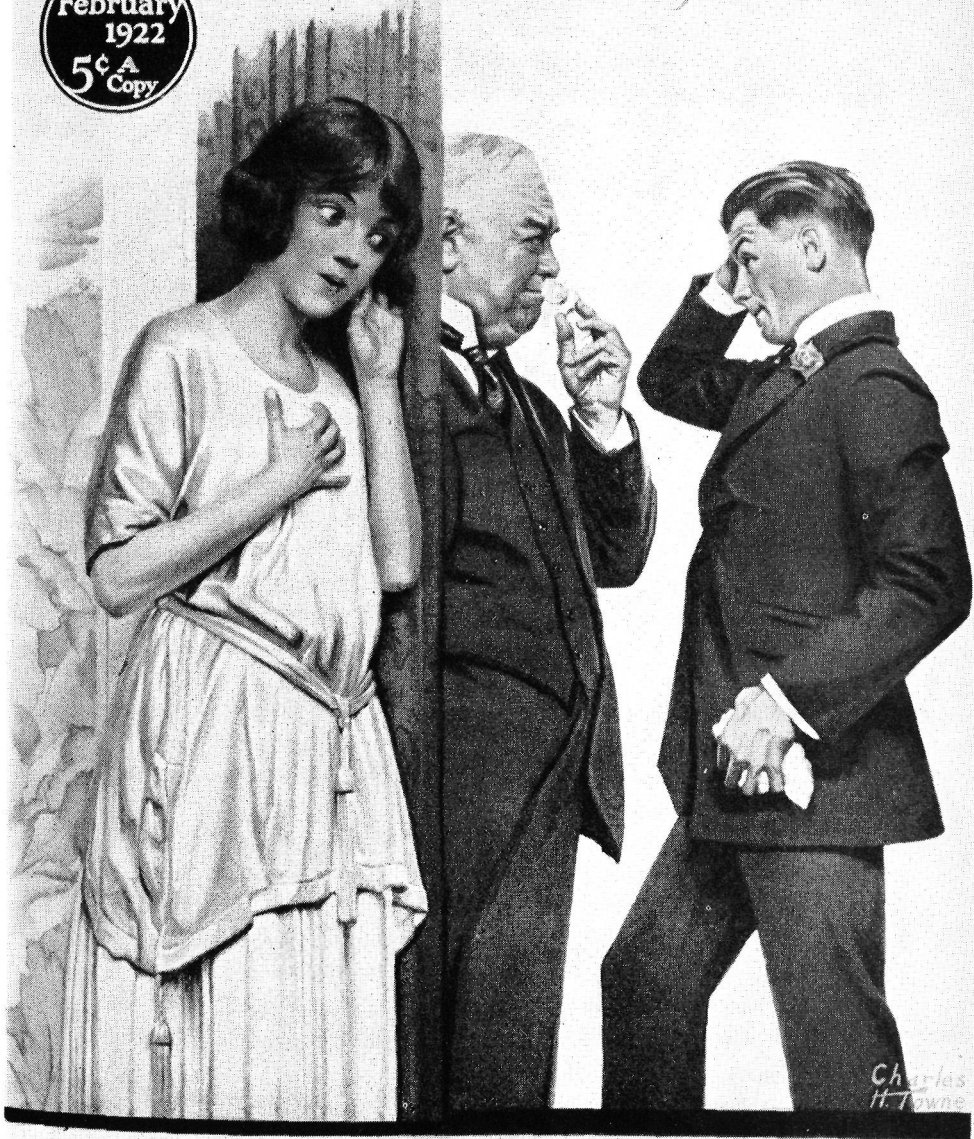
*Pictorial Review*, like *Delineator*, originated as an offshoot of a dress pattern business. It was founded in 1899 by William Paul

<sup>9</sup> Oscar Graeve, "Speaking of Delineator," *Quill*, 25 (January, 1937) 10.

# Farm & Fireside

The National Farm Magazine

February  
1922  
5¢ A  
Copy



Charles  
H. Towne

How Will You Do It?—See Page 1

Ahnelt, a German immigrant who set up his dress pattern business in the United States on a capital of thirteen dollars, a sum he symbolized by incorporating the figure thirteen in his trademark.

*Pictorial Review* dealt mainly in fashions until 1908, but then its editor, Arthur T. Vance, started attracting writers of good fiction away from the general magazines. In time, a number of stories from *Pictorial Review* were appearing in the collections of best short stories selected by Edward J. O'Brien, and a number of its serials were later appearing in book form, among them Donn Byrne's *Hangman's House*, Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*, Booth Tarkington's *Alice Adams*, as well as works by Emil Ludwig, Carl Sandburg, Gertrude Atherton, Joseph Conrad, and others.

Following the lead of *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Pictorial Review* adopted some special projects and engaged in some crusading. For a number of years it annually presented its Achievement Award of five thousand dollars to the American woman who had made the greatest contribution of the year to American culture. It was an early champion of woman's suffrage and of women's clubs. In 1937, after a survey of readers showed that they wanted frank discussions of medical problems, it ran a series on abortions, the menopause, syphilis, and even troubles of the prostate gland.

During the 1920's, *Pictorial Review* ranked among the top women's magazines in advertising revenue and in circulation. In 1920 its gross advertising revenues of \$6,908,000 put it fourth of all magazines in the United States in dollar volume of advertising and second in the women's field only to *Ladies' Home Journal*. In circulation, too, it was near the top. From 1922 until the magazine died, circulation never dropped below 2,000,000, and in 1929 it hit a high point of 2,511,000.

The founder of *Pictorial Review*, Ahnelt, sold it in January, 1932, to George S. Fowler, an advertising man who had been a vice president in the company since the preceding April, and Lee Ellmaker, formerly general manager of Macfadden Publications and onetime publisher of *Liberty*. About two and a half years later, William Randolph Hearst bought *Pictorial Review* as well as the Pictorial Review Pattern Company and Excella Patterns, subsidiaries of the magazine. Hearst is said to have acquired the

magazine from its printer and its paper supplier under an arrangement which allowed him to write off its back debts unless it showed a profit. The first issue of *Pictorial Review* under Hearst ownership was for January, 1935, and with it Herbert Mayes replaced Percy Waxman as editor.

Although circulation had stayed at more than 2,500,000 in 1930 and 1931, it had thereafter slipped to barely more than 2,000,000 in 1934, from which it moved up only slightly under Hearst ownership. When *Pictorial Review* took over *Delineator* in 1937, its circulation jumped to more than 3,000,000. But advertising revenues lagged, and in January, 1939, the Hearst organization killed *Pictorial Review*. It was the biggest magazine ever to die in the history of United States magazines. In 1938, the year before it died, circulation was more than 2,862,000; and on its books were an estimated \$1,000,000 worth of unfulfilled subscriptions.

Still another women's magazine that lost its separate identity if not its name was *Farmer's Wife*, which perennially turned up among magazines with circulations of a million or more in the twenties and thirties. The only magazine written and edited exclusively for farm women, a sort of rural *Delineator*, the magazine grew rapidly after Dr. Ella S. Webb, the missionary-trained sister of the publisher, Edward A. Webb, took over as editor early in the century. *Farmer's Wife* was published in St. Paul and had its greatest circulation in the Midwest and Great Lakes states. In the later 1930's it had annual revenues of \$1,200,000 and a circulation of 1,150,000. In 1939 the magazine was taken over by *Farm Journal* of Philadelphia, which supposedly wanted its readers in order to attract advertising for baby foods, cosmetics, and home appliances. *Farmer's Wife* lost its separate existence with the change in ownership and became a section in *Farm Journal*.

Apart from comic books, which first appeared in the 1930's, and apart from Sunday school papers, magazines for juveniles had a difficult time in the twentieth century. One by one the oldest of them died off until in 1955 only a sparse handful remained. The *Youth's Companion*, which had delighted children and their elders for more than a century, was merged in 1939 with *American Boy*; but as so often happened, the merger was its death, for the *American Boy* retained its own name and editorial policy until it in turn died in 1941. *St. Nicholas*, another perennial favorite,

languished in the thirties and died in the forties. This decline of magazines edited primarily for readers between the ages of, say, nine and sixteen was followed by a rise of publications for children between the ages of two and twelve—periodicals such as *Jack and Jill* of Curtis Publishing Company, *Humpty Dumpty's Magazine* and *Children's Digest* of the Parents' Magazine Press, Inc., and a number of twenty-five-cent story books which were sold in drugstores and supermarkets. Some of these publications began to appear in the thirties, but their boom seems to have been after World War II.

The magazines for juveniles had their heyday before radio and TV programs and Saturday afternoon movies made their play for youthful audiences; and, perhaps significantly, two of them folded shortly after comic books had begun to snowball to success, although they had run into troubles before then. A common explanation for the failure of magazines for juveniles is that children were not a good market for advertisers, therefore the publishers could count on little advertising support. That explanation does not seem invalidated by the number of radio programs for children in the thirties and afterwards, for such shows were usually sponsored by manufacturers of low-cost items such as breakfast foods, and their advertising no doubt reached their mass market at lower unit cost through radio than through magazines. Magazines for small children, such as *Jack and Jill* and others, did not depend on advertising for support.

*Youth's Companion* was founded in Boston in 1827 by Nathaniel Willis and his partner Asa Rand to entertain and instruct young people, to "warn against the ways of transgression," to encourage "virtue and piety"; and to that end, it served several generations a wholesome diet of outdoor adventure stories, historical articles, anecdotes, contests, travel articles, and editorials. Its editorial fare was often by well-known persons—Theodore Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington, Jack London, Grover Cleveland. Even Henry L. Mencken appeared in it with a short story in 1926, although perhaps somewhat to his chagrin. The editors discovered a manuscript which Mencken had sold to the magazine in 1900 when he was still a young reporter in Baltimore, and blowing the dust off this previously unpublished story, they ran it.

For years the *Youth's Companion* was famous for its premiums offered for new subscriptions, and its premium plan helped to push

circulation to about a half million in the 1890's and to slightly more than that in the years before World War I. Another reason for the large circulation of *Youth's Companion* may have been that its content appealed to the whole family, not to youth alone, and many persons continued to read the magazine long after they had reached adulthood.

After World War I, circulation began to decline, and by 1928 it was down to 250,000. In 1927, ostensibly to celebrate its hundredth anniversary, the magazine changed from weekly to monthly publication and enlarged itself. But the magazine lived only two years beyond the century mark. In August, 1929, its owners sold *Youth's Companion* to its biggest rival, *American Boy*. Its publisher explained that because juvenile magazines had a "thin market" it was inevitable that one of the two largest should take over the other.

The *American Boy* that absorbed the *Youth's Companion* was founded in 1899 as a quiet protest against the *Companion* and other reading matter for young people. When a ten-year-old boy named Willie Sprague was ill, he complained that the reading fare allowed to him was too sissified and too dull. With Willie in mind, his uncle, Griffin Ogden Ellis, designed a lively new magazine for boys; and Sprague Publications, Inc.—formed by Willie's father, W. C. Sprague, J. Cotner, Jr., and Ellis—began publishing it in Detroit in 1899. Ellis edited the *American Boy* for Willie, and after the real Willie died in World War I he edited for an imaginary high school sophomore he called Skeeter Bennett.

In 1929, when it took over the *Youth's Companion*, the *American Boy* was healthy. Its circulation was 360,000 and its advertising revenue was about \$750,000. But the depression hit it hard. Circulation slid only to 329,000 in 1933, but advertising revenues dropped to about \$200,000 and stayed there until the magazine died.

After forty years as editor, Ellis sold the *American Boy* in 1939 to Elmer P. Grierson, its business manager, whom he had picked many years earlier as his successor. A little more than a year later, in the summer of 1940, Grierson sold a half interest in the magazine to George F. Pierrot, who had joined the *American Boy* as assistant managing editor in 1922, had become managing editor two years later, and had held that position until 1936 when he resigned to devote full time to a lecture series he had formed.

The following spring Grierson and Pierrot tried to promote additional working capital of \$150,000. When they failed to raise it, Sprague Publications, Inc. went into bankruptcy, and the magazine published its last issue in July, 1941. Lack of advertising was given as the reason for its death.

At bankruptcy proceedings, the Curtis Publishing Company bought the *American Boy* subscription list for \$1,800, and James A. Humberstone, a former editor of a house organ for the Ford Motor Company, bought the good will and title. Humberstone sought to raise \$50,000 to resume publication, but the magazine never reappeared.

But the name *American Boy* lived on in other publications. Ted Kesting, editor of *Sports Afield*, acquired the title and merged it with his *Mark Trail*, a magazine of the outdoors for young people. In the spring of 1953, Kesting sold *American Boy-Mark Trail* to the publishers of *Open Road*, a boys' magazine begun by three young Harvard graduates in 1919. One of the three, Clayton Holt Ernst, resigned as an editor of *Youth's Companion* to help start the new publication. He and his partners, casting about for a title for their magazine, found one in a phrase from Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road." Ernst was editor of *Open Road* until his death in 1945. *Open Road* promoted correspondence between American boys and young people in foreign countries, and it sponsored several exchange trips for them during the summers. It started a Pioneers' Club in 1927 to encourage boys to learn about nature and to become woodsmen. In July 1953, the magazine became *American Boy-Open Road*. It suspended publication in October, 1954. George Hecht of *Parents'* magazine acquired the title but announced that publication would not be resumed for at least a year.

The same Roswell Smith who helped to start the *Scribner's* magazine that later became *Century* also established *St. Nicholas*, a monthly magazine for boys and girls. The first issue appeared in 1873, and the editor for the first thirty-two years was Mary Mapes Dodge, author of *Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates*.

*St. Nicholas* seems to have inspired a loyalty bordering on fanaticism in its young readers. May Lamberton Becker, a subscriber of *St. Nicholas* as a child and its editor in the early 1930's, once said that she had seen no piece of furniture as hard to pass as the bookcase full of bound volumes in her office: "Men and



THE **American**  
MAGAZINE

*December*  
35¢

Could YOU Answer the  
**\$64,000 QUESTION?**  
*by Hal March*

COMPLETE MYSTERY NOVEL BY  
**Mignon G. Eberhart**



EVERYTHING COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

women who came on business would stop short, search the shelves for the year when they used to 'take *St. Nicholas*,' pull out the time-worn volume and lose themselves in its pages. Famous authors whose first appearance in print had been in the *St. Nicholas* League for Young Contributors, founded in 1899, would turn to poems that won silver badges or names in its roll of honor. . . . Children as young as I was when first I came under its spell were enchanted by these volumes in just the same way."<sup>10</sup>

Well might *St. Nicholas* have enchanted children. Rudyard Kipling contributed his *Jungle Book* stories to it, Mark Twain his *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, and Frances Hodgson Burnett *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. Frank Stockton, associate editor for its first two years, was a regular contributor; other authors included Kate Douglas Wiggin, Mayne Reid, Louisa May Alcott—just about everyone with a reputation as a children's author. Young subscribers, too, were encouraged to send drawings and short bits of prose and verse for prizes. Youthful contributors who later became famous included Edna St. Vincent Millay, Robert Benchley, Ring Lardner, William Rose Beñet, Stephen Vincent Beñet, Rachel Field, William Faulkner, Sterling North, and Babette Deutsch.

In the reorganization that resulted in the renaming of *Scribner's* as *Century* in 1881, *St. Nicholas* passed from Scribner and Company to the Century Company, which published it until 1930. When the Century Company withdrew from magazine publishing in 1930, it sold *St. Nicholas* to the publishers of *Scholastic*, a fortnightly begun in 1920 for young people. In late 1934 title to the magazine was acquired by Roy Walker of the Educational Publishing Corporation, who wanted *St. Nicholas* as an adjunct to his magazine for teachers, *Grade Teacher*. Such old-time contributors and subscribers as Struthers Burt, Fannie Hurst, Burton Rascoe, and Henry Seidel Canby flocked to a cocktail party early in 1935 to celebrate the revival of *St. Nicholas* under Walker, who said he wanted to elevate the magazine to its old standards so that a new generation of children would grow up with really first rate prose, verse, and illustrations.

A few years later, however, the old *St. Nicholas* could not be recognized in the new one, which aimed at successively younger

<sup>10</sup> In Henry Steele Commager, editor, *The St. Nicholas Anthology* (New York, 1948), p. xvi.

readers as circulation declined. In 1939 the F. W. Woolworth chain arranged for distribution of *St. Nicholas*, by then edited for elementary school children, in 112 of its stores. Although the publisher of *St. Nicholas* was at first optimistic about the arrangement with Woolworth, he sold the magazine in March, 1940, to Mrs. J. David Stern, wife of the publisher of the *Philadelphia Record*, who had offered her financial help in its revival in 1935. Mrs. Stern's ambition was to recapture the glory of the days when Mary Mapes Dodge was editor. She announced that *St. Nicholas* would suspend publication until September, 1940. The war interfered with her plan to revive the magazine, however, and not until 1943 did it appear briefly under her auspices before it vanished completely.

Why did they die, those magazines of age and quality? No one really knows; there can be only guesses. If magazine men knew why some magazines prosper while others fail, they undoubtedly would be far more successful in prescribing the regimen, medicine, or surgical operations necessary for keeping their publications in good health. But even the reasons for success are elusive. Henry Luce once called together a group of his executives to help him explain why Time, Inc., had fared so well in the commercial world. After rejecting a dozen possible reasons that occurred to him, he asked, "Could it be because, as a group, we are more than average clever in some ways?" Slowly he studied each of the faces around the table. "No," he said sadly, shaking his head, "I'm sure *that* isn't why."<sup>11</sup>

Success and failure do seem related. In the rise and fall of magazines, one editor has seen a law of natural selection at work. William Nichols, editor of *This Week*, in a talk in 1952, noted that circulation and advertising figures show "a steady rhythm of birth, adaptation, and death among magazines" with major shifts occurring every twenty-five years, most recently in the twenties when *Time*, the *New Yorker*, and *Reader's Digest* were founded. Interesting as Nichols' thesis is, it is more descriptive than explanatory. There are, however, several possible general explanations, some of them closely interrelated, for magazine mortality.

One is that publishers were reluctant to alter their editorial formulas even when changing times and changing interests out-

<sup>11</sup> Eric Hodgins, *The Span of Time* (New York, 1946), p. 11.

moded them. Since no magazine could strike a balance of editorial ingredients that would hold its readers forever, the fortunate publishers were those whose editors anticipated changes in public taste and subtly adapted their publications to them without losing readers along the way. Some editors did just that for varying lengths of time. But editors are mortal, and they are fallible; even George Horace Lorimer finally lost touch with the readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*. More frequently than they anticipated change, magazines depended on their tried editorial patterns until too late. No doubt publishers found it difficult to believe that an editorial approach which had brought them success had finally lost its appeal. Instead of reworking their basic editorial formula, then, they sought to recapture readers by tinkering with incidentals—by sparking up the typography, for instance, or by redesigning the cover.

Even if a publisher recognized that his editorial approach was outmoded, he still had to discover a new formula at least as successful as his old one. Some publishers succeeded in doing so. Street and Smith survived at midcentury because it had continually killed off its weak magazines and introduced new ones more in keeping with popular taste. And as the next chapter will show, several publishing companies which retained the same magazines over the years changed their publications so thoroughly from time to time that only the names remained. Crowell-Collier's *Woman's Home Companion* of 1955 was a far different *Woman's Home Companion* from that of 1920; Curtis' *Saturday Evening Post* of 1955 was not the *Post* of the mid-thirties. Those magazines survived not only because their publishers scrapped worn-out editorial formulas but also because they were astute or lucky enough to hit upon successful new ones. But many publishers were not so fortunate. Several publishers whose magazines failed also completely abandoned their old editorial slants and sought new ones, but their publications succumbed while they were still groping for a successful new formula.

Many publishers, unlike Crowell-Collier and Curtis, lacked economic resources to keep their magazines afloat while they devised a new editorial approach. Some magazines undergoing editorial revision probably died for want of funds before their new policies gained reader and advertiser acceptance. Probably even more often, the risk of financial loss deterred the publisher from aban-

doing an old editorial formula that was slipping. Often his profit margin was narrow, and if by changing his content he lost more old readers than he gained new ones, his publication might well die. Better then to risk slow death than suicide.

Closely related to the reluctance of publishers to alter out-moded editorial formulas is a second probable reason for magazine mortality: the ease with which the new publisher could enter the industry. Many of the phenomenally successful companies established after World War I, as later chapters will show, were innovators. They introduced new types of magazines or brought fresh treatment to existing types, as Time, Inc., did with the news magazine and picture magazine and as the Reader's Digest Association did with the digest magazine. Their magazines were experiments that turned out successfully. The nature of the industry encouraged such experimentation. For in trying new ideas, the newcomer often risked less and had more to gain than established publishers. When readers grew weary of the *Literary Digest's* sometimes ponderous treatment of current events, for instance, its publishers would have been jeopardizing an investment of perhaps several million dollars if they had abandoned its basic editorial formula; for \$86,000 Briton Hadden and Henry Luce discovered a new way of reporting current events which contributed to the death of the *Digest*.

The smallness of their publishers' operations no doubt kept many magazines from surviving. True, many of the newcomers rapidly grew from small businesses into large ones. But many of the magazines that failed were the only publications of their publishers. They lacked several obvious advantages of the large publisher in the struggle for survival. Usually the large publisher owned more than one magazine, and in times of adversity his strong publications could support the weak ones. The large publisher could benefit from quantity buying and mass production. He had funds to attract the most popular artists and authors and to promote his magazines. After the thirties, he could better afford editorial research to learn the sort of content readers were interested in.

In short, then, some magazines may have fallen under two sorts of competition—that from small new publishers who were in closer touch with public tastes and interests, and that from large publishers who were better able to withstand the onslaught of the newcomer.

## *chapter 7* The Old Leaders That Survived

In the cycle of life and death in the magazine industry, a few major publishing companies that were born before or just after 1900 managed to survive. All about them, magazines which had once led in public favor merged or died, the former fate usually the equivalent of the latter. The old publishers withstood fierce competition; for in the twenties and after, a large number of new publishers entered the industry and rapidly emerged as leaders in circulation, revenue, and prestige.

At midcentury two of those latecomers, Time, Inc., and the Reader's Digest Association, towered above the magazine industry. But so did four old timers—Curtis, Crowell-Collier, McCall, and Hearst.

At least three of those old publishing companies had had their share of troubles. Curtis and Crowell-Collier had seen changing times make anachronisms of the once successful editorial formulas of their magazines. Their general weeklies were jarred by competition from radio and from such new entrants as *Liberty*, *Life*, and *Look*. Their women's magazines, trying to stay in the lead in an especially competitive branch of the industry, at times had shown signs of slipping. The McCall company had suffered a want of

revenue after World War I, before aggressive action built it into a huge publishing and printing organization.

How did those old publishing houses manage to survive—even to expand? For an answer to that question, let us examine their histories, their vicissitudes, their solutions to their problems.

In June, 1933, within a few days of his eighty-third birthday anniversary, Cyrus H. K. Curtis died peacefully at Lyndon, his estate near Philadelphia. He was second of a mighty triumvirate to die. Edward W. Bok, who had won for the *Ladies' Home Journal* the largest circulation of any magazine in the world, had been laid to rest three and a half years earlier in the bell tower of the sanctuary he had established at Iron Mountain, Florida. George Horace Lorimer, editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* in its early lean years and in its fattest and successor to Curtis as head of the Curtis magazine empire, survived his former employer by four and a half years. Then in October, 1937, less than a year after his retirement, he too died. And so, a few years apart, they all went, the publisher with the golden touch and his two successful editors. Together they had built the Curtis Publishing Company into a giant that for a time took in two out of every five dollars spent on national advertising in magazines, and in doing so they had contributed immensely to the development of the low-priced, mass-circulation periodical. Curtis had demonstrated more vividly than any other publisher the principle on which most large circulations of the twentieth century were based: that by selling a magazine for less than its cost of production, a publisher could become wealthy on the advertising which a large circulation attracted. Bok and Lorimer, editorial midwives at the birth of the national magazine in the late nineteenth century, as shown in Chapter 1, attracted audiences vaster than publishers had ever before dreamed possible.

The success of the Curtis Publishing Company probably resulted from a happy meeting of the times and the men. The company was established in the late nineteenth century when increased industrialization, changes in marketing, and the growth of advertising, among other things, made the times propitious for the magazine industry. The men complemented one another. Curtis' genius was on the business side, in publishing as distinct from editing; the brilliance of Bok and Lorimer was primarily in editing, although both men had a keen business sense. Curtis provided the

atmosphere in which Bok and Lorimer could best exercise their capabilities.

One quality that helped to make Curtis a successful publisher was his ability to sense the market for new publications. He did so with the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Detecting the interest in the women's page of his *Tribune and Farmer*, he overruled the wishes of his junior partner in expanding that department into an eight-page supplement which, under the editorship of Mrs. Curtis, was a popular success as the *Ladies' Home Journal* even before Bok became editor. The partner, who chose to stick with *Tribune and Farmer*, was out of business within a few months. Curtis also sensed the market for the *Saturday Evening Post*, although business associates and advertising men warned that it would break him and journalists told him that the day of the weekly was past. But Curtis was convinced that American men would buy a magazine edited for them, as the *Ladies' Home Journal* was edited for women. The *Saturday Evening Post* which he brought out—at a time when the businessman and industrialist were assuming importance in the American scene, and the public was interested in them—did not compete editorially with existing weekly magazines; and even in an era of inexpensive magazines, its five-cent price was, some observers thought, ruinously low. Curtis again sensed the market when he bought *Country Gentleman* in 1911. The few national farm magazines did not cover the business side of farming, he noted; yet farming, because of the agricultural colleges, was becoming even more businesslike and scientific. A business magazine for farmers could succeed, he thought, just as the *Post* had succeeded among businessmen.

Perhaps of even greater consequence to his company than his ability to pick markets was Curtis' recognition of the important part that advertising was to play in the American economy. The pioneer work done in market research by the Curtis Publishing Company was evidence of that recognition. The five-cent price of the *Post* was a gamble on the capacity of the weekly to attract a tremendous volume of advertising. Curtis himself had a profound faith in advertising. The day after the company treasurer complained that the *Saturday Evening Post* had lost \$800,000 and still showed few signs of making a profit, Curtis began a \$200,000 advertising campaign for the magazine. Once when a potential advertiser refused to listen to a Curtis advertising salesman, Curtis,





the story goes, bought a full-page advertisement in the *New York Sun* to get his sales message to the advertiser's attention.

Curtis had a rare faculty for choosing capable editors, then leaving them alone. Edward W. Bok once summed up Curtis' attitude toward his editors thusly: "The editor is the pivot. Get the right editor and you'll have the right magazine. Then it's only a selling proposition."<sup>1</sup> One of the few attempts Curtis ever made to interfere with Lorimer on the *Post* was to protest a short story. "My wife doesn't think it's a very good piece to be in the *Post*," Curtis remarked. Lorimer replied, "I'm not editing the *Saturday Evening Post* for your wife." Curtis said no more.<sup>2</sup> When Bok wanted to discuss sex in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, he realized that the magazine would lose advertising and at least a hundred thousand readers. He told Curtis so. Curtis advised him to run the articles anyway. When advertisers, subscribers, and friends put pressure on Curtis to stop the articles, he gave them all the same reply: "Go and talk to Mr. Bok about it. He is the editor."<sup>3</sup> Curtis treated Lorimer much the same way. "I take down the profits, but the *Post* really belongs to Lorimer," he once said. "I would no more think of telling him how to run it, what to print and what not to print, than I would think of telling Commodore Bennett how to run the *New York Herald*."<sup>4</sup>

The support Curtis gave his editors was material as well as moral. "Give him what he wants," he used to say. "A man can't work unless he has the tools." What his editors wanted, they got. He approved Bok's request for new four-color printing presses costing \$800,000 without even bothering to read the statement about them that Bok had prepared for him.<sup>5</sup>

Growing rapidly after 1900, especially after 1908, the Curtis Publishing Company had one of the largest gross incomes of any magazine publishing house by World War I. During the twenties, the company grew more and more prosperous. Obviously its success was not the result of the editorial staff alone. The advertising and research departments shared credit for the pages of advertising that made Curtis magazines valuable properties. The company

1 Edward W. Bok, *A Man from Maine* (New York, 1923), p. 169.

2 John Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Garden City, 1948), p. 25.

3 Bok, pp. 167-68.

4 Tebbel, p. 40.

5 Bok, pp. 65, 171.

acquired its own organizations for selling its magazines as well as those of other publishers and for distributing them to newsstands. Field workers with well-developed sales talks went from door to door across the United States selling subscriptions to householders, and until World War II no magazine in the nation had as many boy salesmen as the *Post*.

Although Bok resigned in 1919 after thirty years as editor and turned the *Ladies' Home Journal* over to Barton W. Currie, the magazine continued to lead all other women's magazines in advertising and circulation for most of the twenties. The *Saturday Evening Post*, still untouched by competition from radio, the major weekly magazine in the United States, a magazine read by women now as well as by men, grew even more prosperous under Lorimer, who, as Wesley W. Stout remarked, "set out to interpret America to itself, always readably, but constructively."

The America he interpreted was an average middle-class America, for that was his audience. On his covers, he gave it Norman Rockwell; in fiction, he gave it Harry Leon Wilson, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Emerson Hough, and Octavus Roy Cohen; in his editorials, he gave it conservatism and a strong admiration for material success; in articles, he gave it a conservative and sometimes prolix discussion of its problems, not always its transitory ones. That was the essence of the *Post*, but there were important breaks with that pattern. For instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose writing scarcely represented the middle-class complacency of the twenties, contributed almost seventy stories to the *Post*, virtually all of them in Lorimer's time, and they were by no means all pot-boilers. "Babylon Revisited" and "Family in the Wind," sometimes regarded as two of his finest stories, were published in the *Post* in 1931 and 1932 respectively. The *Post* under Lorimer was the first mass circulation magazine to publish the stories of William Faulkner, and for more than a decade the only one. But the *Post* seldom went far beyond the tastes of the millions who settled in an easy chair with it each Thursday evening. Lorimer's formula, well in tune with his audience, was a successful one.

Its success, like that of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, was reflected in the ledgers of the company. In 1925 Curtis stockholders voted themselves one of the largest stock dividends ever declared when they approved a plan to increase the preferred stock from 200,000 to 900,000 shares, worth \$70,000,000, and to distribute them

among the holders of the 900,000 shares of common stock outstanding. The peak earnings came in 1929. In that year the company reported a net of \$21,534,000, the highest that any publishing enterprise had ever achieved up until then.

The thirties brought relatively hard times to the Curtis Publishing Company. Compared with other publishers, Curtis still did well, but compared with the company's prosperity since World War I, its showing throughout the thirties was poor. Net income, for instance, dropped from \$19,121,000 in 1930 to \$5,568,000 in 1932 and \$5,906,000 in 1934.

There were a number of reasons for the slump. First, of course, the depression curtailed expenditures on national advertising in magazines generally; the dollar volume in 1933 was roughly half of what it had been in 1929, and Curtis magazines suffered with the rest. Second, network radio had emerged as a potent competitor for the dollars that advertisers were spending. While magazine advertising was falling, the dollar volume of advertising on radio networks was growing; it rose from about \$19,000,000 in 1929 to \$33,000,000 in 1933, and it climbed steadily thereafter. The weekly *Saturday Evening Post* with its large circulation certainly must have been affected. Third, while the *Post* had once stood alone as a major weekly advertising medium, other weekly magazines of general interest—*Collier's*, *Liberty*, and after 1936, *Life*—had begun to cut into its field. It was probably newsstand competition from *Collier's* and *Liberty*, which dated their issues a week in advance, that caused the *Post* in 1931 to change its publication date from Thursday to Tuesday and thus gain an extra two sales days a week.

Then, too, in the last years before his death in 1933, Cyrus Curtis had left the affairs of his magazines to others. As early as 1926, he had remarked, "I'm not giving a thought to my magazines now. They are in capable hands."<sup>6</sup> He played a decreasing part in the operations of his company. For a time he peacefully sailed the Atlantic coast in his yacht *Lyndonia* and summered at Camden, Maine; but, suffering from a heart ailment, he became less and less active.

Curtis had once remarked, "When a man feels he can't leave the organization he has built up, it proves him to be a poor organ-

<sup>6</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 59 (July 10, 1926) 11.

izer."<sup>7</sup> There was nothing wrong with the Curtis organization, as such, in the thirties; but its magazines were growing out of touch with the times. The *Ladies' Home Journal* had fallen into the rut that many another women's magazine had fallen into. The *Saturday Evening Post* was still living in the world of yesterday in which it had grown to glory. The times were changing, but the Curtis magazines did not change with them. George Horace Lorimer, president of the company, refused to accept the change.

Lorimer became president of the Curtis Publishing Company in 1932, the year that Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States. Almost from the start, Lorimer opposed Roosevelt and his New Deal. In the winter of 1933, he told a friend, "I'll fight this New Deal if it's the last thing I ever do."<sup>8</sup> Fighting the New Deal continually, he changed the *Post* from an organ of entertainment and enlightenment into a weapon of political warfare; and in a sense, it was the last thing he ever did, for the endorsement of the New Deal at the polls in 1936 left him crushed and bewildered, a stranger in a land he loved and had understood so well for more than three decades. He had not expected Landon to win, although he had supported him; but he had thought that in opposing the New Deal he had spoken for the majority of voters. In the 1936 election, the people turned their backs on all he had battled for; he realized that somewhere America had turned a corner that he had missed and that his world was ended. Two months after the elections, on January 1, 1937, he resigned from Curtis to live a more leisurely life. He died October 27, 1939.

In 1934, to offset rumors that its attacks on the New Deal were costing it readers, the *Post* took full-page newspaper advertisements to report that its sales were increasing because readers "honored a magazine . . . that has the courage of its convictions." In truth, however, its conservatism seems to have cost the *Post* dearly. For years, many readers had regarded its political discussions as authoritative. Nine presidents of the United States had written for it, and Lorimer had been a friend of some of them. When the *Post* lost touch with the mood of the American people in the thirties, then, its lapse was underscored; its prestige suffered. Moreover, Lorimer's conservatism extended beyond politics

<sup>7</sup> Bok, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Tebbel, pp. 198-99.

into the whole character of the magazine. The *Post* still used the outmoded headline type that had been designed for it in 1904, and with the type went antiquated layouts. The articles were often boringly long. The magazine was stuffy, and its anachronisms were made all the more striking by the lively make-up and content of its major competitors—*Life*, for example.

It took more than one man to replace Lorimer. Walter D. Fuller became president. Wesley W. Stout, who had been on the staff since 1922, took the job that Lorimer had trained him for, the editorship of the *Post*. Although he introduced a few minor changes such as photographic covers, a taboo under Lorimer, Stout produced a *Post* scarcely distinguishable from his predecessor's. A continuation of Lorimer's editorial formula evidently was not the prescription for the ailing magazine, for its gross advertising revenues dropped from \$26,602,000 in Stout's first year as editor to \$22,341,000 in his second. For five years, Stout continued as editor. Then, in March, 1942, at odds with the management, he resigned. The public explanations of his resignation were vague. Stout himself said, "There was not one point of disagreement but several." Walter D. Fuller said, "It has been speculated that our differences rose from political viewpoints. That was not the case."<sup>9</sup> A probable reason, advanced in the advertising trade press, was that management had pressured Stout to do something about the threat of *Life*, by then a serious competitor of the *Post* in circulation and advertising, a difficult task for any editor who had worked for fourteen years with Lorimer as closely as Stout had.

Changes came rapidly to the *Post* after Ben Hibbs was transferred to its editorship from the editorship of *Country Gentleman*. For the first time in forty-five years, the *Post* appeared without Benjamin Franklin's picture on the cover, perhaps a symbolic break with the past. The old-fashioned typography and layouts disappeared. The amount of fiction decreased, the amount of non-fiction rose. And the average length of the articles dropped nearly 30 per cent—from 5,825 words to 4,217—between 1941 and 1945, and the trend toward brevity continued. The subjects those words dealt with, especially after the war, were lighter than those that Lorimer's *Post* had usually carried. By broadening the editorial

<sup>9</sup> *Time*, 34 (Mar. 23, 1942) 40.

base of the *Post*, Hibbs aimed at increasing the number of young persons in its audience, a move that offered new markets to the advertising and circulation departments. If Lorimer in his editing had relied upon empathy with his readers, Hibbs relied on empathy plus research; for twenty-six times a year readers were polled on their reading preferences, and Hibbs used the results in getting out his magazine, as for example, in inaugurating a series about "Cities of America," which the staff first vetoed as having too limited an appeal. The promotion department, which moved into new quarters in 1946 because of its expansion in the preceding two years, had a budget of \$2,500,000 for advertising the magazine.

Circulation and advertising responded to the changes in the *Post*, although wartime shortages, both of paper and of the goods usually advertised in the *Post*, no doubt kept the magazine from gaining ground as rapidly as it might have. During the war, circulation did not increase greatly, but after 1945 it gained rapidly and in the winter of 1947 climbed to more than four million. After the war, advertising revenues also inarched steadily past the records of Lorimer's best years. In 1955 the *Post* grossed \$83,731,000, about \$30,585,000 over Lorimer's best yearly gross.

Revitalization of the *Ladies' Home Journal* had come earlier than that of the *Saturday Evening Post*. After Bok left it, the magazine eventually fell into a steady decline, and none of the three editors who followed him could pull it out. The *Journal* achieved such minor triumphs as getting exclusive rights to publish the latest fashions of seventeen Paris designers, a scoop which failed to stir its competitors, although it may have reminded them of Bok's campaign, years earlier, to cause American women to spurn French fashions for American designs. But the middle-aged *Journal* had settled down to an editorial formula of fiction and service articles which did little to set it apart from other women's magazines; and in the late twenties and early thirties, its circulation had settled down to about two and a half million. Even before the depression its advertising had dropped slightly, and after the crash of 1929, revenues plunged abruptly. From a peak of \$16,627,000 in 1929, gross advertising revenue fell to a low of \$7,242,000 in 1935.

In 1935 Lorimer put the *Journal* under the editorship of the husband-and-wife team that rescued it, Bruce and Beatrice Black-

mar Gould. Classmates at the State University of Iowa, they had married in 1923, had worked on New York newspapers, and had collaborated on a successful Broadway play. For some time Lorimer had had his eye on Bruce Gould, then a staff member of the *Saturday Evening Post*, a man so independent in his thinking and so frequently in disagreement with his editor that Lorimer had observed, "Bruce Gould isn't just an associate editor—he's an editor."<sup>10</sup> When Lorimer suggested the joint editorship, Mrs. Gould accepted reluctantly because of her duties as wife and mother, but she did consent to spend three days a week at the office.

The Goulds, without forsaking the home-service features which formed the backbone of the women's magazines, nevertheless insisted that "a woman's world is a good deal broader than the kitchen." They gave the *Journal* some of the freshness and frankness it had had under Bok. In 1937, in article and in short story, they revived the campaign against venereal disease that Bok had waged thirty-two years earlier. They discussed birth control, and they ran articles about the sexual problems of teen-agers. They polled their readers on just causes of divorce, and in their columns they counseled the unhappily wed. Public health, mental illness, alcoholism, slum clearance, American architecture—they gave their readers articles about such subjects, along with Henry Stimson's memoirs, Joseph Stilwell's diary, and Eleanor Roosevelt's autobiography. They inaugurated a seemingly interminable series on "How America Lives" in which they reported on the home lives, domestic problems, budgets, and similar personal affairs of "typical" American families.

The *Journal* responded to their touch. In 1941 the company took full-page advertisements in metropolitan newspapers to trumpet the *Journal's* circulation of 4,000,000, a record held previously by only the *Reader's Digest*. In 1955 it still led all other women's magazines with a circulation of 4,970,000; the closest to it was *McCall's* with 4,641,000. Nor could other women's magazines pace it in advertising volume. In 1947, its peak year, it grossed \$25,627,000 in advertising, more than the combined grosses of its competitors *Good Housekeeping* and *McCall's*. Advertising revenues in 1955 had fallen to \$23,588,000—still, how-

<sup>10</sup> Tebbel, pp. 212-13.



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SEPT. 1902.

# McCALL'S MAGAZINE

FASHIONS



*The McCALL Co. Publishers*  
*113-115-117 West 31<sup>st</sup> St. New York*

5 CENTS A COPY

50 CENTS A YEAR.

ever, some \$6,539,000 more than those of *Good Housekeeping* and \$8,271,000 more than those of *McCall's*.

In the forties and fifties the Curtis Publishing Company seemed determined not to fall into another slump like the one of the thirties. During the forties and early fifties, it had rebuilt its gross income to figures which compared favorably with those of earlier days, although its net in 1954 was less than a fourth of what it was in 1929, when production costs were not as high and when taxes took a smaller share. Since 1938 the company had started or acquired several new magazines and had experimented with others, an indication that Curtis intended to avoid the inertia which had characterized it in the thirties.

First of the new publications was *Jack and Jill*, a monthly magazine without advertising, for children under ten. Begun as an experiment in November, 1938, with a press run of 40,000, *Jack and Jill* flourished under its editor, Ada Campbell Rose, and in the mid-fifties its circulation was 726,000.

A second experiment undertaken by Curtis after World War II did not come off. It was *Magazine X*, which trade gossip said would be a slick picture magazine seeking the largest readership in the United States, a competitor of *Life* and *Look*. After some two years of experimentation, Curtis suspended work on the project in March, 1947, and disbanded its staff of thirty.

Some of the staff members of *Magazine X* went to *Holiday*, the second new Curtis magazine, which had made its debut, amidst a fanfare of promotion, with its issue of March, 1946. A glossy, colorful, picture-filled travel magazine selling for fifty cents a copy, *Holiday* quickly rolled up a sale of 450,000 copies. Although advertising in it had reportedly been sold out a year in advance before the first issue appeared, President Walter D. Fuller said at the outset that he did not expect the magazine to make money for five years. Nor did it. Curtis poured money into it. When newsstand sales faltered a few months after the first issue, the original editor was replaced by Ted Patrick, editor of *Magazine X*. With the issue of January, 1948, *Holiday* began to accept liquor advertising, the first Curtis publication ever to do so. Transformed by Patrick, *Holiday* began to gain the acceptance of readers and advertisers. On its fifth birthday, the company announced, it was a "definite asset" which had "developed into an even more important publishing property" than Curtis

had hoped for.<sup>11</sup> In 1955, when its circulation was 857,000, it carried \$5,854,000 worth of advertising.

In 1954, when *Holiday* was well established, Curtis bought a 60 per cent interest in *Science and Mechanics*, a magazine for the hobbyist and home craftsman, and in the same year laid plans for a program guide for the televiewer. Production costs of *TV Program Week* exceeded original estimates, however, according to the company, and it suspended the publication in 1955 after the circulation of its first eight issues declined precipitously. In January, 1955, the company announced that it had formed a separate corporation to publish *Bride-To-Be*, a dollar-a-copy quarterly for the young bride, which first appeared the following summer.

Besides adding to its holdings, Curtis disposed of one of its old properties in June, 1955. For years *Country Gentleman* had competed with *Farm Journal* for top position as one of the two truly national farm magazines in the United States, but in the forties and fifties it began to fall behind. From 1948 on, its advertising dropped off steadily, although it was still considerably higher than in prewar years. With the issue of January, 1955, Curtis changed the name of *Country Gentleman* to *Better Farming* because the new title, it said, more nearly represented the mission of the magazine. Five months later, Curtis sold *Country Gentleman* to its old rival *Farm Journal*. The new publishers, instead of adding the total circulation to *Farm Journal*, planned to sort subscribers into farm and small town but non-farm. The former they planned to add to the *Farm Journal* roster, the latter to that of *Town Journal*.

In commenting on the sale, Robert E. MacNeal, president of Curtis, said, "Aside from the fact that *Farm Journal* made us a very attractive offer, we see definite advantages in concentrating our efforts on the other magazines of the Curtis line, in which newsstand sales are an important factor. . . . We believe that the change will result in more effective utilization of resources and facilities essential to the strength of our company position."<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the sale was announced, the Federal Trade Commission filed a complaint under the Clayton Anti-trust Act on the grounds that the merger of the two magazines would "lessen competition" and "tend to create monopoly" by giving *Farm*

<sup>11</sup> *Tide*, 25 (Mar. 2, 1951) 44.

<sup>12</sup> *Advertising Age*, 26 (June 13, 1955) 58.

*Journal* about 51 per cent of the total net paid circulation among the six largest competitors in the farm magazine field. In September, the circuit court of appeals in Philadelphia denied the F.T.C.'s petition for an injunction to prevent the merger.

Even the Curtis Publishing Company, for years the wealthiest of publishers and owner of the wealthiest of magazines, was not invulnerable merely because of its size. Its magazines, like those of smaller publishers, stagnated as their content lost harmony with the times and as editors lost their touch; and when its publications went into decline, Curtis had to find ways of recapturing readers and advertisers. True, its size gave it advantages over small publishers. It had reserves to withstand losses of revenue, and it could afford expensive research to find out what readers wanted and to give it to them, as it did after 1940. But the growing audience for magazines, the increasing sums spent on advertising, and the relatively small capital needed to launch a new magazine all enabled new investors to corner a part of the market that Curtis had once had largely to itself.

One of the publishers which, with Curtis, long dominated certain markets was the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company. Crowell-Collier and Curtis illustrate a characteristic of magazine publishing, its imitativeness. In 1883 Curtis pioneered in developing the women's magazine; in 1906 the company that was to become Crowell-Collier entered the market by buying *Woman's Home Companion*. In 1893 Curtis balanced its magazine for women with one for men, *Saturday Evening Post*; and in 1911 Crowell-Collier balanced its *Woman's Home Companion* with a magazine for men, the *American*, which like the *Post* made success a major editorial theme. From a magazine for men, the *Post* became a general weekly; in 1911 Crowell-Collier bought *Collier's*, a general weekly. In 1911, Curtis entered the farm market with *Country Gentlemen*; since 1906, Crowell-Collier had had a farm magazine, *Farm and Fireside*. The publications of Crowell-Collier paralleled those of Curtis, and so did some of the difficulties it encountered.

Although its individual magazines existed before the turn of the century, the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company was built up after 1900 by Joseph Palmer Knapp, certainly the least known outside of the magazine industry of all major publishers. When he died in early 1951 at the age of eighty-six, he was not listed in *Who's Who*, and the *New York Times* gave him but a few short

paragraphs of obituary. Yet he controlled a publishing empire that included the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company with its three mass circulation magazines and its book publishing activities; the United Newspaper Magazine Corporation, which published *This Week*, the magazine supplement for Sunday newspapers; and Alco-Gravure, the world's largest rotogravure printer. For years he also had been a director of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which his father had helped to found. His fortune was estimated to be as much as \$100,000,000.

Born in Brooklyn, Joseph Palmer Knapp was the son of Caroline Knapp, a composer of hymns for the Methodist church, and Joseph Fairchild Knapp, a printer who became the second president of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and its largest stockholder when it was still a stock company. Young Knapp left Columbia College after his freshman year to work for his father's printing firm at the wages of an apprentice—five dollars a week, of which three dollars went to the Methodist church, according to one account.<sup>13</sup>

Noticing that salesmen made the best living, Knapp asked his father if he could sell printing on commission. His father agreed only on the condition that the young man continue his job as apprentice printer, so Knapp did his selling during his lunch hours and after work. One noon he called on James B. Duke, who was later to become one of the chief founders of the American Tobacco Company. Duke was so pleased to find someone else who worked during the lunch hour that he became one of Knapp's best customers and closest friends.

As a salesman Knapp prospered—so much so that his father worried over his large income. To keep his son's cash income from growing too large, the elder Knapp began paying him off in stock in the company as well as in cash. The father, as self-protection, had the option of buying back his son's stock; the agreement provided that in the unlikely event that the son did not wish to sell, he could instead buy his father's stock. After a disagreement during which his father sought to enforce their agreement, young Knapp did something for which his father never forgave him: he borrowed enough money on his own stock to buy out his father's printing business.

13 *Tide*, 25 (Feb. 9, 1951) 48.

Over the years, Knapp expanded his printing business. He founded the American Lithographic Company, which, except for the Alco-Gravure division, he sold in 1929. He also helped to develop improvements in color printing. As a printer, he gave Edward Bok his start as editor. Bok, a boy at the time, got the idea of printing biographies on the backs of illustrated cards given away with cigarettes. One lunch hour he called on Knapp, who was then doing the printing for the tobacco company, and explained his idea. Knapp offered him ten dollars each for hundred-word biographies of a hundred famous Americans. When the first series was done, Knapp ordered a second and a third; and Bok, unable to supply copy fast enough by himself, hired friends to write the sketches for five dollars and edited their work.

From printing, Knapp branched into publishing. For a time, with his friend James B. Duke, he published a daily newspaper in New York City. In 1903 he started one of the first of the magazine supplements for Sunday newspapers; and eleven years later, when competing supplements began appearing, he converted it into a three-cent weekly magazine, *Every Week*, which died from acute paper shortage during World War I.

As Knapp's printing concern grew into a mammoth factory, he looked around for printing orders to keep his presses busy. In 1906, for \$750,000, he bought control of two promising magazines from their founder, John Crowell of Springfield, Ohio, who had decided that they were growing too large for his tastes. One of them was *Farm and Fireside*, the other *Woman's Home Companion*.

A printer, an inventor, and then publisher of a house organ for a farm implement manufacturer in Louisville, Kentucky, John Crowell was twenty-seven years old when he went to Springfield, Ohio, in 1877, to produce *Farm and Fireside* as a house organ for Phineas P. Mast and Company, farm implement makers. The house organ became so popular that Crowell, Mast, and Mast's nephew, Thomas Kirkpatrick, set up an independent company to publish it and began selling subscriptions to it. In 1885 the company added a second magazine, the *Ladies' Home Companion*, renamed the *Woman's Home Companion* in 1897, which grew out of the great interest in the women's page of *Farm and Fireside*, just as Cyrus Curtis' *Ladies' Home Journal* grew out of the women's page of his *Tribune and Farmer*. Both magazines were

prospering when Crowell, no longer able to manage them comfortably, sold out his interest to Knapp and Knapp's friends, Samuel Untermyer and Thomas W. Lamont, later president of J. P. Morgan and Company. Knapp became the majority stockholder, and he set the policies.

In 1911, under Knapp, the Crowell Publishing Company added the *American Magazine*, a descendant of the *Popular Monthly* that Frank Leslie started in the 1870's. A group of muckrakers who had become disenchanted with the policies of S. S. McClure, among them Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens, and Ida Tarbell, had taken over the *American* in 1906, when McClure's partner John S. Phillips organized the Phillips Publishing Company, bought the magazine, and began almost a decade as its editor. In 1911 Knapp bought the *American* for \$40,000 in cash and \$334,000 in preferred stock in the Crowell Publishing Company. Phillips stayed on as editor until his resignation in 1915.

Next, in 1919, Knapp's Crowell Publishing Company bought *Collier's*, which had had its day as a muckraking journal but which had fallen into decay. *Collier's* had begun publication in 1888 as *Once-a-Week*, the product of Peter Fenelon Collier, an Irishman who had prospered in America by selling books on the installment plan. A premium for persons who bought books from the Collier company, the magazine for a number of years depended for its circulation on the sale of books. Its founder rechristened it *Collier's* in 1896 and left management of it to his son, Robert J. Collier.

Under Norman Hapgood, its editor from 1902 to 1912, *Collier's* achieved a certain editorial distinction. Finley Peter Dunne wrote for it, Mark Sullivan joined its staff, and its artists under contract included Maxfield Parrish, Frederic Remington, and Charles Dana Gibson, whom it once paid \$104,000 for fifty-two double-page spreads. Its circulation moved upward—from 170,000 in 1900 to 642,000 in 1914.

Robert J. Collier was poorly equipped, in training and personality, to manage the affairs of the large company, which he took over after his father's death. For the first time in the history of the company, he borrowed money, and bankers and auditors began checking up on the business to protect the loan. Hapgood, worried that the invasion by business interests would mean the end of the editorial independence of *Collier's*, left the editorship

in 1912 after a disagreement with Robert Collier over policy. Collier himself edited the magazine until 1914; then Mark Sullivan edited it until 1917; and Finley Peter Dunne carried on until 1919. But the magazine's affairs were confused and its health weak.

The company was in a chaotic state when Robert J. Collier died in 1918. Then Joseph Palmer Knapp moved in. He did so at the urging of Thomas H. Beck, a onetime soap salesman who had been sales manager of *Collier's* before he joined the Crowell Publishing Company and in a short time worked up to a vice-presidency. For settling its debts, at a cost of about \$1,750,000, Knapp got control of the Collier business. His publishing house continued as the Crowell Publishing Company, for a time. In June, 1934, P. F. Collier and Son Company was merged with Crowell, and from 1939 on the firm was known as Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.

By 1919, then, Knapp's company had acquired the magazines that put it among the major publishers—*American*, *Collier's*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Farm and Fireside*, the last of which was renamed *Country Home* in 1929 and suspended in 1939. For a decade the company published still another magazine, the *Mentor*, which it never tried to commercialize. The *Mentor* was founded before World War I by William A. Moffat, a former publishing executive, to give readers authoritative information from specialists. Each issue of the magazine was devoted to a single topic. The specialists whom Moffat called on included Luther Burbank, Dan Beard, Roger Babson, Augustus Thomas, and Fritz Kreisler. Crowell-Collier bought the magazine in 1920; and although its circulation climbed to 100,000, it was scarcely a commercial success when compared with the company's other publications. In 1929, after Moffat retired, Hugh A. Leamy, a former associate editor of *Collier's*, took over the editorship, spruced up the pages of the magazine, and abandoned its policy of a separate theme for each issue. But Crowell-Collier had become a mass-producer of magazines, and its executives thought that the *Mentor* would fare better under a smaller publisher. In April, 1930, the company sold the *Mentor* to George R. Martin of the World Traveler Magazine Corporation, who took it over with the June issue.

The second magazine that Crowell-Collier disposed of was *Country Home*, born out of the *Farm and Fireside* which Knapp





# McCall's

September 1955  
 25 cents



**WIN**  
 a new kitchen  
 enter our contest  
 see page 88

The incredible  
 life of  
*Harriet Hubbard Ayer*  
 The mystery that shocked the nation

The angry women  
 of Phenix City

acquired with *Woman's Home Companion*. *Farm and Fireside* had grown steadily. Its circulation climbed from 600,000 in 1915 to 1,237,000 in 1927, when its advertising income was \$990,000. But in 1929, although there had been no serious drop in advertising, production costs were eating up profits. The publishers weighed the possibilities of killing off the magazine, of selling it, or of revamping it. Deciding to revamp it, they gave it a new editor and a new name, *Country Home*. They brightened it up with coated paper and a four-color cover. They converted it from a strictly farm magazine into a "magazine of home, garden, and farm."

By 1937, with a gross advertising revenue of \$1,313,000, *Country Home* was the only large farm magazine that had surpassed its peak revenues of 1928 and 1929. Yet it had a hard time breaking even. In late 1939, the company suspended publication of *Country Home*, then third in circulation and sixth in advertising revenue among farm publications, for the same reason that Curtis got rid of *Country Gentleman* sixteen years later: to concentrate in more profitable and promising fields.

Not only was Crowell-Collier a major publisher of magazines; it also was a major publisher and distributor of books, and it had an affiliation with a major Sunday newspaper supplement. *This Week*, the magazine supplement for newspapers, was not a Crowell-Collier publication, but it was closely related to Crowell-Collier through Publications Corporation, the company through which Joseph Palmer Knapp operated his publishing and printing empire. The interlocking of Knapp's various publishing interests at the top level in 1950 was fairly complex. Knapp himself was chairman of the board of Publications Corporation, and his son was one of the directors. Also a director of Publications Corporation was Thomas H. Beck, who before his death in 1951 was chairman of Crowell-Collier, a position Knapp himself once had held. Chairman of the finance committee of Publications Corporation was Albert E. Winger, president of Crowell-Collier. Chairman of the executive committee of Publications Corporation and a director of Crowell-Collier was John Sterling of the United Newspaper Magazine Corporation, the organization which published *This Week*. Thomas Cathcart, a former editor of Crowell-Collier's *Country Home*, was a vice-president of *This Week*.

*This Week* made its debut in February, 1935, when it was carried by twenty-one metropolitan newspapers with a combined cir-

ulation of 4,162,000. In the next twenty years, the supplement had an impressive growth. By 1955 circulation had risen to 11,143,000. The dollar volume of advertising jumped from \$1,229,000 in 1935 to \$31,658,000 in 1955. Editor of *This Week* from 1935 to 1943 was Mrs. William Brown Meloney, a former editor of *Women's Magazine* and *Delineator*. For eight years before becoming editor of *This Week*, she had edited the Sunday magazine of the New York *Herald Tribune*, the title and format of which were taken over by *This Week*. She was succeeded by William I. Nichols, a former editor of *Sunset* magazine, after her resignation because of ill health in 1943.

Under Knapp, the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company was unique among major publishers in that it was built entirely on magazines that had been founded by others; in forty-five years, it never launched a new magazine of its own, although for a time it planned to bring out one right after World War II. This is not to say, however, that the company took over going publications which continued on their own momentum; it did not. Each of the magazines it took over was born again at least once in the Crowell-Collier offices, and the infants sometimes needed a good deal of pampering.

Nor did the publications hold fast to a profitable course once they were put on it. They were in their worst difficulties two years after the deaths of Knapp and Beck. In 1953 all of the Crowell-Collier magazines were losing money, and the company ended the year with a deficit of \$4,349,000 as contrasted with a net income of \$6,539,000 in 1946. Stock in the company, which had sold for \$65 in 1946, was selling for \$4.50 in the summer of 1953.

To pull the magazines out of their trouble, the company installed Paul C. Smith as its president in December, 1953. Smith had come to the company as a vice president eight months earlier to analyze its difficulties. Before that, he had been general manager of the San Francisco *Chronicle* for seventeen years. The histories of the magazines he had to deal with provide a study in the ups and downs of publishing.

When Knapp bought it, *Collier's* was so sickly senile that for a long time it seemed kinder to kill it than to nurse it along. Weak to begin with, it had suffered through, in quick succession, a paper shortage, a general strike of printers, and the hard times of 1920. For four consecutive weeks, it failed to appear. Advertising reve-

nues dropped from \$4,806,000 in 1920 to \$960,000 in 1922, a year in which the *Saturday Evening Post* carried more than \$28,000,000 in advertising. For a half-dozen years, *Collier's* moped along under three different editors whose tenure seemed so insecure that George Creel, refusing to wait twenty minutes for an appointment with one, explained, "I don't know who the editor will be twenty minutes from now."<sup>14</sup>

But Thomas H. Beck, who had helped negotiate its purchase, kept trying to get the weekly on its feet; and in 1925 the magazine got a new editor, William L. Chenery, who reorganized the staff and who helped to evolve the editorial pattern that moved *Collier's* up into a profitable major weekly. To his staff Chenery added a lively crew including Walter Davenport, John T. Flynn, W. B. Courtney, and Kyle Crichton. Indeed, the crew was so high spirited that it once moved Chenery to step from his office and remark, "Gentlemen, may I suggest that the staff get drunk in shifts?"<sup>15</sup>

The new spirit began showing itself in the editorial content. *Collier's* opened 1925 with a serial, "Bobbed Hair," begun by Carolyn Wells and continued by nineteen other authors, including Alexander Woollcott, Dorothy Parker, Louis Bromfield, Elsie Janis, Sophie Kerr, Kermit Roosevelt, and Rube Goldberg. Its staff in 1925 began exposing the evils of Prohibition, a taboo subject in many magazines. The magazine continued to exploit its All-America Football Teams, a feature that Walter Camp had conducted in *Collier's* since 1897 and that Grantland Rice conducted for twenty-seven years after Camp's death in 1925. The magazine evolved its stable and staple editorial formula consisting of the proper balance of politics, economics, amusement, sports, serials, and short stories, one of them a short-short; and it hit upon a tone and brevity that distinguished it from its rival, the *Saturday Evening Post*.

*Collier's* became well known for its brevity. Even famous contributors—and the magazine attracted such contributors as President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox—had to make every word do full duty. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman once insisted that *Collier's* run all ten thousand words of a contribution; he finally approved a version one-fourth that

<sup>14</sup> Hickman Powell, "Collier's," *Scribner's*, 105 (May, 1939) 20.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, p. 21.

length. On occasion Winston Churchill had to rewrite his contributions before they satisfied the editors.

In sparking up their magazine, *Collier's* editors depended on a network of correspondents to keep them informed of news and gossip in various localities. Writing under the name "Mr. X," each correspondent sent the managing editor a detailed but informal memorandum on public sentiment, business, politics, and so on from his section.

As the magazine began to hit its stride, both circulation and advertising revenues moved upward. Circulation, just a shade over a million in 1924, was about twice that in 1929. From \$1,729,000 in 1924, gross advertising revenues rose to \$3,065,000 in 1927, when however they were still far behind the \$53,145,000 of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Yet *Collier's* continued to operate at a loss. By 1927 the company had spent some \$10,000,000 on the magazine, and some of its stockholders were wondering if *Collier's* were not an expensive blunder. Not so Knapp, however. Predicting that the magazine would be on its feet within three years, he said that he would be glad to buy out any stockholder who wanted to quit. Within the three years that Knapp had predicted, *Collier's* had started to break even; it had cost the company \$15,000,000 to get it there. Between 1926 and 1934, its advertising income increased 147 per cent—from \$2,910,000 to \$7,200,000. Its gross advertising revenues, from at least 1937 through 1955, exceeded those of all other Crowell-Collier magazines combined.

During and after World War II, *Collier's* had a rapid turnover among its top editorial personnel. It had seven different editors in the twelve years after William L. Chenery quit to become publisher in 1943. Subeditors also came and went. The editor who had perhaps the most impact on the magazine was Louis Ruppel, who came to Crowell-Collier in March, 1949, from the executive editorship of Hearst's Chicago *American*. At the same time, Chenery retired as publisher but stayed on as vice president of the company. His job as publisher went to Edward Anthony, for the preceding six years publisher of *Woman's Home Companion*.

In his first week at *Collier's*, Ruppel fired the articles editor and the art director; the fiction editor resigned. Chafing at the five-week gap between deadline and publication date, Ruppel tried to run the magazine like a newspaper. With an "expose a week" and controversial "inside stories" by reporters on large dailies, he

hoped to give the magazine a new life; and indeed, a reader who had known only Chenery's *Collier's* of the thirties would scarcely have recognized the jazzed-up *Collier's* Ruppel put together. But the changes were more dramatic than successful. Ruppel resigned in May, 1952, and in May, 1953, *Collier's* changed from weekly to biweekly publication to cut costs and to make the magazine more attractive to advertisers by increasing the number of pages.

The rapid changes on the staff of *Collier's* seem to have been both a cause and an effect of an insecure magazine. Although *Collier's* appears to have had a healthy growth for fifteen or so years after it began showing a profit, it came upon hard times in 1949 and 1950. Its circulation in 1950 was but 6 per cent more than that of 1941, whereas some other weeklies had shown much greater gains in that same decade—*Time* 86 per cent, for instance, *Life* 62 per cent, and the *Saturday Evening Post* 23 per cent. Worse, advertising revenue dropped from \$22,691,000 in 1947 to \$17,048,000 in 1949. In 1950 its competitor *Look* nosed it out in gross advertising, \$17,765,000 to \$17,351,000, and in the next four years continued to outpace it. The troubles of *Collier's* continued to the mid-fifties, when reforms by Paul Smith had somewhat improved its condition.

*Woman's Home Companion* appears to have been in better health than *Collier's* in the early fifties. It showed gains in advertising and circulation from 1946 through 1953, although *McCall's* edged it out for second place to *Ladies' Home Journal* in the women's magazine field. Both sales and lineage dipped in 1954, but a modified editorial approach had pulled the magazine from a similar slump in the late thirties.

For most of its life as a Crowell-Collier magazine, *Woman's Home Companion* was the editorial product of Gertrude Battles Lane, who joined its staff at \$18 a week in 1903 and who was earning \$52,000 a year and was a vice president and director of the company when she died in 1941. Miss Lane spent her last \$10 to get from Boston, where she had been a stenographer for a publishing house and spare-time editor of a small magazine, to New York, where she found work as household editor of *Woman's Home Companion*. In 1912, a half-dozen years after Knapp had taken over the magazine, she was promoted to editor. In the next twenty-nine years, she pushed *Woman's Home Companion* to the top of the highly competitive field of women's magazines where,

# THE RED BOOK

EDITED BY TRUMBULL WHITE y

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Terms: \$1.00 a year in advance; 10 cents a number. Subscriptions are received by all Newsdealers and Book-sellers, or may be sent direct to the Publishers.  
 THE RED BOOK is issued on the fifteenth of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands or on railway trains, a notification to the Publishers will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

CHARLES M. RICHTER, Business Manager.

THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, Publishers  
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during the decade before her death, it jockeyed with Curtis' *Ladies' Home Journal* for first position.

Miss Lane served her readers the established women's magazine fare: fiction by well-known authors, articles about food and fashion, articles giving practical assistance to the homemaker, articles with an element of do-goodism and uplift. She ran the high-priced stories of such authors as Edna Ferber, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Kathleen Norris. She established a Better Baby Bureau to stimulate interest in child health. She crusaded for packaged groceries. She paid \$25,000 for the unpublished letters of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She set up a department to give advice to consumers. To keep her magazine in tune with readers' interests, the company in 1935 organized a panel of two thousand readers who were queried on a variety of subjects each month.

Meanwhile, *Woman's Home Companion* grew in circulation and advertising. When Miss Lane became editor in 1912, circulation was 737,000 and advertising revenue \$1,019,000. In 1930, when circulation was 2,598,000, revenues were at a peak of \$8,500,000. In the late thirties, advertising revenues slipped, and they were down to \$5,935,000 in 1941, the year in which Miss Lane died.

In 1943 when Edward Anthony became publisher, he set about altering the editorial formula which, virtually unchanged even after Miss Lane's death, had kept *Woman's Home Companion* successful for decades. Granting that the functions of a woman's magazine are to entertain and to serve, he concluded that the *Woman's Home Companion* could help its readers with their minds as well as with foods, fashions, and family. Since he thought that articles give a magazine its personality, he sought a new approach for the service nonfiction in *Woman's Home Companion*. Before long the magazine was running articles on juvenile delinquency and racial and religious prejudice, was urging its readers to support the United Nations. But both Anthony and W. A. Birnie, the editor who later replaced him as publisher, thought they had developed a new editorial approach to such subjects. A good women's magazine, according to Birnie, should differ from other magazines in this respect: "that the article, the subject to be treated, must be something that offers an opportunity for the woman to do something about it."<sup>16</sup> To that end, *Woman's Home*

16 "William A. Birnie, interviewed by Quincy Howe, on "You and Magazines," broadcast over station WCBS, Feb. 1, 1950.



*Companion* developed what Roger Dakin, then its articles editor, called "the chocolate cake approach": "Show someone a chocolate cake and you don't have to argue him into wanting a piece. In dealing with problems that affect all communities, for example, show vividly how one community solved it, how the women in that community benefited by the solution. Report, don't sermonize. There will come a point in the article when the reader will feel: 'Why can't my town do it too?' That's the time to tell her how it can, and what she can do to get started."<sup>17</sup>

Although the new approach can scarcely be given full credit, the *Woman's Home Companion* for a time did exceedingly well under it. Circulation climbed from 3,728,000 in 1946 to 4,343,000 in 1953, and advertising income in the same period rose from \$9,084,000 to \$11,955,000. In 1955, however, they were down to 4,175,000 and \$10,196,000.

When Joseph Palmer Knapp acquired the *American*, he thought it had possibilities as a magazine for men, a counterbalance to *Woman's Home Companion*. The man who made the *American* a magazine for men was John Siddall, its editor from 1915 to 1923. The editorial policy of the *American*, Siddall once said, was based on victory—"victory for the individual over the odds that beset him." "There are all kinds of odds: sickness, lack of education, or opportunity, or money; unfortunate environment, bad habits, absurd weakness, every sort of mental, physical, and spiritual barrier. What we do in the magazine is to stand at the hard places in the road and cry, 'You can come through; you can win!'"<sup>18</sup> To inspire his readers to victory, Siddall used what he called the "personal angle," an approach that filled the *American* with articles telling how financially successful men made the grade.

Merle Crowell, who became editor on the death of Siddall in 1923, continued the success formula of his predecessor. The popularity of the *American*, Crowell said, was based on "the universal desire of man to improve himself." His editorial policy was "to give such true human experiences, such wise counsel out of the mouths of practical men and women, such adventures of mind and soul as will be new . . . sound and intimate."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Tide*, 20 (Oct. 25, 1946) 21.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in John E. Drewry, "The American Magazine Adopts a New Success Slant," *Writer*, 48 (Sept., 1935) 344-45.

<sup>19</sup> Drewry, "The American Magazine Adopts a New Success Slant," p. 345.

Under Crowell, the *American* grew. By the time he resigned because of ill health in 1929, he had added 350,000 new readers and had put the *American* into sixth place in circulation of all magazines in the United States. To take Crowell's place as editor, the company engaged Sumner Blossom, a former editor of the New York *Daily News* and of *Popular Science Monthly*. He was still holding the job when Crowell-Collier suspended the magazine in 1956.

The crash of 1929, which almost coincided with Blossom's joining the *American*, made incongruous the optimistic success stories on which the magazine had nourished in the twenties. Blossom sent his staff a memorandum which said, "Horatio Alger doesn't work here any more." Then, by redesigning its editorial approach, he slowly changed the *American* from a man's magazine into a family magazine. Although he did not entirely scrap the success formula, he changed the magazine's definition of success. Personal success, Blossom thought, was not as important as the successful idea or achievement which improved the welfare of large numbers of persons.<sup>20</sup> He tried to make the magazine an authoritative interpreter of contemporary life. To encourage new fiction writers and to discourage his staff from being blinded by famous names, he ordered mailroom clerks to mask the author's name on all unsolicited pieces of fiction. The staff learned the author's identity only after it had decided to accept or reject a manuscript.

Like *Collier's*, the *American* sank into a decline after World War II. Although its sale of copies gained slightly, its advertising revenues fell from \$5,802,000 in 1946 to less than half that amount in 1955. In July, 1956, since the magazine showed less promise than the other two Crowell-Collier publications, the company announced that it was suspending the publication with the August issue.

Soon after Paul C. Smith took over as president, he set about tightening his control of company operations. In July, 1954, he abolished the system under which each of the magazines had had its own publisher and himself took over their management. As editor-in-chief, he approved the covers and the major features in all three publications. He reorganized the staff, instituted various economies, and reviewed the editorial policies of the magazines.

<sup>20</sup> John E. Drewry, "Writing for American Magazine," *Writer*, 50 (Aug., 193T) 256.

The company reduced its losses by 45 per cent in 1954 and showed a net profit of \$744,000 the following year.

In the summer of 1955, a group of twenty-six large investors was formed by Smith and Edward L. Elliott, a New York broker, to gain working control of Crowell-Collier by buying up stock in the company and in the Publications Corporation of the late Joseph P. Knapp. The old seventeen-member board of the company resigned in July, 1955, and was replaced by a nine-member board with Smith in firm control of the company's management.

In 1919, thirty-four years before Paul Smith was called in to rescue Crowell-Collier, the McCall company brought in William Bishop Warner to pull it out of a similar decline. The McCall organization issued its first magazine in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but it remained a minor publisher until after World War I. Then, following a slump in revenues, Warner began a program of expansion which rapidly pushed the company into one of the giants.

Like the Butterick publishing house, the McCall Corporation evolved from a company which originally manufactured paper patterns for women's dresses. Its founder was James McCall, who never lived to see the magazine which bore his name. A Scottish tailor, he emigrated to America and set up a pattern business in New York in 1870. There seems to be no record of just when he added publishing to his pattern-making, but in 1884, the year he died, his company was publishing the *Queen*, a small magazine of fashion notes which then was reaching about 300,000 women.

In the decade after McCall's death, the company underwent several changes in ownership. McCall's widow served as president of it for a half-dozen years. The firm was reorganized in 1890 as the McCall Publishing Company with George H. Bladsworth as president. Page and Ringot purchased the company a year or two later, and a short time afterward Page sold out to his partner, who formed J. H. Ringot and Company. The McCall Company was incorporated in New York in 1893, and for the next twenty years it built up the circulation of its magazine by giving premiums with subscriptions.

Meanwhile the magazine had been renamed the *Queen of Fashion*. It had fattened, sometimes to twenty pages, and in 1894 it ran its first fiction, a story it had awarded ten dollars in a contest. The magazine changed in other ways. Its issue of July, 1896, ap-

peared with a photographic cover, its first; and the next month it carried its first full-page advertisement, for "Alma, The Leading Canadian College for Women." In September, 1897, the magazine appeared as *McCall's Magazine*, with the subtitle, "The Queen of Fashion," which it subsequently dropped. The circulation of *McCall's* hovered around 200,000 at the turn of the century but had grown to more than a million by 1910.

The modern phase of the McCall organization began in 1913 when the banking firm of White, Weld and Company bought the company from James A. Ottley, but the most impressive expansion began a half dozen years later. In 1919 *McCall's* was in poor shape. The magazine had a circulation of 1,163,000, but it had attracted so many subscribers with patterns and rose bushes as premiums that its circulation failed to impress advertisers. Advertisers, who perhaps noticed that *McCall's* could sell only about twenty thousand copies on the newsstands, spent but \$951,000 on it in 1919 as compared with \$8,775,000 in the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

The owners of the company installed William Bishop Warner as president in 1919 to put the company on its feet. Warner, then forty-five, came to the publishing house from Detroit, where he had been president of a department store. One of his first tactics was to pour money into *McCall's* to improve its editorial content. Both revenues and circulation jumped upward. In 1920 the magazine carried \$2,494,000 in advertising, more than two and a half times that of the previous year. In 1927 the sale of copies exceeded two million, and advertising income was \$6,265,000. *McCall's* became and stayed one of the major women's magazines.

Much of the editorial revitalization of *McCall's* was the work of Otis L. Wiese, who was only twenty-three years old when he assumed the editorship in 1928. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, he had come to New York searching for an editorial job and had been hired by Harry Payne Burton, editor of *McCall's*. When Burton quit, Warner asked Wiese for a report on how the magazine could be improved. On the strength of his recommendations, he was appointed editor.

Wiese's changes were so iconoclastic that he was fired a half dozen times in his first year. He broke with the Gene Stratton Porter and Harold Bell Wright schools of fiction, scouted out heavier fare for his articles, redesigned the make-up, and made in-

creased use of color printing. He converted *McCall's* into "three magazines in one" in 1932 by giving it separate sections for "news and fiction," "homemaking," and "style and beauty," each with its separate cover, a form of departmentalization used on through the forties. He began running a full-length novel in each issue in December, 1937. In 1949 he captured Eleanor Roosevelt away from his old rival, *Ladies' Home Journal*, which had serialized the first volume of her memoirs and had carried her monthly column for several years. Wiese splashed Mrs. Roosevelt's picture across *McCall's* cover, the next volume of her memoirs across its pages, and spent \$120,000 calling attention to his coup through newspapers, radio, and television. The following year he redesigned *McCall's* make-up to break away from its rigid departmentalization; and he stirred interest in the magazine by printing a picture of a cake on the covers of half its copies, a picture of a pretty girl on the other half, then inviting readers to vote for their preferences. In 1950, too, *McCall's* opened branch editorial offices on the West Coast, the first national women's service magazine to do so. Wiese announced a fundamental change in policy for *McCall's* in May, 1954. No longer would the magazine be exclusively for women, he said; henceforth it would be directed at women and their families. The new editorial pitch was based on what Wiese called "togetherness"—a family's living not as isolated members but as a unit sharing experiences.

Under William Bishop Warner, the company expanded in other directions. It and the Popular Science Publishing Company in 1919 formed the S-M News Company, an organization for distributing magazines to newsstands. The McCall firm built a new printing plant in Dayton, Ohio, in 1923, an addition for pattern production in 1927. The plant in Dayton was enlarged in 1928, again in 1929, and periodically thereafter; a multicolor department was created in 1939 with the installation of five high-speed double five-color presses. The company began its commercial printing operations in 1930 when it took over the printing of *Popular Science Monthly*. It was printing more than forty magazines for other publishers in 1955. The expansion of the company was reflected in the number of employees. When the *Queen of Fashion* began to grow in 1894, the company had 13 workers on the payroll. In 1925, after the Dayton plant went into production, the number was 535, and in 1955, a decade after a \$11,000,-

000 expansion program had been inaugurated, the company was employing 4,430. Marvin Pierce succeeded Warner as president of the company in January, 1946, four months after the latter's death.

For nearly sixty years the company published only periodicals for women, *McCall's* and its predecessors, and pattern and sewing publications. It broadened its market in 1929 by buying out the Consolidated Magazines Corporation, publishers of *Red Book* and *Blue Book*. *Redbook* and *Bluebook*—McCall telescoped the words in their titles—were survivors of a trio of magazines which were established in Chicago at the turn of the century as vehicles for light fiction and articles about the theater. The third member of the trio, *Green Book*, had concentrated exclusively on the theater. It had been hit hard when movies diminished popular interest in the theater, and it had died in the depression of 1921 after a premature attempt to convert it into a magazine for career girls. Ray Long had edited all three magazines for a half dozen years before he joined the Hearst magazines in 1919.

For twenty years after the McCall company took it over, *Redbook* was a general interest monthly with a heavy load of light fiction for men and women. Although sales increased steadily and passed the million mark in 1937, *Redbook* still lagged behind its two major competitors, the *American* of Crowell-Collier and *Cosmopolitan* of Hearst. Some editorial changes were made in the forties—the ratio of fact to fiction was increased, for instance—but the company decided on even more drastic changes after the magazine lost \$400,000 in 1948. The following year it brought in a new editor, Wade Nichols, who had made a reputation by driving up the circulations of *Click* and *Modern Screen*. Nichols gradually but completely overhauled *Redbook* and aimed it at young married couples, an entirely different audience from the old one. Circulation reached two million in 1950, and *Redbook* officially acknowledged the changeover in audience in 1951 by adding the subtitle, "The Magazine for Young Adults." The magazine was awarded the Benjamin Franklin Magazine Award gold medal for public service for three articles published in 1954. The articles, dealing with security risks, academic freedom, and racial segregation, were called a "courageous effort to bring controversial issues before a mass audience."

*Bluebook*, which did not depend upon advertising for support,

was largely a fiction magazine. In its early years, it ran stories by Mary Roberts Rinehart, James Oliver Curwood, Donn Byrne, and Rider Haggard. In 1925, sensing a popular interest in fact pieces, its editors began to run articles of exciting personal experience and serialized autobiography. Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Andre Maurois, and Sir Hubert Wilkins were among its contributors. *Bluebook* began to call itself a "magazine for men" early in World War II; it was changed into a general magazine for men, with an increased ratio of fact to fiction, during the boom in men's magazines after the war. Donald Kennicott, who had been with the magazine for forty-two years when he retired, ran the magazine virtually without editorial assistance from 1927 to 1952. Early in 1956 the publishers announced that they would suspend *Bluebook* with its May issue.

Whether or not the Hearst Corporation encountered the vicissitudes of the other survivors, it is difficult to say. William R. Hearst did not wish the public to hold stock in his properties, so the inner workings of his empire were never officially made public.

Hearst entered magazine publishing in 1903. While in London, he became so interested in a British periodical named *The Car* that he cabled one of his executives in New York, "Have decided to start a magazine devoted to motor interests. . . ." <sup>21</sup> That magazine, his first, was *Motor*. For twenty-one years *Motor* was a magazine for automobilists. It promoted traffic laws and good roads, covered the auto shows, and had correspondents who reported on the progress of motoring abroad. Then in 1924 the magazine changed its editorial pitch and its audience; it became a business publication for manufacturers and dealers of automobiles.

Hearst began to build up a stable of magazines soon after he had started *Motor*. Scarcely an innovator in magazine publishing, he took over existing publications. According to George d'Utas-say, one of his executives, he acquired them by using his credit with printers and paper manufacturers and by giving bonds, which he redeemed from the profits of his other magazines. <sup>22</sup> In 1955, four years after Hearst's death, the Hearst organization

<sup>21</sup> John R. Winkler, *W. R. Hearst, An American Phenomenon* (New York, 1928), p. 244.

<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Fremont Older, *William Randolph Hearst, American* (New York, 1936), p. 256.

was still said to be on the lookout for promising existing properties such as *Sports Afield*, which it bought in the early fifties.<sup>23</sup>

At his peak in 1935, Hearst owned thirteen magazines, but more than that passed through his hands. Some he merged, some he killed, and some he sold. The Hearst empire melted considerably after 1935, but the Hearst Corporation still published nine American magazines in 1955—*Motor*, *Motor Boating*, *American Druggist*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *House Beautiful*, *Town and Country*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Sports Afield*. It published another six in Britain, three of them editions of its American magazines.

Although Hearst's newspapers were aimed at the lowest of common denominators, several of his magazines were edited for upper-class or highly specialized markets. With two possible exceptions, the American magazines published by the Hearst Corporation in 1955 were for narrowly defined audiences. Even so, Hearst is said to have advised his editors to edit his magazines according to his tested formulas: "Find out what your readers want and give it to them. And give it to them regularly."<sup>24</sup>

One of the magazines with a broad market was *Cosmopolitan*, which Hearst acquired in 1905. Despite its large circulation, however, the staff prided itself on the quality of its audience. *Cosmopolitan* sold for thirty-five cents during the twenties, a high price for a popular magazine, and the staff recalled President Coolidge's remark when he chose it to run his autobiography, "Yes, when you pay thirty-five cents for a magazine, that magazine takes on in your eyes the nature of a book and you treat it accordingly."<sup>25</sup>

*Cosmopolitan*, carrying the motto, "The world is my country and all mankind are my countrymen," was born in Rochester, New York, in 1886, and Schlicht and Fields were its parents. Its editorial content in the first year was as cosmopolitan as the title implied. The monthly ran articles on such diversified subjects as downtown New York, how ancient peoples lived, up and down Vesuvius, Gladstone, and young Mozart.

After a struggle in Rochester, the publishers moved *Cosmopolitan* to New York, where John Brisben Walker purchased it in

<sup>23</sup> *Advertising Age*, 26 (Apr. 4, 1955) 88.

<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Older, pp. 258-59.

<sup>25</sup> *Time*, 13 (Mar. 18, 1929) 46.



October  
1917

Price  
20 Cents

THE  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE

A new novel

"The  
Unpardonable  
Sin"  
by  
RUPERT  
HUGHES



William Tilden ·  
John Fleming Wilson  
Gene Manlove Rhodes  
and Katharine Green

Donn Byrne  
Ida M. Evans  
Roy Norton  
Royal Brown

*J.P. Nikolaki*

"The Bull Called Emily" by IRVIN S. COBB

1889. Walker believed that a magazine should be "a university of the mind," and he gave *Cosmopolitan* a heavily educational accent. For its time, the magazine had a large circulation—about 400,000 in the mid-nineties.

*Cosmopolitan*, under Hearst, was the magazine which carried Ray Long to glory. For twenty years, Long tensely walked the precarious tightrope across the peak of the magazine arena. In 1929, fortune's child, he owned forty suits, five automobiles, and the reputation of being one of the highest paid editors in the world, his reward for an uncanny ability to sense public taste and to move with it.

After growing up in a small town in Indiana, Long had worked on newspapers in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, then had edited *Blue Book*, *Green Book*, and *Red Book*. Hearst hired him late in 1918 to edit *Cosmopolitan*. He ran it well. Hearst raised his salary by a third after four months, then by a fourth, and made him president and editor-in-chief of the International Magazine Company.

When Long assumed direction of *Cosmopolitan* in January, 1919, it had a circulation of about a million; he added 700,000 to that figure and, in doing so, more than doubled advertising rates. His editorial policy was to pick up ideas which had outgrown their original intellectual coterie, adapt them for a larger and less intellectual circle, and forsake them before they had lost their freshness. He kept a half-pace ahead of his readers. When they began to tire of stories about high society, he gave them Peter B. Kyne and James Oliver Curwood; when they wanted painless doses of culture, he gave them Will Durant; and when they showed a budding interest in Russia, he dotted *Cosmopolitan* with Russian by-lines.<sup>26</sup>

In 1925 *Cosmopolitan* absorbed *Hearst's International*, a sister publication. *Hearst's International* was the outgrowth of a magazine founded in 1901. When Hearst bought it in 1911, it was called *World Today*. Hearst was advised that the magazine could never achieve a circulation of more than 200,000 under its current editorial policies, so he converted it into *Hearst's International*, a monthly which carried an increasingly heavier load of fiction, usually of a slightly lower caliber than that in *Cosmopolitan*.

26 "The *Cosmopolitan* of Ray Long," *Fortune*, 3 (Mar., 1931) 49-55.

*Cosmopolitan* was primarily a fiction magazine while Long was editor and for several years after he resigned in 1931. For a long time he had been afraid that he was going stale. On leaving the Hearst organization, he formed a publishing house with Richard Smith, then drifted to the West Coast and to one job after another—manuscript editor for Columbia Pictures, editor of *Photoplay*, subeditor of *Liberty*. In 1935 he was found dead in his bedroom in Beverly Hills, a rifle at his side.

Harry Payne Burton, who had once edited *McCall's*, steered *Cosmopolitan* for more than a decade after Long's resignation. Just after World War II, in 1946, the magazine underwent a major change in direction when Arthur Gordon was appointed editor. Gordon, a Rhodes scholar, had been on the editorial staff of *Good Housekeeping* before the war; during the war, as an officer in Europe, he had written for the large national magazines, supervised the military's relations with them, and had edited *Air Force*. He thought that the mass-circulation magazines had lagged behind the intellectual curiosity of their audiences, and as editor of *Cosmopolitan* he strove for the provocative. Readers responded to his formula with insufficient enthusiasm, however, and Herbert Mayes, editor of *Good Housekeeping* since 1938, took over the editorial side of both magazines. In 1952 *Cosmopolitan* was given another overhaul, but both its circulation and advertising revenues skidded. The Hearst organization applied an iconoclastic remedy in 1953. It dropped the magazine's promotion budget, which had once been a million dollars a year; let subscriptions lapse on expiration; and concentrated on selling the magazine on the newsstand. Although half of the circulation dropped off and the advertising rate was cut to about 40 per cent of the old one, the company expected to make money from the magazine in 1955 as a result of its higher profit from newsstand distribution.<sup>27</sup>

A second magazine with which Hearst sought a wide audience was *Good Housekeeping*. Like *Cosmopolitan*, it was already a fairly old publication when he added it to his fold in 1911. George W. Bryan had published its first issue, "conducted in the interests of higher life in the household," as he put it, at Holyoke, Massachusetts, in May, 1885. After Bryan died in 1898, his *Good Housekeeping* passed from one owner to another—from John Pet-

<sup>27</sup> *Advertising Age*, 26 (Apr. 4, 1955) 83.

tigrew to George C. Chamberlain to the Phelps Publishing Company. When the century opened, it was advising homemakers on preparing Sunday dinners, canning fruits, simplified housekeeping, fashions, and rearing children.

Early in the century, the Phelps Publishing Company set up the Good Housekeeping Experiment Station to provide tested information on home economics subjects. Out of the experiment station grew the Good Housekeeping Bureau and the Good Housekeeping Institute, which in laboratories and kitchens tested consumer products of many kinds and issued seals of approval to their manufacturers whether or not they advertised in the magazine. During an investigation by the Federal Trade Commission in 1940, Richard H. Waldo, who had helped to establish the institute, testified that *Good Housekeeping* rejected \$196,000 in advertising out of a year's total of \$240,000 in the institute's first year of existence.<sup>28</sup> The bureau and the institute were sources of a heavy proportion of articles in the magazine from the time of their founding onward.

*Good Housekeeping* expanded after Hearst acquired it in 1911, and so did its conception of service to the reader, but the basic editorial pattern of fiction and service still remained in 1955. In the mid-thirties, a typical issue carried eight stories, three of them serials; four articles; poems; children's stories; and advice on architecture, home furnishings, fashions, and beauty—essentially the ingredients of issues a decade earlier. Twenty years later, in 1955, the scope of the magazine had been enlarged to include features for teen-agers and departments on music, automobiles, medicine and health, and home appliances. The volume of advertising grew as the magazine did. Gross revenues increased from about \$2,717,000 in 1920 to \$17,049,000 in 1955.

At one time or another in the twenties and thirties, Hearst owned other magazines of popular appeal—*McClure's*, *Smart Set*, and *Pictorial Review*. In 1955, however, the remainder of the magazines belonging to the Hearst Corporation were special interest and class publications. *Motor Boating*, edited for persons interested in small pleasure craft, was two years old when Hearst interests acquired control of it in 1909. *American Druggist*, a trade publication which Hearst bought in 1927, had begun in

<sup>28</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 73 (Feb. 10, 1940) 8.

1871 under the title *New Remedies*. Three magazines for upper class audiences, *House Beautiful*, *Town and Country*, and *Harper's Bazaar*, also had long pasts when they were brought under Hearst ownership.

A Chicago civil engineer, Eugene Klapp, began *House Beautiful* in 1896 to spread his conviction that beauty in architecture and home decoration demanded simplicity. When his magazine was in its second year, he turned it over to Herbert Stone, a Chicago publisher with kindred ideas. Along with its articles telling readers how to raise squab, dress a four-poster bed, collect beer steins, and repair a smoking chimney, *House Beautiful* in 1904 ran a series called "The Poor Taste of the Rich." The articles were illustrated with photographs of interiors of homes of the wealthy, whom the magazine identified, and their purpose was to show "that wealth is not essential to the decoration of a house, and that the homes of many of our richest citizens are furnished in execrable taste." The magazine succeeded well enough to swallow up *Indoors and Out* in 1908, *Modern Homes* in 1909, and *American Suburbs* in 1912.

The Atlantic Monthly Company purchased *House Beautiful* in 1913 and published it for the next twenty years. Then Hearst bought it for \$35,000 to merge with *Home and Field*, a competing magazine which he had owned for five years. *House Beautiful* addressed itself to an audience of somewhat higher income than most of the other home service magazines. Its large gains in circulation and in revenue came after World War II, although it had never failed to show a profit under Hearst ownership.

*Town and Country* was one of the oldest periodicals in America when Hearst bought it in 1925. The magazine had begun its life in 1846 as *Home Journal*, designed as a cultured weekly for "the upper ten thousand composed of the well-born, the rich and the able" to give them the "cream and substance of the week's wilderness of newspaper reading." *Home Journal* was the offspring of Nathaniel Park Willis, an esthete and dandy with some reputation as essayist and poet, who set its tone, and George Pope Morris, a popular song writer and author of "Woodman, Spare That Tree," who tended its business side. Their periodical carried news of society, borrowings from foreign publications, poetry and ballads, and literary miscellany. After a succession of editors and owners, during which it retained its cosmopolitan flavor, *Home Journal*

became *Town and Country* in 1901. In its later years, the magazine acquainted its readers with Ludwig Bemelmans, Evelyn Waugh, Oliver St. John Gogarty, and Salvador Dali, just as it had acquainted them in its earlier years with Swinburne, Alfred de Musset, George Sand, and Balzac. Under Hearst ownership, the magazine continued to seek an audience of means and taste; its production was elegant, its tone sophisticated.

Almost twenty years after the upper ten thousand had buzzed over the first issue of *Home Journal*, the Harper brothers issued the initial number of *Harper's Bazaar*, which Hearst purchased in 1913. Soon after the end of the Civil War, Fletcher Harper, of the book publishing firm, urged his brothers to join him in bringing out a women's periodical modeled after *Der Bazar* in Berlin. The brothers were already publishing two successful periodicals, *Harper's Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly*, and they were not inclined to start another. If the firm would not undertake the new magazine, Fletcher told them, he would publish it by himself. "No, you will not," responded one of his partners. "We'll defer to your judgment, and you shall have your Bazar."<sup>29</sup>

The first number of the new periodical gave readers an idea of what the Harper brothers had in store for them. "*Harper's Bazar* is designed to be a Family Journal, in the true sense of the word," an editorial said, "and it is hoped that its literary merit will equal its practical utility. Serials, novelettes, poems, literary and art miscellany, familiar science, aesthetics, the current literature, new books, amusements, gardening, architecture, household literature—in short all that is likely to interest the home circle will receive due notice."<sup>30</sup> In addition, the new publication promised to carry advance news of fashions. It had arranged for *Der Bazar*, "which supplies the fashions to the newspapers of Paris," to ship it electrotypes and proofs of its fashions materials, and its own staff covered New York styles.

The Harper company published the *Bazar* as a weekly until 1901 when it converted it into a monthly magazine. Although the *Bazar* was highly successful at first, it had been losing money for a number of years before Hearst purchased it.

As a Hearst publication, *Harper's Bazar* became a thick, glossy, chic, lavishly illustrated monthly devoted to fashions,

29 J. Henry Harper, *The House of Harper* (New York, 1912), pp. 252-53.

30 *Harper's Bazar*, 1 (Nov. 2, 1867) 2.

beauty, fiction, and belles-lettres, its advertising scarcely distinguishable from its editorial content. Its tone was set by Henry B. Sell, who edited it from 1920 to 1926 and who returned to the Hearst organization in 1949 as editor of *Town and Country*. For the remainder of the twenties, the *Bazar's* editor was Charles Hanson Towne. He had successively edited the *Designer*, *Smart Set*, and *McClure's*, and he sometimes spoke of the encouragement he had given O. Henry, James Branch Cabell, and Theodore Dreiser. The title of the magazine was modified in 1929 by the addition of a second "a" to *Bazaar*. In 1934 Carmel Snow, who had been trained under Edna Woolman Chase of *Vogue*, a competitor, took over the editorship of the *Bazaar*. She still held the position more than twenty years later. For a time after World War II, she also was listed as editor-in-chief of another Hearst publication, *Junior Bazaar*, which was merged with the parent magazine in 1948.

In 1955 the Hearst organization was the largest communications empire in the world. It operated, among other things, newspapers, newspaper supplements, a movie newsreel, a book publishing firm, radio and television stations, subscription solicitation and distributing agencies and such other diversified enterprises as paper mills and real estate firms. Its annual gross was perhaps \$350,000,000, of which its magazines contributed about one-seventh. External evidence indicated that the Hearst magazines were in good financial shape. While the company did not seem bent on expanding its magazine holdings, it did seem interested in buying an occasional new magazine which it could develop into another money-maker.

## *chapter 8* New Leaders: The Missionaries

In 1937 David A. Smart, a former advertising man and speculator on the commodity market who had drifted into magazine publishing in the late twenties, is said to have remarked, "Why didn't somebody tell me about this publishing business before? It's a cinch."

Not many publishers would have agreed with Smart that the publishing business was a cinch; its uncertainties were too evident, its failures too numerous. Yet several publishers who started their businesses at about the same time would have conceded that they had succeeded beyond all expectation. The publishing companies which they formed, usually on little capital, grew into substantial businesses. The magazines which they founded attracted large followings within comparatively short periods, became the foremost carriers of advertising, and displaced such old favorites as the *Literary Digest* and the *North, American Review*.

In the years immediately after World War I, a number of young men not long discharged from military service arrived in New York with big ideas for magazines in their heads and little money in their pockets. They arrived at a good time. The twenties, apart from a brief period of doubt and a year of discouragement,



were a time of growing prosperity for American business and industry. The rapidly expanding automotive industry, which directly or indirectly created an estimated four million new jobs, was pumping dollars into the whole economy; and construction workers were kept busy laying down new highways over which motorists could travel. Radios and household appliances were becoming necessities instead of curiosities or luxuries, and to a lesser degree than the automobile, they contributed to the prosperity of the period. Manufacturers of many commodities were adapting the assembly line techniques of the automobile makers and were putting science to work for them. The salesman was becoming an ubiquitous figure, and the consumer was making heavy use of the installment plan. The mounting sums allocated to advertising were both a partial cause and an effect of the vast expenditures for consumer goods.

But it was not economic prosperity alone which accounted for the success of the new magazines which hopeful young men offered to the reading public; some of the publications first appeared in years of recession or depression. There were other factors as well. One was a widening market of persons who could read and who bought the goods that advertisers sold. Another was technological advances in the graphic arts industries which enabled publishers to mass produce magazines at high speed. Still another was a happy meeting between what the publishers originated and what the reading public wanted. Several of the publishers read the barometer of public taste so accurately that the magazines they founded were the forerunners of whole new classes of magazines—the digest magazines, for instance, and the news magazines.

Without being at all facetious, one can divide the founders of new magazines after World War I into two loosely defined categories—the "missionaries" and the "merchants." The terms imply no disrespect for publishers in either class. The missionaries did not necessarily propagate a religious gospel, although a few of them came from ministers' families and there were evangelical overtones to two or three of their publications; but they did propagate a faith—a faith in a Better America, for instance, a faith in a way of life, a faith in the American Century. The merchants, on the other hand, were not primarily champions of points of view or causes. They were men who quite evidently regarded magazine publishing as strictly a business enterprise to be oper-

ated at a profit. They were interested mainly in discovering what readers wanted and then giving it to them. The merchants' approach to magazine publishing, it should be emphasized, was a perfectly legitimate one, one in accord with the Anglo-American theory of the press. For that theory, like the "invisible hand" theory of Adam Smith, assumed that a publisher working in his own self-interest would inevitably work in the interests of the community. According to the theory, the need for the press to be financially self-sufficient assured readers of a press attuned to their wants and needs. As readers voted with their coins at the newsstand and with their subscriptions by mail, so the theory went, the publications they did not want would die for lack of support; the ones they favored would flourish.

Nor should one assume that the missionaries were not businessmen as well as the disseminators of some secular gospel. On the contrary, some of them founded and edited magazines which were among the most successful in the market place. Indeed, in some instances, it was the merchants who followed where the missionaries led, the merchants who imitated the successful editorial products of the missionaries.

This chapter will trace the development of four commercially successful publishing houses established by missionaries after World War I. They were missionaries of widely divergent types: DeWitt Wallace of the Reader's Digest Association, Inc., who preached optimism, the simple life, faith in a Better America; Henry Luce of Time, Inc., who regarded even photographs as vehicles of information and education, and who proclaimed the American Century; Harold Ross of the *New Yorker*, who taught the gospel of perfection; and Bernarr Macfadden of Macfadden Publications, Inc., who crusaded for healthful living. All of them originated publications which resulted in the emergence of new categories of magazines.

Both the Reader's Digest Association, Inc., and Time, Inc., were founded by, and in their early years staffed by, persons without previous magazine experience. Both companies were established on relatively small investments, a circumstance made possible in part because their publications did not originate editorial material but merely condensed, simplified, and brightened up material which had first appeared in other publications. Both

companies were among the largest magazine publishing enterprises in the world in 1955.

For several years before the *Reader's Digest* sent out its first five thousand pocket-sized copies in February, 1922, DeWitt Wallace had had the idea for a magazine which he thought might eventually earn him five thousand dollars a year. Wallace was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, where his father, Dr. James Wallace, a Presbyterian minister and scholar of Greek and Latin, was president of Macalester College, a Presbyterian school. After attending Macalester and the University of California, Wallace worked in St. Paul for the Webb Publishing Company, a publisher of farm magazines and textbooks, and as a salesman for Brown and Bigelow, a large printer of calendars and advertising specialties.

By the time he joined the Webb Publishing Company to handle correspondence in its book department, he had his idea for the *Reader's Digest*. Many people wanted to be well informed, he thought, but no reader had the time or money to scout out the material of lasting interest which lay buried deep in the thousands of magazines being issued each month. Wallace proposed to sift out such worth-while articles, condense them for easy reading, and bring them together in a handy publication which could be saved. While he was in the hospital recuperating from shrapnel wounds received as an infantry sergeant during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Wallace experimented with his idea by clipping out dozens of magazine articles and editing them for brevity without sacrificing their meaning. Back in St. Paul, he spent six months copying and pruning articles from old magazines in the public library. He collected thirty-one of them into a sample pocket-sized magazine called the *Reader's Digest*, had two hundred copies printed, and mailed copies to a dozen New York publishers and other potential backers. No one was interested.

In 1921, after he was laid off from a job in the publicity department of the Westinghouse Electric Company, Wallace spent three months writing promotional circulars for his projected magazine. He borrowed money from friends until he had accumulated a capital of five thousand dollars, and he took on a partner—his fiancée, Lila Bell Acheson, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. During World War I, Lila Acheson had traveled about the country with her parents doing morale work in war plants for the Presbyterian church; after the war, with her brother Barclay, she

went to Constantinople to work for Near East Relief. She became engaged to Wallace, whom she had known for several years, on her return to the United States in 1921. They rented an office in a basement under a speakeasy in Greenwich Village, formed the Reader's Digest Association, clipped and condensed innumerable articles, and prepared a mimeographed circular soliciting subscriptions. On their wedding day, October 15, 1921, they mailed out thousands of circulars advertising their magazine, and when they returned from their honeymoon they found that the mailing had brought them fifteen hundred charter subscriptions at three dollars each. They set to work on their first issue, dated February, 1922.

At first the Wallaces intended their *Reader's Digest* primarily for women. They soon broadened their audience to include men, and they developed the editorial formula which made the *Digest* one of the most commercially successful magazines in all history. Their slogan expressed their aim, "An article a day from leading magazines in condensed, permanent booklet form." They were guided by three criteria in choosing features. The first test was "applicability"; the reader should feel that the subject concerned him. The second was "lasting interest"; an article should be worth reading a year hence (and in fact the *Digest* often reprinted articles from its own earlier issues). The third criterion was "constructiveness," a quality which led the *Digest* to shun articles reflecting defeatism and to favor those featuring optimism and good works.

After World War II, although he had long since changed his method of obtaining copy, DeWitt Wallace was still choosing material according to the formula he had worked out in the twenties. He described that formula to Kenneth Stewart, a writer for the newspaper *PM*, as follows: "Primarily, we are looking for articles of lasting interest which will appeal to a large audience, articles that come within the range of interests, experience, and conversation of the average person. The over-all emphasis, for twenty-one years, has been a more or less conscious effort to find articles that tend to promote a Better America, with capital letters, with a fuller life for all, and with a place for the United States of increasing influence and respect in world affairs."<sup>1</sup> A critic of the

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Stewart, "Meet the Editor and Fifty-two Per Cent Owner of 'Reader's Digest,'" *PM*, 4 (Mar. 12, 1944) m4.

digest, John Bainbridge, in an exceedingly unfriendly study of the magazine, mentioned more specific ingredients of the formula. The ones he found were dogmatism, optimism, and "simplism," that is, the "appearance, if not the actual quality, of simplicity."<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the first year, the Wallaces moved their office from Greenwich Village to Pleasantville, forty miles north of New York. There, for \$25 a month, they rented a single room in a garage belonging to Pendleton Dudley, a public relations counsel, and used it for living quarters and office. They later rented a pony shed adjoining the garage for another \$10 a month. In 1926, after three years in the garage and pony shed, they built a home on property adjoining Dudley's and edited the *Digest* from their study. The *Digest* eventually outgrew the study, and they rented office space in two bank buildings. In 1939 the *Digest* moved into a \$1,500,000 building of its own at Chappaqua, near Pleasantville.

In the garage and pony shed days, the Wallaces could publish the *Digest* with help from just a couple of clerks; but as the circulation grew, so did their staff. It was a staff of amateurs until the mid-thirties; only two of the thirty-two staff members in 1936 had ever worked for a magazine before. Two of the top editors were former clergymen, and one was a former missionary. The first professional editor to join the *Digest* staff was Kenneth W. Payne, who had once edited the *North American Review* and who moved to the *Digest* in 1930. A number of men who had edited other magazines took positions with the *Digest* in the mid-thirties after it ceased being strictly a magazine of reprints, among them Alfred S. Dashiell of *Scribner's*, Howard Florance of *Review of Reviews* and the *Literary Digest*, Merle Crowell of the *American*, Fulton Oursler of *Liberty*, Paul Palmer of *American Mercury*, and Marc Rose of *Business Week*. Albert L. Cole, who had been publisher of *Popular Science* and who had been advising Wallace on business matters for several years, became full-time general business manager of the *Digest* in 1939.

Although Wallace tried to hide the success of the *Digest* by keeping its circulation a secret until 1936, numerous imitators sprang up in the late twenties. None of them seriously threatened the *Reader's Digest* in editorial capability or in circulation, but

<sup>2</sup> John Bainbridge, *Little Wonder, or The Reader's Digest and How It Grew* (New York, 1946), pp. 135-43.

they affected the *Digest* in two ways—in its means of distribution and in its means of obtaining editorial material.

Wallace originally distributed the *Digest* entirely by subscription for fear that it would not sell well on the newsstand. When imitators achieved large sales on the stands, Wallace recognized that he had been wrong, and in 1929 he arranged for the S-M News Company to handle distribution of the *Digest* through retail outlets.

At first the *Digest* easily obtained permission to reprint articles from other publications without payment since the magazines were gratified by the publicity and since Wallace was no competitor for advertising. After a few years, however, some editors began viewing the *Digest* as a parasite which fed on their copy and ate into their circulation. Wallace, with the help of Kenneth W. Payne, then on the staff of the *North American Review*, convinced editors that the *Digest* actually stimulated magazine reading.

But when imitators started to pester editors for permission to reprint and even began to reprint without permission, Wallace evidently realized that the whole idea of the digest magazine was highly vulnerable. What if editors of the leading magazines should deny him reprint rights?

His fears were partly justified, then and later. The Hearst magazines, Crowell-Collier, and Curtis all refused to enter into reprint agreements with him. Although Crowell-Collier and Curtis later signed contracts, Curtis would not renew its agreement in 1938 and closed its magazines as a source of copy to him until 1943. The *New Yorker*, after a five-year arrangement under which the *Digest* had used its material, broke off relations in 1944.

In the early thirties, Wallace set about assuring the *Digest* a steady flow of material. As the *Digest* was both the leader and the most affluent of the reprint magazines, he was able to get exclusive rights to reprint from most of the magazines that he approached. The rates Wallace paid magazines for using their articles rose steadily. In the early days, it was perhaps \$100 an article. In 1933 Wallace reportedly paid a top price of about \$10,000 for use of material in a magazine over a three-year period. The payments provided for in three-year contracts after World War II were said to range from \$3,500 to \$50,000.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Bainbridge, pp. 49-50.

As insurance against boycott by his source magazines, Wallace began to run original articles in the *Digest* in 1933. Another reason for this fundamental change in policy, Wallace had said, was that he could not find enough articles of lasting interest and the wide variety he desired to fill the magazine. The *Digest* ran fifteen original articles in 1933, but no one seemed to notice the change to original material until 1935 when Wallace published "—And Sudden Death" by J. C. Furnas, a grisly account of automobile accidents which Wallace hoped would make motorists safety-conscious. Hundreds of newspapers and magazines reprinted the article, radio stations broadcast it, government officials passed out copies of it, judges read it in court or had traffic violators copy it. Within three months, the *Digest* sent out four million copies of the article to more than eight thousand business firms and organizations. The response to the article made editors aware that Wallace was not just a "second-guess editor," as some had called him, but an editor with a keen sense of what the reading public wanted.

Although an increasing amount of copy was originating in its own offices, the *Reader's Digest* maintained the appearance of a digest by a somewhat controversial system. In the mid-thirties, having money enough to commission the sort of nonfiction he wanted, Wallace began offering original articles to other publications in exchange for the right to "condense" and reprint them. Wallace and his staff provided the ideas for such articles, assigned writers to them, and paid for them. Critics called such pieces "planted articles"; the *Digest* called them "cooperatively planned."

Editors of some magazines with small budgets welcomed articles they could not otherwise afford. A dozen magazines like *Scribner's*, *North American Review*, *American Mercury*, and *Rotarian* printed about sixty such articles in the first year and a half that Wallace tried out the system. According to a study reported by John Bainbridge, a critic of the arrangement, 682 of the 1,908 major articles appearing in the *Digest* from 1939 through 1943 were articles which the *Digest* had made available to other publications and then reprinted. The articles were published originally in more than sixty periodicals, including *Harper's*, *Atlantic*, *Yale Review*, *Nation*, *New Republic*, *Survey Graphic*, and *Hygeia*.<sup>4</sup>

4 Bainbridge, pp. 60-62.

When the *New Yorker* ended its reprint agreement with the *Reader's Digest*, it attacked the system of furnishing material to other editors as "a threat to the free flow of ideas and to the independent spirit." In a letter to contributors, the *New Yorker* said that "the *Digest* is beginning to generate a considerable fraction of the contents of American magazines. . . . The fact seems to be that some publications are already as good as subsidized by the *Digest*." If the *Digest* wanted to publish a magazine of original content, the letter continued, it should have done so in a direct manner; it should not have operated through other media to keep alive the "reprint myth."<sup>5</sup> Other individuals and magazines were less fearful than Bainbridge and the *New Yorker*, in which his study of the *Reader's Digest* first appeared as a serial. Dixon Wecter, remarking on the practice of planting articles, said in a review of Bainbridge's book, "One finds it rather hard to share Mr. Bainbridge's shocked feeling that this trend, developing over the past ten years, is somehow perfidious and sinister, though of course it does do violence to the magazine's original aim and title." Yet the matter, Wecter thought, was "chiefly the business of the parties concerned."<sup>6</sup> In its issue of May, 1944, *Esquire* came to the defense of the *Digest* in a full-page editorial attacking the *New Yorker* for its harsh words about the *Digest*. While the *New Yorker* was within its rights in ending its reprint agreement, *Esquire* said, its letter to contributors was "dangerous loose talk" about other people's business and could stimulate rumors of governmental action against the *Digest* on charges of monopoly or unfair competition.

Since the *Reader's Digest* remained the property of just DeWitt Wallace and Lila Acheson Wallace, its financial affairs have seldom been made public; but one can sketch a little of its financial history from the various speculations which have been made from time to time. Judging from circulation figures, the *Digest* probably grossed \$60,000 annually while it still had headquarters in the garage in Pleasantville and \$327,000 a year just before it was distributed on the newsstands in 1929. Its revenues were \$2,178,000 in 1935, according to *Fortune*;<sup>7</sup> and for 1951, *Time*

<sup>5</sup> *Tide*, 18 (Mar. 1, 1944) 42, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Dixon Wecter, "The Bean Stalk of Pleasantville," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 29 (June 15, 1946) 15.

<sup>7</sup> "The Reader's Digest," *Fortune*, 14 (Nov., 1936) 131.



estimated its gross at between \$25,000,000 and \$30,000,000, its net at about \$1,500,000.<sup>8</sup>

So long as the *Digest* carried no advertising in its domestic edition, it was not required to make its circulation figures available. Its circulation was revealed for the first time in 1936 by *Fortune*. Although records for the early years were unreliable, *Fortune* put the circulation at 7,000 at the end of the magazine's first year, at 20,000 by 1925, and at 109,000 just before the *Digest* sought newsstand sales in 1929. From then through 1936, the total circulations as reported by *Fortune* were as follows:

Year	Circulation
1929	290,000
1930	369,000
1931	382,800
1932	401,100
1933	514,600
1934	852,200
1935	1,457,500
1936	1,801,400

Because the circulation of the *Reader's Digest* in the United States and Canada from 1937 through 1954 apparently has never before been published, the figures are included here in detail:<sup>9</sup>

Year	Newsstand	Sales	Subscriptions	Total
1937	793,000		2,195,000	2,988,000
1938	753,000		2,320,000	3,073,000
1939	764,000		2,333,000	3,097,000
1940	701,000		2,770,000	3,471,000
1941	939,000		2,752,000	3,691,000
1942	1,254,000		3,830,000	5,084,000
1943	2,598,000		5,161,000	7,759,000
1944	3,135,000		5,294,000	8,429,000
1945	2,998,000		5,771,000	8,769,000
1946	3,108,000		5,872,000	8,980,000
1947	2,081,000		8,056,000	10,137,000
1948	1,959,000		6,765,000	8,724,000
1949	1,726,000		7,387,000	9,113,000
1950	1,744,000		7,388,000	9,132,000

<sup>8</sup> *Time*, 58 (Dec. 10, 1951) 64.

<sup>9</sup> Average circulation for first six months of each year as reported by DeWitt Wallace and by Walter Weintz of the circulation staff in personal communications to the author.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Newsstand Sales</i>	<i>Subscriptions</i>	<i>Total</i>
1951	1,947,000	8,075,000	10,072,000
1952	1,968,000	8,314,000	10,282,000
1953	1,811,000	9,264,000	11,075,000
1954	1,500,000	9,777,000	11,277,000

The magazine that had been loath to seek newsstand sales began to expand its circulation into foreign lands when it inaugurated its international editions in 1938. The *Reader's Digest* introduced its foreign editions in rapid succession after it established an edition for Britain in 1938: a Spanish-language edition for Latin America in 1940, an edition in Portuguese for Brazil in 1941, Swedish and Arabic editions in 1943, a Finnish edition in 1945, Japanese and Danish editions in 1946, a South African edition in 1948. In all, the *Digest* had thirty foreign editions in twelve languages in 1955, and their total circulation was 7,282,000. The world circulation of the *Digest*, including the domestic edition, was then at least 17,697,000.

When Wallace started his international editions, he found that most readers in foreign countries could not afford to pay the equivalent of twenty-five cents for the *Digest*, its price on the stands in the United States. He cut the price of his foreign issues to fifteen cents and opened his international editions to advertising. Circulation and advertising lineage grew, and some foreign editions at times showed a small profit, but revenue from international operations as a whole did not keep up with rising production costs. At the end of 1950, the *Reader's Digest* for the first time broke even on its international operations.

The domestic edition of the *Digest* carried no paid advertising in its first thirty-three years. However, it did on occasion reprint, free, advertisements which its editors thought noteworthy; and from 1929 on, it did carry a number of "consumer articles" which evaluated widely distributed products and which no doubt affected the buying habits of thousands of Americans. For example, the *Digest* assessed leading brand cigarettes in July, 1942; ammoniated toothpastes in February, 1949; and a new wax for automobiles in June, 1950. Many advertisers quoted such articles, sometimes misleadingly, and used the *Digest* name as a seal of approval for their products. The magazine tried to stop the practice. It repeatedly explained to readers that it never granted per-

mission to advertisers using its name but that it was legally powerless to prevent their doing so. Advertisers were capitalizing on consumer articles in the *Digest* so extensively that at the end of 1950 *Tide*, the advertising trade magazine, devoted three pages to reviewing abuses of *Digest* copy by advertisers. An accompanying editorial called the practice "short-term thinking, opportunistic operating and gray-area advertising."<sup>10</sup>

The *Reader's Digest* broke its long policy against advertising with its issue of April, 1955. Rising costs had made it impossible for the magazine to operate on revenue from readers alone, according to Wallace, and a survey of readers had indicated that they preferred advertising to an increase in the price of the magazine. Wallace planned to limit advertising space to thirty-two pages an issue during the first year that the magazine carried advertising and to screen all advertising copy himself to make sure that it met the standards of the *Digest*. Advertisers at first were eager to use the magazine, but they soon lost some of their initial enthusiasm. The arbitrary limit which the magazine placed on advertising ill suited their fluctuating requirements. When advertising revenues declined, the *Digest* dropped its policy of restricting advertising to thirty-two pages an issue and opened 20 per cent of its total pages to advertisers. During its first year as an advertising medium, the magazine took in some \$11,700,000 from advertisers.

The alacrity with which advertisers quoted the *Reader's Digest* and rushed to its pages when it first opened them to advertising was a testimonial to the influence of the magazine. Thousands of middle-class Americans no doubt put a good deal of faith in the magazine. They found it a wholesome, conservative magazine, a magazine free for thirty-three years from the glib and ubiquitous voice of the advertiser, a magazine as inspiring as a good sermon. Interesting and informative, it praised the simple life, the life of neighborliness and good works, and its optimism never faltered. It was a secular magazine, but the overtones of evangelism in it were unmistakable.

Like the founders of the Reader's Digest Association, the young men who established Time, Inc., in 1922 were without professional

<sup>10</sup> *Tide*, 24 (Dec. 15, 1950) 13-15.

magazine experience and so were the editors who staffed the publication on which the company was built. Even after Time, Inc., had grown into one of the largest magazine publishing houses in the world and carried many experienced professionals on its staff, one could still detect traces of a spirit of amateurishness in its open-minded approach to publishing problems and procedures. Like the Wallaces of *Reader's Digest*, the founders of Time, Inc., had a strong streak of the missionary; indeed, one of them was the son of a missionary to China. As the *Reader's Digest* generated a whole new class of magazines, two publications of Time, Inc., were responsible for new classes—the news magazines and the picture magazines. The stories of those innovators, *Time* and *Life*, are told in a subsequent chapter which treats the classes of publications they inspired. In this chapter, the emphasis will be on the story of Time, Inc., as a publishing company, although obviously the stories of the company and its magazines cannot be sharply separated.

The men with a sense of mission who founded Time, Inc., in 1922, were Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce, both then twenty-four years old. Hadden, born in Brooklyn of well-to-do parents, had been interested in journalism since childhood, when he had entertained his family with epic poems and his schoolmates with a newspaper, the *Daily Glonk*. Educated at Hotchkiss and Yale, he had obtained a job on the New York *World* after telling Herbert Bayard Swope, who had tried to get rid of him, "Mr. Swope, you're interfering with my destiny." His destiny, as he explained it to Swope, was to start a publication of his own; the job on the *World* was to provide him with experience for starting it.<sup>11</sup>

Luce was born in Shantung, China, the son of Dr. Henry Winters Luce, a Presbyterian missionary who had founded two American universities in China and who required each member of his family to spend at least an hour a day in useful effort. Luce went to school in China, then to Hotchkiss and Yale. After a year at Oxford, he took a job as a legman and researcher for Ben Hecht, who was then a columnist for the *Chicago News*.

Hadden and Luce conceived the idea for what became *Time* at Yale, where they collaborated on managing the undergraduate newspaper. They nurtured the idea during service together at an

<sup>11</sup> Noel Busch, *Briton Hadden: A Biography of the Co-Founder of Time* (New York, 1949), pp. 44-45.



Birthplace of a magazine: In 1922, sharing a one-room office on the second floor of this brownstone building on East Seventeenth Street, in New York, Henry R. Luce and Briton Hadden “worked out the ideas” and wrote the original prospectus for their new magazine venture: *Time*.

officers' training camp in World War I, and they developed it further while working together on Frank Munsey's Baltimore *News*. Early in 1922 they quit their jobs on the *News* (with the understanding that they could return if their project failed) and set about raising money for a "paper" of their own which they referred to as *Facts*. That "paper" became *Time*, and they founded it on \$86,000 raised with the help of friends and acquaintances.

Although Hadden and Luce were without magazine experience before the first issue of *Time* appeared in March, 1923, they had a knowledge of publishing which they had picked up on their jobs and from persons in the business. As they sought advice on how to go about getting their publication to press, they appeared so inexperienced that people were glad to help them. A banker assisted in capitalizing their company, for instance; William Herbert Eaton, then circulation manager of *World's Work*, published by Doubleday, taught them the secrets of building a subscription list by direct-mail advertising, a system which *Time*, Inc., developed successfully and was still using in 1955.

And yet an amateurishness characterized the early years of *Time*. None of the small staff was more than three years out of college. The foreign news editor, Thomas J. C. Martyn, who later founded *Newsweek*, did his first professional writing for the initial issue of *Time*; Hadden and Luce, erroneously thinking him a foreign correspondent, had lured him from Rome at a salary larger than either of their own. Roy Larsen, the circulation manager, had been out of college but a year. His assistants were debutantes working for a lark; they got their mailing lists so mixed up that some subscribers received three copies of the first issue, none of the next two.

In appearance, too, *Time* was amateurish in its first few years. "Its printing standards," one executive of the company confessed years later, "were approximately those of a French provincial newspaper in 1910 and its pictures, in the words of the late Robert Benchley, looked as if they had been engraved on pieces of bread."<sup>12</sup> Early issues of *Time* carried few photographs because they were expensive, and the magazine was not printed on slick paper until near the end of the first year. Even then it was still

12 Eric Hodgins, *The Span of Time* (New York, 1946), p. 3.

printed in monotonous black and white; the first red-bordered cover and the first color advertising appeared just before its fourth anniversary.

The unprepossessing appearance of *Time* was in part the result of economy, for there was seldom enough money for comfort in those early years. Once, toward the end of the second year, cash on hand shrank to five thousand dollars, enough for only a few days' operations. And one evening when *Time* was nearly three years old, Luce walked for two hours in Bryant Park debating with a friend whether or not he and Hadden could afford to raise their own salaries to fifty dollars a week.

*Time* managed to survive partly no doubt because Hadden and Luce, who took turns editing and managing business affairs, obtained their raw news from an exceedingly inexpensive source—the daily newspapers, especially the *New York Times*. They clipped the papers and passed the items along to their staff for rewriting. They were able to get along with just a small staff. At times two men wrote 50 to 70 per cent of the magazine, and the entire full-time staff needed but a single taxi for the ride to the printer at press time.

In September, 1925, as an economy measure, Hadden and Luce moved the offices of *Time, Inc.*, from New York, where the company shared space in an East Side loft building with the infant *Saturday Review of Literature*, to Cleveland, Ohio, where rent and clerical help were cheaper. But they returned to New York in August, 1927, for two reasons. First, they missed the supply of adventuresome young intellectuals whom they could hire for comparatively small salaries in New York. Second, they missed up-to-date copies of the *New York Times*, indispensable to their coverage of the news.

Meanwhile, *Time, Inc.*, was growing, and its founders plowed its profits back into the business. In 1927 circulation of *Time*, 136,000, was about a third higher than that of the previous year; gross advertising revenue, \$501,000, was about 77 per cent higher. The following year circulation went up by almost another third, gross advertising revenue by about 54 per cent. There was no longer the slightest doubt as to the success of *Time, Inc.*, by 1930, when the company grossed more than \$3,000,000 in advertising and when it paid stockholders their first dividend on preferred stock.

But in 1929, Time, Inc., lost one of the men who had helped immeasurably to make it a success. On February 27, 1929, after an illness of two months, Briton Hadden died. What had he contributed to the new company? The estimate of his cousin and biographer, Noel Busch, himself a senior writer and former senior editor for Time, Inc., seems a fair one: "*Time* was, first of all, an invention pure and simple; and Hadden had a large part in designing it. Secondly, *Time* was a daring and well-organized business venture; and Hadden played an important part in that. . . . Finally, and perhaps most important of all, Hadden was a great editor. Notable performance in one such line of effort is much more than most people attain in a full lifetime. He attained notable performance in all three in less than half that space."<sup>13</sup>

As Time, Inc., became a profitable business, it added other publications to the news magazine on which the company had been built. Before Hadden's death, the company had started *Tide*, the advertising trade magazine. Hadden, serving his turn as business manager, thought there was a need for a magazine which would summarize the news of advertising as *Time* summarized general news. In April, 1927, the company brought out *Tide*, which resembled *Time* in format and news presentation. After Hadden's death, the executives of the company were too concerned with another new magazine, *Fortune*, to give *Tide* the attention it demanded. Time, Inc., sold *Tide* in late 1930 to Raymond Rubicam, cofounder of the Young and Rubicam advertising agency, who controlled the magazine until 1918. Then, as a step toward retirement, he sold his majority interest in *Tide* to four executives of the magazine.

The idea for *Fortune* came from Henry Luce, who also contributed its name. The business section of *Time* was necessarily so small that it could carry only a small amount of the material its staff produced. Luce suggested that the company start a magazine of restricted circulation to use this material which was being crowded out of *Time's* business pages. Time, Inc., established an experimental department in 1928 to work out plans for the new magazine, and by late 1929 the department had produced a trial dummy. "Business," the original prospectus said, "is the greatest single common denominator of interest among the active leading

<sup>13</sup> Busch, p. 107.





Founders and co-editors of *Time*, Briton Haddon (left) and Henry R. Luce (center), confer with printer William R. Hopkins over some of the early issues (circa 1925) of the weekly news magazine.

citizens of the U. S. . . . *Fortune's* purpose is to reflect Industrial Life in ink and paper and word and picture as the finest skyscraper reflects it in steel and architecture."

As Time, Inc., planned publication of *Fortune* for early 1930 and as it set its price at an unprecedented dollar a copy, the big bull market of the twenties collapsed. A few days after the market crash, executives of Time, Inc., met to decide whether or not readers and advertisers would accept a lush magazine dedicated to business, which was patently in trouble. They decided to proceed with plans for the magazine. "But we will not be over-optimistic," they said; "we will recognize that this business slump may last as long as an entire year."<sup>14</sup> And so the first issue of *Fortune*, dated February, 1930, was mailed to thirty thousand subscribers.

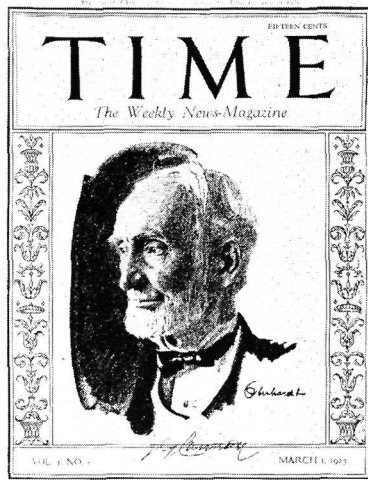
Despite the depression, *Fortune* gained in circulation and in advertising. Subscriptions increased from 34,000 in 1930 to 139,000 in 1936. In the same period, gross advertising revenues more than tripled; they rose from \$427,000 in 1930 to \$1,963,000 in 1936. Throughout World War II, the gains continued. Circulation went up from 162,000 in 1941 to about 269,000 in 1955. Gross advertising revenues, about \$2,052,000 in 1941, were \$6,875,000 in 1955.

Nevertheless, *Fortune*, while a publication of some prestige, contributed but a small part to the total income of Time, Inc. The company has seldom officially revealed the profits from *Fortune*, but one writer who studied the publication, William Lydgate, has estimated its earnings during the thirties.<sup>15</sup> In its first eight years, Lydgate estimated, *Fortune* earned a net of about \$1,300,000, approximately 15 per cent of the income of Time, Inc., from its publications in that period. His figures, all approximations, showed that the magazine lost \$150,000 in 1930, earned \$30,000 in 1931, lost \$30,000 in 1932, and broke even in 1933. For the remaining four years covered by his study, the magazine showed a profit: more than \$200,000 in 1934, more than \$400,000 in 1935, not quite \$400,000 in 1936, and \$498,000 in 1937. At midcentury, at least for a time, the magazine was said to have been losing money.

*Fortune* was an expensive magazine to produce. From its first issue, the company took pride in its fine printing, its many excel-

14 William A. Lydgate, "Romantic Business," *Scribner's*, 104 (Sept., 1938) 18.

15 Lydgate, p. 18.



lent illustrations, its carefully written and carefully researched articles. Confident in the accuracy of its contents, the editors in May, 1937, offered readers five dollars for every error of fact they could find. When the amount was raised to ten dollars, the editors received nearly a thousand letters. The editors allowed two "major errors," twenty-three "minor ones," and forty "small points." They paid out four thousand dollars, then withdrew their offer because of the time wasted in reading, checking, and answering the letters from readers.

The editorial approach that *Fortune* developed was influenced by Henry Luce. In the early thirties, he read a book by A. A. Berle and G. C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, which contended that all business, per se, was invested with a public interest. From that thesis, Luce developed *Fortune's* editorial approach, which sought to hold all business to constant public scrutiny.

One of the types of articles in which *Fortune* pioneered in the thirties was the detailed analysis of the policies, problems, structure, and finances of a single corporation. In time such articles became a standard feature of such other business magazines as *Forbes* and *Business Week*. Although *Fortune* did not entirely discontinue the corporation story, it sought fresher approaches to the coverage of business and industry. And soon after its founding, *Fortune* moved from an examination of big business to an examination of politics, government, and social questions in general. Dwight MacDonald, a former *Fortune* writer, believed that the magazine pushed leftward during the New Deal for several reasons. One was that Luce recognized that the New Deal was big news and that big business, for the time being, was not. Another reason was that many of the talented writers for *Fortune* were liberals. Still another was that as writers dug for facts, they became increasingly liberal even if they had not been at the start.<sup>16</sup> In the late thirties, a typical issue of *Fortune* dealt with such subjects as a single corporation, an entire industry, a wealthy or influential family, a foreign country, and a specific American locality.

Early in 1948 Luce outlined a plan for changing the familiar format and editorial pattern of *Fortune*. The "mission" of the

<sup>16</sup>Dwight MacDonald, "Fortune Magazine," *Nation*, 144 (May 8, 1937) 528.

redesigned *Fortune*, his memorandum said, was "to assist in the successful development of American Business Enterprise at home and abroad." The assignment of *Fortune*, in brief, was twofold: first, "to report, vividly and coherently, the moving story of American Business Enterprise," and, second, "to offer 'light and leading' for criticism, appreciation and problem-solving." The "new" *Fortune* appeared with the issue of October, 1948. Redesigned in typography and simplified in layout, it carried several new departments, including a "Business Roundup" which summarized and evaluated the leading developments of the past thirty days in American business, and more and shorter articles. It experimented with group biography, a single article about several leading businessmen or industrialists, and it viewed with perceptive eyes such subjects as executives' wives, industrial communications, and the rise of suburbia. With its issue of January, 1956, *Fortune* underwent additional changes. The cover was redesigned, the table of contents restyled, and the layout of the inside pages altered.

*Fortune* was a magazine devoted to business and industry in general; in April, 1932, Time, Inc., acquired a magazine devoted to a single industry, *Architectural Forum*. The magazine, which had begun publication as the *Bricklayer* in 1892 and which had been renamed *Architectural Forum* in 1917, was a professional journal exclusively for architects when Time, Inc., took it over. The inspiration for buying it came to Luce from Marriner Eccles, a financier who held positions in the Treasury Department and in the Federal Reserve System under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"Eccles said that the main line of attack against the depression would be in housing," Luce explained to a newspaper reporter a dozen years later. "*Fortune* had been started as a magazine for general business with a pull toward the over-all picture, and we thought we ought to have a magazine for a particular industry. Building was the biggest single industry in America, with tremendous potentialities. That was why we bought *Arch Forum*—at least that was the rationale. But it just didn't work out that way, and we never fully realized our ambitions."<sup>17</sup>

The original mission of *Architectural Forum* under Time, Inc., as its publishers expressed it in their prospectus, was "to bring

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Stewart, "The Education of Henry Luce," *PM*, 5 (Aug. 27, 1944) m9.

together, around the central art and science of architecture, all the influences which will build the new America." Gradually the magazine widened its editorial scope so that it covered not only architecture but all branches of the construction industry. As the purpose of the magazine broadened, its audience came to include not only architects but also builders, realtors, building owners, bankers, and government officials. In view of those developments, the name was changed in 1950 to *The Magazine of Building*. In January, 1952, the magazine was subdivided into two distinct publications. One, *Architectural Forum*, was edited for the heavy building industry. The other, *House and Home*, was edited for builders of residential homes, architects, and mortgage lenders.

In 1936 Time, Inc., developed *Life*, a picture magazine, the history of which is sketched in a later chapter, and in 1952 it began publication of *Life en Espanol*, a fortnightly Spanish-language edition of *Life*. After World War II, Luce and his associates experimented with what they called a "think magazine." Although they did not know exactly what they wanted the "think magazine" to be like, they had general notions of a publication of high intellectual caliber on the order of the old *Dial* or the contemporary *Partisan Review*. As described to stockholders in 1947, the proposed magazine would carry high quality articles about politics, philosophy, religion, and the arts in general. If the magazine were really good, Luce became convinced, it could find a six-figure audience, not one of just the fifteen thousand originally intended. But Luce and his staff were not satisfied with the magazine in experimental form, and they put the project in abeyance. They had "fussed" with it so much, Luce said, that they went stale.

The next new magazine of Time, Inc., was *Sports Illustrated*, a weekly reporter of "the wonderful world of sports," which first appeared in August, 1954, after more than a year of intensive experimentation. Originally the magazine was intended to cover the whole field of recreation; but that conception had been changed even before the first trial dummy went to press, and for months staff members referred to their forthcoming magazine as "Muscles."

Time, Inc., planned *Sports Illustrated* as a magazine for well educated, upper income readers and set a circulation goal of 450,000. An advance promotion campaign brought in 250,000 subscribers even before the magazine had a name, however, and sales



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tle big business." Judged by its net income, the company was a small operation indeed during the late twenties and early thirties. Its net was only \$3,860 in 1927, the year it returned to New York from Cleveland; \$125,787 in 1928; \$325,412 in 1929; and \$818,936 in 1930. Its net had grown to more than \$1,000,000 by 1933, to more than \$2,000,000 by 1935.

In addition to its magazines, Time, Inc., in 1955 owned real estate; radio and television stations in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Albuquerque; a large export business in magazines; an organization selling technical developments to the printing and allied trades; and sizable investments in paper-manufacturing concerns. One of its magazines, *Life*, led all American magazines in gross advertising revenues in 1955 with \$121,003,000; another, *Time*, was third with \$37,892,000. The gross revenue of the corporation in 1954 was \$178,156,000, and its net income after taxes was \$8,057,000—some \$3,540,000 more than the net of that old leader, Curtis Publishing Company. The company employed about 3,500 persons. It had moved from the Chrysler Building to the Time and Life Building in Rockefeller Center in the spring of 1938, but by the end of World War II it had expanded into other New York office buildings as well.

Before 1941, Time, Inc., had no correspondents or photographers of its own abroad, no staff members overseas except a few March of Time people in London and Paris. As a result of its expanded coverage and publishing activities abroad during World War II, it formed Time-Life International in 1945 as a division of the company to administer foreign news coverage and distribution of *Time* and *Life* magazines overseas. Activities of Time-Life International in 1955 were divided into editorial and business phases. The editorial side, called the Foreign Desk, supervised news-gathering and photography for Time, Inc., in foreign countries and was in charge of some 145 editorial bureau heads, correspondents, research workers, and photographers in eighteen cities around the world. The business side handled the distribution of four weekly international editions of *Time*, one fortnightly international edition of *Life*, and *Life en Espanol*. Time-Life International dealt with 188 countries, islands, and territories.

As Time, Inc., expanded into a global operation and took the world for its beat, another missionary was deliberately cultivating



a relatively small following and was focusing his editorial attention on a single city. Harold Ross and his *New Yorker* kept their eyes on New York; and although they regularly peered across the ocean at Europe and occasionally looked across the United States at Hollywood, they largely ignored the America west of the Hudson. Yet Ross's *New Yorker* was an influential magazine. It changed the character of American humor, introduced a new approach to magazine biography, and set high standards of reporting and thereby influenced the course of American journalism in general.

In 1952 when a newspaperman and magazine writer named Dale Kramer published a book which told the story of Harold Ross and his *New Yorker*, some of the persons most closely associated with the magazine disavowed the book on principle. No outsider, they insisted, could possibly handle the subject adequately. A number of writers before Kramer, some of them staff members of the *New Yorker*, had tried to tell what Ross was like. "Unfortunately, it is a story which nobody is able to tell," Russell Maloney, who had worked with Ross for eleven years, admitted in his own attempt in 1947. "No man . . . has been the subject of so much analysis, interpretation, and explanation with so little concrete results."<sup>18</sup>

For twenty-six years, from the first issue in February, 1925, until his death in December, 1951, the *New Yorker* was unmistakably the product of Harold Ross. He worked on every piece of copy which went into the magazine, apart from a few sports columns and foreign newsletters which came in over the weekend, Maloney recalled; and he stalked "through the dirty corridors of his editorial domain, gaunt, gap-toothed, his black hair tousled and his mouth agape like that of a man who has just established contact with a bad oyster, watching the next issue grow and arguing minute points of fact, taste, punctuation, or policy."

By all accounts, Ross was aloof, tactless, rude, given to outbursts of temper and profanity, a man with relatively few friends. Yet the friends he had were remarkably loyal; and he was indisputably a demanding editor, a meticulous one, a great one. The *New Yorker* reflected Ross's personality; but, curiously, his personality and that of the urbane, witty, sometimes acid *New Yorker* were totally unlike.

<sup>18</sup> Russell Maloney, "A Profile of the New Yorker," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 30 (Aug. 30, 1947) 8.

Harold Ross was not a native New Yorker, not even an Easterner. Born in Aspen, Colorado, in November, 1892, he moved to Salt Lake City with his family when he was seven. He never completed high school. At the end of his sophomore year, he quit school to take a job with the Salt Lake City *Tribune*; and as a young man of college age, he was a tramp newspaperman whose driftings took him to Sacramento, Atlanta, Panama City, New Orleans, and San Francisco. His biographer has described him as a "happy-go-lucky, poker-playing, hard-swearing" reporter, competent but not outstanding.<sup>19</sup> His newspaper associates in San Francisco nicknamed him "Rough House."

In 1917 Ross enlisted in the railway engineers' corps, was among the first American troops to arrive in France, and there went to an officers' training camp. But when he learned that a newspaper for enlisted men was to be published in Paris, he went absent without leave to get a job on it. He became editor of that newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, after leading a revolt which deposed the officer in charge of publication. The journalists with whom he worked on the paper and with whom he spent his off-duty hours at a restaurant in Montmartre included Alexander Woollcott, Franklin P. Adams, John Winterich, and Grantland Rice.

After the war, Ross edited *Home Sector*, a short-lived veterans' magazine staffed by former *Stars and Stripes* men, which tried unsuccessfully to capitalize on the wartime popularity of *Stars and Stripes* among the troops. From *Home Sector* he went to the editorship of the official publication of the American Legion, which he left for a brief term as editor of *Judge*. Meanwhile he was planning a magazine of his own. Meanwhile, too, he was admitted into the select circle of wits who lunched at the famous Round Table in the Algonquin Hotel—Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Marc Connelly, Franklin P. Adams, Edna Ferber, and a few others—and played poker with some of them on Saturday nights.

At one of the poker games Ross met wealthy Raoul Fleischmann, whose family had made a fortune from a bakery and yeast business. Fleischmann agreed to help finance Ross's projected magazine, a weekly of high quality humor and satire. The idea for the magazine seems to have grown out of Ross's experiences on *Stars and Stripes* and *Judge*, tempered by his association with the

19 Dale Kramer, *Ross and the New Yorker* (Garden City, 1951), p. 9.

Round Table sophisticates. Just as *Stars and Stripes* had been written by enlisted men for enlisted men and had shown no respect for officialdom, so the new magazine would be written by the urbane for their own kind and would make no concessions to a mass audience. The humor in *Judge* was broad and obvious because the magazine was addressed to a large audience, and it was often stale because of the big spread between deadline and publication date. By seeking a New York audience, the new magazine could be produced fast enough to preserve the freshness of its humor and commentary; more than that, it could publish what Ross thought was the most successful type of humor, humor with a local flavor like that in Franklin P. Adams' newspaper column.

Ross put his ideas for his magazine into a prospectus which, as it turned out, was a good description of the *New Yorker* during the twenty-six years of his editorship:

The *New Yorker* will be a reflection in word and picture of metropolitan life. It will be human. Its general tenor will be one of gaiety, wit and satire, but it will be more than a jester. It will not be what is commonly called sophisticated, in that it will assume a reasonable degree of enlightenment on the part of its readers. It will hate bunk.

As compared to the newspaper, the *New Yorker* will be interpretive rather than stenographic. It will print facts that it will have to go behind the scenes to get, but it will not deal in scandal for the sake of scandal nor sensation for the sake of sensation. Its integrity will be above suspicion. It hopes to be so entertaining and informative as to be a necessity for the person who knows his way about or wants to.

The *New Yorker* will be the magazine which is not edited for the old lady in Dubuque. It will not be concerned in what she is thinking about. This is not meant in disrespect, but the *New Yorker* is a magazine avowedly published for a metropolitan audience and thereby will escape an influence which hampers most national publications. It expects a considerable national circulation, but this will come from persons who have a metropolitan interest.<sup>20</sup>

Since Ross's interests were primarily editorial, his biographers have disagreed over whether or not he foresaw the commercial possibilities of his metropolitan magazine. There was no good reason that he should have overlooked them. In retrospect, the idea was simple enough: Through a local magazine, an advertiser could

20 Quoted in Kramer, pp. 61-63.

reach a sizable number of well-to-do consumers in the New York area with far less expense and waste circulation than he could through metropolitan newspapers or through national magazines. After readers outside of the city came to far outnumber those in New York, the magazine offered advertisers a screened circulation; and even then, advertisers who wished could still buy space in only a special New York edition. Simple as the idea seemed, it failed, as a later chapter will show, when publishers tried it in other large cities in imitation of the *New Yorker*.

The idea almost failed for Ross at first. He set to work translating his prospectus into the words and drawings of a first issue, and to help him he had a staff consisting only of Philip Wylie, Tyler Bliss, an advertising salesman, two secretaries, and a telephone switchboard operator. The first issue appeared on February 19, 1925. By general agreement, it was terrible. Ross knew little about New York, lacked the sort of material he wanted to publish, and did not have the ability to write it himself. He hoped for an eventual circulation of 50,000 to 70,000. His first issue sold 15,000 copies, his third 12,000, his fourth 10,500. Circulation had dropped to 8,000 by April, and the magazine was losing eight thousand dollars a week. Fleischmann, after a conference to decide the fate of the magazine, announced on May 9 that he was withdrawing from the enterprise, a decision which meant the death of the magazine as he was underwriting its losses; but the next day he changed his mind and agreed to keep the magazine going a few months longer while a search was made for fresh capital.

Ross had originally estimated that the *New Yorker* could be started on \$50,000. He had contributed \$20,000 and had drawn only a third of his salary; Fleischmann had furnished \$25,000. Their first issues, which were scanty of advertising as well as of circulation, rapidly depleted their initial capital. Its backers invested \$225,000 in the *New Yorker* during its first year of publication, and Fleischmann provided all but \$35,000 of that sum. A total of \$710,000—\$550,000 from Fleischmann alone—went into the *New Yorker* before the magazine began paying its own way in 1928. The magazine prospered as it grew older; its net profits in 1954 were \$955,000.

When Fleischmann gave the *New Yorker* its reprieve, Ross, aware that his Round Table friends could not fill the magazine in their leisure time, began building up a staff which, as it enlarged,

included Ralph Ingersoll, who later went to Time, Inc., and then on to the newspaper *PM*; Morris Markey, whom Ross lured away from *Collier's*; Joseph Moncure March; Lois Long; and Corey Ford, a frequent contributor to *Vanity Fair*. Getting the sort of staff he wanted was a frantic business; Ross is said to have fired about a hundred staff members in the first year and a half of the magazine's existence. The week after the first issue appeared, Fleischmann had sought assistance from John Hanrahan, a publishers' consultant and "magazine doctor," who offered to help manage the *New Yorker* in exchange for stock in the company. Hanrahan has been credited with recruiting personnel for all departments other than editorial and with having a strong hand in a series of advertisements which promoted the *New Yorker* among advertising men in the fall of 1925.

In the fall of 1925 there were signs that the *New Yorker* would survive. Legend credits a series of articles by Ellin Mackay, a young society woman, with establishing the success of the magazine. Miss Mackay was the rebellious daughter of Clarence H. Mackay, president of Postal Telegraph, and she had decided to become a writer. She sent the *New Yorker* a manuscript written in longhand and impressively bound in leather. Ross had staff members rewrite the article, then ran it under the title "Why We Go to Cabarets," with the subtitle "A Post-Debutante Explains." Miss Mackay's explanation was that society girls frequented cabarets to escape the stag lines of society affairs. Newspapers reprinted parts of the article because it was somewhat iconoclastic and because its author was a member of high society, and the result was a good deal of publicity for the *New Yorker*. Miss Mackay wrote additional articles for the magazine before she caused another stir by marrying Irving Berlin, the song writer, against her father's wishes. Her articles supposedly brought the *New Yorker* to the attention of the Park Avenue set. Whether they did or not, the *New Yorker* ended 1925 with a rising circulation and a growing number of advertising contracts.

In its early years the *New Yorker* acquired some of the staff members whose names were associated with it at midcentury. E. B. White, a graduate of Cornell who had served unhappily in an advertising agency, joined the staff in 1926. James Thurber, a native of Columbus, Ohio, was hired away from a newspaper in 1927 and thereafter brightened the pages of the *New Yorker* with prose

and sketches. By ruthless hiring and firing, Ross found the other editors, writers, and artists he wanted: Katharine Angell, who married E. B. White in 1929, Alva Johnston, Wolcott Gibbs, John O'Hara, S. J. Perelman, Ogden Nash, Helen Hokinson, O. Soglow, Peter Arno.

It was a staff whose escapades provided an unending succession of anecdotes about the *New Yorker*. Ross, intrigued by the weekly editorial teas of *Punch*, established a private speakeasy to create a bond between the *New Yorker* and its contributors. One morning the employee who opened it discovered two contributors of opposite sexes stretched out in a stupor, and Ross permanently closed down the establishment. Another day Ross was acquainting a new managing editor with office routine. "I am surrounded," he complained, "by idiots and children." Just then a copy boy rushed in shouting, "Mr. Thurber is standing on a ledge outside the window and threatening to commit suicide." Ross turned to the new editor. "See?" A man in the financial district once submitted an essay by Stephen Leacock as his own contribution. The *New Yorker* published it without recognizing it as Leacock's. Ross and Wolcott Gibbs soon learned of the plagiarism, but they took no legal action against the offender. Instead they requested that he write a financial letter each week. They returned each of his weekly contributions with a note saying that the article was not quite what they wanted but that he was getting close.

Working for the *New Yorker* as editor or staff writer, Russell Maloney concluded after eleven years of it, was "physically debilitating, mentally exhausting, and a form of social suicide." It was not just the escapades which made it so; it was Ross's insistence upon perfection. For Ross, perfection was "not a goal or an ideal, but something that belongs to him, like his watch or his hat."<sup>21</sup>

Ross's mania for perfection was exemplified in the Profile, a term registered by the *New Yorker* to designate its probing biographical studies. The Profiles developed from casual sketches of Manhattan personalities into detailed dissections of character and motives. Their development, Wolcott Gibbs once observed, was "the story of Ross' ferocious curiosity about people—struggling against the mechanical limitations of a fifteen-cent magazine and

<sup>21</sup> Maloney, p. 29.

the lethargy of authors generally. . . ." <sup>22</sup> The Profile became a distinctive form of biography. Clifton Fadiman has suggested that the Profile was perhaps no less specific a form of composition than the familiar essay, the sonnet, or the one-act play. <sup>23</sup>

Profiles in the early years were, as the term literally suggests, offhand impressions of the subject which an author could report and write in a few days. As Ross sought perfection, the Profile became increasingly long and complex. By the end of World War II, it was not unusual for a reporter to devote five months to preparing a single Profile—three months to collecting his facts, one month to writing his article, and another month to revising it for publication. Ross was no longer content with mere outlines of character; he demanded "a family history, bank references, urinalysis, catalogue of household possessions, names of all living relatives, business connections, political affiliations." <sup>24</sup>

The Profiles, without doubt, helped to improve the quality of magazine biography generally and demonstrated that a person need be neither successful nor significant to be worthy of treatment. Before the *New Yorker*, magazines had run biographies of successful businessmen, the lives of historical figures, sentimental sketches of lovable characters; but the *New Yorker* gave attention to persons who, to use Clifton Fadiman's words, had "made a success, not of their bank-balances, but of their personalities." <sup>25</sup> Subjects of the Profiles were sometimes eminent citizens, sometimes raffish characters from New York's byways, sometimes persons of accomplishment, sometimes persons of doubtful integrity; but all of them, as Fadiman noted, had one common quality: their personalities were decided, were literally outstanding. Reporters conveyed not just a surface impression of those persons but explored deep into their characters in a manner of which Plutarch would have doubtlessly approved.

Because of Ross's obsession for completeness, accuracy, and lucidity, the *New Yorker* established a checking system comparable perhaps only to the research department of Time, Inc. Checkers examined and re-examined every fact that went into the

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in John Drewry, "A Study of New Yorker Profiles of Famous Journalists," *Journalism Quarterly*, 23 (Dec., 1946) 372.

<sup>23</sup> Clifton Fadiman, "Introduction," *Profiles from the New Yorker* (New York, 1938), p. vi.

<sup>24</sup> Maloney, p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> Fadiman, p. vi.

magazine. Nor could writing that satisfied Ross be done hastily. In the mid-twenties, Fillmore Hyde could write the entire three-thousand words of the "Talk of the Town" department in a single afternoon, but in 1947 four reporters devoted their entire working week to it.

The *New Yorker* influenced American journalism all out of proportion to its relatively small circulation, about 396,000 in 1955. Perhaps no other magazine in a similar period published as many articles, stories, cartoons, and verses that later appeared in book form. Any listing of such books—and each year brought a fresh dozen or so—would be purely arbitrary; but among them were Clarence Day's *Life with Father*, James Thurber's *My Life and Hard Times*, Sally Benson's *Junior Miss*, Leonard Q. Ross's *The Education of H\*y\*m\*a\*n K\*a\*p\*l\*a\*n*, Ruth McKenney's *My Sister Eileen*, John O'Hara's *Pal Joey*, John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, to which the magazine unprecedentedly devoted an entire issue on 1946, and Rebecca West's *A Train of Powder*. At one time in 1941, four comedies based on *New Yorker* pieces were simultaneously hits on Broadway: *Mr. and Mrs. North*, *Pal Joey*, *Life with Father*, and *My Sister Eileen*.

Although the *New Yorker* was not a "funny" magazine, it raised the level of American humor. It showed that humor could take other forms than the traditional "he-she" jokes. Ross's prejudice against that sort of humor was so strong that he published one such joke, its lines transposed, in each anniversary issue:

*Pop*: A man who thinks he can make it in par.

*Johnny*: What is an optimist, pop?

The *New Yorker* helped to popularize the cartoon in which the caption was intimately related to the picture. Cartoons in *Judge* and the old *Life* were merely appendages to two-line jokes which could have stood without illustration. Ross developed the one-line caption, made pointed by rewriting, and he insisted that readers know at a glance what character in the picture was speaking.

In less apparent fashion, the conscientious reporting by Rebecca West, Alva Johnston, Joseph Mitchell, Richard Rovere, St. Clair McKelway, John Hersey, Lillian Ross, A. J. Liebling, Daniel Lang, E. J. Kahn, Jr., and others surely affected the standards of American journalism. Richard Watts, Jr., succinctly expressed the essence of the *New Yorker's* reportage:



It doesn't encourage the stuffed shirts and it has a warm place in its heart for the more amiable misfits; it certainly isn't radical, but it can give the reactionaries an expert dressing down; it is often annoyingly supercilious, but it likewise can be perceptive and understanding. Best of all, it not only has a frequent kind of frank honesty which the newspapers too often lack, but it is so professionally skillful that it impresses the journalistic journeymen it tends to despise and serves as a good example for them. I suspect it of being the most forceful influence in American newspaper writing today.<sup>26</sup>

Another missionary who influenced American journalism, although not in the same sense that Ross did, established Macfadden Publications, Inc. The company had its origins in a magazine which was published before the century opened, but the firm did not flourish until after World War I, a few years before Wallace, Luce, and the other missionaries started their publications. Its founder was Bernarr Macfadden, a curious combination of missionary and merchant—a zealot who contended that man could live to the age of 125 if he followed the Macfadden doctrines of healthful living which he ardently practiced and tempestuously publicized; a merchant of magazines and newspapers who had a rare genius for discerning latent mass tastes and satisfying them with superficialities, sex, and sensation.

To propagate his principles of healthful living, Macfadden established the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation, Inc., with a grant of five million dollars. Its properties, which he directed as unsalaried president, in 1950 included a physical culture hotel, a sanitarium, several summer camps, a military academy, and other holdings. In 1931 he opened five Penny Restaurants in New York, Washington, and Chicago at which diners could order health-giving foods at low prices. One could buy complete dinners for a dime and servings of soup, codfish, hominy, beans, prunes, and bread for a penny each.

As a merchant of magazines and newspapers, Macfadden originated the confession magazine and true detective magazine; he poured upon newsstands a stream of periodicals bearing such titles as *True Story*, *True Romances*, *True Experiences*, *True Ghost Stories*, *True Proposals*, *True Strange Stories*, *Dream World*, *Brain Power*, *Muscle Builder*, *Modern Marriage*, *Radio*

<sup>26</sup> Richard Watts, Jr., "Reporters at Large," *New Republic*, 117 (Aug. 25, 1947) 28.

*Stories, True Lovers, Dance, Movie Weekly*, and *Midnight*, several of which reformers and critics charged with prurience and literary incompetence; and he gave New York its most blatantly sensational tabloid newspaper in an era of blatant sensationalism, the *Graphic*, which New Yorkers nicknamed "the Pornographic" and which once instructed its reporters to "bear in mind that from now on it is a waste of time to write a story that cannot stand up under a sensational head."

With some justification, one could categorize Bernarr Macfadden the publisher as merchant rather than as missionary. Yet Macfadden himself professed to see no cleavage between his roles of crusader and publisher. "My publications, my sanitariums, all my plans and projects have been directed toward one purpose," he told lecture audiences, "to bring health and joy through exercise, diet, and the simple life."<sup>27</sup> He used his publications as vehicles for his views on health, and he used their profits to advance his cause. Minority stockholders instituted suits in 1940 to recover funds that Macfadden, as president and chairman of the board, had allegedly spent on the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation and on other activities not directly related with the company. As a result, Macfadden withdrew from the company the following year, and a group of employees took control of it. At the time friends said that Macfadden had regarded his publishing business and other activities so closely interrelated that he thought funds from one might justifiably be spent on the other.

Macfadden listed his occupation in *Who's Who* as "physical culturist," not as publisher; but he used his publications as organs for carrying his convictions to the large audience they attracted. And his audience was vast; the total circulation of his magazines in 1935 was 7,355,000, greater than the total magazine circulation of Crowell, Curtis, or Hearst. Macfadden urged his system of healthful living on his readers in articles and editorials which he turned out prolifically. He was interested in his readers' politics as well as in their physiques. He bought *Liberty* in 1931 and publicized Franklin D. Roosevelt as a Presidential candidate by running seventeen articles about him within a year. (Later he himself aspired to the Presidency.) In 1932 he launched a short-lived magazine for young parents, *Babies: Just Babies*, with Mrs.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Lewis Taylor, "Physical Culture: I," *New Yorker*, 26 (Oct. 14, 1950) 46.

Eleanor Roosevelt and her daughter as editors. His choice of editors, according to Mary Macfadden, who was then his wife, was governed by his hope that Mrs. Roosevelt would use her influence to help him achieve a long-held ambition, the creation of a Secretary of Health in the Cabinet.<sup>28</sup> Even in his sensational tabloid, the *Graphic*, he advocated his principles of physical culture, which dictated matters of basic policy.

Bernarr Macfadden was born of impoverished parents on a run-down farm near Mill Spring, Missouri, in 1868. He was a scrawny child, given to fits of coughing and to running high temperatures. His childhood was one of toil, he recalled in 1950, and he seldom had enough to eat. His sisters were sent off to live with neighbors or relatives. He was packed off to a small boarding school as miserable as anything in Dickens and then, after a period of heavy work at home on the farm, was sent away to Illinois to help out at a hotel run by relatives of his mother. For some time he worked long hours carrying luggage, emptying slops, blackening shoes. Then his relatives bound him out as laborer to a farmer in the vicinity. His work was heavy, his hours long, his employer niggardly and unsympathetic; but Macfadden grew in strength on the farm. He ran away when he was twelve.

Macfadden became fascinated by a gymnasium in St. Louis, where he was working while still a boy. He was too poor to patronize it, but it inspired him to buy a set of dumbbells and exercise in his room. From then on Macfadden dedicated his life to health. In later years he gloried in exhibiting his physical prowess by dictating while standing on his head; by walking barefoot from his home to office, sometimes toting a forty-pound bag of sand; by parachuting from an airplane to celebrate his eighty-first, eighty-third, and eighty-fourth birthdays.

The Macfadden publishing company grew from a small magazine which Macfadden brought out in March, 1899. Its slogan was "Weakness is a Crime: Don't be a Criminal," and its cover bore photographs of "Prof. B. Macfadden in Classical Poses." Macfadden had conceived the magazine a few months earlier while he was touring England demonstrating his physique and lecturing on physical culture. He had hawked a four-page booklet on health, and so many customers had asked if it were a periodical that he

<sup>28</sup> Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips* (New York, 1953), pp. 299-300.



had concluded that a magazine about physical fitness had commercial possibilities.

*Physical Culture*, the magazine, which Macfadden wrote entirely by himself at first, took the line that exercise and diet could cure any illness. It fought such "terrible evils" as prudery, corsets, muscular inactivity, gluttony, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Reformers and crusaders against vice assailed the magazine, and the medical profession from time to time denounced it as a pernicious influence. *Hygeia*, a popular magazine published by the American Medical Association, in its issue of November, 1924, for instance, declared that *Physical Culture* was "an outstanding example of the money that is to be made from catering to ignorance" and called it a magazine "devoted to fantastic and bizarre fads."

*Physical Culture* sold well despite such attacks, perhaps because of them, for they called the attention of the public to the magazine. Three years after the magazine first appeared, Macfadden reported a circulation of 150,000, which had grown by only about a thousand in 1919 when Macfadden struck riches by bringing out *True Story*.

Of all the publications which Macfadden owned, *Physical Culture* seems to have been the closest to his heart. It remained true to his principles of health as long as he owned it, although it underwent several metamorphoses; and it was the one magazine which he repurchased after he parted with the company he had formed.

The editorial approach and even the name of *Physical Culture* were changed several times in its history. In the early twenties, the magazine concentrated on stories telling how famous persons kept fit. It enlarged its appeal in the late twenties by adding fiction and departments on homemaking, foods, and beauty. In the early thirties, it aped the general monthlies and ran fiction by popular authors like Warwick Deeping and Harold Bell Wright, although it still clung to its original mission of health. The title was changed to *Beauty and Health* in 1941, after Macfadden had left the company, and the publication was transformed into a women's magazine which forsook its traditional hostility to medical science. The company suspended the magazine shortly thereafter because of the war. Macfadden soon bought it back and reissued it in pocket size in 1943 as *Physical Culture*. In 1950 he

changed its name to *Bernarr Macfadden's Health Review*, its policy to "Not Merely Muscles, But Health." Under the name *Bernarr Macfadden's Journal*, the magazine continued to reach some twenty thousand readers in 1954.

In 1919 Macfadden fathered *True Story*, the first of the confession magazines, as related in a subsequent chapter; and as it brought money pouring into the company, he tried out one new magazine after another. Macfadden was publishing ten magazines and ten newspapers at his peak in about 1930, and his fortune was estimated at roughly thirty million dollars. He made big use of the melodrama on which *True Story* was based in most of his magazines. The director of research for Macfadden Publications, Inc., in 1952 offered an explanation for the popularity of the company's magazines. They appealed, he said, to wage earners as distinguished from salary earners.

The reason that Macfadden magazines and their imitators have been so outstandingly successful is because they know how to talk to these people in terms of their own understanding and interest. We give our readers what they want, and they continually tell us that they want "stories about nice common people and what happens to them," "stories about our sort of people," "stories of people we understand." . . . Our magazines are indeed read by some who have moved up from wage earner to white collar families . . . but whose interests are still those of their social class.<sup>29</sup>

Although it had been a highly profitable concern, Macfadden Publications, Inc., began running in the red in 1938 when it showed a deficit of some \$200,000. Its losses were reported as \$518,775 in 1940. That same year stockholders filed suits against Bernarr Macfadden; and the following year, under an agreement approved by the court, he retired from management and was succeeded as president by O. J. Elder, who had been associated with him since 1903. When Elder took over, current assets were about \$2,800,000, liabilities were \$2,350,000, and working capital was \$450,000. In 1944 he rearranged the capital stock of the company. After 1943 the company ceased to operate at a loss; but from 1945 through 1954, its net income declined steadily—from \$950,000 to \$157,000—although its gross rose from \$13,280,000 to \$15,842,000.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication to author from Everett R. Smith, Director of Research, Macfadden Publications, Inc.

The company came under new management in early 1951. Irving S. Manheimer, who had made a fortune exporting old magazines abroad and who had formed the Publishers Distributing Corporation in 1939, had been quietly buying up Macfadden stock for the previous year and a half; and in February, 1951, along with three other stockholders, he emerged with working control of the company. Elder resigned as president. Manheimer dismissed 170 employees, instituted a number of economies, and reviewed the policies and potentialities of the various Macfadden magazines.

The company that Manheimer took over published ten magazines. It distributed magazines for a number of other periodical publishers and pocket-sized books for the Garden City Publishing Company, a subsidiary of Doubleday. Its own subsidiaries included Macfadden Publications International Corporation, formed in 1946 to develop editions of Macfadden magazines abroad, and Empee, Inc., also formed in 1946, an agency for selling magazine subscriptions.

When Bernarr Macfadden left the company, he agreed not to enter into direct competition with its magazines for five years. He began publishing *Physical Culture* in 1941, as noted; and in 1946, at the end of the stipulated period, he was full of plans for magazines which would form a new publishing company in which his two sons would be associates—a detective magazine, a love story magazine, a radio magazine. His new magazine empire failed to blossom. So did a vast chain of hotels which he had intended to forge when he bought the Arrowhead Springs Hotel in California in 1950. But almost until his death, Macfadden was as active as ever. At the age of eighty, he remarried, only to become estranged from his wife a few years later, and at eighty-two he was taking singing lessons. He died in October, 1955, at eighty-seven.

In seeking reasons for the success of those four publishing companies, one might look for common denominators in their histories. First, the magazines which led to the formation of those four companies were all designed for markets that had been previously overlooked or inadequately served. *Reader's Digest* and *Time* were established on the assumption that the busy and thoughtful reader of the fast-paced twenties would appreciate a magazine which condensed and simplified for him the ever-mounting mass of printed communications. The *New Yorker* was estab-

at the end of six months' publication were some 575,000 an issue. The magazine was slower in acquiring advertising volume. Just before its first Christmas, when publications such as the *New Yorker* were bulging with advertising, *Sports Illustrated* carried fewer than a dozen pages of advertisements an issue. It completed 1954 with gross advertising revenues of about **\$1,172,000**. Company spokesmen explained that the magazine had been launched so late in the year that advertisers had already allocated their 1954 budgets. The company expected *Sports Illustrated* to gross \$10,000,000 in its first year. In March, 1955, it could foresee half of that sum coming from subscriptions and sales, and by increasing the advertising sales staff of the magazine from twenty-nine to forty men, it hoped to achieve its goal. However, it almost certainly did not make it, as the magazine ended 1955 with advertising revenues of \$2,947,000.

As *Sports Illustrated* was published in three regional editions, it could tap three levels of advertising—national, regional, and local. By gaining experience in publishing regional editions, the company may have been building up insurance for *Life*; for if the tremendous circulation of *Life* should ever price it out of the advertiser's market, as some observers warned that it might, regional editions might be one way of keeping a high volume of advertising.

Through its editorial staff of eighty-five, augmented by freelance contributors, *Sports Illustrated* reported not only the usual spectator sports—football, basketball, boxing, baseball—but took its readers, by word and picture, on mountain-climbing expeditions, fox hunts, big-game hunts, and field trials. The magazine sought well-known authors. William Faulkner covered hockey and the eighty-first Kentucky Derby for it; John P. Marquand wrote a satirical series on country clubs; John Steinbeck wrote about fishing. The magazine ran a much discussed series showing the connection between boxing and racketeering. Its approach seemed to attract a devoted circle of readers. Yet some of the missionary zeal which had characterized the early *Time* and *Life* seemed absent from *Sports Illustrated*. And in undertaking to cover the most thoroughly reported of all American activities, sports, it had a difficult time adding the intimate, undisclosed detail which had given *Time* much of its freshness.

During World War II and in the postwar years, Time, Inc., in the words of its staff, grew from "a big little business" into "a lit-



lished on the assumption that a small group of discriminating people would appreciate a magazine written by persons of their own kind and that advertisers would welcome an economical means of reaching such a market. *True Story* pioneered among persons who probably had seldom read magazines before. Advertisers were not especially interested in reaching them, as their purchasing power was low, and publishers largely ignored them.

Second, those magazines strongly reflected the personalities of their publishers. The *Reader's Digest* clearly mirrored the personality of DeWitt Wallace, who once remarked, "I simply hunt for things that interest me, and if they do, I print them."<sup>30</sup> Even after Time, Inc., had grown into a large company, its publications bore the stamp of Henry Luce, who expected his employees to agree with him on fundamentals; for, as he said in a speech at the University of Oregon in February, 1953: "There is plenty of room for wide differences of opinion and of taste—under a roof supported by a few pillars of conviction. But these differences should never be evaded. When basic differences of conviction are made clear, the men who wish to be both honorable and free will part company. We are called to be the servants of truth: Let us serve it together when we can, and separately when we must." The *New Yorker* showed the hand of Harold Ross, who worked over almost every word that went into it. The touch of Bernarr Macfadden was evident in all his magazines.

Third, those magazines, with the exception of the *Reader's Digest*, changed constantly as conditions and reading tastes changed. James Linen, a key official of *Time*, remarked in 1953, "*Time* today is completely different from *Time* in the forties. That *Time* was totally different from *Time* in the thirties. And so on back." Ernest Havemann, a writer for *Life*, said, "There is no such thing as a *Life* magazine. There have been eight or nine of them."<sup>31</sup> So it was too with the *New Yorker*, *Physical Culture*, *True Story*.

Fourth, most of these enterprises were characterized by good business management. If the founders themselves were not especially interested in the business side of publishing, they became associated with men who were.

Finally, promotional activities played roles of varying importance in the rapid growth of the companies. The *New Yorker* first

30 *Time*, 68 (Dec. 10, 1951) 64.

31 "Life with Time," *Forbes*, 72 (Aug. 15, 1953) 15.

won acceptance after a series of newspaper advertisements, for instance, and it was promoted consistently if somewhat quietly thereafter. The promotional activities of Time, Inc., were extensive, and the company turned even misfortune into prestige advertising—the five million dollars that it lost when the circulation of *Life* outran advertising rates. The exploits of Bernarr Macfadden constantly kept his periodicals before the public.

Apart from those common denominators, those companies no doubt benefited from conditions beneficial to the magazine industry as a whole. One was the emergence of advertising as a major tool of business. The three of those companies which depended on advertising for support were all founded within a few years of one another in the twenties when expenditures on advertising in magazines were more than triple what they had been before America entered World War I. Another was the upsurge in education. The appearance of *Time* and the *New Yorker* coincided with the enlarged college enrollments after World War I, and the *Reader's Digest* and *Life* no doubt drew much of their audience from the increasing number of high school graduates. Finally, it is quite possible that success bred success for each of those companies. As a publication began to succeed, no doubt advertisers and readers were attracted to it, and its success increased.

## *chapter 9*    New Leaders: The Merchants

Perhaps the largest number of publishers who founded magazines after World War I were essentially merchants. Unlike the missionaries of the preceding chapter, they championed no causes, secular or religious. For them, magazine publishing was a business, no more, and their primary aim was profit, a legitimate goal.

They pursued their goal with different degrees of commercialism and with different degrees of social responsibility. Some of them published magazines of high quality ; others published almost anything which turned a quick profit.

They sought their profit by different methods. Some of them, like Condé Nast and David A. Smart, looked for it in the volume of advertising which could be attracted by sleekly elegant magazines edited for a small number of luxury-loving readers. Others, like the Fawcetts and George T. Delacorte, Jr., appealed to mass audiences with magazines edited at a low level of sophistication and depended on circulation as much as on advertising for their revenue.

Some of the merchants developed only a few magazines and built them into stable properties. Others were among the most prolific of publishers. They brought out one new magazine after another.

watched every fluctuation in sales on the newsstands, promoted the magazines which showed promise of success, and abruptly killed the ones which did not.

Some of the merchants were blessed with originality, but many of them—probably most—were not. Since their primary ambition was profit, they preferred the tried to the untried; they were inclined to be highly imitative, to copy the successful innovations of the missionaries and of one another.

In this chapter, we will study the operations of four publishing companies which grew into prominence after World War I: Condé Nast Publications, Inc.; Esquire-Coronet, Inc.; Fawcett Publications, Inc.; and the Dell Publishing Company.

The companies no more resembled one another than those of of the four missionaries whose stories were recounted in the preceding chapter, yet all of them seem to have had one common characteristic: they were guided by men who were merchants.

One must set Condé Nast apart from the other merchant publishers. Through his magazines, he coached Americans in high fashion and gracious living for more than thirty years before he died in his twenty-room penthouse on Park Avenue in September, 1942. His magazines, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House and Garden*, were addressed to a relatively few discriminating readers, in contrast to the confession and movie magazines with which some merchants sought their fortunes among a mass audience. In his private life, he lived in a world far from the balance sheets of business. A worldly wise esthete, he moved in a circle of royalty, statesmen, socialites, and artists. A courtly host, he entertained hundreds of persons at a time at elaborate parties, dances, and dinners in his luxurious apartment. There was something almost regal about his gestures. He once hid a gold coin, \$500 in all, under each chocolate in a box of candy he sent Edna Woolman Chase of *Vogue* as a Christmas gift. Another time he dropped Mrs. Chase a note saying that in appreciation of her work he had set aside \$100,000 "to use for embroidery" on the home she was building, although Mrs. Chase collected but \$25,000 before Nast's financial reverses during the depression.

In his private life and in publishing, Condé Nast was a perfectionist. He himself planned the most minute details of his apartment; he invariably asked his golf partners to call his defects to his attention, and he once had a movie made of himself so he

could analyze the shortcomings of his slice. He often worked a full weekend at his office to overcome some minor problem of layout. He spent \$350,000 landscaping the grounds of his printing plant in Connecticut. He surrounded himself with cultured editors who could endow his publications with smartness and quality. He offered his readers the prose of Gertrude Stein, William Bolitho, Ferenc Molnar, and Willa Cather; the photography of Edward Steichen and Cecil Beaton; the paintings of Seurat and Modigliani.

And yet for Condé Nast magazine publishing was frankly a business, not a crusade. As a publisher, he once remarked, he was but a name broker who attracted a selected audience with his editorial fare and sold advertisers access to it. What he and his editors did, he said, was to "bait the editorial pages in such a way as to lift out of all the millions of Americans just the hundred thousand cultivated persons who can buy these quality goods."<sup>1</sup>

Condé Nast was born in New York in March, 1874, and reared in St. Louis. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Georgetown University and a law degree at Washington University. He had been a classmate of Robert J. Collier at Georgetown; in 1901, while he was still trying to decide whether or not to practice law, Collier gave him a job at \$12 a week as advertising manager of *Collier's*, then a skimpy weekly with a circulation of 170,000. Under Nast, who had a flair for promotion, advertising income shot from \$5,500 a year to \$1,000,000 a year in less than a decade. Nast was business manager of *Collier's* at a salary of \$40,000 a year in 1907 when he quit to go into business for himself.

While still at *Collier's*, as a personal venture, he organized the Home Pattern Company to manufacture and sell dress patterns under an arrangement with the *Ladies' Home Journal*. The company was soon successful, but it was not Nast's idea of the way to make a fortune.

He became a magazine publisher in 1909 when he bought *Vogue*, a weekly of 22,500 circulation, and *House and Garden*, a publication devoted to architecture, decoration, and horticulture. *Vogue* had begun publication in December, 1892, as a weekly magazine of fashion, society, and "the ceremonial side of life" for a small

<sup>1</sup>*Time*, 40 (Sept. 28, 1942) 51-52.

circle of socially elite New Yorkers, and its fifty-six backers included Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, and Mrs. William D. Sloan. Its founder was Arthur Baldwin Turnure, a socialite. The magazine was taking in some \$100,000 a year in advertising when Nast bought it, but it was probably operating at a slight loss.

Nast saw in *Vogue* a chance to test his theory, developed while he was an advertising man, that there was a place for a medium which would bring together without waste circulation the persons who could afford luxury goods and the persons who wished to sell them. Unlike most publishers of his time, who were after large circulations, he was after a selective one. He explained his idea by analogy: "If you had a tray with 2,000,000 needles on it and only 150,000 of these had gold tips which you wanted, it would be an endless and costly process to weed them out. Moreover, the 1,850,000 which were not gold tipped would be of no use to you, they couldn't help you, but if you could get a magnet that would draw out only the gold ones what a saving!"<sup>2</sup> *Vogue* was to be such a magnet.

Nast made little change in *Vogue* in his first years of ownership apart from converting it to semimonthly publication. His idea was to retain its appeal to the wealthy and socially elite but to widen its services, to improve its physical appearance, and to improve the caliber of its content. In the thirties, he said that the basic approach of *Vogue* had changed little since 1909. "Our proportion of fashion to society material hasn't changed very much," he said. "What I did, if anything, was to get better artists and better writers."<sup>3</sup>

Nast inaugurated editions of *Vogue* in France and Britain. The French edition was suspended when the Germans occupied Paris during World War II, but it was revived in January, 1945. An attempt to establish an edition in Germany in the late twenties was unsuccessful.

The editor of *Vogue* from 1914 until 1952 was Edna Woolman Chase, an astute judge of fashion trends who had been on the staff before Nast acquired the publication. Under her direction *Vogue*, along with its major competitor, Hearst's *Harper's Bazaar*, be-

<sup>2</sup> Edna Woolman Chase and Ilka Chase, *Always in Vogue* (Garden City, 1954), p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Pringle, "High Hat," *Scribner's*, 104 (July, 1938) 19.

came an arbiter of high fashion, and the appearance of Mrs. Chase at a couturier's showing of new gowns was an event of major importance. *Vogue* anticipated new fashions by learning what the designers planned to introduce; it presented these fashions in alluring photographs and sketches in a setting which bespoke opulence and cosmopolitanism. Its tone was frankly snobbish.

The world depicted by *Vogue* was a strange one to outlanders. George Orwell, the British literary critic and satirist, tried to describe it in 1946. The magazine, he said,

consists of 325 large quarto pages, of which no less than 15 are given up to articles on world politics, literature, etc. The rest consists entirely of pictures, with a little letterpress creeping around their edges: pictures of ball dresses, mink coats, step-ins, panties, brassieres, silk stockings, slippers, perfumes, lipsticks, nail polish—and, of course, of the women, unrelievedly beautiful, who wear them or make use of them.

One striking thing, when one looks at these pictures, is the overbred, exhausted, even decadent style of beauty that now seems to be striven after. Nearly all of these women are immensely elongated. A thin-boned, ancient-Egyptian type of face seems to predominate: narrow hips are general, and slender, non-prehensile hands like those of a lizard are quite universal. . . .

Another striking thing is the prose style of the advertisements, an extraordinary mixture of sheer lushness with clipped and sometimes very expensive technical jargon. Words like suave-mannered, custom-finished, contour-conforming, mitt-back, innersole, backdip, midriff, swoosh, swash, curvaceous, slenderize and pet-smooth are flung about with evident full expectation that the reader will understand them at a glance. . . .<sup>4</sup>

*Vogue* began the twenties with a circulation of about 137,000 and advertising revenues of \$2,178,000. Its number of readers had grown to 393,000 in 1955, when it carried \$6,953,000 in advertising.

In April, 1939, Condé Nast brought out a little sister of *Vogue*, a monthly called *Glamour*, which was edited for the young woman with a job. Street and Smith had already demonstrated the potentialities of such a fashion magazine for the young woman far lower on the economic scale than the reader of *Vogue*. Four years earlier, in February, 1935, it had introduced *Mademoiselle*, edited

<sup>4</sup> George Orwell, "It Looks Different from Abroad," *New Republic*, 115 (Dec. 2, 1946) 726.

for women aged seventeen to thirty, and had developed it into one of its most lucrative properties. Nast's *Glamour* quite obviously expected its readers to make some of their own dresses instead of commissioning them from Fath or Dior. It advised its readers on such things as fashions, beauty, careers, patterns in silverware, and the plight of persons in war-torn countries in a style that was breezy, extroverted and conversational. *Glamour* made its debut with a press run of 200,000. It had an average circulation of about 609,000 in 1955.

The editorial copy in *Vogue* and *Glamour*, like that in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Mademoiselle*, was hard to find amid the advertisements ; but then women probably bought those magazines as much for their advertising as for their editorial features. And yet while it was easy to satirize their chi-chi advertising, as Orwell did, all four magazines ran material by authors of stature. The artistic level of their prose and illustration was generally high; and at least one of the four, *Mademoiselle*, was well known for the encouragement it gave to unknown young writers of promise.

Nast's *House and Garden*, like *Vogue*, was intended for the economically secure. Founded in 1901, it had a circulation of about 34,000 when Nast bought it in 1909. Richardson Wright became its editor in June, 1914. He had served as Sunday editor of the *Knickerbocker News* in Albany, as a correspondent in Siberia and Manchuria for a string of American newspapers in 1911-12, and as literary critic for the *New York Times*. He was president of the Food and Wine Society and chairman of the Horticulture Society of New York, and he wrote some two dozen books with titles as divergent as *Hawkers and Walkers of Early America* and *The Bed-Book of Eating and Drinking*.

Wright continued *House and Garden* as an elegant magazine of architecture, decoration, and gardening for readers in the upper economic brackets. It was somewhat similar to such home service magazines for the middle class as Meredith's *Better Homes and Gardens* and W. H. Eaton's *American Home*, yet it reached so different a market as to consider them competitors in only the most indirect way. *House and Garden* more than doubled its circulation in the first decade of Nast's ownership, and its distribution of 491,000 in 1955 was more than fourteen times greater than when he took over. The magazine showed large gains in advertising after World War II when home service magazines enjoyed a



boom as a result of increases in home construction and home ownership. Its gross advertising revenues in 1947 were \$2,896,000, a long climb from the \$419,000 of 1921 and an increase of more than 37 per cent over 1946. They amounted to \$3,597,000 in 1955. The company began to issue a French edition, *Maison et Jardin*, a quarterly, in 1950. The magazine, like *Vogue*, then had three editions, American, British, and French.

At least three magazines called *Vanity Fair* were published at different periods in the nineteenth century. Nast's *Vanity Fair* was a continuation of a magazine of that name established in December, 1892, to cover sports, music, and drama. He took over the magazine in 1913 (for the first four issues he called it *Dress and Vanity Fair*) with assistance from Frank Crowninshield, who was its editor until it was submerged in *Vogue* in 1937.

Crowninshield, who had worked for the *Bookman*, *Century*, and *Munsey's* and for a couple of years was Frank Munsey's literary agent in London, was a wit, a connoisseur of art and letters, and an exponent of gracious living in the manner of his close associate Condé Nast. His friends were many and influential; his wide circle of acquaintances, as Nast once said, had beneficent results upon his publishing activities: "It was always, for example, easy for him to persuade Joseph H. Choate to write for us, or Irene Castle to pose for photographs, or John Sargent to permit our use of his sketches, or Aldous Huxley to work on our staff, or Joe Louis to pass an hour or two before the cameras in our studio, or persuade August Belmont and Harry Payne Whitney to cooperate in photographing their horses in their stables, or Isadora Duncan to help in a benefit dance recital, or Geraldine Farrar to do us any order of favor."<sup>5</sup> Crowninshield himself, in a moment of self-analysis, said, "My interest in society—at times so pronounced that the word 'snob' comes a little to mind—derives from the fact that I like an immense number of things which society, money, and position bring in their train: painting, tapestries, rare books, smart dresses, dances, gardens, country houses, correct cuisine, and pretty women."<sup>6</sup>

His interests were reflected in *Vanity Fair*, a chic monthly which gave attention to art, the theater, literature, to a wide span of

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey T. Hellman, "That Was New York: Crowninshield," *New Yorker*, 23 (Feb. 14, 1948) 72.

<sup>6</sup> Hellman, "That Was New York: Crowninshield," p. 72.

subjects. For it Edmund Lester Pearson recalled classic American crimes, Corey Ford polished his little satires, and Paul Gallico reported on sports. From it many Americans no doubt first learned of Picasso, Matisse, and Gauguin.

In 1932 Condé Nast decided that *Vanity Fair* was lacking in substance, and he hired John Franklin Carter, Jr. (who wrote on politics under the name Jay Franklin) and Henry Pringle as part-time editorial advisers to give the magazine a serious note. Clare Boothe Luce, who was an editor of *Vanity Fair* at the time, has described Crowninshield's reaction to the change in policy:

'Twixt card tricks and African sculpture, Mr. Crowninshield laid glibly before the editors, for their distracted consideration, the serious articles on labor, politics, and science which Mr. Nast was then ordering from Jay Franklin, Walter Lippmann, and Matthew Woll, in the days when not only *Vanity Fair* was dying but the very world it stood for. Mr. Crowninshield, alas, was not the man to outflank the world of Mrs. Astor and Mrs. Van Rensselaer, even with the help of Matthew Woll. He was spiritually, if not intellectually, too much a part of that world.<sup>7</sup>

It was addressed to a narrow circle, *Vanity Fair*, and its circulation was never large. It opened the twenties with a circulation of about 99,000 and closed them with 80,000. When it vanished into *Vogue* in 1937, it had a sale of about 90,000. Nor was its advertising income large. In the early twenties *Vanity Fair* took in a half million dollars in advertising a year, more or less, and in 1935 only \$292,895. According to one report, the magazine had shown a profit in only one year of its existence.<sup>8</sup> The company gave declining advertising revenues as the reason for the merger of *Vanity Fair* with *Vogue*.

A perennial competitor of Nast was William Randolph Hearst, who published several magazines aiming at the wealthy and fastidious readers whom Nast had chosen for his market. *Harper's Bazaar*, established in 1867 and acquired by Hearst in the early twenties, was the foremost competitor of *Vogue*, although it never overtook it in circulation or advertising. Unlike *Vogue*, the *Bazaar* ran fiction—fiction by authors such as Christopher Isherwood, Virginia Woolf, Eudora Welty, Colette, and Jean Stafford—but it was essentially a magazine of high fashion. The Hearst

<sup>7</sup> Hellman, "That Was New York: Crowninshield," p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> *Newsweek*, 7 (Jan. 4, 1936) 31.

competitors of *House and Garden* were first *Home and Field*, then *House Beautiful*. Another Hearst publication, *Town and Country*, circulated among persons of taste and wealth, as *Vanity Fair* did.

There were skirmishes between Hearst and Nast from time to time. Nast bought a full-page advertisement in *Printers' Ink*, the advertising trade magazine, in 1923 to deny a story which ran in several Hearst newspapers. The story said that Nast had given up trying to start an English edition of *Vogue* and had sold it to a British publisher, but that Hearst's *Good Housekeeping* had become "in two short years the leading women's magazine in England, excepting only *Nash's Magazine*, which also belongs to Mr. Hearst."<sup>9</sup> In 1930 Hearst bought *Smart Set* back from James R. Quirk, to whom he had sold it two years earlier, with the intention of converting it into a smart competitor of *Vanity Fair*. He had hired Arthur Samuels of the *New Yorker* as editor of the transformed magazine; the project fell through, however, and Samuels served briefly as editor of *Harper's Bazaar*.

During the depression, just about the time he was planning to retire, Nast lost much of his personal fortune on the stock market, and his company suffered financial difficulties as well. Gross revenues of the company dropped from \$10,251,000 in 1929 to \$5,558,000 in 1933, net income from \$320,000 to a deficit of \$501,000. Lord Camrose, a British press lord, invested in the company to help put it on its feet. Nast spent the thirties rebuilding his personal and corporate fortunes. He was succeeded after his death in 1942 by Iva Patcévitch, his executive assistant since 1928, who continued to improve the financial health of the corporation throughout the forties. Gross revenues in the late forties were more than \$20,000,000 a year and net income well over \$1,000,000. Although the net fell off in the early fifties, it had moved up again in 1954, when it was \$811,000.

Condé Nast Publications, Inc., in 1955 had its own engraving facilities and operated a large printing plant on three and a half acres at Greenwich, Connecticut, where it printed its own magazines and those of several other publishers. Besides its magazines, it published the *Vogue Pattern Book*, manufactured and sold paper dress patterns, and operated a studio which sold photographs.

Although Condé Nast showed that there was money to be made

<sup>9</sup> *Printers' Ink*, 124 (Sept. 20, 1923) 35.

from a fashion magazine for women of means, there was no similar magazine for men. Then in 1933, out of a trade publication for retailers of men's clothing, there emerged a magazine of fashion for men, a glossy magazine which attracted readers less wealthy and cosmopolitan than those who bought *Vogue*, perhaps, but which nonetheless circulated in an upper-class market. The magazine was *Esquire*; with it as a foundation, David A. Smart and his associates built a fairly large magazine publishing company, Esquire-Coronet, Inc.

David A. Smart and his brother Alfred R. Smart, both of whom had been in the advertising business, joined forces with William H. Weintraub in 1927 to publish a trade paper for the men's clothing industry. They hired a young advertising man named Arnold Gingrich to edit it because some copy he had written for Kuppenheimer clothing advertisements had greatly impressed David Smart. The magazine, *National Men's Wear Salesman*, did rather well, and they followed it with a style guide, the *Gentleman's Quarterly*.

In 1930 Smart and his partners decided to expand their fashion coverage by photographing celebrities who attended opening nights at New York theaters and sending the pictures by telephoto to men's clothing stores, which could use them as window displays. They tried out the idea at the opening of Ziegfeld's *Smiles* in November, 1930. The photo service ran into opposition almost at once, but it led indirectly to one of the most spectacularly successful magazines of the decade, *Esquire*. The publisher of the leading trade paper in the men's wear field accused the Smarts and Weintraub of sending out faked photographs—pictures of models who posed long before the actual opening. Weintraub, angered by the attack, suggested that they retaliate by starting a publication in direct competition with the publisher's.

The new publication was *Apparel Arts*, a lavish quarterly for the men's clothing trade, and it was the immediate inspiration for *Esquire*. It first appeared on October 15, 1931. In format, paper stock, use of art work, and even somewhat in the development of its articles, it showed strong signs of having been influenced by *Fortune*. Customers picked up copies from counters of clothing stores, leafed through them, and showed their interest by walking off with them. The publishers decided to design a fashion magazine for the customers themselves.

According to legend, Smart was dissatisfied with the names that had been suggested for the new magazine and finally decided to call it *Stag*. A Washington patent attorney discovered that *Stag* had already been registered as a title, however, and he so informed the publishers in a letter addressed to "Arnold Gingrich, Esq." When Smart saw the address, he exclaimed, "Esquire! That's our title!"

The *Esquire* which turned up on ten thousand selected news-stands in October, 1933, was a quarterly with a press run of a hundred thousand. It was an over-sized magazine on glossy paper, about a third of its 116 pages in color. Its price, fifty cents a copy, indicated that it was intended for a class market. Then as later its table of contents carried the names of a number of rather impressive literary figures. Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, William McFee, Erskine Caldwell, Manuel Komroff, Morley Callaghan, and Dashiell Hammett all had stories or articles in the first issue; and there were sports pieces by Gene Tunney, Bobby Jones, and Benny Leonard.

By shrewd buying, Arnold Gingrich, the editor, was able to get manuscripts bearing such famous names at comparatively small cost. When they were planning the first issue, the publishers of *Esquire* asked editors of several mass-circulation magazines if they had any manuscripts by famous names which, on second thought, had seemed too daring or different for publication. For a few hundred dollars, *Esquire* was able to buy manuscripts for which other editors had originally paid thousands. Once the magazine was launched, it continued to attract well-known authors on an editorial budget which was small compared with those of the big slicks. *Esquire* cared little for the formula writing of some of the large-circulation slicks, so it often obtained high quality material for which authors could find no other market.

*Esquire* showed a measure of literary distinction in the thirties. Thomas Mann wrote for it. Ernest Hemingway, a frequent contributor, first published his "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" in it. F. Scott Fitzgerald, with rare introspection, described the disintegration of an artist in a series of sensitive articles about himself which Edmund Wilson later collected into book form under the title *The Crack-Up*.

About the time that Henry Luce was experimenting with *Life*, Arnold Gingrich was using *Esquire* to show the magnetic power of

pictures. Alongside its stories, articles, and essays, *Esquire* ran scores of cartoons, many of them full page, many of them in color, most of them based on humor redolent of the smoking-car and salesmen's convention. Probably never before had an American magazine been so heavily laden with art work. One regular *Esquire* feature, the Petty girl, a creature of curves, inordinately long limbs, and gossamer clothing, became as familiar to Americans as the Gibson girl had been in an earlier time. The Petty girl was succeeded by a beauty resembling her closely enough to have been her sister, the Varga girl, the creation of Alberto Vargas, who withdrew her from *Esquire* in 1946 after a damage suit against the magazine.

From the first issue, *Esquire* sold better than the experts had predicted, and Smart quickly changed from quarterly to monthly publication. Magazine men had told Smart that he could expect to sell no more than 25,000 copies on the newsstand. The first monthly issue sold 60,000, and circulation reached 184,000 by the end of 1934. Thereafter it climbed upward, despite occasional dips, to 742,000 in 1955.

After a survey of readers in 1947, *Esquire* revised its editorial pattern to include Westerns and mystery stories among its fiction ; to increase its coverage of sports ; and to emphasize its service departments dealing with food, liquor, and travel. Typography and make-up were also altered. The page size was increased slightly in 1949 to accommodate advertising plates standard with those of *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Collier's*.

*Esquire*, Inc., expanded its operations in the thirties. David Smart, as a personal venture, set up *Coronet*, Inc., in 1936 to publish *Coronet*, which is discussed in a later chapter. The two companies were consolidated into *Esquire-Coronet*, Inc., in March, 1937.

That same month Smart and Gingrich began laying plans for a new slick-paper monthly magazine of liberal outlook which would give the facts behind the news as insiders saw them. *Ken* was to champion the underprivileged, to employ leftist and liberal writers, to present a unified front of liberals and progressives, and to be militantly anti-fascist, according to George Seldes, one of its editors.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> George Seldes, " 'Ken'—The Inside Story," *Nation*, 146 (Apr. 30, 1938) 497.

When the first half million copies appeared in late March, 1938, *Ken* was far less leftist than at least some of its planners had intended. The first editor broke his connection with the magazine before the initial issue went to press. He was Jay Cooke Allen, a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, who had hired an expensive staff of writers, research workers, and assistants to prepare a dummy issue. Smart found the dummy unsatisfactory. Allen left the magazine in October, 1937—primarily in protest against Smart's desire for economy, not because of differences over the essential nature of the magazine, according to Seldes.

When advertisers learned what the magazine would be like, many of them declined to buy space in it, Seldes said, and some of them also threatened to withdraw their accounts from *Esquire*. The advertising pressure was stronger than Smart had anticipated, Seldes added, and the magazine, even in the planning stage, departed more and more from the original prospectus.

Several of the men attracted by the liberal mission of the magazine left the venture, among them Allen and most of the staff members he had hired; Seldes; Paul de Kruif, the medical writer; and Ernest Hemingway. The last two had been listed in prospectuses as active editors, although they had agreed merely to contribute. *Ken* published "inside stories," but it also ran such sensational pieces as a picture sequence of the agonies of a man dying of rabies and what purported to be an interview conducted by an unidentified journalist with Kaiser Wilhelm on Adolf Hitler, an interview promptly denied by the Kaiser's representatives.

*Ken* sold an average of a quarter of a million copies an issue for a while, but it failed to attract any great amount of advertising. Its publishers changed from semimonthly to weekly publication in April, 1939, in an effort to reach the total monthly circulation guaranteed to advertisers. Two months later they cut the price from twenty-five cents to ten cents. Neither of those methods was effective, and Arnold Gingrich announced that *Ken* would cease publication with its issue of August 3, 1939. *Ken* had enjoyed a creditable first year, he said, but it "did not meet expectations" as a weekly.<sup>11</sup>

*Ken* died about the time that David Smart and his associates were having other difficulties. *Esquire*, which had once guaranteed

11 *Editor & Publisher*, 62 (July 8, 1939) sect. 1, 25.

advertisers a circulation of 625,000 and which had carried 155 pages of advertising in its issue of December, 1937, had lost so many readers that it cut its circulation guarantee to 450,000 in June, 1938. *Coronet* had begun life with a promising sale of 250,000, but it was selling only some 150,000 in mid-1939.

The difficulties were compounded in May, 1941, when a federal grand jury indicted David Smart, his brother Alfred, and ten associates and brokers for illegal manipulation of the company's stock. The two Smarts and their broker were fined \$10,000 and sentenced to two years in prison, although the jail sentence was suspended, and the other defendants received lighter sentences. A series of transactions by the defendants had raised the market price of stock in the company from \$7 to \$12.25 a share, according to the prosecution, and the Smarts had realized \$1,075,000.

Nor was that the end of the difficulties. Frank C. Walker, the Postmaster General, revoked second-class mailing privileges of *Esquire* in January, 1911, on the grounds that the magazine did not meet one of the tests of eligibility for that preferential rate. Walker said that *Esquire* was not, as the law required, "published for the dissemination of information of a public character, or devoted to literature, the sciences, arts or some special industry." Although *Esquire* could have still used the mails, the fourth-class rate would have added approximately \$500,000 a year to its postal bill.

While the publishers of *Esquire* spent \$40,000 to advertise their side in forty-one newspapers across the United States, their attorneys filed suit to restrain the Postmaster General's action. The United States Supreme Court in an unanimous decision restored second-class privileges to *Esquire* after two years of litigation. Meanwhile the magazine had continued to use second-class with the understanding that it would repay the Post Office Department the difference between second and fourth-class rates if the Postmaster General's revocation were upheld.

Despite its vicissitudes, Esquire-Coronet, Inc., continued to operate in the black. Both *Esquire* and *Coronet* enjoyed tremendous increases in circulation during World War II. In 1947, the peak year for the company, net income was \$970,765, more than \$225,000 above the previous high in 1937. In 1954 the company reported gross revenues of \$15,737,251, a net of \$72,553.

It is interesting that the founders of Esquire-Coronet, Inc.,



sound businessmen that they were, nevertheless drew upon the missionary publishers for ideas. *Esquire*, their most valuable property, was their own invention; yet it derived from *Apparel Arts*, which had drawn on *Fortune*. *Coronet* was unmistakably inspired by the *Reader's Digest*. Even when Smart made his abortive excursion as a missionary, he thought of *Ken* in its planning stage first as a liberal *Fortune*, then as a liberal *Time*.

Two publishing companies built by merchants were keen competitors of Bernarr Macfadden, the missionary with a strong streak of merchant. The men who established and operated those companies had no such sense of mission as Macfadden. Although they made some innovations of their own, they borrowed ideas from Macfadden and others. The two companies were Fawcett Publications, founded by Wilford H. Fawcett, and Dell Publishing Company, founded by George T. Delacorte, Jr.

Wilford H. Fawcett and his sons parlayed a mimeographed sheet of risque jokes into a publishing company which employed twelve hundred persons in 1945. The company, a family affair, never issued financial statements, but early in 1956 it reported that over the previous fifteen years its earnings before taxes had totaled more than \$20,600,000 and that they had amounted to more than \$1,000,000 in the first eleven months of 1955. Then too the company's paper consumption was a clue to its size. It was the sixth largest user of magazine paper in 1945, outranked only by Time, Inc., Curtis, Crowell-Collier, McCall Corporation, and Hearst Publications.

Back home in Minneapolis after service as a captain in World War I, Fawcett, a former police reporter for the *Minneapolis Journal*, sat down to a borrowed typewriter and amused himself by turning out a collection of off-color jokes and verses which he mimeographed for distribution among ex-servicemen. He called the sheet *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*, and it was in such great demand that he found a small printing company willing to take a chance on bringing it out as a magazine.

*Whiz Bang*, a pocket-sized magazine selling for twenty-five cents, consisted of broad, earthy jokes and drawings which may have tried the patience of the postal authorities, who, nevertheless, never actually barred an issue from the mails. *Whiz Bang* found its humor in the predicaments of the farmer's daughter whose

virtue was constantly in peril, in pictures of privies, and in the escapades of Pedro, the *Whiz Bang* bull. Captain Billy's monthly editorial was called "Drippings from the Fawcett."

*Whiz Bang* had a large sale among persons who liked their humor unsophisticated. It claimed a circulation of 425,000 by 1923, and it was earning Fawcett from \$35,000 to \$40,000 a month, although it carried no advertising. It was far too profitable a magazine to remain without imitators. Fawcett himself started one in 1926, *Smokehouse Monthly*, which grew out of a column of verse in *Whiz Bang*. When Fawcett and his wife Antoinette Fisher Fawcett were divorced in 1932, she used her alimony to buy out another imitator, the *Calgary Eye Opener*, also published in Minneapolis. But by then readers had tired of *Whiz Bang* and its competitors. The circulation of *Whiz Bang* had dropped to 150,000 in 1930. The next year, in 1931, Dell Publishing Company had introduced *Ballyhoo*, a different sort of humor magazine which in six months had reached a circulation of nearly two million among persons whose tastes in humor were scarcely more sophisticated. Perhaps because *Ballyhoo* usurped what remained of its audience, *Whiz Bang* died in 1932.

Meanwhile, with his earnings from *Whiz Bang* and with help from his brothers Roscoe and Harvey, Fawcett had started several other magazines, most of them copies of competitors' publications which had demonstrated their popular appeal on the newsstands. In 1922 he introduced *True Confessions*, which at first consisted of stories of persons involved in crime and notoriety but which soon became a confession magazine in imitation of Bernarr Macfadden's *True Story*. He followed it, at a time when the pulp magazine was burgeoning, with *Triple X*, variously a war story magazine, an aviation magazine, a crime story magazine, and a Western story magazine, depending on which type sold the best. In 1926 Fawcett added *Battle Stories* and *Screen Secrets*, the latter of which was converted into the movie fan magazine *Screen Play* in 1930. Probably because both Wilford and Roscoe Fawcett were sportsmen—the former had coached the United States trapshooting team in the 1924 Olympics, the latter was a onetime state champion golfer—the company brought out *Amateur Golfer and Sportsman* in 1927. In 1928 the company purchased *Jim Jam Jems*, a rival of *Whiz Bang*; and the same year, it launched *Modern Mechanics*, an imitation of *Popular Me-*

chanics. *Modern Mechanics* was rechristened *Mechanix Illustrated* after the publishers of *Popular Mechanics* complained that its original title infringed on their own. When the success of Dell's *Ballyhoo* was the talk of the publishing industry in 1931, Fawcett cashed in on its popularity with an imitation, *Hooley*. According to Roscoe Fawcett, the company had been urged by independent distributors of magazines to bring out a competitor of *Ballyhoo*, which was distributed by American News, and although the firm had at first hesitated, it had decided to proceed with an imitation when it learned that Bernarr Macfadden also was planning to issue one.

The company spawned new magazines so rapidly that even a complete listing of them would be tedious. At one time, before World War II, Fawcett was publishing sixty-three different magazines. For the most part, the company officials apparently attempted to duplicate the successes of other publishers. Thus when *Esquire* was one of the fastest-selling magazines of the mid-thirties, Fawcett came out with *For Men*, a pocket magazine full of articles and cartoons somewhat in the *Esquire* vein. When the demand for *Life* exceeded the supply, Fawcett appeared with *Spot*, a picture magazine. When such self-help and inspirational books as Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and Dorothea Brande's *Wake Up and Live!* were on the best-seller lists in the mid-thirties, Fawcett brought out *Photo-Facts*, a pocket magazine of "useful information." When Superman became one of the most popular of comic book heroes, Fawcett introduced Captain Marvel, who was clearly patterned after Superman.

The Fawcetts concentrated on publications which promised large sales on the newsstand; they discouraged subscriptions. Nor did they long support publications which failed to show a profit. Their policy for years was to suspend magazines which did not make money and to promote the ones which did. During World War II, when paper supplies were limited, the company adhered to its policy of devoting its major efforts to its most profitable publications. It suspended forty-nine of its sixty-three prewar magazines soon after the attack on Pear Harbor and strengthened the remaining fourteen.

As the company expanded, it moved its headquarters from the Midwest to the centers of publishing in the East and branched

out from magazine publishing into the allied fields of distribution and printing. It moved its general offices from Minneapolis to Greenwich, Connecticut, in 1935. There the business and circulation offices remained, but in 1946 the company bought a twenty-one-story building in Manhattan to house its editorial, advertising, and managerial offices, previously scattered about New York. To put their own publications and those of certain other publishers onto newsstands across the United States, the Fawcetts founded the Fawcett Distributing Corporation, which in 1945 handled twenty-five million copies of magazines each month, about 45 per cent of them Fawcett publications. Early in 1944 Fawcett Publications purchased the C. T. Bearing Printing Company of Louisville, Kentucky, which had long done most of its printing. The purchase, at a price reportedly in the neighborhood of a million dollars, also included two holdings of the Dearing company—the Louisville Colorgravure Company and the Frankfort State Journal Company, the latter of which published a daily newspaper in Frankfort, Kentucky, and the *State Legislative Digest*.

Roscoe Fawcett died in 1935, Wilford H. in 1940. Management of the company then passed into the hands of four sons of Wilford H. Fawcett, all of whom had been associated with the enterprise since, as young boys, they had wrapped and delivered copies of *Whiz Bang*. Wilford H. Fawcett, Jr., became president; Roscoe K. Fawcett, vice president and circulation director; Roger Fawcett, general manager; and Gordon Fawcett, treasurer.

During and after World War II, the four brothers continued to introduce new publications and to experiment with old ones. They entered trade-paper publishing in 1946 with a weekly, *Cosmetic and Drug Preview*, which, however, they summarily discontinued after three months. They converted one of their pulp magazines into a slick publication for men, *True*, and, as a later chapter will show, thereby contributed to the development of a new type of magazine. They toned down the stories of sexual adventure in their *True Confessions* and gave the magazine respectability by publishing such contributors as Eleanor Roosevelt.

In 1945, casting about for another stable publishing property, the Fawcetts decided to enter the competitive field of women's service magazines with a publication designed for women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. They had concluded from their research that existing service magazines circulated primarily

among older women, and they were confident of their ability to attract a young audience, "the most responsive section of the service magazine readers," they said, "and the section with the most clearly defined selfish interests for editors to appeal to."<sup>12</sup>

They gradually changed the editorial balance of one of their confession magazines, *Life Story*, and they brought it out as a full-fledged women's service magazine in November, 1945, under the title of *Today's Woman*. Whereas *Life Story* had run such pieces as "Cheater's Reward," *Today's Woman* carried articles and stories by Clare Boothe Luce, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Mary Heaton Vorse, and James Street. The magazine was able to guarantee advertisers a circulation of one million by July, 1948. The Fawcetts expected the magazine to lose money for a time, and it did, although the trade press reported constant gains in circulation and advertising lineage for it. The magazine still had not developed into a profitable property when the Fawcetts announced in April, 1954, that they were suspending it after the June issue.

The history and operations of the Dell Publishing Company paralleled those of Fawcett Publications, Inc., in several ways. Dell Publishing Company belonged to George T. Delacorte, Jr., who in 1955 could look back on nearly thirty-five years of publishing in which he had become a major publisher of magazines distributed exclusively on newsstands, of comics, and of paper-bound books. He had issued more magazine titles than Curtis, Crowell-Collier, Hearst, and Macfadden combined. He and his staff had originated all of the 200 magazines which he had published at one time or another; he had taken over none of them from other publishers. His company was publishing about 160 magazines and comics in 1955, and each month customers bought some 35,000,000 copies of them. Dell Publishing Company was not obliged to reveal its finances, as Delacorte and his family owned all of the stock in the firm; but its profits were in seven figures from 1941 onward, and its gross was about \$36,000,000 in 1954.

Delacorte, who was born in 1894, was educated at Harvard and Columbia. He broke into magazine publishing after stretches as a free-lance solicitor of advertising and as a circulation man.

<sup>12</sup> *Tide*, 23 (Oct. 7, 1949) 48.

He formed the Dell Publishing Company in 1921 in partnership with William A. Johnston, for many years Sunday editor of the New York *World*, but the company belonged solely to him after Johnston's death the following year. At first Dell's only publications were ten-cent pamphlets on character analysis, horoscopes, birthdays, and kindred subjects.

The first magazine that Dell published was *Sweetheart Stories*, and from its inception Delacorte seems to have followed five practices which probably accounted for the commercial success of his company. First, he practiced rigid economy. He had to, for his company began in the tail end of the depression of 1921 on a capitalization of only a few thousand dollars. Second, like Fawcett, he concentrated on newsstand sales. About 95 per cent of Dell's circulation in 1955 was in single-copy sales. Although the company received about ten thousand dollars a week in subscriptions to comic books in 1948, it made little effort to promote such business. Third, Delacorte looked to circulation rather than to advertising for his revenue. True, advertising became increasingly important to his operation after 1930, when he first diligently sought it for some of his publications. However, he declined advertising for his comic books as late as 1949 because he believed he could sell more copies by keeping their covers free for full-color illustrations. However, he began accepting advertising in his comics in late 1951 when high production costs forced him to cut some issues from their usual forty-eight pages to thirty-two. Fourth, he never based his hopes on a single magazine but always published a number of titles. His practice, like that of many another merchant, was to sell space not in single publications but in groups of his magazines—the Modern Magazine Group, for instance, and the Dell Detective Group. Fifth, he quickly buried magazines that did not catch on; he rarely nursed along weak publications in the hope of retrieving losses, as many other publishers did. Death could come swiftly to an unpromising magazine, for Dell was usually unhampered by advertising commitments.

Delacorte originated nearly three dozen magazines and abandoned well over half of them in his first decade as a magazine publisher; in 1931 he owned fourteen magazines, most of them pulps, confession publications, and movie fan magazines with such

titles as *War Stories*, *Western Romances*, *Cupid's Diary*, *I Confess*, *Modern Romances*, and *Modern Screen*.

On his twenty-fifth anniversary as a magazine publisher, Delacorte recalled some of the economies which had enabled him to stay in business in his first years. He got inexpensive manuscripts for his first four magazines by going to England, buying enough stories at low rates to fill his magazines for two or three years, then assigning them to rewrite men who changed the characters and situations into American ones. To build up a demand for his magazines, he often passed out free sample copies, and he introduced pulps to retail at the low price of ten cents. The price was so low that he could not risk a hazard which publishers of pulps accepted as inevitable, a large proportion of unsold copies, so he devised an ingenious system of marketing. He numbered his issues instead of dating them. Then he put them on sale only east of the Rockies and south of Canada. When dealers from that region returned their unsold copies, Delacorte trimmed the yellowed edges and marketed the magazines west of the Rockies and in Canada.

In 1931 Delacorte and Norman Hume Anthony, a past editor of *Judge*, were responsible for a humor magazine which zoomed to an incredible commercial success in its first issues. *Ballyhoo* fizzled out, like a spent rocket, within two years ; but at its peak it had a newsstand sale of more than two million copies, more than any other magazine until the forties when its record was surpassed by *Life* and *Woman's Day*; it sent competitors hurrying to slap together imitations ; it begat "Ballyhoo" dresses, neckties, scarves, rings, cuff links, scarf pins, games, songs, greeting cards, and night clubs ; and its editor wrote a musical show named *Ballyhoo* which had some of the success of its namesake.

*Ballyhoo* was conceived by Anthony, to whom Delacorte gave a free hand. Its humor, much of it deriving from the bathroom or sex, much of it in questionable taste, was broad and audacious. Anthony had said that a magazine could dare to be funny only if it carried no advertising, and *Ballyhoo* was without advertising. Much of its popularity resulted from its burlesques of familiar advertising slogans, and a few advertisers actually paid large sums to have their advertisements lampooned on its pages.

Delacorte said that he was going against his best judgment

for the first time when he underwrote *Ballyhoo*, a fortnightly, but he thought he could make money on a sale of 100,000 copies an issue. Although the circulation figures are unreliable, the first issue of 150,000 copies was said to have sold out in five days; the second issue sold 450,000 copies, the third 675,000, and the fourth more than 1,000,000. In a few months circulation exceeded 2,000,000. On the second birthday of the magazine, however, sales had fallen to about 300,000, and as circulation dropped off, the magazine shrank to pocket size and became a quarterly. It died altogether in 1939.

Delacorte turned from *Ballyhoo* to other projects which promised a good return. He was one of the first publishers of comic books. He became a leading publisher of twenty-five-cent paperback books. He kept a number of booklets of horoscopes, crossword puzzles, and jokes on his list; and he continued his policy of testing new magazines on the stands and backing them further only if their commercial potentialities were readily apparent. None of his later publications ever captured the public fancy as *Ballyhoo* had. Nevertheless, Delacorte had one record at midcentury that many a publisher might envy: never in its history had his company failed to show a profit.



## *chapter 10*      Success by Imitation

In May, 1919, Bernarr Macfadden, an energetic crusader for healthful living who had been publishing *Physical Culture* for twenty years, brought out a new magazine which he called *True Story*. Its cover bore the motto, "Truth is stranger than fiction," and the line, "We Offer \$1,000 for Your Life Romance." The cover illustration of a man and woman gazing tenderly at one another was captioned, "And their love turned to hatred."

Thousands of American women paid twenty cents a copy for *True Story* to read such pieces as "How I Learned to Hate My Parents" and "My Battle with John Barleycorn," which were illustrated with posed photographs intended to heighten their veracity and emotional intensity. The number of buyers increased from issue to issue; by 1926 *True Story* had the then astounding circulation of two million, almost all of it on the newsstand, and advertising revenues of three million dollars.

It was impossible for Macfadden to hide his good fortune from other publishers, who got together similar magazines of their own. Macfadden himself started other magazines to provide readers more of the content they were getting in *True Story*. Thus the confession magazine emerged as a distinct category of American magazines.

Several other categories of magazines came about in similar fashion during the twentieth century. Time and again a publisher struck upon a new idea for a magazine or gave a new slant to an old idea, and as his publication became successful, other publishers copied it.

The new classes of magazines which resulted, especially after World War I, seemed to reflect the changes in American life. Life in the twentieth century moved at a faster pace than it had in the nineteenth. Improvements in transportation and communication wiped out distances. The political and economic systems became increasingly complex; and as citizen and as consumer, the typical American was called upon to make more decisions than ever before. Illiteracy declined, and schools and colleges sent forth a mounting number of graduates. Women gained the right to vote and competed for jobs that had once been the prerogative of men. Psychology became a catch-word. Sex was no longer a subject discussed in whispers, and gossip became a multimillion-dollar business. The printed media reached more persons than ever before; they were joined by new, powerful media which assailed the ear as well as the eye: movies, radio, and television.

The new kinds of magazines that arose were the products of their times, and they helped to shape them. The confession magazines could have gained the acceptance they did only in a time when sex was talked about frankly. And by reaching millions of persons who could never have understood the language of Freud, they well may have helped to influence the popular attitudes toward sex. The magazines for movie, radio, and television fans reported the most intimate affairs of the folk heroes created by three new mass media and in doing so glorified them further. The pulp magazine furnished inexpensive escape from a humdrum world to persons for whom the frontier was closed and the West won; to persons who could read but who, for the time being at least, were not disposed to think.

In a fast-paced world, many of the new types of magazines built their success on condensing traditional fare in word and picture. The news magazine came along to sift the glut of news, to put it into convenient compartments, and to tell the hurried reader what it meant. The digest magazines, which grew up alongside the news magazines, tried to distill, in simple language, the vast outpourings of busy presses for the reader on the run; and their gen-

erally unrestrained optimism gave him reassurance in times of prosperity, solace in times of despair. The modern picture magazine and the comic book, which paralleled one another in their development, abbreviated even more than the digest magazines, for they did so by picture instead of by text. The miniature magazines inspired by Cowles's *Quick* condensed even the conventional news and picture magazines.

This chapter will discuss some of the categories of magazines that came about in the twentieth century, most of them after World War I—the confession magazines, the factual detective magazines, the fan magazines, the pulp magazines, the men's magazines, and the local magazines. The next chapter will cover the news magazines, the digests, the picture magazines, and the comic books.

Bernarr Macfadden was responsible for the birth of two distinct classes of magazines in the years immediately after World War I, the confession magazines and the factual detective magazines, of which the latter seems a natural outgrowth of the former. Although an official of the American News Company once remarked, "Macfadden had the first new idea in the publishing field in the last fifty years," Macfadden was actually more a re-discoverer than a discoverer. Publishers had been exploiting the popular appeal of sex and crime almost from the introduction of printing into England. Even before the first newspaper appeared, their presses had sent forth thousands of broadsides in artless prose and amateurish poesy that told of serving maids seduced by naval officers and of mistresses murdered by their paramours; and the anonymous hacks who penned such broadsides for the entertainment of scullery maid and apprentice often told their stories in the first person and with a strongly moralizing tone.

What Bernarr Macfadden did was to rediscover what publishers had known for centuries and to apply it to the magazine field. He found that a factual narrative of a true, highly emotional experience—a seduction, a murder—had tremendous reader appeal, especially when it was told in the first person. It was desirable but not necessary, moreover, that the account point up some lofty moral. His emotionally charged editorial matter, he also found, attracted thousands of persons who probably had never before read magazines, persons with little education and little purchasing power, persons whom other publishers had neglected because they

were not the sort that advertisers were especially interested in reaching. The nature of their audience does much to explain why the confession, detective, and movie magazines never attracted large amounts of advertising.

In his confession magazines, in his detective magazines, in his tabloid newspaper, the New York *Daily Graphic*, Macfadden exploited his findings; and as he did so, he left a strong influence on the editorial content of certain types of magazines. Not only did rivals copy his confession and detective magazines; they applied a part or all of his basic formula to the movie magazines, the radio magazines, the sport magazines, and even, after World War II, the men's magazines.

There are conflicting versions of how Bernarr Macfadden got the idea for *True Story*, the first of the confession magazines, but all of them agree that the publication grew out of *Physical Culture*. According to one account, a column of advice to women that Macfadden conducted in *Physical Culture* took far too much of his time for a single department; since it was a highly popular feature, he thought that it might be the basis for a new magazine.<sup>1</sup> According to another account, Macfadden got the idea for *True Story* as he brooded over a mounting pile of letters from readers of *Physical Culture* who poured out details about their personal problems and asked for advice.<sup>2</sup> In still another account, his former wife Mary took credit for originating the magazine. His only hope for success, she told him, was in branching out from his physical culture enterprises into the regular publishing business. Most of the manuscripts for *Physical Culture* and the letters from readers were about true experiences. Many readers wanted to write about their love affairs, personal problems, and intimate experiences, but the magazine restricted them to accounts of physical development and prowess. Why not, Mary Macfadden suggested, get out an entertainment magazine of true stories written by its own readers in the first person?<sup>3</sup>

Whatever its origin, *True Story* formed the keystone of Macfadden Publications and was consistently its most profitable

1 Robert Lewis Taylor, "Physical Culture," *New Yorker*, 26 (Oct. 28, 1950) 42.

2 Harland Manchester, "True Stories," *Scribner's*, 104 (Aug., 1938) 25.

3 Mary Macfadden and Emile Gavreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips* (New York, 1953), pp. 218-19.

magazine, although Macfadden seems to have given his greatest affection to *Physical Culture*. From the beginning, the business problems of *True Story* were handled by Orr J. Elder, who was a long-time associate of Macfadden and who succeeded him as head of Macfadden Publications in 1941. The first editor of the magazine was John Brennan of the staff of *Physical Culture*.

The staff worked hard to keep professionalism out of *True Story*. "We want stories only from the common people," Macfadden said. "We've got to keep out 'writing writers' who want to make a business of it." Amateur "consultants" passed judgment on the seventy thousand to hundred thousand manuscripts that streamed to the magazine each year, and Macfadden often sought the head elevator operator's opinions on contributions. The magazine had six major requirements for its narratives. They had to: (1) be completely serious, (2) be true to life, (3) be realistic, (4) be told in simple, homely language, (5) be told in the first person, and (6) teach a strong moral lesson. Macfadden announced that authors were required to sign affidavits that their stories were authentic and periodically threatened to prosecute those who broke faith, but only the naive took him seriously. A board of New York clergymen served as "censors" of the magazine. Members of the editor's family were models for the early photographic illustrations; but when young actors and actresses realized the publicity value of the pictures, the magazine was able to draw on professionals, some of whom became stars, among them Norma Shearer, Frederic March, Jean Arthur, Anita Louise, Madge Evans, and Bebe Daniels.

As editor of *True Story* from 1926 until 1942, William Jordan Rapp guided it through several changes in policy which he summed up as from "sex to social significance in twenty years."<sup>4</sup> Rapp gradually rid the magazine of its blatant amateurishness while retaining its personal flavor. As his readers' tastes changed, he changed the content. Sex was rampant in the confession magazines when he took over the editorship. Early in 1927 he diluted the amount of sex in *True Story* because he thought his readers had begun to prefer virtue and heart throbs to outright seduction. As his readers became older, he chose stories discussing the problems of marriage instead of the problems of courtship. During the de-

<sup>4</sup> *Tide*, 16 (Feb. 1, 1942) 21.

pression and the war which followed it, the stories he selected gave increasing attention to social problems. By the end of World War II, *True Story* had begun to show some interest in departments and features dealing with homemaking, child care, medicine, and national affairs, although its forte was still confession.

Competitors who hoped to duplicate the success of *True Story* were quick to bring out imitations. They registered scores of titles including the words "revealing," "true," "secrets," "romance," "intimate," and "personal"; and they filled their magazines with hundreds of stories with such titles as "That First Sin," "Slave of Desire," "Because I Was Easy," and "My Dude Ranch Love Affair." George T. Delacorte, Jr., of Dell Publishing Company brought out *I Confess*, which suspended publication, although another publisher was publishing a magazine with the same title after World War II. Dell launched *Modern Romances* in 1930 and built it into one of the leaders in the confession field. In 1931 Dell introduced *My Story* but killed it abruptly when Macfadden threatened to undersell it with a new publication called *Your Story*. Fawcett Publications launched *True Confessions* in August, 1922; and although it lagged far behind *True Story*, it had the second largest sale of any confession magazines for years and after 1937 appeared periodically on lists of magazines with distribution of a million or more, once with a circulation of 1,965,000. In 1931 Alfred Cohen, a publisher of movie fan magazines, revived *Everybody's*, as "the magazine of real life stories." *Everybody's* had been one of the first crusading journals at the turn of the century but had been discontinued in January, 1930.

Even Macfadden himself brought out imitations of *True Story*. He launched *True Experiences* in 1922 and followed it with *Love and Romance*, both of which continued to deal in the affairs of courtship while *True Story* turned to problems of marriage and family. Over the years, new titles issued by various publishers appeared on the newsstands as the confession magazine became an important item in the reading fare of American women: *True Marriage Stories* and *True Love Stories* in 1924, *Secrets* in 1936, *Personal Romances* in 1937, *Intimate Romances* in 1948, and *Revealing Romances* in 1949.

The confession magazine was born amidst the revolution in manners and morals in the decade after World War I. Indeed, it was both a result of and a contribution to that revolution, accord-

ing to Frederick Lewis Allen, one of the historians of the period. As the message of Sigmund Freud circulated among the lay public after the war, Allen has suggested, many educated men and women found "scientific" reasons for believing that universal moral codes lacked validity, that sex was the prime force which moved mankind, and that one needed an uninhibited sex life to be well and happy.<sup>5</sup> The free discussion of sex created an atmosphere conducive to the birth of the confession magazine. The confession magazine, in turn, he suggested, influenced attitudes toward sex among many readers who had never heard of Freud and the libido.

The satisfactions that women got from confession magazines may have been similar to those they got from radio soap opera. They could vicariously enjoy love experiences which circumstance denied them. They could find what they regarded as help in solving their personal problems. In 1955, in an unpublished study, "The World of the Confession Magazines," Wilbur Schramm put it this way:

A woman can . . . turn to these magazines for reassurance that other people also have problems like hers—in fact, many of them have much more severe problems of the same kind. Furthermore, a reader can turn to these magazines for good advice on some of the problems. Ought she confess that episode out of her past? How can she handle a husband who always wants to sit at home in the evenings? And so forth. And still more important, the reader can get from these magazines a comforting sense that this is not a world of chance or caprice, but rather of order and justice. If she makes a mistake, she can do something to rectify it. Her neighbor, who seems to be getting by with murder, will be caught up with in good time; nobody is "getting by" with anything. But neither is anyone foredoomed to unhappiness, providing he is willing to do something about it. It is a comforting pattern of justice and free will.

Certainly the confession magazine reached a large audience, much of it no doubt composed of persons who had never read periodicals because they considered even the popular magazines as too heavy going. Perhaps no magazine until then had ever grown in circulation as rapidly as *True Story*. Almost every year from 1926 through 1955, it had a circulation of at least 2,000,000. While it is impossible to estimate accurately the total audience

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York, 1946), pp. 117-22.

of the confession magazines, five of the largest in 1955 had an aggregate circulation of more than 6,000,000.

As a class, confession magazines never fared as well in advertising as the service magazines for women, although a number of large national advertisers used them extensively during World War II when paper rationing limited advertising space in the home service publications. *True Story*, the leader among the confession magazines, carried an estimated \$3,012,200 in advertising in 1955. Its showing was impressive against an estimated \$437,000 in *True Confessions*, \$66,400 in *True Romances*, \$36,100 in *True Experiences*, and lesser amounts in other confession magazines. But it was far behind such women's service magazines as *Ladies' Home Journal* with \$23,588,000 and *McCall's* with \$15,317,000.

Like *True Story*, a few confession magazines added homemaking features to their first-person stories of transgression and atonement after World War II. But the service features were a relatively insignificant part of the confession magazines as a whole, which remained dominated by their "true" narratives of actual experiences.

The world of the confession magazines in 1955 was one in which sex was the prime motivation of the population and in which making and maintaining a happy marriage was the central problem. It was, in the words of Wilbur Schramm, "a woman's world, a young person's world, an urban middle class world, characterized by violence, overpowering sex drives, and broken homes. It is ruled by a code of ideal justice which demands and accepts payment for all transgressions against the code of accepted behavior. Therefore, the spectre of punishment hangs over these stories."

The factual detective magazines, which first appeared in 1924 when tabloid newspapers and gang warfare were making the public acutely aware of murder and mayhem, seem to have been a natural outgrowth of the confession magazines. Like the confession magazines, they exploited sin. Like the confession magazines, they featured true stories. Like the confession magazines, they reported factual material in the suspenseful narrative of fiction. "The essence of the best stories for *True Detective*," the editor wrote, "lies in the actual fact detail given in sequence, one action of the investigators leading to the next, thus evolving a clearly pictured development of events ; recreating in all its details what



actually happened months or years before. . . ." <sup>6</sup> At times the detective magazines used the first-person approach, although much less than the confession magazines, for their accounts were usually written in the third person by police reporters instead of by participants.

Actually, the confession magazines had dabbled in crime from the start. The first issue of *True Story* had carried a story about "An Ex-Convict's Climb to Millions"; and for later issues, Jack Grey, a retired safe-cracker, had written his "Confessions of a Bank Burglar." When Fawcett's *True Confessions* first appeared in 1922, it concentrated on actual confessions of criminals and ran such articles as "Memoirs of a Con Man" and "Revelations of a District Attorney" before it settled down to the usual fare of the confession magazines.

Despite Fawcett's brief excursion into crime with *True Confessions*, the father of the factual detective magazine as it evolved in the second quarter of the twentieth century was Bernarr Macfadden. In 1924 he began *True Detective Mysteries*, which attempted to prove that true crime mysteries could be as engrossing as the fiction mysteries of the pulps. *True Detective* never had the spectacular success of *True Story*, but it developed into a durable property. After it caught on, Macfadden followed it with *Master Detective*, just as he had capitalized on the popularity of *True Story* by starting *True Experiences*. Rival publishers copied *True Detective* as they had *True Story*, and scores of detective magazines sprang up over the next thirty years, some of them highly sensational. In 1955 *True Detective Mysteries* of Macfadden and *Official Detective*, established in 1934 by the Annenbergs, were probably the best-written and the best-edited of the lot. *Master Detective* was transformed into *Saga*, a general magazine for men, in the fall of 1950 because executives at Macfadden Publications thought that *True Detective* had saturated what they called the "class whodunit field."

Magazines for movie fans began to appear when motion pictures moved from the shady atmosphere of the nickelodeon into grand palaces of their own, when the star system evolved and movie-goers became interested in Mary Pickford, Mabel Normand, Dustin Farnum, and Milton Sills off stage as well as on. Although

<sup>6</sup> John Shuttleworth, *Hints to T. D. Writers: Stories Needed for True Detective Magazine* (New York, 1944), p. 18.

the movie magazine antedated the confession magazine, the two types seem to have risen to popularity side by side. They had much in common. Both types were usually produced by the same publishers. Both types offered escape by giving the reader a glimpse into someone else's most intimate affairs. Both types went to the same class of readers, and they attracted the same kinds of advertising; in fact, it became customary for a publisher of several confession and movie magazines to sell space in them as a group.

Although a few publications may have been issued even before then, movie magazines seem to have proliferated after 1910. *Photoplay*, which by midcentury had grown modestly prosperous by glamorizing Hollywood and which had long led the field, was started in 1911 and struggled along for its first years as a skimpy little pamphlet. *Picture Play*, another of the early fan magazines with a long life span, began publication in 1915. Several others, long since forgotten, also appeared before World War I.

After World War I the movie publications grew rapidly in numbers and in circulation. Throughout the twenties, thirties, and forties, new titles were forever appearing on the newsstands: *Screenland* in 1920, *Screen Play* in 1925, *Screenbook* in 1928, *Screen Stories* and *Screen Romances* in 1929, *Modern Screen* and *Movies* in 1930, *Movie Mirror* and *Romantic Movie Stories* in 1933, *Movie Life* in 1937, *Movie Stars Parade* in 1940, and *Movieland* in 1942, to name a few. As old titles dropped from the stands, new ones took their places.

The fan magazines probably resulted from and helped to perpetuate the star system of the movies. They created a picture of the "real" life of the movie stars, of the "real" Hollywood, as synthetic as the world that the movies themselves portrayed. But for the typical reader, there was nothing artificial about such articles as "Happiness Comes Again to Arline Judge," "That Man Menjou," "Kim Novak's Man Problem," "Why Brando Fascinates Women," and "Why Ava Gardner Quit Hollywood." From articles like those, the reader knew what his favorite stars were "really like," how they spent their money and their spare time, how they stayed handsome or beautiful, what they looked for in a mate.

Radio and television, like the movies, were responsible for the establishment of fan magazines which carried articles about the

stars, program listings, and similar material. The radio publications were never as numerous or as widely circulated as the movie magazines, but several of them were published from the thirties onward, new ones replacing those which died. There was a ready market for magazines carrying radio program schedules as long as many newspapers refused to list such schedules because of their feud with the new medium. For instance, Annenberg's *Radio Guide* in 1936 sold 420,000 copies of its seventeen regional editions with program listings. As newspapers began running the schedules, *Radio Guide* lost circulation and broadened its scope to cover movies as well as radio. Annenberg killed *Radio-Movie Guide* in November, 1943, to obtain additional paper for other magazines. When television boomed after World War II, a few of the old radio magazines put their emphasis on the new medium. One of the oldest of such fan magazines still being published in 1955, for example, was *TV Radio Mirror*, which had begun life in 1933 as *Radio Mirror*.

At least a dozen magazines listing television programs and carrying articles about TV personalities sprang up in the late forties and early fifties. One of the earliest was *TV Guide*, which Lee Wagner established in 1948 for a New York audience but later distributed nationally. Less than two years after Walter Annenberg's Triangle Publications took over *TV Guide* in 1953, the magazine had twenty-seven different editions, some published under franchise arrangements, and a total circulation of 2,222,000. The pack of magazines that it led included publications with such titles as *TV People and Pictures*, *TV Fan*, *TV Star Parade*, *TV This Week*, and *TV Show*.

The pulp magazine, a descendant of the dime novels and yellow-back weeklies of the nineteenth century, was born in 1896. Frank Munsey, tinkering with his *Argosy*, made it an all-fiction magazine and switched to a rough wood-pulp paper because he thought the story was more important than what it was printed on. Publishers of cheap fiction may have seen that the pulp could save postage. As single publications, dime novels were not eligible for the low second-class postal rates granted to periodicals; the pulp magazine was. Sent on its way by Munsey and by Street and Smith, a publisher of dime novels since 1855, the pulp magazine grew in numbers; divided, amoeba-like, into a variety of subtypes; and furnished inexpensive reading for ten million Americans for many

years. During World War II pulp publishers were hit hard by rising production costs and, somewhat ironically in view of the fore-runners of the pulp, by twenty-five-cent paper-bound books. To stay in business, pulp publishers at midcentury were energetically trying to promote advertising for their magazines.

Traditionally, the pulp ran little advertising. It depended on its sales for revenue and was produced so economically that a publisher could make a profit even if he sold just half of the copies he printed. The editor bought fiction at low rates—three or four cents a word in the boom twenties, a penny a word in the thirties—and printed it with little adornment.

At first all pulps were general adventure magazines, but eventually three other broad categories emerged: love, detective, and Western. Those new types resulted as other publishers imitated three successful magazines originated by Street and Smith, *Love Story*, *Detective Story*, and *Western Story*. One instance illustrates this point. Although pulps had sometimes previously published love stories, the first love pulp appeared in May, 1921. Its originator was Anita Fairgrieve, a young woman whom Street and Smith had assigned to develop a new magazine. She holed up in an office during the winter of 1920-21 and pored through a stack of old dime novels. The magazine she emerged with was *Love Story*. First a quarterly, next a semi-monthly, then a weekly, *Love Story* was so widely imitated that in 1938 there were eight-teen love pulps selling about three million copies a month.<sup>7</sup>

The appeal of the love pulps was not illicit sex; their heroines assiduously preserved their virginity even though they drank and sometimes spent the night in a bachelor's apartment. The love fiction differed from that of the women's slick-paper magazines mainly in the writing, which was usually of lower quality and always surcharged with emotion. But pulp publishers early discovered the sales appeal of sex. Long before World War I, old timers like Courtland Young with his *Breezy Stories* and *Young's Magazine* were publishing stories that titilated readers without being pornographic. The trade made a clear distinction between such "snappy stories" and "sexy stories." According to one veteran editor, there was as much difference between "snappy" and "sexy" in pulp connotations as between Western and adventure. The

<sup>7</sup> Thomas H. Uzzell, "The Love Pulps," *Scribner's*, 103 (Apr., 1938) 36.

pulps dealing with raw sex appeared about 1922 when publishers took advantage of the new frankness in discussions of sex that followed the war.<sup>8</sup>

In the competition after World War I, pulp publishers broke the four main categories—adventure, love, detective, and Western—into subcategories. For instance, they issued magazines dealing exclusively with stories that had been but a part of the general adventure pulp and thus flooded the stands with titles such as *Sea Stories*, *Spy Stories*, *Sport Stories*, and *Air Stories*. George Delacorte, Jr., of Dell Publishing Company originated the war story pulp, Harold Hersey and W. M. Clayton the pulp of Western love. Hersey also has taken credit for originating the gangster and jungle pulps.<sup>9</sup>

The first pulp devoted entirely to science fiction appeared in April, 1926, when Hugo Gernsback brought out *Amazing Stories*. Four years later he issued another, *Wonder Stories*, and lined up a staff of authorities including William J. Luyten of Harvard Observatory and Clyde Fisher of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, to check his stories for factual accuracy. Fifteen years before *Amazing Stories*, Gernsback had written and published the first science-fiction story to appear in a magazine, a piece about the adventures of one Ralph 124C41 that appeared in *Modern Electrics*, April, 1911. But the antecedents of the science-fiction pulp were earlier than even that. The first pulps of the nineties, Munsey's *Argosy* and others, had run tales based on supernatural phenomena, and before World War I pulps had run stories of interplanetary travel. But the father of pulp fiction with a scientific or pseudo-scientific background was Gernsback. Interest in science fiction grew; by 1939 about a dozen pulps were entirely filled with it, and its fans had formed their own organization, New Fandom, which met in convention. Science fiction in book and magazine attracted a hard core of perhaps twenty thousand dedicated fans after World War II. The twenty-five or so magazines devoted to it in the early fifties included some publications of quality, such as *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and *Galaxy Science Fiction*, as well as lesser publications which simply moved the scenes of traditional pulp tales from the West to outer space.

<sup>8</sup> Harold B. Hersey, *Pulpwood Editor* (New York, 1937), pp. 159-60.

<sup>9</sup> Hersey, p. 163.

And so the pulp grew and spread. In 1935 one major publisher of pulps, A. A. Wyn, gave out some figures on the size of the industry. Each year the 125 pulps in the United States shipped out 2,000 carloads of magazines for 10,000,000 fans. In producing them, they used \$500,000 worth of art and engravings and \$1,500,000 worth of manuscripts, printed at a cost of \$2,000,000 on \$1,250,000 worth of paper.<sup>10</sup>

During and immediately after World War II, publishers of pulps were hit especially hard by swiftly rising production costs, which increased 72 per cent between the end of 1944 and the middle of 1947. Their revenue from circulation was no longer ample to support them. Some publishers, like Standard Magazines, Inc., and Better Publications, Inc., the publishers of the Thrilling Fiction Group, retained commercial research organizations to discover the reading habits and purchasing power of readers of pulp magazines and then aggressively sought national advertising. Other publishers, like Street and Smith, abandoned their pulps as unprofitable and turned to publications that could attract lucrative national advertising. Still others converted their pulps into slick publications eligible for national advertising and thus contributed to a major postwar development in the magazine industry—the emergence of a new class of magazines, general magazines for men.

Even in the nineteenth century there had been magazines for men, of course, and many more sprang up in the first four decades of the twentieth century; but virtually all of them carried specialized content. Many of them were edited for the hunter and fisher, as were *Field and Stream*, *Hunting and Fishing*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Sports Afield*. A number of them, among them *Popular Mechanics*, *Mechanix Illustrated*, and *Science and Mechanics*, were for the home craftsman who pattered at his work bench. A few dealt with specific sports, as did the *Ring*, and fewer still with sports generally, as did *Sport*. There were several fraternal magazines which carried some general interest material in addition to their organizational material—*American Legion*, *Foreign Service* of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and *Elks*, for instance. Perhaps the closest to a general magazine for men was *Esquire*, but even its appeal was highly specialized and to an upper income audience.

<sup>10</sup> *Time*, 26 (Sept. 16, 1935) 33.

In short, the term "men's magazines" was a broad one that covered such dissimilar publications as the *Police Gazette*, that hardy perennial which brought cigar-store loungers reports of crimes and sporting events and pictures of buxom beauties, and *Gentry*, which addressed itself to an elite hundred thousand in 1951 as a lavish quarterly with detachable inserts and with packets of herbs and swatches of textiles glued to its pages to illustrate the subjects of its articles.

The publications in the new class were none of those. Although the trade called them "general magazines for men," the term was somewhat misleading; a more descriptive term might have been "true adventure magazines for men," for the factual account of adventure was their stock in trade. They first appeared during World War II.

The great increase in the number and in the circulation of men's magazines generally during and after the war was, as the editorial director of Fawcett Publications put it, "one of the biggest turns in the publishing business" in a long time. As a broad class, men's magazines increased their sales tremendously during and after the war. The men's magazines covered by the Audit Bureau of Circulations showed a circulation growth of 134 per cent between 1940 and 1949, according to tabulations in *Magazine Industry*, the publishing trade paper.<sup>11</sup> The table included four magazines either not in existence or not reporting to A.B.C. in 1940. However, even if one excludes them and compares only the magazines reporting in both years, the increase for men's magazines was 93 per cent or roughly twice that of magazines generally.

As some publishers converted their pulps to slick publications for men, as sales of men's magazines generally increased, there developed a new and distinct genre of men's publications—the general magazines for men. They were clearly the grandchildren of the pulps, these new slick magazines, and they dealt in the same basic commodity, escape; but whereas the pulps had provided fiction for escape, the new magazines provided fact. It was fact that sometimes bordered on fiction; indeed, some of the publications adapted the techniques of fiction to factual material as the true detective magazines had done. As one editor wrote a prospective author, "The style we're after is essentially that of the short

11 Carle Hodge, "For Men Only," *Magazine Industry*, 1 (Winter, 1950) 13.

story applied to the fact field—something that can be told mainly in chronological sequence, working up to a climax and a denouement." The publications also adapted a technique of the confession magazines, the first-person account, to their tales of adventure. However handled, their articles were based on conflict.

The standard formula of the magazines was a mixture of a few ingredients, usually crime, war, hunting, sports, speed, and sex. A few random titles illustrate the emphasis of the magazines on exploits of the individual and the excitement which crackled throughout their pages: "My Life as a Headhunter," "I Walked into a Bandit Death Trap," "The Toughest Fish in the Sea," "I Was Hitler's Master Spy," "Virginity Complex" ("are YOU afraid to love?"), "We Stalked a Man-Eater," "I Sailed the Antarctic Killer Boats." Their photographs often showed a sadistic bent, as in pictures of men dying before a firing squad, a man burning to death in a motorcycle accident, the last moments in the life of a racing car driver ("This Is a Man Dying").

The true adventure magazine for men, as a distinct type of publication, had clearly emerged by the end of World War II; and in the decade that followed, titles such as *Male*, *Man's Life*, *Adam*, *Fury*, *Man's Magazine*, *Cavalier*, *Saga*, *Real*, and *Action Caravan* showered upon the newsstands. Most of the magazines were essentially imitators of two onetime pulps, *True* and *Argosy*, which had been converted to slick magazines during World War II.

*True* was founded as a blood-and-thunder pulp by Fawcett Publications before World War II. It limped along with a circulation of about 240,000 and on an income that barely paid expenses. In September, 1944, the publishers transformed *True* into a slick magazine for men and turned it loose in a field in which *Esquire* had gone virtually unchallenged since 1933. To effect the conversion, the publishers had transferred Bill Williams from their *Mechanix Illustrated* to the editorship of *True*, and he spent more than a year working out the idea of what *True* finally became, a slick, advertising-laden magazine that ran factual material only and that attracted its readers with excitement and drama. Williams sought factual material that told a story, and he hired well-known authors to tell the stories: Richard Tregaskis, a former correspondent for International News Service, whom he paid two thousand dollars an article plus expenses to write a series about a trip around the world; Robert Ruark, a widely known newspa-



per columnist; C. S. Forester; and Budd Schulberg. "We'll outbid anybody for stories we really want, even the *Saturday Evening Post*," Williams said.<sup>12</sup>

Circulation rose rapidly. *True* sold 440,000 copies in June, 1944, three months before the transformation was completed; it averaged more than 1,000,000 in the first quarter of 1947, the first men's magazine ever to reach that figure; and in 1955, when both circulation and revenues were somewhat below those of the previous year, it sold more than 1,801,000 copies a month and carried some \$2,231,000 in advertising.

Ken Purdy, who had been editor of *Parade* before becoming editor of *True* after Williams' death in 1948, once tried to explain the success of the magazine. One reason for its success, he thought, was its escapist nature. "We run *True* like a portable twenty-five-cent private study or man's den," he said. "In *True*, the customer gets escapist material . . . no reminders of the sad state the world is in today . . . no whither-are-we-going stories, no doom-is-just-around-the-corner stuff . . . Why should a reader . . . have to wonder if he can use a cure for cancer some time? The hell with it! I don't even like income tax stories." Another reason for its popularity, he suggested, was its ban on fiction. "The fact is that men don't read magazine fiction anymore," Purdy said. "They still want good reading, good stories, but they like them better when they know they're true."<sup>13</sup>

While Fawcett was changing *True* from pulp to slick and establishing it as a general magazine for men, the publishers of *Argosy* were subjecting that venerable pulp to a series of alterations which culminated in 1945 with the emergence of *Argosy* as a competitor of *True*.

Frank Munsey founded *Argosy* in December, 1882, as a magazine for children, but he made it the first of the pulps in the nineties by printing it on coarse paper and filling it with adventure stories for adults. After Munsey's death, *Argosy* was continued as a pulp by the Frank Munsey Company, which was taken over by William T. Dewart, general manager of the firm under Munsey; but the magazine in which Jack London, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and O. Henry had made early appearances sank into sad decline.

Early in 1942, in an effort to modernize the magazine, the

<sup>12</sup> Hodge, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Tide*, 26 (Mar. 28, 1952) 56.

publishers changed its name to *New Argosy*; dropped its familiar cover trademark, a galleon under full sail, in favor of a four-engined airplane; and began to devote half of each issue to factual material and to use photographs as well as the traditional drawings. The measures to enliven the magazine were so extreme that the Postmaster General in July, 1942, banned *Argosy* from the mails for "obscenity." Two months later, the Frank Munsey Company sold *Argosy* and some thirty other titles, only six of them then being published, to Popular Publications, Inc., a large publisher of pulps.

Under its new owner, *Argosy* appeared as a twenty-five-cent all-fiction slick in September, 1943. "We have stepped out of the pulp field entirely," said Rogers Terrill, its new editor. "We felt there was room in the country for an all-fiction slick, and we're it."<sup>14</sup> But apparently there was not room for such a magazine; for in 1944 and 1945, when *True* was selling well on the newsstands, Terrill and Henry Steeger, president of Popular Publications, transformed *Argosy* into another general men's magazine similar to *True*. Retaining some fiction, they developed an editorial formula that included adventure, sports, hunting and fishing, science, and crime. A feature which brought *Argosy* a good deal of publicity in the nation's press was its "Court of Last Resort," in which it told the stories of persons believed to be unjustly imprisoned. The cases were investigated for *Argosy* by a team consisting of a private detective, a criminologist, a former prison warden, and Erle Stanley Gardner, the detective story writer. Several men serving prison terms were freed as a result of the series.

Although *Argosy* still lagged behind *True* in 1954, its publishers seemed aggressive in their attempts to narrow the gap. They hired Ken Purdy, who had done much to establish the success of *True*, as editor of *Argosy* in May, 1954, although he stayed less than two years. He brought two of his key editors with him from *True*. The *Argosy* that he took over had been revitalized by its transformation from pulp to slick. Circulation had been only 40,000 when Popular Publications, Inc., acquired *Argosy* in 1942; in 1955 it was 1,271,000 and gross advertising revenues were estimated at \$1,029,000.

<sup>14</sup> *Newsweek*, 22 (Aug. 23, 1943) 91.

The success of *Argosy* and *True* in attracting readers and advertisers was no doubt responsible for the dozens of similar publications which began turning up on newsstands in the early fifties and thus for the development of the general magazine for men. At one fork in an unprofitable road, then, the pulp magazine branched down a course that led to the general magazine for men. At a later point, as we will see, it took a course that led to another new class of magazines, the comic books. For the comic book was essentially the pulp magazine reincarnated; it was the pulp magazine simplified and summarized by vivid pictures.

All of those kinds of magazines—the confession, detective, fan, pulp, and men's magazines—were addressed to readers on a low level of sophistication and were frankly edited for mass consumption. In the prosperous twenties, in emulation of the *New Yorker*, another type of magazine, the antithesis of those popular publications, sprouted up in the major cities across the United States—the local magazine addressed to sophisticates.

The local magazine of gossip and chitchat for socialites was nothing new. Colonel William Mann founded *Town Topics* for New York society before the turn of the century, for instance, and it lasted until 1932 when it collapsed after the attorney general of New York accused its publishers of forcing wealthy persons to buy stock in the company to forestall unsavory items about themselves and the court enjoined it from selling any more stock. The new local magazines that appeared in the twenties and thirties, while they owed something to such society organs as *American Sketch* and *Tatler*, were nevertheless of a different stamp. They much more obviously emulated the *New Yorker*, and even the names of some showed imitation: *Bostonian*, *Chicagoan*, *New Orleanian*, *Philadelphian*, *San Franciscan*, and *Washingtonian*. Cleveland had *Parade*, a "social, semi-humorous, and pictorial weekly," and Minneapolis and St. Paul had *Golfer and Sportsman*. Washington in 1939 got the *Senator*, a weekly published by Harry Newman of *Judge*, which sought a national readership but which concentrated on affairs within 150 miles of the Capitol in the same fashion that the *New Yorker* did for New York City.

The success of those imitators of the *New Yorker* was slight at best, and their mortality rate was high. Even granting that their goal was an upper-class audience, their circulations were low;

the *Chicagoan* was selling only about 23,000 copies when it was enlarged and redesigned in the summer of 1931. Perhaps the magazines failed to hold readers because they tried too hard to transplant the *New Yorker* to their own localities instead of developing as indigenous products. The audiences they did attract were not large enough to be worth the attention of the big national advertisers whose accounts were essential if a publication were to become financially successful. The *New Yorker*, as its national circulation grew, may well have eliminated any economic justification for its local imitators; for through the *New Yorker*, a national advertiser could perhaps reach as large a discriminating audience in, say, Chicago as he could through a local Chicago magazine.

One of the most enduring of the derivations of the *New Yorker* was *Script*, which in its own fashion tried to do on the West Coast what the *New Yorker* was doing in the East. Rob Wagner founded *Script* in 1929, produced it at a small plant in Hollywood, and kept down editorial expenses by getting his friends who were celebrities to contribute to it without pay. Wagner built a following of a few thousand readers, but circulation began to fall off after his death in 1942 and had dwindled to about a thousand in 1947.

In 1947 Wagner's widow sold *Script* for \$25,000 to Robert L. Smith, general manager of the Los Angeles *Daily News*; Ralph K. Davies, an independent oil operator; and Samuel B. Mosher, president of the Signal Oil Company. Smith said that they hoped within a few years to earn for *Script* a national position similar to that of the *New Yorker*.

The new owners changed *Script* from a biweekly to a monthly and appointed James Felton, a former city editor of the Los Angeles *Daily News*, as editor. Despite a low budget, Felton got the work of widely-known authors and cartoonists, and put Salvador Dali under contract to produce a series of original paintings for the magazine. In about a year circulation rose to 53,000, although *Script* continued to lose between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars an issue.

Ik Shuman, who had once been executive editor of the *New Yorker*, was brought in as publisher of *Script* in 1948. At the same time the magazine got additional financial backing from Samuel

Goldwyn, the motion picture producer, and William Zeckendorf, a New York real estate operator.

Seven months later, however, all of the backers withdrew, and Ik Shuman bought title to the magazine for a dollar. He kept *Script* alive until March, 1949, when he finally suspended publication because of high production costs and low revenue.

Despite the bleak record of local magazines, publishers hopefully continued to try new ones. Chicagoans could read in an editorial in the first issue of *Chicago*, dated March, 1954, why Maurice English thought that his new monthly was justified: "No magazine has yet used the full resources of contemporary journalism—spot reporting, feature articles, fiction, the camera, the artist's pen and brush—to bring into focus one great city. Not an isolated section of it, not this class or that group, but all of its people, in their night-and-daily doings. . . ." By the end of its first year, *Chicago* still had not attracted any appreciable amount of advertising, especially national advertising; but it began its third year with what seemed to be determination.

## chapter 11 Expansion by Compression

In the late thirties, Gardner Cowles, Jr., remarked, "The most notable publication successes of the last decade have all been publications which condensed their contents more than their predecessors. . . ."<sup>1</sup> His observation was sound. Five of the new classes of magazines which arose in the twentieth century abbreviated the content of earlier media, and Cowles himself contributed to the development of two of them—the picture magazine and the miniature magazine.

The first of the five to appear were the news magazines and the digest magazines, which condensed by text. They grew up alongside of one another in the twenties when tabloid newspapers were rolling up huge circulations by giving the news a more concise and lively treatment than conventional newspapers were. The news magazines merely supplemented the newspapers, but they replaced the sober and prolix journals of commentary. They killed off the *Literary Digest*, which, interestingly enough, had itself risen to popularity as a summarizer. The digest magazines plucked articles from the myriad publications which confronted the reader at the newsstand and boiled them down into short pieces with short words and short sentences.

<sup>1</sup> Jackson Edwards, "One Every Minute," *Scribner's*, 103 (May, 1938) 23.

The second two classes grew up together about a decade after the news magazine and digest, and they abbreviated not by text but by picture. Both the modern picture magazine and the comic book summarized with photographs and art work as the news magazine and digest had with text. The picture magazine offered pictorial condensations of the material carried by the news and feature magazines, the comic book the adventure and action stories of the pulps. Both appeared in the thirties, a time when Americans had been made picture-conscious by the movies and newspapers and when commercial television was but a few years away.

In view of the popularity of these summarizers, it was perhaps inevitable that publishers should combine the appeal of both the news and picture magazines in a publication that carried condensation to an extreme—the miniature magazine of news, features, and photographs which was inaugurated when Gardner Cowles, Jr., issued *Quick* in 1949. Significantly, perhaps, three of those five new classes—the digests, the picture magazines, and the comic books—quickly won tremendous audiences; in 1955 a digest magazine and a picture magazine led all other magazines in circulation.

As a class, news magazines became an important part of the magazine industry only after 1923 when *Time* first appeared. Although *Time* was indisputably the most successful and, in a sense, the most influential of all news magazines, it was not the first magazine which had the dissemination of news as its primary function. Such publications had existed as early as the eighteenth century, but they had been so few and so separated from one another in time that they scarcely constituted a distinct category. Nor did even *Pathfinder*, the most immediate forerunner and a contemporary of *Time*, give the attention to news-gathering and timeliness that was to characterize the major news weeklies of the twentieth century.

The first two American magazines devoted exclusively to news appeared two months apart in 1786—the *New Haven Gazette*, and the *Connecticut Magazine* in February, the *Worcester Magazine* in April—and even before them, some magazines had run news as a part of their content. Sixteen years separated their appearance from that of the third news magazine, the *Balance and Columbian Repository*, which survived for almost seven years after its initial issue in January, 1802. The first American magazine of

really long life and large circulation was also a news magazine, the fourth, *Niles' Weekly Register*, which published from September 7, 1811, until February 26, 1848, when it died as a result of competition from the growing number of newspapers and other magazines and from inefficient editing. Other nineteenth-century magazines, notably *Leslie's* and *Harper's Weekly*, covered the news in pictures and so were more properly the forerunners of *Life* than of *Time*. The *Literary Digest* was close to being a news magazine, but it was also close to being a digest; actually, it was more, as one historian aptly described it, "a clipping service for public opinion" than a true news magazine.<sup>2</sup>

The oldest of the news magazines still being published in 1954, when its name and editorial approach were changed, was *Pathfinder*, which had carried news, most of it rewritten from newspapers and the press services, to rural and small-town America for more than a half a century. George D. Mitchell, the Republican son of a Republican congressman from Pennsylvania, founded *Pathfinder* in Washington, D. C. on January 6, 1894. The weekly was filled with rewrites of news from other publications and with odds and ends selected for their entertainment value. Late in covering events, *Pathfinder* favored news of social significance and rarely used material about crime and scandal. Although the advertising it attracted was largely for patent medicines and from mail-order firms, the magazine did a good job of supplying news and entertainment at low price, a dollar a year, throughout World War I and into the peace. The circulation, which grew steadily during the twenties after a sharp climb during the war, was more than a million copies a week during the latter half of the thirties.

In the thirties, control of *Pathfinder* changed hands several times. Sevellon Brown of the Providence *Journal and Bulletin*, owned the weekly from September, 1936, until August, 1938, when he sold it to James L. Bray, former business manager of the *United States News*. Bray sold the magazine eleven months later to Emil Hurja, a former executive director of the Democratic National Committee. Hurja had won himself a reputation as a political forecaster as a result of his pre-election statistical analyses, and he made public opinion polls on national issues a

<sup>2</sup> Calvin Ellsworth Chunn, "History of News Magazines" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Missouri, 1950), *passim*.



feature of the magazine. But Hurja had trouble in attracting advertising, probably because advertisers thought that they could reach a large share of *Pathfinder's* market through other media. To make *Pathfinder* an effective medium for reaching the rural and small-town market, Hurja in 1940 began to reduce its circulation in cities of more than a hundred thousand population, a policy which he said would mean sacrificing "some quarter of a million dollars in advertising due to the elimination of advertising now on the books."<sup>3</sup> The policy apparently did little to revive *Pathfinder*; for although the magazine guaranteed a circulation of 1,000,000 in 1940, its sales had fallen to 556,000 in the first half of 1941.

In August, 1943, Hurja sold operating control of *Pathfinder*, although he remained on its staff for another two years. The magazine was taken over by Graham C. Patterson backed by Joseph N. Pew, Jr., of the Sun Oil Company, the team which had bought and revived *Farm Journal* in 1935 and had acquired *Farmer's Wife* in 1939.

Patterson enlarged and redesigned *Pathfinder*, expanded its news-gathering staff, eliminated its patent medicine advertising, and sought national advertising. Converted from weekly to fortnightly publication in 1946, the magazine showed rapid gains in circulation after the war. At the start of 1947, its circulation had again reached 1,000,000, a gain of 600,000 in a year. In 1950 *Pathfinder* operated twenty-five departments, manned by a Washington staff of forty-one, and had bureaus in Chicago and New York and correspondents in various foreign cities. After its change to *Town Journal*, the magazine was strictly a general interest monthly for small-town America, although it still ran a two-page newsletter from Washington and a page of news for consumers.

Although *Pathfinder* antedated *Time* by almost thirty years, it had no discernible influence on the news magazines that sprang up in the twenties and thirties. There was little about its treatment of the news to capture the imagination; indeed, because of its folksy appeal to a small-town and rural reading public, the vast majority of magazine readers probably never heard of it. Nor was it spectacularly successful. Its newsprint paper stock,

<sup>3</sup> *Editor & Publisher*, 73 (March 23, 1940) 38.

its low subscription price, its patent medicine advertising, its audience all perhaps put *Pathfinder* in a class with the inexpensive farm papers and hence somewhat suspect as a reputable advertising medium. When Briton Hadden and Henry Luce drew up their prospectus for *Time*, the magazine with which they contrasted their proposed news weekly was not *Pathfinder*—there is no indication that they had ever heard of it—but the *Literary Digest*. It was neither *Pathfinder* nor the *Literary Digest* that made the news magazine a distinct genre in the magazine field. It was *Time*.

As undergraduates at Yale and as second lieutenants of artillery at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, in World War I, Briton Hadden and Henry Luce often talked about a newspaper or magazine that would inform a poorly informed America. "People," Hadden said, "talk too much about what they don't know."

"This is not the fault of the newspapers," Hadden and Luce agreed in the prospectus which they drafted for *Time* in 1922; "they print all the news."

"It is not the fault of the weekly 'reviews'; they adequately develop and comment on the news."

"To say with the facile cynic that it is the fault of the people themselves is to beg the question."

"People are uninformed because no publication has adapted itself to the time which busy men are able to spend simply keeping informed."

What was needed, Hadden and Luce agreed, was a publication that made sense of the chaotic torrent of news. After Luce had studied at Oxford and then gone to work for the *Chicago Daily News*, after Hadden had worked for the *New York World*, the two young men finished their plans for *Time* while working together for the *Baltimore News*. Their prospectus of eighteen pages had three major ideas :

1. The news could be completely organized. Each article would be "found in its logical place in the magazine, according to a fixed method of arrangement which constitutes a complete organization of all the news." Each department might be broken into subcategories. For example, "Oil" was one of the proposed sections under the general department of "Foreign News."

2. *Time* would show "what the news means." It would deal "briefly with every happening of importance" as news "rather

than as comment." But, while giving both sides, it would "clearly indicate which side it believes to have the stronger position." It would not run editorials, would not publish articles to prove any special case.

But the editors recognize that complete neutrality on public questions and important news is probably as undesirable as it is impossible, and are therefore ready to acknowledge certain prejudices which may in varying measure predetermine their opinions of the news. . . .

But this magazine is not founded to promulgate prejudices, liberal or conservative. . . . The magazine is one of news, not argument, and verges on the controversial only where it is necessary to point out what the news *means*.

3. Individual persons, not governments and mysterious forces, make news. Influential men, the prospectus said, "are something more than stage-figures with a name. It is important to know what they drink. It is important to know to what gods they pray and what kinds of fights they love." Since "the personalities of politics make public affairs live," *Time* would describe the personalities and private opinions of public men. *Time* would even try to "make editors known to the public as Senators are known."<sup>4</sup>

Rejecting such titles as *Chance*, *Destiny*, and the banal *Weekly News Budget*, Hadden and Luce settled on *Time* as the name for their magazine because it was simple yet both dignified and catchy, was different from other titles yet was a well-known word, and was adaptable to "many varied and catchy slogans."

The prospectus for *Time* impressed its authors far more than it did potential backers, many of whom warned them that their market was thoroughly covered by the *Literary Digest*, which then ranked as one of the leaders in circulation and third among all magazines in advertising revenue. Hadden and Luce eventually raised enough money to begin publication; and with a few staff members, none more than three years out of college, none paid more than forty dollars a week and some only ten, they produced a first issue of twenty-eight pages, a meager four of them advertising. Their source of copy was a bundle of newspapers left at their door each morning and evening. They could rewrite those newspapers without fear of legal retaliation. News could not be protected by copyright, and they had obtained the opinion of

4 Time, Inc., "*Time: The Weekly News-Magazine (A Prospectus)*," 1922.

Justice Holmes that their weekly publication probably would not infringe on the property rights of the original gatherers since news was so perishable a commodity.

When the first issue of *Time*, dated March 2, 1923, went to its nine thousand subscribers, the response was disconcertingly apathetic. Although circulation doubled in the first year, *Time* stumbled from one financial crisis to the next for its first five years. In 1928, however, it showed a net profit of \$125,787; and the next year, its net jumped to \$325,412, its advertising gross of \$1,860,443 was more than double that of the preceding year, and circulation was more than a quarter million. Thereafter *Time*, and Time, Inc., grew steadily.

As Hadden and Luce had recognized, there was a market for a news magazine. After World War I, colleges began turning out graduates at an accelerated rate—the number of regularly enrolled students in 1922 was almost double that of 1918—and *Time* appealed primarily to the person with a degree. The tempo of life was faster than in the years before the war, and a person who wanted his news in a hurry had nowhere to get it. The radio newscast had not yet become commonplace; neither had the radio commentator who tried to clarify the news. *Time* more than filled the need; it filled it entertainingly. Its departmentalized stories were brief—at first never more than four hundred words. Even its sentences were brief, an average of 19.96 words in 1923 as compared with the 30.15 of the *Literary Digest*, as someone once painstakingly computed. Its tone, brash and irreverent, perhaps set well with a generation which was, to paraphrase Frederick Lewis Allen, revolutionizing manners and morals.

As *Time* grew older, it developed certain practices that other news magazines copied. In the mid-twenties, it began to present all of its news in narrative form, a complete break with the traditional news-writing practice of daily newspapers. It evolved a research and checking system under which researchers supplied writers with pertinent details and word by word verified the statements in the writers' stories. In the thirties, perhaps because it could no longer count on other sources to furnish the sort of information it wanted for its distinctive treatment of the news, *Time* began building up its own network of bureaus and correspondents, and in 1955 its private news-gathering organization was below only the Associated Press and United Press in size.

The manner in which *Time* reported events was distinctive, even though staff members denied that there was such a thing as a "*Time* style." Parodists made sport of *Time's* inverted sentences, its piled-on adjectives ("shaggy-maned, beetle-browed John L. Lewis"), its coined words ("cinemaddict," "radiator"), its hyperactive verbs, its footnotes of needless amplification. But the real significance of *Time's* experimentation with language lay in its attitude, of which the style was but a symptom, according to Joseph J. Firebaugh in *American Speech* for October, 1941. "Postwar iconoclasm was the spirit which fostered *Time's* experimental attitude toward language," he wrote; and its significant linguistic achievement was adapting language to express "two great democratic ideals—disrespect for authority and reverence for success." It showed its disrespect for authority in such phrases as "weed-whiskered" and "bald-domed," he said, and its adulation of success in such words as "pundit" and "tycoon." Yet in 1955 the most distinctive characteristic of *Time's* writing was its over-all tone of omniscience which hinted that one person had studied all of the events of the week and was passing along the real story with its true significance.

Imitators began to appear as *Time* became successful. Publishers in the Orient and in England borrowed ideas from *Time*. In Shanghai in October, 1933, Joseph Coughlin, who had once operated a newspaper at Carmel, California, established *East*, "Newsweekly of the Orient." In London in 1933, Francis Yeats-Brown edited *Everyman*, a "World News Weekly," with news condensations and pictures. The most frank imitation of *Time* abroad, however, was the *British News Review*, which first appeared in February, 1936. Openly acknowledging its debt to *Time* in its first issue, *News Review* continued at midcentury to ape the red-bordered cover, the format, and the style of *Time*.

In the United States as well, publishers saw a market for national, regional, and local news magazines. In 1929 McGraw-Hill took full-page advertisements in metropolitan dailies to announce that it was converting its *Magazine of Business* into a weekly news magazine, *Business Week*. "It will be preeminently the businessman's journal of business news, vital and vivacious, informative and dynamic, with something American in every characteristic," the advertisement said. "It will be keyed to the new tempo in business." *Business Week* in 1955 resembled *Time* in

many ways, although it restricted its coverage to news and analysis of developments in business and industry. The two major national magazines of general news that followed *Time—Newsweek* and *United States News*—both appeared in 1933. By then *Time* had forcibly demonstrated the appeal of the news weekly. As the nation struggled out of the depression and then went along the road to war, the uncertainties and tensions, the complexities of the times perhaps made Americans more needful than ever of publications that tried to sift the news and to explain its significance.

*Newsweek* was founded by the first foreign news editor of *Time*, Thomas J. C. Martyn, an Englishman whom Hadden and Luce had imported on the mistaken notion that he was an experienced writer on world affairs.<sup>5</sup> After gaining his first professional writing experience on *Time*, Martyn had gone to the *New York Times*, which he quit to draw up a prospectus, raise backing, and establish a news magazine. With a staff of twenty-two, a bundle of news clippings, and two packing cases of books, he launched a magazine, *News-Week*, which guaranteed advertisers a circulation of fifty thousand. Martyn's original idea was for a news digest which on its cover would publish seven photographs depicting an important event for each day in the week. In June, 1934, Martyn discontinued such covers, which were confusing to newsstand customers.

According to a rival publication, *Time*, 120 individual investors furnished the \$2,250,000 which *News-Week* went through in its first four years.<sup>6</sup> Although circulation had mounted to a quarter of a million by early 1937, the magazine had encountered financial difficulties. Its difficulties were resolved in February, 1937, by a merger with *Today*. Raymond Moley had left Franklin D. Roosevelt's Brain Trust to edit *Today*, launched in November, 1933, with financial backing from Vincent Astor and W. Averell Harriman, to popularize the New Deal. A widely quoted publication, *Today* nevertheless failed to achieve a circulation larger than 75,000. When it was merged with *News-Week*, officers of the new company included Vincent Astor, president; S. Winston Childs, Jr., vice president; DuSossoit Duke, vice president; Raymond Moley, editor; and Frank K. White, treasurer.

*News-Week* was given a revised name and a new editorial policy

5 Noel F. Busch, *Briton Hadden: A Biography of the Go-Founder of Time* (New York, 1949), pp. 85-86.

6 *Time*, 29 (Feb. 15, 1937) 50.

in October, 1937, when Malcolm Muir, who had been president of McGraw-Hill Publishing Company for ten years, became its president and publisher. Its name was changed to *Newsweek*, "The Magazine of News Significance." Departing from its simple digest of the news, the magazine announced a "three-dimensional editorial formula" consisting of the news itself, the background to the news, and interpretations of the significance of the news.

Unlike *Time*, *Newsweek* adopted signed columns—Raymond Moley had written the first of them—although the writers of its news columns remained anonymous. Like *Time*, *Newsweek* established a crew of researchers who aided writers in obtaining information for their stories. The magazine also set up its own news-gathering system of correspondents and bureaus to supplement the news coverage supplied it by the United Press.

David Lawrence established the *United States News* in Washington, D. C., in 1933, a year in which much of the news was made in the nation's capital. His magazine reported, analyzed, and forecast national news, and its editorial scope was narrower than that of *Time* and *Newsweek*, which it trailed in circulation. In May, 1946, Lawrence began a sister publication, *World Report*, which was similar to *United States News* in slant and format but which restricted its coverage and analysis to international rather than national news. For its coverage, the new magazine depended upon a staff of correspondents, the Associated Press, the United Press, and the Chicago Daily News Foreign Service. While circulation of *World Report* climbed to almost 135,000, its advertising lineage stayed low. Ostensibly because a line could no longer be drawn between national and international news, Lawrence merged his two publications into the *United States News and World Report* in January, 1948.

A number of regional and local news magazines appeared across the United States; and while some of them showed the influences of *Life* and the *New Yorker* as well, they nevertheless owed a great deal to *Time*. One of the local news magazines which appeared in the wake of *Time* was the *Pittsburgh Bulletin-Index*, which resulted from a merger of two old publications in the early thirties. Copying the typography of *Time*, it reported on activities in Pittsburgh and drew the bulk of its advertising from local concerns. The weekly, which had a peak circulation of twelve thousand, changed ownerships in 1942 and 1945 and was reportedly losing

a thousand dollars a week before it ceased publication in February, 1949.

Among the regional publications which sprang up in profusion after World War II were several news magazines. On the West Coast in 1946, for instance, O. D. Keep, a former promotion manager for *Time* and *Fortune*, launched *Fortnight*, "The News-magazine of California," which ran guides to entertainment in addition to its news and feature coverage of California affairs. In Texas, also in 1946, Raymond Holbrook established *Texas Week*, which sought to present each week, "through text and pictures, a concise summary of the significant news in the nation's greatest state." The magazine, which was departmentalized like *Time* and *Newsweek* and which had an initial press run of twenty thousand, suspended publication within a year.

The digest magazine found its reader audience about the time the news magazine did, but publishers had experimented with it, as with the news magazine, long before the twenties. Funk and Wagnalls had started the *Literary Digest* in 1890 because they had thought there was a need for a publication that would winnow instructive material from the periodicals of their day, and although the *Literary Digest* departed from its original purpose, it subsisted largely on the content of other publications until its death. Albert Shaw, Sr., had founded his *Review of Reviews* in 1891 because he believed that readers would appreciate a publication which condensed informative material from the host of periodicals then available.

Frank Munsey had had remarkable if brief success with a digest magazine shortly after the turn of the century. In March, 1906, he issued *Scrap Book*, a "granary for the gleanings of literature," as he called it, which consisted of reprinted stories and articles. *Scrap Book* sold a half million copies in three days and did extremely well for a year. Then Munsey, deciding to expand it, issued the publication in two sections, one all pictures, the other all fiction. Sales of the magazine plunged. Within a year, one section had vanished into *Live Wire*; the other lasted until 1912.<sup>7</sup>

A decade later, in 1922, DeWitt Wallace issued the first number of the *Reader's Digest*, and with its appearance, the digest magazine as a distinct type of publication originated; for other pub-

<sup>7</sup> George Britt, *Forty Years—Forty Millions: The Career of Frank A. Munsey* (New York, 1935), p. 100.



lishers inevitably imitated the *Digest*, both in its pocket-sized format and in its policy of culling articles from other periodicals. There was a boom in both the pocket magazines and in the digests, especially in the thirties and forties. The two were not identical types. The term "pocket magazine" distinguished magazines by size, the term "digest" by content; most digests were pocket magazines, although some were not.

The imitators of the *Reader's Digest* began to spring up in the late twenties, despite Wallace's attempt to hide its success by keeping its circulation a secret. As the number grew, some of the newcomers limited their content to special areas instead of carrying the wide variety of articles that the *Digest* did. For instance, there appeared a *Science Digest* and a *Catholic Digest*; after World War II, there appeared a *Negro Digest* and a *Children's Digest*. And it was not just magazine articles that the digests condensed; they turned to the other media, books, newspapers, and radio. In 1938 *Book Digest* and *Omnibook* were established to provide readers with abridgments of current books. A. Newton Plummer, Jr., in 1939 introduced *Cartoon Digest*, which proposed to reprint outstanding newspaper art each month. Two Chicago men in 1947 got out the *Editorial Digest*, which reprinted leading editorial comment of the preceding month; *Column* set out in 1949 to interpret the American scene by a variety of reprinted newspaper columns. Still another magazine tried reprinting the best letters to editors of newspapers. Condé Nast in 1939 toyed with *Listener's Digest*, a summary of the best radio programs.

Compared with the *Reader's Digest*, most of the digest magazines were small operations with not especially impressive circulations. For instance, *Everybody's Digest*, which began publication in 1938 and which was one of the digest leaders for a few years, sold some 278,000 copies a month in 1949; but sales dropped to 138,000 in 1953, and the magazine had vanished by 1955. *The Woman*, which lived from 1938 until 1955, consistently reported a circulation of well under 150,000. Both of those magazines, like the *Reader's Digest*, ran original material as well as reprinted articles.

Most of the other digests, too, ran varying proportions of original material. One can easily guess why they did so. In the thirties, the *Reader's Digest*, having the momentum of an early start, managed to obtain exclusive rights to reprint material from

most of the available leading magazines of general interest, and it was always opulent enough after its first years to outbid competitors. There was certainly some limit to the amount of widely popular material which was available for reprinting, and widely popular material was a necessary ingredient of the digests, which were supported by circulation. As the number of digests grew, competition for material was keen; after World War II, it was not unusual for two magazines to carry different versions of the same reprinted article.

One of the oldest of the early digests still on the newsstands in 1955 was *Magazine Digest*, which began publication in 1930 and which, like the *Reader's Digest*, was a grab bag of miscellany, much of it reworked from scientific and technical journals. Actually, *Magazine Digest* was a Canadian magazine, published in Toronto and printed in Montreal. However, it drew most of its copy from periodicals published in the United States, where it also had its largest circulation, especially after World War II, when its sales overseas had diminished. It set up branch offices in New York City in 1947.

Another successful digest was *Omnibook*, which was founded in 1938 by Robert K. Straus, son of an ambassador to France. In each issue it abridged several popular books, fiction and nonfiction. Its original payment to publishers for each condensation was five hundred dollars. In 1946 its publishers started a similar publication, *Booh Reader*, which they suspended in less than a year. They set up two foreign editions of *Omnibook* in 1948, one in France, one in Australia, and they also distributed their domestic edition abroad.

Two general interest digests which appeared in the forties tried to break with the usual fare of the digest magazines. *Reader's Scope* adopted a politically liberal slant to capture the readership of liberals by giving them the sort of articles its editors thought they would like to find in the *Reader's Digest*. *This Month* was designed to promote international understanding without sacrificing entertainment. Neither had a long life.

*Reader's Scope* first appeared in the summer of 1944. Its editor was Leverett Gleason, a publisher of comic books, who said that he had worked out a new formula for digests as a result of a careful republication analysis of public taste. His plan was to run half reprinted material, half original material, and the articles



# LOOK

THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IN AMERICA TODAY

15¢ NOVEMBER 23, 1955



JANET LEIGH and  
TONY CURTIS  
IN PARIS

would include about five biographical pieces an issue and a strong dose of humor. His articles were to be chosen for their timeliness, besides their liberal slant, instead of for the "lasting interest" of the *Reader's Digest* articles. Magazines with which he had agreements to use material included the *New Yorker*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Woman's Day*. His magazine had ceased publication within six years.

*This Month* began publication in February, 1945, on the wave of public interest in international amity which accompanied the establishment of the United Nations and UNESCO and which characterized the first years after the war. It was a nonprofit magazine backed financially by some fifteen members of the Association for Promotion of International Understanding, a Canadian organization formed to give the typical North American a "liberal, democratic" view of the world. Edited in New York, printed in Canada, *This Month* also adopted a liberal slant and ran both original and reprinted material, the latter from publications in both Canada and the United States. After two years, it suspended publication.

Besides inspiring the digests, the *Reader's Digest* also seems responsible for the rise of a number of pocket magazines composed primarily of original material which imitated its short articles, its short sentences, its short words, sometimes its tone of chummy optimism, and its basic editorial formula. Most of them used some reprinted material, but the bulk of their copy was original.

Money from the defunct *Literary Digest* helped to finance a company that published several such profitable pocket magazines. In 1937 Wilfred J. Funk, whose father had been a founder of the *Literary Digest*, used proceeds from the sale of the weekly to help form Kingsway Press, Inc. The first publication of the new company was *Your Life*, a "Popular Guide to Desirable Living," which capitalized on the popular desire for self-improvement that made best sellers of such books as Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and Walter B. Pitkin's *Life Begins at Forty*. The magazine offered its readers help and inspiration in what its editor, Douglas Lurton, apparently regarded as life's major problem areas: health, charm, love, children, conversation, and fortune. *Your Life* found so hospitable a market that its publishers made a separate publication, *Your Personality*, out of the original department on charm in 1938. The following year

they used the department on health as the basis for still another magazine, *Your Health*. They added *Woman's Life* in 1942, *Success Today* in 1946, and *Your Marriage* in 1949. The company introduced *Faith Today* in 1954 as a nonsectarian magazine to provide "spiritual inspiration for the entire family." Although the publishers kept the circulations of their publications a secret, a trade paper reported in 1947 that their magazines had all shown a profit from the first issue.<sup>8</sup>

The pocket magazine ranking second in circulation to *Reader's Digest* was *Coronet* of Esquire, Inc. It began in October, 1936, as a personal venture of David Smart to "prove that beauty is still a very potent market." As a "book-size magazine of popular culture," *Coronet* in its first few years was an exceedingly arty publication; its first issue, with its five-color cover, carried drawings, etchings, and color reproductions of the work of Rembrandt and Raphael in addition to fiction, articles, and photographs. The first issue, with a press run of a quarter of a million copies, was completely sold out in forty-eight hours, according to Smart. However, beauty was evidently not the potent market that Smart thought it was. Sales declined from about 200,000 in 1936 to about 100,000 in the first six months of 1940.

In 1940 *Coronet* abandoned its artistic pretensions and settled down to an editorial formula in keeping with those of the other digest and pocket magazines. Much of the change was the work of Oscar Dystel, who was moved from the circulation department into a top editorial position and who queried readers on their editorial preferences to develop a new editorial pitch. As *Coronet* did not accept advertising until 1947—it experimented briefly with advertising in 1937 but dropped it—its circulation figures were not made public during the boom war years, when several outsiders estimated its sales at as much as five million. However, when *Coronet* made its postwar bid for advertising, its circulation guarantee was but two million, although its actual circulation after 1947 was several hundred thousand more than that.

Alex L. Hillman built Hillman Periodicals, Inc., into a profitable company by publishing confession, factual detective, fan, and comic magazines. In November, 1944, he added a pocket magazine to his list. His experiences with *Pageant*, a slick-paper

<sup>8</sup> *Tide*, 21 (Oct. 24, 1947) 38.

monthly which at times resembled the offspring of a mating between *Reader's Digest* and *Coronet*, provided a good study of the difficulties of publishing a magazine without advertising in a period of shortages and rising production costs. The first editor of *Pageant*, Eugene Lyons, left after about six months. In those six months, *Pageant* had gone through about \$300,000 of its original \$500,000 budget, and Hillman had killed off his profitable detective and comic magazines to provide it with paper. The second editor was Vernon L. Pope, who had helped to develop the picture-sequence technique used by *Look*. When Pope took over, he said he expected to win *Pageant* a million readers within the next six or eight months; but when he left a little more than two years later, in August, 1947, *Pageant* had lost \$400,000, and circulation had dropped from an initial 500,000 to about 270,000. Neither Lyons nor Pope had had sufficient paper supplies to justify promoting the magazine, and increasing production costs had eaten away at their budgets. When Pope left, Hillman said he would continue to publish *Pageant* as a bimonthly until he had exhausted the features on hand.

In December, 1947, Hillman hired Harris Shevelson away from his job as managing editor of *Coronet* to make him editor of *Pageant*. When he took over, Shevelson remarked, "*Reader's Digest* is sort of the old senator with the long beard, *Coronet* the middle-aged prosperous businessman, and we the youngster. We'll have to be more electrifying, more shocking, and perhaps brasher."<sup>9</sup> Shevelson's *Pageant* was brighter and used more photographs than earlier versions. By 1949 circulation had pulled up to about 400,000 and the magazine was finally paying its way.

Rising costs pinched most of the other digest and pocket magazines after World War II. Traditionally they had not carried advertising; but in 1947 and after, when sales of copies no longer produced sufficient revenue, a number of them sought advertising. *Magazine Digest*, *Reader's Scope*, *The Woman*, *Everybody's Digest*, *Success Today*, and *Coronet* all announced in 1947 that they would solicit advertising; and in 1950, after twelve years without advertising, *Omnibook* accepted its first accounts. The *Reader's Digest* kept its domestic edition closed to advertisers until April, 1955, when it too capitulated to economic pressure.

<sup>9</sup> *Newsweek*, 30 (Dec. 29, 1947) 43.

In content as well as in financial problems, the array of digest and pocket magazines had much in common. Roger Butterfield reported in March, 1946, on an analysis he had made of the content of twenty-one pocket magazines which he had bought at a single large newsstand.<sup>10</sup> As a group, he found the magazines "moderately progressive"; he classified thirteen of the twenty-one as liberal, only four as definitely the opposite. The magazines, he said, were unanimous against racial discrimination, virtually unanimous in favor of the United Nations, and as much for labor as against it.

Most of the magazines of lesser circulation followed the editorial pattern of the *Header's Digest* with its penchant for amusing anecdotes and fascinating facts. All of the material in the magazines could be put into thirty-three categories to which Butterfield gave such headings as "religion and the supernatural" and "state of the world." Lively articles about sex, he found, were in great demand. The magazines also devoted large amounts of space to "the marvels of science and the wonders of nature" (the terms are Butterfield's); "animal stories"; people, living and dead (among them "contemporary celebrities," "contemporary nonentities," "quaint historical characters," and "great national heroes"); "body troubles"; and "the better life," covering such topics as alcoholism, prison life, vice crusades, and drug addiction.

The digest and the news magazines, among the most successful publishing ideas of the twenties, brought the reader his news and features in capsule form. In the thirties, two of the most successful publishing ideas, the picture magazine and the comic book, carried summarization one step further by using pictures instead of text to tell their stories.

One November day in 1936, after months of experimentation and promotion, Henry Luce's *Life* at last turned up on the newsstands, and with its appearance the modern picture magazine was born. For their dimes, purchasers of that initial issue got ninety-six large pages full of photographs—the first, of an obstetrician slapping a baby to consciousness, captioned, "Life Begins." That issue of *Life* was sold out almost at once. Customers put their names on newsdealers' waiting lists or bought secondhand copies for as much as a dollar.

<sup>10</sup> Roger Butterfield, "What Pocket Magazines Feed On," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 29 (Mar. 9, 1946) 5-6, 35-37.

*Life* was not the first of the modern picture magazines; Monte Bourjaily had completely revamped the twenty-two-year-old *Mid-Week Pictorial* and put it on sale the previous month. But *Life* was by all odds the most successful, and its success bred dozens of imitators. As it finally emerged, the picture magazine was the result of at least five influences. The illustrated weeklies at home, the illustrated magazines from abroad, the movies, the tabloid newspapers, and advertising photography all combined to produce the picture magazine. They were helped by technological advances in printing and photography.

From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, there were a number of illustrated magazines in the United States. *Leslie's Weekly*, which began in 1855, built up a large circulation by running wood engravings of topical subjects; and *Harper's Weekly*, long a favorite with readers and advertisers, gave good pictorial coverage to the American scene after 1857. *Panorama* in 1928 and *Roto* in 1934 were unsuccessful experiments with the picture magazine.

In Europe, especially in Germany where the Berlin *Illustrierte Zeitung* was among the pioneers, periodicals used related photographs in sequence to tell a story several years before the modern picture magazine flourished in the United States. Some of the men who had worked on such publications came to the United States to escape the Nazis, and they influenced the development of the American picture magazine. Many of the publications themselves were available in this country. In libraries and on newsstands in large American cities, readers could get copies of perhaps a dozen illustrated periodicals from abroad, *L'Illustration*, for instance, and the *London Illustrated News*.

As the motion picture matured from a peepshow and vaudeville attraction and drew millions of persons to the box office each day, it no doubt made Americans picture conscious. In the thirties, Pare Lorentz and John Grierson, the men on the March of Time, and others were experimenting with the film as a form of journalism, and what they learned was important to the development of the picture magazine.

The tabloid newspapers of the twenties also helped to make photography a tool of journalism. Alongside their condensed, jazzed-up news stories, the tabloids ran more pictures than newspapers ever had before. Indeed, the first tabloid in New York, the



*Daily News*, carried the word "Illustrated" in its title for part of its first year. In their contest in sensationalism, the tabloids used photography as a strong weapon. The *Daily News* smuggled a photograph of Ruth Snyder dying in the electric chair from the death chamber; the *Daily Graphic* invented "composographs," faked photographs depicting what was believed to have happened. Regular newspapers began to use more and more pictures, a trend aided by the establishment of such agencies as Acme Newspictures in 1924, the Associated Press Picture Service in 1928, and the Associated Press Wirephoto Service in 1935.

Advertising photography also has been credited with contributing to the development of the picture magazine. To catch the attention of the reader, advertisers used cartoons, drawings, and eventually photographs; and perhaps because they were better able to bear the cost, they seem to have used photography more lavishly than editors. One advertising agency man who pioneered in advertising photography was J. Stirling Getchell. Breaking away from the usual drawings in automotive advertising, he used photographs in his Plymouth account, and he dressed up advertisements for Goodrich Tires and Fleischmann's Yeast with news-style photos. As early as 1924 Getchell had toyed with the idea of publishing a picture magazine. In 1985 he prepared a sample but was unable to raise the \$2,000,000 he thought necessary to launch it. He was interested in Luce's plans for *Life* and in 1938 started a magazine of his own, *Picture: The Photographic Digest*. Magazines had used photographs editorially since the 1890's, both as covers and as illustrations of the text; and in the twenties, Bernarr Macfadden had hit upon the idea of photographic scenes posed by models to lend authenticity to his *True Story*. But magazine editors, like newspaper editors, had done little to develop photo-journalism.

The most direct forerunner of the picture magazine of the thirties was *Mid-Week Pictorial*, first issued by the New York *Times* on September 9, 1914, as a "pictorial war extra." It was continued after the war as a rotogravure weekly with thirty-two pages of regular news pictures, not the picture stories later developed by *Life* and *Look*.

In September, 1936, when the idea for a picture magazine was in the air and, as one advertising trade paper later remarked, every advertising man carried a dummy for a picture magazine in

his hip pocket, Monte Bourjaily, a former executive of United Feature Syndicate, bought *Mid-Week Pictorial* from the *Times* and converted it into a magazine somewhat along the lines of what *Life* was to become. Bourjaily increased the number of pages to sixty and improved the quality of the paper, but his major change was in approach, which was closer to the one that *Life* was working out than to that of the old *Mid-Week Pictorial*. His idea was to publish a news magazine that told its stories in pictures as well as text. Early in October, 1936, Bourjaily put his first issue on sale, and circulation shot from 30,000 under the *Times* to 117,750.

But the next month Time, Inc., brought out its heavily-promoted *Life*, which within a few weeks was selling a million copies. Bourjaily concluded that he had missed the market and with his issue of February 20, 1937, suspended publication until he could give *Mid-Week Pictorial* a new dress and format. That, as it turned out, was never.

As early as 1932, when *Time* was a success and *Fortune* was established, Henry Luce had had the idea of publishing a picture magazine. A staff at Time, Inc., began experimenting in the fall of 1933 and produced a dummy called *Parade*, which borrowed ideas from *Vanity Fair*, *Time*, and *Fortune*. Luce and his staff were not satisfied with it, and further work on it was slowed up by the entry of Time, Inc., into the motion picture field with the *March of Time*.

Yet the *March of Time* was one of several strong influences on the *Life* that appeared in November, 1936. *March of Time* was a serious attempt at photo-journalism, one on which Time, Inc., spent thousands of dollars, and it taught the editors how to get the sort of photographs they were looking for. Experiments on *Time* and *Fortune* also helped to develop the techniques of pictorial journalism that *Life* adopted.

For years *Time* had been doing some elementary, almost unpremeditated, experimentation in pictorial journalism. Its editors used a good many pictures, and they would shuffle through a score to find the one that best caught the mood of a story. They once ran a spread of color pictures to test reader response as indicated by requests for reprints. In *Time*, too, Daniel Longwell, an interested student of the new techniques in photographic presentation,

tried arranging related photographs in sequence to tell a story, as comic-strip artists had long been doing.

Although it never used pictures to tell a story, *Fortune* contributed more to *Life* than *Time* did. Its editors introduced the candid camera to the United States and popularized the off-guard portrait in their efforts to make the faces of American businessmen interesting. In the *London Tatler* they spied some pictures by Dr. Erich Salomon, a German who in 1928 had become fascinated by the Leica, a small camera which could take pictures indoors without flashbulbs, and who had set about catching shots of famous persons in unguarded moments. *Fortune* bought some of Salomon's pictures, but more important it brought him to the United States as one of its photographers. Salomon's work in *Fortune* inspired Thomas McAvoy, a pioneer *Life* photographer, to buy a Leica and learn to use it. *Fortune* also ran photographs by Margaret Bourke-White and Peter Stackpole, later associated with *Life*.

The immediate forerunner of *Life* was a promotion book, *Four Hours a Year*, which Daniel Longwell produced for the March of Time in 1936. Describing pictorial journalism, "a new language, difficult, as yet unmastered, but incredibly powerful and strangely universal," the book contained several examples of photographic experimentation. There was, for instance, an early example of a sequence of photographs to portray an event, a series of pictures showing the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French foreign minister in Marseilles in October, 1934. On facing pages were conventional portraits of well-scrubbed businessmen, all looking much alike, and candid shots of G. K. Chesterton, Herbert Hoover, and Benito Mussolini. In short, the book tried to apply what Longwell had learned about pictorial presentation.

By the time *Four Hours a Year* appeared, Longwell had a staff to develop a picture magazine, and he had a statement of purpose in the prospectus of what was to become *Life*:

To see life; to see the world; to witness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things—machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man's work—his paintings, towers and discoveries; to see thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms, things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and

many children; to see and take pleasure in seeing, to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed. . . .<sup>11</sup>

To the new magazine, Luce contributed, among other tilings, its "Speaking of Pictures," its "Life Goes to a Party," and its "Picture of the Week." Longwell contributed his technique of telling stories with pictures and was responsible for the typography, page size, and cover design.

The new magazine reached dummy stage, and advertising salesmen tried to sell space in it. While the men in advertising agencies recognized Luce's previous success, they were skeptical about his proposed picture magazine. One of them said that the prediction that the magazine would achieve a half-million circulation was "hysterical talk." In the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* for September, 1936, Phil S. Hanna warned that Luce was "sowing seeds for a fall." He granted that the new magazine might be successful but added: ". . . we will wager that ten or fifteen years from now he will wish that he had confined his talents to his first-born and have returned some of his profits to his readers and advertisers so as to make the initial investment impregnable rather than have placed his profits in expansion."

Executives at Time, Inc., counted on a circulation of no more than a half million, for the new weekly was envisaged as a publication of limited appeal. Memoranda in the files of Time, Inc., showed that the circulation department thought that it would sell about 200,000 copies by subscription, about 100,000 on the newsstand.

Until shortly before the first issue appeared, the new publication was nameless, although a number of names had been proposed—*Look*, *Parade*, *See*, *Focus*, *Picture*, and *Dime*. Someone had referred to it as "Uncle Harry's Show-Book," a name that so caught Luce's fancy that for a time he wanted to call it *Show-Book of the World*. In October, 1936, Time, Inc., bought the name *Life* from the old humor magazine for \$92,000.

*Life* told the news in pictures ; but alongside its timely features, it ran material which its editors thought of permanent value. The magazine covered World War II with thoroughness and some artistry. Photographs by its staff members were hung by the Museum of Modern Art and later were the basis of a picture his-

11 Time, Inc., "A Prospectus for a New Magazine," n.d.

tory book of the war. Memoirs of famous persons became a *Life* standby. It published those of the Duke of Windsor, Winston Churchill, and Harry S. Truman. In 1943 the magazine ran the first of its occasional pieces of fiction, "The Silence of the Sea" by Vercors, which was followed by Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" in 1952 and James Michener's "The Bridges at Toko-ri" in 1953. Nor did *Life* disdain culture, despite its mass audience. In 1953 it published a series of articles and pictures about "The World We Live In," and in 1955 it ran a series about the great religions of the world, both of which won Benjamin Franklin Magazine Awards.

While Luce and his crew were planning *Life*, Gardner Cowles, Jr., was heading another group of men who developed *Look*, the second major picture magazine. *Look* was no imitator of *Life*. It evolved from the rotogravure section of the Des Moines *Register and Tribune*, a newspaper owned by the Cowles family since early in the century. In 1925 when Dr. George Gallup surveyed readers of the *Register and Tribune*, he found that they preferred pictures to text, and, in consequence, the staff began experimenting with the Sunday rotogravure section. Vernon Pope, who became the first editor of *Look*, tried running series of photographs instead of the single news or feature shots which other rotogravure editors were using. His picture series were so successful that in 1933 the *Register and Tribune* syndicated them to twenty-six other newspapers. From then on Gardner Cowles, Jr., in effect tested his idea for a picture magazine in his roto section.

As they planned *Look* and *Life*, Cowles and Luce traded ideas, for they never regarded their publications as competitors. There is a recurrent story that Luce for a time was even a minor investor in *Look*. Although Cowles and Luce agreed on the power of pictures, they differed on fundamentals. As a missionary, Luce favored pictures that transmitted news or information; as a merchant, Cowles thought that good pictures were inherently interesting. Luce visualized a limited audience, Cowles a mass audience. Their different concepts resulted in magazines of different characters. *Life*, a weekly, was printed by letterpress on slick stock and emphasized news, the arts, the cultural, the scientific, albeit with sex for seasoning. *Look*, first a monthly, then a biweekly, was printed by rotogravure on cheap paper and dwelt on personalities and animals, food and fashions, photo-quizzes and photo-mys-

teries, the spectacular and thrilling. As *Look* grew older, its editorial policies were modified from time to time. The magazine carried a heavier load of educational material alongside its purely entertainment features. It tackled such problems as the mentally retarded child and highway safety. In the 1950's, it annually selected a number of All-American Cities, communities in which citizen action had reduced gambling and prostitution, improved living conditions and educational facilities for Negroes, obtained badly needed schools and parks, and so forth. Its account of the Salk polio vaccine won the Benjamin Franklin Magazine Award for the "best article on science or health" in 1955.

The first issue of *Look*, drawing on the plant and personnel of the Cowles newspapers, appeared in January, 1937. Until its publishers could estimate its future circulation, they accepted no advertising. In the first ten months, they increased the original editorial budget tenfold and spent the \$10,000 net profits from each issue on promotion. Circulation rose from 705,000 for the initial issue to 1,700,000 ten months later when *Look* accepted its first advertising. From then on sales increased steadily, apart from a brief wartime slump. In 1950 the publishers estimated that the magazine reached one out of every seven Americans; in 1955 its circulation was 4,077,000 and advertising was \$30,293,000, fourth largest among all periodicals.

In the wake of *Life* and *Look*, millions of copies of picture magazines poured onto the newsstands as other publishers introduced their entries. The mortality rate was high, but during 1937 and 1938 new ones hopefully appeared almost as fast as the failures disappeared. *Life* was virtually the only picture magazine to tell the news pictorially. The rest subsisted on feature pictures, and several capitalized on sex and sensation.

For his dime or quarter, the reader could buy such magazines as *Focus*, in which Leslie T. White sought "to bring the American scene into focus"; *Photo-History*, Richard Storr Childs' quarterly which devoted each issue to a single subject, such as the Spanish Civil War, China, and a history of the labor movement; *Peek*, "A Look at Life," which William Cotton filled with such features as "Peeking at Pictures" and "Peek-uliar Fishing"; *Now and Then*, in which former staff members of the *Pictorial Review* compared the present and past; and *Foto*, a rotogravure bimonthly of Dell Publishing Company which guaranteed a circula-

tion of 400,000 but which died within a few months. J. Stirling Getchell, the advertising man who had pioneered in advertising photography, brought out his *Picture* in December, 1937, with a press run of 800,000. Shunning sex and sensation, the monthly was intended to edify its readers. After four or five issues it disappeared, perhaps because of competition, perhaps because Getchell's advertising clients feared he would neglect his agency for work on the magazine.

*Life* and *Look* emerged from the battle for circulation and advertising far in front, but a few other picture magazines had relatively long lives. One of them was *Click*, which the Annenberg interests began publishing in early 1938 and which became the third largest of the picture magazines. Its themes of sex and shock, and heavy promotion by Moe Annenberg, drove its circulation to 1,600,000 in two issues. Hunting for sensation to feed on, Annenberg instructed his editors to get a sequence of photographs showing a caesarean section, a project he abandoned only after Emile Gauvreau showed him a movie of what the operation was like. He found enough sensation, however, to get *Click* banned by the Canadian government, blacklisted by the Catholic church, and reviled by civic groups. Under such mounting pressure, the magazine was toned down, and thereafter its circulation ranged between 698,000 and 932,000. In 1942 the publishers reformed *Click* completely by making it a family magazine. They killed it off two years later, although its circulation was nearly a million, to get paper for their growing magazine for girls, *Seventeen*.

*Pic*, which Street and Smith launched in 1937, had a history similar to *Click*'s. Originally *Pic* was a rotogravure monthly heavily laden with photographs of young women not far removed from nudity. In 1945 its publishers redesigned it into a serious magazine for young men on the assumption that returning veterans would welcome a sober publication. *Pic* achieved a circulation of more than 600,000 under the new policy, but its publishers suspended it with the issue of December, 1948, to free paper and printing facilities for *Mademoiselle's Living*, a promising new publication.

As *Click* and *Pic* had done but at a swifter pace, a war-born picture magazine made the change from cheesecake to cheesecake-cum-culture. When Ned Pines first issued *See* in July, 1942, its sole emphasis was on pretty girls; but after its second issue, seri-

ous articles by well-known authors—Pearl Buck, Sumner Welles, and Harold Urey—shared its pages with the ubiquitous Hollywood starlets. As circulation climbed to more than a million, *See* replaced *Click* as third largest picture magazine, but in time it was changed into a general men's magazine.

The sensationalism that stirred some Americans to protest a few of the picture magazines also characterized a new class of magazines which paralleled the modern picture magazine in development—the comic books.

Although the pulp magazine had not died out at midcentury, it had lost ground to the comic book which far surpassed it in popularity as a purveyor of inexpensive, exciting reading matter. The term comic book (or comic magazine; the trade used the names interchangeably) was really a misnomer. The content of most comic books was anything but comic, stressing as it did crime, adventure, and romance. The name was a holdover from the days when publishers collected newspaper comic strips into booklet form.

One can argue plausibly that the comics were not magazines. Yet the typical comic appeared periodically under a continuing title, as magazines did, and the major publishers of comic books were also publishers of regular magazines, usually pulp, confession, romance, or movie fan magazines. Moreover, the advent of the comic book affected segments of the magazine industry. Therefore, the comic book deserves some attention in any history of the magazine industry after 1900.

It is hard to assign a date to the first comic book. Regular newspaper comic strips had been collected into book form early in the century, and in the 1930's a number of manufacturers of shoes, breakfast cereals, and the like gave away such books as premiums. Those publications were not periodicals, however, and they did not carry original material. The first regularly issued comic magazine was *Famous Funnies*, which Eastern Color Printing Company brought out in May, 1934, after a number of persons had rejected the idea as unsound. The magazine lost \$4,150 on its first issue; and although it cleared \$2,664 on its seventh issue, its publishers apparently saw no great future in comic magazines.<sup>12</sup>

12 Colton Waugh, *The Comics* (New York, 1947), pp. 339-40.



In the next couple of years, a number of titles appeared as reprints of newspaper strips. After 1937, the comic magazine cut loose from the newspaper and soared on its own. The break began in January, 1937, when *Detective Comics* introduced a new editorial policy—all original material, and each issue devoted to one particular subject. Two years later, when Superman appeared, the pattern of production was established. Putting aside shears, pastepots, and stacks of old newspaper strips, publishers got teams of artists and writers to turn out stories exclusively for the comic magazines and gave them sixty-four pages instead of the dozen or so panels of a newspaper strip in which to develop their plots.

The comic magazine, which was primarily pictorial, boomed about the same time as the picture magazine. Its appeal, like that of many of the picture magazines, was to the emotions; neither its text nor pictures taxed the intellect of its readers. Comic books grew phenomenally in numbers and in circulation just before and during World War II. The war, despite paper shortages, favored their development, for it provided them an opportunity to exploit conflict, horror, and sadism under the guise of patriotism, and it offered them a convenient market in the millions of troops seeking brief respite from the monotonies of garrison life. In military post exchanges they outsold *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* by ten to one.

In 1955 comic magazines represented what *Barron's* estimated to be a \$150,000,000 industry, and their aggregate circulation at times reached 90,000,000 copies a month. Although they circulated chiefly among children, they also were read by adults. A nation-wide survey conducted for Fawcett Publications in 1943 revealed that comic magazines were read by 95 per cent of all boys and 91 per cent of all girls from the ages of 6 through 11, and by 87 per cent of all boys and 80 per cent of all girls from the ages of 12 through 17. But they also were read by 41 per cent of all men and 28 per cent of all women from the ages of 18 through 30, and by 16 per cent of all men and 12 per cent of all women more than 30. While those figures may have been promotional, there can be no denying that comic magazines, passed from hand to hand, reached a large section of the entire population.

As the popularity of comics grew, advertisers recognized their potentialities. When comics first appeared in the late thirties,

publishers made their profits by producing the books for three cents and wholesaling them for six cents. Advertising was pure bonus, and publishers commonly sold it for twenty-five cents for each thousand readers. Sensing the reader appeal of comics, Casper Pinsker and Lester Wunderman, New York advertising men, in 1941 began buying up large blocks of space, as space-brokers had in the nineteenth century, and reselling it in smaller units to clients. By 1943 a number of national advertisers, including Curtiss Candy Company, Republic Pictures, General Foods, Nehi Beverage Company, Bendix Aviation, and Westinghouse, were using comic magazines and the page rate had tripled.

Several of the publishers of pulps added comic books to their lists, and in them they played some of the themes that the pulps had dwelt on—crime, sex, war, adventure, science and pseudo-science, mystery, the West. The titles of just a few comics published in 1955 indicated their contents: *Gang Busters*, *Navy Action*, *Meal Adventure*, *Journey into Mystery*, *Web of Mystery*, *Silver Kid Western*, *Hooded Horseman*, and *Strange Tales*. Romance, too, as it had come to the pulps, came to the comics. In 1949 comics with titles like *Sweethearts*, *Teen-Age Romances*, *Romantic Secrets*, *Life Story*, and *Young Love* were outselling even the comics of adventure, and the confession magazines felt the competition. Early leaders among the comics of love and romance were Fawcett's *Sweethearts*, which had a circulation of 1,000,000, and its *Life Story*, with a circulation of 700,000. Trade directories in 1955 listed about thirty-five love comics with titles such as *Boy Loves Girl*, *Love Experiences*, *Love at First Sight*, and *Lover's Lane*; but such listings were necessarily incomplete, and the actual number was probably at least twice that.

The comic book, because of its vivid pictorial treatment of themes which were often lurid and because of its accessibility to children, met strong opposition from parents, educators, psychiatrists and psychologists, government officials, and clergymen. Typical of the criticism that the comics engendered was that of Dr. Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist: "The ingredients spelled out, pictured and glorified are violence, cruelty, sadism, crime, beating, promiscuity, sexual perversion, race hatred, contempt for human beings, descriptions of every conceivable crime, every method of concealing evidence, and every way to avoid detec-

tion."<sup>13</sup> Critics cited instances in which comic books had inspired youngsters to violence, even to murder. For example, two boys, aged fourteen and fifteen, were caught practicing the techniques of burglary they had read about in a comic; and a fourteen-year-old boy who had poisoned a woman told the sheriff of Los Angeles County that he had got the idea and the recipe for the poison from a comic book.

On the other hand, parents could find authorities who assured them that comics were harmless and even educational. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said: "It is doubtful . . . that an appreciable decrease in juvenile delinquency would result if crime books of all types were not readily available to children."<sup>14</sup> Dr. Laura Bender, psychiatrist at Bellevue Hospital, New York, said, "The comics may be said to offer the same type of mental catharsis to their readers that Aristotle claimed was an attribute of drama."<sup>15</sup>

To protect themselves from criticism and restrictive legislation, fourteen major publishers of comic books formed the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers in July, 1948, as a self-policing body for the industry, and hired Henry Schultz, an attorney and member of the Board of Higher Education in New York, as executive director. The code of ethics adopted by the association urged members to abstain from publishing "sexy, wanton comics"; glorified or sympathetic treatments of crime; "details and methods of a crime committed by a youth"; vulgar and obscene language; and scenes of sadistic torture. However, the members belonging to the association produced only about 30 per cent of the comic magazine output. Some of the largest publishers, Dell, Fawcett, and National Comics Publications, refused to join the association because, they said, they saw no need to be regulated when their own publications were not offensive and because they did not wish to shelter the rest of the industry.

Criticism of comic books continued after the attempt at self-regulation. In September, 1954, the industry formed a new self-regulatory group, the Comic Magazines Association of America, and retained Charles F. Murphy, New York lawyer and magis-

13 Fredric Wertham, "It's Still Murder," *Saturday Review*, 38 (Apr. 9, 1955) 12.

14 *Tide*, 24 (Nov. 24, 1950) 56-57.

15 *Time*, 46 (Oct. 22, 1945) 67-68.

trate, to head the association. Soon after taking office, Murphy banned "horror and terror" comic books and announced a new code of performance, similar to the earlier one. Again Dell refused to join the association, this time on the grounds that the group sought to "regulate rather than eliminate" crime and horror books, although the company offered to cooperate with Murphy.

More than fifty cities had sought action against the sale of comic magazines by 1948. Some had passed local ordinances regulating their sale; others had set up censorship committees. Thirty-two bills or resolutions to curb comic books were introduced in state legislatures in 1949, although none passed. Only one, in New York, passed both houses, and it was vetoed by the governor. However, in May, 1955, New York state did make it illegal to sell "obscene and objectionable comics" to minors and to use such words as "crime, sex, horror, terror" in titles of comic books. The Canadian Parliament outlawed crime comics in 1949 with a law providing up to two years' imprisonment for any person who "makes, prints, publishes, distributes, sells" a comic which "exclusively or substantially comprises matter depicting pictorially the commission of crimes, real or fictitious."

Despite policing by the industry and despite local and state regulation, lurid comic magazines still flooded the newsstands in 1955, and many bewildered parents still wondered if their children would be harmed by reading comics.

In 1949 there appeared the first of several publications which carried the summarization of the conventional news and picture magazines to an extreme—the midget magazines of current events, personalities, and photographs. These super-digests carried the conciseness of the news magazines almost to the point of absurdity, and they borrowed its brightness of style, its preoccupation with personalities. They exploited the appeal of the picture magazines. They packaged their contents in a publication so small that it scarcely covered a man's hand.

The first publisher to show the popular appeal of the small magazine was Gardner Cowles, Jr., who thought that Americans needed news in handy capsules to read "on the bus or in the beauty parlor." He and the *Look* staff prepared trial issues of *Quick*, a pamphlet of four by six inches, and put it on sale in nine "test cities." The first issue of sixty-eight pages needed but a single sentence to cover most news items and just six sentences for its

longest story. Sales in test cities were so encouraging that Cowles gave *Quick* national distribution. Circulation reached 200,000 by the seventh issue, 850,000 a year later, and 1,300,000 in 1953 when Cowles disposed of the magazine.

At first Cowles intended to accept no advertising for *Quick* because its small page size required that advertisers prepare special printing plates. He soon discovered, however, that its low price did not cover production costs. His staff campaigned for advertising and showed advertisers how to adapt their copy and layouts to the small page size. But advertisers were reluctant to prepare special copy for the magazine, and production costs continued to bound upward. Although *Quick* grossed \$936,961 in advertising in 1951 and had a total income of almost \$4,000,000 in 1952, it lost heavily; and in April, 1953, Cowles announced that he would cease publishing *Quick* on June 1.

But *Quick* did not die. Walter Annenberg of Triangle Publications bought the name from Cowles for a reported \$250,000 and tried to establish *Quick* as a larger sized biweekly without advertising. After nine months, in March, 1954, he abandoned the title, and three other publishers scrambled to claim it. Pocket Magazines, Inc., added the name to that of its miniature *Tempo*, which had first appeared about the time that Cowles disposed of *Quick*. Handicraft Publications brought out another *Quick*, and Macfadden Publications later issued a *Quick Digest*. While it initiated law suits against the other two publishers, Pocket Magazines, Inc., continued to publish *Tempo and Quick*, which was still appearing on newsstands in 1955.

Inevitably, *Quick* was imitated. The publishers of *Newsweek* in June, 1950, started publication of *People Today*, a ten-cent magazine the size of *Quick*, "to portray fortnightly in words and pictures people in all their facets—at work, asleep, and very much alive." After publishing the magazine for eight months, the owners of *Newsweek* sold it to Hillman Periodicals, Inc. The circulation of *People Today* began at 80,000, rose to 220,000 before Hillman took over the magazine, and was more than 500,000 in 1955.

Other publishers also brought out magazines in the pattern of *Quick*. In July, 1951, Martin Goodman launched *Focus*; and in November, John Johnson, publisher of *Ebony*, began publishing *Jet*, "The Weekly Negro News Magazine," which promised com-

plete coverage on happenings among Negroes all over the United States.

Allen Chellas, who created *People Today* at *Newsweek* and who moved with it to Hillman, has tried to explain the appeal of his publication and, by implication, that of the other miniature magazines. "Almost every important news story today is wrapped about a person or people," he said. "Where twenty years ago events determined people, the reverse is now true. More than ever news publications are looking for the people behind events." His magazine dealt in personalities ; and people, he said, liked to read about people. Other elements in its success were its pictures, its pithiness which capitalized on the trend toward brevity, and its portability. For the twenty million Americans in transit, he said, a highly portable magazine filled a real need.<sup>16</sup>

At midcentury, advertisers still had not become reconciled to the tiny magazines. But some two million Americans were buying them; and even as production costs continued upward, a handful of publishers who refused to abandon the idea of super-compression managed to keep a number of such publications alive on reader support alone.

16 Nat Chrzan, "Pocket-Size Picture Magazines' Circulation Zooms to Nearly Two Million in Two and a Half Years," *News Workshop* (December, 1951) 9.

## chapter 12 Magazines for Everybody

The American of 1900 could probably have found at least one magazine devoted to his special interests no matter what they were. Magazines had begun to appear in profusion after the Civil War, and never before had they so completely represented the diverse tastes of the public. Politics, religion, science, fashions, society, music, drama, art, literature, sports and recreation—by 1900 there were periodicals covering all of those fields and dozens of others.

If his tastes ran to politics, the American at the opening of the century could subscribe to such partisan periodicals as William Jennings Bryan's the *Commoner* or to journals like the *Nation* which over the years stood above the battle of party politics. If he were devout, he had his choice of innumerable magazines published for the Protestants, Catholics, and Jews and of such nonsectarian magazines as the *Guide to Holiness*. If he were interested in sports, recreation, and nature, he could, like 7,500 other readers, subscribe to *Shooting and Fishing*; send his dollar off to New York for a subscription to that new magazine, *American Golf*; or browse through publications like *American Angler*, *American Sportsman*, and *Bird-Lore*. If he were curious about photography,

he could read *Snap-Shots*; if about drama, *Stage and Foyer Chat*. There were even several matrimonial periodicals like *Cupid*, edited in New York for five thousand readers who were seeking mates.

The American of 1955 had an even more diversified field of magazines to choose from, and the magazines he chose were more likely to be superior in technical execution if not necessarily in content. Magazines of politics in the United States in 1955 represented a number of viewpoints which accepted a democratic form of government, but some also spoke for communism and fascism. Religious magazines of many faiths abounded, and several denominations maintained sizable publishing companies; but freethinkers also had their organs. There were magazines for lovers of classical music, magazines for lovers of jazz. There were magazines for choir leaders, administrators of church property, rodeo fans and performers, makers of amateur movies, believers in astrology, pacifists, ex-servicemen, folklorists, women bowlers, yachtsmen, model railroaders, hobbyists who sought merely recreation and hobbyists who sought pin money besides, magazines for the handicapped, the ailing, the elderly.

Many of those magazines counted their readers in the thousands instead of in the millions. Some were purely commercial ventures; their publishers saw financial promise in carrying the advertiser's message to a small but highly selective audience. Others were begun with less commercial intent. Some arose when devotees of some special interest or hobby decided that they should have a periodical to exchange news and ideas with one another.

Male readers were served by a variety of magazines in 1955, as they had been throughout the century; but until the general magazine for men developed during World War II, virtually all of the publications were specialized organs for the sports fan, the outdoorsman, the handyman interested in science, the war veteran, and the like.

Sports magazines were among the most specialized of the periodicals addressed to men. Despite the great interest in spectator sports which developed in the twentieth century, there were few magazines edited for the fan interested in more than one sport. The titles of magazines reflected their preoccupation with single sports—*American Lawn Tennis*, *Golf*, *Ring*, *Yachting*. Until the mid-thirties about the only periodical covering more than one athletic activity was *Sportsman*, and it was edited for the gen-



tleman who could afford a shooting box, not for the fan in the bleachers.

From time to time, publishers tried general magazines covering all of the major spectator sports, but most of them were financial failures. *Sports Illustrated*, the name which Time, Inc., took for its new general sports magazine in 1954, had been used as a magazine title almost twenty years earlier. In 1935 two *Time* writers, John Escher and Samuel H. McAloney, worked out plans for a periodical which would break with the traditional parochialism of sports magazines. They formed a company with Kurt Simon, a publisher who had fled Hitler's persecutions and who had once planned a similar magazine in his native Germany. Their *Sports Illustrated*, a monthly, first appeared in December, 1935. About half of its content was by staff members, the remainder by such name writers as Paul Gallico and John Tunis. The magazine absorbed Condé Nast's *American Golfer* in 1936, and the combined publication managed to pick up some 35,000 readers before it died in 1938. But the name *Sports Illustrated* continued to float about in the magazine world. Dell Publishing Company borrowed the title from its owner, Stuart Sheftel, for a slick general fan magazine which it introduced after World War II. That *Sports Illustrated* was killed off in June, 1949, after it had cost Dell about \$250,000 in a year. Time, Inc., bought the title from Sheftel.

A contemporary of the original *Sports Illustrated* was *Sports-Week*, which first came out in 1936, vanished after a few issues, reappeared during the war and eventually built up a circulation of 59,000, then disappeared again. *Sports Pictorial Review*, begun in 1943, survived into the peace with some 30,000 subscribers.

Macfadden's *Sport* was the most durable of the magazines paying attention to all of the major sports. Early in the war, the idea for such a magazine seemed a good one to O. J. Elder, then president of Macfadden, but the war deferred its publication. The company brought out 350,000 copies of the first issue in August, 1946, as its first new magazine in eleven years. In its illustrated human interest stories, *Sport* gave athletes much the same worshipful treatment that Macfadden's fan magazines gave motion picture stars, and it supplemented the personality pieces with predictions by famous sports figures, sports quizzes, and analyses. In 1948, Macfadden charged Dell with unfair competition in bringing out *Sports Album*, which it alleged was deliberately de-

signed to take advantage of *Sport's* popularity, but the matter was settled amicably after Dell redesigned the format of its magazine. After nine years of publication, a long life for such a periodical, *Sport* had built up a circulation of about 482,000, the largest of any general magazine for spectators until Time, Inc., brought out its *Sports Illustrated*.

While those few magazines sat on the sidelines of the major sports, another small band of publications tramped the great out of doors. The band grew smaller as death or merger wiped out some of its members, and in 1955 three elderly survivors dominated the field—*Outdoor Life*, *Field and Stream*, and *Sports Afield*. Although outdoorsmen had their preferences among the magazines, they were cut from much the same pattern. They worried about such concerns of outdoorsmen as the depletion of wildlife, the pollution of streams and rivers, and as a class they were no doubt responsible for bringing about a number of conservation measures. Many of their authors were hunters or fishermen who seemed as interested in chatting about their adventures on bear hunting expeditions or canoe trips as in getting paid for their manuscripts, although the magazines also retained staff specialists who spoke authoritatively about the best in guns, dogs, lures, and camping equipment.

The oldest of the three leaders in 1955 was *Sports Afield*. Although sportsmen had been reading it since 1887, it trailed far behind *Outdoor Life* and *Field and Stream* in the twenties. In the thirties, when the magazine was having a difficult time financially, its editor paid ten dollars for a manuscript submitted by M. J. Bell, Sr., a wealthy lumber man. Bell became so interested in the magazine that he invested more than \$50,000 to keep it going. Guided by Bell and Walter F. Taylor, *Sports Afield* had moved to the forefront of the outdoor magazines by 1935, when its circulation of 161,000 was more than five times greater than a decade earlier. Theodore Resting, a sportsman trained in magazine work on *Country Gentleman*, took over the editorship in the mid-forties. For a time, by competing for name authors and livening the content, he steered *Sports Afield* to first place among the outdoor magazines, but in 1955 it had fallen behind *Outdoor Life* and *Field and Stream* in circulation and advertising.

In the nineties, John A. McGuire, a young Denver publisher who had learned the printing trade at thirteen, was bringing out

# SUCCESSFUL FARMING

DEVOTED TO AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE, LIVE STOCK, THE DAIRY, POULTRY AND THE HOME.

WEEKLY THE MOINER IOWA, OCTOBER, 1924 50 CENTS

## OUR BEST FARMERS

It is a pity that our farmers do not have more of the knowledge and experience of the best farmers in the world. It is a pity that our farmers do not have more of the knowledge and experience of the best farmers in the world. It is a pity that our farmers do not have more of the knowledge and experience of the best farmers in the world.

It is a pity that our farmers do not have more of the knowledge and experience of the best farmers in the world. It is a pity that our farmers do not have more of the knowledge and experience of the best farmers in the world.



The Progressive Country Cook selected with ease. The Progressive Country Cook selected with ease. The Progressive Country Cook selected with ease.

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## Fruit Garden AND Home



JULY 10 CENTS

August 1924 10 Cents

# Better Homes AND Gardens



Miss P. Gordon

a magazine called *Cycling West*. He dropped it in 1898 to try his luck with a monthly magazine for sportsmen, *Outdoor Life*. The new magazine was a natural choice for McGuire, who loved the out of doors; by the time he died in 1942, he had taken part in twenty-two expeditions to hunt big game or to collect scientific specimens. In the late twenties, he turned editorial direction of the magazine over to his son, who was studying at the Yale School of Fine Arts. Apart from an interval after ownership changed hands in 1931, Harry A. McGuire edited *Outdoor Life* until 1934, when the publishers of *Popular Science* acquired the magazine. During his tenure, he had kept *Outdoor Life* among the leading outdoor magazines, and it remained there in 1955.

The idea for *Field and Stream*, the third of the leaders, came to its founders, John P. Burkhard and Henry W. Wack, while they were talking in a duck blind in September, 1895. Deploring the wholesale slaughter of wildlife, they decided to publish a magazine which would arouse sportsmen to the cause of conservation. Seven months later they sent out the first copies of their *Western Field and Stream*. After a couple of years of trying to keep the magazine alive in St. Paul, their home town, they moved it to New York, where they still had a difficult time breaking even. According to one story, Henry Ford offered them \$1,200 worth of stock in his motor car company in 1905 in exchange for a full-page advertisement in each of twenty issues, but they turned him down because they were desperate for cash.<sup>1</sup> The years of financial hardship for *Field and Stream* ended soon after Eltinge Warner, a printing salesman and circulation manager, took over its business management in 1906. In 1908, after Burkhard's death, Warner bought control of the magazine, and while building up *Field and Stream* he expanded in other directions. He was publisher of *Smart Set* from 1914 to 1926, an executive in two motion picture companies from 1916 to 1924, and head of a magazine chain after 1933. Meanwhile *Field and Stream* crusaded for a number of conservation measures, built up a library of films of wildlife, and commissioned paintings of wildlife by well-known artists. As the magazine grew prosperous, Warner bought an island in the St. Lawrence River where his staff members could test new sports equipment and hold editorial conferences.

<sup>1</sup> Amos Stote, "Born in a Duck Blind," *Magazine Industry*, 1 (Summer, 1949) 13.

All three of those magazines greatly expanded their audiences during and after World War II. They rode the boom in men's magazines generally, and they profited from the gaps which were created in their market when competitors died off. Their combined circulation in 1955—approximately 2,616,000—was more than five times as great as it had been twenty years earlier and nearly three times greater than in 1940.

Although the three overshadowed their competitors, their dominance failed to deter the newcomer. By specializing instead of covering the whole field of hunting, angling, and camping, a modest publication edited from a former high school building in Oxford, Ohio, entered the outdoor market in 1950. The *Fisherman* was established on the premise that a magazine edited specifically for America's twenty million anglers, some of them almost fanatical about their sport, could more readily give them thorough, year-round, practical advice in harmony with good conservation practice than the general monthlies. The magazine attracted a following of about 211,000 in five years.

While the outdoor magazines glorified the strenuous life, other publications were designed for man's reflective moments. The layman curious about science could satisfy his interest with several publications which reported progress in science and technology and which, at the same time, passed along plans for iceboats, cabinets, gliders, and bookcases that he could build at his workbench.

One of the oldest magazines in the United States in 1955 was a general magazine of science, *Scientific American*. It was established in 1845 by Rufus Porter, a schoolmaster who saw the need for a weekly to cover the news of science which played little part in the content of regular newspapers and popular magazines. No doubt because Porter and one of his early backers were both inventors, *Scientific American* for years took a paternal interest in inventors. It encouraged the dedicated ones, maintained a service for answering questions about patents, and exposed the cranks whose inventions seemed more fraudulent than original. Men such as Morse, Gatling, Howe, and Edison came to its editorial offices to confer with its line of brilliant editors.

In 1921, when the popular press had begun to give adequate coverage to scientific news, *Scientific American* became a monthly magazine stressing industrial research. From early in its exist-

ence, it had identified itself with applied research as distinguished from pure research. In 1943 it intensified its coverage of industrial research in electronics, engineering, chemistry, and similar areas. Yet senility seemed to have overtaken the publication, and its circulation fell to 40,000 from a onetime high of 94,000. In 1947, Orson D. Munn, whose family had owned the periodical for most of its existence, sold it to a group which proposed to give it a new life. The buyers were Gerard Piel and Dennis Flanagan, former science editors of *Life*, who had \$450,000 capital raised among several wealthy backers. Their plan was to make *Scientific American* a medium through which scientists of all kinds could tell one another of their work in language that all could understand. On the day that they took over the magazine, they received a letter from their last advertiser, Bell Laboratories, canceling its order for space. The first issue of their new *Scientific American* appeared in May, 1948. By seeking contributions from leading scientists in various fields, by requiring their authors to present their material in language understandable to the intelligent layman, they made *Scientific American* an authoritative monthly which cut across the various scientific disciplines. Circulation and advertising pulled upward; and in 1955, when it went to some 129,000 readers each issue, the magazine had a solid reputation among the nation's scientists.

*Scientific American* was already a respectably aged magazine in 1872 when Edward L. Youmans talked the publishers of *Appleton's Journal* into bringing out *Popular Science* to help perform what he regarded as the important task of diffusing scientific knowledge. Youmans, a science editor, had become interested in the ideas of Herbert Spencer, and he thought that *Popular Science* would be an excellent means of disseminating his work. When churchmen first saw his *Popular Science*, they damned it and its publishers as atheistic. But the magazine found an audience of twelve thousand men devoted to science—a large enough audience, according to Spencer, who wrote that he was inclined to shake his head when Youmans spoke of making the magazine more popular. More and more persons bought the magazine; and in Youmans' day and after, they read in it articles by the great minds of the time, Darwin, Huxley, Pasteur, William James, Edison, John Dewey.

After Youmans died in 1887, his brother edited the magazine

until 1900. Ownership changed several times between then and 1917, when the magazine was acquired by the publishers who were bringing it out in 1955. Less recondite than in Youmans' time, *Popular Science* sought the home craftsman and hobbyist who wanted to know something about the world of science. The magazine capitalized on the sharpened interest in science and technology during World War II by increasing its coverage of science and industry through prose and pictures and by putting its how-to-do-it material in its back pages. Shortly after the end of the war, it was reaching more than a million readers each issue.

Millions of men throughout the world were also familiar with *Popular Mechanics* at midcentury. It had begun life in January, 1902, as a skimpy weekly which went to five subscribers and a few hundred curious readers who paid their nickels for copies at the newsstand.

Its founder was Henry H. Windsor, Sr., an Iowa minister's son who believed that the age of science and mechanics needed interpretation for the average man. He had worked for a short time as city editor of a newspaper in Marshalltown, Iowa, before holding positions with two public transportation companies. His work as secretary of the Chicago City Railway Company in the eighties led him to start a trade magazine, *Street Railway Review*, which he edited from 1892 to 1901.

Then he got the idea for *Popular Mechanics*. He personally wrote every word of copy and sold every advertisement which appeared in the first issue. His only help was a bookkeeper and a mail clerk, and neither had enough work to keep busy for several months.

By September, 1903, *Popular Mechanics* had become successful enough for Windsor to change it from a sixteen-page weekly into a hundred-page monthly. Soon Windsor struck upon the editorial pattern which characterized the magazine long after its issues had swollen to three hundred pages—a section of news and general features about science and technology, a section for shop mechanics, and a section of how-to-do-it articles for the home craftsman.

Windsor died in 1924, but the magazine remained in his family. His son, Henry H. Windsor, Jr., who acquired full control of the company in the mid-forties, was editor and president in 1955, and his grandson, Henry H. Windsor III, was a vice president in the

organization. In the mid-forties, the company shook off the complacency which had begun to overtake it. It adopted more aggressive editorial policies, increased its promotional and research activities, and expanded its market by publishing foreign editions in French, Spanish, Danish, and Swedish.

McGraw-Hill chose a science magazine for its first and only attempt at publishing a consumer magazine. In 1940 Dagobert Runes, publisher of the Philosophical Library, began a little pocket-size magazine, *Science Illustrated*, which set out to show how science affected everyday life. He disposed of it in 1944 to a publisher who sold it to McGraw-Hill in the fall of 1945. After five months of intensive work, McGraw-Hill introduced its version of *Science Illustrated*, an elaborately pictorial magazine of standard size which conducted sound but popular excursions into the land of science and which avoided the how-to-do-it features of magazines like *Popular Mechanics*. From the start, *Science Illustrated* operated at a heavy deficit, although it attracted a following of some more than a half million readers. The publishers gave insufficient advertising and high production costs as their reasons for dropping the magazine with its issue of July, 1949.

Servicemen and war veterans had their own magazines, some of them official publications under loose or strict control by the armed forces, some of them organs of veterans' organizations, and some of them purely commercial enterprises. The Marines had their *Leatherneck* from 1917 on, for instance; members of the national guard had their *National Guardsman*; and military fliers and their ground crews had their *Air Force*, begun as a newsletter in 1918, turned into a slick monthly in World War II, and discharged to civilian control in 1947. *Confederate Veteran* was an outgrowth of pamphlets circulated in the nineties to raise funds for a memorial to Jefferson Davis. Veterans of the Confederacy found the pamphlets so interesting that their author, Sumner A. Cunningham, started the monthly magazine to carry historical articles and reminiscences of the War Between the States. By the thirties, death had reduced the number of Confederate veterans to a few thousand, and the depression forced the United Daughters of the Confederacy to drop its support of the magazine. In December, 1932, at the age of forty, *Confederate Veteran* mailed its final six thousand copies. From 1914, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars received copies of *Foreign Service*, a slick-paper



monthly of organizational news and general interest material which was redesignated *V.F.W. Magazine* in 1951. Membership in the American Legion carried with it a subscription to *American Legion*, which was born on July 4, 1919, as a weekly. For seven years, the publication remained a weekly, a tool in building and strengthening the Legion organization; then it was changed into a monthly magazine. After a brief period of uncertainty in its early years, the publication lured Harold Ross and five of his onetime *Stars and Stripes* writers to its staff. One of them, John T. Winterich, edited *American Legion* for fifteen years after Ross resigned in 1924. Reaching a heterogeneous audience of millions, the publication became a slick general interest magazine.

Commercial publishers tried to profit from the popularity of *Stars and Stripes* among troops in both world wars and of *Yank* in World War II, but their civilian counterparts of service publications lacked the sparkle of the originals and failed in their attempt to follow servicemen back into mufti. Butterick recruited Harold Ross and other former staff members of *Stars and Stripes* for its *Home Sector* after World War I. The weekly began hopefully in September, 1919, but failed to survive 1920. *Salute*, with Leverett Gleason as publisher, tried to capture the readership of veterans of World War II. When its first issue went on sale in the spring of 1946, each name on the masthead was one which had appeared in *Stars and Stripes* or *Yank*, and the magazine managed to catch some of the tone and flavor of *Yank*. The ownership of *Salute* changed hands three months after the first issue, at about the time that three top editors resigned, apparently in a disagreement over policy. The new publishers sought to make *Salute* interesting to nonveterans as well as to veterans and they entirely dropped the appeal to ex-servicemen early in 1948. They stopped publication with the issue of August, 1948, after losing about \$250,000 on the magazine. At its peak, *Salute* was bought by only 300,000 of the millions of veterans who were its potential market.

In the murky underworld of magazines for men, where dwelled such publications as *Gay Parisienne*, *Paris Nights*, *Pep*, *Snappy*, and *Titter*, the raffish patriarch was the *National Police Gazette*, which George Wilkes and Enoch Camp began issuing in 1845, as they said, "to assist the operations of the police department by publishing a minute description of felons' names, aliases, and per-

sons" and by recording "horrid murders, outrageous robberies, bold forgeries, astounding burglaries, hideous rapes, vulgar seductions." The pink-covered weekly lived up to its founders' promise in giving minute accounts of criminals and their handiwork, if not in assisting police departments, and it thoroughly covered the sporting scene in the days before athletics had become a major industry. At the end of the nineteenth century, it had become as standard a fixture of barbershop and saloon as the decorated shaving mug and the Anheuser-Busch painting of Custer's Last Fight.

The *Police Gazette* determinedly purveyed its gaslight-era brand of sensationalism in the twentieth century; but after World War I, the tabloids covered crime with more diligence than the *Police Gazette* ever had, and a shady crew of magazine publishers had arisen to market sex in packages more alluring. At auction in 1932, the defunct *Gazette* brought only \$545. Its new owners, who already had five magazines of dubious respectability on the stands, hoped to revive it with articles about sex, sports, and the underworld, and pictures of semi-nude nightclub chorines. The number of readers dropped to twenty thousand, about a tenth of what had once been an average circulation for the magazine, and they sold it in 1935 for less than a thousand dollars to Harold H. Roswell, a former newspaper man. Although the *Police Gazette* never again became the institution it once had been, Roswell pushed circulation to what it had been in the magazine's heyday by converting the publication into a slick-paper monthly and by periodically overhauling its editorial approach to its raw ingredients, which in essence were the mixture as before.

Throughout the twentieth century, publishers in shabby offices on the fringe of the magazine industry loaded newsstands with periodicals which trafficked heavily in borderline obscenity, pornographic and quasi-pornographic fiction, and photographs of nude and semi-nude females. The magazines which presented sex photographically often were ostensibly for the artist or photographer, the art lover, and the serious devotee of nudism, although from the mid-thirties on they increasingly seemed to assume that nudity was its own excuse. A few of the prose magazines too insisted that they were edited for discriminating readers. *Casanova Jr.'s Tales* was shipped by express in 1926 to the cultured few able to pay its price of five dollars a copy or fifteen dollars for a year's subscrip-

tion. Most of the magazines of off-color jokes and erotic fiction, however, offered no justification other than public demand.

From time to time, government officials and private citizens protested against the flood of salacious magazines and tried to clean up the newsstands. In 1925, for instance, officials in Chicago, Omaha, and the state of Washington took action to stop the distribution of such magazines as *La Vie Parisienne*, *So This Is Paris*, *Artists and Models*, and *Hot Dog*. The following year Kansans discovered a law which they thought they could invoke to prevent the sale of *Art Lovers' Magazine*, *Hi-Jinks*, *Snappy Stories*, and similar publications. Authorities in scattered cities across the United States cracked down on news dealers selling such magazines in 1932, and the commissioner of licenses in New York warned them that their licenses might be revoked if they handled *Artists' Notebook*, *Brevities*, and *Paris Models*. In 1934 New York police were ordered to keep newsstands from displaying fifty-nine periodicals with such titles as *Cupid's Capers*, *Wild Cherries*, and *Hollywood, Squawks*. Two publishers, apprehended by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, were fined \$1,000 each and sentenced to three months in jail for engaging in interstate commerce in off-color magazines in 1936. The Post Office Department summoned a number of publishers of "girlie books," as the trade called them, to Washington in 1949 and warned that their second-class mailing privileges would be taken away if they did not cleanse their magazines. In 1952 the Gathings Committee of the House of Representatives conducted a lengthy investigation of pornography in magazines, comic books, and paper-bound books.

But protests, investigations, and restrictions did little to slow the presses of publishers who wallowed in the muck at the bottom of the sea of magazines. There was always some demand for their products, and readers bought their magazines not so much by title as by content. If one title were banned, publishers could always bring out the same sort of editorial matter in a magazine of different name. Even if they were forced out of business, they could easily incorporate again under another name, for they had a low overhead, no enormous editorial expenses, and no dependence on advertising.

In the twenties and thirties, most of the low-caste magazines seemed to consist of uncomplicated sex and unsophisticated smut. There were no untoward psychological implications, for instance,

in the nude photographs of the *Nudist*, in the smoking-car jokes of *Calgary Eye Opener*, or in the erotic prose of *Spicy Western*.

In the forties and fifties, however, many of the magazines looked as if their editors had pored over the works of Freud, Krafft-Ebing, and Wilhelm Stekel. Sadism, masochism, fetishism, perversions, all were implicit in the prose and pictures of a covey of magazines—*Night and Day*, *Wink*, *Brief*, *Paris Life*, *Keyhole*, *Eye*, *Pepper*, *Candid Whirl*, *Cover Girls Models*, *Scope*, *Picture Fun*, *Flirt*, *Eyeful*, *Beauty Parade*. The female with an enlarged bosom was one of their staples, as in the days of the nineteenth-century *Police Gazette*; but when she posed in the nude or its approximation, it was not always with simple seductiveness. She wore stilt heels or let her long hair drape her body; she was enmeshed in chains or covered with gilt and powdered glass which, the caption pointed out, could "cut into the skin." She wrestled lion cubs and vicious dogs. She was shown being flogged, being frozen in a cake of ice, being shot from a cannon. Alongside such photographs were articles and picture spreads of men who had died in racing accidents or prison breaks, who earned their living surviving dynamite blasts or wrestling matches with alligators, who exposed vice or profited from it. Some of the magazines exploited sex and sadism in alternate features as their editorial pattern. They represented a world of morbid desires and dark, seething repressions.

But there was a wholesome world, too, one of gleaming kitchens and sunlit living rooms, of shady patios and verdant lawns, of stability, comfort, and familial devotion; and that world, like the other, had its magazines.

In 1922 the presses of a publishing house in Des Moines rolled off the first fifty-two-page copies of a magazine which was to influence the editorial techniques of publications from the West Coast to the East. The magazine was *Fruit, Garden, and Home*, which its publisher renamed *Better Homes and Gardens* two years later.

Its success was built on a formula of service to the settled, middle-class American husband and wife whose big interest was their home and family. There had been home magazines before *Better Homes and Gardens*; both *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* antedated it, for instance, but they were addressed to the well-to-do. There was nothing new in the idea of service to the

reader. Since the days of Edward Bok, magazines had tried to help their readers, had tried to relate their content to the readers' lives and experiences. Such women's magazines as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion* had made service an important ingredient in their editorial formulas. But *Better Homes and Gardens* adopted the policy of service so wholeheartedly that every possible article was measured by the test, "Is it possible to do something as a result of reading this article?" Every article helped the reader to do something: to remodel a house, to repair a faucet, to frame a picture, to teach a child to be a good sport, to decorate a room, to make a summer salad. The articles were not about things; they told readers how to do the thing itself. Further, the magazine sought a dual readership. Most service magazines were for women. *Better Homes and Gardens* won women readers with features about food, household equipment, decoration, and child care, but it also won their husbands with articles for the handyman and gardener.

Its concept of reader service radiated to other magazines. When *Better Homes and Gardens* was a promising infant, Doubleday entered the field with a competing magazine of advice for the average householder, *American Home*. Men trained on *Better Homes and Gardens* carried its policies to other magazines. L. W. Lane, who had served on its advertising staff, bought *Sunset*, a magazine in San Francisco, and revamped it into a regional monthly which tried to make every article of some practical use to the reader. Robert P. Crossley, who had been on the *Better Homes and Gardens* editorial staff, made Capper's *Household* a sort of *Better Homes and Gardens* for the small-town family when he succeeded Nelson Antrim Crawford as editor in the early fifties. The *Better Homes and Gardens* strategy of appealing to both men and women readers was adopted by at least one women's service magazine. *McCall's* announced in 1954 that it would no longer be edited for just the homemaker but for her husband and children as well.

The man behind *Better Homes and Gardens* was E. T. Meredith, who got his first publishing experience helping out on the *Farmer's Tribune*, a Populist paper which his grandfather published in Des Moines. In 1895, when Meredith was nineteen, his grandfather gave him the *Tribune* for a wedding present. A note attached to its financial statement said simply, "Sink or swim."

Meredith dropped partisan politics from the paper and in seven years built it into a modestly profitable business. He sold the paper to try out his idea of a larger publication, a magazine for farmers in the agricultural heart of the nation. In 1902 he sent the first issue of that magazine, *Successful Farming*, to the post office in a single mail bag. Money was scarce for a time, and Mrs. Meredith helped her husband to get out issues of the new magazine. When *Successful Farming* was a dozen years old and Eastern advertisers were worried about the prosperity of the Midwest, Meredith chartered a special train to bring them west for a tour of the agricultural region in which his magazine circulated. Advertising picked up as a result. *Successful Farming* gave its readers heavily practical instruction in profitable and labor-saving farming methods. By 1920, when Meredith became Secretary of Agriculture under Woodrow Wilson, it was already one of the major farm publications in the United States.

Meredith next conceived of a magazine which would be as useful to the average city dweller and suburbanite as *Successful Farming* was to the farmer. The result was *Better Homes and Gardens*. Meredith himself went East to sell advertising for the first issue, for which he guaranteed a circulation of 150,000. Although *Better Homes and Gardens* grew steadily from its first issue and had a circulation of a million by 1928, it shot ahead most rapidly after World War II when the housing boom made business good for all home service magazines. Circulation jumped from 2,645,000 in 1946 to 4,133,000 in 1955, advertising receipts from \$8,390,000 to \$25,602,000.

If staff members of *Better Homes and Gardens* were good at giving readers assistance, one reason probably was that they were very much like their readers. There were no bachelors on the editorial staff and few unmarried women. Staff members were home owners with families who liked to cook, sew, putter in the garden, and romp with their children in off-duty hours. In addition to empathy with their readers, they were guided by survey which provided readership figures on nearly every feature which the magazine had run since the mid-thirties.

When Meredith died in 1928, he left his Meredith Publishing Company to his son-in-law Fred Bohlen and his son E. T. Meredith, Jr., who were still active in its management in 1955.

About the time that *Better Homes and Gardens* began to show

promise, W. H. Eaton of Doubleday, Doran, convinced his employers that there was room for a monthly magazine which would serve the middle class just as the company's *Country Life* served the well-to-do. Doubleday first issued the new magazine, *American Home*, in 1928. Its first years were lean ones. In 1932 *Country Life* and *American Home* were losing about \$60,000 a month, and *American Home* accounted for most of it. Eaton offered to lease the two magazines and to share any profits with Doubleday. Taking over the business side of the two publications, he put their editorial direction in the hands of Jean Austin, who had worked on Doubleday's circulation staff. In 1935 Eaton bought both magazines outright from Doubleday for \$750,000. *Country Life* continued as an organ for the luxury trade until it ceased publication in the early forties after it had been merged with *Polo* and the *Sportsman*. *American Home*, as a strictly service magazine for families of lesser income, flourished even during the depression and developed into one of the top magazines in the home service area.

In 1928, the same year that Doubleday introduced *American Home*, L. W. Lane of the Meredith advertising staff paid \$60,000 for *Sunset* to prove his conviction that home owners on the West Coast would welcome a regional monthly magazine with a heavily practical emphasis. The Southern Pacific Railroad had begun publishing *Sunset* in 1898 to advertise the wonders of the West. It had sold the magazine in 1914 to employees, who had made it a literary journal. When Lane bought the magazine, primarily because its name was well established, *Sunset* was a thin offering of fiction and travel articles.

Lane had definite plans for the sort of home magazine he intended to publish, and he stuck to them despite the counsel of acquaintances who suggested such alternatives as that he devote the publication entirely to Western fiction. First, Lane believed, a regional magazine could most surely succeed in a part of the country having distinct regional characteristics. He chose as his region the area west of the Continental Divide, which was set apart from the rest of the nation by its climate, its pattern of family life, and its system of marketing. Second, such a magazine should capitalize on the differences which distinguished its region from the rest of the country. Thus it could best serve its readers and at the same time remove itself from competition with the big national

magazines. Lane chose the editorial areas of gardening, home building and remodeling, cooking, and travel as the ones in which *Sunset* might serve the differences which distinguished the West. Third, the magazine should never run an article just because it was interesting; every article should be useful to the reader.<sup>2</sup>

Lane had worked out that much of his plan before he took over *Sunset*. After he had been publishing it for a few years, he added two other elements to his strategy. In 1932 he began publishing three separate editions, each tailored to a specific locality within his territory; and in 1936 he made *Sunset* an entirely staff-written magazine because experimentation had convinced him that his own writers could cram more facts and ideas into a column of text than free lances could.<sup>3</sup>

*Sunset* lost Lane almost \$72,000 in the year after his initial issue of February, 1929, and its next six years were hard ones ; but it never failed to make a profit after 1937. *Sunset* had to hold its circulation down to about 200,000 during its first decade because no press on the West Coast was able to handle a larger press run. The lid on circulation was removed when the Coast Printing Company, organized to print *Sunset* and other magazines, installed \$250,000 worth of rotary presses and other equipment in 1939.

In 1955, *Sunset* was by far the most successful regional magazine in the United States. It had a new rambling, hacienda-like home covering seven acres of Menlo Park, to which it had moved from San Francisco four years earlier. It was being read by more than 575,000 families, and its book publishing adjunct, formed in 1949, was selling millions of copies of books on gardening and cookery.

Although the home service magazines prospered during the depression and recession, they were hard hit by the war. The curtailment of home construction shut down advertising from manufacturers of building supplies, and allocations of steel, lumber, and textiles reduced their advertising for home appliances, furniture, rugs, and draperies. Both *American Home* and *Better Homes and Gardens* carried about a million dollars less advertising in 1942 than in 1941, and their total advertising pages fell off almost a fourth. To offset their losses, the magazines tried to build up their

2 Proctor Mellquist, "Sunset is Unique as a Magazine," *Quill*, 42 (Feb., 1954) 12-13.

3 Mellquist, p. 13.



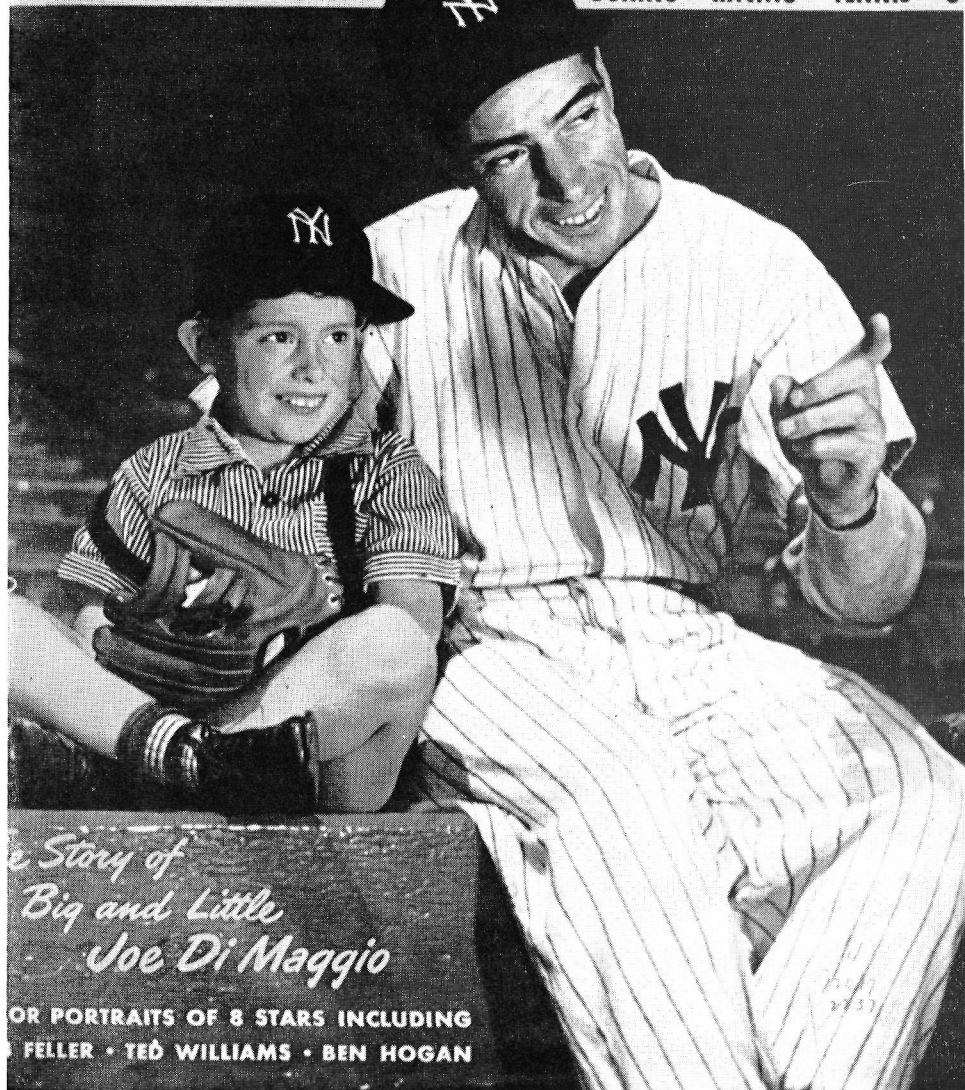
# SPORT

SEPTEMBER

25¢

BASEBALL • BOWLING • FOOTBALL

BOXING • RACING • TENNIS • GOLF



*The Story of  
Big and Little  
Joe Di Maggio*

OR PORTRAITS OF 8 STARS INCLUDING  
FELLER • TED WILLIAMS • BEN HOGAN

linage in other areas. *Better Homes and Gardens*, for instance, expanded its editorial departments on meal preparation to attract more advertising for foodstuffs and promoted the business of drug firms.<sup>4</sup>

The end of the war gave the magazines a rich market. Their potential audience had increased tremendously, for the number of families owning homes or planning them was the greatest in history. Advertisers whose products went into the construction or furnishing of homes were competing for the home owner's business. Manufacturers of new products were trying to gain consumer acceptance.

Publishers of established magazines for the home owner saw their circulations and advertising zoom. The combined circulation of *American Home* and *Better Homes and Gardens* increased by about 59 per cent between 1945 and 1955, that of *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* by about 139 per cent. The combined advertising gross of the four magazines in 1955 was more than two and a half times what it had been in 1946. Alongside their higher stacks of those established magazines, newsstands displayed bright-covered new ones—*Living for Young Homemakers*, *U.S. Home*, *Your Own Home*, and others.

During the period that the home magazines were giving Americans practical guidance in their role of home owner, another group of magazines was giving them practical guidance in their role of parent. One of the pioneers in helping bewildered fathers and mothers rear their families was George J. Hecht, whose Parents' Institute, Inc., was a leading publisher of magazines for parents and their children. Looking back on a quarter of a century of publishing in 1951, Hecht estimated that his *Parents' Magazine* had given advice on child care and training to the parents of more than 25,000,000 children. His audience was ever-changing, for new readers continuously replaced the ones who dropped away as their children reached maturity.

In 1925 Hecht, who had been doing social work in New York, noticed that one important interest was not being served by any magazine, and he brought out a publication for the neglected market in October of the following year. "There are magazines devoted exclusively to the raising of cattle, hogs, dogs, flowers, and

4 *Tide*, 22 (July 30, 1948) 17-18.

what not," his first issue stated, "but until now none on the most important work of the world—the rearing of children." Hecht called his new periodical *Children*, "The Magazine for Parents," a title so confusing that he changed it to *Parents' Magazine* with the issue of August, 1929.

Hecht's idea for the magazine appealed to the directors of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, which provided \$325,000 to establish the publication. Hecht, in exchange for the grant, assigned control of the publishing company to Columbia University, the State University of Iowa, the University of Minnesota, and Yale University. He bought control of the company in 1949.

The editor of *Parents'* was Clara Savage Littledale, who held the position until shortly before her death in January, 1956. She joined *Parents'* after working as women's suffrage editor of Oswald Garrison Villard's New York *Evening Post* and as a correspondent for *Good Housekeeping* in World War I. In *Parents'*, which described its contents as "on rearing children from crib to college," she ran articles by leading authorities on child care, a number of whom were listed on the masthead as advisory editors, and by parents themselves. She expanded the scope of the magazine to cover marriage problems and housing because she thought such things affected children, and the magazine adopted "Family Home Guide" as a subtitle. *Parents'*, over the years, reflected the changing attitudes toward child-rearing. "Twenty-five years ago, we adhered to a very rigid schedule in feeding and raising children," she recalled in 1951. "John B. Watson's theory of behaviorism was the thing at the time. It called for a very detached attitude. . . . Raising a child today calls for being warm and affectionate and expressing love for the child. . . . We thought they were little adults who were just being naughty; now we know they are children."<sup>5</sup>

*Parents'* was a commercial success from the start. Hecht had expected the magazine to attract perhaps a hundred thousand readers. He had that many by the end of the first five years and more than fifteen times that many by 1955. The increased birth rate and the increased interest in authoritative guidance in child-rearing provided him with an expanding market, and as his mag-

<sup>5</sup> *Time*, 58 (Sept. 24, 1951) 77-78.

azine grew, so did the business of feeding, clothing, and otherwise supplying the needs of babies and children. His advertising gross rose from \$500,000 in the first year to \$5,388,000 in 1955.

As *Parents'* prospered, Hecht originated other magazines, almost all of them for children, their parents, or their teachers. He suspended some of the new magazines when they failed to establish themselves, and he revamped others.

Two of Hecht's magazines dealing with child care were distributed free. *Metropolitan Mother's Guide*, edited by Mrs. Littledale, appeared in November, 1932. Hecht distributed it without charge to fifty thousand mothers of pupils in more than two hundred private and suburban schools in the New York area and sold advertising in it on the basis of its circulation among the well-to-do. In the fall of 1942, Hecht launched *So You're Going to Have a Baby*, a magazine of reprints from *Parents'*. He sold copies in bulk to department stores, which could have their own advertisements imprinted on the cover and which gave the publication to their customers. The magazine was renamed *Your New Baby* and made a quarterly in 1946.

In the dozen or so magazines for children and young people that he originated, Hecht apparently tried to furnish his readers good interesting reading material as a substitute for the unwholesome fare of the lurid comics and to provide them with frank, realistic advice on the problems of growing up. Hecht began publishing periodicals for young people in 1935 when he brought out a seven-cent weekly *Boys' and Girls' Newspaper*, sixteen tabloid pages of news, entertainment, and comics. Subsequently, with varying degrees of success and for varying lengths of time, he published, among other titles, *Calling All Girls*, *Calling All Boys*, *Polly Pig-tails*, *Senior Prom*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Twenty-One*, *Compact*, *Varsity*, and *Humpty Dumpty*.

As the number of patients in maternity wards increased and as supplying the needs of the young became an important industry, other publishers recognized young parents as an important market. The young mother changed in interests and outlook because of baby, as the publisher of *Baby Talk* observed in 1950; "she's vulnerable and sellable today as never before and as she never will be again."<sup>6</sup> His *Baby Talk* was born in 1935, and there were

<sup>6</sup> *Tide*, 24 (June 23, 1950) 38.

others that came and went: *American Baby*, *Baby Post*, *Congratulations*, *My Baby*, *Two to Six*. The majority of magazines devoted exclusively to child care, like Hecht's later publications for parents, were distributed free, often through department stores, which used them to promote business for their baby supply departments.

But it was not youth alone that magazines served; for twenty years, the elderly also were served by at least one magazine. The first of the publications directed at persons over forty was *Journal of Living*. It was begun in 1935 as a house organ for the Serutan Company, but eventually it developed into a commercial magazine which sold some 225,000 copies an issue, most of them on the newsstand. In 1952 the publishers of *Christian Herald* noted that there were 53,000,000 Americans in the ages beyond forty "whom," as they said in their prospectus, "the publishing mores of our time either ignore entirely or force into a ridiculous imitation of youth." They introduced *Lifetime Living*, edited by Dr. Martin Gumpert, a gerontologist, for persons who feared old age—a magazine to help them plan their finances, decide where to retire, develop "second careers," enjoy life, keep well, get along with their children and grandchildren, draw on their inner resources during the period of readjustment. *Lifetime Living* and the *Journal of Living* were merged into the *Journal of Lifetime Living* early in 1955.

Although their homes and families were the center of their existence, many Americans still wanted to know about other regions of their own vast country and about other lands, other peoples. Travel magazines took the armchair wanderer on vicarious trips to the huts of primitive African tribes, to the igloos of the Eskimo, to folk festivals in Scottish villages, to the wide boulevards of Paris, to the top of the world, and to the bottom of the sea. Some travel magazines pulled him from the armchair and set him packing.

The *National Geographic* with its old-fashioned yellow-bordered covers was a national institution even before the twenties. It was a safe bet that a considerable number of its copies from the twenties were still hoarded in attics and family libraries in 1955, to be rediscovered and reread from time to time. There was a timelessness about most of the photographs and articles in the *National Geographic*, although a few of them were topical.

The National Geographic Society, which published *National Geographic*, was established in Washington, D. C. in 1888 for "the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge." The society was made a tax-free educational institution by act of Congress, and all proceeds from *National Geographic*, apart from a considerable reserve, were plowed back into the magazine or used to promote the activities of the society. The society had sponsored more than a hundred scientific expeditions by 1955. The *National Geographic* did not solicit subscriptions; it invited persons to membership in the society, which carried with it a subscription to the magazine.

For more than a half century, the editor of *National Geographic* was Gilbert Grosvenor, whose life was dedicated to the interests of exploration and to acquainting Americans with the wonderful world they lived in. Throughout the globe were memorials to his devotion to his cause. A lake in Alaska, discovered in 1919, was named after him in recognition of the encouragement he had given Alaskan exploration. A glacier in Peru bore his name. A mountain in China was named for him by Joseph F. Rock, who headed an expedition of the society there in 1927. A range in Antarctica was named in his honor by Richard E. Byrd in 1929.

Grosvenor was born in Constantinople, Turkey, where his father taught history at Robert College. Soon after his graduation from Amherst, he fell in love with Elsie May Bell, the daughter of Alexander Graham Bell, who was then president of the National Geographic Society. When Bell offered him a job with the society, Grosvenor left his teaching position at Englewood Academy in New Jersey to take it so that he could be in Washington near Elsie. They were married in 1900, the year after he became director of the society and assistant editor of its magazine.

When Grosvenor took over, the society had nine hundred members and debts amounting to two thousand dollars. Its magazine was an erudite journal without popular interest. Grosvenor became its managing editor in 1900, and its editor in 1903, but at first he did little to change it. Then one day in 1905 he became so intrigued by a batch of photographs of Tibet that he spread them over eleven pages. The reaction to the feature showed him that he had struck upon a way to build interest in the magazine.

The basic editorial pattern of *National Geographic* changed little over the next fifty years. The magazine was heavily photo-

graphic, and a large portion of its illustrations were in color; in 1910 it became the first magazine in the United States to use natural color photographs. It gave a loose interpretation to the word "geographic." Its articles—often quaintly florid and quietly enthusiastic—and its pictures dealt with such subjects as taming wild blueberries, America's national parks, traveling through England in a Canadian canoe, Ancient Ur, Burmese temples, the snow peaks of the Equator, work and war among the ants, parrots, kingfishers, flycatchers, the sculptured temples of India, and Ulster through mist and sunshine.

The formula was a popular one. Circulation grew from so few copies that Grosvenor himself could carry them to more than a million in the twenties, more than two million in the fifties. As circulation grew, so did advertising. The magazine carried a million dollar's worth of advertising for the first time in 1923, and the amount had about tripled by 1954.

Grosvenor resigned as editor of *National Geographic* in 1954. His place was taken by John O. LaGorce, who had ranked second to Grosvenor on the magazine for the previous forty-nine years.

After the automobile had become a pleasure vehicle for millions instead of an expensive curiosity, the average reader no longer had to do his traveling at second hand, as he did when Grosvenor joined the staff of *National Geographic*. The automobile made every man his own explorer, and a number of magazines arose to tell him of places he could explore. *Motor News* was being published in Chicago as early as 1906, for instance, and *National Motorist* was founded in 1924. In 1930 the American Automobile Association brought out *Holiday*, a bright monthly full of general travel pieces, but it lasted only until the following year when it was merged with *Travel*, which dated back to 1902.

Travel magazines made up a large proportion of the hundreds of new magazines which decorated newsstands after World War II. Men and women in the armed forces had become accustomed to traveling, if involuntarily, during the war; presumably they would retain the habit under pleasanter circumstances. But more important, the war had severely restricted pleasure travel. Millions of persons had money to spend on trips of one sort or another, and even the middle class could afford a plane ticket to Europe or a cruise to the Bahamas.

From 1945 through 1947, one publisher after another made

plans for travel magazines. *Smart Traveler* had a short life as a magazine for the middle income traveler. *Travel and Camera* appeared briefly as the "first publication to recognize the relationship between travel and photography." *Pacific Pathways* turned up to promote the attractions of California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington. Publishers worked on others—*Everywhere*, *Globe*, *Let's Go*, *Playtime*, *Trek*, *Traveltime*. Some of the magazines died before their first issues, and others withered on the newsstands. The interest in faraway places remained. The general magazines catered to it with occasional articles. House organs of the automobile manufacturers catered to it, and so did Sunday editions of metropolitan dailies, producers of short subjects for the movies, information offices of travel agencies, and tourist bureaus of state and foreign governments. Perhaps partly because they did, the only major postwar travel magazine to survive was Curtis' *Holiday*.

Many of the magazines for small groups were in a sense a protest against the commercialization which overtook magazine publishing at the turn of the century. They refused to engage in what Frederick Lewis Allen has called the "new journalism" which was unleashed when Munsey, McClure, Curtis, and others issued their periodicals for mass audiences. Magazines of the new journalism, questing large audiences, played on majority tastes and interests. They regarded the reader as king, and they gave him what they thought he wanted.

A number of magazines, however, steadfastly refused to conform to mass tastes. Edited for a discriminating minority of readers, they afforded writers a haven from the pressures of the magazine market place. They opened their pages to authors whose ideas were too daring, too shocking, too recondite for the mass circulation magazines. They provided an outlet for fiction, poetry, and criticism which was of literary value but of little popular appeal. They encouraged literary experimentation. The influence of such magazines, as their editors saw it, lay not in the number of persons they reached but in the kind. By speaking to a few persons in positions of influence, their editors believed, the magazines would more surely affect the course of life and letters in America than if they spoke to the multitude.

The so-called "little magazines" of literary experimentation and criticism, magazines like *Poetry*, *Story*, the *Little Review*, and



*Accent*, were of this sort. Their story has been told in splendid detail by Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich.<sup>7</sup> Hundreds of little magazines sprouted up after their twentieth-century renaissance in 1910. Many of them vanished after a year or two, and few of them had ever more than three thousand readers. Yet they were an important force in American literature. They have been credited with introducing at least 80 per cent of the novelists, poets, and storytellers who became well known after 1912.

Readers of the little magazines no doubt would have regarded the *Saturday Review of Literature* as hopelessly middle class; but first as a somewhat sober literary journal, eventually as a lively magazine of ideas and the popular arts, the weekly probably affected the reading tastes and helped to shape the thinking of an influential segment of the population. The *Saturday Review of Literature* grew out of a literary supplement which Henry Seidel Canby, Amy Loveman, Christopher Morley, and William Rose Benet had edited for the New York *Evening Post*. When Cyrus Curtis bought the *Post*, they left to start an independent literary weekly of their own. Their first issue came out in August, 1924. They had wanted to call the magazine just *Saturday Review*; but as a British publication had legal claim to that name, they called it *Saturday Review of Literature*, its title until 1952, when it dropped the "of Literature" without fear of litigation.

In the beginning, Time, Inc., had an interest in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Canby was a former Yale professor, and he had befriended Hadden and Luce when they were trying to start *Time*. When they learned of his plans to found a literary journal, Time, Inc., bought substantial stock in the new magazine; its editors were invited to share *Time's* offices; and Roy E. Larsen, *Time's* circulation manager, conducted its circulation and promotional campaign, which included a two-page advertisement in *Time*. The two magazines amicably severed most of their ties in 1925 when *Time* moved to Cleveland, although Time, Inc., was listed as publisher of the *Saturday Review* for a few issues in 1926 and Larsen remained a vice president in its company until 1932.

In the twelve years that Canby was editor and in the two that Bernard DeVoto held the position, the *Saturday Review* carried

<sup>7</sup> Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography* (Princeton, 1946).

conscientious book reviews and literary discussions by well-known authors alongside its editorials, its erudite and whimsical columns, its evaluations of detective stories, and its famous column of personal advertisements in which the lonely sought pen pals, the unemployed sought situations, and sellers of unconventional goods and services sought buyers. Friends of the magazine, among them Thomas Lamont, made up its losses. Harrison Smith, a book and magazine publisher, bought the publication in 1938 but sold it four years later to Saturday Review Associates, Inc., in which he remained a stockholder.

The big change in policy took place in the forties when Norman Cousins became editor. Cousins added articles on American culture and other features to the traditional literary discussions, introduced radio and television columns, inaugurated a supplement devoted to reviews of phonograph recordings, and from time to time brought out special issues. The audience of the magazine grew to some 151,000 readers in 1955.

Some religious magazines also were edited without commercial expediency. For example, the *Christian Century* became a leading Protestant journal of intellectual vigor after 1908, when Dr. Charles C. Morrison acquired it. *Commonweal* was begun by laymen in 1924 as a "weekly review of literature, the arts, and public affairs" for Catholics, but it frequently disagreed with the official position of the Catholic church on political and social issues. Liberal in outlook, it professed to be an open forum for writers of many religious faiths or even of no faith at all.

In the long run, perhaps the most important, of the publications for small bodies of readers were the journals of opinion, to which the next chapter will give detailed attention, and the quality magazines, the *Atlantic* and *Harper's*. The *Atlantic* and *Harper's* were magazines of high standing even in the nineteenth century; they were the revered patriarchs of publishing in the twentieth. Less esoteric than the little magazines, they guarded literary standards against the onslaught of commercialism, and they surveyed the contemporary scene with perspicacity and authority.

The *Atlantic Monthly* entered the twentieth century with a tradition of literary excellence nurtured by a line of distinguished editors: James Russell Lowell, its first, James T. Fields, William Dean Howells, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Horace E. Scudder, and Walter Hines Page. It seems to have enjoyed, as Frank Luther

Mott has delightfully expressed it, "a perpetual state of literary grace, so that for a large section of the American public, whatever the *Atlantic* printed was literature."<sup>8</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes were among the literary figures of New England who assisted at the birth of the *Atlantic*, and they helped to fill its pages for many years. In its first issue, Holmes resumed his *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, suspended a quarter of a century earlier, with an, "As I was saying. . . ." Longfellow appeared often in it, and so did Emerson.

Until the seventies, the *Atlantic* remained largely a New England journal, aloof to contributions from outlanders. But New England then was still the seat of American letters, and the *Atlantic* could count on its neighbors, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others, to provide all of the material it needed. Edward Everett Hale's classic "The Man Without a Country" first appeared in it, as did Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." In the mid-seventies, the *Atlantic* lost some of its provincialism, and thereafter robust authors like Mark Twain and Bret Harte appeared alongside the sons of Harvard.

Yet the *Atlantic* seemed to shrink away from the profound changes which stirred American life after the Civil War. In the nineties, it continued its genteel way, parochial and academic, its circulation dwindling, its profits negligible. John Adams Thayer, a bustling young man who later made a success of *Everybody's*, proposed to take over management of the *Atlantic*, liven up its content and cover, and sell hundreds of thousands of copies. The conservative publishers were aghast at the suggestion. By 1897 circulation was down to a sad seven thousand.

From that low point, the *Atlantic* climbed upward with a push from Walter Hines Page, editor for twelve months in 1898-99, and Bliss Perry, editor from 1899 to 1909. They acknowledged social problems with articles by Booker T. Washington and Jacob Riis, and they decorously engaged in the muckraking which characterized magazine journalism of their time with articles like Everett P. Wheeler's "The Unofficial Government of Cities" and Francis C. Lowell's "The American Boss." Yet a flavor of dilettantism,

<sup>8</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1850-1865* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 493-94.

reflected by such titles as "February in England" and "Dante as Lyric Poet" clung to the magazine.

A fresh breeze began blowing through the musty pages of the *Atlantic* when Ellery Sedgwick became editor in August, 1909. Sedgwick had formed the Atlantic Monthly Publishing Company and purchased the magazine from Houghton, Mifflin and Company the previous year. He had worked for the popular magazines—*Leslie's Monthly*, the *American*, *McClure's*—and he had diagnosed the maladies from which the quality magazines like the *Atlantic* were suffering. The big trouble with the old quality magazines, he believed, was that they were too remote from life; they avoided the questions which really excited people. Frederick Lewis Allen, who served an editorial apprenticeship under Sedgwick and later went off to edit *Harper's*, has described Sedgwick's conception of the *Atlantic*. Sedgwick, he said, "resolved that the *Atlantic* should face the whole of life, its riddles, its adventures; the critical questions of the day, the problems of the human heart; and that no subject should be taboo if only it were discussed with urbanity."<sup>9</sup>

Sedgwick kept abreast of the news and cocked an ear to the subjects which active minded people were discussing. He relied for manuscripts mainly on new writers and on authorities in various fields who were drawn to the *Atlantic* by its prestige, not by its rates of payment, which were low.

During his thirty years as editor, Sedgwick kept the *Atlantic* fresh and alert, yet high in literary quality. The magazine took up the subjects about which people were concerned—the direct-primary experiment; the government versus the corporation; the Sacco-Vanzetti case, which Felix Frankfurter discussed—and its articles were sometimes of genuine news value. In April, 1927, the *Atlantic* carried an article outlining the shortcomings of Alfred E. Smith as a Presidential candidate because of his religion. Governor Smith replied with a letter to the *Atlantic* in which he stated his creed as a Roman Catholic and as a public official. His letter was so newsworthy that two newspapers published a copy of it purloined from the plant where the *Atlantic* was printed. The *Atlantic* was forced to rush its copies to the stands ahead of schedule and to release the letter to the press at large. The previous year the *Atlantic* had carried an article urging regulation of

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, "Sedgwick and the Atlantic," *Outlook and Independent*, 150 (Dec. 26, 1928) 1407.

the stock market which led to reforms in the New York Stock Exchange. But Sedgwick was as interested in works of literary merit as in articles of topical discussion. He published Ernest Hemingway's "Fifty Grand," which Ray Long of *Cosmopolitan* had rejected as too hardboiled, and Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

Sedgwick traveled in Spain during the winter of 1938. He was sharply criticized by liberal writers for his public praise of the Franco regime. While he was abroad, his place on the *Atlantic* was filled by Edward A. Weeks, Jr., who officially took over the editorship in June, 1938. Sedgwick remained the majority owner of the *Atlantic* until December, 1939, when he sold his interest to Richard E. Danielson, former publisher of the *Sportsman*.

Weeks, editing in the Sedgwick tradition, maintained the literary distinction of the *Atlantic* without letting the magazine sink into senile complacency. He still published the outstanding writers and thinkers, and even George Bernard Shaw submitted manuscripts to the *Atlantic* unsolicited. On the ninetieth birthday of the *Atlantic*, Weeks ran its first four-color pictorial cover and had its typography restyled by W. A. Dwiggins. He aggressively sought advertising. The *Atlantic* in 1951 tried to build up its institutional advertising by selling "advertorials," multiple-page advertisements resembling editorial text in which advertisers discussed subjects of public interest in reasonable, essay form. To save money, the *Atlantic* and *Harper's*, its old rival, merged their advertising staffs in 1952. Advertisers could buy space in either or both of the publications.

Circulation figures attested to the vitality of the *Atlantic* under Sedgwick and Weeks. Responding to Sedgwick's break with the parochialism of the past, sales had climbed past the hundred-thousand mark by 1921. They had mounted to an all-time high of about 221,000 in 1955.

*Harper's*, one hundred years old in 1950, enjoyed a stature no less than that of the *Atlantic*. The State Department ordered ten thousand copies of its centennial issue, sight unseen, for distribution to embassies and consulates. The nineteen hundred manuscripts a month which came unbidden to its book-crammed editorial offices in the late 1940's included many from persons highly respected in their fields of competence. Henry L. Stimson, former Secretary of War, called in person with his manuscript of

"The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," a historical document which the editors ran in February, 1947.

The four Harper brothers—James, John, Joseph, and Fletcher—had no grand notions for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* when they got together the first issue of June, 1850. Years later Fletcher Harper confessed to one of his editors, "If we were asked why we first started a monthly magazine, we would have to say that it was as a tender to our business, though it has grown into something quite beyond that."<sup>10</sup> Their business was book publishing, and they had built up the largest publishing house in the world by printing cheap reprints of English fiction. A monthly magazine would help to assure work for their large printing plant in otherwise idle hours. They could fill it inexpensively with serializations of the best English novels, in which Americans were beginning to show an interest. Moreover, the magazine would be a good medium for advertising their books. For some thirty years the Harpers reserved their advertising pages for their own use and turned down offers from advertisers who wanted to buy space.

If the *Atlantic* looked to New England for its authors, *Harper's* looked to old England. Its chief contents for many years were English works unprotected by copyright in the United States. *Harper's*, following the custom of the times, at first simply reprinted whatever foreign stories it wished without paying the authors. In 1852, however, the firm paid Dickens for reprinting his *Bleak House*, and by the late fifties its custom was to pay for "advance sheets," proofs of the foreign work which by courtesy of the trade gave the purchaser a priority.

*Harper's* serialized novels by Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Bulwer, Trollope, the popular authors of the time, and readers showed their delight by subscribing to the magazine. Sales, which were but 7,500 when the magazine began, shot up to 50,000 in six months. Just before the Civil War, circulation was 200,000, remarkable for the period. The magazine ran more and more stories and articles by American authors alongside the English favorites. By the late nineteenth century, *Harper's* was at its peak as a general family monthly, rich in illustration, attractive in appearance, high in literary quality. Frederic Remington and Howard Pyle did its illustrations. Thomas Hardy and George du Maurier

10 J. Henry Harper, *The House of Harper* (New York, 1912), p. 84.

wrote for it, and so did Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Richard Harding Davis, and Stephen Crane. Its coup of the nineties was the serialization of du Maimier's *Trilby*. People everywhere talked about it, merchandise was named after it, and a mother begged the concluding installments so that her desperately ill daughter could finish the story before she died.

Fletcher Harper was the chief editorial force behind the magazine in its first twenty years, although it had two editors during that period. Henry J. Raymond, a founder of the *New York Times*, was editor from 1850 to 1856, Alfred H. Guernsey from then until 1869. Henry Mills Alden became editor in 1869, shortly before Harper died. Alden edited *Harper's* for fifty years, a half century in which it grew in diversity and distinction.

It was Alden who made *Harper's* give increasing attention to contemporary problems after 1900. He explained his policy at the end of a decade: "The Magazine has a scope broad enough to meet the thoughtful readers at every point of essential and vital interest, without undertaking the function of daily or weekly journalism. But it must be timely. Its field is the living Present. What now, insistent, continuously, and as a part of the great living human movement, concerns these thoughtful readers, must constitute for them the main interest of the *Harper* type of magazine."<sup>11</sup> The *Harper's* of Alden, still predominantly a magazine of fiction, nonetheless ran articles on archeology, exploration, sociology, science, surgery and medicine, history, and literary research. It published the narratives of the explorers Stefansson, Peary, Amundson, and Nansen; Woodrow Wilson's *The History of the American People*; William Dean Howells' "My Memories of Mark Twain." Its affinity for England was apparent in the authors of its articles on science, Sir William Ramsay, Sir Ernest Rutherford, Sir J. J. Thomson, Sir Oliver Podge. *Harper's* remained a magazine for well-to-do readers of catholic tastes, despite Alden's concern with the contemporary. It is doubtful that the readers of *Munsey's* or the *Saturday Evening Post* would have found much to interest them in "The Question of the Atom," a treatise by a chemistry professor in 1910, or in "The Soil as a Battle-Ground" of the same year.

Thomas B. Wells, who edited *Harper's* from 1919 to 1931,

<sup>11</sup> Henry Mills Alden, "An Anniversary Retrospect, 1900-1910," *Harper's*, 121 (June, 1910) 39.

pulled the magazine from the slump into which it had fallen after World War I. The world had changed so fast that it had left *Harper's* behind, conservative, musty, almost antiquarian, and only 75,000 readers remained faithful enough to buy their copies each month in the mid-twenties.

The audience of *Harper's* had not essentially changed, but the times had; and the new surroundings, as Frederick Lewis Allen has observed, called for new policies. When Fletcher Harper guided the magazine in the fifties and sixties, communication was slow between scattered communities, entertainment was not available at the click of a radio switch, and reading matter was hard to come by. *Harper's*, with its stories, aimed at a rather large proportion of American families. Henry Mills Alden, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, addressed his magazine to genteel, educated, well-to-do persons of wide tastes who recoiled from the vulgarities of a headlong industrialization. They had a greater choice of reading matter, but they found much of it crude and common; *Harper's* was a refuge of culture to which they could flee from the barbarities which they thought abounded. After World War I, when Thomas Wells became editor, the mass media flourished on the products of a mass education and an expanding economy. Opportunity was so widespread that, as Allen put it, "a taste for things of high quality had become less a matter of income status than a matter of personal temperament." It was no longer feasible to edit *Harper's* for a distinct social class. The magazine had to appeal to intellectually curious readers of any income who craved quality material which the mass media did not supply.<sup>12</sup>

Wells realized all that; he realized too that *Harper's*, once famed for its illustrations, could no longer compete in art work with the big slicks. His change in policy came with the issue of September, 1925, which signaled the event with a new orange cover. The illustrations were gone, except for a frontispiece, and the magazine had a new typography. But the important change was in editorial content. A shift in emphasis from fiction to articles was clearly discernible, and the articles were of more apparent pertinence to the reader than in the past. True, there were still historical articles; Philip Guedalla wrote about George Washing-

<sup>12</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, "One Hundred Years of Harper's," *Harper's*, 201 (Oct., 1950) 32-33.



ton, for instance, and Jesse Grant reminisced about his father, the former President, in several issues. There was still good fiction. But increasingly there were authoritative articles on the issues and subjects which stirred a thinking minority.

Lee Foster Hartman succeeded Wells as editor in 1931. When he died a decade later, Frederick Lewis Allen became editor. *Harper's* continued to change—in covers, in format, in editorial emphasis. The orange covers gave way in 1938 to covers of different colors, later to covers with illustrations. Line-cuts reappeared to illustrate the text. The page size was enlarged in 1948 when few presses remained which could handle the traditional size. The ratio of articles to fiction continued to increase. And as interests changed, so did the types of articles that *Harper's* ran. Looking back over two decades, Frederick Lewis Allen in 1941 recalled the subjects which had most interested *Harper's* readers:

During the nineteen-twenties our most successful articles were on family questions, matters of personal conduct, sex and marriage, or personal belief. Business was booming too well, apparently, to offer burning issues; politics seemed dull, except for the always fascinating prohibition question; the great excitement of that decade . . . appeared to be over the changes in manners and morals and over the problem of personal religion brought about by the rising authority of science and the waning authority of the churches. But with the depression came a great change: suddenly the key questions seemed to be, not questions of individual conduct, but questions of corporate and government policy. Gradually *Harper's* became almost an organ of politics, economics, and sociology. Now the war has brought about still another change—but not back to the individual; rather it is a change to problems on a bigger and more impersonal scale. Now we are dealing with the affairs of nations and aggregations of nations.<sup>13</sup>

As *Harper's* began its second century, it seemed as adaptable and full of editorial vitality as ever, although it leaned on the book publishing operations of the company for financial security. It celebrated its hundredth anniversary in 1950 with a special issue of three hundred pages. It continued to run good fiction and such topical and provocative articles as "Who Is Loyal to America?" by Henry Steele Commager, of which readers requested 65,000 reprints, and a study of the case of J. Robert Oppenheimer

13 Frederick Lewis Allen in *American Magazines, 1741-1941* by Frederick Lewis Allen, William L. Cheney, and Fulton Oursler (New York, 1941), p. 7.

by Joseph and Stewart Alsop, which won the Benjamin Franklin Magazine Award for original reporting in which serious obstacles had to be overcome.

Allen retired in 1953 to devote his time to writing; he died in 1954. John Fischer succeeded him as editor.

America would have been the poorer without *Harper's* and the *Atlantic*. In the commercialism of the twentieth century, both nobly carried out what Frederick Lewis Allen, in a talk at the University of Missouri, once expressed as the five functions of a worth-while magazine: It must be interesting, it must provide news in the widest sense of the term, it must provide interpretation and discussion of important issues, it must provide a platform for original and inventive thinkers, and it must provide a vehicle for the artist in literature.

### *chapter 13* Magazines for Cultural Minorities

The journals of opinion, comment, and controversy walked a lonely and precarious road in the first fifty-five years of the twentieth century—lonely because their views were invariably the unpopular views of the minority, precarious because they were chronically in financial distress. The mass-produced magazines tended to be neutral or conservative in treating social issues, public affairs, and business once the era of muckraking had ended. Against the ubiquitous concert of the mass-circulation slicks, the journals of opinion raised their small voice. In large measure, they reflected the prevailing mood of the American intellectual, his optimism, his despair, his aspirations, his fears. They were often far ahead of their times in their advocacy of social justice and political reform, yet they were an effective instrument for transmuting the ideas of an aggressive minority into those of an inert majority.

The influence of the journals of opinion could not be measured by their circulation figures. They directed their messages to the well educated, to the intellectuals, on the premise that in the long run these persons were most influential in determining the course of events. Men accustomed to reaching vast audiences sometimes

found the influence of the magazines inscrutable. Frank P. Walsh once called the *Nation* the greatest mystery in American journalism. An article he had written about the railroads was published in the *Nation* in the days when its circulation was about 27,000. A series of his on the same subject was syndicated among the Hearst newspapers, which then had a total circulation of about ten million. Soon after the *Nation* appeared, Walsh received telephone calls from senators, lobbyists, persons of importance. But never, he later recalled, had he ever met a person who mentioned his articles syndicated by Hearst.

The publisher of a typical journal of opinion had to be adept at stalling off printers impatient for payment and at coaxing manuscripts from authors with something to say. An inadequate budget was endemic to his sort of publishing. The editors of *Common Sense*, on the tenth birthday anniversary of their publication in 1942, reported that their deficit had averaged about seven hundred dollars a month for the decade. From the time that E. L. Godkin began the *Nation* in 1865, editors like him were more interested in having their say than in making money. "It was not, and never has been, in the *Nation's* half-century of existence, a question of profits," Oswald Garrison Villard, a later owner, wrote in 1915, "but of presenting certain definite literary, political, and social ideals and of urging them with all the power of righteous, patriotic purpose. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Godkin depleted most of his original \$100,000 capital in his first year, and thereafter the *Nation* subsisted on the bounty of philanthropic owners and generous friends.

Magazines like the *Nation* could exist only with outside assistance. Printed on cheap coarse paper, illustrated with crude line cuts if at all, the magazines carried negligible advertising. They counted their readers in the low thousands instead of in the millions of the big slicks. The circulation of the *Nation* fluctuated around 30,000 in the twenties, and even in the magazine boom of World War II, it sold but 36,000 copies a week. The *New Republic* reached a peak circulation of approximately 96,000 in 1948 when its editor, Henry Wallace, announced his candidacy for the Presidency; but before long circulation had dropped back to its usual level, about 30,000. And those two magazines were among the leaders. The *Freeman* of the twenties attracted only

<sup>1</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard, "The 'Nation' and Its Ownership," *Nation*, 101 (July 8, 1915) 53.

about 10,000 readers, its reincarnation of the thirties only 7,500. Dwight MacDonald's *Politics* of the late forties found some 2,500 subscribers.

Unable to make their own way, the magazines depended upon the generosity of philanthropists and friends. The *New Republic*, for instance, was underwritten by the Straight family from its establishment in 1914. In the twenties, the *Freeman* was guaranteed its expenses for four years by Helen Swift Morris, a millionairess who had married one of its editors, Francis Neilson. When Max Ascoli launched his *Reporter* as a slick-paper fortnightly of "facts and ideas" in 1949, he was reportedly prepared to finance it with \$1,500,000 from his own fortune and that of his wife, a daughter of Julius Rosenwald. The *New Leader* periodically appealed to its subscribers for financial assistance.

The constituency of a magazine could be remarkably loyal in times of crisis. The *Progressive*, founded in 1909 as an organ for the La Follette family's progressive movement, announced in October, 1947, that it would have to suspend publication. Production costs had risen 50 per cent during the preceding seven years, it said, and there had been no corresponding gain in revenue. But subscribers saved its life. Two of them sent checks for \$1,000. An octogenarian in Oregon contributed five dollars he had earned picking berries. Congressmen, Democratic and Republican, sent along their checks; so did nearly five hundred clergymen of many denominations. In all, supporters of the magazine raised \$40,000 in cash to augment \$100,000 they had pledged earlier.

The *Nation*, born just after the Civil War ended, was the elder statesman among the journals of opinion in the twentieth century. Its founder was E. L. Godkin, a young journalist who had come to America from Ireland in 1856 to write about conditions in the South. He developed plans for a weekly paper of intellectual bent, and his idea interested James Miller McKim, a Philadelphia Abolitionist who wanted to finance a periodical to aid freedmen. They found forty stockholders who invested \$100,000 in the paper. Godkin was appointed editor, with complete editorial independence. His associate editor was Wendell Phillips Garrison, son of William Lloyd Garrison, the Abolitionist leader.

At the end of its first year, the *Nation* underwent the first of its many changes in ownership. Its capital was all but gone, and there were unwarranted insinuations that Godkin had mismanaged af-

fairs.<sup>2</sup> Godkin then formed E. L. Godkin and Company, which published the *Nation* for the next fifteen years. They were years of financial insecurity, but the *Nation* grew in prestige and circulation. In 1881 Godkin sold the magazine to the New York *Evening Post* and became associate editor of the *Post*. The *Post* was owned by Henry Villard, the railroad builder and a brother-in-law of Garrison, and he scrupulously refrained from interfering with the editorial policies of his publications.

The *Nation* remained in the Villard family for more than half a century. For thirty-three years it appeared as a weekly edition of the *Post*. Its connection with the paper was completely severed in 1918 when Oswald Garrison Villard took over as owner and editor. He served it without salary, spent substantial sums of his own money on it, and raised funds for it among friends who recognized its value as an organ of liberalism. To insure its independence, he sold it in 1934, two years after he had resigned its editorship, to the Civic Aid Foundation, a nonprofit organization established by Maurice Wertheim, banker and philanthropist.

Wertheim at times took issue with the *Nation's* policies, which were determined by its board of editors, but he made no effort to control them. He disagreed so violently when the *Nation* endorsed President Roosevelt's plan to reform the Supreme Court that he took space in it to present his own stand. Wertheim sold the *Nation* in June, 1937, to Freda Kirchwey, senior editor, who had been actively associated with it for sixteen years. Group control and absentee ownership were less likely to preserve the "independent character and direction" of the magazine than centralized control by an active editor, Wertheim explained in the issue of June 12. The *Nation* paid its own way from 1937 through 1940, but it lost about ten thousand dollars in each of the next two years because of increased operating expenses. In 1943 Freda Kirchwey transferred ownership from herself to a nonprofit organization, Nation Associates, Inc., in which she asked subscribers to enroll as members at from ten to one hundred dollars a year. About 2,500 members joined in the first six months. In September, 1955, when Carey McWilliams succeeded Miss Kirchwey as editor, the *Nation* was still having financial difficulties. Its new publisher, George G. Kirstein, planned to put some of his own money into

2 Villard, "The 'Nation' and Its Ownership," p. 53.

the nonprofit company which owned the *Nation* and to raise enough funds to expand the magazine.

The mission of the *Nation*, as its founders saw it, was stated in its third issue. "This journal," they said, "will not be the organ of any party, sect, or body. It will, on the contrary, make an earnest effort to bring to the discussion of political and social questions a really critical spirit, and to wage war upon the vices of violence, exaggeration, and misrepresentation by which so much of the political writing of this day is marred."<sup>3</sup>

Subscribers received their first copies of the *Nation* in July, 1865, three months after General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox. Lincoln was dead, and the country bore wounds of hate as it faced the terrible problems of reconstruction. "The week has been singularly barren of exciting events. . . ." the *Nation* reported in its opening sentence and added, two paragraphs later, "The news from Europe is unimportant. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

The *Nation* found thousands of "exciting events" to record and comment on in the ninety years between the first issue and 1955, and it saw an increasing importance in news from Europe and from other parts of the world. Godkin, with an aloofness which some of his contemporaries found exasperating, saw much to criticize, little to commend on the American scene. His *Nation* decried railroad barons, Tammany, currency inflation, and the Populists. It took capital's side against labor, attacked trade unionism, and opposed the eight-hour working day. It was a strong advocate of civil service reform. In its literary criticism, its standards were high, its reviews characterized by what Frank Luther Mott has called "casual brilliance."

After Oswald Garrison Villard became editor in 1918, the *Nation* at times adopted editorial policies which clashed with popular opinion. It was denounced as pro-German, pacifist, and "Bolshevik." The Post Office Department held up its issue of September 13, 1918, as unmailable but released it five days later after President Wilson himself had intervened.

More than other journals of opinion, the *Nation* studied the significance of developments abroad. Its platform for the peace after World War I included such proposals as complete disarmament, free trade and an end to all tariffs, and the establishment

<sup>3</sup> *Nation*, 1 (July 20, 1865) 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Nation*, 1 (July 6, 1865) 1.

of an international court and parliament. Even in the red-baiting twenties, the *Nation* tried to interpret the Russian Revolution for Americans, and it printed the texts of early Soviet laws and other documents. It denounced Mussolini at a time when he still had apologists in the United States. It foresaw the threat of Hitler long before the invasion of Poland.

As a part of its foreign affairs coverage, the *Nation* inaugurated an international relations section which carried interpretative articles, texts of documents of international importance along with explanations of them, summaries from the foreign press, book reviews, and similar material.

Villard developed the *Nation's* domestic platform gradually. The magazine found little to admire in the Republican administrations of the twenties but was generally sympathetic to the New Deal. It took up the cause of Sacco and Vanzetti, helped to ferret out the Teapot Dome scandals, campaigned against lynching, favored collective bargaining, and approved a liberal immigration policy.

A number of outstanding intellectuals worked for the *Nation* during Villard's regime. At one time or another the staff included Joseph Wood Krutch; Stuart Chase; Raymond Gram Swing; Norman Thomas; the four Van Dorens, Carl, Mark, Irita, and Dorothy; Lewis Gannett; and Ludwig Lewisohn.

As independent thinkers, they were bound to disagree with the editor and with each other from time to time. Several staff writers resigned from the magazine when their differences were too fundamental or too frequent for harmony. Heywood Broun, a regular contributor for a decade, left the *Nation* for the *New Republic* in 1937 because of his dissatisfaction with its policies. Oswald Garrison Villard continued to write for the *Nation* after he had relinquished the editorship, but he severed all connections with it in 1940. He did so, he said, because of "the editors' abandonment of the *Nation's* steadfast opposition to all preparations for war, to universal military service, to a great navy, and to *all* war, for this in my judgment has been the chief glory of its great and honorable past."<sup>5</sup> Louis Fischer announced his resignation in the *Nation* of June 2, 1945, after an association of twenty-two years because he had noted a steady deterioration in its political matter

<sup>5</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men," *Nation*, 150 (June 29, 1940) 782.



and the emergence of a "line" which governed its inclusions and omissions. The "line" quite evidently, as the editors of the *Nation* guessed, was the weekly's benevolent attitude toward Soviet Russia. Fischer's was the first in a flurry of resignations at midcentury which apparently stemmed from the same reason.

Much of what the *Nation* had to say in the 1950's was unpopular, but in one respect the magazine was steadfast to its tradition: As it had in Godkin's day and in Villard's, it still disdained majority approval.

Some of the magazines of minority expression arose from the political ferment which made the years just before World War I a period of great expectations. America had examined herself, with help from the muckrakers, and her conscience was troubled. A legion of reformers stormed the bastions of the vested interests and battled to rout social injustice. There was no end of causes: an equitable redistribution of wealth, better conditions for the working man, women's suffrage, children's rights. But it was a time of protest and reform, not of revolution, for there remained a strong faith in American institutions. There was high promise that the evils and abuses which had invaded the system could be abolished by democratic means, and that promise contributed to the optimism of the day. The optimism infected the young intellectuals. Socialism, become respectable, had spread to the colleges. Some bright young minds flirted with it; others, in defiance or experimentation, explored the radical movements budding in such places as Greenwich Village.

In that setting were born some of the magazines of political comment and some of the "little magazines" of literary experimentation—the *Progressive*, the *New Republic*, the *Masses*, and *Poetry*, to name a few. Politics and art were often entwined. Many of the young writers were rebels in both politics and in literature. The magazines they wrote for were sometimes political with literary overtones, sometimes literary with political overtones, and even such frankly political journals as the *Nation* and *New Republic* maintained high standards of literary criticism. The little magazine movement began about 1910. Harriet Monroe started *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in 1912, and it was followed by *Glebe*, *Others*, the *Little Review*, and many other publications established to afford authors an outlet for works of artistic merit

or experimentation which could find no place in the commercial magazines.

The *Masses* was a child of those days of protest. It was edited by Greenwich Village Socialists in a former plumbing shop, and it called itself "a monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the working people." The first issue was hawked on the streets of the Village in January, 1911. Piet Vlag, an immigrant restaurant manager, guided the *Masses* through its first issues with editorial assistance from Thomas Seltzer and Horatio Winslow and with financial assistance from a wealthy insurance man. By September, the *Masses* had foundered, however, and for three months its voice was silent against such enemies of the good life as war, child labor, and the high cost of living. During those three months a group of Greenwich Village writers and artists led by Art Young determined to rescue the magazine. They sent a wire to Max Eastman, who had taught philosophy at Columbia University, offering him the editorship without pay. Eastman became editor with the issue of December, 1912. He was later joined by Floyd Dell as managing editor.

John Reed, who was to be buried within the walls of the Kremlin, wrote the statement of purpose for the *Masses*: "To everlastingly attack old systems, old morals, old prejudices. . . ." The *Masses* well lived up to its aim. It took up the causes of feminism, Negro rights, sexual freedom, birth control, and pacifism, but its criticisms were often leavened with humor. Writers and artists of talent served the *Masses* without pay. Art Young, Jo Davidson, Walter Lippmann, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson, John Reed, Mary Heaton Vorse, Louis Untermeyer, Amy Lowell—all of them donated their work to the magazine.

The *Masses* continued to espouse pacifism and socialism even after America entered World War I. It called upon President Wilson to repeal conscription, and it appealed for funds to defend agitators against the draft. Because of its editorial policies, it was banned from the newsstands of the New York elevated and subway systems after January, 1916. The Post Office Department barred it from the mails in August, 1917. Two hung juries failed to convict Eastman, Dell, Young, and the business manager, Merrill Rogers, for "conspiracy against the government" and for "interfering with enlistment."

But the *Masses* died soon after the government attempted to

suppress it. It reappeared in March, 1918, as the *Liberator*. The *Liberator* embraced Marxist doctrines and in 1924 was given to American Communists, who merged it with other of their publications. By then most of the staff of the old *Masses* had long since left the publication.

In 1926 Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman revived the old magazine as the *New Masses*. In the twenty-two years of its existence, the *New Masses* increasingly adhered to the line of the Communist Party, although Freeman denied in 1936 that the magazine was financed by the Communists. Its editors included Granville Hicks, James Rorty, and Michael Gold. The magazine found many new subscribers during the thirties when the depression again brought a questioning of old institutions and when the rise of totalitarian governments in Europe solidified liberals against fascism. Its circulation rose from 25,000 in 1929 to 36,500 in 1933, and the magazine changed from monthly to weekly publication in 1934. After World War II, increased costs of production and a general hostility to communism in America helped to bring about the death of the magazine. *New Masses* ceased publication in January, 1948, after an unsuccessful effort to raise funds to cover its deficit. Later that year its name was combined with that of a literary quarterly, *Mainstream*. The publication was still appearing in 1955 as *Masses and Mainstream*.

The *New Republic* was launched in the same atmosphere of prewar revolt and optimism which nourished the *Masses*. It ranked second in importance only to the *Nation* as an organ of dissident liberalism, although it was younger by nearly half a century. For almost forty years the *New Republic* had fewer financial cares than the *Nation*, although its editors were probably dismayed when subscribers deserted them by the thousand after World War I and again after the decline of the Progressive Party of 1948. Until 1953 its patrons unquestioningly made up its deficit, which was probably seldom less than \$75,000 a year.

The *New Republic* was subsidized by funds from Mr. and Mrs. Willard D. Straight, who allowed its staff complete editorial freedom. Straight had served as a diplomat in the Far East for several years, had represented American banking interests there, and had backed *Asia* magazine because of his interest in that part of the world. He and his wife were impressed by their associ-

ations with Herbert Croly, then editor of the *Architectural Record*. In 1909 Croly had written a book which became the creed of many liberals, *The Promise of American Life*, and the Straights agreed to give Croly financial support for a magazine which would reflect his liberal viewpoint. Straight died in 1918, but Croly continued to draw whatever funds the *New Republic* needed from Mrs. Straight, who later married Leonard Elmhirst. When she became a British subject in 1935, she and her husband created a trust fund for the benefit of the four magazines in which she was interested, *New Republic*, *Asia*, *Antiques*, and *Theatre Arts*. However, trustees of the fund said in March, 1953, that they would no longer assign money to the *New Republic*, which thereafter would have to find other sources to cover its losses; and eleven months later the magazine, like its fellow journals, asked friends for donations to keep it alive.

Croly's weekly recorded its intentions of editorial independence in the opening sentences of its first issue in November, 1914: "The *New Republic* is frankly an experiment. It is an attempt to find national audience for a journal of interpretation and opinion. Many people believe that such a journal is out of place in America. . . . Its success inevitably depends on public support, but if we are unable to achieve that success under the conditions essential to sound and disinterested thinking, we shall make way for better men. Meanwhile, we set out with faith."<sup>6</sup>

There were good reasons for that faith, for the period immediately preceding the war was full of bright promise. An editorial writer for *Collier's* only a few months earlier had spoken for many Americans when he said: "Fifty years from now, when some writer brings Woodrow Wilson's *History of the American People* up to date, we think he will say that the ten years ending about January 1, 1914, was the period of greatest ethical advance made by this nation in any decade."<sup>7</sup> Woodrow Wilson, that man of moral purpose, was in the White House. At first the *New Republic* regarded him warily, but by 1916 it saw him as the new advocate of reforms which Progressives had sought since the 1890's. The good life was not won, of course, but the period was one of happy transition, as the *New Republic* suggested in the subtitle which it

<sup>6</sup> *New Republic*, 1 (Nov. 7, 1914) 3.

<sup>7</sup> "We Take Stock," *Collier's*, 52 (Jan. 24, 1914) 11.

splashed across its cover, "A journal of opinion to meet the challenge of the new time."

The war cut short much of the promise, but in war as in peace the *New Republic* took what it thought to be the path of liberalism. In February, 1917, it called for the United States to participate in the war. When the United States did enter the war, some persons regarded the *New Republic* as an organ of the Wilson administration. Oswald Garrison Villard, who found the competition of the *New Republic* stimulating, has recalled: "For a time during the war and immediately afterwards the *New Republic* was regarded by many as the mouthpiece of Woodrow Wilson; it was considered bad form in some official circles to be seen without it and its circulation climbed to about 45,000. It was believed that Walter Lippmann and the *New Republic* had won the President to our participation in the war in order to shape the peace and that Lippmann had written the fourteen peace points."<sup>8</sup>

The *New Republic* had advocated American participation in a League of Nations, but it was disillusioned by the machinations at the Paris Peace Conference. It urged that this country stay out of the League of Nations, and it attacked the Treaty of Versailles as a betrayal of what the United States had fought for.

The *New Republic's* days of glory faded with those of President Wilson. Many of its readers endorsed the Treaty and the League. Then, too, the mood of the twenties was different from the mood of the prewar years when the *New Republic* had been founded in high optimism. The voices of such dissenters as H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis better suited the mood than Croly's stiff and labored prose and his weekly's earnest analysis. Circulation figures of the magazine in the twenties seem highly approximate, but Ayer's directory shows a decline from 37,000 in 1919 to a mere 12,000 in 1929.

The *New Republic* recaptured much of its lost audience in the thirties, when the depression intensified concern over social, economic, and political problems. Bruce Bliven became editor, and he pushed circulation up to about 25,000. He believed that the magazine's function was as much reporting as interpreting. "I like to think of the *New Republic* as 'progressive,' " he said. "We try to avoid the word 'liberal' which seems to us so vague as to be almost

<sup>8</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard, *Fighting Years: Memoirs of a Liberal Editor* (New York, 1939), p. 361.

meaningless. We don't do much scolding. None of us would feel comfortable on a soapbox."<sup>9</sup>

The twentieth-century liberal position as interpreted by the *New Republic*, according to Richard H. Gentry of the University of Illinois in an unpublished study of the magazine's editorial policies from 1914 to 1935, appeared to be this: In a complex, industrialized society, the disorganized individualism of agrarian days was not only unrealistic but dangerous to the individual. Social planning was necessary to insure everyone as much freedom of decision as possible; and although such planning might curtail some economic privileges, it would not alter the basic liberties of the individual. In 1914 the liberal was optimistic about the prospects of achieving reform within the capitalistic framework and the two-party system, about an eventual liberal party movement. In the twenties, the magazine showed little interest in championing specific political reforms and instead took an objective and philosophical position on the sidelines; but with the depression, it returned to political activity.

While Croly and Bliven were editors, many writers of brilliance and perception wrote political analyses and literary criticism for the *New Republic*. Walter Lippmann and Francis Hackett were among its original editors. Other staff members and contributors from time to time included George Soule, Charles Merz, Alvin Johnson, Randolph Bourne, Stark Young, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Morss Lovett, Edmund Wilson, and John Dewey.

When Michael Straight was discharged from the air force after World War II, he thought that the *New Republic* deserved a larger audience than the 41,000 subscribers it was then reaching. Straight was the son of the Willard Straights who had financed the magazine from its inception. He changed the format, restyled the cover, added political cartoons, set out to break what he regarded as the "sameness" of its editorial policies, and even hired an agency to conduct a campaign of radio advertising.

Henry Wallace, former Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce, and Vice President of the United States, was appointed editor in December, 1946, as part of the program to increase the audience and influence of the *New Republic*. Bliven and Straight remained on as senior editors. The cordiality which had character-

<sup>9</sup> Beulah Amidon, "The Nation and the New Republic," *Survey Graphic*, 29 (Jan., 1940) 25.

ized relations between the United States and Soviet Russia during World War II had vanished by the time that Wallace joined the *New Republic* "to help organize a progressive America." Wallace, however, believed that continued cooperation between America and Russia was possible. There could truly be One World, he said, only if there were jobs, freedom, and peace in all nations. "I prefer to accept the willingness of the Soviet leaders to think more and more in democratic terms," he wrote. ". . . We cannot hide the weaknesses in our democracy. If we take steps to overcome these weaknesses, then I believe the Russians believing in the genuineness of our democracy will move toward greater political freedom."<sup>10</sup>

When Wallace announced his candidacy for the Presidency on a third-party ticket in January, 1948, he relinquished the editorship of the *New Republic*. He continued as contributing editor for another six months, but he and the editors were at odds on several issues. Wallace wrote his last article for the magazine in July, 1948. Two days later Michael Straight endorsed William O. Douglas, Supreme Court justice, as Presidential candidate.

Sales of the *New Republic* more than doubled in the thirteen months that Wallace was editor. At its peak, the magazine was selling about 96,000 copies a week. But the *New Republic* did not develop into the sort of magazine that Straight had envisioned. He had hoped to build circulation to more than 300,000 and to win a comfortable amount of advertising; instead he is said to have lost a half million dollars. He trimmed his staff and instituted other economies after Wallace had gone. Subscriptions dropped off, and circulation in 1955 was down to 27,300, which was still a fair showing, however, for a journal of opinion. In May, 1956, Straight retired as editor to become editor-at-large. Gilbert A. Harrison, previously the publisher, became editor. Policies of the magazine were to remain unchanged.

The intellectual climate which had nurtured the *New Republic*, *Masses*, and similar periodicals before World War I had largely disappeared by the twenties. The prewar intellectuals had found much wrong with life and institutions in the United States, but they had identified themselves with movements to promote the common welfare and to fulfill the promise of American life. If the

<sup>10</sup> Henry A. Wallace, "Jobs, Peace, Freedom," *New Republic*, 115 (Dec. 16, 1946) 789.

typical intellectual of the period just before World War I had been a rebel, the typical intellectual of the twenties was an iconoclast. True, the intellectuals of the twenties assiduously exposed the shortcomings of American life, but they disassociated themselves from the evils they found instead of working to eliminate or to change them. They were detached observers, not a part of the society which they professed to despise.

Some of the spirit of protest and reform remained in the twenties, of course, and on it were built such magazines as the *Liberator* and the *New Leader*. The *New Leader*, for years a tabloid weekly, became a magazine only in 1950. It was founded in 1924 in the backwash of the prewar enthusiasm for socialism which had led to the establishment of the *New York Call*. For more than a decade it was the official organ of the American Socialist Party, but it severed the affiliation in the mid-thirties because its editors believed that a segment of the party was demonstrating antidemocratic tendencies. Consistently liberal and strongly anticommunist in emphasis, the *New Leader* nevertheless opened its pages to writers of many political complexions. It ran articles by authors such as James T. Farrell, Granville Hicks, Sidney Hook, Lewis Mumford, and Max Eastman despite its inability to pay for contributions. Its circulation rose from 24,000 in 1929 to 43,000 in the 1940's, according to the Ayer's directories, but it plummeted to 12,600 in 1950, the year the publication converted to magazine format.

The early twenties also saw the birth and death of the *Freeman* of Francis Neilson and Albert Jay Nock. In a sense, the *Freeman* too had its roots in prewar rebellion and radicalism, for it shared Nock's devotion to the single-tax principles of Henry George. Nock was a strong individualist who abhorred powerful and aggressive government, so strong an individualist that he shunned even organized movements to promote the single tax, and there were traces of his personality in his weekly's statement of purpose: "The *Freeman* will be more interested in discovering sentiment than in creating it and will aim rather at enlightening and unifying public opinion than at controlling or instructing it."<sup>11</sup> The *Freeman* was a quiet magazine of excellent prose. It reached

11 *Freeman*, 1 (Mar. 17, 1920) 24.



a small audience, about 10,000, and it died early in 1924, just short of its fourth birthday, when its funds ran out.

The *American Mercury* of Henry L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan was far more in harmony with the intellectual atmosphere of the twenties than the *Freeman*, the *Leader*, or even than the *New Republic* and *Nation*. The *American Mercury* was the voice of the skepticism and iconoclasm which in the twenties replaced the rebellious idealism and optimism of the days before the war. The *New Republic* may have had a hard time finding 20,000 readers in the twenties and the *Freeman* 10,000; the *American Mercury* had no trouble finding 77,000. Some of the magazines started before the war may have hoped to aid in remaking the world; not so the *Mercury*. It stood apart from the fumbings and follies of society, mocking and superior. Politics in the United States, its editors said, remained "mainly utopian—an inheritance from the gabby, gaudy days of the Revolution." The editors had heard "no Voice from the burning bush. They will not cry up and offer for sale any sovereign balm, whether political, economic, or aesthetic, for all the sorrows of the world. The fact is, indeed, that they doubt any such sovereign balm exists. . . ." Their aims were to tell the truth with novelty, "to keep common sense as fast as they can, to belabor sham as agreeably as possible, to give a civilized entertainment."<sup>12</sup>

The *American Mercury* was not, strictly speaking, a bedfellow of the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and the other journals of opinion and comment, although it was an opinionated and caustic commentator. Nor was it a bedfellow of the quality magazines, *Harper's* and the *Atlantic*, although it was a magazine of literary quality. It was a unique monthly review which nimbly straddled those two broad types of publications.

The immediate predecessor of the *American Mercury* was *Smart Set*, of which Mencken and Nathan were coeditors from 1914 until the end of 1923. *Smart Set*, founded in 1890, was a magazine of many lives. Before Mencken and Nathan, it had been first a magazine for New York society; then an urbane literary journal edited by Charles Hanson Towne and Arthur Griscom for, as it said, "minds that are not primitive"; then a magazine of literary excellence edited by bearded, monocled Willard Huntington Wright,

12 "Editorial," *American Mercury*, 1 (Jan., 1924) 27.

scholar and aesthete, who later reached a far wider audience as an author of detective fiction under the pseudonym S. S. Van Dine. After Mencken and Nathan, it was a magazine of romantic confession, then a magazine of commonplace light fiction.

Mencken and Nathan during their decade with *Smart Set* gave readers a faint taste of what the *Mercury* would be like. Mencken wrote literary reviews for each issue, Nathan wrote dramatic criticism, and their pieces were flanked by novels, short stories, essays, satires, and burlesques by authors such as Theodore Dreiser, Aldous Huxley, Ruth Suckow, Ben Hecht, Michael Arlen, and Thomas Beer. The magazine cast an eye on American institutions in a long series, "The Higher Learning in America," for which various writers examined the universities they knew: John Peale Bishop on Princeton, Gilbert Seldes on Harvard, Donald Ogden Stewart on Yale, John Gunther on Chicago, and so on. *Smart Set* promoted itself in its subtitle from "The Magazine of Cleverness" to "The Aristocrat among Magazines." But at the end of 1923 Mencken and Nathan were ready to move to a magazine which would afford a wider audience than the 22,000 readers of *Smart Set* and which would put less emphasis on fiction and greater emphasis on scrutinizing the American scene.

Alfred A. Knopf, a young man who had built up a successful business publishing books of high quality and beautiful design, offered to publish the magazine which Mencken and Nathan had in mind. The *American Mercury* in its bright green cover first turned up on newsstands in January, 1924. From its opening-page, it debunked the idols and ridiculed the mores of middle-class America. The leading article of the first issue was Isaac R. Pennypacker's "The Lincoln Legend," which argued that Lincoln was descended from a wealthy family, was a doubtful judge of men, but was a canny politician. Ernest Boyd a few pages later in "Aesthete: Model 1924" traced the disillusionment of the young American intellectual who had gathered from the *Masses* before the war that the socialist revolution was imminent but who in his wartime service "bitterly regretted the collegiate patriotism responsible for his devotion to the lofty rhetoric of the *New Republic*." There was an article on "The Communist Hoax," another by a college professor on "The Drool Method of History," an assortment of readable stabs at convention.

Nathan left the *Mercury* after the first year, although he con-

tinued to write for it. Mencken stayed on for a decade, until 1933 when the detached derision of the *Mercury* was out of joint with the almost universal despair engendered by the depression. But for a while the *Mercury* was the high priest of the cult against orthodoxy. It echoed the animadversions of some of its disciples, and it revealed to others just what they should not like about American civilization. More than 77,000 readers bought the *Mercury* in 1927, when it had its greatest following, but they dropped away year by year. About one-third of its 62,000 subscribers in 1931 had gone by the following year, and Mencken was addressing an audience of but 33,000 when he resigned in 1933.

Mencken summed up the progress of the *Mercury* at the end of its first five years. The magazine had won over advertisers, he said, and had begun to make money. It had cast a cold eye on many persons and things for the edification of "the minority which stands clear of the prevailing national superstitions."

The chiropractors and the Socialists, the Holy Rollers and the homeopaths, the pacifists and spiritualists have all taken their turns on its operating table. It has exhibited, mainly in their own words, the dreams and imbecilities of the prophets of high-powered salesmanship, vocational guidance, osteopathy, comstockery, and pedagogy. It has brought to notice, in the chaste, dispassionate manner of the clinic, the hallucinations of Rotary, the Gideons, the D. A. R., the American Legion, the League of American Penwomen, the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, public morals, and a multitude of other such klans and sodalities. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Contributors to the *Mercury* during Mencken's regime included unknown writers with something fresh to say—a condemned prisoner who made notes on conversations in the death cells, a bank robber who explained how to rob a bank—in addition to authors who were or were to become well known: Sinclair Lewis, William Faulkner, Theodore Dreiser, Vachel Lindsay, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charles Beard, Elmer Davis.

Some of the spirit of the *Mercury* vanished with Mencken and with the twenties of which his zestful impudence was so much a part. Henry Hazlitt of the *Nation*, who took Mencken's place, was the first of several editors between then and 1955, and the em-

13 Henry I. Mencken, "Editorial," *American Mercury*, 15 (Dec, 1928) 407-10.

phasis of the magazine shifted as ownership of the magazine changed hands.

Paul Palmer bought the *Mercury* and its circulation of thirty thousand in the mid-thirties. He cut the price in half, shortened the length of the articles, and trimmed the format to digest size. His stated policy was to furnish "a voice for the intelligent minority," as Mencken had. Declaring its complete independence, the *Mercury* said that it recognized "no enemies save fraud, hypocrisy, bigotry, dishonesty, and stupidity" and claimed no friends "save those who shared its view concerning the ultimate value of truth."<sup>14</sup> Circulation had more than doubled before Palmer sold the *Mercury* and took a position with the *Reader's Digest*.

Lawrence E. Spivak, who had been its business manager since 1933, purchased the *Mercury* from Palmer in 1939. The targets and tactics of his *Mercury* were not those of Mencken's, but the magazine managed to regain some of its old vitality by giving early hearing to pleaders of causes and to maintain a literary tone with names like Thomas Wolfe and Walter de la Mare in its by-lines. Jan Valtin, a repentant communist who made a cause of exposing communism, wrote for it; so did John Roy Carlson, a diligent foe of native fascism. Major Alexander de Seversky in August, 1940, began a series of highly publicized and highly influential articles crusading for military air power. At times Spivak's *Mercury* had more readers than Mencken's had. It never had fewer than 50,000 from 1940 until 1947, and it had more than 84,000 at its peak in 1945.

Yet the magazine was no money-maker. Indeed, it never had been except for a brief period under Mencken. Spivak gave the *Mercury* a measure of financial security by adding as side-lines a series of paper-bound books, *Ellery Queens Mystery Magazine*, and magazines of science fiction. Profits from those publications covered the *Mercury's* losses.

Spivak retained the *Mercury* for eleven years, despite its proclivity for losing money. In 1950 he sold the magazine to Clendenin J. Ryan, a millionaire investment banker. Ryan's editor was William Bradford Huie, a journalist with a taste for sensational exposes. They did not propose to recreate the *Mercury* in the image of Mencken, but they hoped to transfer some of its "de-

14 "Editorial," *American Mercury*, 34 (Oct., 1936) 221-24.

licious juices" into their magazine, which stated its intent as follows: "We will do battle to most of Mencken's old adversaries as well as to some new ones. . . . The boobs have become bureaucrats; the censors have become commissars; the yahoos have been marshaled into pressure groups. . . . Now, perhaps even more than in the Twenties, is the time for those who value the human personality to attack those who would sacrifice it to Order and Security."<sup>15</sup> Ryan and Huie soon dissolved their association, however, and the magazine under Huie's direction became a mixture of excitable inside-stories and revelations, conservative political commentary, and articles of durable interest somewhat like those in the *Reader's Digest*.

The *Mercury* was running up too large a deficit for Huie to cover, so he sold it in August, 1952, to J. Russell Maguire but remained as editor. The new owner seemed bent on making the *Mercury* an organ of reaction. Two of the top editors resigned in protest soon after the new ownership became effective. They had understood that the magazine would represent a "dynamic and sophisticated conservatism," they said, but Maguire had shown little sympathy with that objective. Although Huie thought that he could control policy no matter who owned the magazine, he also resigned soon afterwards. The *Mercury* continued publication; but it resembled the *American Mercury* of Mencken neither in cover, in size, in caliber of authors, in quality, in style, or in content, and it might just as well have borne some other title.

The *American Mercury* which had spoken for and to the young iconoclasts of the twenties was buried in 1933 when Mencken quit, and it had lost much of its following even before then. The miseries and uncertainties of the depression of the thirties put an end to mere iconoclasm and brought about a resurgence of protest and reform. As Merle Curti has observed, the intellectuals who had said in the twenties that business enterprise could not meet the needs of the spirit said in the thirties that it could not even provide men with food and clothing. They re-examined the economic system and questioned its ability to survive. Some of them believed that the salvation of America lay with communism; others looked hopefully to socialism; a few saw in fascism a plan for the new order.

15 "In the Mercury's Opinion," *American Mercury*, 71 (Dec., 1950) 665.

The discontent of the thirties revived interest in the old liberal journals of opinion, *Nation* and *New Republic*, and turned an increasing number of readers to the *New Masses*, which switched from monthly to weekly publication. It also set publishers to issuing new magazines for a small audience of intelligent readers.

Selden Rodman and Alfred M. Bingham, two Yale intellectuals, began *Common Sense* as a semimonthly in December, 1932, and made it a monthly a half year later. They promised to "stand on a platform of protest and to present a forward-looking program." *Common Sense* was progressive in politics and looked with skepticism on communism. Varian Fry became its editor after he resigned from the *New Republic* in 1945 over the magazine's policy toward Soviet Russia. The owners sold *Common Sense* to Lawrence Spivak of the *American Mercury* in 1946 when they were no longer able to foot its losses.

There were similar magazines begun in the thirties, some with short lives. Suzanne LaFollette, who had worked on the old *Freeman*, tried to revive the journal as a left-wing organ called the *New Freeman* in the thirties but quit when funds ran out. Sydney J. Harris, a Chicago newspaper man, started the *Beacon*, a liberal journal patterned after the *Nation*, in the late thirties on thirty dollars cash and one thousand dollars' credit with the printer. It also died after about a year for want of money.

Among the journals of opinion born after World War II were magazines to combat communism, to speak up for conservatism, and to foster world peace through world government. Such magazines were to be expected in view of the climate of the times. If the great fear in the thirties was economic insecurity, the great fear in the late forties was communism. The war, in which America had swiftly become the arsenal for the allies, had restored faith in business enterprise; war-born prosperity made experiments with the economic system seem less pressing than they had in the thirties. On the other hand, the trend toward a more powerful federal government which had begun in the thirties was accelerated by the exigencies of war, and a number of intellectuals and average citizens saw that trend as a threat to freedom of the individual. The war and its aftermath dramatized the terrors of the totalitarian state. Communism seemed no longer a noble experiment but a frightening and ruthless enemy of the individual. Many Ameri-

cans who had once been sympathetic toward communism fled it in revulsion, some arriving at a philosophy of liberalism, others at one of extreme conservatism. Fear of communism was mingled with fear of war. With the advent of the atomic bomb, many persons believed that civilization could not withstand another war. The only hope for mankind, they thought, was a superstate of nations which could reconcile differences without recourse to warfare.

*Plain Talk* from its first issue in October, 1946, dedicated itself to exposing what its cover called "the dark forces at home and abroad plotting a world dictatorship." Much of its emphasis was on reports of purported Soviet intrigue in America. "There is no time to lose in forestalling another and greater Pearl Harbor," its editor, Isaac Don Levine, wrote in the first issue. "The elementary prerequisites of our national safety require the ruthless exposure and the elimination through democratic processes from our national life of the Soviet fifth column. . . . Unless we clean house at once, America will be dragged down, carrying civilization with her into the totalitarian abyss."<sup>16</sup>

*Plain Talk* was almost unrelievedly anticommunist. Each month it carried such titles as "Stalin's Spy Ring in the U. S. A.," "Stalin's Hand in the Panama Canal," "Stalin's Hand in Our Ballot Box," "Stalin's Rogues Gallery," "Soviet-American Spy Prodigies," and "Europe's Secret Armies." It took Doubleday to task for publishing Howard Fast's historical novel, *The American*, which it said distorted facts to fit communist doctrine, and it devoted eleven pages to showing that George Seldes' newsletter *In Fact* followed the party line. It described communist infiltration of veterans' organizations and labor unions. It told how to recognize a "front" organization.

The staff of *Plain Talk* and its authors included several men and women who had once served radical causes or who had written for the left-wing journals of opinion. Ralph de Toledano, the managing editor, had been an associate editor of the *New Leader*. Suzanne LaFollette of the old *Freeman* and the *New Freeman* was a contributing editor. So was Eugene Lyons, a onetime correspondent in Russia for the United Press who described his disillusionment with communism in *Assignment in Utopia*. Contributors included Louis Fischer, who had been on the staff of the

16 Isaac Don Levine, "Our Next Pearl Harbor," *Plain Talk*, 1 (Oct., 1946) 5.

*Nation* for almost a quarter century, and Howard Rushmore, a former movie reviewer for the *Daily Worker*.

*Plain Talk* was sold only by subscription, and its circulation was never more than a few thousand. It carried no advertising. It was helped over its financial rough spots by Alfred Kohlberg of New York, who sometimes wrote for it. Kohlberg, a wealthy importer, was a strong supporter of General Chiang Kai-shek and with J. B. Powell was a founder of the American China Policy Association.

In 1950 Kohlberg withdrew his backing from *Plain Talk* to support a second revival of the *Freeman*, which made its debut in October as a fortnightly "journal of opinion devoted to the cause of traditional liberalism and individual freedom." The *Freeman* took over about five thousand unexpired subscriptions to *Plain Talk*, which had died the previous June.

The suggestion for the *Freeman* came from Suzanne LaFollette; Henry Hazlitt, a one-time staff member of the *Nation* and *American Mercury* who had become an editorial writer for the *New York Times* and a contributing editor of *Newsweek*; and John Chamberlain, an author who had largely forsaken his leftist views of the thirties. Chamberlain became editor and president of the new magazine; Miss LaFollette and Hazlitt were on its editorial board. Kohlberg, its treasurer, helped to raise \$130,000, of which he contributed one tenth.

The *Freeman's* politics were those of the extreme right wing of the Republican party. The magazine extolled individualism and opposed big government in all forms; it attacked communism, and it defended Senator Joseph R. McCarthy in his efforts to rout subversives from government. Its contributors included such conservatives as George Sokolsky, Raymond Moley, John T. Flynn, and Senator John Bricker.

Circulation gained by about a thousand a month until the *Freeman* was distributing twenty thousand copies in March, 1952. However, the magazine needed a sale of at least thirty thousand to break even, and it lost \$97,000 in 1951.

The *Freeman* floundered in 1952 because of internal dissension over politics and editorial policies. The editors quarreled among themselves and with the board of directors. Hazlitt quit in October, 1952, after a disagreement with his fellow editors. Chamberlain and Miss LaFollette resigned early in 1953. Then Hazlitt



returned as chief editor to find a new staff and to publish a *Free-man* more temperately conservative than the magazine had become. But the magazine had a difficult time. In July, 1954, when it was on the verge of suspending publication, it was taken over by the Foundation for Economic Education, a nonprofit organization, which turned it into a monthly. Its new editor was Frank Chodorov, director of the Henry George School of Social Science from 1936 to 1941.

*Freedom and Union*, a journal designed to promote world peace, first went out to subscribers in the fall of 1946, the same time that *Plain Talk* began its exposures of communist infiltration of the United States. Clarence Streit, its founder, had been a crusader for world government since 1933; had written *Union Now*, a book outlining a plan for a world democratic federation; and had set up Federal Union, Inc., a nonprofit association of persons who shared his ideas. *Freedom and Union* was edited on the assumption that the United Nations had insufficient powers to be a truly effective force for peace and was intended to serve the cause of world federation as Tom Fane's *The Crisis* had served the American Revolution. Contributing editors included Stringfellow Barr, president of St. John's College; Russell Davenport, former managing editor of *Fortune*; and Owen J. Roberts, a former justice of the United States Supreme Court. Herbert Agar, who had edited the Louisville *Courier-Journal* before the war, joined the staff in December, 1946, to represent the magazine in the British Isles.

Despite their small number of readers, the journals of opinion were an important part of the magazine field. Their influence should not be underestimated. Specialized publications were potentially highly powerful persuasive agents, Joseph T. Klapper concluded from his study of the effects of the mass media.<sup>17</sup> Readers of such a magazine perhaps regarded it as a spokesman for their own personal interests and thus were prone to accept its advice. In Erie County, Pennsylvania, for example, the publication of the Townsend movement evidently changed voting intentions in the 1940 Presidential elections more frequently than *Life* or the *Saturday Evening Post*, despite their much larger circulations.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Media* (New York, 1949), Memorandum II, p. 19.

New ideas, essential if a democracy is to remain vigorous, do not originate with the majority, as John Stuart Mill once observed; they come from individual men of independent and inventive mind who must persuade their fellows. Although large-circulation magazines seldom moved far beyond the views of the majority, the journals of opinion provided a platform from which such men could speak their ideas.

## *chapter 14* Magazines, 1900-1955: An Assessment

The social and economic accomplishments of American magazines from 1900 through 1955 cannot be stated with precision and documentation. No instrument can measure the impact of so universal a medium on several generations; nor is there any way of isolating magazines from the culture in which they were a force and by which they were conditioned, or any way of isolating the effects of magazines from those of the other mass media.

For the most part, the effects of magazines on individuals and institutions were probably imperceptible and cumulative. An individual was not noticeably different after having read one magazine; having been exposed to magazines all of his life, he was different from what he otherwise would have been, and so was the society of which he was a part.

The accomplishments of magazines resulted from their twofold nature as an editorial medium and as an adjunct of the marketing system. The magazine possessed certain characteristics which distinguished it from the other media. Because of them, the magazine was admirably suited for a highly important role in a democratic society, that of introducing new ideas, examining them critically, and assessing their worth. The magazine was put together with

less haste and more care than the newspaper or radio program, yet was more timely than the book. Its available space and the reading habits of its audience enabled it to give fairly lengthy treatment to the subjects it covered. It was not as transient as the radio program, as soon discarded as the newspaper; its issues remained in readers' homes for weeks or months—sometimes even for years. In short, the magazine by nature well met the requirements for a medium of interpretation for the leisurely, critical reader.

Like the other media, magazines bestowed prestige upon the persons, organizations, institutions, movements, and issues which they mentioned in their editorial and advertising columns. Their recognition invested a subject with importance. A businessman whose success story was told in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a manufacturer whose advertisements were parodied in *Ballyhoo*, a doctor whose good works were recorded in the *Reader's Digest*, a college which was portrayed in *Look* all gained prestige in the public mind for having been singled out for attention. To capitalize on this phenomenon, some manufacturers in 1955 even labeled their products, "as advertised in *Life*,"

As a major carrier of advertising, magazines certainly played a significant if undetermined part in raising the material standard of living in the twentieth century. They served the system of mass production and mass distribution by bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods and services, and in doing so they were instrumental in promoting a dynamic, expanding economy.

Scholars have thoroughly examined the effects of advertising on American economic life.<sup>1</sup> Their claims are impressive even when one allows for the criticisms that advertising fostered wastefulness, monopoly, and other evils. Among other things, according to economists, advertising encouraged entrepreneurs to invest in the plants, equipment, and technological improvements which raised the national income fourfold in a century. It helped to create the mental attitudes necessary for a level of consumption high above basic needs. It stimulated product variety and differentiation as manufacturers competed for the favor of consumers, for each producer sought to give his product some special quality or feature which he could exploit in his sales message. It helped

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Neil H. Borden, *The Economic Effects of Advertising* (Chicago, 1942) and C. H. Sandage, "The Role of Advertising in Modern Society," *Journalism Quarterly*, 28 (Winter, 1951) 31-38.

to allocate the economic resources of the nation by diverting supplies according to the wants and needs of consumers, who expressed their preferences by the purchase of goods. By contributing to large-scale demand, it helped to make possible lower prices for goods and services. Magazines as a chief medium of national advertising were a party to such accomplishments.

Magazine advertising, while contributing to the betterment of the material conditions of life, tended to be a force for conservatism in the realm of ideas. Business and industry were understandably anxious to protect the system under which they flourished and to safeguard the large investment in the machinery of production and distribution which had raised the material welfare. Advertising tended to promote allegiance to the existing system in several ways. Its mere presence, for one thing, was conducive to faith in the system of free enterprise. For another thing, advertisers, even the public utilities and the near-monopolies, spoke in the symbols of free competition. For still another thing, advertising tempered editorial policies, since it gravitated toward the publications which did not offend the majority and which were not inimical to the conditions under which business operated.

By playing on existing drives and attitudes in its attempts to sell goods and services, magazine advertising certainly reinforced many of the values of American society. One such value was material success, a by-product of the Calvinism in which some scholars say modern capitalism found religious justification. In advertisements and in American life in the twentieth century, an individual's status in the community and even his happiness were equated with his possession of an automobile of latest model, a wardrobe of fashionable clothing, a refrigerator, a washing machine, and a home full of gadgets. Magazine advertising was also no doubt in part responsible for a conversion of man's natural gregariousness into the social conformity which characterized American life in the twentieth century. The American was driven by a compulsion to be accepted by others, to be "well liked." Magazine advertising emphasized social approval as a major goal in life, and the penalty for laxity in bathing or in brushing one's teeth or for neglecting to read the best sellers was to be alone, an outcast on the fringe of the happy crowd.

Magazines as an advertising medium also affected manners and morals in the twentieth century. After that April day in 1927

when a model named Betty Honeyman was photographed actually smoking a Marlboro for an advertisement in *Vanity Fair*, magazine advertising did a great deal toward eradicating the notion that a female who smoked was surely fallen, and toward making a package of cigarettes as standard an item in a woman's purse as lipstick and compact. The repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and magazine advertising of the thirties and forties legitimized what the speakeasy had started—social drinking between the sexes. The stigma was vanishing from drinking in 1955, and the cocktail party was a national institution. With its pictures of both men and women in scanty attire, magazine advertising no doubt helped to bring about the American's casual acceptance of bodily exposure. Two generations of magazine advertisements which had made such advertising catchwords as "halitosis" and "body odor" parts of the popular language probably aided in developing what many Europeans regarded as the American's fetish for cleanliness.

As an editorial medium, magazines also were inclined to perpetuate the ideological status quo. There were exceptions to that generality, of course. Magazines spoke to and for little publics within the population as a whole, and some of them mirrored the progressiveness of their readers. However, the commercial magazine, a magazine published to earn a profit, was essentially conservative for two reasons. On the one hand, the magazine was a business enterprise with a vested interest in the maintenance of the existing economic system, and it could be expected to share the views of the industries which filled its pages with advertising. On the other hand, the magazine had to earn its keep in the market place. To stay in business, a publisher needed readers, a very large number or a few with exceedingly high purchasing power. If his publication did not carry advertising, the publisher required many readers in order to keep down the unit cost of his periodical. If his publication did accept advertising, the publisher needed as many readers as he could attract from his chosen market both to hold down unit cost and to justify profitable advertising rates. In either event, the publisher was impelled to seek a large audience; and as his audience widened, it increasingly determined what he could and what he could not publish. For to attract and hold his audience, the publisher was inclined to give his readers what he thought the majority wanted and agreed with.

He seemed generally disposed to accept the social and cultural standards of the majority, which rarely in history has been responsible for the introduction of new ideas or for experimentation. Minority views perforce found little expression in the commercial magazine.

In fiction and in articles, commercial magazines were inclined to maintain the status quo. Their fiction, for the most part, tended to glorify the traditional values and goals and to sanction the conventional virtues.<sup>2</sup> But in that sentence, let us underscore the words "for the most part" and "tended" ; for any magazine reader during the twentieth century could summon scores of examples to qualify that generality. Yet for a high proportion of magazine short stories, as James T. Farrell once noted, "the ideal of life is success," and the fruits of that success were a mate and a home equipped with all of the gadgets advertised on the surrounding pages.<sup>3</sup> While such magazine fiction overtly accepted the principles of racial and religious equality, Berelson and Salter found,<sup>4</sup> it actually perpetuated minority stereotypes, approved caste lines, and, in the words of Joseph T. Klapper, pictured "a world where the highest income is reserved for white, American-born gentiles who practice the Protestant ethic."

Even the articles of magazines edited for Negroes gave their chief emphasis to such themes as that Negroes received just treatment from individuals, organizations, and business firms and that they and other races lived, worked, and enjoyed equal rights together." Biographical articles in popular magazines from the turn of the century onward dealt largely with individuals who embodied the popularly sanctioned values.<sup>6</sup>

2 See, for example, Patricke Johns-Heine and Hans Gerth, "Values in Mass Periodical Fiction, 1921-1910," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 13 (Spring, 1949) 105-13; and Joseph T. Klapper, "The Mass Media and the Engineering of Consent," *American Scholar*, 17 (Autumn, 1948) 419-29.

3 James T. Farrell, "Preface," *The Short Stories of James T. Farrell* (New York, 1941), p. xl.

4 Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter, "Majority and Minority Americans: An Analysis of Magazine Fiction," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10 (Summer, 1946) 168-90.

5 Hallie Beachem Brooks, "A Description of Negro Newsstand Magazines and an Analysis of the Contents of a Selected Number of Negro Magazines" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1946).

6 Leo Lowenthal, "Biographies in Popular Magazines," in Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz, editors, *A Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1950), pp. 289-98.

Magazines must also share blame with the other mass media for creating a pseudo-world, a picture out of focus which readers sometimes confused with the real thing. The world was spun of both articles and fiction. It was a world of optimism and good works in which science worked only beneficent miracles, in which poverty was at worst a nuisance, in which anyone could do anything if he persevered, in which the most ill-matched couples could find marital happiness if they really tried, in which evil was justly punished, in which virtue and talent were inevitably recognized and reaped their due rewards, a world of golden light and few shadows.

This pseudo-world was a harmless creation so long as readers did not confuse it with the world of reality, but there was always the danger that they would. Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, has mentioned that the American ideal of marriage is one of the most difficult ever attempted by the human race because it embodies choice by both partners, romantic love, equality of husband and wife.<sup>7</sup> Fulfillment of the ideal must have been complicated for some persons by the fiction in many popular magazines in which heroes were uniformly poised, charming, well-groomed, financially secure, and constantly romantic. There was certainly a frustratingly wide chasm between what such stories led women readers to expect from marriage and what they eventually got. The medical and psychological articles in the mass-circulation magazines were often a dangerous thing, a veteran author of them believed, for they inspired false hopes with their optimistic titles and themes and inspired false fears with their overemphasis on such diseases as cancer and polio. When the author herself became mildly incapacitated by osteo-arthritis, she was emotionally shocked, for her experience in medical writing had made it difficult for her to accept some ills and disorders as an almost inevitable concomitant of aging.<sup>8</sup>

The contributions of commercial magazines to serious literature in the twentieth century were moderate at best. The large-circulation periodicals did bring good fiction inexpensively to millions of persons who otherwise perhaps would have been denied it. Even the magazines of huge circulation, *Life* and the *Saturday Evening*

7 Margaret Mead, *Male and Female* (New York, 1949), pp. 342-66.

8 Edith Stern, "Medical Journalism—With and Without Upbeat," in *Saturday Review Reader No. 3* (New York, 1954), pp. 127-31.



*Post*, carried works by Nobel Prize winners William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. Yet the commercial magazines appear to have been less the discoverers of talent than the exploiters of talent once it was recognized. Nor did they appear to contribute much to literary experimentation. In their fiction and articles, as the century progressed, magazines became increasingly concerned with formula rather than form, and experimentation was left largely to the little magazines, although some of the commercial magazines did encourage authors who departed from the conventional molds. While magazines prided themselves on the conscientiousness of their reporting, a reader sometimes had the feeling that they were not as good as they should have been. Their articles too often answered the "what" instead of the "why," too often assumed that any subject could be discussed in terms of personalities and anecdotes, too often ignored large areas of man's accomplishments and perplexities as dull or dangerous. The trend toward brevity in articles made it impossible for magazines to treat certain subjects at all and contributed to superficial treatment of some which were covered.

Those shortcomings lay neither in a lack of integrity nor in a lack of capabilities on the part of editors and publishers. They lay rather in the commercial nature of the magazine. They were the perhaps inescapable result of a system which, among its benefits, made magazines an accessible, inexpensive source of entertainment, guidance, and instruction. And, despite their shortcomings, magazines as an editorial medium made many genuine contributions to American life and culture. They come out very well indeed when one weighs their faults against their achievements.

First, magazines certainly were responsible in some measure for the social and political reforms of the first fifty years of the century. While magazines were basically conservative, the large volume of advertising and the large circulations which helped to make them so did not come until after 1912, when the period of muckraking had ended. Then too the magazines which exposed the abuses and excesses on the American scene at the turn of the century expressed the sentiments of a large following, and the changes which resulted were within the framework of the existing order. The magazines which carried on where the muckrakers left off were chiefly, although not entirely, the journals of opinion and comment, publications made possible partly by the nature of the

magazine industry, which remained open to the newcomer. The muckraking magazines have been credited with helping to bring about the Congressional investigation, a pure food law, a tariff commission, child labor laws, workmen's compensation, and other reforms. The journals of opinion, as Charles Beard has noted, worked for many of the measures adopted under the auspices of both Democratic and Republican administrations: women's suffrage, old age pensions, social insurance, state and federal housing, regulation of the issue of securities and exchanges, wages and hours laws, public ownership and the development of water sites, and so on.<sup>9</sup>

Second, magazines not only interpreted issues and events but also put them in national perspective. America was a vast land, a land of sectional interests and rivalries; and unlike some foreign countries, it had no national newspapers. Its closest approximations were the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times*, but they did not penetrate deep into the population. Magazines did, however, and they looked at happenings and public questions not with parochialism, not with local prejudice, but with their national and international implications in view. Magazines supplemented rather than competed with the other media in this connection. Newspapers and radio stations were inclined to see much of what they reported from a local viewpoint. Moreover, they were generally concerned with reporting occurrences hour by hour, day by day, not with the leisurely examination and reflection which characterized the magazine. Magazines brought their national approach to a wide variety of topics, for periodicals were edited for many followings with specialized interests.

Third, the national viewpoint of magazines no doubt fostered what might be called a sense of national community. The reader was aware, however dimly, that other people across the nation read the same magazines as he did and they provided a cultural bond between them. Magazines furnished Americans with a common fund of subjects for discussion. They standardized certain externals of behavior. They helped to diffuse what had once been regional specialties—Southern cooking, for instance, and ranch-type houses.

Fourth, magazines provided millions of Americans with low cost

<sup>9</sup> Charles Beard, "Looking Backward," *New Republic*, 101 (Nov. 8, 1939) 74, 76, 78, 80.

entertainment. In America the magazine occupied the place in reading habits that the book did in some other countries, and never before in history had a medium devoted primarily to subjects other than news reached so vast an audience. The night watchman with his copy of *True Detective*, the homemaker with her copy of *Cosmopolitan*, the school boy with his copy of *Boys' Life*, the sales girl with her copy of *True Confessions* picked them up not necessarily from any motive of self edification but because the magazines fleetingly transported them beyond the confines and monotony of their everyday routine. As readers identified themselves with the successful characters in the stories and articles, they may have felt a sense of prestige and gratification, and the editorial material may have served, as Klapper has suggested, as a "safety valve for social tensions."<sup>10</sup> The quality of the entertainment the reader found depended on his tastes. He could have found it in execrably written pulps ; but he also could have found it in the outstanding authors of the day—in Mann and Sandburg and Huxley and Hemingway. If most magazine fiction was published for the moment, some of it was of lasting literary value. It may have been but a small fraction of the total output of the magazine industry, but it amounted to a considerable number of novels and short stories, many of which were given greater permanence between the hard covers of books.

Fifth, for millions of Americans, the magazine was an inexpensive instructor in daily living. It counseled them on rearing children, on marital and financial problems, on getting along with one another. It told them how to furnish and decorate their homes, how to tend their gardens, how to prepare food nutritiously and inexpensively. It advised them on care of face and figure, on the latest fashions of coiffure and clothing, on matters of decorum. It instructed readers in making lamps and bookcases and chairs and tables and even the homes in which to put them.

Sixth, magazines were an educator in man's cultural heritage. With their historical articles, they explored the nation's past; with their biographical articles, they recalled the men who had shaped it. They acquainted Americans with the accomplishments of other peoples. They introduced them to the best in architecture, painting, sculpture, and thought. *Life* alone was perhaps the

<sup>10</sup> Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Media* (New York, 1949), Memorandum III, p. 16.

greatest disseminator of art that mankind had ever known, reaching as it did some 27,750,000 persons with each issue in 1955. Since its inception, it had spent an estimated \$25,000,000 on its colored reproductions of great paintings and other works of art. In a sense, magazines were showcases of culture. Through their reviews, they surely made readers aware of books, plays, music, and movies they otherwise would not have known about. Even the sometimes superficial treatment of the significant in magazine articles may have done the same thing; by calling the subject to the reader's attention, by arousing his interest, such articles might well have sent the reader to explore other sources of information.

Finally, one of the most reassuring strengths of magazines was their variety in entertainment, information, and ideas. Their variety arose from their selectivity of audience. To be sure, some magazines built circulations in the millions by appealing to audiences of highly diversified tastes and interests. But the typical magazine was not edited for just "everybody"; it was edited for a following with some mutual activity or outlook. Because they sought out little publics within the population at large, magazines in the aggregate represented a wide range of tastes and opinions. So long as the nature of the magazine industry enabled new publications to arise as freely as they had in the first fifty-five years of the century, dangers to the free flow of ideas and information were diminished.

## Bibliography

In writing this history of magazines since 1900, I have relied more strongly on a few publications than the footnotes indicate. For the running story of magazine publishing, I have almost inevitably turned to the few publications which have recorded it—the advertising periodicals, *Advertising Age* and *Tide*, the fourth estate's *Editor & Publisher*, and the weekly news magazines, *Newsweek* and *Time*. Much of my raw material has come from the various Ayer's directories, *Standard Hate and Data Service*, and Standard and Poor's *Standard Corporation Descriptions* and *Standard Corporation Records*. Since it is impossible to write about magazines without reading them, I have pored over back and current issues of almost every magazine mentioned in the text. Listing all of those which I used merely for background would serve little purpose beyond, perhaps, impressing the reader with my diligence. However, the following bibliography includes entries for every magazine from which I have specifically quoted or directly drawn material.

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