

## *The Magazine Revolution and Popular Ideas in the Nineties*

BY FRANK LUTHER MOTT

LOW-PRICED periodicals were not uncommon from the very beginning of American magazine history, but the ten-cent magazine of the eighteen-nineties was something different. The sudden and overwhelming popularity of such magazines as *McClure's*, the *Cosmopolitan*, and *Munsey's* was more than a movement or a trend or an episode. It upset the established order; it was a revolution in our magazine publishing and reading.

This revolution took place within the framework of the technology, economics, and culture of that decade. The main technological change contributing to the production of the ten-cent magazine was the adaptation of photography to the engraving of printing plates by the halftone process, which made it possible to produce beautiful illustration at a tenth of the cost of that which was obtained from woodcuts. The chief economic factor was the Hard Times of the early nineties, which made the people count their pennies, and welcome attractive general magazines which sold for a dime instead of the thirty-five or twenty-five cents they were accustomed to pay. On the cultural side, perhaps the one thing that contributed most to the prosperity of the ten-cent magazine was the remarkably aggressive drive for self-improvement which characterized middle-class society in this decade.

But statements of this kind tend to over-simplify the matter. These things made the way easier for the ten-cent magazine, certainly, but there were many other elements in

the picture which interacted with the growth of the cheap magazines. The increase of national advertising, for example, was a tremendous aid to these periodicals; but, on the other hand, the great circulations which the cheap magazines built up made that increase possible. In fact, there were action and reaction and interaction wherever the ten-cent magazine functioned—and this to a far greater extent than had ever been the case with the more expensive monthly or quarterly.

The noble old thirty-five cent magazine had always to aim at the educated and moneyed audience, and naturally it was inclined to be aristocratic in tastes and in political and social attitudes. One must speak in general terms, for there were differences in this ivory-tower aspect of the older magazines—differences, for example, between the *Knickerbocker*, *Graham's*, *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, the *Galaxy*, the *Century*, and *Scribner's*—but as long as the price was kept at thirty-five and twenty-five cents, it can be said that the general literary magazine maintained a certain degree of aloofness as an observer of the passing scene, as well as an esthetic level above that of hoi polloi.

But attend, if you please, to what happens when the magazine descends from the tower of ivory. Mingling with the crowd in the marketplace, it is concerned with the common life of the people, not as picturesque elements, but as matters for understanding and improvement. It becomes a reformer. The entertainment it offers is not always that of cultivated refinement, but it is responsive to popular taste. It enters into an exciting game of give-and-take with the newspapers. It not only becomes a spokesman for popular ideas, but it develops in many cases into an integral part of popular movements.

It is the role which the leading ten-cent magazines played in relation to certain social developments of the nineties

that it is proposed to discuss in this essay. The first of these developments is one already referred to—the directed and organized passion for self-improvement, the mass movement toward adult education. To realize the nature and extent of the interplay between the magazines and the agencies for such education, we have to understand, on the one side, what the new ten-cent monthlies were like—the spirit and impact of them—and, on the other, the earnestness and strength of the desire for culture on the part of large groups of the population, and the forms which their quest developed.

Perhaps the best way to suggest the popular appeal of the ten-cent magazine is to summarize in a few words the leading types of content in *McClure's*, which was the best of them. It contained the finest popular fiction of the times, by writers of established literary reputations, as Stevenson, Kipling, Hardy, Zangwill, Conan Doyle, Stephen Crane, O. Henry, and so on. But more important was the non-fiction, with the great Tarbell lives of Napoleon and Lincoln and the exciting articles about new developments in science and transportation by Cleveland Moffett and Henry J. W. Dam. Then there were the great railroading articles and stories by Cy Warman and Herbert Hamblen. Wild animals, exploration, and the search for the North Pole, and later the Klondike discoveries were prominent, with articles by the explorers themselves. But the largest element in S. S. McClure's pattern for a magazine was the exploitation of human personalities. The great Tarbell series, with their portraits; the "Human Documents" department, and many richly illustrated serial biographies and individual profiles and character sketches—these were the essential stuff of the magazine. And remember that all this was accompanied by copious illustration, brilliant and well printed. And finally, text, typography, and illustration combined in a

liveliness and freshness of presentation which, however, avoided flippancy.

William Archer, writing of the ten-cent magazines in an English review, spoke of their "extraordinarily vital and stimulating quality," and added: "There is nothing quite like them in the literature of the world—no periodicals which combine such width of popular appeal with such seriousness of aim and thoroughness of workmanship."

Now let us confront these magazines with the culture hunger of hundreds of thousands of middle-class adults who felt keenly the difference between ten cents and thirty-five cents in a time of financial stringency. The development of American book publishing and, even more clearly, the growth of lending libraries throughout the country, testify to the increase of reading among the people in the nineties. More spectacular was the flowering of great home-study organizations of many kinds.

The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in 1892 numbered a hundred thousand adults who pursued its prescribed courses of reading and held regular discussion meetings. At least twice a month Father, carrying two folding chairs, and Mother, with the books for current study under her arm, would wend their way to some central private home, there to spend the evening talking with others of the home-town group about the history and culture of some ancient or modern civilization. The C. L. S. C. was an extraordinary movement, by which more than three-quarters of a million adults, over a third of a century, pursued one or more annual courses of reading, chiefly in the humanities. Editor Albert Shaw, in the *Review of Reviews*, called it "the greatest popular educational movement of modern times."

But there were many other such movements: the country was full of them. The Bay View Reading Circle grew from

small beginnings at Flint, Michigan, to large proportions. Women's clubs experienced a record-breaking development in the nineties and became a familiar element in American life, and most of them were study clubs in the fields of literature, art, travel, etc. Browning clubs were active and numerous; and there were many independent study groups of men and women, meeting once a month or oftener through the winter, devoted to Shakespeare, current literature and events, local history, and so on. Correspondence Schools scored their first successes in this period. University Extension, with its lecture courses, institutes, summer sessions, etc., were active at the beginning of the nineties at Johns Hopkins and the universities of Chicago, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the State of New York. Herbert B. Adams, the chief founder of the American Historical Association, was a leader in this great movement, which was to prove more permanent than most of the others mentioned here. Adams once wrote in a magazine article that University Extension was "the Salvation Army of education."

Now, the passion for information and culture which was the basis for all these organizations welcomed *McClure's* and similar magazines with delight. Self-culture enthusiasts still respected the *Atlantic*, the *Century*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*; but they bought *McClure's* and the *Cosmopolitan*. They also bought many other magazines, for the boom in periodical publication started by the ten-centers and aided by the boom in adult education, as well as the expansion of the latter nineties in industry and money and ideas and nearly everything else, made a great era for new magazines. Of these, many catered to the avid desire for information—like the *Review of Reviews*, *Our Day*, *Our Times*, *Self Culture*, *The World To-Day*, *The Progress of the World*, *Current Literature*, and the *Eclectic Magazine*—to name only some leaders among the monthly compends of

information and current events. Among the weeklies of this class were the *Literary Digest*, *Public Opinion*, the *Living Age*, the *Pathfinder*, *The Great Round World*, and two shorter-lived journals called by the comprehensive titles, *Knowledge* and *Information*. The former was "A Supplement to the Encyclopedias," and *Current Encyclopaedia* was a digest of the Werner *Britannica*. Buffalo was the home of a magazine called *Queries*, which printed long quizzes in various fields and offered prizes for the most correct answers. Many magazines printed quizzes in their back pages, but these were usually related to their own contents.

The C. L. S. C. had its own excellent magazine called the *Chautauquan*, and the Bay View Reading Circle had its *Bay View Magazine*. *Progress*, of Chicago, existed chiefly for its home-study lessons. Such general reviews as the *Arena* and the *Forum* formed their own study clubs, with country-wide organization and prescribed programs. John Brisben Walker's *Cosmopolitan*, however, did more than that. It set up a Correspondence University on a grand scale which was too successful; it was swamped by the tremendous number of students who enrolled at too low a fee. We might extend the catalog of examples of this relationship between the magazines and the adult self-improvement and home-study of the decade, but these will be enough to demonstrate that here was an impressive phenomenon in the development of magazines in the nineties.

Another field in which the ten-cent magazines acted as stimuli with a fairly obvious collective response, and in which again there were many elements and agencies at work with reciprocal action, was that of the Interests of the Young Man. It is probable that the original ten-cent magazines were not precisely aware that they were challenging youth; but editors like McClure, Munsey, and Walker, and the

staff writers they drew into their circle, had youthful minds themselves, and their natural intercourse was with youth. The emphasis they all placed on the successful careers of great men, whether in the past or the present; the new discoveries in science and industry, with emphasis on the romance of transportation; and the features and stories about exploration, travel, and adventure—all this set a rich table for youth.

Indeed, any magazine which closely followed the currents of its times, as the ten-cent monthlies did from the first, was bound to challenge youth, for it was a period in which the ideas and aspirations of youth were paramount—a forward-looking, ambitious, hopeful period. This was true especially of the later nineties. The amazing growth of industry and production in general, the new prosperity, the short and triumphant War with Spain, the discovery of gold in the Klondike, the fever for Expansion, the realization of new world power, the progress of the gospel of Manifest Destiny: these were the inspiring factors of fin-de-siècle optimism. It was a mounting fever as the Twentieth Century—the century of unlimited opportunity—approached. “Success” was the device on Youth’s banner, the watchword of the new century. Edward Bok wrote in the *Cosmopolitan* as early as 1894 that in the United States “every success is possible, and a man may make of himself just what he may choose.” Eventually some of the more dignified and expensive reviews were swept into this collective mass attitude, and one of the most remarkable contributions to its literature was written by Walter Hines Page in launching his magazine *The World’s Work* on the eve of the new century. A few lines of this pronouncement may be quoted:

The United States is become the richest of all countries. . . . Our commercial supremacy is inevitable . . . The perfection of method and

mechanism [in the organization of industry] has changed social ideals and intelligent points of view. It is, in fact, changing the character of man.

Even if the changes which were abroad in the land were not as fundamental as that, they did affect the magazines in many ways. Nearly all the periodicals were ringing joyous changes on the success bells at the turn of the century. Thus Theodore Roosevelt wrote on "Character and Success" for the *Outlook* of March 31, 1900; the reformer B. O. Flower wrote on "Successful Men of the Ages" in his *Arena* for September, 1901; John Holme, the printer-artist, wrote on "Successful Personalities" for the *Cosmopolitan* of November, 1900; "Why One Man Succeeds and His Brother Fails" was a *Ladies' Home Journal* topic in February, 1901, and so on. Ray Stannard Baker, in an article entitled "The New Prosperity" in *McClure's*, pointed out that the year 1899 had been the most successful in the history of the country. President Schurman, of Cornell University, declared in *World's Work* that "the opportunities for young men under the present system of combinations of capital are greater than ever before in the history of the world." Opportunity, youth, success! Such was the magic formula.

The newstands were crowded with success magazines of many kinds. Some carried the charmed words in their titles: *Young Men's Journal*, *Opportunity*, *Successful American*, *Successward*. In 1897 Orison Swett Marden, the American Samuel Smiles, began his magazine entitled *Success*, which, for a short time in the new century, was not only to preach but to exemplify the theme of its title.

The most important magazine development in this field, while it did not directly involve the ten-cent general monthly, was closely related to the revolution in magazine publishing which occurred in the nineties. The amazing achievement of Cyrus H. K. Curtis with the *Ladies' Home Journal*



at ten cents had been one of the guideposts to success which had influenced McClure, Munsey, and Walker in their decision to set that price for their magazines. The *Journal's* circulation kept well ahead of that of any of the general monthlies selling for ten cents all through the nineties. When Curtis rather casually bought the bankrupt *Saturday Evening Post* in 1897, he at first made it a kind of weekly *Ladies' Home Journal*; but soon, with the advice and the aggressive editorial direction of George Horace Lorimer, he made it a young man's periodical, at five cents a copy, featuring articles on success in business, discussions of public affairs from the young man's point of view, something about sports and college education, and fiction emphasizing the romance in these topics. The *Post* was full of the Manifest Destiny doctrine. A signed editorial by Maurice Thompson concluded:

We are revelling in mighty exertion; the waiting world knows not the tremendous reserve of our power. It is exhilarating to feel the nation's muscles expand and harden. Here is a return of the heroic form and force. . . . Patriotism is but another name for growth; it is but a mode of motion toward the consummation of national stature, a part of the sweep upward and onward to that "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

The young and handsome Albert J. Beveridge, spokesman of this gospel in the United States Senate, soon became a leading contributor; Beveridge fitted the *Post*, and the *Post* fitted Beveridge. On January 9, 1900, the brilliant young orator from Indiana arose in the Senate and uttered the words that have sometimes been recognized as a classic statement of doctrine.:

Of all our race, God has marked the American people as His chosen Nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace.

It was under the inspiration of such splendid periods in his oratory, but even more under the influence of his frequent

contributions to the *Saturday Evening Post*, that many young men came to hold Beveridge as paragon and model.

Though it was indeed a young man's era, and the air was full of inspiration and challenge to youth, the young man sometimes wondered if the trusts, of which he heard more and more, might not tend to reduce opportunities for ambitious beginners. In its second number, *The World's Work* printed an article by Henry Harrison Lewis which carried as its title the query, "Are Young Men's Chances Less?" The author concluded that "there is always room at the top"; but in the next number the editor confessed that though the good old slogan stated a truth, it was "a sort of misleading truth." In fact, the growth of the trusts was alarming, the revelations of slum conditions in the great cities were shocking, the growth of labor unions threatened industrial peace, the farmer was ever the victim of economic injustice.

And so the third area in which the ten-cent group of magazines was active in its inter-relations was that of economic and social reform. For although the latter nineties were a time of "expansionism," of tremendous American self-confidence, of hope and youthful ambition, and of T. R. and the strenuous life; they were also years of comparative heedlessness and ignorance of the world at large, of growing consciousness of social and economic diseases, and of William Jennings Bryan and Eugene Debs. When one reads the files of the fifty leading magazines of the period, one is struck, to be sure, by the vast emphasis on American successful achievement; but one is often even more impressed, especially toward the end of the decade, by the steadily mounting voices of protest and the multiplying programs for reform.

The fact is that the growth of the trusts was alarming to many observers and had furnished campaign issues ever since 1888. Moreover, revelations of shocking conditions in the

slums and of poverty and injustice on the farm while the number of millionaires mounted indicated the increasing gap between the rich and poor. The growth of labor unions threatened industrial peace. Socialism gained converts on all levels. And so, to all the self-confidence, the boasts of success, and the youthful ambition, there was a steady and increasing counterpoint of dissent and criticism and revolt. It is in this area of exposé and reform that the ten-cent magazines developed a varied set of interests, with actions and reactions.

It is doubtful, however, if any one of the leaders of the cheap-magazine revolution of the nineties possessed what might be called a highly sensitive social conscience. What they did have (McClure especially) was a sensitive perception of what was in the wind—a highly cultivated feeling for whatever was both significant and interesting in social, political, and scientific matters. There was, therefore, some probing of abuses by these leaders in the nineties; and when the voices of unrest grew louder at the turn of the century, it was McClure who stumbled upon the “muckraking” formula which, in the next few years, was to enlist the efforts of many sincere reformatory writers and not a few opportunistic scribblers, to do much good and some harm, to make some magazines very prosperous and to wreck others. Yet one should beware of the conclusion that McClure’s discovery of a magazine technique of exposure was quite accidental. It came, after all, out of McClure’s own characteristic editorial methods, such as locating sensitive and important areas for investigation, studying problems by on-the-spot editors who talked with persons intimately concerned, and publishing one well written and realistic article right on the heels of another.

But the “muckraking” movement was the climax of hundreds of articles in scores of magazines throughout the

nineties. It is true that it was the monthlies which had got their start in the ten-cent revolution of the mid-nineties which eventually exploited "muckraking" in the exciting ten years which began with 1903—*McClure's*, *Munsey's Cosmopolitan*, *Hearst's*, *Everybody's*, *Hampton's*, *Metropolitan*, to mention only the leading monthlies of the movement—but the criticism and data of exposure had built up all through the nineties strong feelings of indignation and outrage in many quarters through articles in a great variety of periodicals.

Warnings of the dangers involved in the growth of trusts, for example, had been common in such magazines as the *Arena*, *Trenton's Century*, and the *North American Review*, and not uncommon in many others. Said the *New York Saturday Globe* as early as 1889: "A thorough examination of the nature, history, and methods of trusts is the most timely of all topics." And ten years later Professor Ernest A. Smith, of Allegheny College, pointing out in the *Charterhouse* an increase of no less than fifty per cent in the capital stock and bonded debt of trusts in only the first two decades of 1899, observed: "The tremendous rush for forming new enterprises in this year is of a nature to demand consideration, even if it has not, as one writer has put it, created as much excitement as the blowing up of the *Maha*." The excitement grew, as the trusts became a political issue in the national campaign of 1900, and the next year *Lyle* was revising the Catechism:

"Who made the world, Charles?"

"God made the world in 4004 B.C., but it was reorganized in 1901 by James J. Hill, J. Pierpont Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller."

Combinations of wealth were not more alarming, however, than the sufferings of the poor, especially in the slums of the great cities. The magazines gave major attention, all

through the nineties, to the varied problems posed by the stupendous growth of large metropolitan centers. Great size was in itself a danger to the society of a city, in the view of some. Percy Stickney Grant, the radical New York preacher, wrote for *Everybody's* about these "social ulcers":

They swell and fester on the surface of human population, which is healthy only in its sparsely distribution. They are full of filth, poverty, and vice. They graduate thieves, murderers, and pandars as naturally as universities graduate scholars. This is not the worst cities can do; they produce vice and crime; they also consume virtue. More like malaria than a disease, they appear like diabolical personalities which subsist on the strength, health, virtue, and noble aspiration produced in the country. A city is a Molech; the fagots of its fires are human bodies and souls.

If this seems extreme, what of Edwin Lawrence Godkin's statement in the *North American Review*: "The most serious question which faces the modern world today is the government of great cities under universal suffrage." In the same journal, Chief Inspector Thomas Byrnes titled an article about New York lodging houses "Nurseries of Crime." Such things led naturally to Lincoln Steffens' "muckraking" series in *McClure's*, "The Shame of the Cities."

Encouraging was the growth of the new science of sociology, and its step-sister, the new profession of Social Service. These movements were not founded upon romantic ideas, oratory, or wishful thinking, but on sound investigative procedures. The *American Journal of Sociology* and the *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* were two of the most significant of the learned journals of the time, and attracted much attention outside academic fields. *Charities* and *Charities Review*, later consolidated into a journal called *Survey*, published much about housing for the poor. *Municipal Affairs*, a review begun in 1897, through the tremendous national interest in the problems of the city pointed to a "Civic Renaissance." Albert Shaw, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, was a specialist on municipal questions.

Most of the journals just mentioned were almost as much interested in the plight of the farmer as in that of the city dweller. The *Arena*, one of the most reformatory magazines of the nineties, printed much about economic injustice to the farmer; and it made Hamlin Garland a kind of contributing editor of both fiction and articles on the subject. The sale of farm mortgages, said *Belford's Magazine*, of Chicago, was "a terrible traffic. The mortgages that are sold are really written in blood. They represent the sweat and tears of an utterly hopeless struggle." By the end of the decade, however, land prices rose sharply; and a boom time set in for the farmers and for farm papers.

But the most controversial of the reform movements was that of the organization of labor, with its issues dealing with strikes, the fixed wage, the closed shop, arbitration of disputes, etc. The magazines were, in general, by no means in full sympathy with labor activities. As a rule, they accepted the unions and admitted that they had brought some benefits to the workers; but they were greatly concerned with abuses of labor leadership and management, opposed to the fixed wage, and even more militant against the closed shop. The *Arena* was exceptional in presenting sympathetic studies of the big strikes and defending unionism. Many national unions started their own journals, and the *American Federationist* began in 1894 with Samuel Gompers as editor. Louis F. Post's *The Public* was a good weekly review with strong labor leanings which began in Chicago in 1898. But more typical of the majority was an editorial in the *Saturday Evening Post* shortly after Edwin Markham's poem "The Man With the Hoe" had made a great popular impression. It pointed out that after all, somebody had to perform hard labor, and why get sentimental about his lot? "It may be," philosophized the editorial writer, from his easy chair,

that those who engender discontent in the hearts of laboring men are worse than the heartless taskmasters. . . . Love, brotherhood, charity, fellowship, humane liberality we can all cultivate; but we can never obliterate the Man With the Hoe until the necessity of the labor-product, of which he is the representative sign, shall cease to exist.

Reform movements of all kinds were active, despite the *American Fabian's* complaint that the prosperous years at the close of the decade made hard times for reform papers! The fact seems to be that what Henry Frank, in the *Arena*, called "an irresistible tide of moral and reformatory thought, sweeping over all the lands of Christendom" characterized all of the final decade of the Nineteenth Century and the first of the Twentieth. Prohibition, divorce, prison reform, and even spelling reform were discussed in leading magazines. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* contained a terrific indictment of the tobacco habit in its number for April 1, 1899, and it was by no means intended as an April Fool joke. Crusades against war, child labor, immigration, and vivisection; and in favor of woman suffrage, religious liberalism, and direct legislation—all these were common. There were several periodicals which served the Bellamy "Nationalist" clubs and Henry George's single-tax cause. It seems rather extraordinary that even conservative reviews gave space to sympathetic presentations of Socialism.

A fourth field in which the ten-cent magazines of the nineties were important, through both direct and reciprocal action, was that of national advertising. It was in the great ten-cent magazines of the nineties that such advertising made its first extensive and spectacular showing, so that *McClure's*, for instance, carried a hundred and fifty pages of "ads" in its number for December, 1895, and ten years later occasionally two hundred pages of them. These figures are to be compared with the ten or a dozen pages of advertising, chiefly of books and other periodicals, which the standard magazines carried in the seventies and early eighties.

It was suggested at the beginning of this paper that the unprecedented extent of the circulations of the ten-cent magazines made this increase of advertising possible. This was unquestionably the case; but, as in every other area of magazine activity which has been considered, there were other factors which reacted with those offered by the growth of the cheap general magazine to produce the observed results. In this instance it was a change in the marketing process which played into the hands of the publishers of the booming ten-centers—a change that grew out of the expanding industrial and fiscal economy of the latter eighties.

Until about 1885 the channel of the marketing process went from manufacturer to jobber to retailer to consumer with much regularity. Advertising, which was aimed (except in trade papers) to reach the consumer, was pretty much limited to the third and fourth stations on this channel; that is, it was performed by the retailer to stimulate the final objective of the whole process—purchase by the consumer. And since the retailer's market was a local one, the newspapers, with their close-to-home circulations, were used for advertising, rather than the nationally or regionally distributed magazines. The marketing-advertising situation thus described is subject to some important exceptions, however. It had been demonstrated long before that consumer advertising by the manufacturer could, in some few fields, create such a demand that retailers would require large quantities of the advertised article from the jobbers; and jobbers, passing the demand back, would turn the manufacturer's advertising dollar into many profit dollars. This was so well recognized in the fields of proprietary medicines and cosmetics that new remedies, soaps, etc., commonly had to be backed by advertising to get themselves established in any large way. Important additions to manufacturer's (national) advertising in the sixties and seventies were sew-



ing machines, pianos, and organs. Book publishers were among the earliest national advertisers, and periodicals themselves took much space, usually on an exchange basis. Farm papers and mail-order journals also made exceptions to the standard marketing-advertising formula.

Indeed, exceptions increased to such an extent in the eighties that it was not surprising to anyone when, with the industrial expansion of the latter eighties, accompanied by the appearance of many new products on the market, national advertising became more and more general. It then came to include such foods as Baker's Cocoa, Royal Baking Powder, Quaker Oats, etc.; such apparel items as W. L. Douglas \$3 Shoes, Bay State \$3 Pants, Cluett Shirts and Collars, and R & G Corsets; as well as many other things like Sapolio, Pears' Soap, and Scott's Emulsion. All these products and many more were advertised in monthly and weekly magazines and newspapers by their manufacturers in the system which was called by local newspapers "foreign" advertising, but which came increasingly to be known as national, as opposed to local, advertising.

Though the extension of this national marketing effort was not surprising when it came to pass gradually in the late eighties and early nineties, it appeared as an amazing phenomenon in the ten-cent magazines. It then came in as a kind of tidal wave of a returning prosperity and an extraordinary expansion of business of all kinds, making use of larger circulations than had ever before been known, exploiting more articles and devices and equipment for more comfortable, healthful, happy living than readers had ever known or imagined. Thus national advertising entered on the prologue to a golden age.

Many readers found the advertising half of the fat ten-cent magazines quite as interesting as the text half. It was not necessary to mix the "ad" pages confusingly with the

text to get them read; they were read anyway. Readers of the nineties were not sated with such announcements; moreover, as one looks those "ads" over today, one finds a certain charm and simplicity in them which later advertising does not quite match. Publishers, seeing what their own pages did for the products of others, used advertising widely to promote their own magazines. Curtis built *Ladies' Home Journal* circulation, and later that of the *Saturday Evening Post*, largely through newspaper advertising. Munsey promoted his *Magazine* in its early months and years as a ten-cent monthly, through copious space in the newspapers; and his example was followed by other publishers. *Printer's Ink*, "the little schoolmaster of advertising," recorded all this advertising history, and itself grew fat and prosperous.

The advertising which flooded into the magazines in the nineties was varied in character. There were the camera "ads," led by those of the Eastman Kodak Company, with their slogan, "You press the button; we do the rest." Phonograph "ads" came later, with the Victrola's "His Master's Voice" picture. Bicycle advertising by many manufacturers was copious: in the March, 1896, number of the *Cosmopolitan* appeared the announcements of no less than thirty-eight makers of bicycles. Foods—especially breakfast cereals, canned beans, pickles, and crackers—were widely advertised. A dozen kinds of soap were made known to readers through trade-mark pictures and slogans. Bath-tubs, too, were pictured and extolled.

All this made the magazines prosperous, and profits from the resultant sales made the manufacturers rich; but the real beneficiaries of the whole system were the readers. Many things which were advertised were useless, and some harmful; but in general this aid to the cheap and rapid distribution of bathtubs and cosmetics and pianos and books and

typewriters and phonographs was a great social and economic service. The advertising of the nineties, with all its hideous faults (some of which it was mending through the efforts of publishers and agents) was in many cases pointing the way to better standards of living and the pursuit of happiness. Even soaps doubtless made their contribution to contemporary civilization: certainly Henry Ward Beecher, writing a testimonial for Pears' Soap, thought so:

If cleanliness is next to Godliness, soap must be considered as a means of Grace, and a clergyman who recommends moral things should be willing to recommend soap. I am told that my commendation of Pears' Soap has opened for it a large sale in the United States. I am willing to stand by every word in favor of it that I have ever uttered. A man must be fastidious indeed who is not satisfied with it.

How important the influence of Sapolio, with its gospel of Spotless Town, or of the Lackawanna Railroad's talk about clean travel, may have been at the turn of the century, it would be hard to tell; but it may be found pleasant at the close of this essay to note brief quotations from the advertising of those two concerns. It was the period of "jingles" in "ads"—a device not unlike the singing radio commercials of a later time. Sapolio, presenting an amusing picture of the dapper Mayor of Spotless Town, has him speak his piece thus:

I am the Mayor of Spotless Town,  
 The brightest man for miles around.  
 The shining light of wisdom can  
 Reflect from such a polished man,  
 And so I say to high and low:  
 The brightest use Sapolio.

The Lackawanna Railroad, making a bid for passenger business on its line between Buffalo and New York, featured the fact that it used anthracite instead of bituminous coal for its locomotives. Let us hope that it had some influence in

banishing the old coal-soot-laden passenger coaches with its verses about the dainty Phoebe Snow:

Says Phoebe Snow,  
About to go  
Upon a trip to Buffalo:  
My gown stays white  
From morn till night  
Upon the Road of Anthracite.

It would, of course, be impossible to measure or even estimate the impact of the cheap general illustrated magazines on the society and economy of the eighteen-nineties, or to define the scope of their influence; but this discussion of four areas in which they sustained various important relationships may illustrate their close integration with the life of the period.

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