

Harper's Young People and Its Rivals

Having created three extremely successful periodicals—a definitive monthly and two iconic weeklies—Harper management naturally continued to search for more markets where the company's resources and experience could be profitably employed. Fletcher Harper considered starting a daily newspaper, but eventually rejected the idea. Curtis said that Harper “was already a little too far advanced in life to satisfy all the rigorous considerations indispensable to so great an undertaking.” (in Harper, 405)

The company eventually turned to the idea of a magazine for children, a move that literary historian Jane Benardete described as “almost inevitable,” since Harper & Brothers had been producing children's books—including textbooks, spellers, and libraries—for decades. (191) *Harper's Young People*, announced in the *Weekly* in the fall of 1879, was the only Harper magazine to be launched after the passing of the four founders. (Fletcher Harper, the last surviving brother, died in 1877.)

In 1879 competition in the juvenile market was brisk, with dozens of competing periodicals available for children of all ages and tastes. Magazines for young people had become a large and well-established market by the time Harper & Brothers decided to enter.

It was a market with a 90-year history: the first American magazine for children, aptly named the *Children's Magazine*, was established in 1789 in Hartford, CT. A contract with Noah Webster had brought the publishers, Hudson & Goodwin, success with textbooks, but the *Children's Magazine* closed after four months. (cf. Mott I, 29 ; Tassin, 337 ; Kelly, xixf)

In its wake came New York's *Youth's News Paper* (1797), the *Juvenile Magazine* and *Juvenile Olio*, both launched in 1802 in Philadelphia, Boston's *Fly, or Juvenile Miscellany* (1805), New York's *Juvenile Monitor* and Boston's *Juvenile Repository*, both launched in 1811, the *Juvenile Mirror*, the *Juvenile Port-Folio*, launched in 1812 in Philadelphia,¹ and *Youth's Repository of Christian Knowledge*, America's tenth juvenile periodical, in 1813. (Mott I, 144, 794 ; Kelly, xixff, 553ff) None of these early efforts appears to have lasted more than four years, and most closed within a year, not unusual performance for the times.

In 1823 the American Sunday School Union started *Youth's Friend and Scholar Magazine*, the country's first nonsectarian Sunday School magazine. It reached 60,000 circulation within four years and was published until 1864. Later Sunday School magazines, drawing from this archetype, proliferated in the second half of the 19th century, and some, like *Youth's Friend* itself, developed huge circulations.

Growth of juvenile magazines accelerated during the 1820s, and by 1830 more than two dozen children's periodicals had been launched in the United States. (Mott I, 144, 794 ; Kelly, xixff, 553ff)

Two of the most popular children's magazines of the early 19th century were the offspring of Samuel Griswold Goodrich. Goodrich was a successful author, editor, and publisher—sometimes simultaneously. Born in 1793, he began his career as a Boston book publisher, and was an early champion of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who (over a period of several years) wrote more than two dozen stories for Goodrich's annual, the *Token*. (cf Thompson et al.)

¹ Its founder was a precocious 14 year-old, Thomas G. Condie. He kept the project going until 1816, making his the longest-lived of the early juveniles. (Kelly)

In 1827 Goodrich invented a character named Peter Parley who was the fictional narrator of one book after another,² devoured like candy by the children of the day. Parley was a benevolent, avuncular old gentleman with a gouty foot, who endeared himself to his audience with educational stories told in an engaging tone that made them enjoyable and not drudgery. Historian Leonard S. Marcus wrote:

Goodrich was an inexhaustible master of the odd fact, the startling, evocative detail. He seems to have savored these morsels of reality partly for their own sake: the storyteller in him was at times almost prepared to gain the upperhand—although never for long—over the moralist-educator. (348)

Mott described Goodrich's writing as "instructive and obtrusively moral," but it was a breath of fresh air in its time. (I, 492)

In 1832 Goodrich decided to build on the popularity of the Parley books by launching *Parley's Magazine, for Children and Youth*. It was a biweekly for its first eight years, becoming a monthly in 1840. In its first year the magazine had reached 10,000 circulation, but Goodrich's health forced him to withdraw, and Dr. William Alcott, cousin of educational maverick Bronson Alcott, became *Parley's* editor. (Marcus, 345) William Alcott endowed the magazine with the same spirit of pleasurable learning that Goodrich gave his Parley books, and for years the magazine was a delight of children throughout the country.

Having regained his health, Goodrich decided to launch a second children's magazine in 1841. *Robert Merry's Museum* was built around a fictional character very much like Parley. Robert Merry, too, was a kind old fellow with an inexhaustible supply of stories and a bad leg. The tales and anecdotes Merry put in his *Museum* were wholesome, factual, and focussed on America; Goodrich disliked fairy tales, and saw the development of American literature as a patriotic imperative. (MacDonald, 294)

Merry's Museum and *Parley's Magazine* merged in 1844, becoming *Merry's Museum and Parley's Magazine*. In 1854 Goodrich sold his share of the business to Stephen T. Allen, who remained with the magazine until 1866. Horace B. Fuller became publisher and in 1868 hired Louisa May Alcott, Bronson Alcott's daughter, as editor, a position she held until 1870. Her efforts gave *Merry's Museum* a second wind of popularity, but after she left the magazine went downhill quickly, and it closed in 1872, 40 years after Goodrich had launched the original *Parley's*. (MacDonald, 296ff) The subscription list was absorbed by *Youth's Companion*. (Greene, 510)

Another noteworthy antebellum children's magazine was Boston's *Boys' and Girls' Magazine and Fireside Companion*, a monthly which first appeared in 1848. Run as a family affair, the magazine was founded by Mark Forrester, patriarch of a staff of relatives who included cousins, uncles, and three successive Forresters in the editor's office. In 1851 it became *Forrester's Boys' and Girls' Companion*. For a time, *Forrester's* was very popular. It ran for ten years, full of didactic stories, instructive articles on natural science and geography, and biographies of historical figures. It closed in 1857.

Youth's Companion

By 1879, the year Harper & Brothers launched *Harper's Young People*, two very popular magazines had grown preeminent in the market segment that Harper & Brothers was aiming for—children of the upwardly-striving middle class. (Bernadete, 191) The two market leaders were the weekly *Youth's Companion*, launched in 1827, and the monthly *St. Nicholas*, launched in 1873.

² There were more than 100 Peter Parley titles. Goodrich estimated in 1857 that seven million Parley books had been printed, an average of 300,000 per year. (MacDonald, 294, 296)

Youth's Companion had been started in Boston by Nathaniel Willis, father of journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis. It was an offshoot of the *Recorder*, a weekly newspaper published by the Congregational church, and although *Youth's Companion* itself was nonsectarian, it was very religious and full of admonition, characteristics it maintained into the 1860s. (Mott II, 263f ; Greene, 509)

Goodrich described Willis Sr. as a man “much respected for his industry, his good sense, his devotion to whatever he deemed his duty, and his useful services in morals, religion, Christianity, and philanthropy.” (709)

The very first issue contained a “little hymn:”

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take. (in Mott II, 264)

Youth's Companion began life as a weekly four-page quarto, with the annual subscription price set at \$1.00 (not including postage) effective with the second issue. (Mott II, 266)

In 1857 Willis sold the magazine to John W. Olmstead and Daniel S. Ford (although he stayed on as senior editor for eight more years). When the partnership between Olmstead and Ford dissolved 10 years later, Ford retained ownership of *Youth's Companion*. He coined a new name for the business, the Perry Mason Company. There was no Perry Mason ; Ford simply didn't want to put his own name on the masthead. (Mott II, 266) As a boy, novelist Erle Stanley Gardner was an enthusiastic reader of *Youth's Companion*, and he gave the name to his fictional lawyer, who first appeared in print in 1933. (Nolan)

When Olmstead and Ford bought *Youth's Companion* from Willis, circulation was about 4,800. By the end of the Civil War it was closer to 50,000. (Mott II, 266) In 1867 the magazine began its long-running premium program for subscription sales, allowing young readers to earn prizes if they sold a certain number of subscriptions. Premiums were used by many magazine publishers after the Civil War, but none had as much success with them as *Youth's Companion*. According to Mott, the “Magic Scroll Saw” alone brought in 40,000 subscribers, and by the 1890s the annual list of prizes was 72 pages long. (II, 268) Circulation grew at rates exceeding 10,000 per year, and reached 442,000 by 1890. (Mott II, 268 ; Ayer, 1890) At that time *Youth's Companion* may have had the largest paid circulation of any American periodical: in comparison, *Ladies Home Journal* stood at 400,000, *Delineator* at 300,000, and *Harper's Monthly* at 175,000. Roughly two out of every 100 American children were paid readers of *Youth's Companion*. It grew from there. By the turn of the 20th century, *Youth's Companion* had passed the half million mark. (Mott II, 268)

As circulation increased, so did the size of each issue. The page count increased to eight pages per issue in 1867, and increased again to 12 per issue in the 1880s. (Mott II, 266ff) Illustration was added in the 1860s, color in the 1890s. (Mott II, 272 ; Greene, 512) *Youth's Companion* also grew more expensive: the annual subscription price was raised to \$1.50 in 1869 to \$1.75 in 1870, to \$2.00 in 1912, and to \$2.50 in 1919.

Youth's Companion maintained its popularity with contributions from a roster of authors whose stories were intended to appeal to the whole family (for a number of years the magazine's subtitle was “The Companion for All the Family”). (Greene, 511) The list of distinguished contributors is staggering. Among writers who contributed fiction were Louisa May Alcott, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Frank Baum, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Rebecca Harding Davis, Thomas Hardy, William Dean Howells, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, and Jules Verne ; and contributors of nonfiction included Henry Ward Beecher, William Gladstone, Thomas Huxley, Theodore Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington, and Woodrow Wilson. (Mott II 269ff ; Greene 510) The magazine also developed a reputation for hiring excellent editors. (Mott II, 270)

In 1892 *Youth's Companion* promoted a series of events associated with the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World. As part of the larger campaign, circulation manager James B. Upham asked one of his assistants, Francis Bellamy, to write a Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. The results were published for the first time in the issue of September 8, 1892. Bellamy's original version was a bit shorter than the current: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands—one Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." (Bellamy)

Ford died in 1899, and although *Youth's Companion* continued to thrive and evolve for the next decade or so, a spark went out of the magazine around the time of the First World War—it may have grown a little old-fashioned for children, but but may have changed too much to suit their parents. Perhaps, as Mott wrote, "Old friends resented new changes." (II, 274) Or perhaps, as literary historian David Greene suggested, "It had acquired traditions that were as important to its management as they were to readers, even when readership had begun to dwindle." (513) The Perry Mason Company was purchased by the Atlantic Monthly Company in 1925—Ellery Sedgwick of the *Atlantic* had worked at *Youth's Companion* 30 years earlier—but new ownership didn't save *Youth's Companion*. It ceased publication in 1929 at the age of 102, and was folded into *American Boy*. (Mott II, 274) Greene said, "Probably no other magazine was mourned so widely." (514)

St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas was a monthly launched in 1873 by Roswell Smith, one of the founders of *Scribner's Monthly*, and it ran as a junior sibling to *Scribner's* (which became the *Century* in 1881). The association gave *St. Nicholas* access to writers, illustrators, and production facilities that might have been beyond the reach of an independent publication.

In the long run it wasn't business resources which propelled *St. Nicholas's* success as much as the forceful vision of its founding editor, Mary Mapes Dodge. Widowed with two sons at the age of 28, Dodge turned to magazine editing and writing to earn her living. Her best-known novel, *Hans Brinker; or the Silver Skates*, was published in 1865. She worked with her father, publisher of *Working Farmer*, became associate editor at *Hearth and Home* (under Harriet Beecher Stowe), and was then hired by Smith to supervise a staff that included writer Frank Stockton and associate editor William F. Clarke. (Erisman, 379) For the next 33 years, until her death in 1905, Dodge directed *St. Nicholas* as a monthly embodiment of her belief that children's magazines should be "stronger, truer, bolder, more uncompromising..." and that children "do not want to be bothered nor amused nor petted. They just want to have their own way over their own magazine. They want to enter one place where they can come and go as they please." (in Mott III, 501) In practice, *St. Nicholas* was both entertaining and instructive. (Erisman, 379)

In 1880 U. S. Census historian S. N. D. North wrote that *St. Nicholas*

...has laid the best brains and the best pencils of the United States under tribute for the edification, amusement, and interest of young people, and it is absolutely unique in its wealth of original illustration and its variety of entertaining reading matter adapted especially to the tastes of young people. (121)

One of the features that endeared *St. Nicholas* to its readers was its encouragement of their contributions. The "St. Nicholas League," supervised by Albert Bigelow Paine, awarded prizes to submissions from the readership—among the many authors who were first published in *St. Nicholas* were Bennett Cerf, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and E. B. White. (Mott III, 504 ; Erisman, 380)) For many years the Agassiz Association, a club organized by *St. Nicholas* with hundreds of local chapters, ran a monthly column on natural science and promoted exchange of letters and specimens. (Mott 502f) Other departments of the magazine that encouraged reader participation were the "Puzzle Box," the "Letter Box," and "Young Contributors." (Erisman, 380)

By the same token, the adult writers that Mapes brought to *St. Nicholas* provided popular and engaging stories—one of the hallmarks of *St. Nicholas* was its consistently outstanding fiction. Stockton's prolific *St. Nicholas* serials began in the first issue and continued into the '80s. One of the magazine's most famous serials was Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, begun in November, 1885. A few among the magazine's many other serialists in the later decades of the 19th century were Sarah Orne Jewett, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Nelson Page, Howard Pyle, Theodore Roosevelt, Horace Scudder, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, and Kate Douglas Wiggin.

Other contributions came from football coach Walter Camp ; Palmer Cox, creator of the "Brownies" ; and Gelett Burgess, whose ill-mannered "Goops" taught etiquette to thousands of children by showing them how not to behave. Mapes herself contributed a section for younger children she called "Jack-in-the-Pulpit," and often wrote short poems.

St. Nicholas approached about 70,000 circulation at its highest point. Ayer estimated circulation at 65,200 in 1890 and 65,000 in 1900, when subscriptions were \$3.00 per year. *St. Nicholas* grew initially by acquiring competitors. Prior to the launch, Scribner & Co. had acquired the *Riverside Magazine*, whose circulation helped establish the new magazine. The year 1873 marked the start of an economic downturn, and Smith was able to purchase *Our Young Folks*, *Little Corporal*, the *School-Day Magazine*, and the *Children's Hour*, and combine their lists with *St. Nicholas's*. (Erisman, 378)

Clarke succeeded Mapes as chief editor in 1905, and held the position until 1928, his 55th year with *St. Nicholas*. The Century Company went out of business in 1930, and ownership of *St. Nicholas* transferred first to American Education Press of Columbus, OH, and then to the Educational Publishing Corporation of New York. Although *St. Nicholas's* final issue came in February, 1940, anthologies of material from its pages were published into the 1950s. During *St. Nicholas's* heyday bound volumes were popular with children and their parents, and even today the contents of the aging crimson and gold copies can captivate, enthrall, and stealthily educate a curious child.

Historian Fred Erisman said that *St. Nicholas* was a "well-conceived, carefully edited, lavishly produced magazine" whose importance would be difficult to overestimate.

Tellingly, it served in a time of turmoil as a powerful force in striving to maintain a degree of cultural continuity in American life. Dedicated as it was to the creating and maintaining of an informed populace, *St. Nicholas* advanced a consistently genteel, principled, upper middle-class view of life, tacitly seeking to perpetuate the values and attitudes of this class in the next generation. (386f)

Other Young People's Magazines

But *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* were only two among many magazines published for young people. North remarked in 1880 on the large numbers of weekly story papers.

The country is weekly flooded with poorly printed sheets, whose crowded columns are the receptacle for vilely written stories of exciting adventure and prurient tendency, and whose eager purchasers are the servant girls and shop boys. (119)

After they were published in the "poorly printed sheets" those stories became the contents of dime novels, and many of the publishers associated with dime novels and story papers produced periodicals specifically for younger children. Norman Munro launched *Boys of New York* in 1875. It was taken over by Frank Tousey in 1878, merged with *New York Boys' Weekly*, and ran until 1894. Tousey launched a number of other boys'

magazines. Beadle produced several magazines for girls, including *Belles and Beaux*, begun in 1874. There were magazines for country mice, too, including *Young Folks' Rural*, launched in Chicago in 1870, and *Our Little Granger*, launched in Cincinnati in 1880. (Mott III, 174ff)

Combatting the “vile and prurient” story papers were a host of Sunday School periodicals, which took full advantage of the distribution resources and captive audience that a network of churches could provide. Some developed enormous readership. At the end of the 19th century, three Baptist Sunday School papers, *Primary Quarterly*, *Intermediate Quarterly*, and *Senior Quarterly*, circulated 308,000, 290,000, and 210,000 copies respectively ; the Methodist *Sunday School Journal*, had 100,000 circulation ; Boston's nondenominational *Junior Sunday School Quarterly* and *Senior Sunday School Quarterly* had 83,000 and 120,000 circulations respectively ; and Chicago's *Young People Weekly* offered 220,000. (Ayer 1900)

Occupying the middle ground between sentiment and melodrama on one hand and Christian education on the other was a parade of secular children's magazine that began to form at the end of the Civil War. In the vanguard were Ticknor & Fields's *Our Young Folks* and Chicago's *Little Corporal*, both launched in 1865 (and both later rolled into *St. Nicholas*). Tassin said that the *Little Corporal* was the first Chicago magazine to achieve national popularity. (202) Then came *Demorest's Young America* and Lee & Shepard's *Oliver Optic's Magazine* (both in 1866), and in 1867 Hurd & Houghton's *Riverside Magazine for Young People*, (later purchased by *Scribner's*) and Leslie's *Boys' and Girls' Weekly*. Leslie's *Chatterbox* (1879), Elverson's *Golden Days for Boys and Girls* (1880), and Munsey's *Argosy* (1882), appeared later, as did many others.

In a nutshell, it was a crowded market into which Harper & Brothers launched *Harper's Young People* in 1879, a market with two highly respected, well established magazines, hundreds of story papers and dime novel libraries, a wide range of wholesome religious magazines doing their best to combat the story papers, and several other juvenile magazines fighting for readers. And the crowded market continued to swell. Rowell's directory for 1869 listed 65 American magazines published for children. The 1900 N. W. Ayer directory listed more than 140.

Harper's Young People

The prospectus for *Harper's Young People* reminded the public that children's recreational reading was a big influence in their lives, adding that “much of the reading now offered to them is void of intellectual stimulus, much of it appeals to a vicious taste, and some of it seems to aim at corrupting the heart.” (in Harper, 457) The goal of the company's new magazine, “a weekly journal of amusement and instruction,” would be

...to stimulate and satisfy the intelligent curiosity of girls and boys... as far as possible the world of corruption and wrong will be left to itself, and *Harper's Young People* will live in the other world of youthful knowledge, purity, and joy. (in Harper, 458)

The first issue of *Harper's Young People* appeared on Tuesday, November 4, 1879. It was a weekly, nine inches by 12. Annual subscriptions were \$1.50, and its eight pages were elegantly illustrated—the art department was a company asset that Harper & Brothers was always willing to leverage. Six weeks after its launch, *Harper's Young People* increased from eight to 16 pages and spruced up its design. (Bernadete, 191)

Within a few years circulation had reached 35,000. (Bernadete, 191) Rapid circulation growth is at least partly attributable to the decision to send 30 free issues to the subscribers of Harper & Brothers' other magazines, along with a subscription form. (Bernadete, 191) *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's* were close competitors in the adult market, and this may have spurred Harper & Brothers' willingness to compete aggressively with *St. Nicholas* for younger readers.

The first editor was Kirk Munroe. Mott wrote that Monroe produced a magazine that appealed “to actual intellectual and emotional hungers of older children.” (Mott III, 178) Munroe was a journalist with a taste for adventure. He had befriended Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill, and General George Custer, reported on the battle at Little Big Horn for the New York *Sun*, and had crossed South America by the time he was hired at Harper & Brothers at the age of 29. While working at *Harper's Young People*, Munroe met his first wife, Mary Barr, who was a contributor. Munroe stayed at Harper & Brothers until 1882, and after leaving he became a prolific writer of books for boys. During the bicycle craze of the 1890s Munroe was one of the founders of the League of American Wheelmen. (Donelson)

His replacement at *Harper's Young People* was a Miss Van Duyn, who was succeeded in 1885 by A. B. Starey, an Oxford graduate and children's books author. (Critic 2/7/85) Starey came to the position from the advertising department—an unusual change of career. (Literary World 3/7/85)

For many years the editor whose presence was most visible to the readers was Margaret Sangster, who ran “Our Post-Office Box,” the contributors' page. (Bernadete, 193). As “The Little Postmistress,” she encouraged piety, good behaviour, and strict adherence to the traditional roles of young men and young ladies. Bernadete described *Harper's Young People* as a periodical that “appealed directly to the tastes and standards of prosperous, upwardly mobile people who wanted the best for their children and feared the corrupting influence of less genteel branches of the popular press.” (191) Sangster worked hard to maintain and promote this position. Her writing in *Harper's Young People* sounds painfully sentimental, stereotyped, and saccharine today—although she was very popular with her young readers of the 19th century.

Contents of *Harper's Young People* included serials, short stories, sketches, poems, puzzles, and games, as well as illustrations from several Harper & Brothers artists—material on the whole that was similar to the contents of its competitors *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas*. Among the many writers who contributed to *Harper's Young People* were editors Munroe and Sangster, William Dean Howells (whose autobiographical book *A Boy's Town* ran as a serial), Sarah Orne Jewett, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Louisa May Alcott, whose popular Christmas stories became an annual feature. (Bernadete, 194f) Howard Pyle, who wrote and illustrated historical tales, also became closely identified with the magazine. (Bernadete, 198)

J. H. Harper said that readers outgrew *Harper's Young People* and that this created a serious ongoing problem for the magazine. He wrote, “We found it necessary to create a new audience for the little weekly every three or four years, as it took about that time for the average subscriber to outgrow the constituency for which it catered.” (in Bernadete, 201) But this is probably rationalizing. *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* proved by their long lives that Harper's “three or four years” rule was not ironclad—and if the rule had been fatal it certainly would have sunk *Harper's Young People* long before the magazine had run for 20 years.

Balancing content so that boys and girls were served equally was a challenge that *Harper's Young People* never seemed to solve. For the first decade or so of its existence, the magazine emphasized girls' stories over boys'. Around the time of Sangster's 1889 departure, the balance shifted in the opposite direction, and boys' stories began to predominate. (Bernadete, 200) One of the magazine's most popular features in the early 1890s was the “Order of the Round Table,” a readers' club with appeal to boys. Eventually Harper & Brothers decided to concentrate on where they were successful, and as of the April 30, 1895 issue, *Harper's Young People* became *Harper's Round Table*.

The early 1890s brought an economic downturn, and the late '90s were a period of increasing financial distress at Harper & Brothers. As business conditions worsened, tolerance for underperforming properties diminished. Effective with the November, 1897 issue, *Harper's Round Table* became a monthly. It was shuttered in October, 1899, on the eve of the 20th century.

In its 20-year life *Harper's Young People* accumulated a body of writing and illustration that, taken as a whole, may not be as large but is probably as good as its main rivals', *Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas*. But it ran as

a distant third to them, never quite achieving the same status as an institution in the lives of American children and never quite achieving the impact of the other three Harper magazines.

The Fall of the House of Harper

Each of the four founding Harper brothers had several children and numerous grandchildren, and thus a business with four partners had dozens of owners by the time the third generation came of age in the late 19th century. Some of the grandchildren had a deep attachment to the company, but others elected to cash out, and this drain on assets, combined with a couple of bad strategic decisions and an economic downturn in the early 1890s, brought America's largest publishing company suddenly to the brink of insolvency in 1896. (Tebbel B, 95).

William Dean Howells later recalled his astonishment and disbelief that a business so well-established and stable could stumble:

It seemed as if this order of things was to continue forever, when, one morning after the misery of a night in a sleeping-car on my way home from a Western lecturing tour, I read in the *New York Tribune* that the House of Harper & Brothers had failed. It was as if I had read that the government of the United States had failed. It appeared not only incredible, but impossible; it was, as Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan said, a misfortune of the measure of a national disaster. Apart from the anxiety I felt for my own imaginable share in the ruin, there was a genuine grief for those whom it necessarily involved; they had been my friends so long that I could not help appropriating their misfortune and making it personal to myself. Before that, indeed, I had heard some intimation that things were not well with them, but I had not been uneasy, for the simple reason that what could not happen would not. Yet it had now. (in Harper, 324)

Declaring that "the downfall of the House of Harper would be a national calamity," J. P. Morgan advanced \$850,000 in loans.³ Upton Sinclair (260) and others have claimed that Morgan acquired his interest in *Harper's* to put an end to the magazine's anti-trust crusading. Mott says, however, that "the influence of large financial interests is far from clear." (II, 403)

By 1899 the company was unable to make interest payments on its outstanding loans, and, anxious to find a white knight, approached S. S. McClure, the owner of *McClure's Magazine* and partner in a book publishing venture with Frank Doubleday. The allure of acquiring Harper & Brothers was irresistible to McClure, and he agreed to assume management and part ownership. But by November, 1899 the deal had unravelled. Doubleday (who had not been consulted in the decision or involved in management) was unhappy, the stress of the situation was affecting morale, and Harper losses were turning what would have been McClure's most profitable year into a year of loss. McClure was forced to withdraw. (Tebbel B, 96) Compounding the injury, Doubleday dissolved their partnership and went into business with colleague Walter Hines Page—two weeks after McClure cancelled the arrangement with Harper & Brothers. (Tebbel B, 97)

In December, 1899 Harper & Brothers went into receivership, and the board of directors asked Colonel George B. M. Harvey, publisher of the *North American Review*, to head the company. Harvey had begun his career as a reporter and newspaper editor, and went on to make a great deal of money in the electric streetcar business. In February, 1899 he had used some of it to purchase the *North American*—fulfillment of a boyhood ambition. He responded eagerly to the overture from Harper & Brothers. Along with his deep pockets, Harvey brought enthusiasm for journalism, publishing, and business. Energetic, charming, and only 36 years old, the Colonel hung a picture of Morgan on his office wall, and set about making significant reductions in company expenses by various means that must have shocked the old guard. He fired the

³ Including further loans and interest, Morgan's investment increased to \$1.23 million by 1923. (Tebbel B, 202f)

compositors, leased Linotype machines, and sold off several company assets, including what was left of the textbook and reference book businesses. (Tebbel, 98)

Harvey's cost savings enabled Harper & Brothers to survive the early years of the 20th century, and he was able to attract several new and popular authors, including James Branch Cabell, Theodore Dreiser, and Zane Grey, but despite his efforts the company's debt to Morgan remained intractable. Described as "witty, sardonic, autocratic, inscrutable," Harvey succeeded in maintaining Harper & Brothers' reputation and position of leadership—he enjoyed the company of good writers and the prestige of publishing them—but the Morgan loans were a Sword of Damocles, and the blade fell in 1915. (Tebbel B, 99)

Harvey's successor was C. T. Brainard, who introduced a new level of austerity that won him few friends and lost several authors, including Cabell, Dreiser, and Sinclair Lewis. (Tebbel B, 99) Publishing historian John Tebbel described Brainard as "uncouth" and "heavy-handed." (202)

But while Brainard was president, Thomas B. Wells (editor in chief of *Harper's Monthly*) and another vice president, Henry Hoyns, developed a plan to retire the debt. The agreement cost Harper & Brothers its subscription book business, its printing facilities, and the company's historic headquarters in Franklin Square. Part of the arrangement gave Morgan the proceeds from the movie rights to *Ben Hur*.

Nevertheless, it was a good deal in the end: paying off the debt allowed Harper & Brothers to focus on growth rather than cuts and to operate much more flexibly. Another benefit was the departure of Brainard in 1924 and the emergence of a new generation of company leadership, the first executive team in more than 20 years able to manage with autonomy. (Tebbel B, 203ff) Hoyns eventually became chairman of the board, guiding the company into the 1940s. (Tebbel B, 367) Wells gave *Harper's Monthly* a major redesign and repositioning, which brought the magazine its first growth in decades. He left the company and moved to Paris in 1931. (Exman, 199, 254)

In 1924 a young man named Cass Canfield joined the sales department. (Tebbel B, 203) Canfield had been educated at Groton, Harvard, and Oxford, was well-traveled, and blessed with a patrician charisma that led to success. After spending three years managing Harper & Brothers' London office, he returned to the U.S., became head of the firm, and remained with the company for almost 50 years. (Tebbel B, 371) Under Canfield the company expanded not only in fiction and politics, but also in education, religious, and medical publishing.

By the early 1960s just about the only attractive publishing market that the company had not regained a leadership position in was textbooks. This gap was plugged by a 1962 merger with Row, Peterson, & Co. Harper & Brothers became Harper & Row. In 1987 Harper & Row was acquired by News Corporation, which later acquired William Collins & Sons, a venerable British book publisher, and the two companies were merged into HarperCollins. HarperCollins is headquartered in New York and has branches around the world. (cf. HarperCollins)