APPENDIX

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From Standard Magazines to Pulps and Big Slicks: A Note on the History of US General and Fiction Magazines

In the otherwise excellent Science Fiction in the 20th Century *(reviewed elsewhere in this issue), Edward James writes as follows, "The [1890s] boom in periodicals, which the United States shared with Britain, continued [in the US] long after the decline in Britain, and publishers deliberately aimed their publications at a wider public than in Britain. There had been considerable indignation at the low literary level of such dime novels as the* Frank Reade Library, *but the result was the replacement of the dime novel by almost equally low-grade fiction magazines aimed at almost the same public—'the pulps.' The average pulp was a magazine measuring 10 x 7 inches, printed on thick coarse paper; it was the development of the technique of producing cheap paper from wood-pulp, in the 1880s, that created the possibility of mass production of cheap magazines as well as the name by which they became known. The pulps often had ragged untrimmed pages and, later in their history, covers printed with cheap lurid coal-tar dyes. Now, yellowing and fragile, they are expensive collectors' items, but when published, they were the kind of things that respectable readers shunned, or kept hidden. The publishers of the more up-market middle-class magazines (printed on better quality, shinier paper, and hence known as 'the slicks') came to see the fast-paced adventure story to be found in the pulps (which included sf) as tainted by their low-grade associations, and they stopped printing them" (35). Faced with this tissue of confusion, which is typical of almost all commentary on the pulps I have seen,*[1] *I have thought it worthwhile to write the following note. In order to minimize the space occupied by a subject only peripheral to the study of science fiction, it is set in small type.*

During the 1920s, cultural critics began to speak of "the pulps" and "the big slicks." The two terms covered not the full spectrum of US magazines but only a comparatively small number. In the 1921 *N.W. Ayer and Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory,* recording data for 1920, the department titled "Magazines, Women's Publications, and Mail Order Journals" (i.e., periodicals with national circulation) lists 131 titles as magazines. Since we are concerned here only with fiction magazines and general magazines (those that devote about half their space to fiction), we can, with some uncertainty, cut the list to the 36 titles in the table on the facing page. Of these five count as "big slicks" (i.e., magazines big in both format and circulation), four as failing efforts to achieve big-slick success, four as quality magazines, and 23 as "pulps." The 36th, *True Story*, can be described as a downscale slick-paper fiction magazine.

To speak of "the slicks" rather than of "the big slicks," as present-day historians of sf are prone to do, makes no sense, for aside from a few reviews on book paper (the better grades of uncoated stock), a few upscale luxurious-life magazines on glossy paper (the better grades of coated stock), and a Sunday supplement on newsprint, the 95 infinitely various magazines we have eliminated from our list were all printed on slick paper (the cheaper grades of coated stock), so that there is no meaningful referent for "slick-paper magazine."

The two terms came into usage as pejorative terms in response to changes occurring in the magazine field between 1912 and 1920, a period that can be called "the decline of the standard magazine."

1. The General Magazines 1892-1911. Printed products may be said to be of two broad classes: those designed to be read and discarded and those designed to be read and preserved. In the 19th century the read-and-discard class consisted primarily of newspapers for local circulation and story papers or dime-novel series for national distribution, while the read-and-preserve class consisted of books and magazines. Those most likely to be preserved may be regarded as luxury products requiring the use of expensive grades of paper and expensive processes for the reproduction of photographs. Periodicals in newspaper format cannot be individually shelved and in bound volumes cannot be easily handled, so that magazines to be preserved can hardly be larger than 8x11 and most conveniently should be 7x10 or smaller. On the other hand, the larger sizes are more inexpensively printed, so that the first popular magazines were in the 8x11 format.

In 1882 the standard price for magazines (a term ordinarily applied *only* to periodicals of the read-and-preserve type) was and for a long time had been $4.00 a year, 35¢ a copy. The

Principal General Magazines and Fiction Magazines in 1912, 1920, and 1925

Size: Standard, Oversize, Undersize.
Paper: Book, Slick, Quality mixture, Mixture of pulp and better grades.
Frequency: Monthly, Semimonthly, Weekly. Price per copy. CIRCulation in thousands.

	1912					1920					1925				
	S	P	F	Pr	CIR	S	P	F	Pr	CIRC	S	P	F	Pr	CIRC
Harper's	S	Q	M	.35	110	S	Q	M	.35	86	S	B	M	.50	31
Century	S	Q	M	.35	150	S	Q	M	.35	47	S	B	M	.50	69
Scribner's	S	Q	M	.25	175	S	Q	M	.25	98	S	B	M	.35	71
Overland	S	Q	M	.15	68	S	Q	M	.25	65					
Munsey's	S	Q	M	.10	400	S	P	M	.25	132	S	P	M	.25	71
Cosmopolitan	S	Q	M	.15	750	O	S	M	.25	1330	O	S	M	.25	1424
McClure's	S	Q	M	.15	400	O	S	M	.15	440	S	S	M	.25	
American	S	Q	M	.15	300	O	S	M	.25	1441	O	S	M	.25	2113
Everybody's	S	Q	M	.15	600	O	S	M	.25	298	S	S	M	.25	383
Metropolitan	S	Q	M	.15	291	O	S	M	.25	368					
Hearst's	S	Q	M	.15	100	O	S	M	.35	482					
Smith's	S	M	M	.15	129	S	P	M	.20	S&S					
Railroad Man's	S	P	M	.15	150										
Green Book	S	M	M	.15											
Lippincott's	S	B	M	.25	60										
Black Cat	U	B	M	.15		S	P	M	.20	50					
10 Story Book	U	B	M	.10	89										
Smart Set	S	B	M	.25	85	S	P	M	.35	50	O	S	M	.25	262
Ainslee's	S	B	M	.15	227	S	P	M	.20	S&S	S	P	M	.25	S&S
Red Book	S	S	M	.15	300	O	S	M	.25	791	S	S	M	.25	781
Young's	S	B	M	.15	109	S	P	M	.20	102	S	P	M	.20	NG
Snappy Stories, 1912						S	P	M	.20	175	S	P	S	.20	NG
Live Stories, 1913						S	P	M	.15	130	S	P	Q	.20	NG
Parisienne, 1915						S	P	M	.20	140					
Breezy Stories, 1915						S	P	M	.20	103	S	P	S	.20	NG
Saucy Stories, 1916						S	P	M	.20	120					
Telling Tales, 1919						S	P	M	.20						
Argosy, 1882	S	P	M	.15	300	S	P	W	.10	498	S	P	W	.10	MC
Popular, 1903	S	P	S	.15	370	S	P	S	.20	S&S	S	P	S	.25	S&S
Blue Book, 1905	S	P	M	.15	175	S	P	M	.20	200	S	P	M	.25	189
All-Story, 1905	S	P	M	.15	180										
People's, 1906	S	P	M	.15	180	S	P	M	.20	S&S					
Cavalier, 1908	S	P	W	.10	125										
Top-Notch, 1910	S	P	S	.10		S	P	S	.15	S&S	S	P	S	.15	S&S
Adventure, 1910	S	P	M	.15	100	S	P	S	.20	190	S	P	T	.25	126
Short Stories, 1910	S	P	M	.15	120	S	P	M	.20	132	S	P	S	.25	291
Gunter's/New St	S	P	M	.15	150										
Detective Story, 1915						S	P	W	.15	S&S	S	P	W	.15	S&S
Western Story, 1919						S	P	W	.15	S&S	S	P	W	.15	S&S
Love Story, 1921, replacing Smith's											S	P	W	.15	S&S
Flynn's Detective Fiction, 1924											S	P	W	.10	MC
Complete Stories, 1924, replacing People's											S	P	S	.15	S&S
Sea Stories, 1922											S	P	M	.20	S&S
Sport Story, 1922											S	P	S	.15	S&S
Black Mask, 1920; Action Stories, 1921											S	P	M	.20	NG
Ace-High, 1921											S	P	S	.20	NG
Atlantic	S	B	M	.35	30	S	B	M	.35	108	S	B	M	.50	119
Sat Eve Post	O	S	W	.05	1885	O	S	W	.05	2109	O	S	W	.05	2420
Collier's	O	S	W	.10	500	O	S	W	.05	1043	O	S	W	.05	1032
True Story, 1919						O	S	M	.25		O	S	M	.25	1193
The Street and Smith Combination										773					1,114
The Munsey Combination (Circulation for 1926)															444
The News Stand Group															About 600

cover of the October 1882 issue of *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* proclaims that it is "The Cheapest Magazine Published in the World / 128 pages, Over 100 Engravings / Price 25 Cents." Its dimensions are 8x11.

In 1887 the dominant American general magazines were *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Both were in the standard format (the format they had made standard), 7" by 10" with advertising confined to fore and aft sections that could be discarded when the issues of a volume were bound together. Each was priced at 35¢, each had about 175,000 subscribers, and in each the magazine proper consisted of about 160 pages of alternating glossy-paper sections with half-tone reproductions and book-paper sections with line drawings. The advertising sections ran to about 100 pages in each issue. The third well-known 35¢ magazine at the time was *The Atlantic Monthly,* but it was a more serious magazine, with no illustrations, and with only about 16,000 subscribers. In this year *Scribner's Magazine* was established as a 25¢ general magazine in the standard format to compete with *The Century* and *Harper's* as a magazine for people of quality rather than with *Leslie's* as a popular magazine.

The Saturday Evening Post at this time was a 5¢ 12x16 weekly story paper with a circulation of about 25,000. *Collier's Weekly* (12x17, 10¢), while it published some fiction, was devoted primarily to news and public affairs.

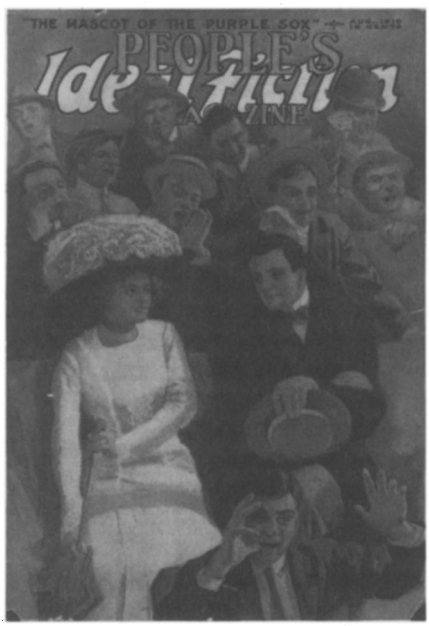
The success of *Scribner's* led other publishers to experiment with standard magazines at prices lower than 35¢. The magic formula proved to be 128 or 144 pages for 10¢, with the price later rising to 15¢. In 1912 we have the 11 general magazines listed in the first tier of the table: three "quality" magazines on the basis of price and eight "popular." They all look very much alike. In all of them the magazine proper consists of alternating sections of glossy paper illustrated with halftones and book paper illustrated with drawings. The same authors contribute to all 11; the fiction is mostly of the best-seller type, though it includes some works that have survived as literature. The merchandise advertised in the slick-paper sections (which sometimes run to more pages than the magazine proper) is again virtually the same in all 11.

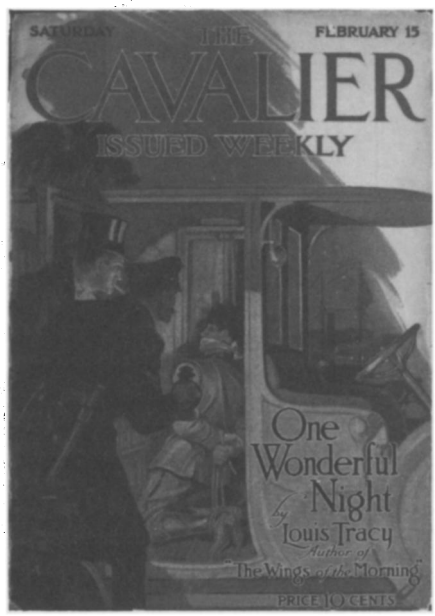
In the 1920s, which is as far back as my memory goes, almost every middle-class home had as a mark of status one or more four- or five-tier sectional bookcases, each section with a glass door. The sections for such bookcases were advertised in magazines of the turn of the century at $1.00 without or $1.75 with door. The selling point was that a family could add sections to its bookcases at the same time as it added books to its library. The 10¢ magazines, including those printed on pulpwood paper, offered bound volumes at a dollar each. Even when not bound in volumes, standard magazines sat nicely on a shelf. All the new magazines were designed to be of the read and preserved.

2. The Book-Paper Fiction Magazines (1900-1912). Since 1887 *Lippincott's*, a 25¢ "quality" magazine of 160 book-paper pages, had published a complete novel in each issue together with verse, several short stories, and an essay or two. *Short Stories* in 1903 was a nicely illustrated 25¢ magazine devoted entirely to short stories. *The Black Cat,* which earlier had offered five stories for 5¢, sold for 10¢ in 1912. *10 Story Book*, established in 1901, asked 10¢ for its 10 stories; it was a bit racier in its prose than *The Black Cat* and in both prose and illustrations than *Short Stories*. *Gunter's Magazine* in 1907 had several glossy-paper sections, was priced at 15¢, and carried a good deal of book advertising. There were other non-pulp fiction magazines in the early years of this century, but except for those mentioned here and below, none that lasted more than a year or two.

The Smart Set began in 1900 as a 25¢, 160-page, book-paper magazine claiming to publish sophisticated, up-to-date fiction by and about the members of high society. Though it actually found few authors in high society, it generally lived up to its sub-title, "A Magazine of Cleverness." In 1902 *Ainslee's Magazine,* which had begun as a general magazine, was made into a close imitation of *The Smart Set*, even unto its subtitle, "A Magazine of Clever Fiction," but at the lower price of 15¢. (The subtitle later became "The Magazine That Entertains.") Both published poetry, essays, playlets, and reviews as well as "complete novels" and short stories. Neither was illustrated. *The Red Book Magazine,* established in 1903 as a 10¢ short-story magazine, differed in that its fiction was profusely illustrated and in that each issue had about 48 pages of photographs of fashion models, actresses, and stage scenes. All three published one or two "sex-problem" stories in each issue, but *Ainslee's* and *The Red Book* tended to be less daring and less sophisticated than *The Smart Set*, and where *The Smart Set* had a standard two-color cover depicting a devil as puppeteer with a pair of lovers as marionettes, the full-color covers on the other two featured women in high-fashion clothing. Advertising in *The Red Book* ran to 48 pages or so in each issue, to somewhat fewer in *Ainslee's*, and still fewer in *The Smart Set.*

In 1912 William C. Clayton, later a publisher of action-adventure pulp magazines, left *The Smart Set*, whose title appeared on its cover with large swirling *S*'s, taking with him perhaps some manuscripts, certainly a list of authors, to establish *Snappy Stories,* which title also appeared with large swirling *S*'s. (Its subtitle, echoing *Ainslee's,* was "A Magazine of Entertaining Fiction.") It published poetry, playlets,





and reviews as well as fiction in its 128 book-paper pages; its price was 15¢, a high price for quantity-minded readers. It was a success from the start.

A sex-problem story is a story about such problems as are created by infidelity or pre-marital sex, often a satirical story in which, e.g., a wife repays her faithless husband in kind or a chorus girl retains her virginity while fleecing a millionaire, or a sentimental story in which a girl or woman is forgiven her sin on the grounds that it was committed under extraordinary circumstances. *Young's Magazine*, founded in 1897 as a kind of scandal sheet, became a standard book-paper magazine in 1908 and was perhaps the first such magazine devoted largely to sex-problem stories.

3. The Largest Magazines in the World, 1896-1914. In 1894 *The Argosy*, published by Frank A. Munsey, was a story paper (16 10x13 pages) for young people; in 1895 it was made into a 128-page illustrated general magazine in the standard format, a sort of *Munsey's* for young people. That experiment having met with little success, *The Argosy* was changed in 1896 to a 192-page pulp-paper fiction magazine publishing mainly stories for boys. It was still not a great success, but the boys' stories were gradually abandoned in favor of stories with heroes and heroines in their 20s or older rather than in their teens, and by 1905 it was, among American magazines, second in circulation only to *Munsey's*. It was "The Largest Magazine in the World"—192 pages of fiction (with some verse) for 10¢. It is not evident that anyone thought it unworthy because of the pulpwood paper used for the magazine proper. More important for the gist of this note, it was a middle-class magazine, with, in the November 1905 issue, 48 slick-paper advertising pages for merchandise of the same kinds as that advertised in the general magazines.

The Popular Magazine was established in 1903 as, according to Moskowitz (309-10), a 96-page boys' magazine, but in 1904 it was made into an all-fiction magazine similar to *The Argosy* and claiming the title of the world's largest magazine by printing on its cover "194 Pages Choice Fiction." In the November 1904 issue the magazine proper has 192 pulp-paper pages in 16-page sections and 2 slick-paper pages; that is, the first leaf of the rear slick-paper section is used for text rather than advertising. Since the word "magazine" laid claim to respectability, that word appears on the cover in type the same size as "Popular."

The Munsey Company added *The All-Story Magazine* to its list in 1905. It was edited by Robert H. (Bob) Davis, who would also launch *The Cavalier* in 1908. They differed from *The Argosy* only to the extent that Davis's editorial judgments differed from those of Matthew White, editor of the always more successful *Argosy*. Davis's magazines are of special interest to sf fans in that they published more sf than the other magazines.

The Blue Book Magazine was established in 1905, *People's Magazine* in 1906. The former published glossy-paper pages devoted to stage photos (with sometimes a full-color frontispiece) and pulp-paper pages devoted to fiction and a play-review department, "Stageland." The latter, according to Moskowitz, had the same format in 1908 (321).

In 1907 *The Popular* and *The Blue Book* raised their price to 15¢. *People's* followed in 1908, *The Argosy* and *The All-Story* in 1912. In 1907 *The Popular* and *The Blue Book* also increased their page-count to 224, setting off a new competition for the largest-magazine-in-the-world title. When *The Argosy* and *The All-Story* went to 15¢ they also went to 240 pages, which was promptly matched by *The Blue Book*. The page-count in *The Argosy* and *The All-Story* was eventually reduced. In 1916 *The Blue Book* is alone at 240 pulp-paper pages, the stage departments having been dropped. From 1912 through 1918, *The Popular* led the field in circulation; it had become a semimonthly in 1910.

These are all middle-class magazines. The covers, with few exceptions, are quite sedate, in many cases simply depicting a pretty girl. When action or activity is illustrated, it tends to be a social scene or an outdoor scene depicting manly activity not involving violent conflict, such as driving a dog-sled across a snow-covered landscape. Scenes depicting or suggesting violent action did begin to appear in 1912. In Volume 21 of *The Cavalier* (Oct 21-Nov 2, 1912) readers argue vehemently about a recent change in the magazine's cover, which now, to the embarrassment of some of them, illustrates a story. Since I have no 1912 issues of the magazine other than coverless ones in the bound volume specified, I cannot judge the extent to which violence is depicted. The cover of the February 15, 1913, issue depicts not violence itself but a result of violence: a gentleman in evening dress and a uniformed policeman have opened the door to the passenger compartment of a limousine and found a bound and gagged man whom they will presumably rescue. Several *Argosy* and *Blue Book* covers in 1912 and later depict a person startled or frightened by something not shown—that is, we seem to have the ancient theatrical policy of keeping the violence offstage. Be that as it may, none of the magazines of these years in my collection has a cover anywhere near as violent as those that were typical of many pulp magazines in the 1920s and '30s.

In March 1910 Street and Smith replaced its *Tip Top Weekly*, a 5¢ dime-novel series devoted to the adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell, with *Top-Notch Magazine*, priced at 10¢, with

the slogan "Tops Everything for Boys," edited by Burt L. Standish, the author of the Merriwell stories, and, though called a magazine, retaining the 8x11 dime-novel format until November, when it was turned over to a new editor and made into a standard 192-page magazine (Moskowitz 353-54). The October 1913 issue makes no reference to boys and in general appearance does not differ from the other pulp-paper magazines. It was still priced at 10¢.

The publishers of *Everybody's* launched *Adventure* in 1910 as a 15¢ monthly magazine of 192 pages. It gradually adopted a policy that defined "adventure stories" for the pulp-paper magazines: stories set in a romantic or fantastic past, in the American west, or, with white men as heroes, in Africa, Asia, or the South Seas. It became a semimonthly in 1917. *Short Stories* was taken over by Doubleday-Page in 1910 and changed to pulp paper. The 160-page issue dated June 1912 contains a complete novel reprinted from a 1906 book and nine short stories, all presumably original. At some point in the next few years, it modeled itself on *Adventure* in content and typography.

Gunter's Magazine was at some point between 1907 and 1910 taken over by Street and Smith. The April 1910 issue has 192 pulp-paper pages, plus four slick-paper pages for the table of contents and promotional material:

> "You have probably noticed that we have eliminated the illustrations from the pages of *Gunter's*, retaining only the pictorial headings. This is in line with our with our policy that 'the story's the thing.' We want to crowd into our 192 pages just as much fiction as we possibly can.... So much for quantity. As to quality—that is synonymous with *Gunter's*."

According to Moskowitz, *Gunter's* was replaced by *New Story Magazine* in November 1910 (349). The June 1912 *New Story* has the same format as the April 1910 *Gunter's*.

At the end of 1914 we have only ten pulp-paper fiction magazines. In all these magazines, except for *Short Stories* and *Adventure*, the first section is on slick paper. *The Argosy* consistently carried a considerable amount of advertising, *The All-Story* and *The Cavalier* somewhat less. *The Blue Book*, though it head-lined its advertising pages with "The Great Show Window of America," was less successful in this respect than *The Argosy*. The publishers of *Short Stories* and *Adventure* apparently made no effort in these years to promote their magazines as advertising media; the same may be said for Street and Smith with respect to *People's, Top-Notch,* and *New Story,* but they did profit from advertising in *The Popular*, whose September 7, 1914, issue has in its advertising pages a feature called "The Up-to-Date Man," apparently an effort to attract men's-wear advertising. It should also be noted that some of the advertising in the Munsey magazines and in *The Blue Book* and *The Popular* was for big-ticket items such as phonographs and automobiles.

The ragged edges disdained by Edward James were not peculiar to the pulp-paper magazines. In the October 1900 issue of *Munsey's*, Frank A. Munsey boasts of having three years before installed machinery that cut the leaves of his magazines; those who read other magazines in 1900 had to slit the folds with a paper knife—or take their copies to a printer for trimming. Other publishers sooner or later installed such machinery, so that the ragged edges produced by slitting wheels rather than trimmed edges are standard in standard magazines until about 1920. The few trimmed copies from these years in my collection were all taken by individual readers to a print shop for trimming, as is evident from the way the type and illustration on the covers crowd the top, bottom, and right edges in comparison to the left edge.

Although *The Argosy* and *The Popular* had their origins as juveniles, it was as "the largest magazines in the world" that they achieved their success. The first magazine to issue directly from a dime-novel series was *Top-Notch* in 1910. *Gunter's* and *Short Stories* as pulps had as their initial readers those who had read the earlier book-paper versions of the same title. *The Blue Book, The All-Story, People's, The Cavalier*, and *Adventure* were established as new magazines. As for the quality of the fiction, it was far from being "equally low-grade" as the dime novels (which continued to be published) but was instead largely written by the same writers as contributed fiction to the quality and popular general magazines. One example is H. Rider Haggard, who appeared in *Harper's* and *Munsey's* as well as *The Blue Book* and other pulp-paper magazines. Another is one Cyrus Townsend Brady, whose novels appear in issues I happen to have of *The Century, Lippincott's*, and *The All-Story*. A third is H.G. Wells, whose *Love and Mr Lewisham* was reprinted by and whose *Tono-Bungay* had its initial US publication in *The Popular*. It may also be added that all these magazines published poetry, most often short poems as page-end fillers but sometimes longer poems as features in their own right.

4. Three Magazines for Special Audiences. *Smith's Magazine* was established by Street and Smith in 1905 with Theodore Dreiser as editor. The first 12 issues contain sections of slick paper, glossy paper, and pulp paper. Since I have examined only the bound volumes, I cannot speak of the advertising sections. The slick and glossy pages in the magazine proper are elaborately illustrated with photographs and drawings, some in color. The fiction on the pulp-paper pages consists mostly of story-paper love stories such as appeared in *The New York*

Weekly, the Street and Smith story paper. Among the departments is one called "The Latest Fashions for Limited Incomes (Illustrated)." In sum, *Smith's* seems to be aimed at the lower middle class rather that at the readers of the other general magazines.

Inasmuch as in 1906 railroad workers were very numerous and perhaps the highest paid of all industrial workers, they formed an obvious audience for a specialized magazine. I have not seen a copy of *The Railroad Man's Magazine*; according to Moskowitz it was a "192-page ten-cent pulp, just as heavy on the fiction as on the fact, [and] copiously illustrated" (323), which would seem to indicate that it did not use slick paper for its illustrated articles.

Actors were relatively more numerous in 1911 than now, what with stock companies scattered across the land in large towns and small. The June 1914 issue of *The Green Book*, established in 1911 by the publishers of *The Red Book* and *The Blue Book*, is devoted in its articles and fiction entirely to the stage: 96 pages of articles illustrated with photographs on slick paper and 96 illustrated with drawings on pulp paper. The August 1917 issue is all pulp though illustrated with poorly reproduced halftones as well as drawings, and is almost entirely devoted to fiction. On the theater we now find only five pages of photos, one article, and a review department. *The Green Book* was still alive in 1920, though perhaps not for the full year. Advertisements in *The Red Book*, which make no mention of the theater, indicate that it is now devoted to careers for women, for the articles advertised are about women who have been successful in business or public affairs.

5. The Book-Paper Fiction Magazines 1913-1920. In 1914 *The Smart Set* was sold to a company managed by one E.F. Warner, who, by offering each a one-sixth interest in the magazine, recruited two famous critics, H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan, to take over the editing (Mott 4:260-61). *The Smart Set* was losing money, but Nathan and Mencken felt that they could manage money-making magazines similar to *Snappy Stories* just as well as their literary inferiors, so they established the first of what they called their "louse magazines," *The Parisienne*. In 1916 they challenged *Snappy Stories* directly with *Saucy Stories*, and in 1920 they established *Black Mask* to publish mystery and adventure stories. All three proved profitable for a time, and thus made possible the continuation of *The Smart Set*, which they edited for the fun of it rather than money.

The first response to the success of *Snappy Stories* had come from Street and Smith, the publisher of *Ainslee's*, who launched *Women Stories* in 1913, changing the title after a few issues to *Live Stories*. Its January 1916 issue has 160 book-paper pages and is priced at 15¢. The publication of its March 1916 issue resulted in the arrest of its nominal publisher, one George C. Dodge, on the charge of publishing indecent literature. Dodge was discharged by the court after stating that he "had destroyed all existing copies of the magazine and had discontinued its publication" (*Publisher's Weekly*, 89:1268, Apr 15, 1916). The magazine was then sold to Clayton's company and made a companion to *Snappy Stories*.

The Young company established *Breezy Stories* in 1915. William Clayton, who disappears from my sources in 1917, having sold his company and perhaps gone to war, returned in 1919 to establish *Telling Tales*. One is tempted to say that the first US genre-magazines were those devoted to the sex-problem story, but in truth it is cleverness (or attempts thereat) that best characterizes all the magazines that sprang up in the wake of *The Smart Set*, for they all published many stories in which sexual misbehavior plays no part at all. Moreover, both *The Smart Set* and *Ainslee's* laid claim to literary excellence and, in their reviews, to critical acumen, a claim surely justified in the Mencken-Nathan issues of *The Smart Set*. John Held Jr got his start in *The Parisienne*; Dorothy Parker reviewed plays in *Ainslee's*.

By 1917 the war in Europe had made book paper scarce and expensive, so that all these magazines, *The Red Book* excepted, went to pulp paper. The 15¢ magazines went to 20¢ and *The Smart Set*, calling itself "The Aristocrat of Magazines," to 35¢, which kept it, by price definition, among the quality magazines even though it now used pulp paper.

6. The Pulp-Paper Magazines 1915-1920. The successful conversion by Street and Smith of the *Tip-Top Weekly* to *Top-Notch Magazine* in 1910 led in 1915 to their conversion of the *Nick Carter Weekly* to *Detective Story Magazine* and in 1919 to that of the *Buffalo Bill Weekly* to *Western Story Magazine*. But Nick Carter and Buffalo Bill were soon replaced by such detectives and ranchers and cowboys as had in recent years become common in fiction and general magazines as well as in books. Both magazines developed as 15¢ weeklies of 144 pages.

The competition to provide the largest magazine in the world could not survive the rising costs of the war years. The pulp magazines discussed above had either to reduce pages or raise prices. Most of them did both, so that 20¢ and 192 pages became standard for the old-line pulp-paper magazines other than those published by Munsey, whose prices returned to 10¢ and whose pages were by 1920 down to 160.

The Munsey company began the consolidation of its magazines in 1912 by "merging" *The Scrap Book*[2] with *The Cavalier*; that is, by transferring the subscribers of the former to the latter, which is all magazine mergers usually

amount to. *The Cavalier* became a weekly at the same time. In March 1914 *The All-Story* followed suit, absorbing *The Cavalier* two months later. *The Argosy* became a weekly in 1917, absorbed *Railroad Man's* in 1918, and *All-Story* in 1920. *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* (the *The* having been dropped from the title) began with a circulation of almost 500,000, reassuming the position of leadership *Argosy* had held up to 1912.

The August 1919 *Ainslee's* has an advertisement for "the New *Smith's*," with stories of "men and women, their lives and their loves, showing generally the more sophisticated side of life, and no sex problem is dodged if it is human, genuine, and delicately handled." Even so, the new *Smith's* looks more like *Adventure* than *Snappy Stories*, for many of its stories are set in far-off romantic places. The 1920 issues in my collection are unusual for pulp-paper magazines at this time in having in the magazine proper two 16-page slick-paper sections.

Adventure added slick-paper advertising sections in 1919; *Short Stories* presumably did the same at about the same time. But advertising was on the decline in the pulp-paper magazines; their circulations, once comparable to but now much smaller than those of general magazines, had made them less attractive to advertisers. Street and Smith responded to this fact by introducing the Street and Smith Combination; henceforth *Ainslee's* and *Smith's* and the first issue each month of its other magazines would carry the same advertisements on three cover pages and in the pages of the slick-paper section, which would differ from magazine to magazine only in the table-of-contents page. *Argosy All-Story Weekly* would still carry more advertising even though its circulation was only about half that of the S&S Combination.

7. The Pulps in the 1920s and Later. In 1921 William C. Clayton turned from the cleverness of *Telling Tales* to establish *Ace-High Magazine*, devoted to western, adventure, and sports stories; in that same year the Fiction House company founded *Action Stories*. In 1922 E.F. Warner brought several minor publishers together as the News Stand Group, furnishing *The Smart Set*, *Black Mask*, *Young's*, *Breezy Stories*, *Snappy Stories*, *Live Stories*, *Ace-High*, *Telling Tales*, and *Action Stories* with a slick-paper section that guaranteed advertisers an audited circulation of a million copies each month.[3] Though the slick-paper supplement lasted only a few years, the News Stand Group continued to supply ad copy to various pulps well into the 1930s. One can imagine the chagrin of Nathan and Mencken at this association of *The Smart Set* with the "louse magazines" from which they had tried to keep their distance; at any rate, they cashed in their interest and left to establish *The American Mercury*. *The Smart Set* survived for a time as a 9x12 slick-paper general magazine. Its old rival, *Ainslee's*, survived a few years by reprinting such novels as Wells's *Ann Veronica*.

In 1921 Street and Smith replaced *Smith's*, a magazine for women, with *Love Story*, a magazine for girls, declaring that

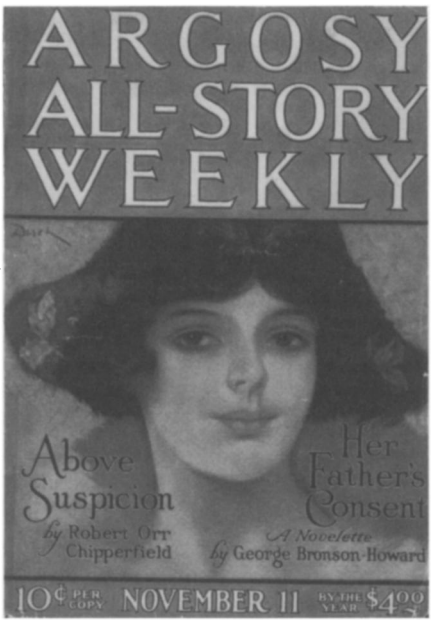
> *Love Story* is *not* just another of those sex-problem magazines that have done so much harm in recent years. *Love Story* is clean at heart, and its stories are written around the love of the one man for the one woman. (Reynolds 197).

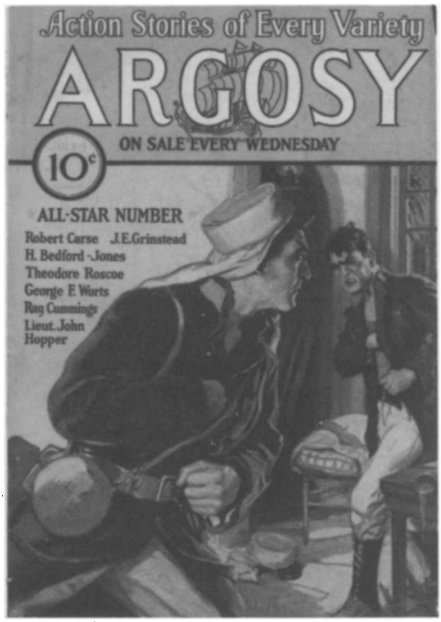
Munsey did the same sort of thing in 1929 when it replaced *Munsey's*, now a pulp-paper fiction magazine, with *All-Story: Love Stories of the Modern Girl*. The magazines of cleverness (though *Breezy Stories* was to last into the 1950s) were to fade away in the '20s and early '30s, for women (as opposed to girls), it is evident, had come to prefer reading about sex problems in the slick pages of *Cosmopolitan* or *The Red Book* or in such new downscale slicks as *True Story*.

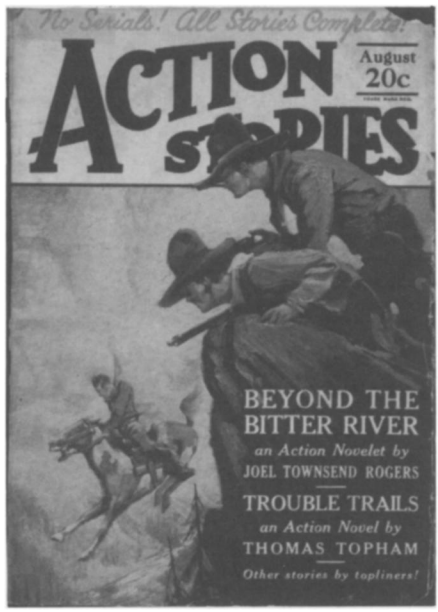
In 1924 Street and Smith replaced *People's* with *Complete Story*. Words like "popular" and "everybody," which once opposed the middle class to the aristocracy or its American equivalent, "people of quality," had come, in literary matters at least, to indicate the lower classes. Where books once had titles like *Mathematics for the Millions*, they now have titles like *The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science*.

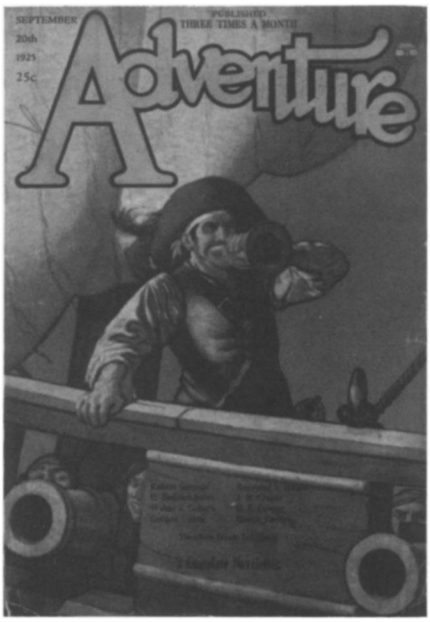
Street and Smith had established the trend to narrowly specialized magazines with *Detective Story*, *Western Story*, and *Love Story*, and continued to lead the way with *Sea Stories* and *Sport Stories*. There were to be no new general-fiction pulp-paper magazines like *The Blue Book*, *The Popular*, or *Argosy-Allstory*. The Clayton and Fiction House lines would expand gradually through the 1920s, as would Dell Magazines, with such titles as *Ranch Romances*, *Clues*, *Air Stories*, *Love Romances*, *Sweetheart Stories*, *War Stories*, and even, as commentators love to point out, *Submarine Stories*. In 1924 the Munsey company established *Flynn's* (later *Detective Fiction Weekly*, *Formerly Flynn's*), and in 1929, as indicated above, not only shortened the name of its leading weekly to *Argosy*, but narrowed its content from fiction of actually all varieties to "Action Stories of Every Variety": compare the 1922 and 1931 covers on the facing page.

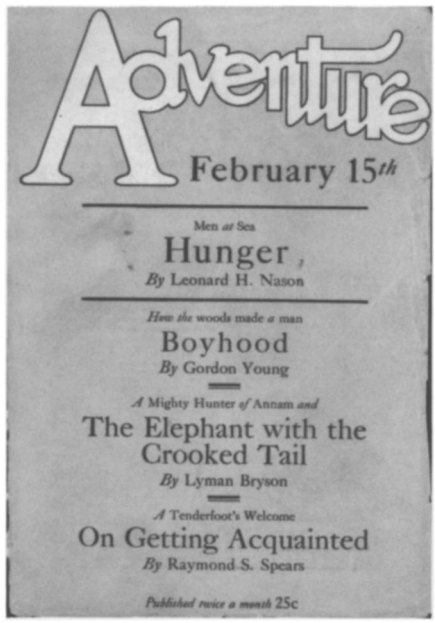
The Clayton, Fiction House, and Dell chains were built up title by title. In 1928-29 the future of pulpdom was foreshadowed by the almost simultaneous launching first of the Hersey Magazines and then of the Red and Blue Band Magazines, each with a dozen or so titles (Hersey 40-41, 292-93). Neither line was a lasting success, but in the early 1930s mass-editing was successfully joined to mass-production by two new











publishers, Harry Steegar of Popular Publications (who once boasted of having issued 42 titles in a single month [Goodstone v]) and Ned Pines of the Thrilling Group, as well as by some lesser firms. The total number of pulps on the stands increased from perhaps 40 in 1927 to as many as two hundred by 1937.

The Popular declined in the 1920s, though just when the decline began is not clear, its circulation figures being hidden within those of the Street and Smith Combination, and died in 1931. The circulation of *Argosy-Allstory* also declined; the figure for the three-magazine Munsey Combination is for 1928 less than that for *Argosy-Allstory* alone in 1922. The decline can be attributed to the growing number of pulp-paper magazines and the bewilderment of readers choosing from a host of magazines that all looked much the same. For a few months in 1926-27 *Adventure* appeared in the format of a quality magazine, looking much like the *Scribner's* of the same period; i.e., with book paper, and, instead of illustrations, interior decorations by Rockwell Kent (one of the most admired artists of the day, noted for, among other things, his edition of *Moby Dick*), at first with plain covers and then with cover designs by Kent of a symbolic nature. This attempt to find new readers among those who presumably would not touch a pulp magazine did not succeed; pulp paper returned and Kent was replaced by less prestigious and less expensive illustrators. Even so, *Adventure* prospered in the 1920s and until the saturation of the market in the 1930s, at which time it fell into Harry Steeger's hands and was given covers like the fourth on the facing page.[4]

The Blue Book and *Short Stories* also prospered in the 1920s, and even in the 1930s and later managed to survive independent of the big chains. *Short Stories* had a most distinctive cover design, one that featured a large red circular disk suggesting a setting or rising sun, with the illustration sometimes resembling the first of the *Adventure* covers reproduced here, but also, alas, sometimes resembling the fourth.

The social decline of the old-line pulps can be seen in the slick-paper advertising sections, which in 1925 still carried some advertising for automobiles but thereafter only for cheap luxuries or necessities or for correspondence courses. The slick-paper sections that had appeared in *Argosy-Allstory* every week now appeared only once a month and about 1931 disappeared altogether. A page-count claim on a magazine cover, which had earlier included only the text, now included the advertising pages.

It continued to be true that most of the contributors to the big slicks also published in the pulps. Detective stories remained frequent in the general magazines as well as fiction magazines, and it is simply not true that the big slicks ceased to publish fast-paced adventure stories. Writers were said to graduate from the pulps to the big slicks, but the big-slick market was not large enough, even at the high rates it paid, to make popular authors as rich as they wanted to be, or to keep them busy, so with few exceptions they continued to sell also to the pulps.

The depression increased the total sales of pulp-paper magazines, which along with the movies offered an inexpensive form of entertainment, but the glutting of the market drastically reduced the sale of individual titles. By 1936 Popular Publications and the Thrilling Group had passed Street and Smith in total circulation. The Munsey titles were sold to Popular Publications in 1938, bringing the life of the old *Argosy* effectively to an end. Munsey should have held out a bit longer, for pulp-magazine sales boomed during the war years, when anything printed could be sold. The sales of Popular Publications reached 2,243,000 copies per month in the first half of 1946. During the war Street and Smith, using almost all its paper allotment for publications more profitable than pulps, had dropped most of its titles and changed its weekly and semimonthly pulps to monthlies or bimonthlies; in 1946 it published only four issues per month. In 1948 it sold everything pulp (back-issue copyrights as well as magazine titles) but *Astounding* to Popular Publications. But even Popular Publications could not survive the competition now offered by paperback books, so that by 1955 the pulp era had come to a close. And, for that matter, so had the era of the big slicks. The present-day *Cosmopolitan* and *Redbook* are nothing like the big slicks of the inter-war years.

8. The General Magazines 1912-1930. The decline of *Harper's* and *The Century* vis-à-vis the popular magazines had already begun in 1904. In the period 1912-1925 they declined vis-à-vis *The Atlantic*, which had never used illustrations and hence had never flourished by providing entertainment to people of quality. Between 1920 and 1925 they both dropped illustrations and emulated *The Atlantic* in seriousness; *Harper's* succeeded, *The Century* faded away. *Scribner's* survived into the 1930s by featuring modernist fiction, but then attempted glossiness in a 9x12 format and died.

For some years by 1913, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* had been demonstrating that advertisers preferred pages larger that 7x10 and pages on which advertisements were mingled with the text of stories or articles. In 1913 *The American*, which had been seriously concerned with social questions, turned editorially to optimistic human-interest articles and stories and typographically to the dimensions 9x12, with advertising no longer segregated in discardable sections. *McClure's* ceased to segregate advertising at about the same time and in

1915 adopted an 11x14 page. *Cosmopolitan, Everybody's, The Metropolitan,* and *Hearst's* soon followed into one or the other of the larger sizes. Two fiction magazines, *People's* and *The Red Book,* also made the change, the former unsuccessfully and so only temporarily, but the latter with great success. Advertisers now demanded larger and larger circulations. By 1920 *The American, Cosmopolitan,* and *The Red Book,* leaving the others far behind, had joined *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post* in a top five. *Hearst's* was absorbed by *Cosmopolitan. McClure's* and *Everybody's* attempted various expedients, including a return to the 7x10 size; the former faded away, the latter eventually became a pulp-paper fiction magazine, a sort of little sister to *Adventure,* its erstwhile little brother. *Munsey's,* which alone among the general magazines had resisted the trend, also became a fiction pulp.

9. Conclusion. It is of course true that there were in the 19th century, and are even today, people who shun magazines with covers that suggest sex or depict violence and would, if they read such magazines, keep them hidden, and who as parents, would seize and trash such magazines if they found them in the hands of their children. But to assume that this attitude extended to all pulp-paper magazines is absurd.

For critics in the 1920s "pulp" had come to mean cheapness in the sense of shoddiness; "slick" had long meant expertise in fraudulent or worthless endeavors. Worthwhile fiction, it was held, appeared not on pulp paper and not on slick paper but on book paper in books or in serious magazines like *The Atlantic* or the converted *Harper's.* But these were critical terms, unknown to people who did not read reviews and who would have been a bit surprised that literary and cultural critics considered worthless not only such magazines as *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* but also such as *The Saturday Evening Post,* which in the interwar was virtually the bible of the great American middle class. Latter-day commentators have confused the attitudes of literary people with those of people in general.

And, after all, what is wrong with pulpwood paper? If it had not been invented and developed, we would not have the newspapers we read nor the paperback books we have become accustomed to. Paperback books are the pulps of today, and some appear with covers that cause "respectable people" to turn away.

NOTES

1. Sam Moskowitz is the honorable exception. I have drawn on his work for information for which I have at hand no direct evidence.

2. See Moskowitz for an account of the complicated history of this magazine, which I cannot detail on the basis of the one issue in my collection, and also for an account of a second Munsey magazine of which I have no copy, *The Ocean,* later *The Live Wire* (321-26).

3. The guarantee was met by running the section in both issues each month of the several semi-monthlies in the Group, so that there is in Ayer no audited figure for average per-issue circulation. The Street and Smith and Munsey combinations, on the other hand, ran the slick-paper advertising section in only one issue of each magazine per month.

4. Steeger did for the pulps in the 1930s what had been done for general magazines in the 1890s by Frank A. Munsey, who had bought out failing magazines and "merged" them with his own magazines. Some subscribers to *Godey's* may not have been happy to find their subscriptions completed with issues of *The Argosy,* but then some may have been, for it was for the sake of possible renewals that Munsey had bought the subscription list.

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