

**THE PUBLISHING EMPIRE OF BERNARR MACFADDEN**

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**A Thesis**  
**Presented to**  
**the Faculty of the Graduate School**  
**University of Missouri**



**In Partial Fulfillment**  
**of the Requirements for the Degree**  
**Master of Arts in Journalism**

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**by**  
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**June 1958**

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have  
examined a thesis entitled

THE PUBLISHING EMPIRE OF BERNARR MACFADDEN

presented by Alexander Markovich

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Scope of the thesis. Bernarr Macfadden has often been written up in magazines and newspapers, and he has been the subject of a handful of biographies. This is not hard to understand when one learns something about the man. Macfadden was a nonconformist and an exhibitionist; everything he did was newsworthy.

What is hard to understand, however, is why his publishing achievements have so consistently been neglected or played down. Publisher Macfadden at one time or another controlled ten daily newspapers. His bold entry into the magazine field resulted in a chain of fabulously successful magazines which at one time had the nation's highest circulation.<sup>1</sup> From the forty-two different Macfadden magazines a new trend evolved in periodical literature, a trend which is today still very much in evidence.

This thesis, in dealing primarily with the Macfadden publications, will attempt to fill this vacancy. Yet in addition to a description of these publications, I believe it is necessary, in order to reach a complete and accurate understanding of Macfadden and the reasons why he embarked

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:44, October 28, 1950.

upon his journalistic career, to delve briefly into his early life, his beliefs and his extra-journalistic activities. Chapter III and, to a fairly large extent, Chapters II and VII deal with these aspects of Macfadden's life.

Organization. I have attempted to arrange the thesis chronologically wherever possible. The sole exceptions are the sections on the two aspects of Macfadden's journalistic career, his magazines and his newspapers. Though running concurrently, these phases, I believe, can best be discussed in separate chapters, even at the expense of breaking up the normal chronology. Each of these chapters, however, within itself, proceeds chronologically.

Sources. I have tried to use primary source material whenever possible. Information for Chapters IV, V and VI, dealing with Macfadden's magazines and newspapers, was gleaned primarily from the publications themselves. However, for information on Macfadden's early life and many of his other activities it was necessary to consult secondary sources.

Care had to be used in selection of data; many of the sources offered contradictory or otherwise obviously misleading information. Macfadden was a man who inspired among his associates and acquaintances either great admiration or great animosity, resulting in biographies

that were prejudiced more than slightly in one direction or the other.

Probably the best known works on Macfadden are the biographies written by Fulton Oursler, Clement Wood and Grace Perkins Oursler;<sup>2</sup> all three authors were employees of Macfadden, and their books all came out within one year. One writer claims that these biographies were ordered, censored, proofread and paid for by Macfadden.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not this assertion is true, one fact remains indisputable; no man could possibly be as admirable as the protagonist of these three books.

Grace Perkins Oursler's book is concerned primarily with trivia, with the Macfadden family home life, physical culture cooking recipes and other similar human-interest material; therefore I drew little upon this book for information.

The Clement Wood and Fulton Oursler biographies are virtually carbon copies of each other; the organization of the books is similar, and even certain phrases are

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<sup>2</sup>Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, 1929); Clement Wood, Bernarr Macfadden; A Study in Success, (New York, Lewis Copeland Company, 1929); Grace Perkins Oursler, Chats With the Macfadden Family, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company Inc., 1929).

<sup>3</sup>Allene Talmey, "Millions from Dumb-bells," Outlook and Independent, 155:162, June 4, 1930.



suspiciously alike. However, after digging a little deeper through the flowery words of praise, I was able to uncover much valuable data on Macfadden's early life. Certain correlations seem to indicate that many of the magazine articles on Macfadden also drew heavily on these books.

Still another biography, written by Macfadden's third wife, Mary, and Emile Gauvreau, former editor of one of Macfadden's newspapers,<sup>4</sup> is slanted in the opposite direction. Gauvreau had had a misunderstanding with Macfadden over editorial policy, resulting in his resignation.<sup>5</sup> Mary Macfadden, divorced by her husband after years of court battles,<sup>6</sup> is presently suing the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation, a non-profit organization founded by Macfadden.<sup>7</sup>

A series of three articles in The New Yorker titled "Profiles," written by Robert Lewis Taylor,<sup>8</sup> seems less prejudiced than most of the other material, and provided

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<sup>4</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953).

<sup>5</sup>The New York Times, 34:7, July 9, 1929.

<sup>6</sup>The New York Times, 21:4, January 10, 1946.

<sup>7</sup>Personal communication to the author from Edward Bodin, president of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation.

<sup>8</sup>These articles appeared in the October 14, 21 and 28, 1950, issues.

me with helpful data.

Macfadden himself wrote an autobiographical series titled "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," which appeared in 1933 and 1934 in his Physical Culture magazine. This, too, added much to an understanding of his early life.

Macfadden's relatives and many of his friends unfortunately were reticent; however, Edward Bodin, president of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation, and Rabbi Max Felshin, a director of the Foundation, supplied me with much valuable data, as did Felix May, editor of Physical Culture.

Countless other articles, in books, magazines, and newspapers too numerous to mention here, filled in the many other details of this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF APPRAISAL

The "Father of Physical Culture." On the night of May 25, 1945, Carnegie Hall was packed with 2,200 eager disciples of Bernarr Macfadden. Speaking on "The Joyous Life"- How to Live It" Macfadden turned on his old-time elan for 100 minutes and a new faith, Cosmotarianism, was born. The cardinal tenet of this "religion which tries to bring some of heaven down to earth" was that if man cherishes his God-given body the Kingdom of Heaven will surely follow.<sup>1</sup> In this field of physical culture lies Macfadden's principal claim to fame.

Few people thought of Bernarr Macfadden as an editor and journalist;<sup>2</sup> he was better known as the advocate of health measures that often verged on cultism.<sup>3</sup> In strange, often bizarre, ways he built his body up and kept himself vigorous. His experiments on his own body usually started him on crusades through which he attempted to impart his newly-gained wisdom to the rest of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Newsweek, 25:93, June 4, 1945

<sup>2</sup>Time, 28:44, September 21, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>Britannica Book of the Year (Chicago, Toronto, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1956), p.515.

<sup>4</sup>Fulton Oursler, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met", The Reader's Digest, 59:82, July, 1951.

No man ever advertised himself more flamboyantly. He was a master showman, and the public soon became familiar with his sharp hawklike face, his long bushy hair and his muscular torso and thighs in scores of magazines, newspapers and books, as well as in movies and television.<sup>5</sup>

Macfadden was indeed an impressive specimen of physical development. Nicholas Murray, his photographer who snapped him in many a "classic" pose, described him at sixty years of age in these words:

His shoulders were broad, as if built to support massive burdens. The muscles rippling under the velvet of his skin rippled like the tensing muscles of a leopard; then they clicked into place, firm, obedient to his will, unimprovable. His chest had a mighty expansion; his stomach muscles were like living steel, and there was no trace at all of a paunch, that headline of careless living almost universal at this age.<sup>6</sup>

A magazine article presented this vivid, though slightly tongue-in-cheek, description:

Physically, he was a striking specimen. His perfectly muscled body was only 5 feet 6 inches high, his visage was stern, beaked and remorseless, his eyes of a peculiar hazel which became somberly multicolored in moments of passion. His teeth were none too good—perhaps because he believed that the cure for toothache was to chew hard on a piece of mahogany ("massage", he called it). He always slept soundly; even when many anxieties were on his mind, his snores resounded "like coal going down a chute." Though his joints cracked

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>6</sup> Clement Wood, Bernarr Macfadden: A Study in Success, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1927), p.136.

like muskets when he did his one-legged heave-ups, he was determined to outlive any other man of his generation and be a second Napoleon. Not that he approved entirely of Napoleon, who, he often said, "filled himself full of onion soup and brandy before the battle of Waterloo. That fixed him for keeps."<sup>7</sup>

Many of the followers that he accumulated throughout his long career looked upon him as a god.<sup>8</sup> Clement Wood, one of his many biographers, probably spoke for a great number of Macfadden's devoted disciples when he wrote: "Somehow you feel like shading your eyes a trifle, when you come close to him."<sup>9</sup>

Known to many as the "Father of Physical Culture," Macfadden was undoubtedly sincere in his efforts to spread health and physical well-being to the masses; yet he had the rare talent of being able to combine shrewd business policy with his humanitarianism. No one in the United States ever found health as profitable.<sup>10</sup>

Macfadden's health theories. Macfadden's major health tenet, to which all others were subordinate, was that there is but one true disease; "impurity of the blood." The one cure, fasting, enabled the famished body

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<sup>7</sup>"Life With a Genius," Time, 61:120, April 20, 1953.

<sup>8</sup>"Macfadden's Family," Time, 28:44, September 21, 1936.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", Newsweek, 5:27, June 29, 1935.

to devour its own diseased tissue.<sup>11</sup>

In one of his many books Macfadden wrote:

[Disease] is a condition. There is a cause for every disease, manifested in a variety of "symptoms". These symptoms are too often mistaken for the disease itself . . . whereas they are only its outward manifestations . . . we must . . . discover and remove the cause; . . . the symptoms will disappear of themselves.<sup>12</sup>

He prescribed his therapy of fasting for such diseases as bronchitis, asthma, epilepsy, paralysis, obesity, constipation, heart disease, insomnia, diabetes, impotence, dyspepsia, kidney ailments, bladder trouble and many other ailments, most of them serious, stating confidently that fasting would "help and generally cure" these conditions.<sup>13</sup> Claiming mental as well as physical benefits, Macfadden fasted often for periods of from three to fourteen days,<sup>14</sup> and once went without food for three weeks.<sup>15</sup>

Other Macfadden tenets were eating healthy foods, brief swimsuits and sunbathing,<sup>16</sup> and physical training and exercise for good health. He pioneered the low-heel shoe, the bed-board and enriched flour, and attacked the old-

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<sup>11</sup>"Life With a Genius," op. cit., p. 121

<sup>12</sup> Bernarr Macfadden, Fasting for Health, (New York: Macfadden Book Company, Inc., 1923), p.2.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker 26:50, October 21, 1950; Macfadden, Fasting for Health, loc. cit.; Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929) p.148

<sup>14</sup>The New York Times, 22:2, May 24, 1923.

<sup>15</sup>Personal communication to the author from Edward Bodin, President of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation.

fashioned corset, fear of night air, eating from habit rather than hunger, sex-prudery, tobacco, alcohol and drugs.<sup>16</sup>

From even a casual reading of his many works, it becomes apparent that Macfadden's "Perfect State" would have been peopled by beings with godlike physiques, all devotees of exercise, fresh air, fasting, milk, fresh vegetables, daily beauty contests for men as well as women and daily recitals in unison of the Macfadden physical culture creed:<sup>17</sup>

We believe . . . that our bodies are our most glorious possession, that health-wealth is our greatest asset . . . Weakness is truly a crime . . . Sickness is a penalty of violated health laws.

We believe that the requirements of building glorious health are . . . pure air . . . vital foods well masticated . . . cold baths . . . hot baths . . . dry friction . . . right mental attitude.<sup>18</sup>

It is ~~this~~ belief in the importance of the human body that is responsible for the growth of the Macfadden Publications, one of the largest and most profitable publishing enterprises of our times.

During the decade preceding the turn of the century, the topic of health received far less attention from the

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<sup>16</sup> Bernarr Macfadden, Macfadden's Physical Training (New York: The Macfadden Company, Inc., 1900), pp. 6, 100-104; "Life With a Genius", op. cit., p.122; Bernarr Macfadden, Strength From Eating, (New York: Physical Culture Publishing Company Inc., 1901), p.12; Bernarr Macfadden, Marriage a Lifelong Honeymoon, (New York: Physical Culture Publishing Company, 1903), pp.106-10, 162, 168, 188; "Macfadden Steps Down," Newsweek, 17:59, March 10, 1941

<sup>17</sup> Henry F. Pringle, Big Frogs, (New York: Macy-Masius . The Vanguard Press, 1928), pp. 117, 118.

<sup>18</sup> "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium" loc.cit.

American public than it does today. In his attempt to awaken public interest in health matters, Macfadden had to become a publisher, for no editor would print what he had to say.<sup>19</sup>

The controversy. From the very start of his journalistic career he was a controversial figure. There were those who worshipped him as their savior, others who considered him a crackpot. He himself wrote: ". . . I was referred to as a crank and a fanatic - 'nutty' some people called me. I had to go through a certain amount of persecution and prosecution. Every enthusiastic reformer has to suffer in a similar manner."<sup>20</sup> Still others accused him of being a scandal monger and vulgarian pandering to the lowest instincts of the mob.<sup>21</sup>

Probably Macfadden was a little of all three, but whatever were his faults, it must be admitted that he was a man of some stature. His contributions to journalism, though not always of the most noble nature, were not insignificant. His basic health principles and practices helped

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<sup>19</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Celebrating Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXIX:4, March 1933.

<sup>21</sup>Pringle, op. cit., pp. 118, 119; Allene Talme, "Millions from Dumb-bells," Outlook and Independent, 155:164, June 4, 1930.



tremendously to make the nation health-conscious.<sup>22</sup>

At his editorial peak he published over twenty magazines whose combined circulation was sixteen million a month.<sup>23</sup> By 1931 he had accumulated a fortune of thirty million dollars.<sup>24</sup> Yet strangely he used little of his money for his own personal purposes; it went instead to start several charities and other enterprises which he hoped would help to propagate his health practices and theories.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), p. 378.

<sup>23</sup>"Life With a Genius", op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>24</sup>Time, 66:102, October 24, 1955.

<sup>25</sup>"Macfadden: 'A Lowly Crusader' Reviews His Life, in Two Parts," Newsweek, 6:36, December 14, 1935.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EARLY YEARS

Childhood. Bernard Adolphus McFadden was born on August 16, 1868, the son of John R. and Elizabeth Mary (Miller) McFadden.<sup>1</sup> His birthplace was an austere two-room farmhouse by the Black River of Wayne County, Missouri, some two miles from the village of Mill Springs.<sup>2</sup>

His father, the son of a rich southern planter, kept the family in constant poverty through his love of horse races and corn whiskey.<sup>3</sup> His tubercular mother passed on to him, the oldest of three children and the only boy, a legacy of physical frailness and sickness; the little weakling suffered all the childhood ailments, and his recoveries were slow. When less than two years old, he fell into a tub of boiling water on washday and almost died. He bore scars on his back from this incident until he was

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<sup>1</sup>Some years later he changed his name to Bernarr Macfadden, which, he felt, sounded more distinctive: Henry F. Pringle, Big Frog, (New York: Macy-Masius. The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Clement Wood, Bernarr Macfadden; A Study in Success, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), pp. 16, 17; Pringle, op. cit., p. 122; Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), pp. 42, 43; "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", Newsweek, 5:27, June 29, 1935.

<sup>3</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 43; Thomas Dixon, A Dreamer in Portugal, (New York: Covici-Friede - Publishers, 1934), p. 19.

almost fourteen, and was left with a fear of water which took him many years to conquer.<sup>4</sup>

His father's heavy drinking resulted in fits and rages so violent that Mrs. McFadden frequently had to flee with Bernarr and his sister to the safety of a neighbor's home.<sup>5</sup>

Finally Mrs. McFadden left John, taking her two children with her. Once he came to her, pleading for another chance, and she returned. But the reunion was short-lived, and when Bernarr was less than four years old she again left, for the last time.<sup>6</sup>

She went with her children to live with her parents in Ironton, forty miles upstate. There her second daughter was born.<sup>7</sup>

Once more John returned to plead, but this time he was refused, and so he left. Soon after, he died in a drunken stupor.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Oursler, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., pp. 27, 30.

<sup>5</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 43; "Walking: Macfadden Runs Derby for Publicity, Profit, and Proof", Newsweek, 5:17, May 18, 1935.

<sup>6</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 28

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 28,29.

<sup>8</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", loc. cit.; Pringle, op. cit., p. 121; Oursler, loc. cit..

Unwilling to burden her parents, Mrs. McFadden took her children to Chicago, but poverty soon forced her to send her son to a cheap and disreputable boarding school, where the children were starved and mistreated.<sup>9</sup>

In a few months his mother returned for him, but before long he was again sent away, this time to live with relatives who ran a hotel near Chicago. Here he was put to work doing countless menial chores; he emptied spittoons, shined shoes and rarely went to school.<sup>10</sup>

One day, when he was ten, he was told that his mother had died of tuberculosis. That night, as he lay awake in bed, he overheard his relatives predict that from the sound of his hacking cough he too would soon suffer his mother's fate. The boy wanted to rebel against this fate, but he did not know how.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after his mother's death, his relatives gave up their unprofitable hotel, and Bernarr was "bound out" to an Illinois farmer, Robert Hunter.<sup>12</sup>

His work on the farm was hard, and not at all

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<sup>9</sup>Wood, op.cit., p. 32; Oursler, op. cit., pp. 43,44: Oursler compares this school to those of Dickens' novels, stating that "the boys ate peanuts, shells and all" in the institution.

<sup>10</sup>Wood, op. cit., p.33; Oursler, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>11</sup>Pringle, op. cit., p. 121; Oursler, op. cit., pp. 44, 45; Wood, op. cit., pp. 34, 35.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles", The New Yorker, 26;39, October 21, 1950; Wood, op. cit., p. 36.

pleasing to the child. The farmer, convinced that adopted boys usually run away when they arrive at an age where they can do a man's work, was determined to get his money's worth as early as possible. And so, for nine months of the year the boy had to work from sunrise to sunset, just for his bed and board.<sup>13</sup>

Once the child got his hands on a cigar, smoked it, and became thoroughly sick. From that day on he was violently opposed to the use of tobacco.<sup>14</sup>

He disliked Sunday School and the Presbyterian sermons, and even in adulthood was never religious. Physical culture probably became the nearest thing to religion that he ever had.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, life with Hunter was becoming more and more unpleasant. When the farmer refused to pay for mending the boy's boots, which had become ludicrously worn, Bernarr decided to run away. Years later he looked upon

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<sup>13</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, 69:19,20, April 1933; Pringle, op. cit., p. 122; Oursler, op. cit. p. 45.

<sup>14</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 35; Oursler, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>15</sup>Harold Brainerd Hersey, Pulpwood Editor, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1937), p. 211; Wood, op. cit., p. 36.

his two years on the farm as a blessing in disguise. The twelve-year-old, once a frail weakling, had become strong and healthy from the hard work and outdoor air.<sup>16</sup>

He set off for St. Louis, where he had an uncle, Harvey Miller.<sup>17</sup> As he had no carfare, he would board a train and sit reading a cast-off newspaper until the conductor arrived. Then he would explain that he did not have a dime to his name. Sometimes he was thrown off at the next station, but more often on the roadbed.<sup>18</sup>

When finally he arrived at St. Louis, his uncle took him in but was too poor to support him.<sup>19</sup> And so Bernarr took a job as delivery boy in a small grocery owned by another uncle, Crum K. Miller. In an ashcan he found a high silk hat, cutaway coat and a pair of striped trousers, which seemed to the boy a luxurious wardrobe indeed. He made the rounds at ever-increasing speed, but his ambition went unrewarded. And so after almost a year he took a job as route boy for a mercantile agency. After

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<sup>16</sup>Macfadden, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., pp. 40-42; Oursler, op. cit., p. 47

<sup>17</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Wood, loc. cit.; Taylor, loc. cit.

a few months he became an office boy in a grocery brokerage, earning the munificent salary of three dollars, and later five dollars, a week, and then became a clerk in a general store where his uncle Harvey was a bookkeeper.<sup>20</sup>

However, those years of city life and confining office work took a toll, and by the time young Macfadden was fifteen his hacking cough had returned and he acquired one cold after another. Doctors prescribed pills and drugs, salesmen sold him patent medicines, but nothing seemed to help.<sup>21</sup> Macfadden later wrote in one of his magazines, ". . . all my sufferings served to impress upon my mind a lesson that I was never to forget . . . the importance of health, the most precious asset that any man or woman can possess."<sup>22</sup>

A gymnast. Then came a time which Macfadden later called "a glad day in my despairing life, the day of awakening."<sup>23</sup> While walking with his uncle he came upon the Missouri Gymnasium and saw the posters showing several muscular torsos. His imagination afire, Macfadden dragged

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<sup>20</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., p. 72; Oursler, op. cit., p. 49; Taylor, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>21</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., p. 20; Pringle, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., pp. 17, 44; Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 50

<sup>23</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., p. 21.

his uncle in, after a short struggle, for gymnasiums were of low repute in the 1880's, on a level with pool halls. Once inside, he viewed the gymnasts with great admiration; even the worst physical specimen of them all was an Apollo compared to the spindly-framed Macfadden. But both were discouraged by the fifteen dollars initiation fee, especially uncle Harvey, whom Macfadden asked for a loan. Miller changed the subject and took the boy to the zoo.<sup>24</sup>

Macfadden, however, was determined to build up his body. The gymnasium instructor outlined a dumbbell drill for him for a quarter, and then the purchase of a pair of second-hand dumbbells for half a dollar, and Macfadden was ready to go to work.<sup>25</sup>

Within a month of daily strenuous exercises he noticed a great improvement in his strength and physique. It was time for another outlay of half a dollar for a heavier set of dumbbells. Instead of riding to work daily, a distance of three or four miles each way, he walked. He also carried with him a 10-pound bar of lead which he had gotten from a printer, for additional exercise. Once his

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.; Taylor, loc. cit..

<sup>25</sup>"Walking: Macfadden Runs Derby for Publicity, Profit, and Proof", loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 45; Oursler, op. cit., p. 52; Macfadden, op. cit., p. 72



grandmother, who was also living in St. Louis, called him a fool for using up his energy by toting the weight to work each day, but the ridicule failed to break down his confidence in his methods.<sup>26</sup>

And then one day the Barnum circus came to St. Louis. As Macfadden watched the acrobats swing and flip high above the crowd, he was seized with a sudden ambition to become an acrobat himself. With the help of a few neighboring boys he set up a makeshift gymnasium in his uncle's cellar, complete with horizontal bar, parallel bars, trapeze rings and all the other necessary fittings. He soon was spending two hours or more daily for his exercises. One day he set up a tight rope, but on his first attempt he fell and severely injured his wrist. After regaining the use of his arm he took down the rope and never again attempted the feat.<sup>27</sup>

When Thomas Stevens announced his intent to ride a high-wheeled bicycle around the world (actually accomplished in 1886, barring the water jumps), Macfadden bought a second-hand bicycle with the notion of joining him. But

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<sup>26</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., p. 73; Oursler, op. cit., p. 53; Taylor, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>27</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., pp. 73, 75; Taylor, loc. cit.

his idea was short-lived. He fell six times the first day he tried to learn how to ride the treacherous high-wheeler; he could never seem to get farther than fifty or sixty yards in an upright position.<sup>28</sup>

A country lad again. Soon after his loss of interest in cycling came a dissatisfaction with city life. His business career was suffering because of the time he spent exercising. Though his physical condition was improving, he kept thinking back to his good health during the years he spent on the farm. He decided to return to the country. His relatives, unable to dissuade him, wrote to another relative who was practicing dentistry in McCune, a small town in Kansas.<sup>29</sup>

When the dentist agreed to take him in, Macfadden, now fifteen, joyously set forth on the six hundred-mile journey. When he arrived, he worked as a dental assistant for a time, helping make false teeth and sometimes holding down the heads of a few patients who lost their courage in the midst of an extraction.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXIX:14, May 1933; Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>29</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., pp. 15, 16; Wood, op. cit., p. 49; Taylor, op. cit., pp. 39, 40.

<sup>30</sup>Wood, loc. cit.; Macfadden, op. cit., p. 16.

He next got a job as farmhand, but was paid only half the regular adult wages. In his spare time he practiced boxing and became especially adept at wrestling, so that he was able to defeat many of the farmers in this sport. After he once more became accustomed to farm labor and felt he was doing a man's work, he demanded a raise. His employer refused, and so Macfadden packed his belongings and left for the open road. In the months that followed, he tramped and rode the roads all through Kansas and Missouri.<sup>31</sup> He slept in haystacks and hobo camps, chopped wood, and did farm work and other odd jobs.<sup>32</sup>

The youth was believed by his fellow hobos to be eccentric. His luggage consisted mainly of a pair of Indian clubs, which he twirled and juggled through the long dull hours in freight cars; while he exercised, he sang loudly, seeking to enrich his speaking voice. The other "passengers" often resorted to throwing small items of freight in his direction to restore silence.<sup>33</sup>

All through his life he was to try to remedy the lack of resonance in his voice. He later came to believe

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<sup>31</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., pp. 16, 63; Taylor, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>32</sup>Fulton Oursler, "Bernarr Macfadden's True Story," The Reader's Digest, XXXI:79, September 1937; Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), p. 55; Taylor, op. cit., pp. 39, 40.

<sup>33</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 39.

that by mooing, growling and roaring as a form of exercise he could give his voice the quality it lacked, especially on the public platform. Deserted subway cars were his favorite place to perform these unorthodox activities, for the noise of the subway drowned out his bellows and decreased the risk of his attracting unfavorable attention. But his voice never lost the flat twang of the Ozark highlands and the unfortunate resemblance it bore to that of W. C. Fields.<sup>34</sup>

All through this time he rarely held a job longer than a month. He dropped in frequently on his many relatives in the Midwest, most of them in stringent circumstances. Though he often went hungry, he never found it necessary to beg.<sup>35</sup> After a while he returned to the dentist, working first in his office, then as waterboy for a railroad construction gang.<sup>36</sup>

He became a tramp again, but once more returned to the dentist, who in the meantime had decided to give up

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<sup>34</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), pp. 8, 305.

<sup>35</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 40; Oursler, loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 50; Oursler, op. cit., p. 56.

his dental practice and publish a newspaper. And so Macfadden became a printer's devil for the McCune Brick.<sup>37</sup>

On his own time he rented a stable and started a boxing school, but he got only a few paying students. Most of the visitors were loafers who came to see a free fist-fight. Eventually he sublet the institution to an itinerant showman who drew a nice crowd showing his two-headed calf.<sup>38</sup>

The dentist's paper, meanwhile, was losing money. It folded within a short time, and Macfadden went on the road again.<sup>39</sup>

The physiculturist. Many stories have been told of Macfadden's decision to make physical culture his life's mission, so many that it is often difficult to determine where truth ends and rumor begins. Several of his biographers claim that he saw the word "health" written in capital letters in the tail of Hailey's comet (two of the biographers assert that he then chased the comet for five miles), and from this he realized that health was to be his life's destiny.<sup>40</sup> Probably a more reasonable version is that while working the night shift in a coal mine he realized that he was getting no nearer to his goal of physical well-being. He decided to quit the job and to devote the rest of his life to preaching physical culture.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," loc. cit.

<sup>41</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 27; Wood, op. cit., p. 54.

And so, not yet seventeen, the youth returned to St. Louis with two major goals: to learn about body building, and to teach others what he had learned.<sup>42</sup>

Within a few weeks of working as bill clerk for a photographic supplies firm and doing other odd jobs, he hoarded enough money to enroll in a gymnasium.<sup>43</sup>

He trained with zeal and determination, spending two or three hours daily at the gymnasium. He became an expert gymnast, doing the front and back swings on horizontal bars, somersaults on parallel bars and the running headstand, tuck and front flip on the side horse with the best acrobats in the house. Throughout these exercises his off-pitch tenor voice, quavering under the exertion, sang out, causing many of the other gymnasts to appraise the youth with some suspicion.<sup>44</sup>

His lack of money forced him to eat in cheap beaneries and to walk instead of riding the horse-cars. His only close friend was a Greek-American wrestler named George Baptiste, a youth slightly older than he.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.; Oursler, op. cit., p. 60; Wood, loc. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 42; Wood, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>44</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 63; Taylor, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>45</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

Baptiste also frequented the gymnasium, and it was he who convinced Macfadden that life was not all gymnastics and acrobatics. He taught Macfadden to wrestle in the several styles then in fashion, the Gumbel~~land~~, the Cornwall and Devon, the Lancashire (catch-as-catch-can) and the Greco-Roman. Though ten pounds heavier, Baptiste was pinned by his pupil within a few months.<sup>46</sup>

In his attempt to supplement his fragmentary education, Macfadden read voraciously, but almost exclusively on the topic of health. The printed word made a tremendous impression on him, and he naively accepted all he read as fact.<sup>47</sup>

Somewhere in his reading he acquired the idea of fasting and dieting. To support these theories he noticed that many animals thrived on one daily feeding, and when sick, most animals ate nothing at all. Macfadden shared his discoveries with Baptiste, saying, "George, we're poisoning ourselves with food." The compliant Baptiste, though feeling fine, agreed to join Macfadden in a dietetic experiment. They ate one daily meal of soggy half-cooked vegetables. After several weeks Macfadden gleefully noticed that he felt better than ever. But one day he grew

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Pringle, op. cit., p. 123; Wood, op. cit., p. 58.

faint and almost fell in the street. He quickly sought out Baptiste, who was sitting weakly in a corner of the gymnasium. "What do you suppose is wrong?" Macfadden asked, explaining that he was feeling none too well. "My impression is that we need food," said the wise Baptiste; whereupon they went to the nearest beanery and ate a big meal.<sup>48</sup>

This experience served to make Macfadden somewhat more cautious, but in later years he kept on with his dietetic experiments.<sup>49</sup>

By the time he was in his late teens he was a proficient wrestler. His first professional match with a local favorite was over in seconds. Macfadden put an over-the-shoulder arm hold on his opponent and flipped him, leaving him senseless at the opposite side of the ring. The winner had showered and was on his way to collect his small purse before many of the spectators were even seated.<sup>50</sup>

After several more similar successes in the ring he saved three hundred dollars and opened a curtain laundry in

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<sup>48</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 68; Taylor, op. cit., pp.42  
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<sup>49</sup>Oursler, loc. cit..

<sup>50</sup>"Macfadden's Second Publishing Empire?", Printers' Ink, 215:81, June 28, 1946; Taylor, op. cit., pp. 42,44.



partnership with a friend, Hilary Updike. However, Updike's initial zeal was short-lived when he was confronted by the hard work of washing and ironing. Macfadden was forced to buy him out, and later, in disgust, sold out himself.<sup>51</sup>

, A brief career as circus acrobat ended when in an accident he strained a tendon in his foot and was lame for several months.<sup>52</sup>

The Kinistherapist. On the proceeds from the sale of his laundry he rented a studio and hung out a shingle:

BERNARR MACFADDEN - KINISTHERAPIST  
TEACHER OF HIGHER PHYSICAL CULTURE 53

Kinistherapy, a term suggested by a friend who had dabbled in Greek, was the science of gaining strength through brisk motion, he explained to callers.<sup>54</sup>

This was the first occasion on which he used the name Bernarr Macfadden rather than his real name, Bernard A. McFadden. "The name looked ordinary," he said years later. "I was starting out fresh. New business, new kind of culture, new name - the works."<sup>55</sup> "I have never

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<sup>51</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 64; Taylor, op. cit., p. 44

<sup>52</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>53</sup>Taylor, loc. cit..

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

attempted to conceal this," he said on another occasion. "I called myself Bernarr Macfadden because the picturesque appealed to me."<sup>56</sup>

His studio was a moderate success.<sup>57</sup> Having read up on anatomy, he discovered that the spine was mentioned favorably, and he immediately concluded that to stay vigorous one must keep his spine supple. And so his pupils were launched on a program of gyrations designed to twist and rotate the spine.<sup>58</sup>

All through this period he flooded newspaper and magazine editors with an unending barrage of articles on his health theories. He sent out one or more such articles each day, but none was ever accepted.<sup>59</sup>

Feeling that perhaps his articles lacked grammar and polish (which they truly did), he determined to get a quick education. He closed his studio and assumed the title of professor of physical instruction in a small private school at Bunker Hill, Illinois. After remaining there a year, studying rhetoric and literature in his spare time, he felt that he had progressed into the ranks of the scholars,

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<sup>56</sup>Pringle, loc. cit.

<sup>58</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

and so he left the institution.<sup>60</sup>

He now hit upon a scheme to gain publicity for himself and his theories. He decided to win the wrestling championships of all the weight divisions from lightweight through heavyweight.<sup>61</sup>

With Baptiste training him, he reduced to 135 pounds in order to meet the lightweight qualifications. When he got into the ring to face his opponent, who advertised himself as "the lightweight champion of the West", Macfadden was twelve pounds below his normal weight. With his ribs sticking out ludicrously, he was greeted by a round of laughter from the spectators. But Macfadden nevertheless won a fast victory, immobilizing his opponent in seven and a half minutes. He later defeated "the welterweight champion of Chicago" in four minutes. His match with "the heavyweight champion of Chicago" took an hour and forty minutes, but Macfadden was the winner. He also started promoting wrestling matches as well as participating in them, for he discovered that the promoters made more money.<sup>62</sup>

Taking advantage of the publicity from his matches,

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.; Oursler, op. cit., pp. 74,75.

<sup>61</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 77; Taylor, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 68.

he began to give lectures on health, mostly the "man-to-man" type.<sup>63</sup>

A budding novelist. His urge for literary creation far from sated, he wrote an 80,000-word novel, The Athlete's Conquest, in which his primary target was the corset.<sup>64</sup> In this autobiographic work the hero, Harry Moore, builds himself up from a weakling into a health crank seeking an uncorseted mate.

"Every corseted woman seems to be only a creature of imperfection," says the despairing Harry Moore.<sup>65</sup> "The American women . . . crush the most important organs of the organism into a shapeless mass with bands of steel," he adds.<sup>66</sup>

Suddenly Harry sees Edith in a crowd: "And what a beautiful thing she is! She doesn't wear a corset!"<sup>67</sup>

The publisher to whom Macfadden took his book laughed at the spelling and grammar and called the novel "the crudest piece of junk" he had ever read. Macfadden

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<sup>63</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 84

<sup>65</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "The Athlete's Conquest", Physical Culture, I:13, March 1899.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

later admitted that ~~this~~ was the most crushing blow of his life.<sup>68</sup>

It was then 1893, and the World's Fair was in Chicago. He decided to go to see this city whose wrestling championship he held. After spending several days sight-seeing through the fair, he met Alexander Whitely, an old friend, who was exhibiting one of his inventions, a complex exercising gadget abundantly supplied with ropes, pulleys and springs. Whitely talked him into helping him peddle the contraption at the fair for a while.<sup>69</sup>

However, the publisher's rejection of his book was still scorching his pride, and Macfadden decided that another bout with education was in order. And so at twenty-three he became a coach once more, this time at Marmaduke Military Academy, a preparatory school near St. Louis. Here he rewrote The Athlete's Conquest and was finally successful in having it printed by another publisher.<sup>70</sup>

At the school he lectured, studied, led drills, and coached the wrestling team to a state championship. He

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<sup>68</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", loc. cit.: Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>69</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, LXX:39, October 1933; Taylor, op. cit., p. 47

<sup>70</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, LXX:42, September 1933; Wood, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.

also coached an undefeated football team, himself playing quarterback; eligibility rules were slack in those days, and few rival schools protested as Professor Macfadden raced through the line for big yardage gains. He was said to have been the most popular man on the faculty.<sup>70</sup>

After the season was over, he left the academy. He wrestled in a few more matches, but was also thinking of a good place to locate a studio. He opened a school in Sedalia, Missouri, and was fairly successful. When the students wanted to learn about boxing, a sport with which he was not very familiar, he managed to read up on it and to stay far enough ahead of his pupils.<sup>72</sup>

But he was not altogether satisfied. The East had always attracted him; and hearing that Boston was the literary and art center of the nation, he picked that city as his destination. There, he felt, his work would be appreciated the most.<sup>73</sup>

A New Yorker. When his train stopped at New York, he decided he would stay for a short visit in that city, of which he had heard so much. Soon, however, he changed his

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<sup>71</sup>Taylor, op. cit., pp. 45, 47.

<sup>72</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 73

<sup>73</sup>Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", October 1933, loc. cit.

mind about going on to Boston. The huge metropolis thrilled and awed him, and indeed it was the center of the business world; but what most of all persuaded him to stay was the sight of benches occupied by men who, to him, seemed in the last stages of physical erosion.<sup>74</sup>

And so in 1894 Macfadden became a New Yorker, arriving, as one biographer put it, "equipped with much muscle, an extraordinary chest development, a shock of hair, and the power to impress his personality upon others."<sup>75</sup>

Friendless, and with only fifty dollars in his pocket, he had to look for work immediately. He got a temporary job as rubber in a gymnasium, and then rented a two-room studio in a drag old boarding house at Twentieth Street near Broadway for ten dollars a month. Outside the entrance he hung placards featuring his torso, and he distributed a thousand circulars advertising a free "physical culture matinee" to be held the following week.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 101; Taylor, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>75</sup>Oswald Garrison Villard, "Sex, Art, Truth, and Magazines", The Atlantic Monthly, 137:393, March 1926.

<sup>76</sup>Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", loc. cit.; Oursler, op. cit., p. 89; Pringle, op. cit., p. 124; Taylor, loc. cit.; Wood, op. cit., p. 77.

But no one seemed to care about Professor Macfadden's health crusade. The matinee drew few besides a reporter from Dana's Sun, who, coming in good-humored curiosity, recorded for posterity that Macfadden "chatted and posed in an interesting way for over an hour." Macfadden acquired no customers from the demonstration.<sup>77</sup>

He had paid his rent a month in advance; now it was nearing the end of the month, and the state of his finances had become so bad that he had not eaten in several days. When a fat and well-to-do looking actor walked in asking the price of a complete course, Macfadden blurted out "Fifty dollars." He was surprised when the man pulled out a large roll of money and carelessly peeled off five tens.<sup>78</sup>

The actor was the first of many affluent fat men bent on reducing. Macfadden stripped them down, exercised them and forbade alcohol, tea, coffee, tobacco and overeating. Some lost weight and some did not, but the money kept coming in. Soon the studio was prospering, and Macfadden began advertising in newspapers. The stern

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<sup>77</sup>Villard, loc. cit.; Taylor, loc. cit.; "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", loc. cit..

<sup>78</sup>Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", op. cit., pp. 101, 102; Taylor, op. cit., pp. 47, 48.



face and wild bushy hair was a constant reproach to New Yorkers. By that time Macfadden allowed his hair to grow recklessly; having noticed a slight thinning-out, he hit upon the remedy of seizing the hair in both hands and wrenching it, which, he claims, saved him from imminent baldness.<sup>79</sup>

Those first few years in New York, he took the role of a town freak and was good-naturedly teased by the press. But Macfadden, accustomed to ridicule since his grandmother had teased him for carrying a bar of lead about, was undisturbed. For his studio he bought dozens of rubber balloons, inflated them and ordered his clients to keep them in the air by blowing. A reporter, finding a roomful of fat men stripped to the waist blowing up balloons, questioned Macfadden about the amazing sight. Macfadden replied tersely that balloons were "fifteen cents a gross - cheaper than dumbbells."<sup>80</sup>

All through this period he kept turning out stacks of health articles, but, as before, the editors rejected them. Health, they claimed, was not a popular topic at the time.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium" loc. cit.; Taylor, op. cit., p. 48; Oursler, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>80</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.; Pringle, op. cit., p. 126; "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium", loc. cit..

<sup>81</sup>Oursler, op. cit., pp. 91, 92.

During the summer, his business slackened off, and so he arranged to sell Whitely's exerciser in nearby cities.<sup>82</sup> When autumn came, he moved his studio to a fashionable suite on lower Fifth Avenue. Here his business expanded still further. However, the summers continued to be slow.<sup>83</sup>

On to England. Reassured by the success of the Whitely contraption, Macfadden invented and patented a similar device. These exercisers sold so quickly that in 1897 he decided to take a trip to England and introduce his contrivance in that country.<sup>84</sup>

His friends informed him before his departure that he might suffer seasickness, but he laughed in derision at such talk. The idea that the steel-strong Macfadden stomach might rebel was absurd!<sup>85</sup>

He boarded the Cunard liner, traveling second class, and throughout the entire voyage he went through the horrors of the worst kind of seasickness. The fact that his berth was in the rear of the ship where the vibrations of the

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<sup>82</sup>Taylor, loc. cit..

<sup>83</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, LXX:17, November 1933; Oursler, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>84</sup>Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", op. cit., p. 98; Taylor, loc. cit..

<sup>85</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.; Macfadden, op. cit., pp. 98,99.

engine were especially apparent did not help matters. He found that the only nourishment he could keep from delivering to the fish was lemon juice with Vichy.<sup>86</sup>

When he finally arrived in England, he vowed never again to undertake an ocean voyage, even at the cost of remaining in England for the rest of his life.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 85; Macfadden, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>87</sup>Macfadden, loc. cit.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BIRTH OF PHYSICAL CULTURE MAGAZINE

The first of the Macfadden publications. In England Macfadden was an immediate success. He toured the country, stopping at the larger towns and cities to sell his exerciser, but a large part of his sales talk consisted of a physical culture sermon exhorting the people to lead healthful lives.<sup>1</sup>

Soon, however, he altered the aspect of his tour. Seeing that many people came not to buy his exerciser but to hear him speak, he concentrated on his lectures, and the exerciser was pushed into the background. He hired a box-office man and a ticket taker, and began charging a shilling and sixpence admission.<sup>2</sup>

He also had a four-page pamphlet printed, containing health news and extolling the virtues of the exerciser; though a price was printed on the first page, Macfadden distributed it free outside the lecture halls.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, LXX:99, November 1933; Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles", The New Yorker, 26:49, October 21, 1950.

<sup>3</sup>Clement Wood, Bernarr Macfadden: A Study in Success, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), p. 86; Taylor, loc. cit.; "Macfadden's Family", Time, 28:44, September 21, 1936..

Many people, under the impression that it was a periodical publication, inquired about subscriptions; and here Macfadden found the germ of an idea. He decided to use the money he would make on the tour to finance a magazine devoted to health.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the rest of his tour England went muscle-mad, and it remained for many years one of his principal markets. But after working in England for six months, Macfadden began receiving letters from his associates in New York insisting that he return to attend to his business affairs. The memory of the horrors of his last ocean voyage still fresh in his mind, he tried to put off his return for as long as possible, but after he received several cablegrams announcing that all would be lost if he stayed abroad, he decided to take the trip. Before his departure, however, he devised a method which made it possible for him to remain tolerably comfortable on his subsequent ocean voyages. By walking several miles on deck every day and eating nothing but baked potatoes and lemonade he found that he could remain moderately immune to seasickness.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Taylor, loc. cit..

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture", Physical Culture, LXX:101, November, 1933

When he returned to America, the time was ripe for the publication which he was planning. In previous years the topic of health had been far from popular with Americans; to practice physical culture, to strive for a strong, well-developed body was regarded as a silly fad and held in ill repute.<sup>6</sup> But now, thriving on the new prosperity, the country club had become popular, and golf and football had become the American people's favorite pastimes. Athletics were gaining nationwide interest.<sup>7</sup>

Convinced that, single-handed, he could engineer sweeping health reforms, Macfadden made immediate arrangements with a printer, and on March 1899 Physical Culture magazine appeared. The small thirty-four page publication was little better than the circular which he had distributed in England; it was still primarily an advertisement for the exerciser, but Macfadden now charged five cents a copy.

The cover bore the subtitle, "A monthly publication devoted to subjects appertaining to Health, Strength, Vitality, Muscular Development, and the General Care of

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas Dixon, A Dreamer in Portugal, (New York: Covic-Friede - Publishers, 1934) p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Oswald Garrison Villard, "Sex, Art, Truth, and Magazines," Atlantic Monthly, 137:393, March 1926; For the relation of sports and recreation to magazines in the preceding period see Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) Vol. IV, Chapter XXII.

of the Body," and immediately underneath was a photograph of "the editor as he appears in one of his classical poses"<sup>8</sup>. On the inside cover Macfadden announced a contest for the "Finest Developed Man" and the "Greatest Improvement in Development in Three Months." The prizes were one hundred and fifty dollars in cash, a bicycle, a twenty-five book physical culture library and eighty dollars worth of Macfadden exercisers.

In the first several issues he printed the magazine's platform:

It is the editor's firm and conscientious belief-  
That weakness is a crime.

That one has no more excuse for being weak than he can have for going hungry when food is at hand.

That if one possesses sufficient vitality to remain alive under the abnormal conditions of sickness, he has more than sufficient strength to regain vigorous health.

That usually disease is simply an effort on the part of the physical organism to right itself, and is the means adopted to attain the end of effecting a cure.

That there is no disease without a cause, and if the cause is removed the body will gradually "cure itself."

That disease is not "sent by Divine Providence," but is the result of the victim's own ignorance or carelessness.

That vigorous, pulsating health with all the energy

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<sup>8</sup>See Figure 1.

No. 1, Vol. 1

MARCH, 1899

5 CENTS  
Six Cents Per Year

# Physical Culture

A monthly publication devoted to subjects appertaining to HEALTH, STRENGTH, VITALITY,  
MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE PHYSICAL CARE OF THE BODY.

Edited and Published by WILLIAM A. PIERCE



THE EDITOR AS HE APPEARS IN ONE OF HIS CLASSICAL POSES

PHYSICAL CULTURE PUBLISHING CO

New York, U. S. A., 45 N. 2nd Street

London, E. C., 17, St. John Street, E. C.

Figure 1. First issue of Physical Culture.



of mind and body that accompanies this exalted physical condition is within the reach of all.

That health and strength of a high degree is the natural condition of man, and it is otherwise only when one's life does not conform to nature's laws.

That there are thousands in every civilized country annually dying from consumption, general debility, heart trouble, and other causes too numerous to mention, who could easily have been brought back to health, strength and power had they adopted rational methods at the proper time.

That his great purpose in life is to "preach the gospel" of health, strength and the means of acquiring it.

That the finest and most satisfying results that can be acquired from proper physical culture are the cure of disease and the development of that energy, vitality and health essential to the success and happiness of life.<sup>9</sup>

The articles in this first issue stressed the physical and mental benefits of exercise, sane eating, frequent hot baths for cleanliness, cold baths for "tonic effects" and the avoidance of white bread, alcohol, tea, coffee and too much meat. Macfadden also announced that he was starting a health column which would answer readers' problems free of charge.<sup>10</sup> His novel, The Athlete's Conquest, was revised and serialized, the first installment taking up a full third of the magazine. The first issue

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<sup>9</sup>Physical Culture, I:3, March 1899.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

was written completely by Macfadden, as were most of the articles of the next few issues, for he did not have money to hire employees or pay for manuscripts.

In the second issue he succeeded in getting six pages of outside advertising in addition to the several pages devoted to the old stand-by Macfadden exerciser.

Most of the covers of the early issues were adorned by photographs of Macfadden in his "classical poses"; his near-naked form was also exhibited in the monthly illustrated exercise and calisthenics section, and elsewhere throughout the magazine.

The bold crusader showed great promise in the early years of his publishing career. He printed a stirring series of articles by his sports editor, Arthur Duffey, exposing professionalism in amateur athletics. He waged constant war against medical quacks and worthless patent medicines, with few besides the Ladies' Home Journal as an ally.<sup>11</sup> He ran a monthly column entitled "Rounding Up the Quacks." In an open letter to President Theodore Roosevelt he wrote: "The American people . . . are being preyed upon by an unorganized band of quacks . . . utterly void of conscience . . . (whose) one and only aim . . . is to get the

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<sup>11</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Protection from Patent Medicines," Physical Culture, XV:3, March 1906.

money."<sup>12</sup> When the Post Office Department ordered newspapers to cease publishing objectionable medical advertising, threatening to revoke mailing privileges, Macfadden claimed most of the credit.<sup>13</sup>

He himself strictly avoided selling space to patent medicine manufacturers, but strangely his advertising pages became a haven for purveyors of gadgets such as the "violet ray" machine which promised to cure polio, obesity, scars, weak eyes, baldness, "brain fag," deafness, and forty-one other maladies, and a host of other "doctors" and "professors" peddling electric belts, vibrators and courses guaranteed to turn weaklings into musclemen within minutes.

His exposés of the unsanitary conditions of meat-packing houses<sup>15</sup> and the adulteration and unwholesome coloring of candy<sup>16</sup>, though sensationally presented, were worthwhile. Another timely crusade criticized the bad

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<sup>12</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "An Open Letter to President Roosevelt About Medical Quacks", Physical Culture, XV:454, May 1906.

<sup>13</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "President Roosevelt and Medical Quacks," Physical Culture, XV:647, June 1906.

<sup>14</sup>Physical Culture, XLI:57, June 1919.

<sup>15</sup>George Janovish, "Gruesome Revelations of a Packing-House Employee," Physical Culture, XV:638, June 1906

<sup>16</sup>Arthur T. Buswell, M.D., "Children's Lives Sacrificed by Adulterated Candy," Physical Culture, XV:340-1, March 1906.

working conditions of child laborers.<sup>17</sup> His editorials combined a "folksy" philosophy with the physical culture sermons which taught the benefits of right living.

However, much of what he published was unreliable and misleading. He printed violent attacks on medical doctors, claiming that most surgery was unnecessary and that medicine, rather than a science, was a guessing game, an experimentation at the expense of the patients. His antagonism toward the medical profession probably was not based on the belief that doctors sought to promote illness for the benefit of their bank accounts, as one of his biographers, Fulton Oursler, naively contended.<sup>18</sup> More likely cause for his antagonism was the fact that these men who had spent half their lifetimes studying the human body refused to try out the theories of the presumptuous little naturopath who had never even finished grammar school.

There was a great deal of truth in some of Macfadden's theories, but many of his beliefs were dangerously erroneous. In answer to a reader's question, he once wrote that if one's blood "is in perfect condition"

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<sup>17</sup>Selwyn C. Harper, "The Shame and Threat of Child-Slavery," Physical Culture, XVII:77-81, January 1907.

<sup>18</sup>Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), pp. 16, 17, 35.

there is little danger from the bite of a rabid dog.<sup>19</sup> To another reader he wrote that the only cure for cancer is fasting and hydropathy. "Medical treatment," he wrote, "can do nothing for you."<sup>20</sup> His remedy for worms was a diet of sand,<sup>21</sup> while a strict milk and fresh air regimen would, he believed, cure syphilis.<sup>22</sup> He printed many attacks on appendectomies; one of the articles went as far as to say that in ninety-nine appendicitis cases out of a hundred surgery is unnecessary.<sup>23</sup> His opposition to vaccination, stemming from a childhood infection after a poorly-administered injection, led him to begin a series entitled "Anti-Vaccination Department"; in addition he printed many articles blaming lockjaw, smallpox, consumption and the formation of "cancer germs" directly on vaccination.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "General Question Department," Physical Culture, XII:569, December, 1904.

<sup>20</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Women's Question Column," Physical Culture, XV:452, April 1906.

<sup>21</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "General Question Department," Physical Culture, XXXI:89,90, January 1914.

<sup>22</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Bernarr Macfadden's View-point," Physical Culture, XLV:15, April 1921.

<sup>23</sup>Charles E. Page, M.D., "Needless Operations," Physical Culture, VIII:37, October 1902.

<sup>24</sup>"Vaccination Bereaves Parents of Baby Boy," Physical Culture, VIII:111, November 1902; A. Oppermann, M. D., "Vaccination is One of the Main Causes of Cancers and Consumption," Physical Culture, VIII:171, December 1902.

"Physical Training for the Baby," one of the magazine's regular departments, explained how to exercise infants by raising, stretching, swinging and pulling them by an arm or leg; the slightest slip in one of these precarious maneuvers might mean a dislocated limb for the baby.

An amusing note was reached by an article which explained in these words how to use Jiu Jitsu to assault suspicious-looking passers-by: "Beware the utter stranger who attempts to speak to you at the railway station. If he looks at you squarely in the face, take his nose between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand and twist it outward and upward until the tip touches the forehead."<sup>25</sup>

The magazine also contained write-ups of movie stars and sports heroes, sports how-to's, a section devoted to readers' letters of praise, articles about foreign lands and even a short-lived attempt at forming a lonely hearts correspondence club.<sup>26</sup>

The successful publisher. Yet strangely, Physical Culture was an immediate success. Within less than two years of its birth its circulation had climbed to the then

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<sup>25</sup>Rand Smith, "Higher Jiu Jitsu," Physical Culture, XV:327, March 1906.

<sup>26</sup>Physical Culture, XIII:641, January 1905: "Correspondence Club" lasted for just one issue.

remarkable figure of one hundred thousand copies monthly,<sup>27</sup> and in another year reached one hundred and fifty thousand.<sup>28</sup>

Probably a major reason why the magazine caught on was Macfadden's belief that controversy and dispute are essential. When Arthur Brisbane, the Hearst columnist, claimed in a New York Journal editorial that an excess of muscle was bad for the brain, Macfadden snapped back that such men as Gladstone, Washington, Lincoln, William Cullen Bryant and William Jennings Bryan were physical culturists as well as intellectuals, and that weaklings such as Alexander Pope were successful in spite of their physical condition.<sup>29</sup>

His editorial complaisance made available his magazine space to anyone with original health ideas, no matter how revolutionary or bizarre. A Spanish grass-eater sent several photographs of himself dressed in tuxedo and opera hat grazing contentedly in a pasture.<sup>30</sup> John

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<sup>27</sup>"Macfadden Steps Down," Newsweek, XVII:59, March 10, 1941..

<sup>28</sup>Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 246.

<sup>29</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Is Disease Necessarily an Accompaniment of Genius? Is Muscle Bad for the Brain?", Physical Culture, I:99-102, June 1899.

<sup>30</sup>Joseph C. Hurley, "Human Beings Eating Grass!", Physical Culture, 12:536, December 1904; Eusebio Santos, "Why I Adopted Grass as a Diet," Physical Culture, XII:627-8, January 1905.

Alexander Dowie, founder of Zion City in Illinois, who allowed no physicians or druggists in his community, healed by prayer, and taught the world was flat, was championed by Macfadden even after he was expelled from the community for polygamy, larceny and deficient leadership.<sup>31</sup> The pros and cons of the validity of the germ theory were a frequent topic for discussion in Physical Culture; most of the articles denied much connection between germs and illness.<sup>32</sup> Macfadden entered the act by blaming chairs and divans for the unshapeliness of Americans' legs; he prescribed sitting on the floor to remedy the situation.<sup>33</sup> A mailman from Oregon wrote that he advocated heel-less shoes, and that flat feet were an advantage.<sup>34</sup> Although Macfadden was strongly opposed to the frequent use of meat, he printed an article claiming the benefits of an exclusive meat diet and blaming the use of salt for scurvy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, Physical Culture, XV: 645-6, June 1906.

<sup>32</sup>J. W. Hodge, M.D., "A Criticism of the Germ Theory and its Promoters," Physical Culture, XIV:398, November 1905; and many other similar articles.

<sup>33</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "The Unshapely Anglo-Saxon Leg," Physical Culture, XIII: 319-20, May 1905.

<sup>34</sup>L. S. Wright, "Comment, Council and Criticism by our Readers," Physical Culture, XVI:348, October 1906.

<sup>35</sup>Stefansson, in an interview by J.C.H. Gainfort, "Man Can Live on Meat Alone," Physical Culture, XLII:23-4, 60, 64-6, August 1919.



However, he always made sure to include on the contents page the statement: "The editor does not assume responsibility for opinions of contributors."

As Physical Culture continued to gain circulation, Macfadden abandoned the exerciser whose sales had originally supported the magazine, and began to concentrate on exercises that needed no equipment. The magazine invariably opened with the men's calisthenic section, which was followed by the women's, children's and the previously mentioned babies' sections. The volume of outside advertising continued to grow and to provide liberal returns.<sup>36</sup> The success his magazine was enjoying prompted Macfadden to move into a suite of offices and hire a staff of forty or fifty employees.<sup>37</sup>

In October 1900 he began a publication similar to Physical Culture, but for women. First called Woman's Physical Development, its title was changed in February 1903 to Beauty and Health.

At the age of thirty-three Macfadden met and married a Canadian-born nurse, Marguerite Kelly, who began writing

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<sup>36</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:42, January 1934.

<sup>37</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:78, February 1934.

a regular column called "Ideal Babyhood." This was actually Macfadden's second marriage; the first, years before, had been annulled. His second marriage was also short-lived, ending several years later in divorce, with Macfadden gaining custody of their girl, Byrne. He also had custody of another girl, Helen; as the child was of his blood, he promised her mother to care for her.<sup>38</sup>

In 1901, in order to prove the efficacy of diet and fasting in the cure of various diseases, Macfadden leased a farm near Kingston, New York, and offered to treat several selected patients at no cost. The five patients he chose suffered from rheumatism, a paralyzed digestive system, asthma, hernia, tuberculosis, neurasthenia, and palsy. Macfadden starved them, exercised them and fed them beet juice, carrot juice, honey and rainwater. Within several weeks he crowed exultantly that all but the palsy victim were on their way to a complete cure.<sup>39</sup>

Encouraged by the success of his first sanitarium,

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<sup>38</sup>From a personal communication to the author from Edward Bodin, president of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation; Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), pp. 121, 279; The New York Times, 31:1, October 13, 1955.

<sup>39</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:37, October 28, 1950; Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:42, 56, February 1934.

he bought a larger building on Lake Ronkonkoma, Long Island. The venture, however, was doomed from the start. The capacity of the sanitarium was sixty persons, but with the aid of hastily-set-up tents it accommodated as many as one hundred and twenty five. There was strife among the guests, for the occupants of the building, for some inexplicable reason, looked down upon the tent-dwellers as squatters, though both paid the same rates. The appearance of hordes of mosquitoes made life in the tents unbearable. Worst of all, the attendants turned out to be drunkards and thieves. After several months Macfadden closed the sanitarium.<sup>40</sup>

In January 1903 the price of Physical Culture was raised to ten cents, but it had tripled in size since the first issue. That same year, in order to publicize his magazines, Macfadden sponsored a physical culture exhibition in New York's Madison Square Garden during the week of December 28 to select the healthiest specimens of manhood and womanhood. The exhibition was moderately successful, and two years later he planned to stage another, more elaborate, demonstration. He offered a total of two thousand dollars in prizes and asked readers to contribute

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<sup>40</sup>Physical Culture, X:90, July 1903; Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:31,70, March 1934; Wood, op. cit., pp.95,106.

additional prize money. Besides the usual beauty contests, many athletic events were planned.<sup>41</sup>

This exhibition was a great success; Madison Square Garden was packed during the opening performance, and five thousand people had to be turned away. The show ran for a week beginning October 9, 1905, and drew near-capacity crowds each night.<sup>42</sup>

However, Macfadden had an unpleasant experience just before the show opened. In order to publicize the exhibition, he had been distributing posters showing the women contestants of the previous show dressed in snug-fitting underwear. Anthony Comstock, secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, raided Macfadden's office with a group of burly detectives on the opening night and, determined to suppress these "obscene" posters, arrested Macfadden and one of his assistants.<sup>43</sup> One biographer claims that Comstock, seeing a photograph of the Venus de Milo on the wall, cried, "So! You have pornography here, too."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Physical Culture, XIII:Editorial Supplements, March 1905.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid; Edward R. Bushnell and Arthur Duffey, "The Athletic World," Physical Culture, XIV:493, December 1905; Bernarr Macfadden, "The Physical Culture Exhibition," Physical Culture, XIV:575, December 1905.

<sup>43</sup>H. Mitchell Watchet, "The Arrest and Trial of the Editor," Physical Culture, XV:582-3, June 1906.

<sup>44</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:51, October 21, 1950.

On March 28, 1906, the defendants were technically convicted of "giving away obscene prints," but no penalty was imposed.<sup>45</sup> In his anger Macfadden launched a slashing series of articles entitled "Comstock, King of Prudes," in which he accused Comstock of advocating "mystery and secrecy" in matters of sex,<sup>46</sup> of standing for "all that is impure, salacious, and obscene,"<sup>47</sup> for "ignorance, superstition, . . . depraved conceptions."<sup>48</sup>

All the while Macfadden was busy with various literary efforts. Having cured himself of "blindness" brought on by overwork, he wrote a book entitled Strong Eyes. He cured himself of what he believed were tuberculosis, receding hair, pneumonia, all by his own natural methods; every time he cured himself of something, he proceeded to write a book about it. He became the author of literally dozens of books on various health topics.

The rise and fall of Physical Culture City. Early in 1905 Macfadden bought a tract of nineteen hundred acres

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<sup>45</sup>Watchet, op. cit., p. 584

<sup>46</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Comstock, King of Prudes," Physical Culture, XV:13, January 1906.

<sup>47</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Comstock, King of Prudes," Physical Culture, XIV:563, December 1905.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

halfway between Spottswood and Helmetta, New Jersey, forty miles from New York. Named Physical Culture City by Macfadden, the land was planned as a real-estate development, a community where Macfadden's beliefs could be put into practice. The individual plots, rather than being sold, were leased for nine hundred and ninety-nine years so that Macfadden could retain control and keep out objectionable businesses such as saloons, tobacco shops, drug stores, corset shops and high-heel shoe stores.<sup>49</sup>

He moved his printing plant to the community, and then began planning a library, an assembly hall, a hall for dancing, athletic grounds, schools and a physical culture restaurant.<sup>50</sup> By the end of the year over ten thousand dollars worth of lots were leased. "The outlook for Physical Culture City," Macfadden wrote, "is most flattering from every standpoint."<sup>51</sup>

The project, however, was fraught with irritations

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<sup>49</sup>Physical Culture, XIII:Editorial Supplement, May 1905; "Physical Culture City Ready for Home Builders," Physical Culture, XIII:Editorial Supplement, April, 1905.

<sup>50</sup>"Physical Culture City Ready for Home Builders," loc. cit.; Bernarr Macfadden, "Work and Progress at Physical Culture City," Physical Culture, XIII:472-3, June 1905; Bernarr Macfadden, The Macfadden Prosecution, (Battle Creek, Michigan, 1908), p. 2.

<sup>51</sup>"Physical Culture Enterprises," Physical Culture, XIV:566, December 1905.

from the outset. The Pennsylvania Railroad, bordering on the property, agreed to stop some local trains there and to build a station, but a controversy arose over naming the station. The railroad company asserted that the name Physical Culture City was absurd, and so the station remained nameless.<sup>52</sup>

Once, while Macfadden was away from the community for a few days, an employee neglected to open the sluice gates of a dam holding back a lake. The water washed over the dam and caused thousands of dollars damage.<sup>53</sup>

Then there was a controversy over a separate post-office for the community. Forced to use the postoffice of a nearby village, Physical Culture City was receiving so much mail that the postmaster's salary rose from four hundred dollars to over two and a half thousand dollars a year. The postmaster naturally wanted to preserve this state of affairs, and so he used all his influence to prevent the community from having its own postoffice. He was, however, unwilling to grant Physical Culture City, a mile away, free delivery.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:37, October 28, 1950.

<sup>53</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture LXXI:21, April 1934.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.; The Macfadden Prosecution, loc. cit.

At about this time Macfadden decided to go through with his long-standing plan of publishing a magazine similar to Physical Culture for boys and girls. Strong, Beautiful Girls and Boys was to have appeared early in 1903,<sup>55</sup> but after a long series of delays started in March 1905 under the name Physique Culture for Boys and Girls. A pamphlet-sized nickel magazine, it had a format very much like the earliest issues of Physical Culture.

In the first issue Macfadden editorialized: "I believe that every boy can grow into a strong, rugged, manly man. I believe that every girl can develop the beauty and attractiveness that accompanies superb womanhood."<sup>56</sup> The parents of Physique Culture's youthful readers must have been angered when their offspring took Macfadden's advice and fasted, refused medicine and meat and demanded permission to sleep in a tent the year round.

Physique Culture, however, was short-lived, and on January 1906 was combined, together with Beauty and Health, in a new and larger Physical Culture. Beauty and Health was revived as a separate publication in April 1907, but in September 1908 again merged with Physical Culture.

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<sup>55</sup>Physical Culture, VIII: 196, December 1902.

<sup>56</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Editorial Department," Physique Culture for Boys and Girls, I:16, March 1905.



In the October 1905 issue of Physical Culture a strange serial yarn, "Weird and Wonderful Story of Another World," appeared. Written by a man who claimed to be a Mexican scientist, the story was subtitled:

Unparalleled Experiences of a Young Scientist who Solved the Problem of Navigation, not only of the Atmosphere, but of the Heavenly Spaces outside of it. Claims Jupiter to be Peopled by a Superb Race of Men and Women Who Live Physical Culture Lives of the Highest Order and Who in Themselves Prove the Magnificent Possibilities of Physical Culture Principles.<sup>57</sup>

The author calmly went on to state in the story that he had invented a space ship, flown to Jupiter and without any protective equipment toured the planet and met a race of perfect beings. In the first installment a report by a committee of "scientific experts" was included, stating that the author's statements were logical and apparently true. Macfadden, in an editor's note, referred all who doubted the truth of the story to this report.<sup>58</sup> The story ended September 1906; the author stated that he returned to earth, accompanied by a beautiful Jupiterian girl who later made off with his space ship and disappeared, presumably bent on exploring the earth. The author pleaded with his readers to contact him if they learned of her whereabouts.

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<sup>57</sup> Tyman Currio, "Weird and Wonderful Story of Another World," Physical Culture, XIV:332, October 1905.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>57</sup> Tyman Currio, "Weird and Wonderful Story of Another World," Physical Culture, XIV:332, October 1905.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

The climax of the story came four months later when an alert reader wrote in that he had seen the girl and the spaceship in Florida, and asked to be remembered if a reward was being offered for information.<sup>59</sup>

When "Weird and Wonderful Story" was ended, Macfadden decided the time was ripe to educate his readers about the horrors of a life of dissipation and the dangers of venereal disease, topics which were at that time shrouded in mystery. And so he hired John Russel Coryell, author of the well-known Nick Carter series of detective stories,<sup>60</sup> to write a fiction serial about the broken lives that result from promiscuity.

The story, entitled "Growing to Manhood in Civilized ( ? ) Society," told of an unwanted child of separated parents who, at sixteen, accomplished his first seduction, and went on from there to new conquests.

Soon after the first installment appeared in Physical Culture, word came from Washington that Physical Culture City was granted permission for a separate postoffice.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>A. Hunter, "Comment, Counsel and criticism by Our Readers," Physical Culture, XVII: 64, January 1907

<sup>60</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>61</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

Then, after the sixth installment of "Growing to Manhood" appeared on March 1907, Macfadden was suddenly arrested by request of the Post Office Department and charged with mailing indecent, obscene literature, the November, December and January issues forming the basis of the charge.<sup>62</sup> He was convinced that the nearby New Jersey postmaster was responsible for his arrest and that the charge was trumped up merely to get even with him for requesting a separate postoffice.<sup>63</sup>

Macfadden fought back with a series of editorials. "This story teaches a lesson that is sadly needed," he wrote. "It plainly sets forth the evils with which one is sure to come into contact. The story was written with a high moral purpose."<sup>64</sup> But in October 1907 Macfadden was convicted by the New Jersey Federal Courts, fined two thousand dollars and sentenced to two years hard labor in the New Jersey State Penitentiary.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "The Editor's Arrest - My Protest Against Comstockery," Physical Culture, XVII:251, April 1907.

<sup>63</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:66, April 1934.

<sup>64</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Our Serial Story and the Moral Code," Physical Culture, XVII:247, April 1907

<sup>65</sup>Letter to the readers from Macfadden enclosed in Physical Culture, December 1907; Is It a Crime to Expose Crime, pamphlet enclosed in Physical Culture, December 1907.

The arrest, trial and conviction all came as distinct surprises to Macfadden. He paid the fine, but while the case was pending review by a higher court he embarked on a lecture tour of the country to fight what he termed "wrong and oppression," "persecution and not prosecution,"<sup>66</sup> Enclosed in the December 1907 issue of Physical Culture was a letter to the readers asking them to publicize his crusade, a sixteen-page autobiographic pamphlet and a petition bearing the request that Macfadden be granted a full pardon. "The day will come," he wrote, "when the laws of this land, I fully believe, will encourage the publication of literature of this kind."<sup>67</sup>

Thousands signed the petitions, and many more wrote to President Taft, who finally suspended the prison term.<sup>68</sup> Many years later Macfadden's friend, Senator Robert Reynolds of North Carolina, introduced a bill in Congress to refund the fine, but was unsuccessful in having it passed.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>"The Case of Bernarr Macfadden, The Arena, 39:95, January 1908.

<sup>67</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Is the Editor Guilty," Physical Culture, XVIII:364, December 1907.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:51, October 21, 1950.

Ironically, the notoriety helped the circulation of Physical Culture; thousands began to buy it in the hope that it was really obscene.<sup>70</sup>

Macfadden never became reconciled with the policy of hushing up sex, even after this close escape from imprisonment. More than fifteen years after the trial, he attacked the amendments to the Clean Book Bill by saying: "Any attempt to conceal sex matters from young people only results in increasing their interest in them. They will seek information from sources which consider the most beautiful things in life vile and unclean."<sup>71</sup>

While his attention was distracted by the trial and subsequent barnstorming, Physical Culture City was slowly withering and dying from neglect. To make matters worse, the organization of the community left much to be desired. The city was set up so that most of the residents were "students," working for their sustenance and at the end of the course receiving diplomas certifying a physical superiority. The rest of the residents were patients paying for room and board in what was known as the Health

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<sup>70</sup>Henry Pringle, Big Frogs, (New York: Macy-Masius The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 127.

<sup>71</sup>The New York Times, 9:2, April 26, 1923.

Home, and doing no work.<sup>72</sup>

The students received fifteen cents cash for a ten-hour day of manual labor. A few of the more practical students calculated that, at that rate, with no absenteeism, it would take them over five and a half years to graduate, by which time Macfadden would have a nicely developed piece of real estate.<sup>73</sup> The paying patients were no happier; they were charged eighteen dollars a week for board, and then immediately given a week's fast "for their health."<sup>74</sup>

In one of its characteristic crusades the New York World sent a reporter to investigate. He stayed at the community for several days, and then wrote a story accusing Macfadden of "skinning" the patients and allowing immorality.<sup>75</sup> Macfadden in turn accused the World, and newspaper men in general, of seeking sensationalism. The community's residents, he claimed, were abbreviated, but not immoral, clothes and bathing suits.<sup>76</sup> He filed suit

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<sup>72</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 112; Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:37, October 28, 1950.

<sup>73</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.; Villard, op. cit., p. 395.

<sup>74</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," Newsweek, 5:28, June 29, 1935.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Physical Culture City Criticized," Physical Culture, XVI:215-18, August 1906.

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Physical Culture City Criticized," Physical Culture, XVI:215-18, August 1906.



against the World for fifty thousand dollars and lost. Within a few months Physical Culture City collapsed.<sup>77</sup>

Never content to remain inactive for long, Macfadden became engaged in other activities. He started a series of restaurants in New York which sold various health foods for a penny a serving. Originally starting as a charitable venture to aid the jobless, the restaurants surprisingly turned out fairly profitable.<sup>78</sup> He started another sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, but later moved it to Chicago.<sup>79</sup>

In the latter part of 1912, feeling it was time for a vacation, he left his assistant, John Brennan, to assume editorship of Physical Culture, and embarked for another tour of England.<sup>80</sup> He was publishing an English magazine, Physical Development, similar to the American Physical Culture, and to publicize this publication he decided to hold a contest for "Great Britain's Most Perfectly Developed Woman."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>78</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 113

<sup>79</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXI:67, April 1934; Wood op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>80</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXII:83, July 1934.

<sup>81</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 115.

The winner of the one-hundred-pound prize was a hefty, athletic nineteen-year-old girl named Mary Williamson.<sup>82</sup> She accompanied him on his tour of England, playing the star rôle of springing from a high table and landing with both feet on his stomach in his nightly demonstrations.<sup>83</sup> On March 5, 1913, after an acquaintance of less than two months, they were married.<sup>84</sup>

While in England, Macfadden founded a women's magazine, Beauty and Health, similar to its American counterpart. He also opened a sanitarium at Brighton, a seashore resort on the English Channel.<sup>85</sup>

When the First World War broke out in Europe, the Macfaddens returned to America.<sup>86</sup> In Physical Culture he began writing editorials calling for a "red-blooded peace" in an effort to jolt the isolationists out of their lethargy. He decried a desire for peace at the cost of appeasement and non-resistance, and preached preparedness

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<sup>82</sup>"Life With a Genius," Time, 61:120, April 20, 1953.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, op. cit., p.42.

<sup>85</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "My Fifty Years of Physical Culture," Physical Culture, LXXII:85, July 1934.

<sup>86</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, op. cit., p.162.

for the possibility of American involvement in the war.<sup>87</sup>

In 1918 Physical Culture took on a new large format which it retained for many years. By then it was attracting such authors as Upton Sinclair and George Bernard Shaw, and in later years featured contributions by Zane Grey, Caruso and even Mussolini. In 1919 the price of the magazine went up to twenty cents. Physical Culture had by that time lost much of its earlier radicalism but none of its sensationalism.

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<sup>87</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Red Blooded Peace," Physical Culture, XXXVII:39-41, April 1917; Bernarr Macfadden, "Dangers Ahead ? Who Knows ? Prepare!!!", Physical Culture, XXXVII:1, April 1917.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRUE-STORY BONANZA

The discovery of the "Wagetown" audience. Not until 1919 did Macfadden discover that a cheaply-produced sensational publication appealing to the servant girl, bootblack and factory worker public is sure to be financially successful.<sup>1</sup> In response to letters "so poignant, so real so unlike other stories" sent by readers of Physical Culture,<sup>2</sup> True-Story Magazine appeared in March 1919.<sup>3</sup> Subtitled "Truth is Stranger Than Fiction", the magazine set out to prove Macfadden's contention that everyone has a dramatic, absorbing real-life story to tell.<sup>4</sup>

Claiming that the writers of most of the stories would be influenced "by a high moral purpose," Macfadden wrote in the first issue: "We . . . hope that (True-Story) will assist in building the right sort of principles, add strength to your character and force and stability to your

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<sup>1</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," Newsweek, 5:28, June 29, 1935; Henry F. Pringle, Big Frogs, (New York: Macy-Masius - The Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>See Figure 2.

<sup>4</sup>Grace Perkins Oursler, Chats With the Macfadden Family, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, Inc., 1929), p. 2.

"TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTIO

# True-Story Magazine

We offer \$1000.00  
for your Life Romance





Figure 2. First issue of True-Story Magazine.

life purposes."<sup>5</sup>

To preserve the folksy appeal, the quality of a "great outpouring of human experience,"<sup>6</sup> Macfadden hired only common people for the editorial board, barbers, salesgirls, plumbers, elevator operators, cooks, housemaids, office boys, chauffeurs, housewives, janitors, the men and women representing the mental strata for which the magazine was written. It is said that one editor was fired for attending classes at the Columbia University School of Journalism and another for taking a short-story writing correspondence course.<sup>7</sup>

True-Story offered a thousand dollars for each month's best story in addition to a fifty-thousand dollar yearly prize. From seventy to one hundred thousand manuscripts began to flood in yearly.<sup>8</sup> The magazine preferred the confessions of common people to those of celebrities. No rewrite men were used; Macfadden felt that

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<sup>5</sup>"Why the True-Story Magazine is 'Different,'" True-Story Magazine, I:3, March 1919.

<sup>6</sup>"Macfadden! 'A Lowly Crusader' Reviews His Life, in Two Parts," Newsweek, 6:37, December 14, 1935.

<sup>7</sup>Pringle, op. cit., p. 129; Alva Johnston, "The Great Macfadden," Saturday Evening Post, 213:9, June 28, 1941.

<sup>8</sup>Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 277.

the readers must tell their own stories in their own words.<sup>9</sup> Only spelling and serious grammatical errors were corrected.<sup>10</sup> Each story went through the hands of three, four and even five readers before it reached Editor John Brennan. All stories meeting with the readers' approval were given to Macfadden for final action.<sup>11</sup>

Of the first issue about one hundred thousand copies were printed and about sixty thousand sold, an average first-issue sale at that time.<sup>12</sup> True-Story was produced so cheaply it probably could have been profitably sold at ten cents a copy,<sup>13</sup> but Macfadden shrewdly priced the pulp at twenty cents, and later twenty-five.

It was Brennan's idea to use photographs to illustrate the magazine; though the idea was not new, True-Story became the first national publication successfully to use this method of illustration.<sup>14</sup> The first models for the

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<sup>9</sup>Harold Brainerd Hersey, Pulpwood Editor, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1937), p. 212; Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Pringle, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>11</sup>Hersey, op. cit., pp. 216-18

<sup>12</sup>Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, 1929), pp. 222, 223.

<sup>13</sup>Johnston, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>14</sup>"A Colorful Publishing Career," Printers' Ink, 253:82, October 21, 1955.



pictures were members of Brennan's family,<sup>15</sup> Later models included Norma Shearer, Fredric March, Anita Louise, Madge Evans and Jean Arthur.<sup>16</sup>

As True-Story's circulation grew, it was turned into a smooth-paper magazine. This elaboration, one writer believes, may have been the turning point in the magazine's career; as a pulp it might not have won the loyalty of big advertisers nor the large reading public it came to hold.<sup>17</sup>

Such stories as "The Price of One Girl's Folly,"<sup>18</sup> "The Fate of a Flirt,"<sup>19</sup> "The Other Woman and his Wife,"<sup>20</sup> "A Scarlet Woman's Heart"<sup>21</sup> and "A Woman's Good Name"<sup>22</sup> made True-Story's circulation grow at an amazing rate until by 1926 it had reached over two million copies monthly.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Fulton Oursler, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:42,43, October 28, 1950.

<sup>17</sup>Hersey, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>18</sup>True-Story Magazine, II:41-4, March 1920.

<sup>19</sup>True-Story Magazine, II:72, May 1920.

<sup>20</sup>True-Story Magazine, II:13-16, June 1920.

<sup>21</sup>True-Story Magazine, VI:48,66, February 1922.

<sup>22</sup>True-Story Magazine, VIII:17-20, 123-27, June 1923.

<sup>23</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

The experimental magazines. Macfadden's success in discovering such a large, previously unexploited stratum of readers spurred him on to new publishing enterprises, none of which, however, ever came close to attaining the success of True-Story.

On February 12, 1921, he started Movie Weekly, a ten-cent magazine devoted to intimate glimpses of movie stars.

The great wave of self-improvement that swept over America in the early twenties<sup>24</sup> inspired Macfadden to start publishing National Pictorial Brain Power Monthly in September 1921. This celebrity-mad twenty-five cent magazine, devoted "entirely to means and methods of developing mental attainments,"<sup>25</sup> included stories such as "How Lillian Gish Learned to Concentrate"<sup>26</sup> and "Edison: The Man Who Never Works,"<sup>27</sup> as well as articles on Sarah Bernhardt, Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Ford. Also

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>25</sup>George William Wilder, "Fundamental Principles in Brain Development," National Pictorial Brain Power Monthly, I:11, September 1921.

<sup>26</sup>Martha Parkhurst, National Pictorial Monthly, I:13, 58, February 1922.

<sup>27</sup>Wainwright Evans, National Pictorial Brain Power Monthly, I:13-15, 54-56, January 1922.

included in the magazine were the ever-present serial stories and a contest offering one thousand dollars in prizes for the best stories "pulsating with the spirit of achievement."<sup>28</sup>

In February 1922 the magazine's title was changed to National Pictorial Monthly. An editorial claimed that the reason for the change was that the former title suggested a "heavy, technical, scholastic publication,"<sup>29</sup> but probably nothing could have been further from the truth. The main reason the magazine was floundering was because the title was subjected to public ridicule; being seen with a copy of Brain Power was tantamount to an admission of feeble-mindedness.<sup>30</sup>

That same month Macfadden again tried to start a companion magazine to Physical Culture For women. The Intimate Magazine of Beauty and Health, however, lasted only four months, and in June merged with Physical Culture.

His next publication was Midnight, a sleazy, sex-ridden weekly which made its appearance August 19. A

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<sup>28</sup>"One Thousand Dollars in Prizes," National Pictorial-Brain Power Monthly, I:13, September 1921.

<sup>29</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Our Name Was Too Heavy," National Pictorial Monthly, I:11, February 1922.

<sup>30</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

typical example of Midnight's style was the October 14 issue, featuring a near-naked girl on the cover together with the name of a clergyman who had unwittingly contributed an article to the magazine. Other stories included in that issue were "Last Call for Thrills" and "Don't Monkey With the Women." After two years of publication, the profitable weekly was discontinued upon complaint of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, in September 1922, National Pictorial Monthly once again underwent a title change, this time becoming National Brain Power Monthly, but the attempt to rejuvenate the dying magazine was in vain. That same month Macfadden started Beautiful Womanhood, a twenty-five cent publication similar to The Intimate Magazine of Beauty and Health. Devoted to "secrets that are essential to bring out feminine beauty in all its most appealing charm,"<sup>32</sup> the magazine became smaller the next year and its price was cut to ten cents, but it never became successful. Its name, as that of Brain Power, was ridiculed; only the homely could

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<sup>31</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>32</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Our Message to Women," Beautiful Womanhood, I:9, September 1922.

possibly have any use for it. Both Brain Power and Beautiful Womanhood perished in May 1924.

Macfadden started the year 1923 by buying Metropolitan, a "class" fiction publication that sold for twenty-five cents, in January.<sup>33</sup> He promised the readers fiction articles that would be "uplifting, inspirational, constructive,"<sup>34</sup> but even such names as Theodore Dreiser, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle contributing their talents to Metropolitan could not put the failing publication on a firm footing.

Later that year, as True-Story became increasingly successful, Macfadden shrewdly decided to publish competing magazines before too many other publishers got the same idea. In September he started True Romances, which sold out its first issue.<sup>35</sup> The magazine, claiming to be the "Salvation Army of the magazine world," promised that it would be "guided by high ideals" and that every story would "carry a clean, wholesome, uplifting lesson."<sup>36</sup> As was so

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<sup>33</sup>The New York Times, 22:3, January 14, 1923.

<sup>34</sup>"A Little of the Past and a Big Promise for the Future," Metropolitan, LVI:6, February-March 1923.

<sup>35</sup>Fulton Oursler, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>36</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "An Inspiration and a Guide," True Romances, I:9, September 1923.

often the case with Macfadden's publications, uplift combined easily with dollars.

To offset some of the criticism aimed at True-Story and its sister publications, Macfadden asked a ministerial board composed of active clergy to review each accepted story before it appeared in print and delete any words or passages that might be considered in bad taste. Macfadden also printed a column of dozens of letters from clergymen throughout the nation, praising the "uplifting influence" of True-Story.

In November 1923 Macfadden started Dance Lovers Magazine, a twenty-five cent smooth-paper publication about dancing and dancers. "Dancing will help to keep you young"<sup>37</sup> became the theme of the magazine. Besides the usual serials the magazine soon ran a contest offering one thousand dollars for the best new dance step.<sup>38</sup>

Another imitation of True-Story, titled Dream World; Into the Land of Love and Romance, appeared February 1924, continuing in later months under varying subtitles. This

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<sup>37</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Retain Your Youth Through Dancing," Dance Lovers Magazine, 1:5, November 1923.

<sup>38</sup>"An Opportunity to Win Fame and \$1,000.00!", Dance Lovers Magazine, 2:12, 13, July 1924.

twenty-five cent publication promised it would try to add "to the sum total of human happiness."<sup>39</sup> "We want to enthrall you with clean, beautiful love stories," Macfadden wrote.<sup>40</sup>

The following month saw the appearance of Muscle Builder, a fifteen-cent publication which showed readers how to get extraordinary physiques and strength through weight-lifting and exercise.

Two months later, with the demise of Brain Power and Beautiful Womanhood, Macfadden boldly started a new magazine, a specialized true-story publication devoted to articles on crimes. This twenty-five cent magazine, True Detective Mysteries, boasted of photographs of real criminals, murder weapons and scenes of crimes.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan was continually running in the red. In October, in a last attempt to bring it back to life, Macfadden renamed it Fiction Lover's Magazine. It became an all-fiction publication specializing in "stories that . . . throb with the elemental forces of life."<sup>41</sup> That same month Macfadden started Radio Stories, a publication on radio personalities and programs.

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<sup>39</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Into the Dreamy World of Romance," Dream World; Into the Land of Love and Romance, 1:11, February 1924.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "We Make Our Bow to the Public," Fiction Lover's Magazine, LX:11, October 1924.

Three months later Movie Weekly went up from ten to fifteen cents, but this was not enough to bring it out of the red; on September 26, 1925, the magazine folded.

In February 1925 Macfadden started another True-Story imitator titled Modern Marriage Problems.

As these experimental Macfadden magazines became more numerous, some proving unprofitable and being discontinued while others found a new and sufficiently large segment of magazine readers to become successful, rival publishers were becoming interested. Macfadden was flooding the newsstands with his publications, True Lovers, Dr. Rockwell's Mustard Plaster, Midnight Mystery Stories, True Proposals, True Ghost Stories, Sport Life, True Radio Tales. Virtually every month a new publication was being started.

Many competing publishers decided to try to get a share of the profits. True-Story became the most copied of all the Macfadden publications, but the imitators were only moderately successful. One pulp editor, it is said, hired sales girls from a department store to hack out "true stories" in the Wagetown style; the girls, however, took studio apartments, became literary-minded and spoiled everything.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Harland Manchester, "True Stories," Scribner's Magazine, 104:26, August 1938.



Meanwhile Radio Stories died in May 1925, just seven months after it had appeared. Replacing the casualty that month was Your Car; A Magazine of Romance, Fact and Fiction, a twenty-five cent publication which promised "romance in its associations with the automobile,"<sup>43</sup> but reached a dead end after five months.

In August 1925 Metropolitan, in spite of its change of title and policy, was discontinued.

In November Dance Lovers Magazine became The Dance Magazine; the price went up to thirty-five cents and the format was improved by the use of glossy art-finished paper. At the same time, Own Your Own Home appeared. This twenty-five cent smooth-paper magazine specialized in articles on house and garden care and economy, furnishing, selecting plots of land, and household and cooking hints.

The following month marked the beginning of still another True-Story imitator, True Experiences; True Stories of Life and Love. This twenty-five cent magazine's claim to being educational lay in the belief that "a true story . . . is a rich field for the attainment of dependable knowledge."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "The Road to Romance," Your Car; A Magazine of Romance, Fact and Fiction, I:5, May 1925.

<sup>44</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Experience - Greatest of Teachers," True Experiences; True Stories of Life and Love, I:5, December 1925.

A lean year for Macfadden came in 1926. In July Muscle Builder was discontinued.

The year 1927, however, started off eventfully when half a million dollars in libel suits were filed against Macfadden Publications.<sup>45</sup> The author of one of the stories appearing in the January issue of True-Story had used the names of eight men and women actually living in Scranton, Pennsylvania, describing them as shallow booze-hounds and illicit-love makers.<sup>46</sup> From then on each contributor had to sign an affidavit that the story he wrote was true and that all names and places had been altered. This statement also had to be accompanied by several character references.<sup>47</sup>

In March 1927 Own Your Own Home shortened its title to Your Home in order to attract present home owners as well as the prospective ones.<sup>48</sup>

Air Stories, devoted to aerial adventure, was started in August 1927, followed by Flying Stories, a

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<sup>45</sup>"About 'The Revealing Kiss,'" True-Story Magazine, XVI:140, March 1927; Pringle op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>46</sup>"The Revealing Kiss," True-Story Magazine, XV: 28-30, 75,79, January 1927.

<sup>47</sup>Oswald Garrison Villard, "Sex, Art, Truth, and Magazines," Atlantic Monthly, 137:390, March 1926; Taylor, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>48</sup>"Special Notice," Your Home, III:4, February 1927.

similar pulp, in November 1928.

True Strange Stories started in March 1929, followed four months later by Model Airplane News, a magazine for the aviation-conscious youth of that time. Appearing toward the beginning of the model-building craze, this fifteen-cent publication contained aviation stories, serials, contests, pictures of models, and blueprints.

Encouraged by the success of True Detective Mysteries, Macfadden put out The Master Detective, a magazine similar in contents and format to True Detective, in September 1929.

The next month True Strange Stories became Strange Stories. In January 1930 Model Airplane News also underwent a change in title, becoming Junior Mechanics and Model Airplane News, and exactly one year later, changed again, this time to Model Airplane News and Junior Mechanics.

In September 1930 Flying Stories was absorbed into Air Stories. Your Home perished in March 1931.

Early the following month Macfadden acquired Liberty, a five-cent weekly pulp which published general articles and fiction. This magazine giant, third highest in circulation, claimed over two and a half million average net paid copies a week, but publishers Joseph

Medill Patterson and Robert Rutherford McCormick could not make it pay. However, under the editorship of Fulton Oursler, Liberty was soon operating in the black.<sup>49</sup>

November 1931 saw the birth of Movie Mirror, a ten-cent magazine specializing in intimate glimpses of Hollywood personalities, and Love Mirror, another True-Story imitator.

The following month The Dance Magazine was discontinued.

In May 1932 True Experiences was suspended, but it reappeared in the following November.

In October of that year an unusual alliance was formed, resulting in the birth of a magazine on baby care. With Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt the editor and her daughter Anna Roosevelt Dall the associate editor, Macfadden published his newest brainstorm, Babies, Just Babies. One source contends that Macfadden's main objective in starting Babies was to influence President Roosevelt to appoint him Secretary of Health,<sup>50</sup> a position in which he had previously

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<sup>49</sup>"Macfadden's Family," Time, 28:45, September 21, 1936.

<sup>50</sup>Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernard Macfadden, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), pp. 299, 300.

expressed interest in a newspaper editorial.<sup>51</sup> However, the title of the glossy-papered fifteen-cent magazine caused much amusement. Macfadden, accustomed to ridicule, was unperturbed by the horselaughs, but they proved disconcerting to the First Lady. She resigned her editorship after eight months and the publication was discontinued.<sup>52</sup>

In January 1933, Love Mirror, combined with True Experiences. That November marked the appearance of Radio Mirror, another ten-cent magazine glamourizing radio personalities and programs.

American Detective, still another twenty-five cent imitator of True Detective Mysteries, made its debut in May 1934.

In October of the same year Macfadden bought the late James R. Quirk's Shadowplay and the handsome glossy motion-picture magazine Photoplay.<sup>53</sup> The latter immediately lost circulation but continued to make money.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "This Nation Needs a Secretary of Health in the Cabinet and He Should Be Non-Medical," New York Evening Graphic, 4:28, June 11, 1928.

<sup>52</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup>"Macfadden's Family," loc. cit.; The New York Times, 21:1, October 24, 1934.

<sup>54</sup>"Macfadden's Family," loc. cit.

By 1935 Macfadden Publications had reached a total circulation of 7,355,000, the greatest in the magazine field.<sup>55</sup>

In March 1935 Famous Detective Cases, still another imitator of True Detective, appeared. It was, however, absorbed by True Detective in October 1936; American Detective was absorbed, also by True Detective, in December 1938.

Macfadden Publications changes hands. Up to this time Macfadden Publications had been a highly profitable concern.<sup>56</sup> Even though many of the experimental publications were unsuccessful, the several successful ones, the most prominent of which was True-Story, clearing, according to Macfadden, from three to four million dollars yearly in its greatest period,<sup>57</sup> paid for the failures and still brought back a handsome profit. However, in the late thirties, Macfadden Publications began running in the red. The 1938 deficit was two hundred thousand dollars, and in 1940 the concern lost over half a million dollars.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>56</sup>Peterson, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>57</sup>Johnston, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>58</sup>Peterson, loc. cit.

Macfadden kept pulling strings in an attempt to bolster his failing publications. In January 1939 Dreamworld changed to True Stories of Love and Romance, and in April changed again to True Love and Romance. In March 1939 he started Your Faith: Why Not Try God ?, a fifteen-cent pamphlet-size magazine without illustrations, emphasizing the healing power of prayer. This publication lasted only until July 1940. Radio Mirror changed to Radio and Television Mirror in August 1939. Love Mirror was absorbed four months later by True Experiences. Photoplay and Movie Mirror merged, becoming Photoplay Combined with Movie Mirror, and the price was reduced to ten cents. But Macfadden's strategy was to no avail, and his magazine empire kept going downhill.

To make matters worse, he began having trouble with his stockholders. He had been running his enterprises without regard to some of the niceties of corporation law; his magazines had been paying for his health projects, political activities and a host of other unrelated promotions. These actions caused no comment in the earlier days of prosperity, but the loss of revenue from the depression and from increasing competition provoked much criticism. Suits were filed in 1940, demanding payment of \$2,900,000 lost on one of Macfadden's newspapers and

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between three and four million dollars alleged to have been used for various philanthropic and personal activities.<sup>59</sup>

On February 27, 1941, Macfadden surprised all but the publishing world by announcing that he was giving up the presidency of Macfadden Publications.<sup>60</sup> "Having reached the age of seventy-three years," he said, "and finding that my (health enterprises) are demanding more and more of my time and attention, I have decided to relinquish control of Macfadden Publications, Inc."<sup>61</sup>

Four printing and supply houses, Cuneo Press, W. F. Hall Printing Company, Kimberly Clark Paper Company and West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, advanced the money so that a group of management employees, including Orr Jay Elder and Fulton Oursler, could buy the property. These four companies were represented on the board of directors in return for their advance. Elder became president and publisher, but Macfadden continued as editorial consultant. The claims of stockholders were satisfied when Macfadden agreed, in order to avoid litigation, to repay \$300,000 of the \$600,000 he had received for his publications and to

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<sup>59</sup>Johnston, op. cit., p. 92; Peterson op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>60</sup>"Macfadden Steps Down," Newsweek, 17:59, March 10, 1941; The New York Times, 15:2, February 28, 1941.

<sup>61</sup>The New York Times, loc. cit.

return 22,000 shares of Macfadden preferred stock for cancellation.<sup>62</sup>

A Curious situation was uncovered after the new management of Macfadden Publications began cleaning house. Rarely does any large publishing company pad its circulation figures, the basis on which advertising is sold; but after several weeks the new publishers found that Macfadden had ~~done~~ just that. It was discovered that True-Story sales had been falsified by an average of over seventy-six and a half thousand copies and Liberty by over twenty-one thousand. When fifteen-cent True-Story's sales began slipping to competing ten-cent publications, Macfadden began offering bonuses to distributors for keeping up sales quotas. These bonuses were scaled in such a way that it was made profitable for distributors to "eat," or destroy, unsold copies. The new management admitted these facts to the advertisers and made refunds.<sup>63</sup>

In the meantime, Macfadden had been writing editorials and articles for the Macfadden magazines, but as the months went by, fewer and fewer of his contributions reached

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.; Peterson, op. cit., p.71; "Macfadden Steps Down," loc. cit.; Johnston, loc. cit.; The New York Times, loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup>"Scandal in Circulation," Time, 37:61, May 12, 1941; Peterson, op. cit., p. 28.

print. While Macfadden was gradually being eased out of the picture, many of his former publications were undergoing drastic changes in policy and format.

## CHAPTER VI

### "NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH"

The beginning of the Graphic. Early in 1924 Macfadden bought the old plant and equipment of the New York Evening Mail.<sup>1</sup> Rumors began to circulate that he was about to publish an evening newspaper, and indeed he was preparing to do just that.

His magazines had by this time proved successful enough to finance such an expensive venture. After a series of discussions with his managerial staff, Macfadden decided on the name Evening Graphic.

In early September, just a few days before the paper was scheduled to appear, Macfadden ran into a legal snag in the form of an injunction to stop selling Graphic stock, unauthorized by the Illinois Securities Act, in that state.<sup>3</sup> Later, however, the injunction was lifted.<sup>4</sup>

On September 15, 1924, according to one writer the

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<sup>1</sup>Clement Wood, Bernarr Macfadden: A Study in Success, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, 1929), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:44, October 28, 1950.

<sup>3</sup>The New York Times, 36:3, September 10, 1924.

<sup>4</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, Plain Speech on a Public Insult, (New York: Macfadden Publications, Inc.), p. 11.

"blackest day in the history of American journalism,"<sup>5</sup> the New York Evening Graphic, a two-cent daily tabloid, appeared.

Here was a tabloid to end all tabloids, specializing in large black headlines and sordid pictures; described by one writer as New York's "most blatantly sensational tabloid newspaper in an era of blatant sensationalism,"<sup>6</sup> the Graphic soon won the nickname "the Pornographic."<sup>7</sup>

The first issue announced to its readers that the Graphic hoped to become the "great defender of American institutions."<sup>8</sup> It went on to say:

. . . we intend to make this newspaper instructive, upbuilding, inspiring, whenever possible.

We want to be recognized as one of the . . . common people . . .

We are just nice plain folks.

We intend to interest you mightily. We intend to dramatize and sensationalize the news and some stories that are not new.

But we do not want a single dull line to appear in this newspaper . . .

We want this newspaper to be human, first, last, and all the time. We want it to throb with those life

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<sup>5</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 243.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>"Glad to Meet You," New York Evening Graphic, I, September 15, 1924.

forces that fill life with joyous delight.<sup>9</sup>

Following this editorial was the Graphic's platform, tilting its lance at intolerance, government censorship, business and political favoritism and graft, as well as crusading for improved subway service, a bridge across the Hudson River to New Jersey, registration of aliens, compulsory suffrage with a fine for violators, voting by mail, automatic annulment of laws inactive for two or more years and protection of commuters from the policy of railroad companies requiring photographs and "other inconvenient methods of identification."<sup>10</sup> The last point probably stemmed from Macfadden's long-standing grudge against the Pennsylvania Railroad Company following the controversy over naming the railroad station at Physical Culture City.

The appearance of the Graphic suddenly made the tabloid a public issue. Its "personal" reporting, the moralizing and editorializing of news, its sensational headlines and photography all combined to stir up a host

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<sup>9</sup>"We Are of the People," New York Evening Graphic, I, September 15, 1924.

<sup>10</sup>"Our Platform," New York Evening Graphic, I, September 15, 1924.

of hostile critics.<sup>11</sup>

Macfadden's hope of making his newspaper different from others was undeniably realized; with his magazine temperament he created in the Graphic a daily magazine, containing an abundance of magazine features, special articles, contests, short stories, serials and illustrations. Even in treatment of news the magazine technique was evident.<sup>12</sup>

The newspaper began under the editorship of Emile Gauvreau and was staffed by sixty editors and writers.<sup>13</sup> Macfadden, in keeping with his preference for amateurs, hired rustic rather than metropolitan journalists.<sup>14</sup>

Early in the Graphic's career, Macfadden stated: "You have to dramatize the news and features that you present in such a manner as will not only interest your readers but will have an uplifting influence, mentally, morally, and spiritually."<sup>15</sup>

Displaying the motto "Nothing But the Truth" on each

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<sup>11</sup>Fulton Oursler, The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden, (New York: Lewis Copeland Company, 1929), p. 242.

<sup>12</sup>"Mr. Macfadden Defines News," New Republic, 40: 133-35, October 8, 1924.

<sup>13</sup>"We Are of The People", loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Alva Johnston, "The Great Macfadden," Saturday Evening Post, 213:91, June 28, 1941.

<sup>15</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

front page, the Graphic emphasized stories on suicide, divorce, crime, marital bedroom scenes and scandals and sex deviation. The tabloid's special vocabulary consisted of such words and phrases as "love tryst," "shiek," "prince," "scandal," "love nest," "love child," "intimate," "love-crazy," "orgy," "vice-girl."

Front page headlines included such masterpieces as "Torch Fiend in New Letter Defies Police"<sup>16</sup> and "Boy Slayer's 'Loves' Sought."<sup>17</sup>

On the second day of its existence the Graphic printed the headline, "Poor Boy, 19, Facing Noose, Cries Must I Die When Rich Killers Get Life."<sup>18</sup> Opposed to capital punishment, the Graphic continually sought clemency for poor youthful killers, citing the Loeb-Leopold case where the two rich murderers get life imprisonment.

An average week selected at random disclosed the following front page headlines: "Pretty Girl Has Three Hubbies"; "Cop Dying, 4 Bandits Shot"; "Heiress Penniless in Cell as Check and Jewel Crook"; "Why Donohue Jewel Thief Got Protection and \$68,000"; "Donohue Gem Thief Unknown";

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<sup>16</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 4:1, February 27, 1928.

<sup>17</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 5:1, November 5, 1928.

<sup>18</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 1:1, September 16, 1924.



and "Inside Story of Coal Plot."<sup>19</sup>

The five-cent Saturday Graphic, described in advertisements as "vibrant with human interest, alive with action and beauty," consisted of a rotogravure section devoted to scantily-clothed pin-ups and movie stars and a collection of features on various subjects. A typical Saturday Graphic story was "Criminals Are Made By the Food That They Eat as Children,"<sup>20</sup> which blamed criminality on white bread.

On May 3, 1925, Macfadden established the Sunday Graphic. In a circular he claimed that over a quarter of a million copies of the first issue had been sold, and that subsequent issues had been so well received and widely circulated that the Sunday Graphic had scored a success unprecedented in American journalism.<sup>21</sup> The Sunday Graphic, however, lasted only two months. In July it was stopped. Macfadden claimed that its success was its own downfall, that it was impossible to raise advertising rates to keep pace with the increasing circulation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 2:1, October 14-20, 1925.

<sup>20</sup>Flossie Zunser, New York Evening Graphic, 5:M7, June 1, 1929.

<sup>21</sup>Oswald Garrison Villard, "Sex, Art, Truth, and Magazines," Atlantic Monthly, 137:396, March 1926.

<sup>22</sup>Macfadden, op. cit., p. 12

Within one year of its founding, the Graphic had acquired almost 100,000 readers.<sup>23</sup> As circulation increased, the growth of new special departments and features kept pace, constantly usurping more and more space. The Daily Physical Culture Page kept its readers aware of Macfadden's health doctrines and was one of the major reasons why Macfadden entered the newspaper field. In the "Antics of Arabella," included on this page, health and physical culture were made more palatable for Graphic readers by a comic strip picturing two girls cracking old vaudeville quips while demonstrating various exercises. Other departments included "Your Numberscope," "Graphic Shopper," "Fashion's Voice," "The Woman Who Makes Good," "How to Get Your Man," "The Cutest Thing Baby Ever Said," "Our Daily Sermon," "Guide to Charm," "Getting Personal," "Your Handwriting Analyzed," "Screenland - Music and the Stage," "Why I Blushed," and "Investment Bureau."

The Graphic also ran a lonely hearts column, sponsored a lonely hearts ball,<sup>24</sup> and launched "keyhole journalism" by giving Ed Sullivan, Walter Winchell and Louis Sobel their start in journalism. Sullivan wrote two columns, "Ed Sullivan Sees Broadway" and "Sport Whirl."

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<sup>23</sup>Villard, loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup>"Venus of 1928 is Crowned Queen Before 15,000 at 'Hearts' Ball," New York Evening Graphic, 4:21, September 10, 1928.

Winchell's column, "Your Broadway and Mine," was later taken over by Sobol.

A column written by "Gene the Psychic" answered such readers' questions as when and whom they would marry, whether their sweethearts were true and what special unknown talents they possessed. Those who did not believe in Gene's powers had another department to appeal to, "Are You Unhappily Wed? Ask Patricia Lee. She Will Solve Your Married Life Problems."

In the fiction department were daily stories and serials reprinted from True-Story Magazine. In spite of the fact that Macfadden had a string of magazines for which he had to write monthly editorials, he always found the time to write a daily editorial for the Graphic, usually on some facet of successful courtship or marriage. His editorial fecundity was so great that he was known to dictate a month's supply of newspaper editorials within a few days before rushing off on a business trip abroad.<sup>25</sup>

Revival of the composograph. In keeping with the "see and believe" theory of news presentation, a vital instrument of tabloid journalism,<sup>26</sup> the Graphic supplied

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<sup>25</sup>Henry F. Pringle, "Another American Phenomenon," World's Work, 56:659, October 1928.

<sup>26</sup>Samuel Tenenbaum, "The Camera Learns to Lie," The Nation, 124:633-34, June 8, 1927.



its readers with an abundance of illustrations. The photographs were usually of criminals, movie celebrities or children, or sometimes of grief-stricken relatives of a murder or accident victim, accompanied by a maudlin account of their sorrow. The September 17, 1931, front page showed a photograph of a murder victim who had been fished out of the sea; the body, its arms and legs still bound, was shown on a concrete slab being studied by detectives.

A process revived and used frequently by the Graphic was the ancient fake type of illustration called the "composograph."<sup>27</sup> This consisted of photographs of posed models together with drawings, and often with faces of well-known persons grafted on without a complete breakdown of credits.

After having played up the Peaches Heenan Browning-Edward W. (Daddy) Browning marital scandals for some time, the Graphic dramatized Peaches' celebrated annulment suit by running a front-page composograph showing the plaintiff standing naked before the jury box.<sup>28</sup> The picture was a composite of a chorus girl's body and Peaches' head.<sup>29</sup>

Public reaction to this picture was mixed. Over-

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<sup>27</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 2:1, November 25, 1925.

<sup>29</sup>Taylor, loc. cit.

night the Graphic had a quarter of a million temporary new readers. Editor & Publisher declared it was "the most shocking news picture ever produced by New York journalism." Several communities barred the paper's sale.<sup>30</sup>

John S. Sumner, ever-vigilant successor of Anthony Comstock as head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, brought charges against Macfadden and Gauvreau for publishing pictures of "bloodshed, lust and crime."<sup>32</sup> The Browning composograph and several other pictures were produced in court as evidence.<sup>32</sup> Both men were held on one hundred dollars bail, but the court later dismissed the charges, concluding no law was broken.<sup>33</sup>

In October 1926 the Graphic moved into a new eight-story building in a deal involving approximately four million dollars.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, to many newsmen's surprise, the Graphic was not catching on. In this tabloid Macfadden believed he had the beginning of a chain of newspapers to rival that of William Randolph Hearst; it was expected that the

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 44, 46.

<sup>31</sup>The New York Times, 31:6, April 26, 1927.

<sup>32</sup>The New York Times, 15:5, June 16, 1927.

<sup>33</sup>The New York Times, 21:1, July 2, 1927.

<sup>34</sup>The New York Times, 21:4, October 22, 1926.

Graphic would lose money the first few months until it became established, but after several years Macfadden was still unable to bring the tabloid up out of the red.<sup>35</sup>

Such stories as "Searched Europe in Vain for Doctor to Save Her Dog's Sight,"<sup>36</sup> an article on a new "easy way" to control birth through inoculation,<sup>37</sup> countless writeups of "endurance dances" and a bathetic series of "spirit letters" from the deceased Rudolph Valentino had proved ineffective in attracting more readers. Further attempts to print "nothing but the truth" included a front page composograph accompanying a shipwreck story. In the background a sinking ship was drawn in, and several people were shown drowning in the rough sea; in the foreground a woman with an agonized face was clutching a child and trying to swim away while a leering, toothy shark, its head above the water, was preparing for a meal.<sup>38</sup>

The Graphic even experimented temporarily with perfumed ink,<sup>39</sup> but its sensational columns seemed to

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<sup>35</sup>"Macfadden's Family," Time, 28:45, September 21, 1936.

<sup>36</sup>Gladys Walton, New York Evening Graphic, 1:10 September 17, 1924.

<sup>37</sup>"Science Finds Easy Way to Solve Control of Birth", New York Evening Graphic, 7:2, April 15, 1931.

<sup>38</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 5:1, November 15, 1928.

<sup>39</sup>Personal communication to the author from Edward Bodin, president of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation.

smell no sweeter.

Probably no American newspaper has the volume of legend about it that the Graphic enjoyed. Once, it is said, when a tip came in that the kidnapped Lindbergh baby lay buried in a Trenton cemetery, the editor sent his staff grave-robbing. Reporters spent the night picking and shoveling, but they found no story.<sup>40</sup>

On July 8, 1929, Gauvreau resigned from his editorship. His letter to Macfadden read in part: "I cannot continue any longer as editor and publisher, as we do not agree on essential and vital policies."<sup>41</sup> The following day he was replaced by Martin H. Weyrauch.<sup>42</sup>

One biographer states that at this point Macfadden, "implacably determined to make the Graphic into a journal of real and lasting influence," undertook personal supervision of the tabloid, soon making it "vastly different than when it started" with "moral emphasis" rather than "mere pandering to morbid curiosity."<sup>43</sup>

The new moral Graphic proved its reformation by printing such headlines as "Half-Mad Bluebeard Taught Rites

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<sup>40</sup>"Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," Newsweek, 5:28, June 29, 1935.

<sup>41</sup>The New York Times, 34:7, July 9, 1929.

<sup>42</sup>The New York Times, 45:3, July 10, 1929.

<sup>43</sup>Oursler, op. cit., p. 255.

of Sex to 115 Love-Crazed Women,"<sup>44</sup> "2 Die in Voodoo Cult Raid,"<sup>45</sup> "Wild Village Orgy Winds Up in Girl's Bedroom Murder,"<sup>46</sup> "Gigolo Confesses Torso Murder; Paid by Sweetie,"<sup>47</sup> "Dad Shoots Nude Girl Beach Dancer"<sup>48</sup> and "'Ruined By Love Potion!' Says Girl in Own Story of Her Mad Revels."<sup>49</sup>

However, it soon became apparent to Macfadden that the Graphic's losses were becoming too high. Around the turn of the decade the tabloid showed a glimmering of a promise that it might start running in the black, but the depression reached its worst stage and advertisers began to drop off.<sup>50</sup>

On June 8, 1932, Macfadden announced a plan whereby he hoped to sell the failing tabloid to his employees.<sup>51</sup> By paying ten per cent of their salary the staff would have been able to complete payments in twelve and a half years. However, only five thousand dollars was collected, and the money was refunded. On July 1 a petition in bankruptcy was

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<sup>44</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 7:3, September 1, 1931.

<sup>45</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 6:1, March 5, 1930.

<sup>46</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 7:1, September 8, 1931.

<sup>47</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 7:1, June 6, 1931.

<sup>48</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 7:7, June 8, 1931.

<sup>49</sup>New York Evening Graphic, 6:1, March 20, 1930.

<sup>50</sup>Bodin, loc. cit.

<sup>51</sup>The New York Times, 3:6, June 9, 1932.



# 'RUINED BY LOVE POTION!'

## Says Girl in Own Story of Her Mad Revels

Story on Page 2

The Weather  
Fair and warmer tonight. Clouds and colder. Prevailing southwest winds.

Average Net Paid Daily Circulation  
**325,662** 6 Month Period  
To Oct. 1, 1929

NEW YORK

Second Largest Circulation Among New York Evening Newspapers

★★★★★★

# EVENING GRAPHIC

LATEST Final Edition NEWS

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1930

# SQUAW BLAMES LOVE IN KILLING

Story on Page 3



TO STAY IN PARIS  
Her who she for a titled  
new husband, the first  
woman's history the for  
mer wife of Charlie  
Chaplin, would not say  
today as she boarded the  
Aquitania. Foxes felt  
better than happier  
beamed the former Fox  
Gress. "I don't know how  
long I will be abroad, but  
it won't be too long."

BOON BENE GOES TO MURDER SPOT With the somber shadows of the city  
growing ever closer, Irene Schick, now on trial for the slaying of State  
Senator Brady Paul, visited scene of killing today. She is shown with Sheriff Frank N.  
Ferguson and Sheriff Bill Reynolds. And her only emotion was for Glenn Dague, her  
lover, awaiting trial for murder in same shooting.

Figure 3. Typical front page of the New York Evening Graphic.

filed for the Graphic, which still owed \$760,000.<sup>52</sup>

On July 7 the Graphic died quietly. Since it had begun, it had faced libel suits totalling seven million dollars, but had lost only \$5,290 in judgments and settlements. Its final circulation, second highest in the city's evening daily field, had reached 237,000, and it employed 350 persons.<sup>53</sup>

Besides the Graphic, there were nine other dailies in Macfadden's newspaper stable. The New York Daily Investment News was a Wall Street tabloid bereft of technicalities and for "popular" interest.<sup>54</sup> Another tabloid published in New York was the Automotive Daily News. The Philadelphia Daily News and the Detroit Daily News were also tabloids, while the New Haven (Connecticut) Times-Union, Mt. Pleasant (Michigan) Daily Times, Lansing (Michigan) Capital News, Wyandotte (Michigan) Daily Record and Greenville (Michigan) Daily News were all full-sized papers.<sup>55</sup>

Though these newspapers proved fantastically unprofitable, the biggest money-loser was the Graphic. When someone suggested to Macfadden that the Graphic had

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<sup>52</sup>The New York Times, 2:5, July 2, 1932.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.; The New York Times, 20:2, July 8, 1932.

<sup>54</sup>The New York Times, 41:4, March 28, 1929.

<sup>55</sup>Oursler, loc. cit.

cost him a couple of million dollars, he crowed indignantly, "The Graphic lost between seven and eight million dollars."<sup>56</sup>

"I damn near put the Mirror out of business," Macfadden said years later. "I would have, too, if my employees had been entirely loyal."<sup>57</sup> Though he declined to amplify this cryptic comment, he was probably referring to the fact that, when it was announced that the Graphic had lost five million dollars within five years, Winchell and many other employees took other jobs. However, rather than being a question of disloyalty, it was probably more a fear of the inevitable demise of the Graphic which spurred them to look elsewhere before it was too late.<sup>58</sup>

A magazine writer, reviewing the eight-year career of the Graphic, said, "The only value ever claimed for it was that it educated readers up to a point where they were able to understand the other tabloids."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup>Taylor, op. cit., pp. 46, 47.

<sup>58</sup>Bodin, loc. cit.

<sup>59</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ZENITH, AND LATER YEARS

The health missionary. In 1930, while the Graphic was withering and his magazine chain was constantly blossoming out with new publications, Macfadden took a trip to Europe. Visiting an Italian army post, he found the soldiers ill fed and in poor physical condition. He secured an audience with Mussolini and offered to demonstrate how his troops could be fed at half the current cost and be made twice as vigorous.<sup>1</sup> At first his suggestion was coldly received, but the following February forty young Italians arrived in America to test Macfadden's methods. After five months all showed substantial improvement in physical measurements and endurance.<sup>2</sup> Macfadden later received a decoration from the king of Italy for his work.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1931, at the age of 62, he was awarded a flier's license.<sup>4</sup> The owner of several planes, he had for years disapproved of flying as inimical to good health.

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<sup>1</sup>Alva Johnston, "The Great Macfadden," Saturday Evening Post, 213:93, June 28, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas B. Morgan, Italian Physical Culture Demonstration, (New York: Macfadden Book Company, Inc., 1932), pp.3, 46, 80, 114-193.

<sup>3</sup>The New York Times, 19:4, March 17, 1932.

<sup>4</sup>The New York Times, 13:3, July 19, 1931.

His newly-found enthusiasm for flying stemmed from political considerations; in 1928 he had flown from both parties' presidential conventions to be the first person from the conventions to congratulate the nominees, Smith and Hoover. He piloted his own planes well into his eighties, regardless of weather conditions and undisturbed by five minor crackups, and claimed he was the oldest active pilot in America.<sup>5</sup>

It is said that in his later years he became extremely absent-minded about trivialities. Managers of airports near New York, when they heard he was coming, usually locked up all their planes; it is said to have been Macfadden's custom, without consulting anyone, to take off in the first unoccupied plane he spotted.<sup>6</sup>

The year 1931 also marked a rift in the Macfadden family; he and Mary, after having seven children, were separated.<sup>7</sup>

Another of Macfadden's undertakings that year was a chain of penny restaurants similar to the ones which he

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; "Mr. Macfadden in Speedy Plane First to Congratulate Hoover," New York Evening Graphic, 4:6, June 18, 1928; Johnston, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, "Profiles," The New Yorker, 26:46, October 28, 1950.

<sup>7</sup>The New York Times, 11:1, February 8, 1945; "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," Newsweek, 5:28, June 29, 1935.

had started in 1907. Coming as they did during the depth of the depression, the restaurants offered health foods at a price low enough to put new hope into those who had a few cents or who might at least have found it easier to get such a small sum than to wait for hours in a bread line. The first of the penny restaurants looked like any other cafeteria, and the patrons were not exclusively down-and-outers. A penny bought a bowl of soup or a serving of cod-fish, hominy, beans, prunes or bread. Milk, apricots, and figs were two cents, meat cakes were two for five cents and a dime bought a complete dinner. Coffee, of which Macfadden did not approve, was sold for three cents a cup in order to discourage its sale.<sup>8</sup>

Soon there were six penny restaurants in New York, two in Washington and another one in Chicago.<sup>9</sup> Showing comparatively small deficits, the restaurants were started not so much for actual relief as for a demonstration of what could be done. Nevertheless they were serving as many as twelve thousand meals a day.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>"Food for a Penny," The Nation, 135:70, July 27, 1932; "Macfadden's Family," Time, 28:45, September 21, 1936.

<sup>9</sup>The New York Times, 17:5, June 22, 1933; "Macfadden's Family," loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>"Macfadden's Family," loc. cit.; The New York Times, 3:5, December 30, 1931; "Macfadden: 'A Lowly Crusader' Reviews His Life, in Two Parts," Newsweek, 6:36, December 14, 1935.

By receiving subscriptions toward the purchase of meal ticket books, Macfadden was later able to extend his plan to include those who could pay nothing. He also offered the services of one of his staff to any city wishing to open a similar restaurant.<sup>11</sup>

Climaxing his charitable ventures was the formation of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation in September 1931 to spread his health doctrines. Putting aside one and a half million dollars as a bequest to his dependents, Macfadden contributed five million dollars to the Foundation.<sup>12</sup> He gave up the rest of his estimated thirty million dollars to live on an annuity of two thousand dollars a week<sup>13</sup> and, as he put it, "throw aside the tentacles that grip you when assuming the responsibilities that great wealth brings."<sup>14</sup>

The Foundation's certificate of incorporation set down the following purposes:

To propagate the principles of health building by natural means; to publish books, magazines and pamphlets devoted to physical culture and natural methods of health building; to maintain, conduct and

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<sup>11</sup>The New York Times, 15:3, December 24, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>"Macfadden Millions Given to Charity," Editor & Publisher, 64:14, October 3, 1931.

<sup>13</sup>Time, 66:102, October 24, 1955; Rabbi Max Felshin, director of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation, in an interview with the author.

<sup>14</sup>"Macfadden Millions Given to Charity," loc. cit.

operate educational activities, including schools and institutions in which the said health-building methods are taught; to establish scholarships and foundations and other means for advocates of the said health-building methods to the end that they may be taught and trained and otherwise fitted to spread the principles thereof throughout the world; to maintain sanitariums and other institutions for the treatment of persons by such physical culture methods; to establish gymnasiums and camps and other outdoor recreational facilities to promote the physical well-being of young men and women; to promote among all classes of people the knowledge of right living and healthful living and the care of their bodies, which are essential to right living and good citizenship; to promote the knowledge of hygiene and health, and to ~~do~~ any and all things for the social and physical betterment of society and to lessen such abuses of society as may be factors in undermining the well-being or physical well-being of individuals and families; to promote the ideals of citizenship, the principles of good government and unselfish public service.

There shall be no discrimination as to age, race, nationality, sex, creed or color of the beneficiaries of such purposes.<sup>15</sup>

Macfadden kept tight control of the Foundation, casting ten votes while each of the eight other directors cast one vote each. The provisions stated that any member or director could be removed by a majority vote of members without cause. After Macfadden's death, his ten votes would be abolished, and an elected chairman would cast two votes in a tie. Each member, prior to death or disability, was to name a successor whom the others would elect, but with a proviso that the successor must either be a

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<sup>15</sup>The New York Times, 13:3, July 19, 1931.



descendant of Macfadden, a blood relative of his or else an officer or employee as well as a stockholder of Macfadden Publications, its successor or successors or affiliated companies.<sup>16</sup>

Late in 1931, encouraged by the success of his Italian experiment, Macfadden went to Portugal. Here he established a health school and placed fifty weak and slightly-built children from orphanages under the care of his health instructors. When the institution closed after six months the children were all greatly improved physically and were undefeated in the school's various sports, in spite of the fact that every contending team had been older, taller and heavier.<sup>17</sup>

The President-makers. As the money continued to roll in from his magazines, Macfadden accumulated a large following of yes-men and other parasites who tried to convince him that his talents were needed in high government offices. In 1932 an organization was formed to nominate Macfadden for the presidency of the United States, but he declined the offer,<sup>18</sup> preferring to set his sights on

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<sup>16</sup>The Survey, 67:2, October 15, 1931

<sup>17</sup>Thomas Dixon, A Dreamer in Portugal, (New York: Covici-Friede - Publishers, 1934), pp. 54, 55, 111-144.

<sup>18</sup>Johnston, op. cit., p. 91.

becoming the Secretary of Health. He hoped to attain this office through Franklin D. Roosevelt. His newly acquired magazine, Liberty, printed many articles on Roosevelt, becoming virtually a house organ for the Democratic nominee.

After Roosevelt's election, Macfadden, his hopes of a cabinet position rapidly fading, abandoned Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. In an editorial in Liberty he wrote:

I was an enthusiastic supporter of President Roosevelt; but when he cast aside many of his campaign pledges, abandoned almost entirely the Democratic platform upon which he was elected, and began the introduction of socialistic activities, it became my duty as a patriotic American citizen to do everything possible to defeat what appeared to me an effort to change our form of government.<sup>19</sup>

Toward the end of 1935, after a little prodding by the President-makers, Macfadden was ready to admit that the Republican presidential nomination would please him.<sup>20</sup>

"If the lightning strikes, it will find me a willing victim,"<sup>21</sup> he said, adding that the presidential nomination was "an honor no American can afford to refuse."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "Liberty's Publisher Accused of 'Muscling In' on the Republican Presidential Nomination . . .", Liberty, 12:4, December 14, 1935.

<sup>20</sup>"Macfadden: 'A Lowly Crusader' Reviews His Life, in Two Parts," loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup>Johnston, loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>Time, 26:61, November 11, 1935.

When the arch Republican Herald Tribune sent a reporter to interview him, Macfadden declared: "If the Republicans nominate an old-line Republican they'll be beaten worse'n last time, sure as shooting. They've just got to nominate a man who'll draw some Democratic votes, someone outside the political field. That's my chance . . ."23

When, after the interview, the Herald Tribune poked fun at his anxiety to 'muscle in' on the nomination,24 Macfadden snapped back in Liberty,

It is difficult to understand how a great newspaper . . . could stoop to direct falsehoods and other questionable tactics to discredit one it believes might become a candidate for the Presidency . . .

In the article referred to it is quite evident that it was the intention to brand me first of all as an all round vulgarian and then as a queer fanatic . . .

Christ was crucified for His teachings. Socrates was condemned to death for the same reason. Lincoln was vilified most unmercifully previous to his nomination. Not that I should be classed with any of these renowned characters . . .

No, I do not seek the Presidency. It is a man-killing job at best . . .

Ninety-nine out of every hundred intelligent Americans would not refuse a chance to be President if

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23 Ibid.

24 "Macfadden: 'A Lowly Crusader' Reviews His Life, in Two Parts," loc. cit.

it were offered to them, and I am no exception.<sup>25</sup>

At a luncheon of the Advertising Club of Baltimore, his speech attacking Roosevelt and the New Deal was constantly being cut off by heckling. His mention of the "Yellow Peril" - the possibility of a war with Japan - brought the final tumult which ended the speech.<sup>26</sup>

It was later estimated that the President-makers had trimmed Macfadden for approximately a quarter of a million dollars.<sup>27</sup>

In May 1935 Macfadden organized the first of a series of annual walking derbies. The 325-mile, seventeen-day hike began in New York City and led to Dansville in western New York.<sup>28</sup>

Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia pulled the trigger of a blank pistol, starting the forty-eight hikers on their trek. Among the walkers were a doctor who had hitch-hiked in from St. Louis, two grandmothers, and a retired sixty-nine year old lumberman who bet five thousand dollars that he had stamina enough to finish.

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<sup>25</sup>Macfadden, loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>The New York Times, 2:4, February 16, 1936.

<sup>27</sup>Johnston, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>28</sup>The New York Times, 10:3, May 3, 1935.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.; "Walking: Macfadden Runs Derby for Publicity, Profit, and Proof," Newsweek, 5:17, May 18, 1935; The New York Times, 17:2, May 10, 1935.

An eighty-three-year-old hiker kept getting blisters and dropping out; then he would mysteriously reappear ahead of his rivals at hotels along the route. A New Yorker removed his shoes to make the hike harder. A 173-pound woman, threatened with divorce, was determined to lose the fifty pounds she had gained the previous year.<sup>30</sup>

A truck filled with nine hundred pounds of cereal, raisins, brown sugar and salt chugged with the troupe.<sup>31</sup>

The pilgrimage to Dansville was repeated during the next three years. In 1939 the hikers walked to Philadelphia and back, extending the derby to 617 miles.<sup>32</sup>

In 1940 Macfadden sought to become Senator from Florida on the Democratic ticket, and proved amazingly popular with the voters. Some contend that he won by a wide margin but was counted out.<sup>33</sup>

A return to publishing. In 1941, after his retirement from publishing, he devoted most of his time to his duties as unsalaried president of the Bernarr Macfadden

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<sup>30</sup>"Walking: Macfadden Runs Derby for Publicity, Profit, and Proof," loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup>The New York Times, II, 1:2, May 5, 1935.

<sup>32</sup>The New York Times, II, 1:4, May 17, 1936; The New York Times, II, 9:1, May 23, 1937; The New York Times, 7:6, July 8, 1939.

<sup>33</sup>Time, 35:21, May 6, 1940; Johnston, loc. cit.

Foundation. The Foundation properties by this time included Castle Heights Military Academy at Lebanon, Tennessee, a physical culture hotel at Dansville, a sanitarium at Liberty, New York, a resort hotel in Miami Beach, two schools for children in Westchester County, New York and sundry other interests.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, under the new management, Physical Culture, in October 1941, became Physical Culture, the Intimate Magazine of Beauty and Health, and the following June became Beauty and Health, the Intimate Magazine for Discriminating Women. These changes almost killed Physical Culture, and after it was suspended in July 1942, Macfadden bought it back for next to nothing.<sup>35</sup>

He brought it out in pocket size in October 1943 under the name New Physical Culture. By 1946 the magazine, once enjoying a circulation of three hundred and forty thousand, still had only one hundred thousand.<sup>36</sup>

In June 1949 the publication changed to Bernarr

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<sup>34</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 50; "Professor-Prophet Acquires Another Sanatorium," op. cit., p. 27; Outlook and Independent, 150:1162, November 14, 1928; "Macfadden's Second Publishing Empire?", Printers' Ink, 215:81, June 28, 1940.

<sup>35</sup>Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1956) p. 246.

<sup>36</sup>"The Body is Back," Time, 48:69, August 12, 1946.

Macfadden's New Physical Culture. The March/April 1950 issue became Bernarr Macfadden's Health Review, changing in February/March 1951 to Macfadden's Vitalized Physical Culture, and again in June/July 1951 to Bernarr Macfadden's Vitalized Physical Culture. In the spring of 1954 it became Bernarr Macfadden's Journal; by this time the magazine had only twenty thousand readers.<sup>37</sup>

When Macfadden sold out his string of magazines in 1941, one of the conditions was no direct competition for the next five years. When the term was approaching its end in 1946, Macfadden began planning a new publication which was to be named Bernarr Macfadden's Detective Magazine. "My main reason for going back into general publishing," he said, "is to stabilize the crusade for health that I have waged throughout my life. Any funds received from this venture will go to the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation which is the embodiment of my ideal and ambition."<sup>38</sup>

Other publications which were to come out when paper was available were a true-story and a true-radio magazine;<sup>39</sup> however, his plans for a second empire never

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<sup>37</sup>Peterson, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>38</sup>"Macfadden's Second Publishing Empire?", loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup>"The Body is Back," loc. cit.

blossomed.<sup>40</sup>

In 1946, after years of court battles and disputes,<sup>41</sup> Macfadden, accusing his third wife of "humiliating" him by losing her figure, won a divorce.<sup>42</sup>

Two years later, at the age of seventy-nine, he married forty-two-year-old Mrs. Jonnie Lee, a teacher of health practices similar to his, in Miami. The wedding ceremony was marked by an outburst from a person known only as the "goat woman," often seen leading a goat around downtown Miami, who ran behind the altar and shouted, "This is against the holy word!"<sup>43</sup> In 1952 Macfadden and his fourth wife were separated.<sup>44</sup>

In 1949, a few days after his eighty-first birthday, Macfadden decided to prove "this growing-old idea is all nonsense."<sup>45</sup> Anxious to attempt something more spectacular than the feat he had performed in 1943 when he gave a press interview standing on his head to celebrate his seventy-

<sup>40</sup>Peterson, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>41</sup>The New York Times, 15:1, May 10, 1933; The New York Times, 10:6, November 21, 1933; The New York Times, 19:7, June 21, 1934; The New York Times, 11:1, February 8, 1945.

<sup>42</sup>The New York Times, 21:4, January 10, 1946.

<sup>43</sup>The New York Times, 13:5, April 24, 1948; Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Personal communication to the author from Edward Bodin, President of the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation.

<sup>45</sup>The New York Times, 55:4, August 21, 1949.



fifth birthday,<sup>46</sup> he decided on a parachute jump. With two concessions to safety, a football helmet and shin guards, he jumped from two thousand feet, landing in a field near Dansville Airport.<sup>47</sup>

He repeated the stunt in 1951, this time landing in the Hudson River near Yonkers, New York; he had wanted to jump over Niagara Falls, but was unable to secure permission.<sup>48</sup>

The following year, at eighty-four, he went to Paris and parachuted nine hundred feet over the Seine. Though he missed the river, he landed unhurt in an empty lot half a mile away. After this exploit, he went into a jig and announced that he intended to repeat the jump yearly "until I am 120 and then I'll try to live until I am 150."<sup>49</sup>

When he was eighty-six, Macfadden wanted to parachute into the Great Salt Lake, but was refused permission by the Utah Aeronautics Commission;<sup>50</sup> and so he decided on a new diversion to observe his birthday. Feeling that he needed another "cleansing," he announced

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<sup>46</sup>"A Colorful Publishing Career," Printers' Ink, 253:82, October 21, 1955.

<sup>47</sup>The New York Times, 55:4, August 21, 1949.

<sup>48</sup>"Bravo Macfadden," Newsweek, 40:46, September 8, 1952; Time, 60:54, September 8, 1952.

<sup>50</sup>The New York Times, 33:4, March 11, 1954.

that he would conduct a seven-day fast at his Dansville health resort with anyone feeling a similar need to "purge the system."<sup>51</sup>

Macfadden's genius for dreaming up strange inventions was shown by such gadgets as his "physical culture suspenders," guaranteed to make its wearer an "upright man,"<sup>52</sup> the physical culture watch, whose dial showed what exercises and food were called for during each given hour, a narrow-gauge railroad for department store customers, and the peniscope, a ventilating device of which the less said the better.<sup>53</sup> In his latest brainstorm, the double-deck subway car designed to nearly double passenger capacity, he saw an idea which, he believed, could win for him the mayoralty of New York City. In 1953, running on the "Honest Party" ticket, he tossed his hat into the already crowded ring, pledging ejection of Communists and greedy and corrupt politicians, sales tax elimination, traffic decongestion, better schools and housing, more state aid, and legalization of gambling, with the profits to

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<sup>51</sup>"Fast Purge," Newsweek, 44:44, August 9, 1954.

<sup>52</sup>Advertisement: "Be An Upright Man," Physical Culture, X:xi, July 1903.

<sup>53</sup>"Life With a Genius," Time, 61:122, April 20, 1953.

be used for welfare.<sup>54</sup>

In a letter to The New York Times, sent soon after a rise in the subway fare, Macfadden wrote:

It's about time New York City had a business administration free from the wastefulness of politicians. We wouldn't have to be paying 15 cents for a subway ride if the subway were managed with the business efficiency found in any great corporation in America.

When I am Mayor I will call upon the best brains in the business world, not politicians, to advise me. Meanwhile the 15-cent subway token can be my campaign button to remind victims of political waste and what can be if they clean house this year.<sup>55</sup>

However, later that year the Board of Elections invalidated Macfadden's city-wide petitions, holding that 1,120 of the 8,306 signatures were defective.<sup>56</sup>

The last days. Toward the end of his life Macfadden was a bitter and unhappy man. His critics' rebukes, which had never bothered him in years past, became harder to bear.<sup>57</sup>

Alone, almost friendless, he was living in the Hotel Earle in Jersey City, New Jersey, when he became ill and

<sup>54</sup>The New York Times, 15:6, July 21, 1953.

<sup>55</sup>Bernarr Macfadden, "To the Editor of the New York Times," The New York Times, 22:6, July 29, 1953.

<sup>56</sup>The New York Times, 25:4, October 14, 1953.

<sup>57</sup>Felix May, editor of Physical Culture, in an interview with the author.

lost consciousness. The hotel manager called the police, who in turn summoned an ambulance. Semi-conscious and too weak to object, the lifelong advocate of nature healing was taken on October 7, 1955, to the Jersey City Medical Center and placed under the care of a physician.<sup>58</sup> On the evening of October 12, Macfadden died at the age of eighty-seven. His physician diagnosed the cause of death as jaundice, complicated by a three-day fast.<sup>59</sup>

Eulogy. It has been said that Macfadden "had the first new idea in the publishing field in the last fifty years."<sup>60</sup> He had an uncanny ability to discover publications for which millions were waiting. Today many of his magazines are still being published, some by Macfadden Publications, a few by other publishing concerns. No matter what one's opinion of his publications may be, it must be admitted that he started a new trend in magazine literature.

And yet, though Macfadden put out a handful of newspapers and dozens of magazines whose total peak

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<sup>58</sup>Bodin, loc. cit.; The New York Times, 44:4, October 11, 1955.

<sup>59</sup>The New York Times, 31:1; October 13, 1955; Time, 66:102, October 24, 1955.

<sup>60</sup>Peterson, op. cit., p. 275.

circulation was estimated at up to forty million yearly,<sup>61</sup> it must be remembered, if we are to make a valid evaluation of this man, that his publishing career was of secondary import to him, a means of achieving what was to him a far more important goal. With the wealth that he acquired from his publications, through his quest for public office, through his exhibitions of physical prowess, he hoped to spread his health doctrines.

Macfadden's non-profit Foundation today still maintains the Castle Heights Military Academy and the Dansville health resort,<sup>62</sup> and publishes Physical Culture at Branford, Connecticut.<sup>63</sup>

Significantly, at his funeral Macfadden was eulogized not as the one-time publisher of the nation's largest magazine chain but as "an apostle of good health."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>The New York Times, 31:1, October 13, 1955.

<sup>62</sup>Broadside circular, (New York: The Bernarr Macfadden Foundation, September 25, 1932).

<sup>63</sup>Bodin, loc. cit.

<sup>64</sup>The New York Times, 86:1, October 16, 1955.

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