

# THE NORTHERN MONTHLY AND NEW JERSEY MAGAZINE:

MAY 1867-JUNE 1868

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ONE hundred years ago literate Americans were engaged in the task of reviving those civilizing influences which are neglected in time of war. If the hectic economic fluctuations of the greenback era encouraged speculation and fostered an exuberant materialism with disturbing reverberations in government and society, prosperity in North and West also brought opportunities for the nourishing of cultural expression. In the particular area of the periodical press the availability of new money and the rapid improvements in printing technology encouraged, between 1865 and 1870 alone, an increase from 700 to 1,200 in the number of periodicals published in the United States.<sup>1</sup> A majority of these publications followed erratic careers in search of mass family audiences. Some were conducted by professional journalists, others by popular writers, clergymen, and businessmen with lesser literary ambitions. One such man was Captain Allen Lee Bassett, proprietor and editor of *The Northern Monthly and New Jersey Magazine*.

The circumstances of Bassett's editorship are related to another post-Civil War phenomenon: the rapid rise of literary societies. Local in origin and selective in membership, these societies were established by civic leaders with literary tastes, and the members met regularly to engage in debates, discuss their creative efforts, and encourage each other's moral and mental improvement. In New Jersey, representatives from thirty such societies met at Trenton in December, 1866, to discuss the consolidation of their activities. At a formal convention held the following month in Newark (15-16

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

January, 1867) they established the New Jersey State Literary Union.<sup>2</sup>

Recommendations for the publication of a state periodical were given immediate consideration at the convention, and representative Peter N. Honeyman<sup>3</sup> records that the report of the committee on State Organ occasioned much lively debate. A suggested newspaper publication was discarded in favor of a monthly magazine which would be only slightly more expensive to produce and which "would be in a handier form for reading and for binding, which might be the means of securing for it subscribers which it might not otherwise receive."<sup>4</sup> It was also assumed that twenty-four pages of the magazine would be reserved for the use of the State Literary Union. After further discussion Captain Bassett was elected to the editorship for one year, a post which he accepted "though with reluctance" because of his inexperience in journalistic matters.<sup>5</sup>

Bassett's election was in part a recognition of his business experience and past public service.<sup>6</sup> Born in Connecticut in 1827, he came from a distinguished New England family, but declined a professional career at the age of eighteen to become a mercantile clerk in New York. During the next twenty years he rose to the control of the Brooklyn manufacturing firm of Bassett and Mace. During the Civil War, as organizer and captain of the Brooklyn Greys, he helped quell the New York riots and later saw action at Gettysburg. After the war he moved to Irvington, New Jersey, where he became a member of the Irvington Lyceum and developed an early interest in the State Literary Union.

<sup>2</sup> The Special Collections Department of the Rutgers Library includes documents related to the formation of the N.J.S.L.U., as well as a complete file of the *Northern Monthly and New Jersey Magazine*.

<sup>3</sup> Honeyman was a member of the New Germantown Lyceum of Oldwick, New Jersey. The papers of this society are in the Special Collections Department of the Rutgers Library. Included are Honeyman's convention reports, containing useful information about the founding of the *New Jersey Magazine*.

<sup>4</sup> Convention report, January, 1867, Papers of the New Germantown Lyceum of Oldwick, N. J., p. [4] (hereafter cited as New Germantown Lyceum Papers).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. [4]. Bassett had served on the Rules of Order and State Organ convention committees, and was thus slightly known to the otherwise unacquainted representatives.

<sup>6</sup> Biographical entries on Bassett may be located in: *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Second Series, XII (Newark, 1894), 127-128; *Cyclopedia of New Jersey Biography: Memorial and Biographical*, III (New York, 1923), 194-195; Irving S. Kull, *New Jersey. A History. Biographical and Genealogical Records*, V (New York, 1930), 41-43.

Following the Newark convention, Bassett began a laborious search for a publisher to underwrite the magazine but found none willing to risk money on a venture that had only amateur support and an uncertain future under an untried editor. Anxious that there be no pre-publication delays and aware that the State Literary Union could not provide initial financing without considerable difficulty, Bassett "took the responsibility upon his own shoulders, and was satisfied with the result."<sup>7</sup> He invested his private funds in the project, set up an editorial office at 248 Broad Street, Newark, secured an agent to canvass subscriptions and contributions across the state, and contacted established magazine writers for further contributions. These efforts led to the issuance in May, 1867, of the first number of *The New Jersey Magazine*.

In format, the magazine was attractively printed in wide-margined single columns, providing "a page which can be read with ease and comfort."<sup>8</sup> The first issue was ninety-two pages long (later issues averaged one hundred pages) and began with Bassett's "Announcement" introducing "a monthly devoted to Literature, Art, History, and Biography" which would draw wide-spread attention through its efforts "to aid the intellectual energies of New Jersey" and to contribute to the general advance of the nation: "Such a journal as we shall try to make this is needed in our State and country." To forestall critics and muster support Bassett urged that

The contents of this number, although inferior in many respects (which is inevitable with all new enterprises) to those which will follow, sufficiently indicate the high order of talent engaged upon it. Some of the ablest minds in New Jersey are writing for it, without distinction of party, class, or sect; while from abroad we shall secure whatever of real value may offer. . . . (p. 1)

A letter from New Jersey Governor Marcus L. Ward expressed pleasure that "writers of experience generally, throughout the State, have, as a class, so largely promised to write for the magazine" (p. 2).

James Walker Wall, a New Jerseyan of particularly broad experience, contributed the opening article to this first issue. Wall had

<sup>7</sup> New Germantown Lyceum Papers, July, pp. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> *The New Jersey Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 1 (May, 1867), 1. All future page references for direct quotation from the magazine will appear in the text of this article.

had a turbulent national political career centered in Copperhead activities, but for the *New Jersey Magazine* he offered a hardly inflammatory article on "The Great Master of English Satire—Dean Swift." Swift was a particularly sympathetic figure to Wall, who seemed to find justification for his own career in Swift's "bold fearlessness in defense of right" in a "corrupt age" (p. 4). Dr. F. B. C. Walker contributed an important sketch of New Jersey Civil War hero Major-General Alexander Shaler. Newark civil engineer Major Alfred F. Sears discussed "Authority of the Old Masters in Architecture," challenging hybrid modernism in ecclesiastical design. An unsigned Civil War reminiscence offered angry reflections on the betrayal of government forces in Texas at the start of the war.<sup>9</sup> The introductory essay of a six-part series on the "History of the English Language" by John Whitehead, a prominent Newark lawyer, was clearly intended for the mental improvement of Literary Union members. Two New Jersey authoresses contributed to the first issue. Miss Amanda M. Douglas offered a two-part sentimental romance with the dubious title "How One Man Was Saved," and Miss Anne H. M. Brewster offered a slight sketch on Madame Récamier, whose recent memoirs of French society had struck the public fancy. Bassett had the good fortune to secure a poem, "Flowers From Bunyan's Grave," from the very popular Mrs. Ellen Clementine Howarth, then residing in Trenton; a still largely unknown correspondent for the Newark *Daily Advertiser*, Richard Watson Gilder, offered out-of-season verses on "A Christmas Cross." The only contributions directly traceable to members of local literary societies were a lame trifle "On Bores" by one D. H., and a too-long poem, "Voices of Spring," by Dr. R. S. Braine, both members of the Irving Literary Union of Irvington and presumably friends of Bassett.

The magazine closed with editorial columns which were probably modeled on the editorial section of *Harper's Monthly*.<sup>10</sup> First came the Editor's Saddle-Bags, which Bassett described as "a sort of omnium gatherum—a budget of stray facts" in which the

<sup>9</sup> Articles were nearly always unsigned in the magazine, though a bound volume included contents pages which identified all but a few contributors.

<sup>10</sup> *Harper's* editorial matter in 1867 included the Editor's Easy Chair (sketches and urbane comment), the Editor's Drawer (humor), a Monthly Record of Current Events, and a section of Literary Notices.

editor might "ventilate his pet literary theories—denounce the wrongs, real or fancied, which come under his observation, and indulge in the platitudes usual and therefore tolerable in members of his species." The department would notice "striking events of the month—State items, sketches, and such fun as is suggested, contributed, discovered, or can be manufactured" (p. 71). His sketches would be in "plain English" and there would be no "cant and drivel." As humor would be a chief ingredient, Bassett offered the extravagant promise that

no one shall be afflicted with the ponderous humor that sank *Vanity Fair* or the "latter-day" *Knickerbocker*, nor the dreary, ghastly, other-world witticisms of *Punch* . . . nor lastly . . . any of *Harper's* fearful *milk stories*.  
(p. 72)

Bassett entered upon his duties aware of the course and clichés of other magazines and able to wink an eye at his own high-spirited ambitions. This spirit manifested itself in the form of Yankee irony, a blend of cosmopolitan and provincial attitudes, and a self-congratulatory stance which was recurrent in his editorial style. Style, however, could not cover lapses in invention. The editorial fillers in the first issue were thin: an anecdote on "the dullness of business, and general hard times" (p. 72) as illustrated in a story about boorish new-moned Western merchants, a joke about phrenological errors, and a "booster" for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company "proving to the world that America, young as she is, can still set an example in life insurance" (p. 74). A Monthly Record of Current Events proceeded haphazardly through European and American affairs and wound up noting an outbreak of horse disease in New Jersey. (The anemic quality of this current-events feature was quickly realized, and it was dropped after the second issue.)

Book reviews filled out the editorial section. The first issue gave favorable notices to novels by local authoresses Amanda M. Douglas and Anne H. M. Brewster, urging both ladies to bring further acclaim to New Jersey letters. Miss Mulock was an overrated writer, but in *The Two Marriages* she did try to produce "healthy results" while contemplating the "darker phases" of marriage; in addition, the handsomely-bound volume would make "a rich addition to the library shelf, or the drawing-room table" (p. 88). Victor Hugo was

highly praised for his "absolute literary power" (p. 88) in the service of epic themes in *Toilers of the Sea*. *The Claverings* contained Trollope's usual everyday characters; its popularity was puzzling, and the review ended with the faint compliment that the book was "decidedly excellent, considering that it is Trollope's" (p. 89).<sup>11</sup>

The issue ended with a brief history of the State Literary Union, including a plea for "proper appreciation, just criticism, and liberal support" of the *New Jersey Magazine's* "laudable effort" to achieve "the elevation of a literary standard and the development of literary tastes and interests" (p. 92).

This first number has been discussed at length because it is representative of most issues of the magazine during its brief career. The contributors were largely from the metropolitan New York-Newark area: some were professional writers; others, decidedly amateur. The balance of discursive and formal essays with light fiction and poetry remained constant, but the emphasis on the cultivation of New Jersey writing talents was somewhat tempered when the provincial drawbacks of the title were recognized. An experimental title—*The Northern Monthly and New Jersey Magazine*—was adopted in July, 1867; by September, this had been shortened permanently to *The Northern Monthly*.

The fourteen monthly issues of Bassett's magazine contained approximately one hundred articles.<sup>12</sup> Most recurrent were the more formal historical and biographical pieces, and in them students of New Jersey military and political history will find source material on Major-General Shaler, Major-General Philip Kearny, cavalry officer Captain George V. Griggs, Major-General Kilpatrick, Commodore Stockton, lawyer-Congressman Richard Stockton, statesman William L. Dayton, and reformer-abolitionist Benjamin Lundy. James Parton contributed a four-part series on "Past Presidential

<sup>11</sup> Literary reviews in later issues discussed Thackeray's merits as superior to Dickens's (October, pp. 597-598), satirically appraised Walt Whitman's "A Carol for Harvest 1867" as though it had been intended to grace an agricultural catalog (October, pp. 598-599), and, though disappointed in the sterile creed of Swinburne's early verse, found much in *Laus Veneris* that was "philosophically of ethical value" (June, 1867, p. 185).

<sup>12</sup> Nearly seventy writers can be identified. Though their reputations have generally not been lasting, at least seventeen are important enough for inclusion in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Nominations" (July-October), and another article confronted the "Alleged Atheism of the Constitution" (November). European politics were represented by articles on Bolingbroke, Richard Cobden, the House of Commons, British court ceremonies, and post-Napoleonic France.

Next in frequency were articles on literary topics. These included early biographical sketches of several journalists of the period: Parke Godwin—Newark *Evening Post* editor later associated with *Putnam's*; publisher Horace Greeley; James Gordon Bennett of the New York *Herald*; poet-dramatist-journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis. Two surveys of "Our Magazine Literature" (March) and the "History of American Journalism" (December) traced the growth of the American press through the mid-1860's.<sup>13</sup>

Social institutions, morals, and manners, although fashionable in many popular magazines, occupied a decidedly lesser sphere in the *Northern Monthly*. By far the majority of Bassett's contributors were men with predictable attitudes toward the "woman-question." Three articles on the moral interrelationship of dress and behavior appeared early in 1868. The anonymous author of "The Farewell of the Fig Leaves" (March) showered leering abuse on the alarming fashionable incidence of décolletage, but his remarks were mild in comparison with Junius Henri Browne's attack on ballet (March) as the harbinger of the final voluptuary decline of Western civilization. Julius Wilcox offered more tempered criticism, equating modesty in dress with beauty (April), but all three wrote from the entrenched viewpoint that proof of modesty rested with the woman. Apart from these attacks, only Olive Logan's brief sketch of stage-life ("A Talk About the Green-Room and Its People"—September) and her anecdote of French society ("An Empress on Skates"—March) might appeal to feminine non-fictional tastes.

There were scattered articles on travel, particularly in and around a Catholic Rome viewed with disturbance by Protestant observers; these were augmented by a series on metropolitan clergymen. Wide-

<sup>13</sup> There was also an anonymous attack on Charles Dickens in the January issue—"Some Plain Words Concerning Mr. Charles Dickens"—coinciding with Dickens's farewell tour of America. The writer attempted to stir up long-buried antagonism against Dickens's early anti-American impressions, his views on copyright, and his personal character. Bassett later offered the lame excuse that the writer had preferred to remain anonymous because of his modesty (April, p. 635).

ranging articles on life and industry in Newark (September and November) and Philadelphia (January) were contributed by prolific journalist William Wirt Sikes. Other pieces described life in Paterson (December), in New York's Jewish community (June, 1867), and in Washington during the 1840's (June, 1867). Articles on manufacture and economics included explanations of the Bessemer process (December), life insurance (March), the national debt (May, 1868), and a worried appraisal of "The Greenback Era" (May, 1868).

The *Northern Monthly* published two serial novels, twenty-two short stories, and thirty poems. *Miss Van Arsdale* (August, 1867-January, 1868), by Miss Douglas, was a domestic drawing-room romance in which the heroine was saved with a minimum of social embarrassment from marrying the wrong man. *The Thief in the Night* (January-June, 1868), by popular novelist Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford, had a superficial continental setting within which hero Beaudesfords was revived by means of galvanic shock on his almost-deathbed to marry the heroine in the last installment. The short stories and poetry were afflicted with that creative malaise which permeated much popular literature of the period. They were hackneyed, sentimental, relentlessly didactic.

Bassett utilized his editorial columns to discuss problems of editorship and the fortunes of his magazine. In July, 1867, he expressed annoyance that many of the literary societies had been lax in subscribing, and decided that press attacks on his editorial sketches actually called attention to their "merits and attractiveness" (p. 275). A collection of vapid novels on his desk in August led him to remark that "this is not the golden age of American literature" (p. 380). In September he facetiously contemplated "fifteen to twenty well-packed crates" of unsolicited poetry crowding his office and suggested that if authors would submit their photographs, "we will agree to publish the poetry (?) (God save the mark!) sent by the homeliest man and the prettiest woman" (p. 487). In October he celebrated the end of his first volume with the reflection that the magazine had thrived despite criticism that New Jersey was "barren soil" for such a provincial enterprise. The *Northern Monthly* "numbers its readers by thousands, and its worth is everywhere acknowledged by the leading minds and united press of the entire

country" (p. 594). The magazine would continue to be "the repository of American literature, pure and simple" (p. 595). In November he printed the New York *Tribune's* comment that the *Northern Monthly* had "lusty life . . . decided pluck . . . a little audacity." He boasted of "writers of acknowledged reputation" (p. 91) and expected to "excel all other literary competitors" (p. 92). But the remarks were becoming strained, and the enthusiasm could not fully cover evidences of a shaky financial situation and a lethargic circulation.<sup>14</sup> Still, the new year found him "hopeful of a long and dashing career" (January, p. 311).

The January number replaced the exhausted Saddle-Bags with a new editorial feature: a dramatic interchange among four characters (A. L. B., The Editor, Rhadie Manthus, and Alcie Biades). These four personalities (sprung full-grown from Bassett's imagination) are always discovered around a cluttered library table, hard at work on the current issue of the magazine. In the midst of much humor, mock seriousness, literary harangue, and cigar smoke, they nurse the *Northern Monthly* along from month to month and instill a new spirit into the later numbers of the magazine.

In April, 1868, the *Northern Monthly* celebrated its first anniversary. Bassett was tired—perhaps ill<sup>15</sup>—and his remarks reflected this weariness. He believed his purposes to have been "lofty, however faltering the performance." He had tried to present "a not unfair reflection of what is genuine in American life" (p. 634), but he had not always been favored with a congenial intellectual atmosphere. Quality contributions cost money, and until circulation improved readers would have to "be content with such things as the month brings forth" (p. 635). In June, 1868, he insisted that he had "a great superfluity of very excellent matter already laid aside for future use" (p. 236). There was no indication that the magazine's publication would be abruptly terminated that same month.

Behind the scenes, however, there had been difficulties from the start. At the State Literary Union's second convention in Newark

<sup>14</sup> Unsold back issues of every number were still available, and a free copy of Volume I "handsomely bound in cloth" was offered to any group of three new subscribers who wished to "secure for the Northern Monthly a footing in every household" (November, p. 92).

<sup>15</sup> ". . . he was compelled to relinquish [his editorship] on account of his health." *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*. Second Series. XII, 127.

(16-17 July, 1867) a large number of the representatives accused Bassett of bad faith for publishing so few of the manuscripts submitted to him by local literary societies and talked of opposing further publication of the magazine.<sup>16</sup> John Whitehead (later president of the State Literary Union in 1868) spoke in defense of Bassett, calling the *Northern Monthly* "far superior to 'Harper's' which is generally considered the best magazine in this country."<sup>17</sup> Bassett also addressed the representatives. In three months the project had cost him several thousands of dollars and he did not feel that the estimated total circulation of 3,000 copies per issue was unrespectable.<sup>18</sup> He had published few of the contributions sent to him by society members because the majority of them had not been worth publishing "in a first class magazine, as he had endeavored to make the one of which he was the Editor."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he had been disappointed in his expectations of financial support from local societies, and he reminded the representatives that a majority of the annual subscribers, perhaps nine-tenths of them, were in no way involved in the activities of the State Literary Union. He insisted that the magazine would improve in time and would soon be embellished with engravings.<sup>20</sup> Somewhat mollified, the representatives adjourned without taking any action beyond offering Bassett thanks for his efforts.

With only minimal support from the State Literary Union, Bassett was left largely to his own devices for the continuance of the magazine. Circulation did not rise, subscribers were often in arrears, there were no provisions for advertising income, and good contributions were scarce. Bassett went so far as to print as appendices certain "booster" articles which he had been paid to publish by outside parties.<sup>21</sup> In the early spring of 1868, he decided to withdraw from

<sup>16</sup> In the first three issues, only six minor articles and poems were specifically acknowledged as contributions from literary societies. After an abbreviated report on the July convention appeared in September (pp. 491-492) there was no further mention of the State Literary Union in the magazine.

<sup>17</sup> New Germantown Lyceum Papers, July, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> In contrast, *Harper's Monthly* could point to a circulation of 125,000 as early as 1854. See Percy H. Boynton, *A History of American Literature* (Boston, 1919), pp. 491-492.

<sup>19</sup> New Germantown Lyceum Papers, July, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Three full-page plates and numerous smaller vignettes were eventually clustered in articles on Newark and steel manufacturing.

<sup>21</sup> These included articles on behalf of the Central Pacific Railroad (December),

the editorship and began looking for someone to take his place. Attempts to attract first fellow-Newarker Richard Watson Gilder and then well-known lecturer-journalist Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland to the post proved futile,<sup>22</sup> but George Palmer Putnam, New York publisher of *Putnam's Magazine*, was more sympathetic to Bassett's plight.

*Putnam's Magazine* was the second series of the pre-war *Putnam's Monthly*. Its editor, Charles F. Briggs, hoped to capitalize on the success of the earlier series, but since its revival in January, 1868, the magazine had not been well received by the public.<sup>23</sup> Unable to secure more than 1,500 subscribers,<sup>24</sup> *Putnam's* now looked to improve its position through merger with other magazines. Bassett arranged to have the *Northern Monthly* absorbed by *Putnam's* during the month of June, 1868, and the July *Putnam's* carried a notice of this consolidation:

When this Magazine (after being for a half-score of years quietly moored out of sight,) sailed out once more into the broad ocean, newly fitted and manned, we signalled several other trim craft bound on much the same course, enjoying a favorable breeze and managed by skilful navigators. One of these, well to the windward of us at the start, carrying a national flag with "*Northern Monthly*" at the fore, was evidently so well handled by her wide-awake skipper, that one wouldn't have wondered much if she had distanced her competitors.

Why, and how we have overhauled this craft and taken her captain and crew on board our own ship, we need not say in detail. Suffice it for the friends of literary commerce to know that the business of both vessels will hereafter be merged. Probably those specially interested in the career of that lively and fast-sailing clipper will not be altogether displeased to receive their intellectual supplies hereafter by the steady-going vessel lately rebuilt from the sound timber of the old "*Putnam*," mixed with live-oak fresh from the forest.

In plain prose, the *Northern Monthly* and its varied resources, with all its efficient allies, will hereafter be included in those of *Putnam*. May we not reasonably anticipate that all parties concerned will be advantaged

the Gorham Silver Company (April) and the Collins Steel Company (June, 1868), and a defense of A. M. W. Ball's disputed authorship of a popular song: "Who Wrote 'Rock Me to Sleep, Mother?'" (March).

<sup>22</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, *Letters*, ed. Rosamund Gilder (New York, 1916), p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> In his Editor's Saddle-Bags for October, Bassett had applauded G. P. Putnam for reviving *Putnam's*, "a magazine than which none superior has ever been established in the United States. . . . Success attend it!" (p. 597).

<sup>24</sup> Mott, *History of American Magazines*. II: 1850-1865, p. 430.

by this consummation? The management of PUTNAM'S MAGAZINE *will remain as at present*;—with all possible additions of fresh life and vigor.<sup>25</sup>

The anticipated advantages, however, did not materialize. None of the local writers who had first appeared in the pages of the *Northern Monthly* is listed on the contents pages of later *Putnam's* issues. Whatever good will and subscriber support G. P. Putnam thought to gain was not forthcoming, and in November, 1870, *Putnam's* was in its turn merged with the just-inaugurated *Scribner's Monthly*.

J. G. Holland was editor-in-chief of *Scribner's*; his managing editor was Richard Watson Gilder. In absorbing *Putnam's*, these men found themselves once again indirectly associated with the *Northern Monthly* and Gilder would later remark on the "singular coincidence"<sup>26</sup> of this renewed acquaintance. The association was, though, only titular. *Scribner's* highly successful program emphasizing the best in family reading enhanced by quality illustrations had no room for the materials and procedures of the *Northern Monthly*. Holland was convinced that "such changes have occurred in the popular demand that a great success is not possible if sought only by the old means and methods."<sup>27</sup>

The *Northern Monthly's* failure to gauge this popular demand had fated it for early extinction. A brief appraisal of the magazine indicates that its weaknesses were greater than its strengths.<sup>28</sup> It had encouraged native writing talents and had published timely biographical and historical articles. Its editorial aims had been laudable and Bassett had been sincere in his concern for the general mental improvement of his readers. Yet the materials which he printed were too often the leisured, amateurish essays of businessmen, collected to no observable end.<sup>29</sup> There had been nothing to

<sup>25</sup> *Putnam's Magazine*, n. s. II (July, 1868), 128.

<sup>26</sup> Gilder, *Letters*, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Scribner's Monthly*, I (November, 1870), 105.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Luther Mott, in his *History of American Magazines*, III, 33, gives the "Northern Magazine" [*sic*] a hurried and inexact glance, noting only that it was both "rather amusing" and "badly edited." Mott says that J. G. Holland had been a contributor, but he is not so listed on the contents pages of either volume. The anonymous "A Plea for Good Reading" (April) may be his.

<sup>29</sup> In September, 1867, Bassett published a report on the State Literary Union in which he quoted John Whitehead's convention remark that the *Northern Monthly* had "not the *transcendentalism* [of the *Atlantic*] or the *pictures* [of *Harper's*], but the instruction—the interest—the real value, second to no magazine in the United States"

appeal to young tastes and the occasional attacks on women had surely alienated that important segment of the potential audience. Further, a tendency to puff the works of contributors, and evidence of too much religious, social, and literary bias (despite Bassett's protestations of impartiality) weakened the *Northern Monthly's* image, particularly in its later issues. In attempting to accommodate both the "freedom vouchsafed to divergent opinion on the street and in the drawing-room" (May, 1868, p. 124) Bassett found himself in an untenable position and was left to argue, in his last issue, that "an editor should not be burdened with what is decidedly out of his sphere" (June, 1868, p. 236). All these difficulties may be traced in his frank editorial columns where the shaky scaffolding supporting the magazine was too often exposed.

Following his resignation, Bassett returned to the more congenial atmosphere of the Newark business world, eventually to become president of the Newark Board of Trade, chairman of the Essex County Republican Committee, and, more notably, organizer of the Prudential Insurance Company. As a member of the New Jersey Historical Society and a supporter of many philanthropic activities he left his mark on community and state. The *Northern Monthly* remained not the least of his generous ventures in support of New Jersey's cultural life.

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(p. 492). But the reading public clearly wanted less instruction and more entertainment from its popular magazines.