George R. Graham  
Philadelphia Publisher

In the literary history of Philadelphia there is hardly a more colorful success story than that of George R. Graham and the magazine which bore his name in the 1840's and 1850's. Nor is there a more pathetic story of failure, for this magazine publisher who printed original writings of Poe, Longfellow, Lowell, Bryant, Cooper, Thoreau and Elizabeth Barrett met in mid-life financial disaster from which he never recovered.

Although Graham was for years an outstanding citizen of Philadelphia, the story of his life has been told sketchily. The reasons are apparent. Graham's appearance in the field of periodical publishing was brief. He had no children to keep his memory alive. His surviving kinsmen doubtless considered silence more merciful than publicity. And certainly an old man, once wealthy and prominent in the city of his birth, is disinclined to memorialize his own story of failure. Despite some weakness of character and some unwise business ventures, Graham's life shows the outlines of a man capable of courage, a man who delighted in his family, in his city, and in the literary world—although these three pleasures were denied him in old age.

1 The forerunners of Graham's Magazine extend back to 1826, but under the name of Graham's its run was only from 1841 to 1858 inclusive. After about 1851 the contents were watered down with much reprinted material. The influence of the magazine thus is concentrated in the space of a decade. Godey's Lady's Book ran from 1830 to 1898, Peterson's Magazine from 1842 to 1898, and Harper's from 1850 to the present.

2 Aside from scattered letters, the chief source of biographical facts is an article, "George R. Graham," written by his intimate friend and business associate, Charles Jacobs Peterson, and published in Graham's Magazine while Graham was editor (XXXVII, [July, 1850], 43-44). Graham doubtless read the article in manuscript form. A second notable article is an unsigned obituary written by Graham's friend of his later years, Frank W. Baldwin of Orange, N. J., and published as an editorial in Baldwin's weekly newspaper, the Orange Chronicle, July 14, 1894: "Death of George R. Graham"—hereafter referred to as Baldwin's obituary. Most entries in biographical dictionaries lean entirely on Peterson's article for information, with the exception of that by George H. Genzmer in the Dictionary of American Biography, VII, 473-474. Certain biographical details remain unsolved. An extended search has failed to identify Graham's parents. Neither Peterson nor Baldwin gives this information.
The life span of George Rex Graham covered all but eighteen and one-half years of the nineteenth century. He was born in Philadelphia on January 18, 1813, a few weeks before the threat of British invasion forced the formation of a citizens’ committee for defense of the city. His mother was of the old and prolific Rex family of nearby Montgomery County; and his father, “a gentleman of education and fortune,” was a prosperous Philadelphia merchant engaged in shipping. It is not known when Graham’s mother died, but the business failure and death of his father in the twenties left the boy, his sister Mary, and brother William orphaned and unprovided for. George, and presumably his brother and sister as well, were taken in by George Rex, the maternal uncle in Montgomery County for whom Graham was named.

Graham’s education was little more than elementary. He attended a country school, then took a job tending a country store for a year. In 1832, at the age of nineteen, Graham returned to Philadelphia and apprenticed himself to a cabinetmaker, in this way supporting himself until he could commence legal training, as his father had wished him to do. During these early years of his youth, Graham met Charles J. Peterson, the future author and magazine publisher, who was to be his lifelong friend. It was apparently Peterson’s influence that interested Graham in church-going. Five months after Peterson was admitted to communion by the Fifth Presbyterian Church on Arch Street, Graham became associated with the same church.

Graham’s intellectual curiosity and ambition led him to pursue a systematic course of self-improvement. Although his trade required from ten to twelve hours each day, the young man rigidly devoted an additional six hours to study, often rising before dawn. At this time Peterson was reading law with Judge Thomas Armstrong, and

3 Peterson states that the father’s death occurred during the boy’s fifteenth year (1828); Baldwin places it during his eleventh year (1824).
4 Baldwin’s obituary.
5 The entry for Sept. 18, 1832, in the church records reads: “George Rex Graham 20 yrs No 4th St. Not baptized.” Manuscript minutes of the Proceedings of the Session of the Fifth Presbyterian Church Philadelphia, [Vol. 1], no pagination, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. The church records show that on Apr. 18, 1837, Mrs. Elizabeth Peterson and Charles J. Peterson were admitted to membership, but there is no further mention of Graham. His name is not to be found in the lists of pew holders.
6 Peterson, “George R. Graham,” 43.
in 1836, at the age of twenty-three, Graham began his legal training under the same man. For three years Graham studied, alternating between his woodworking bench and the law office, often rising at four in the morning and studying late into the evening hours.

Together with Peterson and Joseph R. Chandler (destined to become another literary Philadelphia lawyer), Graham found relaxation and entertainment at Bamford's tavern, where the three sipped their wine and read to one another. There were occasional evenings given over to courting the young ladies of a boarding school, under the critical eyes of an aged teacher-chaperone.

Within the space of a year, Graham's life moved swiftly and surely into the pattern it was to follow during the mature years of his life. Graham's twenty-sixth year (1839) was an eventful one. In January he became the editor of Samuel Coate Atkinson's Evening Post and Philadelphia Saturday News. In March the Philadelphia Bar admitted Graham to practice. In April he married Elizabeth P. Fry.

7 "'Graham' to 'Jeremy Short,'" Editor's Table, Graham's Magazine, XXXIV (January, 1849), 80. Graham identified "Jeremy Short" as Charles J. Peterson in Graham's Magazine, XXXVII (July, 1850), 72.

8 Ibid., XXXIV (February, 1849), 154-155.

9 One biographical detail occurs at this point which to me seems questionable. In J. Thomas Scharf and Thomson Westcott's History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884 (Philadelphia, 1884), III, 2012, these two local historians assert that in May or thereabouts Peterson and Graham served as reporters for the Daily Focus, a small penny daily. They state that this came while both friends were still law students and after Gen. William F. Small had withdrawn as editor. Actually Small did not resign until May, 1838 (see Daily Focus for May 24), after Graham's admission to the bar. Baldwin states that Graham's "career as a journalist began in his reporting a temperance lecture in which he criticised the speaker in strong terms." The Checklist of Pennsylvania Newspapers (Harrisburg, Pa., 1944), I, 44, lists Peterson and Graham as editors of the Focus from 1838 to 1840. A search of available copies of the Focus has failed to verify these claims, however.

10 The new editor was announced in the issue of Jan. 12, 1839. Atkinson had founded the Saturday Evening Post in 1821. Early in 1839 he had purchased the rival Saturday News from L. A. Godey and with the issue of Jan. 12, 1839, he combined the two.

11 The date, Mar. 27, 1839, is given in John Hill Martin, Martin's Bench and Bar of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1883), 272. Baldwin asserts that Graham practiced law "for about six months." McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1840 (compiled and published in 1839) lists "Graham George R., att'y at law, 204 N. 6th." This was Graham's first appearance in city directories. The address was his residence. In a letter written in 1843, Graham mentioned "my little law office," but it seems unlikely that he had an active practice, in view of his many journalistic enterprises.

12 The United States Gazette on Apr. 25, 1839 carried this announcement: "Married ... on Tuesday evening, 23d inst. by the Rev. T. T. Waterman, George R. Graham, Esq. to Miss Elizabeth P. Fry, both of this city." Rev. Waterman was pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian
and became an owner of Atkinson's cheap reprint-monthly, the *Casket*.¹³ In November he bought a half interest in the weekly newspaper of which he was editor.¹⁴ It must have been during 1839 that Graham fixed his ambitions upon magazine publishing, for in March of 1840 the firm bearing his name assumed full control of the *Post,*¹⁶ and in October he purchased Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine,*¹⁶ which Edgar Allan Poe had been editing for several months. By October—perhaps earlier—Graham had formed his plan for a popular monthly magazine, and in January appeared the first issue of Graham's *Magazine,* the result of his merging the subscription lists of both the *Casket* and the *Gentleman's Magazine.*¹⁷ Graham now had full control of a promising new monthly periodical and an established weekly newspaper. Both the *Post* and Graham's were published from a building on the southwest corner of Third and Chestnut Church, of which Graham was a communicant. Some biographical articles refer to Miss Fry as of Germantown. Yet the records of this church show that a Martha and Elisabeth Fry were admitted to communion on Feb. 14, 1832, their address being 16 New Market Street. Graham probably met his future wife through attendance at church services.

¹³ Announcement of the change of ownership was printed on the outside back paper cover of the May issue. (This issue, of course, was printed in April.) The notice is signed "George R. Graham & Co." The notice refers to the "proprietors" and the "editors." It is likely that Graham and Peterson were both.

¹⁴ Announcement was made in the issue of Nov. 9, 1839. The co-owner at this time was John S. DuSolle. With this issue the name reverted to the *Saturday Evening Post.*

¹⁵ The issue of Mar. 28, 1840 states that DuSolle had withdrawn and that "Charles J. Peterson, Esq. will hereafter be associated with us in the management of this paper," under the firm name of G. R. Graham & Co. Just when Graham sold his interest in the *Post* I do not know. Available files of the newspaper are incomplete. At any rate, the 1843 city directory is the last which lists Graham as publisher of the *Post.* It is likely that Graham disposed of this property prior to investing in the *North American* in 1845.

¹⁶ An announcement dated Oct. 20, 1840, reads: "W. E. Burton . . . has sold the ownership of the work to G. R. Graham, Esq., Proprietor of the Philadelphia Casket, with which work hereafter the Gentleman's Magazine will be conjoined. . . ." Inside front paper cover of the *Gentleman's Magazine,* VII (November, 1840). This periodical had first appeared in July, 1837, with Charles Alexander as publisher and Burton as editor.

¹⁷ As an advertising stunt, Graham used his new title, Graham's *Magazine,* for the final (December, 1840) issues of both the *Casket* and the *Gentleman's.* Because of the need for finishing continuation stories in the two old periodicals, this December number varies in contents. The new Graham's for 1841 continued the volume numeration of the *Casket,* doubtless because it was the older of the two parent magazines.

The question arises as to where an impecunious orphan and fledgling lawyer found the money for all these publishing ventures. I have not discovered the answer. It may be that his guardian uncle or his new-found wife or his friend Peterson served as angel for these ventures.
Graham's Magazine was an instantaneous success. Its circulation rose from 5,000 to 25,000 during the first year; by the end of its second year the circulation had grown to about 50,000.\(^1\)

When Graham conceived his idea of a popular literary monthly with nation-wide circulation, he entered an extremely competitive field. Frank Luther Mott has estimated that between 1825 and 1850 the number of periodicals (other than newspapers) rose from less than one hundred to about six hundred. The scores of magazines born each year raised loud voices and drained off subscribers, even though many failed after a brief try.

Graham's method for success was to adopt those features which had proved popular in other periodicals (illustrations, fashion plates, book reviews, and enough sentimental poetry and fiction to satisfy women readers), and, as a drawing card, to add the original work of recognized American authors. Inasmuch as the emphasis was upon the literary contents, Graham avoided topical and controversial

\(^{18}\) This vicinity was the publishing district of the city. Graham's office was on the top floor of the new Public Ledger Building, which contained the offices of that newspaper, of the Dollar Newspaper, and of the publisher, G. B. Zieber. The Spirit of the Times had offices on the northeast corner. Just down and across the street at number 101 were the offices of Godey's and the Philadelphia Saturday Museum.

At a little later time, Graham moved to 98 Chestnut Street, next door to the Ledger Building. This housed the offices of Gihon's book-bindery; James M. Campbell & Company (Campbell's Foreign Monthly Magazine); Charles J. Pererson's Lady's National Magazine; T. B. Peterson, bookseller; James Meignelle, engraver; the engraving firm of Rawdon, Wright & Hatch; William H. Graham and Asa Jones Rockafellar.

Apparently Graham and his brother William called themselves the Messrs. Graham & Company. In 1845 they published Mrs. Ann S. Stephens' David Hunt and Malina Gray as No. 1 of the Cabinet of American Authors series. (This reprint series failed, perhaps for lack of promotion or because the public was not yet receptive. Interestingly enough, Mrs. Stephens' Malaeska, The Indian Wife of the White Hunter appeared in 1860 as No. 1 of Beadle's Dime Novels and was a roaring success—to the extent of selling about half a million copies.) It is likely that A. J. Rockafellar was associated with the two Grahams, for he had married one of Mrs. Graham's sisters. W. H. Graham shortly moved to New York City, where he operated a bookstore and served as agent for Graham's Magazine.

\(^{19}\) No records of the magazine firm have survived, but circulation figures are mentioned in the magazine itself and in letters. Poe gave the initial circulation as 5,000. John Ward Ostrom, Letters of Edgar Allan Poe (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), I, 185. John Sartain's figure of 5,500 approximates this figure. Reminiscences of a Very Old Man (New York, 1889), 196. By the end of the first year the magazine claimed 25,000 subscribers. Graham's Magazine, XIX (December, 1841), 308. This tallies perfectly with a figure stated in the Poe letter mentioned above: "In January we print 25000." Poe stated that, within a year and a half (by July, 1842), "its circulation amounted to no less than 50,000—astonishing as this may appear." Ostrom, I, 269.
issues, until his financial troubles later led him to treat some of these matters.

Graham's plans, expressed in the advertising language of the day, are given in the prospectus printed on the paper cover of the December, 1840, “specimen” issue. He promised that “The character of the articles . . . will be equally removed from a sickly sentimentality, and from an affectation [sic] of morality, but while a true delineation of human nature in every variety of passion is aimed at, nothing shall be found in its pages to cause a blush upon the cheek of the most pure.” He set about soliciting contributions from the established writers, but it took him a year to gather his resources. For the first year of publication his only first-rate contributors were Lowell and his editor, Poe. But early in 1842 he was ready. The January issue offered contributions by Longfellow, Lowell, Poe, George Pope Morris, Park Benjamin, William Gilmore Simms, Henry William Herbert, and several popular women writers, including Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Emma C. Embury, Ann S. Stephens and Amelia B. Welby. Before the year was over he had added two more names of the first magnitude, Bryant and Cooper. Eventually he secured contributions from Hawthorne, Holmes, and Thoreau, but he could not persuade them to become regulars. The only other major writers Graham failed to capture were Irving, Emerson, Whitman and Melville. Irving naturally leaned toward the Knickerbocker, and Emerson was just too aloof and uninterested. Through Horace Greeley and Rufus W. Griswold, Graham offered Emerson fifty dollars for one of his lectures. It was an excellent price, but the answer from Concord stated, “I fancied my work worth twice so much as the sum named.”20 Emerson preferred to keep his lecture and read it to Bostonians in the fall. Whitman was publishing his prose in the newspapers for which he worked and was saving his poetry to publish in book form. Melville was abroad for several years and when he returned and wrote for periodicals it was for the Literary World of his friends the Duyckincks, or for Putnam's and Harper's. In the fifties, when the Graham's editors might have wished to secure Melville, the magazine could no longer afford much for contributions.

In his relations with contributors and the public and his competitors Graham adhered to ethical standards whenever possible. He insisted that contributions be original—that is, never before printed. He himself set a high rate of payment for established authors, in some cases paying more than the author asked or expected. Once he established a rate for an author, he never went below that figure. Unlike his competitor Godey, he refused to advertise as a “regular contributor” any writer who was not just that. It was Godey who began to insist that his writers contribute to no other Philadelphia magazine. In self-defense Graham applied the same tactics and gradually weaned away the more desirable authors from that Lady’s Book. He bested Godey on another front: he secured the services of the outstanding engraver of the day, John Sartain. Yet he decried the emphasis which the trade placed upon illustrations and wrote Lowell that until the rage for engravings dies out, “literature will not flourish as it ought.” Still another problem were those magazines which paid nothing for the English articles which they pirated. In this regard, Harper’s Magazine (founded in 1850) was the chief offender. It was particularly galling, for such “contributions” cost the American publisher nothing—and it was extremely popular, just because it was English. Nonetheless, Graham insisted on his usual editorial emphasis upon American writings.

The fame of Graham’s Magazine was widespread throughout the country and known favorably to almost every American writer of consequence. Within a year and a half of its appearance, Charles Dickens was familiar with it.21 Hawthorne, who had contributed one story to the magazine, chose to emphasize with mild sarcasm the popular aspects of both Graham’s and Godey’s when, in The House of the Seven Gables, he had Holgrave assert that “my name has figured . . . on the covers of Graham and Godey. . . . In the humorous line, I am thought to have a very pretty way with me; and as for pathos, I am as provocative of tears as an onion.” It was not quite fair, for actually Graham would have been first to excise the weak humor and pathos, if the competition—and the public taste—had allowed.

The Grahams rapidly became wealthy and respected citizens of

21 Mentioned in letter from Charles Fenno Hoffman to Rufus W. Griswold, June 28, 1842, in Homer F. Barnes, Charles Fenno Hoffman (New York, 1930), 224.
Philadelphia. They moved to a large house on Mulberry Street in 1843. He drove behind a fine team of horses. His home became a meeting place for authors, artists, lawyers and businessmen. As early as 1842 Graham was wealthy enough to have his wife sit for a portrait by Thomas Sully. By 1845 Graham's fortune was estimated to be $100,000. Whenever business permitted, the Grahams took vacation trips to resorts near and distant. They had no children, but they "practically adopted" a son of Mrs. Graham's sister Mary. For a time, too, a cousin, Katharine Rex, lived in the Graham home, and here the young girl met Poe, N. P. Willis, T. S. Arthur, "Fanny Fern" (Sarah Payson Willis), Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale of Godey's, and "Grace Greenwood" (Sarah Jane Clark). Here she heard Poe read "The Gold Bug" from manuscript and here she helped her uncle to count the sums of money received in the day's mail from subscribers.

At the height of his success Graham looked back almost with fondness on the carefree days of his youth. In 1843 he wrote his well-known contributor, Frances S. Osgood:

I have embarked on the stormy sea of publishing, heart and—I sometimes fear—Soul. I do not expect I should have made much more in the world, either as a lawyer, or a writer,—certainly I should not as both—for I had a happy faculty of shoving off the responsibilities of one, on to the shoulders of the other—but I fancy, I should have had more moments of delight than can be possibly stolen from the bustle of

22 During 1839 and 1840 the Grahams had been living in a house at 204 North Sixth Street, but in 1841 they moved to larger quarters on the corner of Franklin and Buttonwood Streets. In 1843 they moved again, to 199 Mulberry (now Arch) Street. See Philadelphia directories for 1840, 1841, 1842, 1844. For photographs of two of these residences see Joseph Jackson's Literary Landmarks of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1939), facing pages 143, 148.

23 Sully began the portrait Dec. 27, 1842, and completed it Jan. 10, 1843. It cost Graham $100. Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, Life and Works of Thomas Sully (Philadelphia, 1921), 161. The portrait (number 664 in the catalogue) is now owned by Mrs. Lyman P. Powell, Boonton, N. J. A photograph of the portrait can be found in Mary E. Phillips, Edgar Allan Poe, the Man (Philadelphia, 1926), I, 702. The only likeness of Graham is the engraved portrait published in the July, 1850, issue of Graham's. The artist was Thomas Buchanan Reed, who contributed poems to the magazine and for a time maintained a studio in Philadelphia.

24 Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1845), no pagination. This volume rates Louis A. Godey, Graham's rival, at only $50,000.

25 A favorite resort for them during the months of summer heat was nearby Cape May, N. J. In 1846 they took their vacation at the fashionable Catskill Mountain House in New York State. Graham makes mention of other vacation trips in his editorial column.

26 Letter to the writer from Mrs. Lyman P. Powell.

27 Obituary of Mrs. George H. Burgin, Jr. (formerly Miss Katharine Rex) of Germantown, Pa., in the Germantown Independent Gazette, Sept. 13, 1917.
an active and successful business life. . . . If you should see me now, with from 30 to 40 business letters daily—on an average—before me to read and answer—you would . . . pity as well as forgive me.  

The accumulation of magazine profits required some form of investment, and in October, 1845, Graham joined Alexander Cummings in purchasing the *North American,* an increasingly popular Philadelphia daily newspaper which was to become one of the nation's leading Whig journals. The editor selected by the new proprietors was Robert Taylor Conrad, the noted lawyer and orator, who by 1845 had written two successful plays. Cummings presently dropped out of the firm because of political differences, and Graham was sole owner until January 1, 1847, when Morton McMichael, another Philadelphia lawyer, formed a partnership with him.

In 1847 the firm of Graham & McMichael persuaded Joseph R. Chandler, then in poor health, to sell his daily *United States Gazette,* and on July 1 the two were merged and the name changed to the *North American and United States Gazette.* To accomplish this merger of the two leading Philadelphia Whig papers, Graham and McMichael took in a third partner, Robert Montgomery Bird, the dramatist.

At this point—sometime during 1848—Graham succumbed to the false lure of stock speculation, a move eventually fatal to all his enterprises. The personal papers which Bird left upon his death give a chronicle of the budding crisis. According to Bird, Graham was not only inattentive to his duties and frequently absent from the office,

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28 Letter from Graham to Frances S. Osgood, Jan. 8, 1843, in the Boston Public Library.
29 The *North American* was first issued Mar. 26, 1839. Its lineage goes back to the first daily newspaper in the western hemisphere—the *American Daily Advertiser,* established Dec. 21, 1784, by Dunlap and Claypoole, as an offshoot of the *Pennsylvania Packet,* founded in November, 1771, by John Dunlap.
30 Graham's interests as an entrepreneur naturally allied him with the Whig cause. In 1853 Graham remarked in anger, "Look at the treatment of the Whig party to the noble Clay! He towered as a giant Northern Pine over dwarf trees. What was Taylor! compared to Clay or Harrison!"
31 McMichael had been connected with the *Saturday Evening Post,* the *Saturday Courier,* the *Saturday News,* and the *Saturday Gazette*—all Philadelphia newspapers. At this time he was an editor of *Godey's Lady's Book.*
32 The firm continued to be known as Graham & McMichael. Bird's purchase share was $26,000. The receipt is in the Bird Collection, University of Pennsylvania Library (UPL). The numerical figure stated in Clement E. Foust's *Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York, 1919), 134, is in error.
but moreover used the credit of the firm to bolster his speculations.\textsuperscript{33} The solution was to rid the firm of Graham, and in July Bird and McMichael succeeded in “buying out” Graham’s interest—probably for the sum of his debts.

At the time that these financial difficulties were brewing, the accounts of the magazine were suffering. To further his outside enterprises, Graham had borrowed on his magazine property and by 1848 owned but one third of the firm. His sister-in-law, Mrs. Mary Fry Rockafellar, owned one third; Robert T. Conrad and Samuel D. Patterson owned another third. Moreover, Graham had borrowed money on his share. That was the fatal mistake. Graham wrote Bayard Taylor a few of the details. “When I failed,” he wrote, “I owed Mr. T [Robert T. Conrad?] & Patterson for endorsements of notes & acceptances about $4,400 & Mrs. Rockafellar my sister-in-law $5,000, with interest due to the amount of about $400.” To cover the $4,400, Mrs. Rockafellar had purchased Graham’s interest in the magazine for the total indebtedness of $9,800.\textsuperscript{34}

Samuel D. Patterson & Company took over the management\textsuperscript{35} and the October, 1848, issue of Graham’s contained an admission of failure:

\ldots had I not, in an evil hour, forgotten my own true interests, and devoted that capital and industry to another business which should have been confined exclusively to the magazine, I should to-day have been under no necessity—not even of writing this notice.

Graham finished his notice with a courageous fighting statement.

\ldots I can yet show the world that he who started life a poor boy, with but eight dollars in his pocket, and has run such a career as mine, is hard to be put down by the calumnies or ingratitude of any. Feeling, therefore, that having lost one battle, “there is time enough to win another,” I enter upon the work of the “redemption of Graham.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33} Some details of the arrearage are revealed in the Bird Papers. Graham, it seems, had drawn upon the firm’s credit to the extent of $32,000. Letter from Bird to Graham, July 10, 1848, UPL. An unsigned copy of an indenture in Bird’s handwriting indicates that Graham withdrew from the partnership “for and in consideration of a certain competent sum of money to him . . . in hand paid.” The absence of a figure suggests that no actual money changed hands. The copy of the indenture is dated only July, 1848.

\textsuperscript{34} Letter from Graham to Bayard Taylor, Aug. 25, 1848, in the Taylor Collection, Cornell University Library (CUL).

\textsuperscript{35} In a letter to Bayard Taylor, Aug. 16, 1848, Patterson wrote that he had purchased the interest of Mr. Conrad and so had a two-third control of the magazine. (Graham’s letter of Aug. 25, it should be noted, does not credit Patterson with a two-third interest.)

\textsuperscript{36} “Editor’s Table,” Graham’s Magazine, XXXIII (October, 1848), 240.
It is a sad mischance that Graham was not to be able to recapture what he had lost, despite the fortitude which he displayed. During this crisis of his life Graham's inner virtues began to assert themselves. His letters show that his thoughts were as much for those who had lost money through him as for his own sad misfortunes. At a later time, when the proprietorship had again changed hands, Graham expressed his regret that the printers and other employees were to lose the small sums due them.\(^{37}\) There was a solid strain of idealism and fair-dealing in Graham's nature. During the prosperous days of the magazine, Graham had acquired a reputation for prompt payment of his contributors. Despite Poe's later accusations that Graham had treated him unjustly, it must be admitted, in fairness, that Graham had paid Poe standard rates for his editorial efforts and for his contributions. After Poe left his editorial post with *Graham's Magazine*, Graham assisted him from time to time with small sums of money. Whether Graham was a deeply religious man we do not know, but his teaching a Sunday school class of Negroes for several years is proof of humanitarian idealism.\(^{38}\)

Under Patterson's management Graham did routine editorial tasks and abandoned the extravagant living to which he had become accustomed. In 1848 he moved from his large house on Mulberry Street to a less fashionable address on Chestnut Street.\(^{39}\)

The new manager fared no better. It took only a year and a half for Patterson to give up the struggle against the large deficit. A weakening of Graham's original editorial policy and increased competition from other periodicals added to the management problems. According to Graham, Patterson's total loss was about $95,000. Mrs. Rockafellar had thrown more money into the enterprise. Included in the total figure was $45,000 of hers and $2,500 of his brother William's money.\(^{40}\) Graham lost five hundred dollars in salary due him.\(^{41}\) The magazine property was purchased by "a body of gentlemen, merchants, bankers and others," and Graham was installed as

\(^{37}\) Letter from Graham to Taylor, Mar. 13, 1850, CUL.
\(^{38}\) "Editor's Table," *Graham's Magazine*, XLII (March, 1853), 365.
\(^{39}\) The 1849 city directory carried his new address: Chestnut above Schuylkill 4th (now 19th Street), today a fashionable address near Rittenhouse Square.
\(^{40}\) Letter from Graham to Taylor, Mar. 13, 1850, CUL.
\(^{41}\) Letter from Graham to James Russell Lowell, n. d., in Harvard College Library (HCL). This letter was probably written during March, 1850.
His spirit was still with him. He had the vain hope of regaining ownership. To Lowell he wrote that for the next few months he wanted to accustom his subscribers "to strong mental food and by making a noise about it, to commence 1851 boldly as the leader of a new era in magazine literature."

From this new beginning a change of policy is observable. Graham's editorial writings are no longer bland and pleasant reminiscence, but are realistic and aggressive. In the March, 1850, issue Graham printed one of the earliest and most eloquent defenses of Poe, shielding him against the charges made by Poe's posthumous editor and defamer, Rufus W. Griswold. "Poe's whole nature . . . eludes the rude grasp of a mind so warped and uncongenial as Mr. Griswold's," Graham wrote with perfect justice. Temperance creeps into the pages of Graham's and for the first time the word slavery appears. Early in 1853 Graham reviewed Uncle Tom's Cabin in a spirited article which exposed a weak plot, insipid characters, and desultory style, and which called attention to the profit to be had by writing on the slavery theme. His personal solution of the Negro problem was a planned deportation. He demanded, meanwhile, that northern capitalists concern themselves first with the welfare of the "free negroes of the North." To still the voices of the critics, Graham offered the sum of one thousand dollars for the founding of a college in Philadelphia for the education of free black youths, provided that three hundred abolitionists each equal his amount. It was a safe challenge to make.

During 1853 Graham was seriously ill and late in the year he and

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42 Letter from Graham to Bayard Taylor, Mar. 13, 1850, CUL.
43 Letter from Graham to Lowell, mentioned above, HCL.
44 Graham's Magazine, XXXVI (March, 1850), 224. Both in print and in letters, Griswold intimated that an unknown person had written the article under Graham's name. Later in 1850 Griswold wrote James T. Fields: "Graham, by the way, is getting up a scandalous biography of me, with which to revenge himself for the observations forced upon me by his first article." Letter, Sept. 25, 1850, in Huntington Library. The "revenge biography" was entirely a product of Griswold's near-hysteria, brought on by the remarks of those who sought to protect Poe's posthumous reputation against Griswold's slanderous statements.
45 "Black Letters; or Uncle Tom-Foolery in Literature," Graham's Magazine, XLII (February, 1853), 214.
46 "Editor's Table," Graham's Magazine, XLII (March, 1853), 366.
47 As early as 1844 and 1845 in letters to Longfellow, Graham had mentioned illness. In the former year he said that he had been confined to his house by an attack of "rheumatism, which has fallen in my eyes." Letters, May 20, 1844 and July 24, 1845, in Longfellow House, Cambridge, Mass.
his backers were forced to accept a new proprietor, Richard R. See. Graham probably assisted in editing the magazine, but his chief employment was as editor of another enterprise of See, the Saturday Evening Mail. The chief policy of this newspaper was to support the cause of temperance and to reprint freely from Graham's Magazine. But this proved only a temporary employment for Graham. He left his job with See probably late in 1854. On February 16, 1855, he was appointed Harbor Master of the Port of Philadelphia, probably through the good will of his friend and former partner, Robert T. Conrad, whose political campaign the Mail had supported the previous year. Graham held his sinecure until November 8, 1856.

Graham was only forty-three years of age, but his productive life was over. His name practically disappears from Philadelphia journalism. At the end of 1858 the magazine which bore his name ceased publication. His wife died and was buried in their plot in the Laurel Hill Cemetery on July 24, 1871, alongside the graves of her brother, Levi Fry, her brother-in-law, Asa Jones Rockafellar, and her niece, Annie Graham Rockafellar.

A year after the death of his wife, Graham moved to Orange, New Jersey, to live with his wife's nephew, Harry Rockafellar, whom the Grahams had helped to raise during the 1840's. In December, 1873, during Graham's sixtieth year, the Englishman William F. Gill visited Graham prior to publishing his biography of Poe. He found the old publisher "in excellent health."

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48 For the sake of completeness, it might be well to mention the strong possibility that Graham took to intemperate drinking at this time—a natural enough development during these years of financial trouble. Mary E. Phillips, in Edgar Allan Poe, the Man, I, 704, quotes Mrs. Burgin, without annotation, to the effect that Graham's financial distress came from "intemperance." The only documentary evidence I have discovered is a letter from the New York shop of Bininger & Cozzens to Graham (Feb. 21, 1853, New-York Historical Society), in which the proprietors dunned Graham for an overdue wine bill, contracted in March of the previous year when Graham entered their shop with Henry William Herbert, the magazinist, and, in an already tipsy condition, ordered that wine be sent to Herbert's home for the two of them. If Graham was subject to intemperance, his lecture delivered in 1853 may indicate that he was mending his ways. It was published in Philadelphia in 1853 as a pamphlet: Speech Delivered before the Excelsior Temperance Circle of Honor, No. 1, at the Musical Fund Hall, on Thursday Evening, November 10th, 1853.

49 Martin, 115. There is no record of Graham's service in the Port Wardens Minutes for the Port of Philadelphia, but mention of harbor masters in these records is seldom made.

50 Interment certificates in the files of Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia. These years between 1856 and the death of his wife in 1871 are a blank. I assume that the Grahams remained in Philadelphia, but I have found no record of his employment for these years.

51 Baldwin's obituary.

52 Life of Edgar Allan Poe (London, 1878), 110-112.
During the 1870’s Graham appears as a writer for the Newark *Daily Journal* but it was only token employment.\(^53\) At the age of sixty-five, Graham wrote his old friend Bayard Taylor a pathetic letter. “I congratulate you!” he wrote, but with the many ovations you have received, the poor scribbling of your old friend Geo. R. Graham will not amount to much

—Still, I had you so much in mind,—and loved you so dearly, that I gave a baptism of my brains in the Newark Journal, which I sent to my oldest and best friend, Charles J. Peterson, at Philadelphia.

When the dark boatman—who is now waiting at the shore to ferry me over gets me on board—you will read the letter and Charley’s sketch—

Good night—and, Good bye

G.\(^54\)

Graham’s work on the *Journal* came to an end in 1882 when cataracts formed on both eyes and slowly brought blindness. Both George W. Childs, Philadelphia’s leading newspaper publisher, and Charles J. Peterson contributed money to Graham’s support and care. The following year, Joseph Atkinson, editor of the *Daily Journal*, wrote Lowell asking for any help he could give. “George R. Graham, the founder of Graham’s Magazine, and, therefore, the father of first class American periodical literature, has been for nearly two years past and is now an invalid,” he wrote. “He is almost blind. . . . Mr. Graham is now residing in Orange, near here, and is under medical treatment with some hope of his recovery of eyesight. He is without a near relative or friend in the world, death having swept them all away. It is needless to add that he is absolutely without means.”\(^55\) Through the assistance of such men as came forward with help, Graham was sent to the New York Ophthalmic Hospital. An operation almost completely restored his sight, and he returned to Orange in 1888, boarding with Mrs. Martin V. B. Morrison at 36 William Street.

The ills of old age pressed in upon him, however, and he was admitted to the Orange Memorial Hospital, where he spent the remainder of his life. Mr. Childs continued to contribute money toward Graham’s support, the same person who, as an errand boy

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\(^{53}\) The 1876 Newark city directory lists “George Graham, editor, h 490 Broad,” and during the next six years the directories give his business address as the *Journal* office, 184 Market.

\(^{54}\) Letter from Graham to Taylor, dated “Newark Journal Office March 2, 1878,” CUL.

I have been unable to locate the article on Taylor which Graham mentions.

\(^{55}\) Letter, Sept. 23, 1883, HCL.
in Philadelphia in the forties, had looked with awe and respect on
the well-dressed magazine publisher as he drove grandly by in his
carriage. Graham was a patient in the hospital for six years, under
treatment for a complication of heart and bladder trouble, aggra-
vated by old age. In 1892 Graham was so seriously ill that Frank W.
Baldwin, who had custody of Graham's affairs, wrote to the Phila-
delphia cemetery to see if the burial records were in order, "in case
it becomes necessary, at short notice, to arrange burial."  

Graham lingered on for two years more. Early in his final year,
1894, Baldwin solicited money for his charge, enough to cover his
needs for that calendar year. The response was a tribute from the
publishing world, but the silent and charitable sort of tribute which
carries a share of shame and bitterness for the recipient. Among the
contributors were Charles Scribner of Scribner's Magazine and the
publishing house; Frank H. Scott and R. Watson Gilder of the
Century Magazine; H. O. Houghton of the Atlantic Monthly; O. D.
Munn of the Scientific American; Harper & Brothers; Henry A.
Steel of the Newark News; and many others. Not all of the fund was
required, for Graham passed away on July 13, 1894, at the age of
eighty-one.  

Funeral services were held the following day at the home of Baldwin in West Orange. His body was sent by train to Philadelphia and there buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery on July 16.  

There were no kin to bury him, and none of his generation of Phila-
delphia journalists. His good friend, Charles J. Peterson, had died
in 1887.  

For Graham at the time of his death, there were only two personal
literary links with the past—Godey's and Peterson's Magazine, for
both were being published in 1894. Assuming that in old age Graham
saw copies of Peterson's, he realized that the magazine which he had
urged his friend to establish to draw off subscribers from Godey's
had outlived Graham's own journal and had done no damage to
Godey's. He saw the writers of the time of Poe give way to new
writers of a completely new era—the realistic criticism of Harold
Frederic, the local-color stories of Joel Chandler Harris, the urbane

56 See column entitled "The Lounger" in the Critic (N. Y.), XX (Feb. 27, 1892), 131.
57 Letter, July 5, 1892, in the files of Laurel Hill Cemetery.
58 Baldwin's obituary.
59 Ibid.
60 Interment certificate, Laurel Hill Cemetery.
essays of Agnes Repplier, the conservative editing of Thomas B. Aldrich, the restrained social fiction of Howells, the uninhibited writings of Mark Twain, the sentimental verses of Eugene Field. He saw the artificially posed, hand-engraved and hand-colored fashion plates of the 1840's give way to photographs and process-engraved illustrations. He saw magazine editors change from individually solicited contributions to the work of professional staff writers. He saw the death of Victorian sentimentality and the birth of broader, more realistic interests. He saw family-owned periodicals replaced by stock-company management. An entirely new era of magazine publishing had completely altered the magazines of the 1840's which Graham knew.

Graham's death was not widely reported. Editors of two New York weeklies noticed his death with biographical sketches. The Philadelphia papers carried only brief death notices, except for the Inquirer, which printed a fine editorial on his accomplishments for a new generation which had forgotten him. The editor pointed out that Graham had rendered "to American literature a service unexceeded by any other individual," and attempted to record the key position which Graham's Magazine held in the nineteenth century:

As a magazine of literature none of the popular magazines of the present day is producing anything like the results achieved by Graham in his "Philadelphia Magazine" a half-century ago. . . . Graham and Fields were the two publishers of the country whose liberality and enthusiasm gave opportunity for the development of American literature, and Graham was the pioneer. . . . Until the "Atlantic Monthly" was founded, just before the war, "Graham's" had no successor and the success of the "Atlantic" was caused by many of the same contributors who in their earlier years had written for "Graham's". . . . Without him the most brilliant period of our literature might have been as dark as the years which preceded it and those which have followed it.

There is no doubt that Graham's Magazine was the first of our periodicals to take a truly national view of our literature. His policy was not to prate about the need of a national literature to rival England's. His policy was to use every means to gather in contributions from all sections of the country and thus show the nation the scope and variety of its rapidly developing literature.

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