

THE HORATIO ALGER

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A Newsletter



Newsboy CLUB

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Published for the enjoyment of our Subscribers, Readers, Collectors and Dealers of books written by Horatio Alger, Jr. Prepared and distributed at the expense of Forrest Campbell, Editor and the support of paid Subscribers, (three months free trial period to our friends). Assoc. Editor, I. Gurman, 23498 Parklawn, Oakpark 37, Mich. *****

My wife and I wish to thank each and every one of you for the many greetings we received during the Christmas season. My wife looks forward to your letters as much as I do, reads them with as much interest as I; She can recognize your handwriting and your postmarks equally as well as I can. Although she does not type, she has picked up her pen on some occasions. What she lacks over the keys, she makes up for with the rolling pin and the frying pan! The proof is in the puddin' and on my noggin' not to mention the needle-ing work!

Mrs. C.H. Smeltzer has made it possible for us to send two more books to the REVERE PUBLIC LIBRARY, the titles are as follows:

- CHESTER RAND No. 9
- ONLY AN IRISH BOY No. 10

If you have a book or books you wish to donate, check with me first before you mail, to avoid duplication!! Mrs. Jenny Breedveld, subscriber; (staff writer of the REVERE JOURNAL) has informed me that Ralph Gardner, subscriber; has also visited the Library and presented them with six books. (this is not officially included in the count as listed above.)

We salute the State of California! Our subscriber, Shirley Conlon has informed us that their Governor has proclaimed that the last day of December will be a state holiday in celebration of the fact that they now have more people than any other state. (Would you mind bringing them out from behind that smog, Governor, so we can count them?)

I see by the papers that the champion liar for 1962 has been named but cannot be found. Reminds me that twenty years ago, I received my membership card from the Burlington (Wisc.) Liars Club for my entry (it was so dry, the cows were giving powdered milk) for which I received only honorable mention.

Our 56 subscribers come from 21 states and the Dist. of Col. Michigan, 8; New York, 8 Illinois, 6; Connecticut, 3; Indiana, 3; (Massachusetts, 6; sorry) New Jersey 3; Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee & Wisconsin, 2 each; California, Delaware, D. of C., Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington & W. Va. 1 each.

I promised to announce and give credit in the January issue to those of you who submitted names for my proposed story, "The Young Postmaster" and I am happy to do so. Gilbert K. Westgard submitted the name of Algerton for the village. I am pleased with it since it is fictitious and also honors our hero. The names of the characters will be announced and credit given as they appear. In the first chapter, the name of Carey Churchill was submitted by Kenneth Butler, he also submitted the names of the father and mother of our hero mentioned above, Abigail and Thornton. The names of our hero's brother and sister, Michael and Ethel and the name of our hero's best friend, Pete Bates, was named by Jean Steiner. I reserved the right to name the Squire and I have given him my last name. However the choice of the first name was suggested by both Butler and Steiner. The middle initial and the name Flint comes from Steiner. The Squire will never reveal his middle name (in the story) and if you must know, you will have to ask Jean and I don't believe she will tell. Credit is due to Ellis Steiner for background material and credit must be given to Butler for proof-reading, but if you find errors, don't blame Ken, as he warned me! Will the Squire get the upper hand and gain control of the post office? Will he be able to bring our hero and his family to their knees? Be sure to read the February installment.

Mrs. C.H. Smeltzer of the Philadelphia area still has a few books she is anxious to dispose of to some of our subscribers; Just recently there was a major fire in the down town section and many families were burned-out. I have asked Mrs. Smeltzer to inquire if there might be a sixteen year old boy whom our group might befriend with a small donation of \$10.00 Our RAGGED DICK fund is not yet that large so I am appealing to you to send a dollar to Mrs. Smeltzer if you wish to help in this way. You will be given credit in the RAGGED DICK fund and all donations over \$10.00 will be deposited. Do not send your donation to me. Send it to Mrs. C.H. Smeltzer, 290 Bickley Road, Glenside, Pa.

Next month, Lt. Harry Jenkins of the Kalamazoo Police Department will be given a half column to tell us what the average 16 year old boy of today, is like. The Lt. has worked with the type Alger wrote about.

Important Event in January

If you are a father - Give
If you are a mother - March
If you are a child - Be Glad
For the MARCH OF DIMES
In Your Community
* * * * *

We trust you had a Merry Christmas and a Jubilant New Year's Eve to greet the other 364 days of 1963 of which the end will be much like the dregs of 1962 we just tossed out, and 20 years from now, we'll fondly embrace as "the good ole days"....

Apologia.to a number of gracious people who have written about books, publishers, dime-novels, and the like,....instead of a hasty note with no meat on the bone, as it were, the correspondence will go out in whirlwind-fashion, now that this house is painted and refurbished. (Finished as contracted, 6 A.M. Xmas Eve) The men-folk enjoy a new car every year or two, so why do we gals have to put up with lumpy furniture....to this I took my new broom had an Inaugural Ball of my own, and swept them all out of office. I say, one gets a bit weary of weaving, painting, refinishing... while resting....yet I can't wait to antique the drum-top table I was given.....so it isn't the tired blood, but the container, that concerns at the moment. . .Replies due, Dr. Enslin... N. Teicher...E. Walbridge...Don Wallace...M. Gately...V. Viera...G. Westgaard.... and F. Campbell has visions of hibernation at this end....J. Stouffel, and Ed. Reynolds.....I'll be out of the rut and back in the groove very shortly, so take heart, replies on the way. . . .Ken Butler thanks for the unusual Christmas card...and Max Friedman for Greetings for Chanukah. . . . these two Holy Days were celebrated in 1961 on Dec. 25th, this phenomena will not come about again until 2361AD, 400 yrs. hence.

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THANK YOU, Department

Don Wallace sent in some notes on Alger's publisher, A. K. Loring... some of the highlights.....Loring was the son of a Mass., saddler, he opened a lending library in Boston in 1859, and a publishing house in 1864...liked stories that taught a "lesson in life".... he published 35 books written by Alger...opened a coffee-house in 1875.....and in 1881 these enterprises collapsed into bankruptcy. Messrs. Porter & Coates attended the sale, purchased copyrights and plates of Alger stories for \$1,118.80. A.K. Loring died Sept. 26, 1911, as an inmate of a charitable institution. (From "Imprints of History" by M.B. Stern)

(Editor's Note on Loring: Jos. H. Allen, Publisher, Oliver Optic, Editor of Student & Schoolmate, Boston, liked what Alger wrote and serialized his stories in their paper. They had previously published poems and declamations by Alger's sister (Olive A. Cheney). Loring published these serials in book form and seems to have carried the ball of wax for 16 yrs (tho it is unknown how many other magazines Alger wrote for at this time), printing better than two books per year. Porter and Coates published Alger's books for 13 yrs., after which the legacy fell to H. T. Coates. Neither had an exclusive, but shared the field with a number of other publishers. M.B. Stern says of Loring: "his life work the failure of rugged individualism, the gap in the pattern, the fallibility of the legend"....by the same token, must we admit that Alger was a failure also, because he too, died without a farthing? Both Alger and Loring whether consciously or otherwise, inclined toward "Life is to give", and in truth, gave everything they possessed....Alger, to the inmates of the Newsboys Lodging House, and Loring, to the newspapermen and to the writers of daring-do, who, in a manner of speaking, ate and drank him out of his Boston Coffee-House. Neither could have given more, nor had they died wealthy, could they have taken it with them. Who can define "success" or "failure" as it pertains to "everyman"? I have yet to see a Brinks wagon in any funeral procession....now, have you? -- I.G.)

Announcing...
New Members

Charlton Havard Lyons, 1500 Beck Bldg., Shreveport, Louisiana...we add a new member and a new state. Mrs. C. E. Smith, 2633 Middlesex Dr. Toledo, O.; Alvin P. Rezelman, 828 W. Oregon, Lapeer, Mich...and Ralph Gardner, 135 Central Park W, N.Y. City. We honor another young man of 15 years, David Findley of 759 N. Maple Grove, Hudson, Michigan who has 73 titles to his collecting credit. Morris Teicher, I should have mentioned last month, but somehow slipped during the paint wrestlement around here, and brings to mind a selfish little prayer by Sir Jacob Astley - "O Lord Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me".

* * * * *

Please direct all membership fees to F. Campbell, Kalamazoo, Mich. & all correspondence addressed to I. Gurman-23498 Parklawn-Oak Park, Mich

PART III - Concluded

The major event of every Alger book was the hero's encounter with this idealized elderly adult who accorded him adult status and helped him to escape from the authority and control of other adults. Most of the other characters were representations of aspects of the adult world resented by children. Prominent in the typical story was the figure mentioned above who tried to keep the hero in childish subservience. This figure was frequently a foster-father or wicked uncle, for it should not surprise you by this time to hear that all the Alger heroes lost their fathers. This authority-figure invariably turned out to be a villain who had cheated the hero out of his rightful inheritance, or who spught to exploit the hero's abilities for his own benefit. When his manhood had been recognized by the benevolent patron, the hero was able to expose and overthrow this villain. Other secondary characters caricatured such things as the adult claim to greater sophistication, snobbish superiority to the activities and ideas of children, old-maidish dislike of boyish exuberance and the condescension of young men who had just emerged from boyhood themselves. By far the greater part of the Alger books were devoted not to the hero's industrious pursuit of business, but to episodes in which the boy-hero turned the tables on these representatives of the adult world.

I think I can graphically illustrate this aspect of Alger's stories by one brief and striking example of his treatment of the adult-like relationship. So important was the demonstration of adult shortcomings to the Alger story that even the hero's mother does not escape. Contrary to the traditional American mother-worship, the Alger mother was usually a weak, vacillating, helpless female both dependent on, and in awe of, her doughty young son. The following quotation illustrates in brief the way in which Alger expressed both his audience's suspicion of adults and their strong longing for adulthood's privileges and presitge:

The boy spoke with calm and resolute dignity, hardly to be expected in one so young, and with a deep conviction that surprised his mother.

"Luke," she said, "I hardly know you tonight. You don't seem like a boy. You speak like a man."

"I feel so, mother. It is the thought of this man, triumphant in his crime, that makes me feel older than I am. Now, mother, that I feel that I have a purpose in life. It is to find this man and punish him for what he has done, unless he will make reparation."

Mrs. Walton shook her head. It was not from her that Luke had inherited his independent spirit. She was a fond mother, of great amiability, but of a timid, shrinking disposition, which led her to deprecate any aggressive steps."

Our Freudian friends would doubtless point out that a universal boyhood fantasy is embodied in the Alger story and that our hero, who overcomes the plots of a wicked uncle and finds a new protector who grants his wish to be an adult, is none other than Oedipus disguised as a newsboy. But the popularity of Alger's stories was also rooted in a particular time and place. The latter 19th century was a period of particular strain on the American family because the impact of industrialism and the influence of romantic ideas of childhood and child-rearing had weakened, but not entirely destroyed the traditional image of the child as an imp of Satan whose moral recalcitrance demanded complete parental dominance.

Children were caught between conflicting expectations, encouraged in the direction of spontaneity and independence, and then pulled sharply back into subservience to parental authority. Alger, probably because of his own psychological makeup, and his own difficulties with the adult world had a strong sense of these tensions, expressing them in his stories through the plot and characters described above. For children resentful of adult interference with their freedom, and longing themselves for the status of adulthood. Alger's implicit condemnation of authoritative uncles, peevish aunts and snobbish young men, together with his ascription of superior manhood to a boy-hero, must have been a compelling and reassuring

message.

When, in the 1920's and 1930's new standards of adult-child relationships became widely accepted and children found status and new kinds of norms within their own peer groups, the popularity of the Alger stories rapidly declined to nothing. Their impact remained with the last generation who had read them, however, as this generation grew up to face the problems of the 20th century. As a source of favorable sentiment Alger's name lived on and became useful in a variety of ways. Journalists found it an effective device for dramatizing the careers of successful businessmen. Defenders of business against the attacks of reformers found that the public esteem for Alger made his mantle a useful one for legitimating 20th century business. For those who feared the growing power of government and labor, invoking the name of Alger was a way of expressing nostalgia for the simpler ways of an earlier period when enterprise was not subjected to legislative regulation and the harassment of unions. As the memory of the real Alger and his books faded, the symbolic Alger became more and more important as the exponent of what people like to consider the peculiarly American values of enterprise and upward mobility. How far this process

of symbolic transformation may go on, it is hard to say, but the fact that for the last decade the American Schools and Colleges Association has given, in Alger's name, a widely publicized award for distinguished achievement on the part of men who started in humble circumstances, may be a straw in the wind.

The transformation of Horatio Alger from an obscure writer of popular children's books into a symbol of values which many Americans esteem above anything else illustrates a process of great importance to a culture which is continually changing. The necessity of constant adaptation to new ideologies, technologies, and social conditions places great strain on a culture's expressive symbols. The process by which new symbols are created and old ones adjusted to new circumstances is of considerable importance because it is one of the main ways in which a culture expresses its hopes and fears, its aspirations and its understanding of itself. If we could discover more about the operation of this process, not just in the case of Horatio Alger, but of all of our symbols and heroes, we would better understand the course of our history.

The End

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CHAPTER I A LITTLE ABOUT ALGERTON

(Opening setting, Saturday Oct. 13, 1894)

Darkness had fallen on this early October evening in Algerton. A drizzling rain was in the air. The street leading north from the village was deserted, except for our hero, Carey Churchill, who was on his way home. Carey and his mother Abigail and his sister Ethel, age 15 and his brother Michael, age 9, had that afternoon buried their father, Thornton Churchill, the former postmaster of the village. A sudden and unexpected illness struck the little family a fatal blow and left them quite unprepared for this unhappy turn of events. Mrs. Churchill, stricken with grief, left all details necessary in settling up the affairs of her husband in the hands of Carey, now the man of the household.

Algerton was situated on the Erie Line. The post office was located near the tracks and between the depot and the village crossroads. Carey's home was just a short distance on the other side of the tracks. The post office had remained closed for the day in memory of Mr. Churchill, and Carey had just left the building. The evening train from the east had just departed having stopped for the purpose of discharging passengers and the transfer of mail and express, and was now heard in the distance hurrying on its way to the terminal in Erie, Pa. Carey, having properly cared for the storage of the evening mail, was about to leave the wooden platform area of the station and turned up his coat collar to protect his clothing from the rain which was dripping from the trees and forming pools along the pathway. A shadowy figure stepped out from the darkness and stopped abruptly in front of Carey which prevented him from proceeding. The person appeared to be a man of forty and was dressed rather carelessly and held a bundle under his arm.

"Can you direct me to the hotel? You do have one here, don't you?" he asked.

"Sorry Sir, We do not." replied Carey.

"Then strangers are not welcome here, I gather."

"On the contrary, we do have a rooming house operated by Mrs. Cam——"

"Campbell?" interrupted the stranger.

"No," continued Carey, "Mrs. Cameron, do you know the Campbells? If they are expecting you ——"

"No," interrupted the stranger again, "They wouldn't be expecting me, just spoke too quickly ——" and with this, the man turned on his heel and vanished into the darkness. Carey tarried no longer for after all it was a nasty night; although he gladly would have given further assistance if needed, the man asked for none and did not seem to appreciate that which he did receive. Carey shrugged his shoulders and was about to pass the incident from his thoughts when he recalled that it was not unusual for visitors or village people to arrive on the evening train during the week, but this was Saturday and this man was not one of the villagers. Once again he bent his steps homeward and quickened his pace and in a

minute, he was home. A home which must be supported, and the responsibility would be his. Carey, age 16, Ethel and Michael attended the public school just south of the village. Carey hoped that in some way it would be possible for him to finish his final year at Algerton High School. But now his first duty was to his mother and her needs. His mother was about forty and very attractive and was a good mother to her children and was well liked by all of the villagers, she was not a good business woman and she knew it and had left all of the family business matters to her husband.

Carey's familiar steps were recognized by Ethel and Michael and they met him at the door greeting him with the same respect they had always given their father.

"How is mother?" asked Carey.

"She is lying down." replied Ethel.

"Have you eaten?"

"No, mother asked us to wait for you."

"Will she eat with us?"

"I don't think so," responded Michael, "she says she is not hungry."

"What is there to eat?" inquired Carey.

"Pete Bates brought over a basket," added Ethel, "But let me help you off with your wet coat! What did you do? stand out in the rain?"

"Thanks Sis, I was detained a bit, now let's see what's in that basket."

"Carey."

"Yes, Sis?"

"What will we do now?"

"You mean about things ——?"

"Yes."

"Well the first thing we will have to do is to stop worrying and trust in the Lord. Now let's raid that basket. Good old Pete Bates, One of the best friends we've got."

"But will you run the post office ——, I mean?"

"Of course I'll run the post office ——, unless ——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless ——," Carey thought seriously for a moment, then smiled and added, "Unless I'm asked to run for Governor and we have to move to Albany. Look! There's an apple pie. Good old Pete!"

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Will you come here, please?"

"Coming mother, now while you two are setting the table and laying out the food, I'll see if mother won't join us. What is it, mother, how are you feeling tonight?"

"I feel very weak from exhaustion, but I'll be all right as soon as I get my strength back."

"I'll have Ethel fix you some tea, mother." "Ethel." called Carey.

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Do you think you could handle ——"

"Yes, mother?"

"I mean, —— do you think you could take your father's place ——?"

"Did you call me?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, mother will drink some tea with us." continued Carey, "Now mother, you're

worrying again. Of course I can take father's place. Haven't I minded the office in father's absence, many times?"

"I know, but do you suppose they will permit you --?"

"Why not, who is better qualified?"

"But --" she hesitated.

"But what? Do you mean about Squire Campbell?"

"Yes."

"That --," Carey paused, admitting a reasonable doubt, "is a bridge we shall cross, when we come to it."

"You won't have to quit school?"

"Perhaps not, if I can make arrangements."

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Our home is not paid for, is it?"

"I don't believe so, mother."

"Does Squire Campbell ---?"

"Yes, mother, he holds the mortgage."

"Have you seen him?"

"No, mother, I haven't, not yet."

"Tea is ready!" called Ethel, who appeared in the doorway.

"Now mother, take my arm," said Carey, "and let me escort you to the table."

The Churchill home was comfortable enough but small and compact. There was no wasted space. The house was square in shape and the four rooms were divided almost equally with a kitchen, a dining room with a wide arch leading into the living room, and a bedroom. Upstairs, under the eaves, was divided off into two rooms, one for Ethel and the other was shared by Carey and Michael. Their father had made arrangements to buy the house about eight years ago, when Michael was a baby. He foresaw the need of a larger house for his family and having received the appointment as postmaster, with the aid of his friend, Alfred Jamieson, he felt that with this security, he could afford to borrow money to buy a larger house. Squire Campbell loaned him the sum of a thousand dollars at the legal rate of interest. Mr. Thornton had paid seven hundred dollars in the last seven years. Another payment was almost due, when his death occurred. This left the family unprepared for the emergency.

The Squire had investments in many of the village industries and commercial establishments and loaned money on real estate. Many people were forced to look to him for financial support when they were in need. His advice was never sought but always had to be considered. Most every one having to form an opinion, usually consulted the Squire, because if they did not, they eventually found some of their liberties, freedoms and privileges were taken from them. The Squire occupied the largest and most elegant mansion in the village and had recently added a stable which housed four of the nicest carriage horses that money could buy and had room for two more, should his guests desire to stay overnight. Over the carriage house and stable were accommodations for the servants in his employ.

Mortimer S. Campbell, commonly referred to as Squire by the villagers, was not a native of Algerton. He was thought to have come from New York City in the year of the great panic. The Squire did not inherit his wealth, neither did he earn it by the sweat of his brow, but by his scheming, conniving and the manipulations of his papers and accounts. He invested a few paltry dollars in the local Saw Mill and almost immediately the price of cord wood went up. After gaining control of the Saw Mill, he promoted money to build the Ice House and was soon controlling the price and sales of this product to the villagers. Whenever the Squire made a dollar, some villager felt an equal loss.

In addition to his community interests, the Squire and his son, Mortimer S. Flint Campbell, were seen every Sunday in the local community church. The Squire's wife had been dead now for three years. She had been reluctant to give up her name which she held in very high esteem. When young Mortimer was born, she added her name to his, so that her name might not be forgotten entirely. Young Mortimer and his mother preferred and encouraged the use of Flint rather than Mortimer. Young Mortimer's friends called him Flint at his own insistence. But to his father and for matters of public record, he was forced to honor and recognize the name of Mortimer. He and Carey were of the same age, having been born in the year 1878. They were both students of Algerton High and were in the same grade. This being the one and only place where young Mortimer could not look down upon our hero. Carey was not ashamed of his station in life but had a very happy outlook upon his future, until now, when his hopes and his plans might have to be abandoned or at least altered. On such occasions, the Squire was sure to make an appearance, usually posing as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He schemed continually, how to parlay a dollar into two or more. It is true that he did promote or inspire the villagers to build public buildings for their own use and pleasure; They had recently built a new school which they felt they could not afford and the Squire was appointed the Head of the Board of Education. They built the Library and the Squire selected the Librarian of his choice. They built the village opera house and the Squire became Chairman of the Board of Directors. There was one place where the Squire had not yet gained control, and that was the local post office. Thornton Churchill had run it and answered only to the office of the Postmaster General. Under the present conditions, this barrier of security for the Churchill family had become weakened. They could muster little or no resistance against the Squire.

"Carey, there is someone at the door," said Mrs. Churchill, "If it is the Squire Carey, please don't leave me alone with him, I would be putty in his hands!"

"All right, mother dear," said Carey, just before opening the door.

"Good evening, Squire Campbell."