

Newsboy

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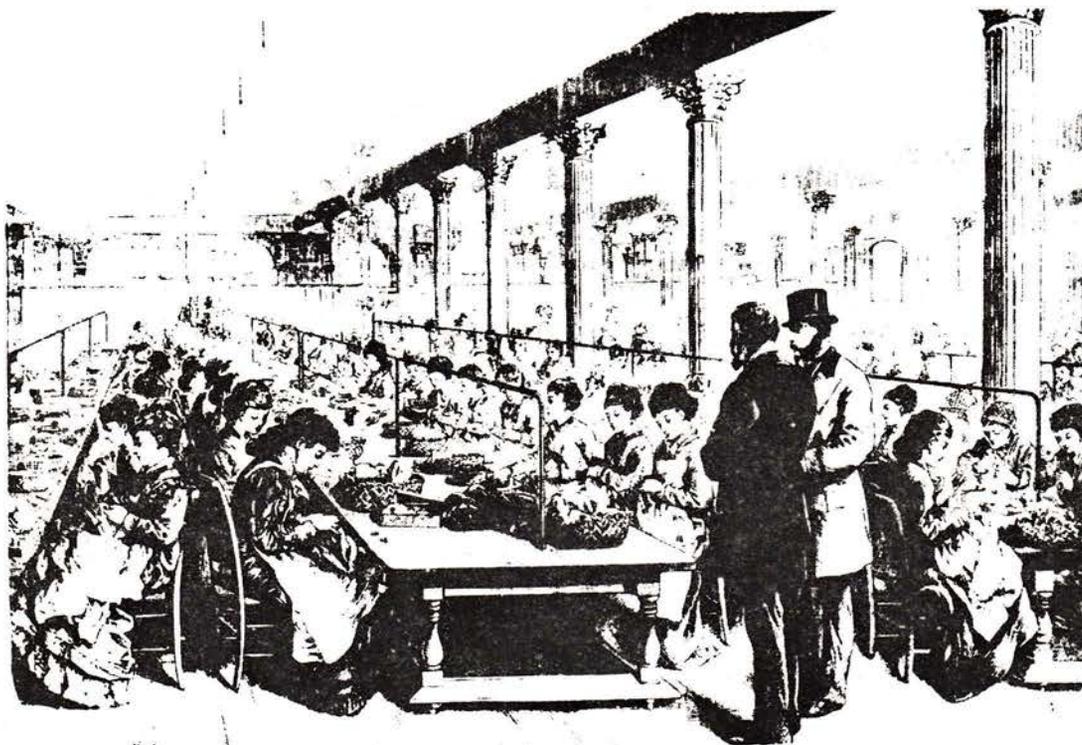


Volume 14
Numbers 6 & 7
Jan.-Feb., 1976

Monthly Newsletter of
the HORATIO ALGER
SOCIETY. The World's
Only Publication Devoted
to That Wonderful
World of Horatio Alger.



Founded 1961 by Forrest Campbell & Kenneth Butler



A name recognizable to all Alger readers is A. T. Stewart, New York's greatest retail merchant in the 1870's. Though a man of impeccable honesty, who brought the working conditions in his store to a level far above those of the common New York City sweatshop, he was said to be "as tender to his employees as a fireman is to his truck." His seamstresses worked from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., receiving a salary of \$3.00

per week each, which was regarded as pitifully low even then.

The above illustration shows the sewing room in Stewart's department store, and is from Otto L. Bettmann's The Good Old Days - They Were Terrible! A review of this book — a volume which does not portray a very glamorous view of the Gilded Age and the "Gay" Nineties — appears on page 9 of this month's Newsboy.

HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr., and to encourage the spirit of Strive and Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes — lads whose struggles epitomized the Great American Dream and flamed hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans.

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Newsboy, the official organ of the Horatio Alger Society, is published monthly (bimonthly January-February and June-July) and is distributed to HAS members. Membership fee for any twelve month period is \$10.00. All members' inquiries about their subscriptions (including requests for missing issues) should be directed to the Society's Secretary, Carl T. Hartmann, 4907 Allison Dr., Lansing, Michigan 48910.

Newsboy recognizes Ralph D. Gardner's Horatio Alger or, the American Hero Era, published by Wayside Press, 1964, as the leading authority on the subject.

Manuscripts relating to Horatio Alger's life and works are solicited, but the editor reserves the right to reject submitted material.

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

PF-407	Ira Marshall P.O. Box 192 Greenville, Ohio 45331
PF-425	Steve Weeks 1044 9th St. Apt. 4 Santa Monica, Calif. 90403
PF-463	Richard (Dick) Bales

440 Palace St.
Aurora, Ill. 60506

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NEW MEMBERS REPORTED

PF-131 Walter James Moore
914 Linview Drive
Urbana, Ill. 61801

A former member of HAS, Dr. Moore now rejoins the Society. He is a professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois, and is a collector of first edition Algers, of which he owns ninety titles. Welcome back, Walter!

PF-459 Georganne W. Hendry
114 Clinton St.
Apt. 6-C
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201

Though Georganne joined the Horatio Alger Society last March, her introduction has not appeared in Newsboy. She learned of HAS through Ralph D. Gardner, and is enthusiastic about her new membership. She wrote Carl Hartmann last year that, "I think the Horatio Alger Society is performing a very worthwhile function, for which you deserve congratulations."

PF-469 Herbert R. Mayes
910 Fifth Ave.
New York, N. Y. 10021

Two years ago Herb was made an honorary member of the Horatio Alger Society (our only other honorary member was U. S. Senator Everett Dirksen), but he now joins as a regular subscriber. As probably all Newsboy readers know, Herb wrote the first Alger biography, Alger: A Biography Without a Hero, which was published in 1928. The January-February, 1974 Newsboy details what many Alger readers had suspected for decades — that the book was practically all fictitious. Herb recently autographed my copy of his book as follows: "For Jack Bales, with affectionate regards, from the man who should have written this book in invisible ink. Herb Mayes, November 14, 1975."

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BOOK MART

The listing of Alger books in this department is free to HAS members. Please list title, publisher, condition, and price.

Offered by Leo F. Moore, 16412 Gentry Lane, Huntington Beach, Calif. 92647.

Leo writes: "I have just purchased a large Alger library from a long time collector, and have a long list of titles of the following publishers for sale: Burt (standard edition); Hurst; Winston; Donohue; Consolidated; Mershon; Federal; Wanamaker; Caldwell; Grosset & Dunlap; Thompson and Thomas; Street & Smith; Loring (library rebound); Porter & Coates; and Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

"These titles that I have to offer should be particularly attractive to the new members of our club who are in the process of acquiring the most titles that they can. Priced sensibly at \$2.00 and \$3.00. I will be happy to submit a list of titles to anyone who writes to me."

Offered by John Sullivan, 1000 East Center Street, Ottawa, Illinois 61350.

Joe's Luck, Boys' Home Library, published by A. L. Burt Company. September, 1887, volume I, number 1. Very good, clean condition. \$70.00.

Offered by Rohima Walter, 1307 Greenbush, Lafayette, Indiana 47904.

Rohima has over one hundred Algers for sale, of publishing companies that include Donohue, World Syndicate, A. L. Burt, Winston, Hurst, Superior, and Whitman. Send self-addressed stamped envelope for list.

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THE EDITOR'S OPINION
by Jack Bales

Since I became editor of the Newsboy a year ago last August, I receive from ten to fifteen letters a week from HAS members. Some of these include manuscripts and pictures for inclusion in

the Newsboy. Other subscribers give me suggestions, comments, and criticism. All letters are read, answered, and welcomed, and I continue to invite members' opinions.

As a number of questions have arisen regarding some aspects of the Society and its publication, I feel that an editor's column is the best place in which to answer them. Probably the question uppermost in members' minds is the reason for the increase in dues from \$5.00 to \$10.00. The main justification for the price hike lies in the cost of printing the Newsboy. I type each issue using an electric typewriter, and send it to HAS Secretary Carl Hartmann, who has it reproduced by a process called "offset photography." A camera photographs each page, and the Newsboy sheets are then printed.

Notice how a sixteen page Newsboy is made up of four double sheets. It costs \$18.95 to print one of these double sheets. Thus, it costs \$75.80 to print just one issue of Newsboy, and this is relatively inexpensive in comparison with other types of printing. I have investigated the costs of having each issue typeset, and the prices quoted were far above \$75.80.

This figure does not take into account the rising postal costs. When Bob Bennett and Carl Hartmann visited me last summer, we tried to find some way that HAS could qualify for a reduced mailing rate, such as that given to nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, the criteria for inclusion in this special classification imposes restrictions that the Society cannot meet.

As some members have asked, I think I should mention that no one in the Horatio Alger Society is paid for his/her efforts, nor are special privileges given to some people. For example, I do not get "first choice" when book ads are sent me for inclusion in the Newsboy "Book Mart," and this is a policy that previous editors Forrest Campbell and Carl Hartmann followed.

It has been suggested to me that I start a "letters to the editor" column. Though much of what is related to me is reported in my "Random Reports from Algerland" column, any member desiring a letter printed need only ask that it be done.

I hope that this editorial has answered some of the questions which members of the Horatio Alger Society have. I would like to thank the readers of the Newsboy for their support during my first year and a half as editor, and to express my gratitude to those who contribute letters, articles, and all other types of material. It is very much appreciated!

* * *

NOTES FROM RALPH

by Ralph D. Gardner

Roy Wendell sent me a copy of the big story that appeared in the Boston Globe last November 10th about Max Goldberg's Alger expertise and all he's doing to reintroduce Horatio to Young America. In the photo, Max is smoking that marvelous carved meerschaum pipe he showed us at the fabulous Geneseo Convention.

Talk about Alger publicity, all PF's can do a lot for their own collections and for HAS by contacting local media. There's no question but that newspapers, radio and television are eager to present a relaxing and nostalgic Alger feature. They're interested in your latest acquisition, a display that local libraries or bookshops will be delighted to work out with you, plus the many other innovations you can think of yourself. Members who have done this — some plan it about once a year, with fine results — tell me they get great publicity exposure which helps them pick up needed items. And always remember to give HAS a good plug (along with Carl Hartmann's address), because in this way we've picked up some fine new members.

In October I was the lead-off speaker at the American Schools and Colleges presentation of their annual Horatio Alger Awards. It was an exciting event

at the Waldorf-Astoria, here in New York. Eleven successful men and one woman received the plaques. I shared the guest honors with Joe DiMaggio and Lowell Thomas. It all got a lot of press coverage.

Bill Henderson has taken over the remaining stock of that splendid pair of first edition reprints — Phil the Fiddler and Struggling Upward — that he published several years ago when he headed Nautilus Press. You've probably all received Bill's mailings by now, with his special offer to HAS members. These are what, in catalogs, are described as fine bindings, and they are the only Alger titles I know to be available as such. If you don't already own this set — or if you haven't now ordered — I suggest you do so while a few sets remain. They're marked at a special HAS price — a fraction of the original published price — at \$4 each or both for \$7. Order directly from Bill Henderson, P.O. Box 845, Yonkers, N. Y. 10701.

Incidentally, Bill continues to rise upward through the publishing ranks. He has recently taken on new duties as editor at Stein and Day Publishing. Best of luck, Bill.

Bob Sawyer very thoughtfully sent me an 1898 copy of the old Life Magazine, which includes this Alger joke of sorts:

Teacher: Can anyone tell me who cried because he had no more worlds to conquer?

No response.

Teacher: Try to remember. It begins with A.

Shrill voice: I know. It's Alger!

We'll be eager to reprint here any other old Alger jokes or comments you come across in old publications. Even when they're not the most hilarious of knee slappers, remember that the Newsboy is a scholarly publication of Alger lore and information. So these should be recorded. Many thanks, Bob, for your kindness.

(Editor's note: Another Alger joke appeared in the June, 1972 Newsboy (p. 8). Originally printed in the January 3-10, 1972 issue of Antiquarian Bookman, it reads as follows:

Horatio Alger was working as a stock boy at the local supermarket. It was Monday night, and he was getting ready to go home. Suddenly the boss told him he was fired.

"Fired?" exclaimed Horatio. "But why, Mr. Brown? I've worked like a slave all day long. I've swept the floor, arranged the stock, waited on the customers!"

"Maybe you did," conceded Mr. Brown, "but you didn't empty the garbage, clean the windows, or hose down the sidewalk."

"But, Mr. Brown," screamed Horatio, "this is supposed to be my day off!"

John (Jed) Clauss, publisher of Aeonian Press, has announced the upcoming publication of six or seven Alger titles during 1976. Those who ordered the Aeonian first series know how attractive and well bound these books are. John even has them bound in a sturdy plum colored cloth, as much as possible the color of the original Loring Algers. More on these later.

Alger books that members sent to the University of Wyoming Library are now on exhibit and much appreciated. I can't stress how important to Alger scholarship it is to have a permanent repository such as we are now offering. These are permanently available to all who seek Alger information. If you have any Algers to spare — regardless of edition or condition — please send them to Dr. Gene Gressley, The Library, Box 3334, Laramie, Wyoming 82070. They're needed!

* * *

A COLLECTOR'S REMINISCENCES

by Keith H. Thompson

(Editor's note: As I am continually researching the history of the Newsboys' Lodging House, I was pleased to recently receive a letter from HAS member Keith Thompson offering to let me borrow three important reference books which he

owned. His letter, dated November 17, 1975, also included some fascinating anecdotes relating to his collecting experiences, and he has graciously consented to let me share them with Newsboy readers, as well as permitting me to quote paragraphs from a second letter, dated December 12, 1975. I am sure that all Alger collectors who relish "the thrill of the chase" will enjoy these stories from a long time book enthusiast).

I've collected Alger nearly thirty years and regret that I've not taken the time or energy to share my collection and knowledge with the Society. I have a fine representative collection of firsts and various editions, but lack the real tough ones like Timothy, Seeking His Fortune, The Disagreeable Woman, Dan the Detective, Tony the Hero, etc. Oddly enough I do have two copies of Tom the Bootblack published by Ogilvie, but no Tony.

Years ago I used to buy Algers in a bookstore near Clinton, Massachusetts near my wife's hometown of Leominster. They were one and two dollars, and I always found several, but one day I walked in and the owner showed me a copy of Robert Coverdale's Struggle in the New Medal Library edition, #555. He also had Mortin Enslin's bibliography in the Antiquarian Bookman open at the page where Enslin extols its rarity and doubts its existence. I also subscribed to this journal and was aware that it was a little known book, although I have perhaps ten different Burt editions or other printings. Mort Enslin and I were eventually outbid, but I was the first collector to see the book. At the time I was a graduate student and couldn't see my way clear to bid over \$75.

In fact, it hadn't been many months earlier that I had been in Baltimore at a used book store on my way to Washington for the end of a scientific conference. My resources were at an all time low when I saw a copy of Wren Winter's Triumph by Thompson & Thomas for 75¢ in pretty bad condition. I had a nice

copy in my own collection, but wanted another to go with the T&T Rolling Stone for comparison. Gruber listed the latter, you'll recall in his original bibliography, and then Enslin notes the former and I wanted to check the type-wear. I felt somewhat like the Alger heroes myself since I was staying at the YMCA and eating for less than \$1.00 a day, but I just didn't have the 75¢. I had to leave it there. Later, a book dealer said he'd give me \$5.00 for it so I wrote and obtained it. He later sold it to Mort Enslin for \$10.00.

Keep up your good work.

Sincerely,

Keith H. Thompson
PF-035

12 December 1975

Dear Jack,

I enjoyed your letter and am glad you liked the brief reminiscences. I should be willing to let you use them as you see best, but would be willing also to write up a short collector's article. I find it interesting to read of others' collecting tales. You mention your autographed Canal Boy, and I was immediately reminded of the wintry day I was in the Army, traveling through Chicago to Fort Benning, Georgia and had a change in trains. I immediately went across the street to Newberry's Book Shop and found a nice copy for \$5.00 which was a lot in 1952. The only autographed Alger I have is Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, and I begin to suspect that an unautographed copy of that book is the real rarity.

I just turned 45 but I've always collected Alger since I went away to college at Davis, California in 1948. My father had about a dozen New York Book Company editions from his childhood, and we gave these to neighborhood boys when we moved from Michigan to Idaho in 1944. I was nostalgic for them and tried to pick them up at any used books stores I

chanced across. Modern collectors are fortunate that the resources of the Newsboy and Alger Society are available for information and advice. Then, too, the good reference books from Gardner, Gruber, and Enslin [for Enslin's work see Antiquarian Bookman, July 6-13, 1959] are now in circulation. When I started collecting it was a thrill supreme to come across a completely new (to me) Alger story in a used book shop. On my way to Korea I found a copy of Young Captain Jack in Portland, and for the first time realized that there were later books which didn't read quite like Alger. I puzzled over that one for some time. When I came to Cornell University to do graduate work I finally got a copy of Frank Gruber's bibliography, and I was able to relate my collection to the real world.

Speaking of Alger stories, one of the most unusual finds I ever made was from a man who had bought a house full of books and wrote up all the titles and authors and sent me a list in response to an advertisement in a trade journal. I had moved and the list was so badly out of date (two months delayed) and obviously one of several copies, that I was certain nothing was left, especially Wait and Win, most of the Stratemeyer titles, and other good, solid, later works that were listed. It was "make offer," so I offered \$3.00 apiece for about a dozen good titles. They came and were nearly new with the same boy's signature in each. I later drove with my wife, having just been married, to his shop in Massachusetts, and he still had hundreds of books left. At 50¢ and 75¢ I bought nearly \$300 worth — all owned by the same boy who bought or was given nearly a complete collection of Alger, Castlemon, Barbour, and many other authors. Most of the Algers were Burt reprints, but from The Young Bank Messenger on they were first editions and immaculate with few skips. Unfortunately, my \$3.00 offer had "fixed" the price of all the Algers, and even though they were in beautiful condition I couldn't afford everything.

January-February

In response to your question, I believe that a "letters to the editor" column might prove interesting and perhaps even enlightening. I personally have always appreciated the work and effort that the members of the Society have done, largely without reward or even praise. I'm continually finding things in the Newsboy that is new to me, and I appreciate it very much.

I'm a consulting statistician to the Biology and Medical Departments at the Brookhaven National Laboratory here on Long Island. My wife is a Geneticist, she and I both taught at Cornell University and she works part time in the Biology Department presently. Our two sons are 11 and 13, and although both read the Algiers and the other 3,000 children's books which are on shelves in our home, they don't seem to be passionately involved.

They are, however, very interested in baseball and collecting baseball cards and items. My great uncle, Sam Thompson (Detroit 1885-1888, Philadelphia 1889-1898, Detroit American League 1906) was elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame in 1974, and my family and I were invited to the ceremonies to accept the award for him. He had no children, and his scrapbook and many of his mementos had been in our family which we donated to the museum.

My wife and I both collect antiques of all types and kinds — our house has seven or eight grandfather clocks set up, as well as dozens of shelf clocks. I haven't done much with my Algiers in some years; mostly because I've been out of touch with dealers and collectors since I came to Long Island, but it was my first and grandest passion.

Sincerely,

Keith H. Thompson

* * *

HOW TO GET OUT OF THE BOOK BUSINESS

(Editor's note: The author of this article wishes to remain anonymous. Anyone desiring to write him can send

correspondence to me and it will be forwarded).

The problem, if you are already a book dealer, is to get out of it more than you have put into it. If this seems impossible, Brother, you've got big trouble!

Of course it helps if you have inherited the business from your grandfather. After all, no young person is old enough to acquire the knowledge it takes to operate an old book business successfully, nor is he old enough to have acquired the thousands of books it takes to attract the "buying public."

There are thousands of books on the shelves of old book stores, but there seems to be only hundreds of books that will interest the buying public. If my fractions are correct, that means that only one book in ten has any appeal. What then, is the proper way to display these books?

But first, let's set you up in business. Let's say that you have inherited a substantial number of old books on a number of subjects which may appeal to a great many people. But, they must be moved. You have also inherited a little money in sufficient amount to buy a suitable place to display and store your books. So, you have no money problems, except that you are dependent upon book sales to meet living expenses.

Look for an old building, not far from the beaten track, or a well traveled road where you can install a sign of good size. The word "BOOKS" is all you'll need on the sign. If the right persons see your sign, they'll find you.

Look for an old building that has been offered for sale but has stood vacant some two years or more, and the owner is willing to accept a reasonable price to unload the property. An old blacksmith shop, no longer a service to the community, would be a possible site. Even better, an old depot would be an

ideal location; but your sign is always of major importance. If your selected building has more than one entrance, close all but the main door, unless the local building code forces you to do otherwise.

You may have some additional expense in shelves, equipment, fixtures, and utilities. You may want to remodel your lighting system with gang switches at the entrance where the lights can be controlled by you. Small rooms or stalls lined with shelves are advisable. If you do not have such an arrangement, make stall dividers out of shelving material.

Each stall should be plainly labeled according to subject. All books should be arranged in alphabetical order on the shelves according to title or author. No shelf should have books in front of books or else the title or author cannot be easily determined. Nothing discourages a customer with limited time more than books arranged without rhyme or reason or books behind books.

Top shelf books should be within reach of your shortest potential customer. Books should not be packed in on the shelves so tight that the customer has to pull them out by the spine. All books should be priced, with code if deemed preferable. Each stall should have a bargain box with books at greatly reduced prices to keep the old stock moving out. No shelf should have, to your knowledge, a book in poor condition on it priced the same as books in good condition. Remember, these books will never be in any better condition than they are today, for the ravage of time takes its toll. If books in the bargain box fail to sell, build a bonfire out back. Some customers like to rummage through bargain boxes, so put in some fresh bait daily.

If you have a rare book section, advertise this fact publicly and clearly. No collector wants to take the time to inspect all shelves only to discover that the book he is looking for is behind lock and key.

Not all customers wish to identify themselves, nor do they always want to state the purpose of their search. Sometimes a customer hopes to catch a dealer unawares by discovering a "rare find" among the ordinary books, and often he does so, while a dealer is deemed to be honest until found to be otherwise. Fairness breeds fairness, and shrewdness breeds shrewdness. Try to be fair in all transactions.

Sometimes a repeat customer may ask if you have any new stock. For this reason, never fill the vacant space on shelves at random with new stock. Better to have a stall labeled "New Stock" and keep books there for a reasonable length of time before any attempt is made to put them in their proper places. If you have just bought miscellaneous stock from another source, be fair to all of your regular customers, and keep it in the back room out of sight until you have had time to go over your purchases personally and price them.

If a question arises, consider the opinion of your customer, for he may know more about the subject than you do. Don't haggle about prices but be fair and reasonable. After all, it's better to accept a reduced price than to get nothing at all. Keep your stock moving. A customer may stop coming in if your stock looks the same today as it did last month.

Be fair about your "rare book" department, too. Remember, these books are aging just as fast as those books on the open shelves. Just because someone paid an exorbitant price for a rare book at a New York City auction is no sign that your patrons are going to beat a path to your door.

If you accept or solicit mail orders, you are looking for trouble unless there is proof of implicit faith between the customer and the dealer. A complete disregard of these tenets will cause grass to grow in the path to your door, and you will find yourself slowly but surely getting out of the old book business.

NEWSBOY BOOK REVIEW

by Dick Bales

The Good Old Days - They Were Terrible!
By Otto L. Bettmann. New York: Random House, 1974. Introduction by the author. Footnotes. Bibliography. 207 pages. Hardbound: \$9.95. Softbound: \$4.95.

(Editor's note: The pictures on pages nine and ten and the Newsboy cover illustration are from Otto L. Bettmann's The Good Old Days - They Were Terrible! [c1974] They are reproduced by permission of Random House, Inc., which has also permitted quoted material to appear in this review).

In these times of inflation and the energy crisis, it is popular to reminisce about "The Good Old Days," a time when life was less complicated, when a few dollars would buy a week's worth of groceries and one did not have to lock

the door at night. Such thinking, in fact, has permeated today's entire culture. For example, a magazine entitled, appropriately enough, Good Old Days, features "photos, poems, cartoons, songs, and illustrations of the Happy Days Gone By." There is even a toothpaste, Peak, whose advertisements espouse the glories of baking soda, an "old-fashioned" ingredient.

Probably no other era has brought about more of this "wistful" thinking than the years from the end of the Civil War to the early 1900's. Most people commonly view these years as the epitome of carefree America, when the idle rich, who wore fine clothing and lived in huge mansions on Fifth Avenue, spent their days cavorting in horse-drawn buggies and the nights cavorting on the dance floor. Such was the Gilded Age, the Gay Nineties.

Or was it? In his book, aptly titled The Good Old Days - They Were

Signing the farm away.
Thirty percent of the farmers in the 1880s
had to mortgage their land, overgrown
with that worst of all weeds: debt.
America was called a billion-dollar country
—a billion dollars in mortgages.

Terrible!, Otto L. Bettmann takes this myth of "Gould-an" prosperity and ebullience and literally dashes it to pieces on the floors of the sweatshops by showing the seamier aspects of life in the nineteenth century, an era when actually only a small elite succeeded and prospered; the vast majority knew only a life of incessant drudgery, exploitation, and filth.

Bettmann's work is enhanced by both his colorful text, and, more importantly, by the large number of period drawings and photographs, all documented from such sources as Harper's Weekly, Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, and the New York Times. These





Young women functioned as conveyor belts in store and factory. Cashgirls at \$3 a week complained that they were "box-carrying machines."

illustrations, in fact, comprise more than one half of the book's total contents, and do much to heighten both its appeal to the reader and its overall credibility as the end result of serious research.

It should be noted that Bettmann's credentials are more than sufficient to justify his undertaking of such a project. He is the founder of the Bettmann Archive in New York, a picture library of some three million prints and photographs.

The book contains eleven chapters; each chapter is concerned with a single topic, such as "Housing," "Rural Life," "Crime," and "Food and Drink." These topics are further subdivided into more specific groupings. For example, the chapter "Education" deals with such subjects as "Country Teacher," "Corporal Punishment," "City Schools," and "Teaching Methods."

For additional research purposes, footnotes and a bibliography are also included.

A cursory examination of this book may lead one to believe that the author is guilty of the same crime that he is accusing others of committing, that is, of recounting the past from a strictly one-sided viewpoint. One may at first feel that by focusing on only the seedier side of the Gilded Age, the author does not do justice to the actual events of this era, events which produced a representation of both good and bad.

Further inspection, however, proves that such a portrayal was not Bettmann's purpose.

As he writes in his Introduction:

"I have always felt that our times have overrated and unduly overplayed the fun aspects of the past. . . . The world now gone was in no way spared the problems we consider horrendously our own. . . . In most of our nostalgia books, such crises are ignored, and the period's dirty business is swept under the carpet of oblivion. . . ."

"I have concluded that we have to revise the idealized picture of the past and turn the spotlight on its grimmer aspects. This more realistic approach will show us Gay Nineties man (man in the street, not in the boardroom), as one to be pitied rather than envied. He could but dream of the Utopian miracles that have become part of our everyday life. Compared with him we are lucky - even if dire premonitions darken our days and we find much to bemoan in our society."

In The Good Old Days - They Were Terrible!, Otto L. Bettmann has combined both pictures and prose in a fascinating new view of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, it is currently considered fashionable, amid today's nostalgia craze, to bewail the present state of society and to revere the past. This book, therefore, is a refreshing change from these doomsday prophesies that maintain that only a return to the "carefree days of yesteryear" will save civilization from extinction. After reading Bettmann's book, such assertions will appear foolish, and rightfully so. It is a book that all Alger collectors should have on their bookshelves, for much of it concerns Horatio's own New York City. This, though, is an added bonus; it is icing on an already excellent cake.

* * *

ALGER ANALYSES

by Jack Bales

Number three in a series of studies of books that are useful in researching the life, works, and times of Horatio Alger, Jr.

Comstock, Anthony. Traps for the Young. Introduction by Robert Bremner. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967. (Originally published in 1883 by Funk & Wagnalls).

The two generations between 1860 and 1910 marked a notable era in America's literary history — the years when the dime novel played a significant role in the development of literature for children and young adults. Read by hundreds of thousands of youths across the country, and avidly collected by enthusiasts a hundred years later, dime novels, according to E. F. Bleiler in Eight Dime Novels [New York, Dover Pub., 1974], were "the first mass-produced entertainment industry of importance. [They] stood in the same relation to the average young American as television does today."

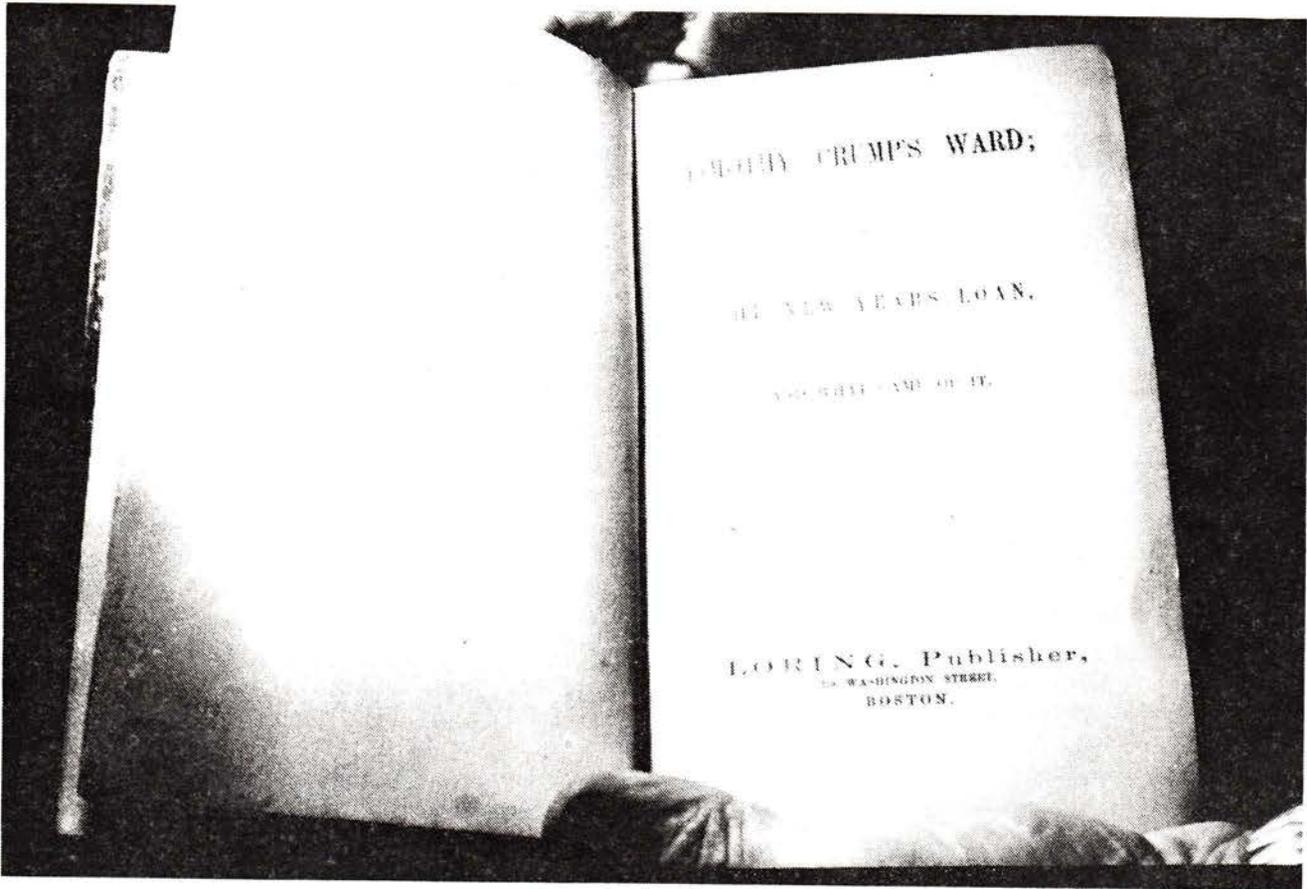
However, not all people welcomed the inundation of this new type of

reading matter, and the derision and scorn heaped upon dime novels by clergymen and educators forced youths to surreptitiously conceal the books whenever their parents were near. But I do not think anyone abhorred these little paperbacks as much as did Anthony Comstock, one of the most renowned reformers in America's history. For more than forty years he stood guard at what he referred to as "the sewer mouth" of society, acting as a self-appointed bastion against the onslaught of "objectionable" literature and material aimed at children.

Comstock, born in 1844 in a rural section of Connecticut, was the son of devout churchgoers who impressed upon him the significance of "the poison of impurity." After a two year enlistment in the Civil War, Comstock went to New York City in 1867, to begin work as a dry goods clerk.

It was there that on March 3, 1872, he began what was to be a lifelong foray against indecency. On that day he, with a police captain and a New York Tribune reporter, entered two stationery stores and purchased books and pictures which Comstock stated were obscene. The policeman arrested six employees of the stores, including two boys aged eleven and thirteen. Three of the adults were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, and in the days, months, and years following, more than 3,600 men, women, and children would be arrested by Comstock in his four decade battle for moral purity. Quoting from Robert Bremner's Introduction: "He [Comstock] boasted in 1913 that the number was enough to fill a passenger train of 61 coaches, 60 coaches containing 60 passengers each and the 61st almost full."

The title of this book explains Comstock's purpose — to set before the reader the temptations that affected the moral fiber of juveniles living in nineteenth century America. These "traps for the young" included daily newspapers, which "educat[e] and familiariz[e] our youth with crime" (p. 15); lotteries; light fiction; and paintings,



On page 14 of the November, 1975 Newsboy, HAS member Chet Kennedy details the events leading up to his purchase of Timothy Crump's Ward, the most valuable Alger book. Above is a picture he sent your editor of the volume's title page.

("Alger Analyses"-Continued)
sculptures, and works of literature which he declared obscene. ["Many 'classical' writers, as the word goes to-day, have gained fame by catering to the animal in man." (p. 169)]

But Anthony Comstock particularly hated dime novels and story papers, for these especially appealed to boys and girls. This vindictive attitude is apparent on page 20 of Traps for the Young:

"And it came to pass that as Satan went to and fro upon the earth, watching his traps and rejoicing over his numerous victims, he found room for improvement in some of his schemes. . . . He . . . resolved to make the most of these vile illustrated weekly papers, by lining the news-stands and shop-windows

along the pathway from home to school and church, so that they could not go to and from these places of instruction without giving him opportunity to defile their pure minds by flaunting these atrocities before their eyes."

Comstock filled this chapter with accounts of how boys and girls, influenced by dime and nickel novels, committed crimes in imitation of the characters about which they had read. Following is an example from page 28:

"Last April another lad, 15 years of age, was arrested after three attempts to wreck a train just beyond Saratoga. Pleasant thoughts for the traveller, that we are safe from the armed brigands of Italy and the outlaws of the plains, but in imminent danger from schoolboys crazed by the accursed

blood-and-thunder story papers! Only five cents apiece! Step up, parents, and buy a cheap way of getting rid of your boys! Supply these books and papers, and your boy will soon be behind prison-bars and be off your hands."

As can be imagined, not all people agreed with Anthony Comstock, who in 1873 lobbied for passage of a federal anti-obscenity law (called the "Comstock Law"), and who that year was appointed a special agent of the Post Office Department, charged with the enforcement of that law. Many justifiably argued that his definition of obscenity was subjective. Whatever he deemed objectionable was automatically illegal, at least as far as he was concerned.

Also, other individuals observed that although many of the children arrested by Comstock admitted reading dime novels, the reformer seldom — if ever — proved that there was a connection between the books and the crimes which the youngsters committed.

And finally, it was pointed out that Comstock would often use trickery or strong arm tactics to get arrests. In detecting violations of postal laws [the 1873 law was titled, "An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use"], he would employ various aliases so that he could correspond with suspects.

Naturally, the cartoonists of the period had a field day with Anthony Comstock. A cartoon entitled, "That Fertile Imagination," appeared in the January 18, 1888 issue of Life. It shows Comstock knocking an artist's paints to the floor as the man is putting the finishing touches on a picture of a woman bathing in a pond. Only her head is visible. The caption is as follows:

WANT HELP BRINGING
YOUR ALGER COLLECTION
UP TO PAR?



THEN COME TO THE
ROSEMONT CONVENTION
MAY 6, 7, 8, 9, 1976.

A-t-o-y C-m-t-ck: "Hold! I arrest you for painting indecent pictures!"

Artist: "Indecent! Why the head is the only portion visible."

A-t-o-y C-m-t-ck: "That makes no difference. Don't you suppose I can imagine what is under the water?"

Another cartoon that appeared in The Masses, September, 1915, has Comstock addressing a judge as he holds an unconscious woman by the collar of her dress. Her legs are hanging limply along the

1	W	2	A	3	G	4	S			5	B	6	E	7	E	8	F		9	A	10	R	11	A	12	B				
13	I	14	S	15	L	16	E		17	A	18	L	19	G	20	E	21	R		22	B	23	O	24	L	25	O			
26	T	27	H	28	E	29	T	30	E	31	L	32	W	33	G	34	R	35	A	36	P	37	H	38	B	39	O	40	Y	
41	H	42	E	43	N			44	B	45	E	46	N	47	S			48	R	49	O	50	S	51	E					
				52	H	53	E	54	R	55	D			56	B	57	O	58	A	59	R									
60	R	61	O	62	B	63	E	64	R	65	T		66	A	67	L	68	A	69	I		70	C	71	A	72	W			
73	E	74	D	75	A	76	M			77	R	78	I	79	O	80	T	81	S		82	I	83	A	84	N	85	A		
86	A	87	D	88	R	89	I	90	F	91	T	92	I	93	N	94	T	95	H	96	E	97	C	98	I	99	T	100	Y	
101	D	102	E	103	E			104	E	105	A	106	S	107	T	108	S			109	P	110	R	111	I	112	N			
113	E	114	R	115	R			116	A	117	L	118	E	119	S			120	C	121	H	122	A	123	N	124	C	125	E	
				126	W	127	R	128	E	129	N			130	C	131	O	132	O	133	S									
134	S	135	U	136	R	137	E			138	C	139	A	140	M	141	P			142	F	143	L	144	A					
145	R	146	U	147	P	148	E	149	R	150	T	151	S	152	A	153	M	154	B	155	I	156	T	157	I	158	O	159	N	
160	A	161	L	162	A	163	S			164	O	165	A	166	S	167	E	168	S		169	A	170	V	171	I	172	D		
173	G	174	U	175	S	176	T			177	O	178	T	179	H	180	O			181	D	182	E	183	N	184	Y			

Above are the answers to the Alger crossword puzzle that Herb Risteen made for the December, 1975 Newsboy. Another puzzle will appear in next month's issue.

("Alger Analyses"-Continued)
 floor, and her arms are at her sides. The caption reads, "Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!"

Anthony Comstock died of pneumonia on September 21, 1915. Though his views were not widely popular, nor were his actions always credible, Robert Bremner, who edited the reissue of Traps for the Young, wrote that the man "both embodied and caricatured the moral sense of his epoch." And although I doubt that many members of the Horatio Alger Society or subscribers to the Dime Novel Round-Up would agree with his contention that "the finest fruits of civilization are consumed by these vermin" [dime novels], one has to respect the man's

sincerity and idealism in coping with the moral dilemmas of a not so innocent era.

* * *
 ALGERS WANTED

I recently received a laboriously scrawled letter from Herbert Trulick, Apt. 217, 2555 Welsh Road, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19114. As HAS members have always been generous in supplying Alger books to people who want them, I hope that they can help this individual. Following is part of his letter:

"I am retired and on Social Security Disability with a heart condition and unable to get around much. Now that the bad weather is starting to set in, I am in for the rest of the winter until April, and the only hobby I have is

reading Horatio Alger books, of which I have read and reread about ten times in the past fifteen years. There are about one dozen Algers I haven't read, and I don't seem to be able to get them.

"I don't care what shape they are in, as long as myself and the rest of the retirees in this building can read them without them falling apart. It seems that when one gets old and disabled he looks forward to books he read when he was a boy 65 years ago. I can afford \$1.50 for each book. Please see what you can do for us. The books are Abraham Lincoln, The Backwoods Boy; Dean Dunham; From Farm Boy to Senator; From Canal Boy to President; Lester's Luck; Ned Newton; Out for Business; Victor

Vane; Bernard Brooks' Adventures; Joe, the Hotel Boy; and Tom Tracy. Please help us."

* * *
HAS MEMBER IN MAGAZINE

The CCG Picture, a magazine published for the personnel of California Cannery and Growers, included an article about Alger Society member Alan Conner in its May/June, 1975 issue. Titled, "Rags to Riches; Author of Conner's Collection Had a Profound Effect," the piece features a large photograph of Alan in front of several of his book shelves. The first section of the article tells of his collecting interests:

"Alan Conner, advertising manager, collects books—old and rare books. They line the shelves of the den in his Sausalito home, fill trunks and boxes in the basement. Books bound in luxuriant calf skin, gold embossed titles on the covers, and musty, slightly battered, rare books by renowned writers are equal treasures in Alan's collection. But most prized are the ninety-nine volumes of boys' stories by Horatio Alger, the 19th century American author who originated the rags to riches through diligence, hard work, and luck theme as an inspiration to the youth of the time.

"Alan collects Horatio Alger books '. . .not because I love boys' stories, but because Alger was a social philosopher. He has had a more profound effect on business ethics and morals than any other social philosopher. It is the only significant body of American literature in which the businessman is a hero. And, I say God bless him!"

"Alan began his collection about seven years ago, '. . .when an elderly lady who lived here in Sausalito discovered an Alger book in her library and gave it to me. A friend of mine gave me another one and now I have ninety-nine. . .about 78 are unduplicated.'" * * *

ALGER BOOKS FOR SALE IN FLORIDA

HAS Co-founder Forrest Campbell

writes: "Partic'lar Friends who will be traveling to Florida this winter may want to stop in at the 'Old and Rare Book Shop,' located four miles east on U.S. 90 in Marianna, Florida. The proprietors, Roy and Wanda Noble (mail address: Rt. 3, Box 348A, Marianna, Florida 32446), have some 200 assorted Alger books for sale. Inquiries by mail must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope."

* * *
RANDOM REPORTS FROM ALGERLAND
by Jack Bales

As a souvenir of the 1974 Alger Society Convention, Phil Atkins reproduced the first dialogue from Seeking His Fortune. HAS Secretary Carl Hartmann still has a few copies of this booklet left, and if you desire one, send \$2.25 to him at 4907 Allison Drive, Lansing, Michigan 48910.

Also, Irene Gurman prepared a souvenir booklet for the same convention. It contains two pieces — the poem, "A Welcome to May," and the short story, "Borrowing from Economy." This first edition of 295 numbered and signed copies is still available — send \$2.50 to I. Gurman, 540 Sherman Drive, #49, Royal Oak, Michigan 48067.

Steve Weeks reports that he found a nice Loring Alger in a Los Angeles bookstore for \$2.00! That just proves that those days of finding inexpensive Algers are not gone yet. Congratulations, Steve!

Ralph Brandt notes in a recent letter, "I am still writing my daily column in retirement, plus two editorials. This keeps me in trim. This column has been going since 1924!"

The twelfth annual convention of the Horatio Alger Society will be held in Rosemont, Illinois from May 6-9, 1976. Convention host Gil Westgard asks that members send him the registration fee as soon as possible. The cost is \$15.00 per person. Please make checks out to Gilbert K. Westgard II, 764 Holiday Lane, Apt. 1, Des Plaines, Ill. 60018.

In my research into the history of the Newsboys' Lodging House, I was fortunate in locating this rare photograph of the reading room in the Duane Street Lodge. (See November, 1975 Newsboy to obtain information on the three lodging houses for newsboys). For a story on my Alger collecting and research, an area newspaper greatly enlarged this picture, and in the newspaper illustration one can see numbers on the small compartments beneath the library shelves. Perhaps these cabinets were the boys' lockers in which their belongings were kept.

This picture was taken in the early

1890's. I had thought that in 1928, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Children's Aid Society, the name "Newsboys' Lodging House" was dropped in favor of "Brace Memorial Newsboys' Home." However, the words "Brace Memorial ?" at the top of this picture show that this belief is incorrect.

This contradiction is an excellent illustration of one of the most important tenets of research: that new information inevitably causes one to reverse decisions, rendering it desirable to seek additional data.

