

Monthly publication of the HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY, a magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

Newsboy



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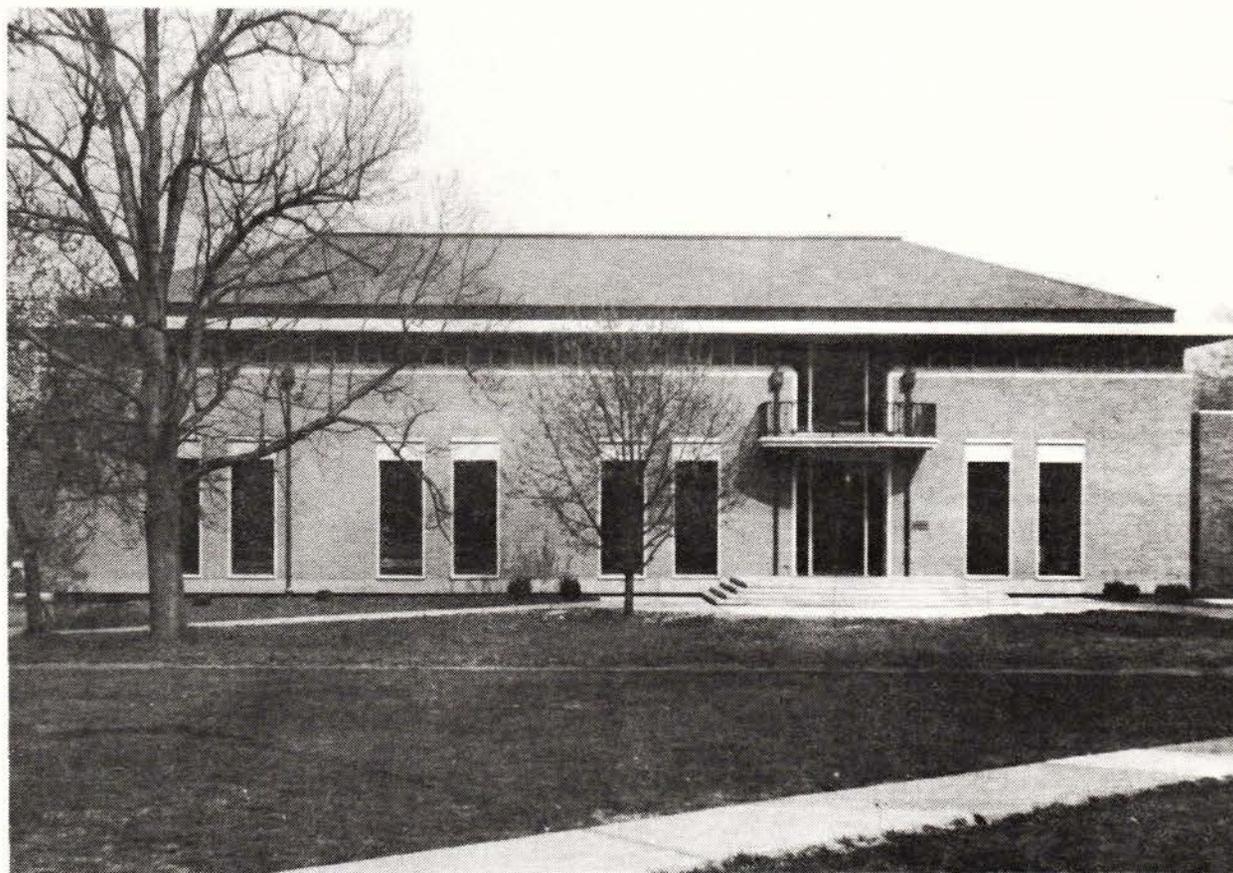


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Jack Bales - Newsboy editor and host of the 1978 Horatio Alger Society Convention - is employed as Public Service Librarian at Illinois College in Jacksonville. The College Library (pictured above) has a large display case, in which some of his Alger books will be prominently exhibited. As Head Librarian Richard L. Pratt says: "I am very pleased to welcome the Horatio Alger Society to Jacksonville and to the Illinois College campus. I hope that the Society members have a pleasant and profitable convention, and I cordially invite them to the College Library to view Jack Bales' display of some of his rarest Alger books."

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. Cost for single issues of Newsboy is \$1.00 apiece.

Please make all remittances payable to the Horatio Alger Society. Membership applications, renewals, changes of address, claims for missing issues, and orders for single copies of current or back numbers of Newsboy should be sent to the Society's Secretary, Carl T. Hartmann, at 4907 Allison Drive, Lansing, Michigan 48910.

A subject index to the first ten years of Newsboy (July, 1962 — June, 1972) is available for \$1.50 from Carl Hartmann at the above address.

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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REMEMBER: The HAS Convention — the "Jacksonville Jamboree" — will soon be here!! Don't forget the dates, Thursday, May 4 through Sunday, May 7, in Jacksonville, Illinois.

* * *

A STAMP HONORING HORATIO?

by Brad Chase

At the Boston convention last May, several of us from New England accepted the responsibility of inquiring into the national commemorative stamp selection process. Specifically, we received a charge to see what would be involved in getting a commemorative stamp dedicated to our Hero, Horatio Alger, Jr. Several times during the summer, Dick Seddon and I discussed possible sources for finding information. We finally zeroed in on the Office of Philatelic Affairs of the United States Postal Service.

In September, I happened to be in Washington, D. C. on business and decided to visit the Postal Service to see what I could find out. After several false steps, I located Room 5700 of the new, massive, and impressive U. S. Postal Service Building. This is the office of Mr. Jack Williams and his people who staff the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee in the Office of Philatelic Affairs. Mr. Williams is Coordinator of the Committee which assists the Postmaster General in selecting subjects and artists for the various stamps. One of Mr. Williams' staff members listened to my query and I learned the following:

A. Out of the over 4,000 requests for commemorative stamps received by the Committee each year, about 1,500 are determined eligible in that they meet established criteria. Usually only about twenty are actually selected for printing.

B. The Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee recommends subjects and artists for stamps. The Committee includes historians, artists, businessmen, stamp collectors, and others interested in American history and culture. The members of the Committee review and approve proposals submitted and make recommendations to the Postmaster General.

C. The following criteria have been adopted by the Committee as the basic

standards of eligibility:

1. The subject must not be a living person.
2. Commemorative stamps honoring individuals will be issued preferably on significant anniversaries of their births, and not until ten years after their deaths.
3. Commemorative stamps of historical significance should be considered for issuance on anniversaries, preferably starting with the fiftieth year and continuing at fifty year intervals.
4. Only themes and events of wide-spread national appeal and significance will be considered as subjects.
5. Commemorative stamps should not be issued to honor fraternal, political, or sectarian organizations, nor a commercial enterprise or a specific product.
6. Commemorative stamps are not considered appropriate for charitable organizations.
7. Commemorative stamps shall not be issued for cities, towns, municipalities, counties, schools, or institutions of higher learning.

Dick and I reviewed these criteria with respect to whether or not Horatio Alger would qualify. In our judgment he would. As part of the procedures, there needs to be a sponsoring organization which of course could be HAS. We suggest the stamp could be earmarked for issuance in 1982, 150 years after Horatio's birth. The key seems to be in convincing the Committee that issuing a stamp honoring Alger's birthday is "meritorious and significant." The procedures dictate that organizations sponsoring suggestions for commemorative stamps present their request in writing to the Postmaster General at least eighteen months in advance of the requested date of issuance.

I agreed with Dick to take a first stab at developing a submittal package

and will do so between now and convention time in May. Hopefully I'll find time to have some preliminary reviews completed by several HAS New England members before that time.

So the initial step of inquiry about the process of getting a commemorative stamp honoring Horatio has been taken and it seems appropriate to pursue it. This is a matter which should receive attention at the convention in order that the ultimate submittal package represents membership thinking to a significant degree.

Yes, we may have a stamp honoring Horatio in 1982, but it will take a lot of hard work. I'm sure we're up to it.

* * *

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Editor's note: Probably one of the best Alger articles to come along in a long time appeared in the November, 1977 issue of American Opinion. Entitled "The Story of Horatio Alger," the piece was written by Medford Evans. The following letter refers to this article, as well as to the substandard work that appeared in the November, 1977 Smithsonian. [See the previous issue of Newsboy for material on this article and my letter to the editor which appeared in the January, 1978 Smithsonian]).

Jan. 10, 1978

Dear Jack:

I found the article by Medford Evans excellent. I hope this denouement of Mayes' "hoax" will finally sink into the academic world of the universities. This will make it unlikely for Smithsonian Magazine and others to have articles on misinformation which often the writer feels he has to defend in order to save "face." Your letter in the Smithsonian should also do a lot toward having the facts accepted.

The publicity in the Smithsonian should widen the membership in HAS. I often come across a collector in a

book store looking for boys' books and find upon striking up a conversation that he feels he is alone in collecting this type of material, and he is surprised to discover that there are publications on the subject. The big problem is to get publicity to the right people. Most books stores are hesitant to give much information for they feel they will lose a customer and that the high prices they are asking in many cases will not hold up if too much knowledge in collecting circles becomes known.

I'm planning to attend the Jacksonville convention and am looking forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Eddie

(Editor's note: As most HAS members know, Eddie LeBlanc is the editor of Dime Novel Round-Up, one of the oldest and most authoritative publications on dime and nickel novels and boys' books. His address is 87 School Street, Fall River, Massachusetts 02720).

1631 W. Mulberry Drive
Phoenix, Arizona 85015
23 November 1977

Dear Jack:

Reading the reprint of the excellent article by Stanley A. Pachon in the September, 1977 Newsboy, and noting his listing of Andy Gordon as #34 in the list of Boy's Home Weekly reprints, brought to mind some of the oddities we all have run into in some of Horatio Alger's stories.

How many of us recall that Alger had a three handed character in one of his stories? In the earlier Forging Ahead title of Andy Gordon's life, in Chapter 20 (p. 179 of my copy) by Penn Publishing Company:

"The next moment Mr. Mike Hogan felt an iron grip at his collar, while the supposed lady held a revolver to his

head.

"What new trick is this?' he asked in utter amazement, recoiling from his fair companion.

"With his unoccupied hand the detective threw back the veil which concealed his face . . ."

Now where did that "unoccupied hand" come from when one had a grip on the collar and another held a pistol?

Looking over copies of Andy Gordon I find the same wording:

Donohue, Chapter 21, page 120.

Saalfeld, Chapter 7, (no page numbers, as this is one of those heavily abridged editions, but this particular wording was retained).

A. L. Burt, Chapter 21, page 135.

Federal Book, Chapter 21, page 120.

On another comment — often Alger mentions a well-known author of his era — Howells. This undoubtedly refers to William Dean Howells, born in 1837 and died in 1920. He is frequently referred to as one of the central figures in 19th century American fiction writing.

I appreciate your time and work on the Newsboy. For some ten years (as a volunteer and as a hobby) I tried to edit and publish our local chess club news sheet for a 400 member distribution, and I know some of the headaches that can arise in this kind of work. I am too old to want to get involved in such matters now, but if I can help in a minor way, or on "one shot" deals, drop me a note.

With best wishes,

Paul

Col. Paul L. Webb

* * *

1978 Convention plans are almost complete — hope that you are intending to attend the "Jacksonville Jamboree" — the fourteenth annual convention of the Horatio Alger Society.

March

BOUND TO RISE—BUT NOT TOO FAR:
HORATIO ALGER AND THE DREAM OF SECURITY
by Frank Shuffelton

(Editor's note: The following article originally appeared in the Fall, 1976 issue of Illinois Quarterly, published by Illinois State University in Normal. It appears by permission of both the journal and Dr. Shuffelton, who is a professor of English at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York).

Searching for one best word to describe late 19th Century America, a writer might easily come up with the by now familiar adjective, "pluralistic." But striking as all the diversity is in what Howard Mumford Jones refers to as the Age of Energy, equally striking is its seeming disappearance in the 20th Century. Our times appear to reveal a pattern of religious ecumenicalism, corporate conglomeration and political federalism. Although the consensus proclaimed to us a decade or two ago by some historians is more illusive than real, new technologies in the hands of the modern media, industry and management have gone far to give us a uniformity of culture unknown to the 19th Century.

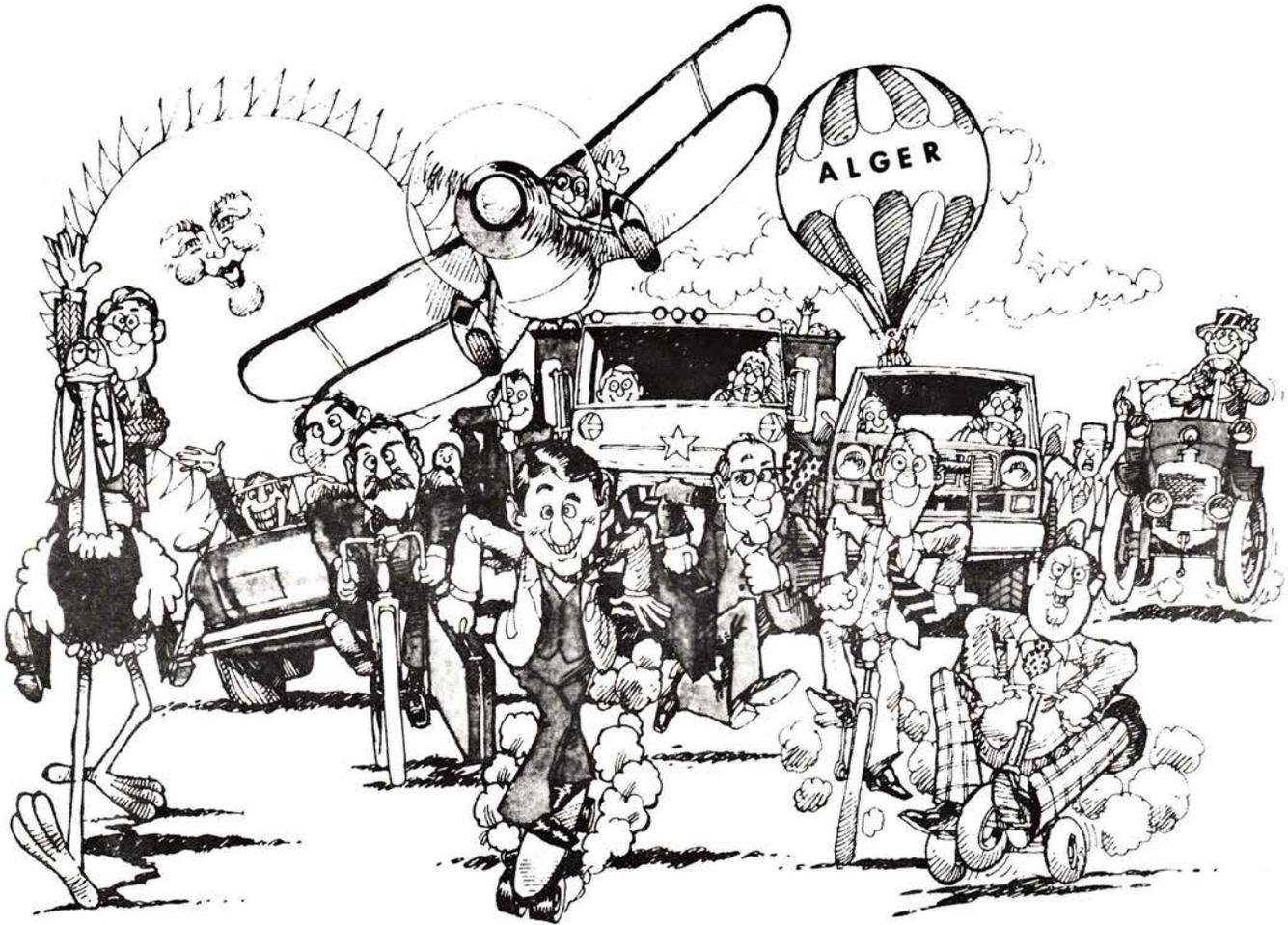
But if our technology has indeed brought us nearer to national conformity, surely it was because we chose the technology, we were ready for it, we wanted it. The dominant business figure in the late 19th Century, at least in the public imagination, was the captain of industry. Yet during the same period, as Henry Adams saw, the Dynamo was triumphing over the Virgin, and the Dynamo wanted not heroes but servants, not captains but managers and executives. Adams learned at Chicago in 1893 that society had given itself up to the model of the machine, "the whole mechanical consolidation of force, which. . .created monopolies capable of controlling the new energies that America adored." (1) The entrepreneurial dream was given up for a stock option, and as technology triumphed over nature, the young men who would exploit it formed their visions of the

future.

One of the more powerful calls to enlist in the service of modern technology sounded in the pages of Horatio Alger Jr.'s fantastically successful boys' books. Generations of boys from the end of the Civil War through the first two decades of the present century read their Algers to pieces, and their favorite reading matter gave them a stock of images with which to envision their own future lives. In the Alger novels young readers discovered their most secret plans for themselves acted out by juvenile characters who had been so broadly developed by their maker that readers had little difficulty identifying themselves with the parade of Gilbert Greysons, Mark Masons, and Bob Burtons. (2)

These young readers saw themselves wearing fine clothes on Fifth Avenue, digging for gold in California, traveling as assistants to magicians and medicine shows, discovering hidden talents as detectives or detectives' assistants. Parents, godparents, doting relatives encouraged all this because they knew the ultimate message of Alger's fiction would show a young man The World Before Him, would encourage him to Do and Dare, would show him that Shifting for Himself would make him Bound to Rise. (My copy of The Young Salesman is inscribed thus by a mother to her son in 1907, "This is a verry good book. One of the best Alger ever written about a prosperous Boy. Read it carful.") Indeed, successful men of all sorts have testified to the positive influence Alger novels had upon their careers, but for every boy who went on to successes beyond even Algerian dreams, thousands lived out their times as mediocrities, comfortable bourgeois with modest goals and stunted imaginations.

If Alger novels imparted lessons in which morality and economics inextricably entwined, they also provided sociological and psychological models of behavior. From school texts boys learned how the founding fathers revealed the American truth, but from



**Get to the
convention in
JACKSONVILLE
any way you can**

**But
get
there**

the Alger novels they read on their own they learned, or thought they learned, what contemporary life in America was really like. Before they ever fled from the village, they discovered an imagined and imaginable version of the city in Alger's pages, and as they read about life in Alger's villages and boarding schools, they succumbed to a romanticized, almost mythically imagined view of their own hometowns. Alger's urban scenes are all the more compelling for his portrayal of the whole range of society in a city. He was in many ways 30 years ahead of his time in presenting life among the urban poor, and it is not until the advent of the so-called naturalists that we hear the speech and view the lives of bootblacks, newsboys, shop clerks, drunkards and gamblers in anything like the detail Alger gives us. If his views of the upper classes are hopelessly false and maudlin compared to the portrayal of a far more talented observer like Howells, he at least gives a comprehensive picture of a whole urban society, and in doing so, he encourages his readers to see the city as a possible field for their own endeavours. Whether he writes about the city or the country, Alger fits the variety of American life into a simple pattern, enabling readers to see the nation not as a bewildering range of diverse regions and localities but as a transcontinental repetition of the same temptations and opportunities.

While Alger's favorite settings are either New York City or an archetypal New England village, his characters find themselves in locations across the country which turn out to be strikingly similar to each other. The facts of life in New York hold true for Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee or San Francisco; the same business opportunities exist, the same cast of providentially appearing friends and spiteful enemies act out their business in the same tenements, hotels and mansions, only the street names and a few basic geographical details change. Bob Burton grows up in an Iowa village that could easily be a New England hamlet, except that he falls heir to a farm capable of

producing 1,400 bushels of wheat and that the local meanest man in town is not addressed as Spuire. When Julius the Street Boy is transported to a Wisconsin village, he encounters the same social situation and the same landscape he might have discovered in New Hampshire or in upstate New York. Just as Alger levels all distinctions of place into uniform versions of city or country, so he manipulates time to maintain an eternal present for his youthful readers. When Tom Nelson, the Young Adventurer, first sees the Kansas prairies on his way to the California gold fields, the narrator demythifies the landscape by observing, "At that early day the settlement of this now prosperous State had scarcely begun. Its rich soil was as yet unwearyed by the plow and the spade." There will be no gropings after the sublime here; the prairies are fixed within the bounds of opportunity and industry which define Alger's America.

Only in the California gold fields or in Australia do real alternatives exist, and these are effectively removed from the reader by time in the first case and space in the other. In The Young Miner Tom Nelson almost intuitively realizes the historical transiency of the gold rush; he sells out his claim for a handsome profit, lifts the mortgage on the family farm in New Hampshire and reads for the law in San Francisco. Only as the West becomes like the East can an Alger hero settle into the "lucrative practice" fit for a mature man. Australia of course can never become sufficiently East for an Alger character; Harry Vane, the hero of Facing the World and In a New World, returns to New York with the \$5,000 he earned in Australia, invests the money and takes a position with a shipping merchant. The marvellous landscapes and societies of the gold fields offer no real options to middle class life in a progressive American city, for they are merely geographical images of the providential incidents young men encounter in more conventionally set Algiers. They are not end but initiation, just as saving wealthy men's

daughters from runaway horses or betraying pickpockets to rich widows only start heroes on their way to success and do not reveal a pattern of experience that can be repeated.

The adventures which set a boy hero into his career do foster an early maturity of judgment, but they provide only a bare minimum of imaginative stimulation. Leaving the village or looking for employment more remunerative than bootblacking opens new, enlarged prospects for useful employment and eventual financial security, but it offers precious little in the way of aesthetic growth. Scott Walton, hero of The Young Salesman, does go to a concert of Adelina Patti's, but the incident is used only to show up the absolute cultural poverty of Loammi Little, Scott's mean-spirited cousin, who aches to be seen with the best society. Chester Rand discovers a talent for drawing but aspires only to being an illustrator for Puck. When he meets kindly Professor Hazlitt, an ethnologist who has inherited wealth and retired to a life of independent scholarship, he finds work illustrating the Professor's magnum opus. But the Professor offers him no encouragement to consider a career in ethnology; Hazlitt is merely the stereotyped providential employer who is more commonly the owner of a traveling medicine show or a magician. Just as a recital by Patti has more social prestige than a circus sideshow but about the same value as entertainment, so scholarship for its own sake and medicine shows are cultural and economic dead-ends which Alger heroes wisely desert for more promising opportunities.

Alger's young men always pass up temporarily rewarding situations, gold mines, magic acts, etc., in favor of more solid careers offering less excitement and perhaps less potential for vast wealth but far more security and, more important, respect from society. Model characters end up reading for the law or taking a promising position in a mercantile establishment. Alger heroes opt for the middle way, and Alger is as interested in portraying the dangers of

wealth as he is in portraying the threats of poverty. There are always two systems of villainy in an Alger novel, and the hero has as often need to defend himself from upper-class corruption as from blue collar crime.

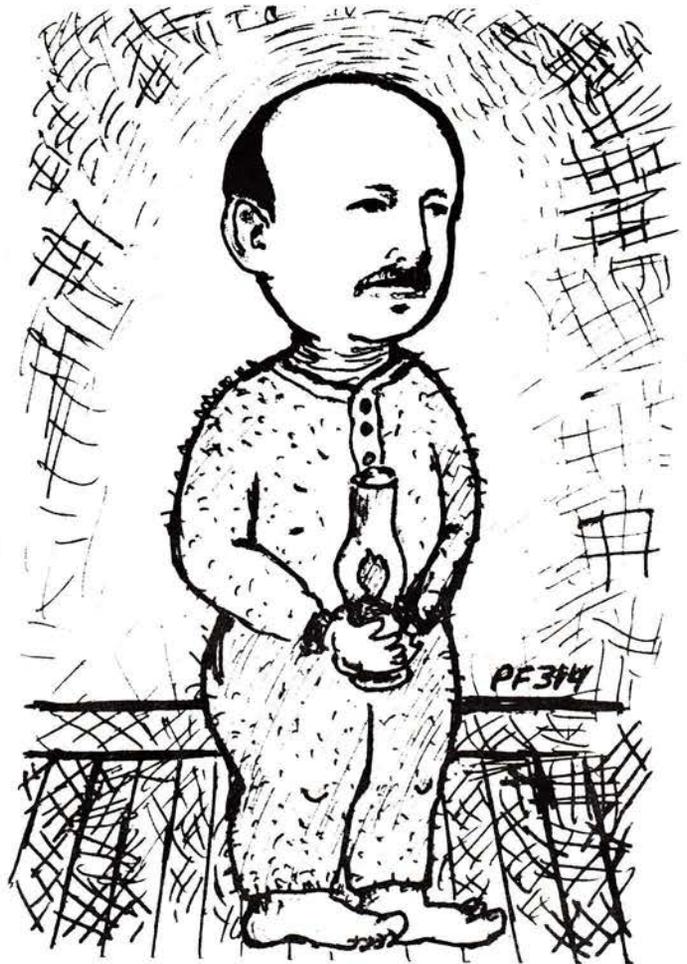
As we might expect from a child of New England, Alger is concerned to show us the moral core of society hemmed in at all sides by reprobates. Although his lower class villains are frequently Calvinist demons, innately depraved types who seem to joy in choosing the most wicked alternative in any situation, he occasionally shows his reader the roots of this kind of behavior in poverty and friendlessness. Peg Hardwich, an associate of kidnappers in Jack's Ward, puts it most eloquently: "Madam, you are rich. You have always had whatever wealth could procure. How can such as you understand the temptations of the poor? When want and hunger stare us in the face we have not the strength that you have in your luxurious homes." The vulgarity, crudeness, or "showy" dress (a favorite Algerian pejorative) of the con men and thieves who often physically threaten our heroes results as much from economic deprivation as it does from a breakdown of family morality. If Christian nurture is essential in enabling an Alger hero to escape from poverty, Alger is occasionally realistic in assessing the morally and imaginative destructive powers of that poverty.

But if poverty opens men to temptation, wealth can be equally seductive in different ways; for every streetwise pickpocket there is an upper-class defrauder of widows and orphans, and the showy dress of the con man is mirrored by that of the stock jobber. Along the way Alger heroes triumph over a succession of lower class criminals, but in the end they frequently win out by unmasking a wealthy uncle who had cheated them out of their inheritance or by proving the local deacon was really in debt to their deceased father despite representations to the contrary. Wealth corrupts even more when it is inherited; a standard fixture of

the typical novel is the wealthy villain's incurably snobbish son who is beginning a career of adolescent dissipation which eventually leads to moral and financial ruin in the final paragraph. Heroes usually meet a patron uncorrupted by his wealth, but Alger frequently makes the point that said patron works for a living and often qualifies the extent of his wealth. The hero's friend in Mark Manning's Mission, for instance, is only "moderately rich" with \$40,000; when he proposes to will one-third of that sum to his lawyer, the lawyer, a model of pecuniary temperance, rejects it, "Because I am moderately rich already and need nothing more. . . I might turn out to be as wicked and unprincipled as most lawyers are said to be." Speaking of his hopes for California, the Young Adventurer's friend says, "I have never had had such large expectations. If I make three or four thousand dollars in twelve months it will satisfy me." When the hero finds security and success in the final pages, we are frequently told that he remains unspoiled by prosperity, but his purity of heart is always a function of refusing to will too much.

The Alger hero unerringly moves toward the more successful ranks of the middle class by virtue of his superior gifts of adaptability in any unexpected situation. Like Emerson's self-reliant Yankee lad who "teams it, farms it, peddles, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth," an Alger hero on the make is a veritable one-man chamber of commerce who can turn his hand to any honest job with equal facility. The hero of Walter Sherwood's Probation is kept out of school for a year by his guardian who fears he is becoming dissipated. Told his trust fund is bankrupt, Walter becomes successively and successfully an insurance salesman, a violinist in a medicine show and a school teacher. Along the way he also captures a bandit, supposedly a rider with the James boys, and, before evidence arrives clearing him from a false accusation, convinces a lunch mob of his

COULDN'T FIND ANY
NEW ALGERS TO READ
LAST WINTER?



THEN COME TO
JACKSONVILLE
THIS SPRING!

honesty through sheer rhetoric and character. At the end of his probationary year Waltar returns to school with a modest bankroll and a renewed sense of purpose; even when he discovers his trust fund is not bankrupt after all, he maintains his intention to become a lawyer and fill a useful place in society. Saved from opulent idleness, Waltar Sherwood is one more recruit for the middle class. His

intelligence, honesty and industry enable him to adapt to any situation, and he submits himself to the values of that white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant center of American society which Horatio Alger worked so hard to encourage. But where Emerson can convince us that his Yankee boy is a model of Self-Reliance working out his true self through his experience, we come to suspect that the chameleon-like flexibility of Alger's heroes conceals a void at the heart.

If the apparent winner at the end of an Alger novel is the boy hero, the real winner is middle class virtue seen as the essence of patriotism and morality. Alger's heroes triumph not only over poverty (or, in some cases, over wealth) but over all ethnic and cultural impediments to easy entry into the American bourgeoisie. Almost all Alger heroes have impeccably Anglo-Saxon names, often incredibly alliterative ones at that, but a few books describe the Americanization of immigrant boys who prove to be as apt for middle-class success as native born heroes. Andy Burke, the hero of Only an Irish Boy, enters the story as the out-of-work son of a widowed mother and ends as the proprietor of the village's general store. The owner of a quick and irreverent wit, Andy parlays a devotion to his mother, a readiness to perform any honest labor and an eagerness to receive a formal education into a village success. In the book's last sentence Alger points the moral to his celebration of American receptiveness for all seekers of the middle-class dream: "He is not the first, nor will he be the last, to achieve prosperity and the respect of the community, though beginning life as 'only an Irish boy.'"

Not all Alger's ethnics have Andy Burke's advantages, however. Phil the Fiddler begins as an Italian street musician, exploited by a Fagin-like padrone, separated from his parents who are still in the old country and possessed of little English. All his efforts are directed towards escaping from this old world corruption which has been translated into New York

streets, and he is hardly able to make his way in America until saved from a blizzard and adopted by a small-town doctor. Once he gets away from the padrone, his European musical talents are of little practical use in the new land, but as he learns English and is absorbed into an American family the Italian grasshopper becomes an American ant. Although his success is highly providential, his kindness to fellow victims of the padrone and his determination to have his freedom make him as deserving as Andy Burke.

Intelligence and will power can overcome language and cultural barriers, but color is an almost insuperable bar to the kind of middle-class success Alger heroes find. Blacks and Chinese, portrayed in the broadest ethnic stereotypes (as are all of Alger's non-Anglo-Saxon characters, for that matter), are never accepted in the same way as Phil the Fiddler or Andy Burke. Still, it is the hero's duty to encourage them to persevere in the ways of American bourgeois virtue. Luke Walton chides a Chicago street boy for heaving a brick through a Chinese laundryman's window: "A well-behaved heathen is better than a Christian such as you are." In Frank's Campaign; Or, What Boys Can Do on the Farm for the Camp, Frank Frost patiently teaches Pompey, the son of an escaped slave, to read and write and schools him in the behavior expected of an American citizen. But Pompey's social and economic possibilities are more seriously constricted than those of the typical Alger hero. "As soon as Pomp is old enough, Frank will employ him on the farm."

Similar to the way in which Frank Frost assumes the white man's burden, Horatio Alger becomes an evangelist for bourgeois virtue, the flame which keeps the melting pot working. He extolls all the institutions of society which help a man occupy a position at the center of his community. When Frank's father speaks out at a community meeting called to raise troops for the Civil War, Alger credits his effectiveness to wise use of the popular press: "The

reader may have been surprised at the ease with which Mr. Frost expressed himself in his speech at the war-meeting. No other explanation is required than that he was in the habit of reading, every day, well selected newspapers." Schools are also useful in enabling heroes to conform to the great middle of American society insofar as they help the escape from lower-class poverty and teach the follies of aristocratic snobbery.

Schools are less important to Alger for their curricula than they are as socializing institutions; they are a crucial democratizing force in American society. We often first meet his heroes in a schoolyard, a beleaguered Eden from which they are soon to fall through no fault of their own. Although the hero usually stands first in his class, more as a result of virtuous study habits than of sheer brilliance, the most important part of his character is his democratic instinct. We typically find the hero in the first paragraph engaged in conversation with a poor classmate whose father is "only" a shoemaker or small farmer, and we learn that the hero's snobbish rival disdains to associate with such students. The hero's fellow students respect him because of his openness and his refusal to use his achievements as a basis for any self-assumed authority over them. The Alger hero is a friend of the common man and an enemy to social, moral and economic tyrants who, like criminals, set themselves outside the body of working people and their families.

The school often turns out to be an almost ideal model of what adult society ought to be; it clarifies the deceptions and hypocrisies of adult life by simplifying and enlarging them. The would-be aristocrat's attempt to intrude the artificial class distinctions of the outside world reveals the viciousness of these distinctions as he parades his wealth, acts out of petty jealousy and collects a small circle of toadies. Also, like Alger's portrayal of adult life, school is apolitical; Alger understands democracy not as a political

phenomenon, created by the citizen's participation in the law making process, but as a sociological fact, the attitudes concerning equality and the pursuit of happiness held by the great majority of virtuous Americans. Finally, school is a fit preparation for the world of commerce, for in both realms of life the only relevant standards are those of accomplishment and of morality.

Business, like school, is (or ought to be) democratic, and a successful businessman is one who can recognize potential managerial talent in any social milieu. Class distinctions are meaningless in business, where the only criteria are honesty and efficiency. But if a businessman's democratic spirit makes him at once an economic success and a model American citizen, his electing eligible young men to the benefits of his company and his companionship makes him also a patriarchal figure of authority. The hero is his equal as an American, yet at the same time his subordinate within the frame of the business, and it is the commercial context, along with that of the family, which becomes most important for Alger. To live as a democratic American is for Alger a spiritual attainment, a function of personality, whereas to be a dutiful son and honest employee is a function of manners, realizable not in attitudes but only in actions. The life of an Alger hero is a life of action—that is a great part of his attraction for youthful readers—and it is singularly devoid of spirituality or innerness. The hero, then, is only nominally a democrat; more important are his dutifulness and success in carrying out errands imposed by others. His democracy is expressed as sympathy for all fellow Americans and not as the carrying out of independent, self-reliant actions; he is other-directed, not inner-directed.

The benevolent businessman is a patron who avoids patronizing, but he is also a patron who will not give up his position this side of the grave, and considering the impact he has on the hero's life, perhaps not even then. Alger

heroes never become president of the firm, only vice-president and possible successor. Consistent with Alger's feelings about immoderate wealth, his heroes are never magnates or robber barons; to be a manager is more temperate than to be an entrepreneur on a large scale. Also, Alger heroes are commonly fatherless, and the pattern of their adventures is a search for an adequate substitute. The presence of the benevolent businessman not only fends off excess wealth, it also removes the need to grow up emotionally and spiritually. As long as the kindly father patron is there, the hero need never examine the contradictions inherent in a democratic economy nor realize the confusion of love and benevolence permeating Alger's books.

Despite claims to the contrary, then, Alger's novels are not instruction manuals for would-be captains of industry but recruiting pamphlets for the ranks of middle management. Alger heroes give up their individuality—if they ever had any in the first place—to join the ranks of junior executives. They are untouched by art, by literature, by music beyond the mere level of popular amusement. They are not strivers after the unknown, after novelty, after the infinite, for their vision of the world is limited. They are never fathers, only sons; years before Frederick Jackson Turner announced the closing of the frontier, they recognized it and turned to the business of settling and developing. Their manifest destiny is not potentially unlimited expansion of the American imagination but the creation of an American society in which all social and cultural distinctions will be obviated. In them the spirit of mediation, of compromise, of the golden rule, triumphs, and rather than becoming the heirs of Emerson, they are the ancestors of Babbitt.

NOTES

1. Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (Boston, 1918), p. 345.

2. Since there are so many various editions of the Alger books, citations

of any particular edition are fairly useless to an interested reader, but I have indicated in the text the title of any work I quote from. Useful checklists and bibliographies are included in Morton S. Enslin, "A Checklist of Horatio Alger, Jr.," Antiquarian Bookman, XXIV (July 6, 13, 1959); Frank Gruber, Horatio Alger, Jr.: A Biography and Bibliography (West Los Angeles, 1961); John Tebbel, Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger, Jr. and the American Dream (New York, 1963); Ralph D. Gardner, Horatio Alger; Or, The American Hero Era (Mendota, Illinois, 1964).

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The following short article is from AD-LIBS-AD-LIBS (June-July, 1977 issue), published by Bentley, Barnes and Lynn, Inc., 303 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611. This four page newsletter regularly contains short pieces that are "of particular interest to management and marketing personnel."

Thanks go to Gil Westgard for sending me this.

Flaky Newsboy Was Tops In Philly

At 13, W. C. Fields became a newsboy. The following account from "W. C. Fields: His Follies and Fortunes" tells how he handled it:

"Because of the running show he put on, he pushed sales higher than those of anyone in the district. He sold papers with an elan which was perhaps never equalled in the news-hawking profession since then. He was probably one of the first newsies to call out details of the day's events.

"This practice became commonplace in later years, though the majority of its exponents stuck pretty close to the headlines. Fields handled things differently. He was beginning to develop a fascination for odd names, and he searched the columns for catchy examples.

"As a result, his reports on the news (from a journalist's standpoint) showed poor editorial judgment. 'Bronislaw Gimp acquires license for three-legged sheepdog!' he'd cry, and add, 'Details on page 26!' However, many citizens of Philadelphia bought his papers out of simple curiosity."

HAS CONVENTION NEWS

Keep those donations for the annual auction coming!! Following is a list of all the items that have been received as of February 1, 1978 (or have been promised by the donor):

1. Bottle with Alger picture in it (Gil Westgard)
2. Alger souvenir plate from 1976 HAS Convention (Gil Westgard)
3. Framed picture of nineteenth century sailing boat (Harry Lane)
4. Copies of Top-Notch Magazine and Tip Top Semi-Monthly. These are beautiful dime novel-type magazines and would look great on any book collector's shelf. (Harry Lane)
5. Hand carved Horatio Alger dulcimer (Bob Sawyer)

REMEMBER: The money that each item brings in at auction is tax deductible. Auctioneer Ralph D. Gardner is warming up his vocal cords now, hoping that we'll beat the \$1400 that we raised last year. All proceeds go to help HAS stay in the black. Please help make this a great auction. Even if you can't come to the "Jacksonville Jamboree," you needn't feel left out. Just send Jack Bales an item (mail bids are acceptable on donations also). His address is 1214 W. College Ave., Jacksonville, Illinois 62650.

See January-February, 1978 Newsboy for convention information. As details become finalized, I'll publish all pertinent data in Newsboy.

* * *

PETER PLUNKETT'S ADVENTURE

by Horatio Alger, Jr.

(Editor's note: The following Alger short story is from the collection of Dick Seddon. It originally appeared in Alger's first book, Bertha's Christmas Vision (1856).

Some years since, there lived in

Portland a worthy shoemaker named Peter Plunkett. Unpoetical as his name may appear, Peter possessed a vivid imagination, which, had it been properly cultivated, might have made him, perchance, a poet or a novelist. As it was, he chiefly employed it in building air-castles of more than royal magnificence, wherein dwelt fairies and genii. If there was any book that approached the Bible, in Peter's estimation, it was the Arabian Nights' Entertainment. He had a devout belief in all the marvellous stories which it contains, and often sighed in secret that it had not been his fortune to live in the days of that potent monarch,—the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid.

Peter Plunkett's peculiarity was well known. Indeed, his mind was most of the time far back in the golden age of fairies, so that he would sometimes be guilty of amusing mistakes. On one occasion, he addressed his housekeeper as "Most charming princess!" whereupon the good woman was led to entertain serious doubts as to his sanity, which, indeed, were not wholly unreasonable, since, though an excellent cook, she certainly did not look much like a princess.

Not far from Peter's shop lived Squire Eveleth, who, being mirthfully inclined, resolved to take advantage of the worthy shoemaker's fancies, and play upon him a practical joke.

Happening into Peter's shop, he led the conversation to the subject of genii. "I have sometimes thought," said he, gravely, "that the fairies and genii have not yet abandoned the earth, but still continue, invisibly to us, to exercise an influence over our destinies."

"So have I," said Peter, eagerly. "Many a time I have fancied, as I sat here at work, that I could hear the rushing of their wings as they circled about me; and I have sometimes invoked them to appear in visible form; but they never have."

"Perhaps they will some time," said

the squire, encouragingly. "I wish you would come and take tea with me tomorrow," he continued, after a pause. "I should like to confer with you about these things."

Consent was readily accorded; and the next afternoon found Peter Plunkett a guest of the squire. The latter, unperceived, mingled a potion with Peter's tea; and the result was that in half an hour he was in a sound sleep. In this condition, the squire had him conveyed in a carriage to the depot; and, in a few minutes, they were travelling towards Boston. They reached the city in the evening; and Peter, still sleeping, was conveyed to the Revere House, carried to a bed-chamber, and deposited in bed. Squire Eveleth then retired, and, after leaving a note on the table, left the house; and, after passing the night at another hotel, returned, in the morning train to Portland.

The sun was already high in the heavens when Peter Plunkett awoke. He gazed, bewildered, at the unwonted appearance of the room, and, jumping out of bed, walked mechanically to the window.

"Surely this can't be Portland," he said to himself, as the towers and steeples of Boston met his view. "Where am I? What can have happened to me?"

Turning from the window, his eye rested upon a letter lying upon the table, addressed to himself.

He opened it hastily, and read as follows:—

"Mortal! be thankful; for you, in return for your unquestioning faith, has been vouchsafed a favor which distinguishes you above your fellow-men. I who write to you am Aldabaran, the potent genie of the air. Last night, I snatched you from your couch, in the dead of night, and bore you hither. You are now at the Revere House, in Boston. In your pocket you will find gold, which I have placed there. It will defray all your expenses, and bear

you back to Portland. But beware lest you divulge to any one the chance that has befallen you; for, should you be so indiscreet, I swear to you by Solomon's seal, which glows with unapproachable splendor, that you will instantly be transformed into a gigantic jackass, and be doomed in that shape to walk the earth for ever as the penalty of your folly.

"Farewell, and beware!"

"Aldabaran."

As Peter Plunkett read this terrible missive, his hair stood on end with affright; yet, in the midst of his terror, he was filled with joy at the nature of the favor which had been granted him.

That night, he returned to Portland. Many curious inquiries were made of him as to the object of his journey; for this was the first time he had left Portland for many years. To all these inquiries he preserved an impenetrable silence; merely shaking his head mysteriously, lest he should incur the dreadful doom denounced against him. Henceforth he deemed himself as one singled out from the great mass of mankind. Upon his fellow-mortals he looked with a pitying eye, as beings with whom the invisible spirits of the air had never deigned to hold communication. Happy in his innocent delusion, he would not exchange places with the most powerful monarch. Locked up in his trunk are the gold coins which he found in his pocket in accordance with the mysterious letter. He will never spend them; for he regards them as a fairy gift; and fancies, that, while he holds them in his possession, Fortune will ever smile upon him.

* * *

Gil Westgard called and told me that a package of books which he had sent Roger Scime had been returned, marked "addressee unknown." If anyone in HAS knows the correct address of Roger, please let Gil know. His next issue of Newsboy will also undoubtedly be returned.



The Bowery, in Alger's day, from an old post card that was given me by HAS President Jerry Friedland. .

RANDOM REPORTS FROM ALGERLAND
by Jack Bales

Ralph Gardner recently sent me a copy of the beautiful magazine Collector Editions Quarterly. Ralph has a regular column in the magazine called "Ralph Gardner's Celebrity Collector," and the person about whom Ralph writes in the January, 1978 issue is Geoffrey Moss, an editorial page illustrator who collects "lithographed boxed games, tobacco tins and turn of the century Americana." Following are a few paragraphs from the article:

"Most spectacular [game] is their Lightning Express, twelve lithographed blocks extending six feet when placed end-to-end. There are railroad cars on one side, a circus menagerie on the other, with wild animals at top, bottom and ends. This is one of their thirty sets made by McLoughlin Brothers, of New York, from about 1880 until 1895.

"Other McLoughlins include:

"The Errand Boy Game, based upon an 1889 story by Horatio Alger. Players follow the hero's struggle upward from a

penniless street boy to 'an honorable, respected banker and good citizen.'"

Accompanying the article are pictures of some of Moss's possessions. One shows many of his games, and The Errand Boy Game is seen quite clearly. Now that would be something for the Alger collector to have!!

Dave Kanarr sent me the Sunday cartoon strip from "Little Orphan Annie" (dated November 18, 1977). Annie says to a friend: "Mr. Puddle came to this country as a poor immigrant? But now he's worth millions! How'd he do it?" The friend replies: "Work! He got a job at a dollar or two a day in a steel mill. . . . Course he had more'n just muscles! 'Specially above his neck. . . . So now he owns a steel mill."

Annie says: "He reminds me a lot of another guy I know. . . . In fact, Mr. Puddle 'minds me o' heroes in old-time stories by guys like Horatio Alger." Mr. Puddle comes in and joins the conversation: "Thanks, Annie! That's the nicest thing you could say about me. . . . In those days the ragged hero got a job . . . worked hard . . ."

Mr. Puddle continues: "I never heard of a lazy, whining failure ever making the grade in an Alger novel . . . in fact, I never heard of a chap like that

really making any lasting success today. I still believe that hard work, brains, honesty . . . are the things that count."



The above cartoon was drawn especially for Newsboy by HAS member Louis Bodnar, Jr., PF-490, 1502 Laurel Ave., Chesapeake, Virginia 23325.