



# THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

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1832 – 1899

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

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## Horatio Alger's *Tattered Tom: A Tale of Two Genders*

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*Coming up short:*  
Edward Stratemeyer's  
venture with Hearst's  
International Library

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Walter S. Rogers' frontispiece for the Hearst's International Library Company's 1916 first edition of *The Rushton Boys in the Saddle*.

## President's column

I start this article for the second time this month with a warning: Back up your files regularly and ensure your backups are successful and your files are retrievable. My laptop just crashed and will not reboot. Since the hard drive has full disk encryption for security purposes the data is not retrievable from the drive. Not to worry, I have an automated backup running every night. However, I was not paying attention to the backup logs and found that they had not been successful since June 2011. Unless, I can perform a miracle, I have just lost 10 weeks of e-mails, work, and some personal files.

This included the current President's column that I am now rewriting. Our reliance on technology has become so pervasive that the loss of 10 weeks of data seems devastating. However, the loss of five years' worth of pictures of my children would be even worse. I do have backups, but should I make backups of the backups? I have shied away from personal online backups of data as I lean toward a more paranoid view of Big Brother, but maybe Carbonite ([www.carbonite.com](http://www.carbonite.com)) is the way to go.

The timing of this data catastrophe could have been much better, since Wendy and I leave for Las Vegas in two days for the Semi-Final and hopefully Final round in the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking on Aug. 18-20. I will have a great time and regardless of the outcome will lose this self-inflicted boat anchor of responsibility I have been lugging around since winning the District contest. I will write about my experiences in the next President's Column.

Lynne Thomas, Curator of Rare Books & Special Collections (including the Horatio Alger Repository) at NIU, has been working hard to make the H.A.S. 2012 Convention a success. The 2012 Convention will be held at Northern Illinois University (NIU) May 3-6, 2012. Lodging will be at the Holmes Student Center on the NIU campus with a projected rate of \$65 per night. The Holmes Student Center has undergone renovations since our 2004 convention and its location on the NIU campus near the NIU Library makes it the logical choice for hosting convention activities. I am already looking forward to seeing all of you next May.

Ever the collector, I recently acquired three original pen-and-ink drawings by H. O. Rawson. These drawings were of William T. Adams, Charles Fosdick and Edward S. Ellis. H. O. Rawson was a noted Western artist, although there seems to be little information available regarding

(Continued on Page 9)

## HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

*To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive & Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Horatio Alger, Jr., his works and influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series, pulps and dime novels.*

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# Horatio Alger's *Tattered Tom*: A Tale of Two Genders

By Carol J. Singley, Ph. D.

Horatio Alger, Jr., the renowned author of tales about poor and orphaned children, set a new standard for juvenile adventure and aspiration with the 1867 serial publication of his novel *Ragged Dick; or, Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks*. In response to the novel's popularity, Alger wrote a number of sequels, including *Tattered Tom; or, The Story of a Street Arab* in 1871, the initial volume in a series following the one that included *Ragged Dick*.<sup>1</sup> Alger's "rags to riches" plots are well known and formulaic: they chart the course of poor children, often orphaned and usually male, who not only survive but also thrive through ingenuity, honest efforts, and the well-timed intervention of well-wishers. Many of Alger's stories also follow the conventions found in the adoption narrative, a fictional form predominant in the mid-nineteenth century and made popular by female domestic novelists such as Susan Warner, Susanna Maria Cummins, and Louisa May Alcott.<sup>2</sup> So many writers published fiction then about orphaned children finding homes with non-biological kin that the period may be termed "the golden age of adoption."

These adoption stories were, in accordance with an ideology of separate spheres for men and women that was popular at the time, highly gendered — with boys learning to make their way in the world through the help of guides or mentors, and girls embracing the comfort and safety of home, made possible either by permanent adoption or by reunification with their birth family.<sup>3</sup> Alger is a master of the boy's tale, but he demonstrates his facility with both male and female narrative conventions in *Tattered Tom*, published three years after his groundbreaking *Ragged Dick*.

Like many Alger tales, *Tattered Tom* tells the story of a "street Arab," as such homeless children were called. But the "surprise" (vii) of the novel is that Tom is a female, although not, the narrator hastens to assure readers, "of the conventional kind" (viii). The resourceful Tom — eventually revealed to be Jane, nicknamed Jenny — displays different "tastes and manners from the young ladies of twelve usually to be met in society" (viii), and these departures from the norm constitute both her superiority and her charm. Alger, highly aware of boys' and girls' roles in his time, revels in

*This article appeared in The Worcester Review, Vol. XXX, Nos. 1 & 2 (2009), one of seven scholarly articles in that issue collectively titled "The Horatio Alger Story; or, A Marlboro Man." Reprinted by permission of the author.*



**The decorative title page for Alger's *Tattered Tom*. The scene shows Tom (Jenny) reunited with her own mother, Mrs. Lindsay, who had been searching for her daughter since she was stolen away years ago.**

gender bending, with Tom and Jane frequently exchanging identities as well as clothing, behaviors, and speech patterns. The result is a novel that challenges gender expectations while also conforming to them.

Gender play is immediately apparent. The reader meets Tom in a scene that features a fastidiously dressed pedestrian in distress over how he might cross the intersection at Broadway and Chambers Streets without soiling his freshly polished boots. This feminized "dandy" (10) is quickly outsmarted by Tom, a girl disguised for all intents and purposes as a boy. Ambiguously dressed, Tom wears a boy's cap over short hair and a boy's jacket over a girl's dress, with the result that "it was not quite easy to determine whether it was a boy or girl" (10). He

(Continued on Page 5)

## Editor's notebook

When I wrote the article “John W. Lovell’s Rugby Edition: An Introduction,” for the July-August 2008 *Newsboy*, I noted the “work in progress” nature of this story, and that “... hopefully, this complex puzzle may someday edge toward a conclusion.”

The Rugby Edition was a publisher’s series produced by John W. Lovell during a turbulent period in the history of New York-based book publishers, dating back to Frank Munsey’s *Golden Argosy*, the soft-cover *Munsey’s Popular Series for Boys and Girls*, followed by the *Leather-Clad Tales of Adventure and Romance*, the latter started on Dec. 7, 1889 by Frank F. Lovell and soon thereafter taken over by the John W. Lovell Company.

John Wurtele Lovell (1851-1932), whose book-publishing career had a fizzled start in 1881 at 14-16 Astor Place, quickly reorganized the following year as The John W. Lovell Company at 150 Worth Street.

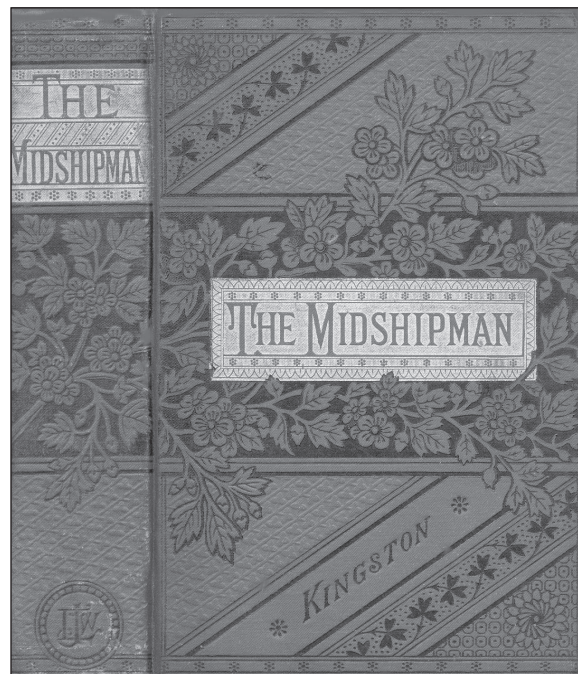
Frank H. Lovell’s involvement in book publishing included joining his brother in creating the Frank F. Lovell Publishing Company in 1888, that firm issuing early titles in the *Leather-Clad Tales* in late 1889 (they soon became John W. Lovell imprints) and also producing two 3-volume hard-cover series in the same period titled *Wild Adventure Series*, the first having three books authored by Edward S. Ellis under his “Lieut. R. H. Jayne” pseudonym and the second containing three books by Frank H. Converse.

In mid-1890, the Lovells and several colleagues created the United States Book Company, an attempt to monopolize the cheap-book publishing industry. This so-called “book trust” collapsed in 1893.

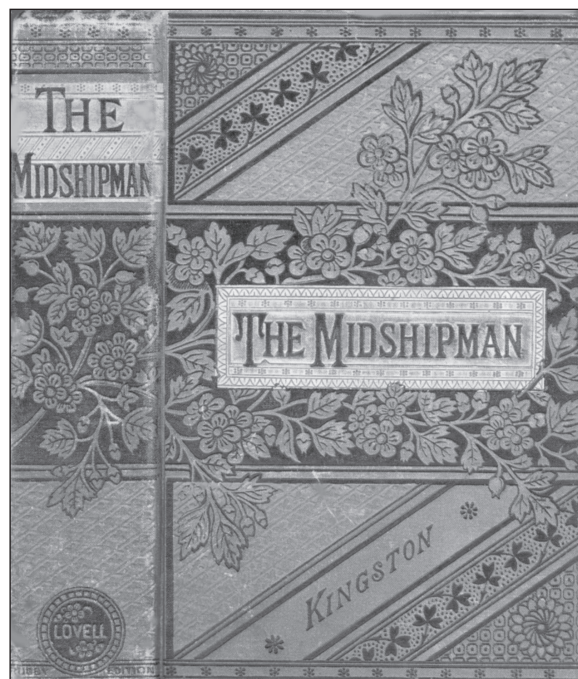
This just skims the surface. For a more detailed description, you are highly encouraged to read Robert E. Kasper’s article, “The Frank A. Munsey-John W. Lovell Connection and their Alger Paperbacks,” in the July-August 2002 *Newsboy*.

My article in the July-August 2008 issue delved more specifically into John W. Lovell’s *Rugby Edition of Books for Boys and Girls*, a hard-cover series encompassing titles by many of the best-known authors of the day. Included are Horatio Alger’s first hard-cover editions of three titles: *The Young Acrobat*, *Number 91* and *Tom Tracy*. Also included are two books by Harry Castlemon (Charles Fosdick): *Gilbert the Trapper* and *Luke Bennett’s*

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The Frank F. Lovell “transitional” format for William H. G. Kingston’s *The Midshipman* has the usual Rugby Edition cover design except for the use of the interlocking “JWL” logo at the base of the spine, in black letters.



John W. Lovell’s Rugby Edition of the same title has the blindstamped “Lovell” circular logo with minuscule RUGBY EDITION printed underneath.

# Horatio Alger's *Tattered Tom: A Tale of Two Genders*

(Continued from Page 3)

is engaged in an ambiguously gendered task of sweeping, a feminine art, but on a public street, a masculine domain. When Tom asks for a penny and Mr. Pelham refuses, Tom sweeps dirt onto the dandy's boots, ostensibly by accident; the vexed man is compelled to pay a bootblack waiting on the opposite

corner to restore the shine to his shoes. The reader soon learns that Tom and the bootblack are in league with one another; for Tom's part in the escapade, he receives a cut of twenty percent. His earnings reflect cooperative feminine behavior, shown by his reliance on the bootblack, as well as a more masculine, individualistic practice of capitalism that results in a day's profit. Tom's ability

to hold these two realms in productive tension is borne out by the commentary of an unidentified passing philanthropist who calls him, paradoxically, "a practical philosopher" (17), as well as by Alger's habit of referring to Tom with the interchangeable pronouns "he" and "she."

*Tattered Tom* reflects Alger's awareness of current narrative conventions. His predictable, formulaic plots help, as Carol Nackenoff writes, to "simplify a complex world" and reassert traditional values "in a rapidly changing environment" (54). They also, as Jane Tompkins notes, may be viewed as mediating differences and solving problems: "heuristic and didactic rather than mimetic [...] they provide a basis for remaking the social and political order" (xvii). Adoption plots of the nineteenth century re-integrate homeless children into the fabric of family and society, and thereby affirm both the elasticity and the integrity of these basic units of social organization. Scripting different roles for boys and girls, they also reinforce

discrete gender expectations. These stereotypical representations provide a shorthand for normative behavior and help readers to find their way through a vicissitude of social possibilities.

In the male adoption plot popular in the mid nineteenth century, the protagonist is assisted by one or more patrons — usually also male — who provide him with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to rise in the world. In Alger's tales, the ragged street orphan eventually rises to join the ranks of gentleman, capitalist, and philanthropist. Early in *Tattered Tom*, two characters foster Tom's growth and teach both the importance of making money and the virtue of giving to charity. An unnamed gentleman gives him ten cents. John Goodwin, a boy of "comfortable" means (42) who works in a nearby store, then gives him twenty-five

cents that he uses as "capital" to invest in "a supply of evening papers" (51), which he sells after defeating a rival for rights to the street corner. Tom is on his way to achieving Alger's male version of the American dream. Another unnamed gentleman breaks up the fight over selling rights on the corner, but no one on the street questions Tom's right to keep the money

he has earned or to engage in transactions that will assist him in accumulating greater capital. Wealth through honest labor and wise investment will make Tom's financial independence possible.

In the female adoption plot, in contrast, a girl must find a loving caregiver, often female, who will not only provide shelter but also help her to acquire manners and domestic skills that will, in turn, give her a measure of control over her environment. Tom's battle for control over resources on the domestic front is launched first "in one of the most wretched tenement houses" (19), where he lives with his violent Granny Walsh, and then with Meg Morley, the thieving owner of a rooming house he visits when he runs away from Granny. These domestic settings are abominable, and both women represent false mothers whose cruelties the orphan must survive in order to finally find a loving family and home. The alcoholic Walsh is "a vicious old woman with a pretty

(Continued on Page 6)



"GI' ME TWO."

*Tattered Tom; or The Story of a Street Arab*, Frontispiece

# Horatio Alger's *Tattered Tom: A Tale of Two Genders*

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vigorous arm" (19). Tom intuitively knows that she bears no relation to him, despite her familial designation. An abductor, not a caregiver, she sees Tom as "prey" (49) and "knew her power and meant to keep it" (38-39). Mrs. Morley is similarly reprehensible. When Tom arrives at her boarding house with

half of the fifty cents he earned that day, she lies in wait until he falls asleep and then robs him. Peniless, Tom once more finds himself on the streets, where he is better off. In the female adoption narrative, the heroine receives nurture and guidance from a non-biologically related caregiver who helps orient her toward home and hearth. Quite the opposite occurs in *Tattered Tom*. Encounters with these

false mother figures realign the novel with the conventions of a male adoption story, in which the protagonist eschews the benefits of domesticity in favor of the risks and opportunities in more public spaces.

After leaving the boarding house, Tom resumes masculine activities. She rejoins the streets, "her own mistress" and in "in good spirits," with "confidence in herself" that "she could get along somehow" (65). However, her careless independence is short-lived. A permanent transition to more ladylike behavior occurs when Tom meets a sea captain, Albert Barnes, who hires Tom to transport baggage. This job is commonly a boy's, but Barnes hands Tom a small bundle containing a doll, signaling his intent to treat her in accordance with female norms. When he invites her to a restaurant, Tom feels "awkward and out of her element" (77), but her rehabilitation is underway. At the restaurant, the waiter understands that she is female although he con-

fuses her for "an unprotected street girl" (79). The narrator underlines Tom's feminine qualities, explaining that with a clean face she would be considered "pretty" (80). Seeing her potential to become a young lady, the sea captain turns the conversation to the subject of manners, the hallmark of middle-class respectability. While acknowledging Tom's atypically "self-reliant spirit" (85), Barnes decides to "make an effort to save her" (82) with feminine socialization. Throughout nineteenth-century domestic fiction, adoption is figured as a form of salvation that rescues the child from poverty or homelessness and prepares her for the privileges and responsibilities of middle-class life. Alger follows the conventions of the female adoption narrative with his description of both the sea captain's motivations for adopting Tom and his plans for her training.

Childless, Barnes "should like to train up a child in whom I could take an interest, and who would be a comfort to me when I am older" (95). In order to be worthy of this position, Tom — now identified as Jane, or Jenny — must learn middle-class feminine roles. To cultivate the qualities of obedience and sociability that lead to respectable middle-class femininity, Barnes



MEG MORLEY'S LODGER

*Tattered Tom*, Page 63

places her in the well-ordered household of his sister, Martha Merton.

Tom's placement with Mrs. Merton begins a socialization process common to girls in adoption narratives. The captain asks his sister "to assume charge of this wild little girl" while he is at sea. "There's enough in her to make a very smart woman, if she is placed under the right influences and properly trained" (90), he says. Tom is reluctant to give up her male status — she understands, as does Jo March in *Little Women*, that "boys have more fun; besides, they are stronger, and can fight better" (102). However, she responds positively to Mrs. Merton, who is motherly and kind, with "an expression of care in her face" (92). Whereas Tom's priorities at Granny's were basic — food, shelter, and avoidance of beatings — in Mrs. Merton's home she can learn more genteel values and behaviors. She gradually, although not without mishap, subscribes to the captain's and Mrs. Merton's

notions of femininity. She answers to the name of Jenny rather than Tom. Initially indifferent to cleanliness, she takes a bath and displays “elements of beauty” (101). She practices the domestic arts by making beds; comes to understand the importance of social nuances when she mistakenly seats a beggar woman next to an aristocratic lady in the parlor; and attends school. Even though with her “wild independence,” there “was little prospect of her taming down into an average girl all at once” (104), Jenny shows promise of becoming a respectable young woman.

Although the captain chooses Mrs. Merton for her nurturing qualities, Merton, like Granny Walsh and Meg Morely, proves to be a negative mother. Sibling rivalry develops between Jenny and one of Mrs. Merton’s two daughters.

Jenny successfully befriends eight-year-old Fanny and wins her loyalty by defending her against a neighborhood bully, but she has a difficult time with Mary, a “vain” girl her age (123). Mary steals a boarder’s money and falsely accuses Jenny of the theft. When Mrs. Merton is forced to choose between believing her daughter or her ward, she privileges biological rather than adoptive kin-

ship and assumes that Jenny is guilty. Mrs. Merton, acting on the adage that blood is thicker than water, is also willing to blame Jenny for the theft because she wants to eliminate her from competition for the sea captain’s money. The narrator describes a typical though unflattering genealogical bias: “Mrs. Merton was human. She thought it only fair that one of her daughters should inherit their uncle’s money in preference to a girl taken from the streets” (187). As in many of Alger’s novels in which the protagonist must bear the insult of a false accusation, Tom quietly leaves the Merton household and returns to life on the street, whereupon the narrative veers again, briefly, in the direction of the male adoption story.

Once on the street, Tom must make her own way, as boys typically do in male adoption stories. However, Tom is reluctant to resume old street habits, having “acquired such different tastes” at Mrs. Merton’s (189). Socialization has affected her, and she finds that with these changing tastes,

“something of the instinct of her sex had sprung up in her” (200). In male fashion, Tom uses her wits to earn money, but in female fashion, she seeks a home for herself. She asks Mrs. Murphy, the mother of a friend, if she can board with her for one dollar and fifty cents per week, an arrangement that allows her both to pay her way and also to feel “once more [...] that she had a home” (206). As the plot moves inexorably to the revelation that Tom is actually the biological daughter of Mrs. Lindsay — who has been searching for her since her abduction by Granny Walsh — Tom again falls into Granny’s malicious hands. Granny is now in the employ of Mrs. Lindsay’s brother-in-law, who initially plotted Tom’s abduction so that he himself might inherit the family fortune. With funds and a directive from Mr. Lindsay,



“IT’S MY GRANDCHILD, SIR!”

*Tattered Tom, Page 225*

Granny boards a train westward with Tom, intending to relocate and erase the child’s identity. Tom’s brief journey West is a parody of the male adoption story, in which young men seek their fortune on the frontier. Alger also alludes to the orphan trains organized by Charles Loring Brace’s Children’s Aid Society, an organization based in New York City that transported indigent and homeless

children to waiting farm families. Through cunning and luck, Tom manages to escape from Granny and the train and find overnight lodging in the Hooper family’s “comfortable farm-house” before returning to the city (256). Conversely, Granny, who is sporting new clothing made possible by Mr. Lindsay’s payments, follows the conventions of the female adoption plot. Although she dies in Chicago from a fire caused by her own drinking and smoking in bed, she is rumored by neighbors to have “been adopted by a rich family in Fifth Avenoo [sic]” (208).

The mystery of Tom’s identity is finally solved when the orphan, back on the streets, unknowingly escorts Mrs. Lindsay’s sister to the boarding house where Mrs. Lindsay — Tom’s birth mother — is staying. “The child so long-lost was at last restored” (270), and the female adoption plot reaches its conclusion. Tom permanently assumes her rightful identity as Jane and continues her socialization

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# Horatio Alger's *Tattered Tom: A Tale of Two Genders*

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as a female under her birth mother's loving care. Alger writes that there is no doubt that "her new life would soften and refine her manners, and make her more like girls of her own age" (273). However, he cleverly ends the tale so that it still conforms to both masculine and feminine narrative conventions. When "suitably dressed," Jane bears a strong resemblance to her mother, but she retains "a careless, independent expression produced by the strange life she had led as a street Arab" (273). She is a well-mannered young lady who nonetheless preserves "that fresh and buoyant spirit, and sturdy independence, which had enabled her to fight her way when she was compelled to do so." This felicitous combination of male and female qualities is likely to make Jane "a great favorite in society" (274).

Alger portrays a protagonist who is versatile and nimble in her fulfillment of mid- nineteenth-century gender roles. As Tom, the protagonist is capable of meeting expectations associated with the male orphan, providing for himself personally and financially in the public realm while becoming, like most of Alger's heroes, an aspiring, fair-minded capitalist. As Jenny or Jane, she is quick to learn the domestic scripts that the sea captain, Mrs. Merton, and her mother provide for her, displaying the qualities of courtesy, helpfulness, and obedience that are common to stories about the development of adopted nineteenth-century middle-class girls. Alger demonstrates dexterity in handling the conventions of gendered adoption plots, writing a novel that delights the reader in its alternations between a boy's and a girl's story.

Today's readers may think of Alger's tales as simplistically following formulaic plots of social and economic improvement, but *Tattered Tom* demonstrates a unique ability to play with gender roles, alter narrative conventions, and incorporate the dimensions of both male and female adoption stories.

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*Carol J. Singley is Professor and Graduate Director of English at Rutgers University-Camden. She has published many works about Edith Wharton and her current work concerns constructions of childhood in American literature and the centrality of adoption in the American literary experience.*

## NOTES

1. In addition to *Tattered Tom*, titles in this series include *Paul the Peddler*; *Phil, the Fiddler*; and *Slow and Sure*.

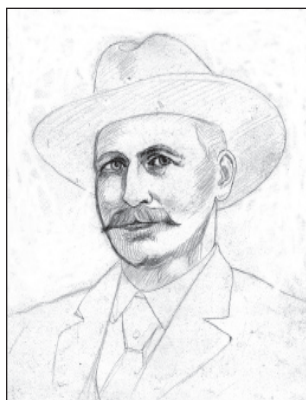
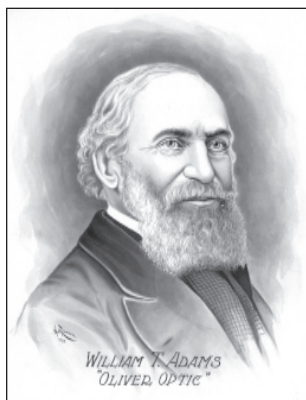
2. See, for example, the adoption plots in Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), Cummins' *The Lamplighter* (1854), and Alcott's *Jo's Boys* (1886).

3. For further discussion of the role of gender in nineteenth-century adoption literature written for children, see Singley, especially 67- 70. On the role of orphans in this literature, see Griswold 5-11, Nelson, and Lang.

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Western artist H.O. Rawson's drawings of William T. Adams and noted cowboy Charles Siringo.

## President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

his life and work as an artist. He made drawings of Western figures such as outlaws, trappers, lawmen, military leaders, western authors and other legendary figures, and then sold reproductions of these images on small cards. I have a few of these small cards containing images of Edward S. Ellis, Texas Jack, Buffalo Bill, and others. These original pen-and-ink drawings were made from photographs or real life and are 8.5 x 11.5 inches in size. A pleasant surprise was the original line drawing of Charles Siringo on the back of the Edward S. Ellis drawing.

Charlie Siringo (1855-1928) was a cowboy, lawman, detective, and Pinkerton agent. He grew up in Texas, owned a mercantile store for a few years in Kansas, and then began working for the Pinkerton Detective Agency. He worked cases primarily in the western United States, although he went as far north as Alaska and as far south as Mexico City. He was one of the pioneers of working undercover to capture outlaws and made over 100 arrests and was instrumental in many other arrests. He wrote a well-known book on cowboy life, *A Texas Cowboy; or, Fifteen Years on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony*, in 1884. It sold well as it was one of the first true-to-life looks at the life of a cowboy. I have this book and it is a very enjoyable read. He wrote additional books later in life about his years spent as a detective. Siringo died a celebrity in Los Angeles and is still notable as a western cowboy and lawman.

Although I purchased these drawings because they were related to my specific collections, I had no idea I would also acquire the drawing of Siringo. I will most likely hang the drawing of Siringo rather than Ellis. This is just a glimpse of why collecting is so much fun!

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## Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

*Hide Out*, both under the pen name "Capt. C.B. Ashley;" along with Oliver Optic's *Nature's Young Noblemen*, as by "Brooks McCormick."

Now, this "work in progress" takes a new turn. On a book-hunting trip last month, in an upstate New York antique mall I found a copy of William H.G. Kingston's *The Midshipman Marmaduke Merry; or, My Early Days at Sea*, in the familiar Rugby Edition cover. At first I hesitated, because I already had this book, but this copy was different; the title page lists the publisher as follows:

NEW YORK/FRANK F. LOVELL AND COMPANY/  
142 AND 144 WORTH STREET

The spine logo is not the familiar blind-stamped "Lovell" with "Rugby Edition" in tiny letters printed underneath (shown above), but the interlocking "JWL"



logo found in books produced by John Lovell's short-lived 1881 publishing venture at 14-16 Astor Place, before he re-incorporated the following year as The John W. Lovell Company. So we have a book published by Frank F. Lovell, using what is likely leftover cover stock from his brother's failed 1881 John Wurtele Lovell venture, the logo in black instead of gold.

This "transitional" book brings Horatio Alger into the equation. In his bibliography, in describing *The Young Acrobat*, whose first edition is the **Munsey Popular Series** paperback (No. 8, published in March 1888), the late Bob Bennett states in a note: "The first hard-cover edition was issued in 1889 by Frank F. Lovell in the Rugby edition under the Putnam pseudonym."

We know this title exists in John Lovell's Rugby edition both as written by Alger himself and under his "Arthur Lee Putnam" *nom de plume*. Bennett would not have noted a Frank F. Lovell Rugby edition unless he had seen it in his collection, which has since been dispersed. If such a "transitional" edition, such as the Kingston book, can be found today, we will have re-confirmed another item of Alger scholarship.



**The First Ladies National Historic Site in Canton, Ohio.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn

# *Convention reflections*



**Wendy and president Bob Sipes at the 356th Fighter Group restaurant.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



**Michael Morley and Arthur Smitter.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



**Bob Huber seeks a bid on a d/j copy of Herbert Mayes' Alger biography.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



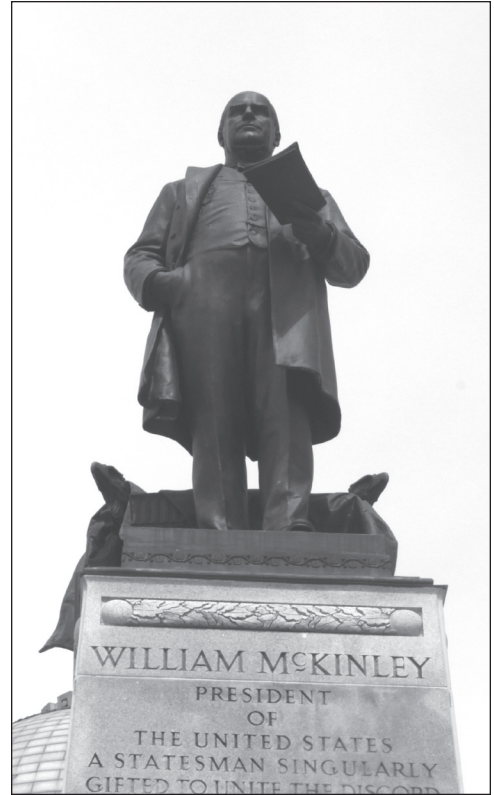
**Carol Nackenoff and Debby Jones.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



**Chris and Doug DeHaan at the annual H.A.S. banquet.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



**The statue of the 25th president at the William McKinley memorial in Canton, Ohio.**

Photo by Barry Schoenborn



**Vice president Barry Schoenborn and Lynda Straus.**

Photo courtesy of Barry Schoenborn



**Ann and Brad Chase, with executive director Rob Kasper.** Photo by Bill Gowen

## Coming up short: Edward Stratemeyer's venture with Hearst's International Library

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)  
First of two parts

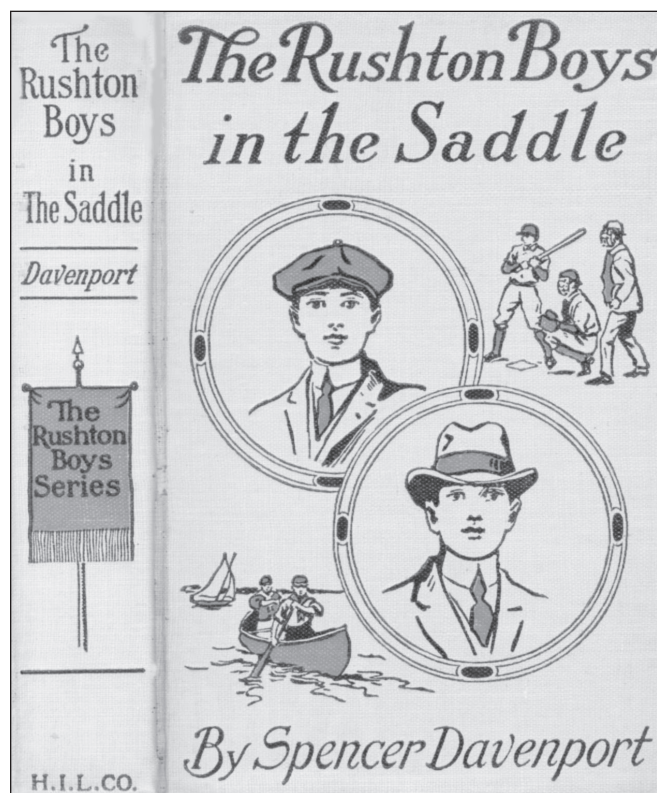
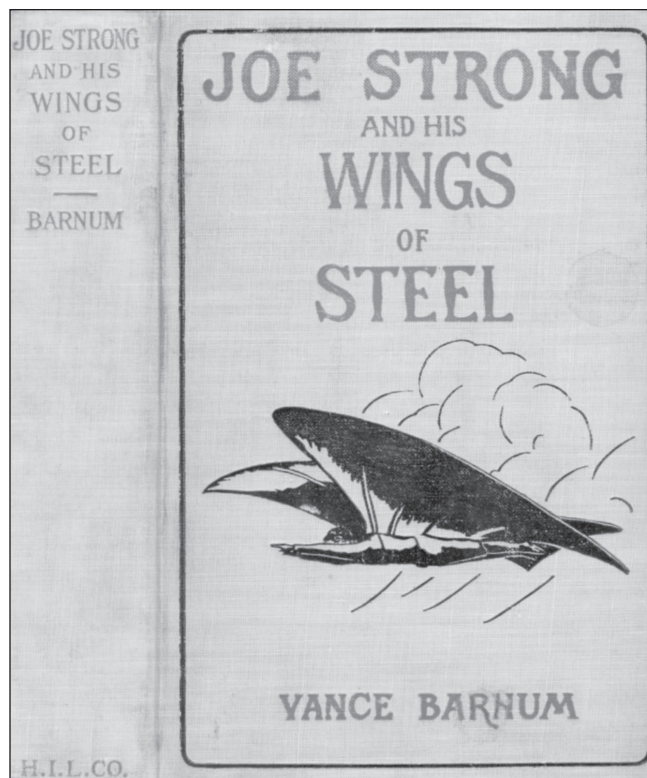
Edward Stratemeyer's accomplishments with his literary syndicate are well documented. Books in series such as *The Motor Boys*, *Tom Swift*, *The Hardy Boys*, *Nancy Drew* and *The Bobbsey Twins*, sold in the millions. In all, some 1,400 boy's and girl's titles were produced by the Syndicate between 1905 and when it was sold to Simon and Schuster in the 1980s.

But not all of the Stratemeyer Syndicate's books were best-sellers. The most notable failure was *The White Ribbon Boys of Chester* (Cupples & Leon, 1916). The first in a projected series with W. Bert Foster writing under the "Raymond Sperry Jr." house name, the proposed second title, *The White Ribbon Boys at Long Shore*, never reached publication. It seems likely the temperance-movement theme did not resonate with readers, as the initial volume sold poorly.

One of the reasons Stratemeyer succeeded in producing low-cost fiction for young people was his ability to cut his losses. From 1908 to 1911, the Syndicate produced the **Darewell Chums Series**, for which the estimable Howard R. Garis was the ghostwriter using the "Allen Chapman" house name. This Cupples & Leon series was dropped after six volumes due to marginal sales. In 1909-1910 there was the **Musket Boys Series**, written by Weldon J. Cobb using the "George A. Warren" house name. It lasted just three volumes.

In 1912-1914, Garis wrote the **Racer Boys Series** for Cupples & Leon, his assigned house name of "Clarence Young" an attempt to build on the success of the **Motor Boys Series**. After six volumes, the Racer Boys were dropped by C&L.

In the 1913-1915 period, several additional series published by C&L came and went. These included the **Tom Fairfield Series** (five volumes, by Garis writing as "Allen Chapman"); **Fred Fenton Series** (five volumes, with St. George Rathborne writing as "Allen Chapman"); the **Dave Dashaway Series** (five volumes, by Weldon J. Cobb writing as "Roy Rockwood"); and the **Speedwell Boys Series** (five volumes, Foster writing as



Hearst's International Library Company editions of the Stratemeyer Syndicate's Joe Strong Series and Rushton Boys Series, both published in 1916.

*The Stratemeyer Syndicate's  
Hearst's International Library series*

**Joe Strong Series**

**By Vance Barnum**

1. Joe Strong, The Boy Wizard  
or, Mysteries of Magic Exposed
2. Joe Strong on the Trapeze  
or, The Daring Feats of a Young Circus Performer
3. Joe Strong, The Boy Fish  
or, Marvellous Doings in a Big Tank
4. Joe Strong on the High Wire  
or, A Motor-Cycle of the Air
5. Joe Strong and his Wings of Steel  
or, A Young Acrobat in the Clouds

**Rushton Boys Series**

**By Spencer Davenport**

1. The Rushton Boys at Rally Hall  
or, Great Days in School and Out
2. The Rushton Boys in the Saddle  
or, The Ghost of the Plains
3. The Rushton Boys at Treasure Cove  
or, The Missing Oaken Chest

**Nan Sherwood Series**

**By Annie Roe Carr**

1. Nan Sherwood at Pine Camp  
or, The Old Lumberman's Secret
2. Nan Sherwood at Lakeview Hall  
or, The Mystery of the Haunted Boathouse
3. Nan Sherwood's Winter Holidays  
or, Rescuing the Runaways

"Roy Rockwood"). These selected examples show that Stratemeyer had the sense to drop a series quickly if it did not find an audience, even though those mentioned above were authored from Stratemeyer's plot outlines by such distinguished writers as Garis, Rathborne, Cobb and Foster. Note that the **Darewell Chums** and **Musket Boys**, along with a few other Syndicate series, were reissued by Goldsmith in cheap editions.

While Cupples & Leon and Grosset & Dunlap were the Stratemeyer Syndicate's major publishers, Edward Stratemeyer also desired to diversify his business among additional primary publishers. Through the years he did so with regularity, even though several of those ventures did not bear much fruit.

One of the least known today is Stratemeyer's attempt to place three series, totaling 11 volumes, with the New York City-based house of Hearst's International Library Company, a book publishing arm of Hearst's International Magazines, the latter a division of the vast Hearst media empire, which made its big reputation in newspapers and radio stations.

In 1915, the year in which series such as **Tom Fairfield**, **Fred Fenton**, **Dave Dashaway** and **Speedwell Boys** were wrapping up, Stratemeyer decided to take three new series to Hearst's International Library Company (also known as H.I.L.Co.). Thanks to official correspondence between Stratemeyer and this publisher, we can get a glimpse of how the Stratemeyer Syndicate operated. Several years ago, James D. Keeline (PF-898) purchased from the New York Public Library several reels of microfilmed copies of Syndicate correspondence, and in Parts 1 and 2 of this article we'll reproduce full letters or excerpts from several of the more than 50 between Edward Stratemeyer, H.I.L.Co. and other publishers during the 1915-1917 period.

In Part 1, we'll take a look at the early period of the Stratemeyer-H.I.L. Co. negotiations, and in Part 2 in the September-October **Newsboy**, we'll show how these series did not last long with that publisher, with Stratemeyer offering them to other publishers.

On June 18, 1915, Stratemeyer sent the following letter to Hearst's International Library Co., 119 West Fortieth Street, New York City:

Gentlemen:

Acting on my conferences with your Mr. James L. Perkins, I herewith submit contracts in blank for the following lines of books:

The Joe Strong Series, five volumes.

The Rushton Boys Series, three volumes.

The Nan Sherwood Series, three volumes.

As you will see, I have placed the dates for the delivery of manuscripts and of printing plates at as early dates as possible, and these dates, of course, will only hold good provided the contracts are settled upon and signed in the near future so that I can get out the complete working plots for my various authors and set them to work before I start for my trip to the Pacific coast early in July.

In offering these books, allow me to state that it is my intention to get the very best stories possible, and edit the same with care for book publication. We read all proof sheets and select all subjects for illustrations, and also get out suggestions for book covers when desired. It will be my endeavor to make "the Joe Strong Series" just as good as our very popular "Tom Swift Series," and to make "the Nan Sherwood Series" and "The Rushton Boys Series" just as good as the best of our sixty cent lines for boys and girls, and it will then be up to your house to go out for a sale that will make it worth whole

*(Continued on Page 14)*

## Coming up short:

(Continued from Page 13)

for both of us. The amount of the guarantee on the various books is not such as would interest me if that was all there was to it. ...

Regarding the titles of the various books, I have gone over this matter carefully and consider those I have named in the contracts the strongest we could use. However, if you prefer some of the other titles mentioned on the sheets your Mr. Perkins took with him, I stand ready to make the necessary changes.

If the contracts are satisfactory, kindly let me know by telephone or otherwise and I will come up to sign the same with you.

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

Ghostwriters for these series were: **Joe Strong Series**, Howard Garis; **Rushton Boys Series**, John W. Duffield; **Nan Sherwood Series**, W. Bert Foster.

On Sept. 29, 1915, Edward Stratemeyer wrote to the publisher as follows:

Gentlemen:

By the artist, Mr. Rogers, I am sending you the following:

4 drawings for "The Rushton Boys at Rally Hall."

4 drawings for "Nan Sherwood at Pine Camp."

Kindly have these plated in your establishment and charge the same to me.

If you wish any alterations made in the drawings Mr. Rogers will make the same. Personally I think the drawings very good for these volumes.

The text plates for the books will be ready shortly. Number two of each series is being set, and the third "Nan Sherwood" MS. is now on my desk. Kindly send me shipping directions for the plates, which are being made by J.J. Little & Ives Co.

I have the first MS. of the "Joe Strong Series" on hand and will bring it up when I see you. You will remember you were to make an appointment over the 'phone, to decide on covers.

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

In a letter dated the same day, H.I.L.Co. acknowledged receipt of the Walter S. Rogers artwork:

We acknowledge, with thanks, the eight drawings referenced in your letter of the 29th, and these will be

played by our allied Chromatic Engraving Co., 150 Lafayette St., who will bill you as requested at the same price we pay. We trust your judgment in approving the drawings as satisfactory for the volumes.

If agreeable to you, we would like to have all of the plates remain in the J.J. Little & Ives vaults until we are ready to arrange for the printing, when they will have a chance to figure on it, as they are doing considerable work for us. ... We are returning the title pages with our O.K., and they look very well indeed.

On November 6, a follow-up letter to Stratemeyer reported, as follows:

We are returning your original drawings with engravers' proofs of "Nan Sherwood at Lakeview Hall" and "The Rushton Boys in the Saddle." We trust you will find these halftones satisfactory in every way, and as per general instructions I have sent them to J.J. Little & Ives Co.

As time went on, Stratemeyer was becoming concerned with the Hearst firm's leisurely pace in producing these books, as shown in his letter of Feb. 25, 1916:

Gentlemen:

I am writing to find out just what is being done with the "Rushton Boys Series," "Nan Sherwood Series" and "Joe Strong Series" which I furnished to you.

As you will remember, or contracts call for publication by April 1st., but so far I have seen no samples of the books. Royalties were to start August 1st., next. My Literary Bureau here worked very hard to get out the eleven manuscripts and the six sets of plates on time, and I have a good deal of money locked up in the proposition, so I am anxious to know just how matters are going. These stories were among the best we have ever turned out and I do not want to see them fail down in any way. Of course there is a guarantee on each book but that in my estimation does not cover its real commercial value.

Trusting to hear from you in the near future, and that this deal will prove to be "worth while," I remain,

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

The reply from H.I.L. Co., dated Feb. 28, 1916:

In reply to yours of the 25th, I am going to get busy on the books right away. My idea is to have them all ready by the time the schools close, so that way during the month of June we could have some big special newspaper advertising.

I still think we shall want to make the Joe Strong Series 60¢ the same as the others, and in this case if we make the plates and convince you that we will sell a very large number by extensive advertising, wouldn't it be satisfactory to you to make your royalty on the "Joe Strong Series" 3¢ a copy? For our extensive advertising, it is pretty costly to pay a royalty of 12½% on the other 60-cent books and if we could even up matters a little by making it 3¢ on the books which we make the plates of, I am sure the results will please you.

I am intensely earnest about this matter. I know that with our millions of newspaper and magazine circulation, if we get these launched right, these books will spring into popularity at a greater degree in four months than they would in four years in ordinary plan of letting them make their own way through the dealers. Won't you drop me a line on this matter, and we will shortly get busy?

Very truly yours,

J.L. Perkins

*Appended handwritten note:*

Of course we'll sell through regular dealers too.

Then came Stratemeyer's reply of Feb. 29, 1916:

Dear Mr. Perkins:

Yours of yesterday to hand and I am glad to learn that you are going right ahead with the eleven books you have from my Literary Bureau. I sincerely trust that you will be able to make such sales during June and July that the royalty account in August will be worth while.

I note what you say about increasing the price on the "Joe Strong Series" and I think myself they are good enough to sell for more than a quarter. But when it comes to accepting a royalty less than 10% on a book to retail at 60 cents that is something I cannot in justice to all my other publishers do. On all the books handled by Grosset & Dunlap, Cupples & Leon Co., Dodd, Mead & Co., The Page Co., Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, Barse & Hopkins and others I get 10% where the publishers make plates and 12½% where I own plates — and in a few instances I do even better than that.

The only thing I can offer is the following: If you want to issue the "Joe Strong" books at 50 cents, net,

instead of 60 regular I will make the royalty 10% of that price, 5 cts. Also, if your advertising proves of real value in disposing of a big quantity of the books I will allow you 10% of my royalties on the series for such advertising, you to render bill at the time and take out of the royalty account. Many of the Barse & Hopkins are issued at 50 cts., net. Would be pleased to have you make appointment to talk it over.

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

J.L. Perkins continued these financial negotiations with the following letter of March 2, 1916:

**Joe Strong Series**

by  
**Vance Barnum**

Five Titles                      Four illustrations to each volume

Each, 60 Cents

Vance Barnum is a real treasure when it comes to telling about how magicians do their weird tricks, how the circus acrobats pull off their various stunts, how the "fishman" remains under water so long, how the mid-air performers loop the loop and how the slack-wire fellow keeps from tumbling. He has been through it all and he writes freely for the boys from his vast experience. They are real stories bound to hold their audiences breathless.

The hero of this series is a remarkable young fellow. He has a superb form physically, a keen eye and limitless nerve. He became a magician, an acrobat, a high diver and boy fish, looped the loop in the air on a motor cycle and made a sensation by his "dive for life" from one flying machine to another. He was a marvellous shot with pistol and rifle, hitting bull's eye while swinging on a trapeze and while on a tight rope.

- (1) JOE STRONG, THE BOY WIZARD  
or Mysteries of Magic Exposed
- (2) JOE STRONG ON THE TRAPEZE  
or The Daring Feats of a Young Circus Performer
- (3) JOE STRONG, THE BOY-FISH  
or The Marvellous Doings of a Boy-Fish
- (4) JOE STRONG ON THE HIGH WIRE  
or A Motor-Cycle of the Air
- (5) JOE STRONG AND HIS WINGS OF STEEL  
or A Young Acrobat in the Clouds

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Hearst's International Library Co. - - New York

We appreciate your conscientious scruples about not making a special royalty arrangement with us in justice to your other publishers. You know, however, there are exceptions to all rules and in this case none of your other publishers have the facilities for giving publicity to your books through millions of magazine and newspaper readers. For example, we have recently made arrangements with three very prominent authors, who get big royalties running to 20% with regular publishers, but these authors have gladly consented to a royalty of 3¢ a book provided we will include books in our 50-cent series, and advertise widely in our own and many other newspapers. We really cannot afford to pay more than this amount royalty because advertising costs money.

Now, on the Joe Strong Series, I believe our guarantee is \$50 a year for three years, at 2¢ a copy. I submit to your sense of fairness that if we are willing to advertise very extensively books which shall be sold at retail in stores for 50¢, or 60¢ prepaid by us, spending our money liberally in white paper and printer's ink, you should be willing to accept 3¢ on the Joe Strong Series, where we make the plates. I am inclined to think that we on our part should raise your guarantee of \$50 each on these five books to \$100 each per year for three years. Personally, I haven't the slightest doubt that if we get into this in the right way, as we want to and will do with your cooperation, you will be very happy

*(Continued on Page 16)*

## Coming up short:

(Continued from Page 15)

with your royalties.

You will note that I am not saying a word regarding the royalty of 12½%, based on a 60¢ retail price, on the other six books, on which you have made the plates. But I do want to bring down the average of the royalty to make it possible for us to carry out our plans which I earnestly believe are for your interests as well as ours.

We might say, confidentially, that a certain 50¢ book which we started advertising a month ago yesterday has already reached a printing of 20,000 copies.

Very truly yours,  
J.L. Perkins

Stratemeyer's immediate reply of March 3, 1916:

Dear Mr. Perkins:

Yours of yesterday to hand and contents noted. This letter arouses my sporting blood, and as you seem to be so much in earnest over the "Joe Strong Series" of books I am inclined to meet your proposition as far as I can possibly do so without violating the rule of our Bureau to accept nothing less than 10% on books issued at 50 cents or more.

You say that you might be willing to guarantee me \$100 per book per year instead of \$50. That would mean a sale of 3,334 copies at 3 cents, and that number at 5 cents would mean a royalty of \$166.70.

If you wish to do so, I am willing to draw up a new agreement on the books changing the royalties and guarantees and amount for advertising as follows:

"Joe Strong Series," five volumes, to be issued at 50 cents retail on a royalty of 5 cents per copy. Guarantee of \$166. per volume per year for first three years of publication, royalties to start August 1, 1916 and first year's guarantee to be due Feb. 1, 1917. During the first three years of publication I to allow your company 2 cents per copy on every book sold or paid for under guarantee for advertising same. After the third year I to allow your company 10% of my royalties for advertising.

It seems to me this fills the bill as you want it. While you would guarantee me \$166 per book you would get

back the \$66 for advertising. Of course I should want it understood that the royalty statements showed the books at 5 cents royalty and that a separate bill be made of the advertising at 2 cents per copy, and this bill could be sent to me receipted and as part settlement of royalties.

If this is satisfactory let me know and I'll have the new agreement drawn up and we can sign them and destroy the old ones.

By the way, I hope this "booming" of the "Joe Strong" line won't sidetrack the "Rushton Boys" and "Nan Sherwood." I am particularly hopeful of Nan Sherwood, as girls books have just now a little more of a "look in" than do books for boys.

We could handle some of the proofs of "Joe Strong" very nicely just now as we'll be somewhat slack in our proof reading department for the next two weeks — until the Fall books commence to come in. Since last October we have handled over 30 Spring books! And all out on time.

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

P.S. I hope you'll give the various lines some attractive jackets. I think "Nan Sherwood" especially ought to have something to catch the eye of the girls.

On May 4, 1916, Stratemeyer expressed his concern about H.I.L.Co.'s promotion strategy. Stratemeyer himself wrote the advertising blurbs appearing in the Syndicate's books and on the dust jackets (example on Page 15). It appears he had doubts about the effectiveness of Hearst's proposed national newspaper advertising campaign:

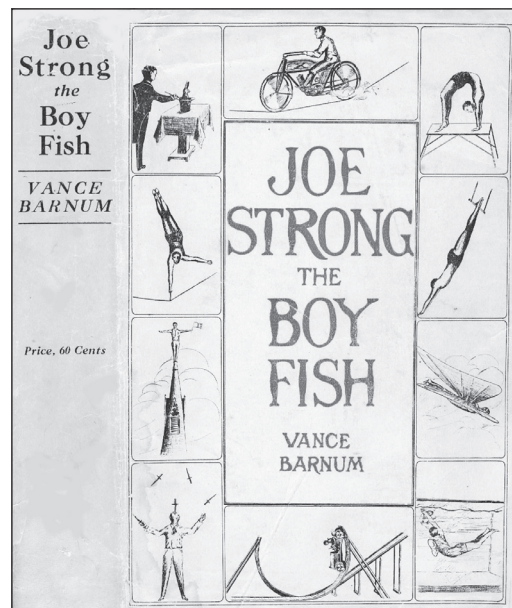
Dear Mr. McCann:

With this I mail you several ideas for the advertising of our juveniles, which you can perhaps work up to suit yourselves. I am a bit in the dark concerning your newspaper campaign, but this matter can be worked up in a number of ways.

Have received a bill for dies for the "Nan Sherwood" and "Rushton Boys" lines — 10 each set of three — from the Artistic Eng. Co. If this is O.K. let me know and I will pay the same.

Yours truly,  
Edward Stratemeyer

(End of Part 1)



The scarce dust jacket for the H.I.L. Co. edition of *Joe Strong the Boy Fish*.