



THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



Horatio Alger, Jr.

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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President's column

The importance of two holidays

No matter what your faith, Christmas is important. So is New Year's Day. They are holidays where we emphasize what we value.

We can learn lessons in values from Horatio Alger. He attended Harvard College and graduated in 1852, Phi Beta Kappa with honors. He also attended Harvard Divinity School later. As a scholar and a Unitarian minister, Alger knew values, and spent a career imparting them to his readers.

At Christmas

In *Bertha's Christmas Vision* (Brown, Bazin, and Company, 1856), Bertha goes to bed thinking only of what St. Nicholas will put in her Christmas stocking. But then, three figures (women dressed in white) appear at the foot of her bed, and say they are "bringing gifts both rich and rare." They say:

*Faith and Hope and Charity!
Earthly maiden, sisters three,
These the gifts we bear to thee.*

Those values — Faith, Hope, and Charity — serve Bertha the rest of her life. They are the real gifts. If we can receive those gifts, life will be better for us and for everyone we touch.

In *Bertha's Christmas Vision*, be sure to read "Little Flo; or How a Miser was reclaimed." It's a wonderful story of how a little girl, exhibiting great character, changes an old man from a cold and stingy miser into a warm, generous fellow.

During the holidays, we should remember that "we are the gift." Like little Flo, we can do a lot to help people. We can do a lot to help ourselves, too. Horatio Alger would expect no less from us.

In the New Year

In the United States, we take New Year's Day to be a day for rebirth. We vow to "turn over a new leaf," acquire good habits, and end bad habits. Alger would approve, I'm sure. Every one of his books suggests that hard work and education ("striving") will produce rewards ("succeeding").

Alger's boys strove to enter the respectable middle class, and the middle class is one of America's greatest strengths. As many of us grew up, it seemed indisputable that all people could better themselves through educa-

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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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The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space **free of charge** to our members for the **sale only** of such material. Send advertisements or "Letters to the Editor" to **Newsboy** editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047. E-mail: hasnewsboy@aol.com

It's time to start planning for 'Race to Indy'

By Bob Sipes (PF-1067)

As we approach the New Year, it is time to look forward to the 2013 Horatio Alger Society convention. Since Wendy and I held the 2007 HAS convention in Shelbyville, Indiana, we decided to move the 2013 convention to the south side of Indianapolis in the Greenwood/Southport area. For those of you traveling by air, this area is approximately 20 minutes from the Indianapolis airport.

While we have not yet firmed up the venue, we are striving to acquire a reasonable rate in a quality hotel and keep the convention registration fee reasonable as well. We will provide the details in the January/February issue of **Newsboy**.

The 49th annual convention, "Race to Indy," is well on its way to reality and will be held 2-5 May 2013. There will be a wide variety of activities available, including many museums such as the Indy 500 Museum, local antique shops, retail shopping, and much more.

Wendy is working hard to line up great food and atmosphere and I will be writing about the historical

aspects and activities of the Indy Southside area for the next issue of **Newsboy**. I am also working with other members of the Society to acquire enticing items for the book auction.

We have already selected our Saturday evening dinner speaker, an entertainer you do not want to miss! He

is a well-known Indy entertainer and personal friend who will enthrall you with ... we will save that for the next article. We cannot forget to mention that the young entertainers, Sofia and Channing, who perform and entertain in their own way, and will also be in attendance throughout the convention (except during school hours).

Keep an eye on the Horatio Alger website for additional details, links, and instructions on paying the convention fee via PayPal (an option). We will add many details and Indianapolis information to the website over the next few months.

Wendy and I are working hard to make "Race to Indy" a success, and we hope to see you all this coming May!



Expressing best wishes for your holiday season!



Editor's notebook

The holiday season is upon us; I hope you survived "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday" and your shopping is complete. Please read Barry Schoenborn's President's Column for his wonderful comments on the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Just a few weeks ago, we received the sad news that another H.A.S. member has left us: Donald L. Cripe (PF-919) of New Bremen, Indiana, passed away in June; his wife sent us a note in late October, thanking the Society for being supportive through the years. In 2011, Don consigned the Alger collection of his late father, Paul A. Cripe (PF-633) for the annual auction.

In recent news, two Partic'lar Friends have been mentioned in national publications. H.A.S. Vice President Jeff Looney, editor of "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series," at Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia, was quoted in a fascinating **Wall Street Journal** article titled "To Quote Thomas Jefferson, 'I Never Actually Said that'," by Cameron McWhirter. The article groups Jefferson among famous persons among whose quotations have become legend, but not necessarily true. One of Jefferson's most often stated is "All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent," which Anna Berkes, 33, a research librarian at the Jefferson Library at Monticello, insists was not spoken or written by the famous founding father.

Where do these so-called "quotes" come from? Accurate attribution is the key, according to Looney. "The burden is on the people to say where they got it, and usually they can't," he says. This article, "To Quote Thomas Jefferson, 'I Never Actually Said that,'" appeared on Page A1 of **The Wall Street Journal** issue of Dec. 6.

Former longtime **Newsboy** editor Jack Bales, who is interviewed by 180-year-old Horatio Alger on Page 5, also recently received national attention with his mention in the Dec. 3 issue of **Sports Illustrated** in a feature article by writer Tim Layden on Chicago Cubs Hall of Fame second baseman Johnny Evers, titled "Tinker to Evers to Chance ... to Me."

Bales, along with fellow baseball historian Tim Wiles, is credited by Layden in his research concerning Franklin Pierce Adams' famous "Tinker to Evers to Chance" poem of eight lines titled "Baseball's Sad Lexicon," which was used to fill out a column for the **New York Evening Mail** on July 12, 1910, published during a Cubs-New York

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President's column

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tion and hard work. I don't know about you, but I never thought I'd see the day when the situation was reversed, and people fell out of the middle class.

That's the situation we have today. Some people believe, therefore, that the "Alger story" is passé. I must profoundly disagree. The "rags to riches" story is *now* more important than ever. Hard work and clean living are a good start. Then, if you can, maybe you will perform "some extraordinary act of bravery or honesty" (as Gary Scharnhorst says on Wikipedia). With any kind of luck, you may get some help. While it's unlikely that you'll rescue a rich banker's daughter in a runaway carriage, you must believe that good deeds will be rewarded.

Remind you that "you are the gift." You can and should help yourself, but I'm confident you *also* won't pass on chances to help people less fortunate than you.

Remember an "ignorant bootblack who never expected to be anything better?" *Ragged Dick* ends with:

"[Y]ou were Ragged Dick. You must drop that name, and think of yourself now as — "
"Richard Hunter. Esq.," said our hero, smiling.

That's upward mobility! Let's bring it back. We make the difference, with ourselves and with the Ragged Dicks of the world.

A reminder: Horatio Alger's birthday is January 13th.

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087)
552 Brock Road
Nevada City, CA 95959
(530) 265-4705
E-mail: barry@wvswrite.com

MEMBERSHIP

New official H.A.S. address!

Direct all correspondence to:

Horatio Alger Society
1004 School St.
Shelbyville, IN 46176

Horatio Alger interviews Jack Bales (PF-258)



Editor's note: On the 113th anniversary of Horatio Alger's death and his 180th birthday year, Horatio Alger returns to earth to interview H.A.S. members regarding their Alger collections. This is the fifth in a new series written by an anonymous author posing as Horatio Alger.

Horatio Alger here, is this Jack Bales?

Jack Bales: Quite an honor. Quite an honor.

H.A.: How are you doing?

J.B.: I'm doing very well. You know, I do a lot of research and writing. By the way, back in my younger days, I was a big fan of yours.

H.A.: You were?

J.B.: I sure was.

H.A.: How did you start collecting my books?

J.B.: I was about fifteen years old at the time. It was 1966 when I came across one of your books in my father's study. And I'd heard your name. I had to put myself through school — with nine kids in the family — so I identified with the characters in your books.

H.A.: Nine kids?

J.B.: Two sets of twins as well. I heard about your rags to riches philosophy and really liked it. So I started collecting your books. I used to go into Chicago with my family and we visited used book stores where I found your books. I don't know if you know this, Mr. Alger, but a man named Ralph D. Gardner wrote a book about you. I came across a reference to it in a store and my parents bought a copy for me for Christmas in 1968, my senior year in high school. In the back of the book, in the acknowledgements, was a note thanking Forrest Campbell of Kalamazoo, Michigan. I wrote a letter to him simply addressed to Forrest Campbell, Kalamazoo, MI. Forrest was a post office worker, and a letter carrier delivered it to him. I thought that was pretty cool.

Anyway, that's how I discovered the Horatio Alger Society. Forrest hosted the 1969 convention in Kalamazoo. I went to it and came back with my clothes in a pillowcase and my newly purchased Algers neatly stacked in my suitcase. My mother still talks about that. By the way, my hometown of Aurora, Illinois, was near Mendota, Illinois, where Ken Butler lived. Ken and Forrest were the co-founders of the Society and I used to visit Ken quite a bit. He was a very good, very kind man. In fact, he wrote a letter of recommendation for me when I entered college.

H.A.: Wonderful. How long have you been collecting?

J.B.: Well, I was fifteen when I started, and I joined the H.A.S. in early 1969. I became editor of *Newsboy* in 1974 and I did that until 1986.



Jack Bales in his office at the University of Mary Washington Library in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He is holding a copy of his favorite Alger book — *Struggling Upward and Other Works* (1945), which his grandfather found in a Phoenix, Arizona, bookstore in 1971 and gave him.

H.A.: Holy cow! Editor of *Newsboy*. How many Algers do you have now?

J.B.: I have to tell you, Mr. Alger, after I co-authored two books about you, I gave away most of my books to libraries in Massachusetts that helped me with my research. I only have about 20 or 30 now.

H.A.: My goodness, you overwhelm me — two books about me?

J.B.: Yes, with my friend Gary Scharnhorst, we published *Horatio Alger Jr.* (Scarecrow Press, 1981) and *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger Jr.* (Indiana University Press, 1985). It's still in print after all these years.

H.A.: Well I'll be darned. Do you have anything unusual?

J.B.: I picked up a copy of one of your books for \$30 in the early 1970s with your autograph signed inside it.

H.A.: A book I signed?

J.B.: You sure did. Just your autograph, though, no inscription. It was in a small book store in Geneva, Illinois.

H.A.: I'll bet that's rare.

J.B.: Yeah, it really is rare. Thirty dollars was a lot for one

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Horatio Alger interviews Jack Bales (PF-258)

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of your books in 1970, but it was still a pretty good deal for a signed book.

H.A.: *What's your favorite book?*

J.B.: I've always liked *Hector's Inheritance*.

H.A.: *Oh yes, the boys of Smith Institute, a great yellow apple.*

J.B.: I always liked *Andy Grant's Pluck*, too. Hector went to a boy's school. I liked that idea. I really didn't like the New York City books as well.

H.A.: *Who is your favorite character?*

J.B.: Hector, Andy Gordon, and Grant Thornton of *Helping Himself* were my favorites. Also Luke Larkin of *Struggling Upward* and Ben Barclay of *The Store Boy*. The stories all started out in small country towns.

H.A.: *Anything else?*

J.B.: I really liked the A.L. Burt books with the bright, colorful covers — one variation showed a boy walking wearing a red turtleneck sweater. When I started collecting, those books were rather inexpensive, so I specialized in those books, You know, Mr. Alger, those Loring books were very expensive and valuable, but they looked awful.

H.A.: *They were some red and some green.*

J.B.: I've written several other books about my other research interests. I don't know, Mr. Alger, if you are up on current technology, but I have my own website, www.jackbales.com. I've always had a special place in my heart for Horatio Alger material and there's a page on my website about you. You know Bob Bennett compiled a bibliography and Brad Chase has five books about your publishers.

H.A.: *Six now. Brad was my first interview.*

J.B.: Great guy.

H.A.: *Yes. Jack, do you have a daytime job? What do you do?*

J.B.: Since 1980 I've been a reference librarian at the Uni-

versity of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. I do a lot of research and I've helped thousands of students over the years. My website describes my job. I love my job, and my family and I love living near the Shenandoah Mountains in Virginia. I tell my students that after 32 years I look forward to coming to work every day, and I hope that they will someday have a job like that.

H.A.: *Is there anything you'd like to ask me?*

J.B.: How did you like living near Boston? I went to an H.A.S. convention there hosted by Dick Seddon — a marvelous guy.

H.A.: *I'm 180 years old now and don't remember much about Massachusetts, but I know Boston is a great historic small city. What was it like editing *Newsboy*?*

J.B.: Well, I did it for about twelve years. It came out once a month in the early days. It was before computers, so I typed every issue by hand. It would take an entire weekend to put an issue together and paste it up. Recently my mother was reminding me how I'd put a card table in our upstairs hallway and I would work on the **Newsboy**. I had a lot of fun corresponding with members and I had file cabinets full of information. I still have all the old issues.

H.A.: *I've really enjoyed talking to you and I know your website will be a great place for members to learn more about you.*

J.B.: Thanks, Mr. Alger, for calling me.

Editor's note: *Readers are encouraged to visit Jack's website, www.jackbales.com, which contains a wealth of information on his other literary interests, including noted authors Kenneth Roberts and Willie Morris, about whom he has written several critically acclaimed books, essays and articles. He also includes a section on his life-long passion for baseball, and the Chicago Cubs in particular. The goal of Jack's ongoing research is the publication of a documentary history of the team.*

Editor's notebook

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Giants series at the Polo Grounds. Bales wrote to me last week saying he "was rather overwhelmed" by the mention of his name, brief as it was, in Layden's article. Evers, elected along with Tinker and Chance to the Hall of Fame in 1946, is buried in Troy, N.Y., his hometown.

Jack, who is researching a documentary history on the Cubs, also sent me a lengthy article he had published in the Spring 2012 issue of **Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture**. It tells the story of how William L.

Veck Sr. made the transition from sports writer to vice president and treasurer (and later, president) of the Cubs, in large measure debunking the legendary story that team owner William Wrigley Jr. responded to supposed severe criticism of the team in Veck's articles for the **Chicago Evening American** (most under the pen name "Bill Bailey"), and that Wrigley said, in effect, "If you think you can do a better job, come here and do it yourself." Research shows Wrigley's so-called "offer" was likely apocryphal — that Veck earned the job on merit.

Jack's article is wonderfully researched and crafted, with endnotes totaling 43 citations. As a retired sports writer, I found it very enlightening.

The Unsocial ‘Purfessional’

Revisiting Horatio Alger’s *Ragged Dick*

By Lisa Fluet, Ph. D.

In a *Nation* editorial entitled “The Death of Horatio Alger” (2004), Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman offers a brief account of the state of contemporary class mobility in the United States, by contrasting the roughly thirty years of post-World War II intergenerational mobility to our present moment:

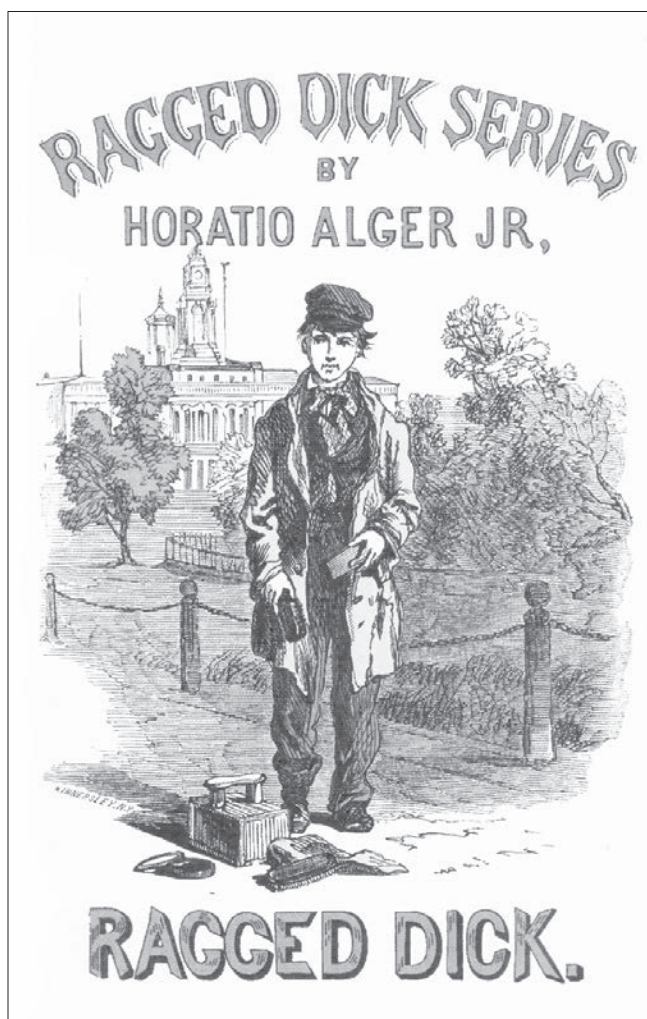
It is true, however, that America was once a place of substantial intergenerational mobility: Sons often did much better than their fathers. A classic 1978 survey found that among adult men whose fathers were in the bottom 25 percent of the population as ranked by social and economic status, 23 percent had made it into the top 25 percent. In other words, during the first thirty years or so after World War II, the American dream of upward mobility was a real experience for many people. (16-17)

That 25 percent number has since dropped, according to Krugman, to only 10 percent; now. “[v]ery few children of the lower class are making their way to even moderate affluence.” Krugman cites both the “Wal-Martization” of the contemporary American economy (17), and the fiscal policies of the second Bush administration, as the central causative factors in reinforcing what he has called, in his subsequent study *The Conscience of a Liberal*, the “New Gilded Age.”

One literary consequence of this stabilization of class hierarchies, in terms of increased discrepancies between wealthy and poor, has been, as Krugman suggests, the “vanishingly rare” occurrence of “rags-to-riches stories” like Horatio Alger, Jr.’s *Ragged Dick* (Krugman, “Death” 17). This 1867 novel recounts the tale of a resourceful shoeshine boy who — after he is befriended by a gentleman and given new clothes — rents a room, pursues an education, opens a bank account, and eventually, under the name “Richard Hunter, Esquire,” acquires a promising job as a clerk.

Ragged Dick suggests, although not without considerable complexity, that social mobility is a possible outcome for a character who is at once hard-working and blessed with attributes he did not earn (such as good looks and an innate tendency to avoid meanness), calling attention to his self-

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August F. Kinnersley’s engraved title page for the first edition of *Ragged Dick*, in 1868, presents Dick Hunter as an energetic young entrepreneur. Dick’s clothing, while shabby, appears professional, and he is ready with a bottle of blacking, a sponge, a shoe-box, and other equipment.

reliance as well as to the fact that he has been significantly helped by those in a position to pay him appropriately for his services (as a city tour guide for Frank Whitney or, at the novel’s end, as a rescuer of children).

In contrast, as Krugman argues, nowadays “you’re quite likely to stay in the social and economic class into which you were born — whether you possess *Ragged Dick*’s work

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The Unsocial 'Purfessional'

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ethic, attributes, luck, and helpful patrons or not — and this likelihood underscores the “vast waste of human potential” consequent upon the closing down of avenues to upward mobility (Krugman, “Death” 17). It is not simply, in other words, that the New Gilded Age results in the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, with fewer and fewer Ragged Dicks transforming themselves into house-buying Richard Hunters — although Krugman certainly wants to call attention to this problem. It is also the case that nowadays, the potential for Ragged Dick’s at once self-interestedly enterprising, and disinterestedly benevolent interventions into the lives of those periodically in need around him has become vanishingly rare as well.

As Bruce Robbins observes in his study *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Towards a Literary History of the Welfare State* (2007), Alger’s stories challenge a simplistic conceptualization of up-by-your-bootstraps self-reliance not only because wealthier figures intervene in Dick’s life and offer him opportunities, but also because Dick himself frequently assists others when he cannot really afford it — others who also, notably, do not seem as blessed with good looks, talent, a work ethic, and ingenuity as he is. With his “recklessly premature philanthropy,” Dick “responds to a boy’s need, one might even say his *lack* of pluck, rather than his resemblance to Dick’s own forceful and buoyant character” (Robbins 71).

His assistance to Henry Fosdick, a homeless young orphan, to Johnny Wilkins, whose mother is ill, and to Tom Nolan, who lacks business sense, for example, does not suggest a desire to mold other street boys to his own image, but rather prefigures an understanding of responsibility toward the poor as public rather than private — strangers helping strangers, according to their needs rather than to a belief in the necessity of demonstrated merit (Robbins 73). As a story of class mobility, then, *Ragged Dick*, in both Krugman’s and Robbins’ analyses, resists rewarding rugged individualism for its own sake, and instead favors presenting Dick Hunter as an agent for the dissemination of both wealth and the rescuing capacities of human potential over a broader sampling of persons in need.

Dick possesses many qualities that enable his assumption of the role that both Krugman and Robbins assign to him. He can actually make money more effectively than his

street-boy peers, thanks to a combination of looks, charisma, banter, and work ethic. He instinctively grasps how to take advantage of opportunities that older, wealthier men place before him. He also decides to save his money, which allows him to develop a surplus for his recklessly philanthropic assistance to less obviously favored boys. And, in addition, law enforcement and the banking system seem to be on his side whenever his money is threatened in any way. I want to suggest two further, related aspects of Dick’s character that enable and reinforce his rise to the status of public-minded benefactor, as well as call attention to the particular kind of class fiction Alger has conceived: Dick considers himself “professional” — or a “purfessional,” in Mrs. Mooney’s rephrasing, one of several permutations of the term — while others more critical of his advancement, notably Jim Travis, consider him “unsocial.”

When Dick first embarks on his quest for “spectability,” he decides to take lodgings, in a critical move towards the stability to which Frank Whitney and his uncle have encouraged him to aspire. In the midst of seeking a week’s advance payment, his landlady, Mrs. Mooney, questions Dick as to what “his business” might be, and Dick abruptly responds “Oh, I’m professional!” — to which Mrs. Mooney responds “Indeed!” although she “did not feel much enlightened by this answer” (Alger 60). Calling oneself professional, in Dick’s understanding, should conveniently close off further questioning from Mrs. Mooney. She does not understand what the term means, but Dick grasps that invoking this mystifying word will demonstrate his right to rent rooms, and allow him to present himself as someone who treats living indoors as a habit.

Yet “professional” also accurately delineates what boot-blackening entails for him: a skilled service, in terms of the actual work, but also in terms of the rhetorical skill required to convince clients that they specifically need *his* services. The word suggests, as well a working condition — that is, he’s “professional,” not “a professional,” and thus he need not specify whatever work he performs so long as he conveys to Mrs. Mooney that other people recognize its validity. Boot-blackening assumes the status of professional labor so long as it remains unclear — to Mrs. Mooney — what specifically Dick does for money, and so long as “professional” can be a term that hinders, problematizes, and ultimately cuts off conversation.

To call oneself professional, then, can usefully inhibit sociability with anyone who might be inclined to question the specifics of the job. When Mrs. Mooney tentatively suggests that to be “purfessional” might mean that Dick has involved himself with, perhaps, some kind of unmentionable lewd activity for pay, he cuts her off by calling attention to her own prudery — as she cannot even name what she suspects of him — while further conveying the offended dignity of



DICK SAVING JOHNNY — *Ragged Dick*, Page 284

someone comfortable both with calling himself professional and with establishing himself in rooms (61). The term thus, also, significantly, protects Dick from inquiries that might lead to his not advancing in life — that might prohibit his making that first crucial move into relatively stable housing. In an “unsocial” way, he can even declare their conversation at an end by subsequently invoking the vague professional claims of having “business of great importance to attend to” (61).

This exchange with Mrs. Mooney and the securing of rooms via the “professional” password, I want to suggest, anticipates a later confrontation with Jim Travis, one of Dick’s fellow-lodgers, whom he and his roommate Henry Fosdick both suspect, rightly, of stealing Dick’s bank-book — notably, Travis can successfully steal the bank-book because of the close proximity of quarters in the lodging-house, and because his own locked bureau drawer is identical to Dick’s. Travis, “a bartender in a low groggery in Mulberry Street” who is much given to drinking and “reeling upstairs in a state of intoxication, uttering shocking oaths,” nevertheless “had made several friendly overtures to Dick and his room-mate, and had invited them to call round at the bar-room where he tended, and take something” (104). Dick and Fosdick reject his offers, however, “partly because the boys were better engaged in the evening, and partly because neither of them

had taken a fancy to Mr. Travis” (104). Their “rejection of his friendly proffers had caused him to take a dislike to Dick and Henry, whom he considered stiff and unsocial” (104). Travis subsequently hears word from a friend of a gold claim in California, and steals the bank-book, after overhearing Dick and Fosdick discussing it, in order to fund his trip West.

Leaving aside Mr. Travis’s presumably unprepossessing personal qualities, it is worth pointing out that “stiff and unsocial” is actually a fairly apt way to characterize Dick’s transformation from homeless bootblack to renting professional. As is made clear at the outset of the narration, Dick had been a boy inclined to go out sociably at night and spend his money recklessly, until the possibility of advancement had been articulated to him, and the “better” evening engagement, for both Dick and Fosdick, involves filling in the significant gaps in Dick’s education, which will ultimately lead to his competence as a clerk by the narrative’s end (that is, as someone traditionally more inclined to consider himself professional than, say, a bootblack).

Travis’s attempted theft — of the money that signifies Dick’s own growing security in the world and that makes possible the philanthropy he extends to others — presents a markedly distinct objective. Unlike Dick, Travis does
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The Unsocial 'Purfessional'

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represent something like rugged individualism, where the skillfully opportunistic can reap personal benefit, and where the only responsibility that matters is private responsibility over personal survival. But Travis's critique underscores the extent to which someone like Dick — who is identified, in both Krugman's and Robbins' analyses, with the social, *with* the larger goal of the public betterment of less skillful homeless boys like himself — nevertheless achieves this identification with the social through highly "unsocial" means, as the professional who utilizes this conceptualization of his work and his newly-educated position as a vital means to holding the potential distractions and threats of the social at bay. There is something, in short, inherently "stiff and unsocial" about the professional's pursuit of social goods in *Ragged Dick*, and about the very complicated process of merging self-interested advancement with the diffusion of advancement to others.

The purpose behind unsocial behavior and the related, premature identification with elevated professional status, in a narrative of advancement like *Ragged Dick*, might be summed up, simply, by the phrase "buying time." The potential threats to Dick's mobility that Mrs. Mooney and Jim Travis represent specifically, would drain time away. Taking the time to justify and answer a lot of questions about his status, explaining how he makes his money, or going out casually in the evenings would all get in the way of acquiring and keeping fixed lodgings. And lodgings crucially provide the necessary private "cover" for the costume changes, as well as for the work (study, fiscal prudence) required for his advancement.

Yet the unsocial attributes of upwardly mobile protagonists often attract criticism — from figures like Jim Travis, but also from those readers who express exasperation with the rags-to-riches protagonist's need to primly separate him or herself from a social world invariably perceived as insidiously threatening. *Ragged Dick* in this instance offers one way to account for the persistence of the unsocial in contemporary American upward mobility narratives. It is not, I would suggest, that such narratives have disappeared as a consequence of the New Gilded Age, but they have certainly assumed different forms that demand attention and comparative clarification alongside Alger's *Ragged Dick*.

To take one example: Curtis Sittenfeld's 2005 novel

Prep presents a lower-middle-class protagonist from the Midwest, Lee Fiora, during the course of four years of scholarship-funded attendance at an elite East Coast preparatory school. What claiming to be a professional, acquiring fixed lodgings, and pursuing nighttime studies have been to *Ragged Dick*, the combined merit-and-need-based preparatory school scholarship system is to Sittenfeld's late-twentieth century American protagonist. Both arrangements offer the chance to inhabit a protected, temporary space through which to navigate the competing claims of self-interest and social outreach.

Yet from the start, Lee emerges as peculiar: unlike *Ragged Dick*, she's not particularly outgoing or likeable, and the continual public reinforcement of her exceptional merit is persistently absent. At this preparatory school, she is average and remains average — more of a Henry Fosdick or a Tom Nolan than a *Ragged Dick*. Moreover, the possibility of Dick's reckless, premature philanthropy toward those less favored cannot be realized through Lee, since she routinely fails to perceive how anyone *could* be less favored than she is at this preparatory school. Hence the numerous difficult moments in *Prep* when Lee pointedly distances herself from students and staff at the school who are conspicuously in worse shape than she is, socially and economically: a poor African-American student on scholarship who relies on stealing from the wealthier girls; a struggling, unpopular young teacher with Lee's socio-economic background; a cafeteria worker briefly interested in her romantically.

She responds to the discovery of these circumstances by developing an incredibly detailed, critical attention to the social organization and required behaviors of the institution itself — all while remaining "unsocially" outside participation in them, as in an emblematic moment, early in the novel, when she stays home from a dance in order to peruse the yearbook and memorize details about her fellow students' backgrounds, activities, and opinions that even they themselves probably could not recount so well. Lee's unsocial behaviors thus suggest both a willing blindness to the immediate perception of need in others, and a related desire to shield herself from debilitating reminders of her own enduringly average status by turning the social institution of the preparatory school itself into the one object of study she proves expert in — the one area of existence about which she could claim professional knowledge.

In a review of *Prep*, initially published in **The Boston Globe** and then expanded and reprinted in his fairly controversial study *The Trouble With Diversity* (2006), Walter Benn Michaels argues that the problem with "utterly anodyne" novels like *Prep* would be the "classism" — rather than class differences — that a protagonist like Lee constantly feels threatened by: "Classism is what you're a victim of not because you're poor but because people aren't nice to you

when you're poor" (106). The "attraction of the scholarship novel," as he suggests, ties in "the work it does [...] not in exposing the injustices of class differences" at exclusive schools, "but in pretending there *are* class differences" in such places (96). In other words, the protective, unsocial behaviors that Lee adopts to forestall her own victimization by classism distract her from realizing that she, herself habitually fails to respond to the more acute socio-economic suffering of those few people she encounters in prep school who happen to be more in need than she is, and who only very briefly break into her sight as evidence of class difference.

Lee's situation thus explores, in a sense, the narrative ramifications of treating the position of the protagonist who begins in relative poverty as an identity — rather than as a socio-economic state that might be remedied, if the *relatively* poor at prep school (Lee) were able to perceive shared ground with the *actually* poor there. Or if Lee, in short, were able — in spite of her lack of exceptionality — to be a Ragged Dick. Yet while Benn Michaels presents a powerful, and impatient, critique of the narrative limits of identity-bound classism in contemporary novels of upward mobility, his problems with Lee Fiora's "stiff and unsocial" defensiveness about classism in the late-twentieth-century American preparatory school fail to address the pivotal position of the unsocial in such upward mobility narratives — and the earlier example of *Ragged Dick* emphasizes the endurance of this unlovable, but necessary, aspect.

That is, even in a world without classism, in which, overall, the wealthy are improbably, spontaneously "nice" to the poor — where only unpopular, penny-pinching elderly women accuse Dick and Frank of stealing and rudely call attention to their poverty — still the need for an unsocial cover of professionalism persists, and thus suggests itself as vital to making something like mobility (if only beyond the prep school, in Lee's case) happen. The contemporary protagonist who feels victimized by classism may be less appealing than Ragged Dick, and may systematically frustrate our attempts to sympathize with her; but she remains crucial to any professional, detached assessment of the social institutions that made her, and many others, that way.

Lisa Fluet is Assistant Professor of English at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Holy Cross and holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English Literature from Princeton University. She taught previously at Princeton University, Holy Cross, Trinity University and Boston College.

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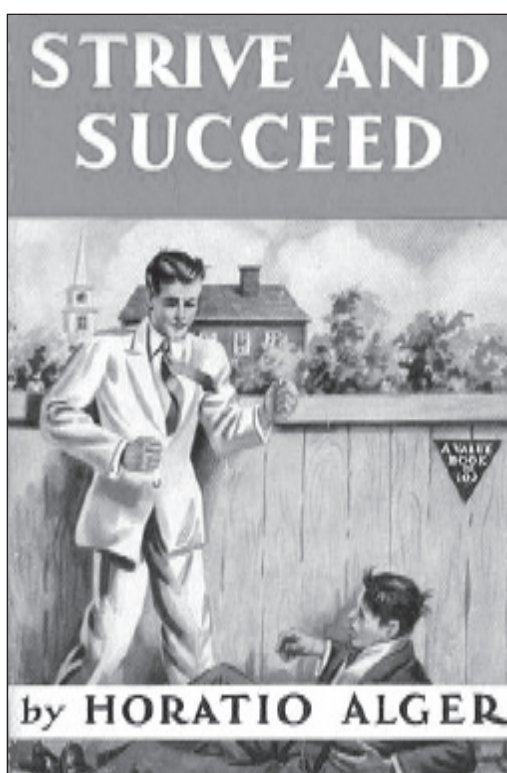
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HORATIO ALGER, THEN AND NOW

Wherein is set forth the story of Rip Van Winkle in terms of Tony the Newsboy

On Bunker Hill Day 1910 (June 17), Boston newsboys met at Bunker Hill and proposed the establishment of a Newsboys' Court in conformity with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This plan was supported by the School Board, and the court quickly became operational. (Licensing of Boston newsboys was handled by the Boston school committee — probably a mechanism devised by reformers to assure that newsboys were attending school).

The court would deal with all first offenses against the rules and regulations governing the trade; offenses might include truancy, short-changing customers, selling papers on streetcars, smoking, and gambling. The newsboys' court handled these complaints in lieu of the juvenile court, which was established in Boston by statute in 1906, and police officers were instructed to bring complaints against newsboys to the newsboys' court. According to the *Documents of the School Committee of the City of Boston*, "the establishment of a newsboys' court as a final step in the movement of self-government among the licensed school newsboys will unquestionably largely reduce the

number of boys who now get into court for petty offences which could equally well be handled by a newsboys' court such as the boys themselves are now proposing." Young judges elected from among the newsboys themselves heard cases and handed out sentences. According to the **Boston Evening Transcript** (November 29, 1911), "two mature men sit on the board with the boys."

This remarkable step in self-government followed upon the creation of the Boston Newsboys' Republic exactly two years prior, on Bunker Hill Day 1908. Approximately 3,000 newsies met and ratified their founding and governing document. This new government for newsboys raised the minimum age for newsboys (from ten to eleven) and set an 8 p.m. curfew (it had been 10 p.m.). They apparently also had the power to regulate the minimum age for bootblacks and to police other street trades plied by the young.

I discovered the following **Survey** article while researching the New York newsboys' strike of 1899 for the September-October 2012 issue of **Newsboy**.

— Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)

By Lewis E. Palmer

"Tony the Newsboy" was his name and Horatio Alger was his father. Last Saturday we figuratively coaxed Tony from between the frayed covers in a Sunday school library (of course he was sleeping in an ash barrel) and took him to the Boston School committee. He was so pitifully forlorn, all shreds and grime and ashes, that we let him sit on the floor behind a blackboard where he could see but not be embarrassed. For though Tony is still a favorite when he stays where he belongs, in his book, we felt that he might not prove very popular among the fifty up-to-date newsmerchants in the room. Picture him crouched down in the chalk dust behind the blackboard, watching and listening with mouth and eyes and patches agape.

Judge Harry Hornstein, "aged sixteen, sir," of the Boston Newsboys' Trial Court, was speaking: "I am not here to do any electioneering today, fellows. I have been serving on this Trial Court for a year now and my term of office is over. It's up to you fellows representing over fifty schools here in Boston to elect a new board today and we all want to see the best boys win out, no matter what their color or religion or school is.

The court during the past year had tried to give every fellow a square deal, and although some of us don't know very much about jurisprudence we've been on the job for justice to all and I think you fellows will agree with me. It's poor business to sell before six o'clock in the morning, because a fellow that sells before that time don't get enough sleep at night and is dopey the next day in school. If you want to grow up to be a bum, the best to start is to sell late at night to the sports who ought to be home in bed. If you're on the job with your badge during the hours when you ought to be on the job, you won't run up against this court or any other court."

We thought we saw Tony slink back a little farther into the corner when Philip Davis, the supervisor of licensed minors, introduced the five candidates for the three positions in the Trial Court. A little Irish chap from South Boston, an aspirant for the bench, explained that he could make up in ability what he lacked in size. A colored boy from Dorchester modestly set forth his claims. A German from English High and a Jew from the High School of Commerce told just why they should be elected judges.

Then the balloting started. There was a rumor that the slate had been "fixed," but in reality the votes were split from the head of the ticket down. In Tony's day there weren't such things

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*This article originally appeared in **The Survey**, No. 27. on December 2, 1911, pages 1275-76, a major publication for the emerging social work profession and progressive era reformers.*

HORATIO ALGER, THEN AND NOW

(Continued from Page 13)

as newsboy republics, and so Tony was more aghast than ever when he saw that the balloting included a captain general and a general secretary as well as the three judges for the Trial Court. Each captain of newsboys from the fifty schools had a vote for each candidate, some of the delegations carrying over 200 votes from their respective districts and some swinging not more than twenty. The final count showed that the Trial Court for 1911-12 will consist of Michael Berman, Ab Resnick, and Henry Brown, a colored boy. The captain general will be James Biederman, and the general secretary Joseph Flax.

When the cheering was over we thought of Tony in his patched trousers and ragged shirt. But Tony had gone back to his ash barrel in the Alger book. Newsboy republics and newsboy courts had made him homesick.

The Boston Newsboys' Republic consists of all newsboys between the ages of seven and fourteen licensed by the School

Committee, as distinguished from the older boys licensed by the City Council. The Republic has some citizens over fourteen who attend school and agree not to smoke, gamble, short change or do anything whatever unbecoming a young citizen. It has been in existence for about four years and is a self-governing

scheme applied to the needs of the trade. It is made up of 3,000 licensed newsboys, 100 additional captains and lieutenants elected annually by the boys according to school districts, a chief captain, a general secretary, and seven district captains.

The Newsboys' Trial Court, established about a year ago, is the republic's department of justice. The court consists of three newsboy judges elected from the ranks of the captain, a clerk, and two adult judges

appointed by the School Committee. The court deals with all violations of license regulations and minor troubles which before had clogged the Juvenile Court. A year's trial has proved the newsboy's court a success.



Newsboys gather outside the offices of the Boston Journal in October 1909. Photo by Lewis Hine, who was working for the National Child Labor Committee.

THE SAILOR'S RETURN. A CHRISTMAS STORY.

By Horatio Alger, Jr.

"Uncle Ephraim, can you let me have a little money this morning?"

Ephraim Badger put on his disagreeable expression with which he always received applications for money, for though well to do, he was far from being a liberal man. "Maybe I might squeeze out a little," he said, ungraciously; "but times are dull, and money's tight. Here's fifty cents. Will that do you?"

Fanny Danforth made no motion to take the tattered bit of

currency extended by her uncle. Her lip curled just a little, and a flush came to her face.

"Fifty cents would do me no good," she said. "I need as much as five dollars."

"Five dollars? Are you crazy? ejaculated her uncle.

"For the land's sake!" chimed in her aunt, who was if possible, a little more tight and grasping than her husband, — what do you want with five dollars? You must think your uncle is made of money."

"There is going to be a Christmas tree at the chapel on Christmas eve," said Fanny, and all the teachers are going to give presents to the members of their class. My scholars will be expecting them as well as the rest."

"Let 'em expect," said Aunt Phoebe, bluntly. "For my part I don't believe in Christmas presents. It's a new-fangled notion entirely. They didn't have 'em in my day. It's a clear waste of money, to my thinking."

"I agree with you," said her husband. "If children have good clothes and enough to eat, it's all they need."

"If you must give 'em anything," continued her aunt, "make

This story originally appeared in The Home Circle on Dec. 25, 1869, and was subsequently published in Gleason's Monthly Companion in the December 1881 issue. This is its first appearance in Newsboy.

them some rag babies. They won't cost anything."

"My scholars are boys. Rag babies would not be very acceptable to them."

"Well, make 'em some pen-wipers," suggested the economical aunt.

"I'd rather not give them anything at all," said Fanny, the indignant tears nearly forcing their way into her eyes — "unless I can give them something decent."

"Seems to me you're rather lofty in your notions. So pen-wipers aren't decent. What do you call decent?"

"I want to buy them each a nice book. That's what most of the teachers are going to give."

"That's what I call downright foolish, spendin' so much money for books. They'll read 'em, and that's all the good they'll get out of 'em. However, if 'twas your own money, 'twouldn't make so much difference; but you want to throw away your uncle's money on such nonsense, that your scholars may think you're generous."

"I only ask for money I have fairly earned, Aunt Phoebe," said Fanny, indignantly. "I've worked hard for you for the last six months, and all the money I've had in that time was four dollars and sixty-seven cents."

"Haven't we given you a home?"

"You have given me board and lodging, but I have earned a good deal more than that. I've earned fifty dollars beside, at the least calculation, yet you grudge me, what in addition to what I have had, would make only one-fifth of that sum."

"That's what you call gratitude, Fanny Danforth?" said her aunt. "We took you in when you hadn't no home, and I gave you a share of ours, and that's all the thanks we get for it. Well, well, there ain't much gratitude in the world."

"Why should I be grateful? You dismissed your hired girl when you were paying two dollars a week, and I've done her work. It's you, and not I that have benefitted by my coming here."

Mrs. Badger could not very well gainsay this, so she took refuge in fresh charges of ingratitude, and bethought herself also of underrating Fanny's services.

"You've worked pretty well," she said, "but you ain't begun to do as much as Cynthy did."

"Then," said Fanny, "you had better get her back again."

"We can't support both of you."

"You needn't. In the course of a month I will get something to do, and go away."

"Father," said Aunt Phoebe, who had no desire to lose her cheap and efficient assistant. "I guess you might as well give Fanny the money she wants. She won't call for any more for a good while."

"Won't three dollars do?" asked Uncle Ephraim, reluctantly drawing out his wallet.

"No, it won't," said Fanny, firmly.

The farmer sighed, as he passed over the five dollar bill into his niece's keeping. He looked at it regretfully, knowing

that it was passing from him forever.

"Be keeferful how you spend it," he said. "Five dollar bills don't grow on every bush."

"That's very true," thought Fanny, as she took the money so grudgingly given, with a strange sense of humiliation and mortification at the hard struggle she had to get it. Immediately afterwards she had to go about her household employments.

In the course of the afternoon a neighbor came in.

"Have you heard about Caroline Peyton's sickness?" she said.

"No. When was she took?" asked Mrs. Badger, who was not very correct in her grammar.

"Yesterday. She had bleeding at the lungs. The doctor says she must give up keepin' school."

"Who's going to take her school?"

"I heard Deacon Penniman say they hadn't got anybody yet."

Fanny Danforth heard this, and the thought struck her — "Why should she not apply for the vacant school?" Her education was sufficient, and her work would not be as hard as her uncle's, while she would be independent and not be regarded as living on charity. So when she went out in the afternoon to make purchases, she took the deacon's on her way, he being Chairman of the School Committee.

"Good afternoon," said the deacon, pleasantly.

"Good afternoon," Deacon Penniman. "I heard that Miss Peyton is sick."

"Yes, she was taken down suddenly. I'm sorry for her, and sorry for the school. It wasn't easy to find a teacher now — that is, a good one. Most of them are already engaged."

"Suppose you take me," said Fanny, quickly.

"Are you in earnest?"

"Yes. I should like to try it. I never taught before, but I think I should succeed."

"I've no doubt you would. I wonder I didn't think of you before. You know enough, and I guess you can manage the children."

"I like children, and I don't think I should find much trouble."

"The pay is seven dollars a week," said the deacon. "It isn't very large, but you can get boarded at three dollars."

"That'll be four dollars a week besides board," thought Fanny with satisfaction — "while at Uncle Ephraim's I have got only ten dollars in six months, and that I had to fight for."

You can be examimed at once if you like," said the deacon. "You'll be wanted to begin on Monday. Maybe you'd like to review your studies a little."

"No, I'm ready now," said Fanny, promptly.

"The examination was very satisfactory, and Fanny Danforth left the house, the regularly engaged teacher of the school in District 3.

"That will be better than working as a drudge in my aunt's

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THE SAILOR'S RETURN.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

(Continued from Page 15)

family," she thought with satisfaction.

The next day was Christmas – a day ushered in that year by snow, which fell thick on hill and plain, loading the trees with feathery flakes, and giving a wintry aspect to the country about.

Fanny sighed as she recalled the past Christmas. Then her parents were both living, and she was the inmate of a happy home. More than this, she was betrothed to a young man whom she loved, who, led by his tastes, had adopted the adventurous life of a sailor.

But in May her parents both died of a contagious fever, and a month later the tidings came that John Hilton, her betrothed, then absent on a long voyage, had fallen from the side of the vessel and been drowned. Thus she was cut off, almost at once, from all the ties that bound her to the world. Aunt Phoebe invited her to become an inmate of her household. Little time, however, did she give to the stricken orphan for mourning those of whom she had been bereaved. She intimated pretty plainly, that she expected her niece to earn her living by assisting in the domestic work of the house, and after a brief period she dismissed her only servant, Cynthia, as she called her, and Fanny found that she was expected to take her place.

Fanny was not indolent. She was ready to do her part, but it did seem to her at times, that the services she rendered were worth more than the meager pittance she received in return. As to board, her aunt was noted for her meanness, and the food might easily have been of better quality and in greater abundance.

It was now Christmas morning, and the snow was falling. Fanny looked out of the window, and thought sadly of the gallant sailor whom she loved, and who, months ago, had perished by the relentless sea.

"How different would be this Christmas day if he were here?" she thought.

She had not yet told her aunt of her engagement to teach. She felt she must do so.

"Aunt Phoebe," she said, "you were speaking of Cynthia yesterday."

"Well."

"I hear that she is out of a place, and that you can get her back again."

"I don't want her!" said her aunt. "I ain't the woman to send my niece away from the house."

Fanny smiled to herself. She understood very well why her aunt preferred her to Cynthia.

"But, aunt, I think it will be better. Cynthia, you say, can

do more work than I."

"What are you goin' to do?" asked Mrs. Badger, abruptly.

"I have engaged to teach Miss Peyton's school at seven dollars a week."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Aunt Phoebe in surprise and dismay. "Are they actilly going to give you seven dollars a week for teachin' school?"

"Yes, and as that is better than you can afford to give me, I have accepted the offer."

Mrs. Badger compressed her lips in disappointment. She had imposed upon her niece because she thought she had no other resource; and now she found that she has emancipated herself.

"Keepin' school don't last all the year," she said; "there's vacation."

"In vacation I can do as I have been doing," said Fanny.

Her aunt said no more, but regretted that she had made any fuss about the five dollars, as that had evidently put into Fanny's mind the idea of teaching. So avaricious people are likely to overreach themselves.

She was suddenly startled by a loud scream from Fanny, who rushed to the door, threw it open, and dashed bare-headed into the snow.

"What possesses the critter?" she ejaculated to Uncle Ephraim, who had just entered.

They both went to the door, and saw Fanny, with both hands clasped in those of a young man in the dress of a sailor, who was advancing towards the house.

"If it isn't John Hilton!" said Aunt Phoebe. "I thought he was dead."

But John was explaining to Fanny how it happened that he wasn't dead, that the report was wholly false, that he had come home with plenty of money, and promotion to the position of mate.

"And now, dear Fanny," he said, "I've come home to be married."

"But," said Fanny, demurely. "I'm otherwise engaged."

"Who to?" said John Hoarsely,

"To Deacon Penniman."

"To that old man? O, Fanny!"

"Not to be married, John. Only to keep the school in District No. 3."

They went into the house together, and as Fanny's fortunes were now looking up, were graciously received. The Christmas dinner was a merry one, though the turkey which Uncle Ephraim had bought at a bargain, was somewhat tough.

In a fortnight, Fanny Danforth became Mrs. John Hilton, but continued to teach the school. She is now established as mistress of a pretty house, and her husband is now Captain John Hilton, who has prospered so well that he soon means to establish himself permanently on shore.

So joy came with the snow, and Christmas was made merry by **THE SAILOR'S RETURN.**