

THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



Horatio Alger, Jr.

1832 – 1899

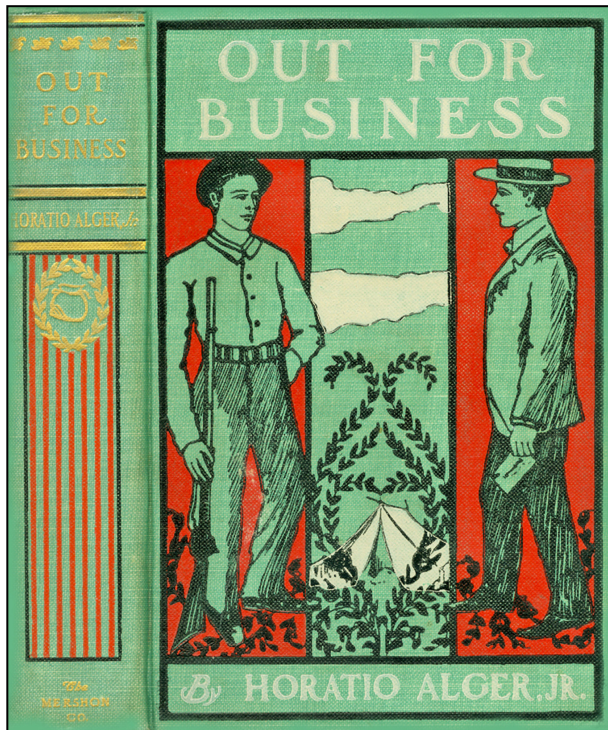
A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

VOLUME LIII

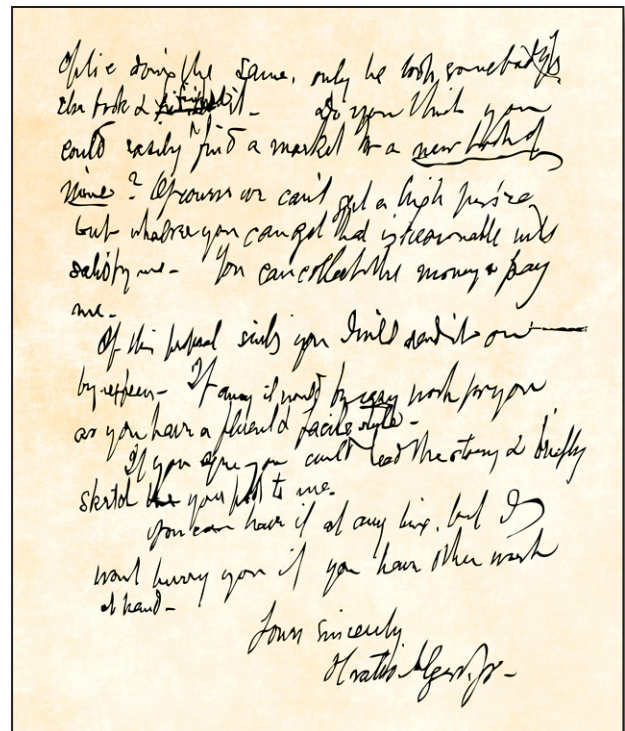
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2015

NUMBER 5

‘A fluent and facile style’



Edward Stratemeyer becomes the literary heir to Horatio Alger, Jr.



At right: the second page of a letter dated Oct. 26, 1898, in which Horatio Alger wrote to Edward Stratemeyer, asking “Can you take my story and finish it in my style?” This manuscript, which Alger said was two-thirds written, eventually became two books: *Out for Business* and *Falling in with Fortune*, the initial titles of the 11 Stratemeyer-Alger completions. Full text of this letter is on Page 7.

-- See Page 3

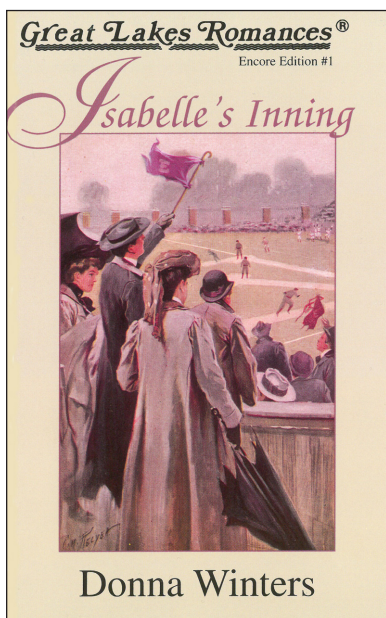
Sara Ware Bassett: *The Invention Series* — and more

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President's column

I am constantly amazed by the ways that the Internet in general and venues such as eBay and Amazon have broadened our knowledge of the authors and titles we study. I am an avid collector of the works of Ralph Henry Barbour. Given that he died in 1944, I would not have expected to find his books appearing much beyond that date, as publishers gradually let his titles go out of print. Thanks to eBay, I have recently acquired two somewhat esoteric exceptions to this rule.

The first is a modern romance novel by Donna Winters titled *Isabelle's Inning* (Caledonia, Michigan: Bigwater Publishing, 1997). Listed as the first title in the author's



"Encore Editions," the copyright page indicates that the book is "adapted from *Weatherby's Inning* by Ralph Henry Barbour, ©1903 by D. Appleton and Company." The front cover of the Winters paperback uses (and duly credits) the color frontispiece illustration by C.M. Relyea from *Weatherby's Inning* [see Page 20].

I was sufficiently intrigued by the sudden reappearance of this early Barbour

classic in new garb that I wrote to Ms. Winters, who graciously replied that she happened upon the book "in an antique store and realized that it would adapt well for romance."

The choice was thus based on serendipity rather than extensive study of Barbour and his contemporaries. Winters added that the book has sold as well as her other titles and that she is "in the process of reformatting the title for CreateSpace and Kindle" and that it will soon be available from Kindle. Having read both books, I found that the adaptation consisted of use of some of the names of characters and settings and some of the plot devices (Jack Weatherby cannot swim at the beginning of either

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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 books, 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

'A fluent and facile style'

Edward Stratemeyer becomes the literary heir to Horatio Alger, Jr.

By James D. Keeline (PF-898)

Part 1

By most measurements of the term, Edward Stratemeyer was successful. He wrote 168 stories that were published as books along with many more for periodicals. Through his Stratemeyer Syndicate, he produced several hundred volumes of books in series that are still household names today. When he died in 1930, he left an estate that would allow his family to live in comfort.

Yet this success was not instantaneous. Instead, it was a journey with mile markers and a horizon stretching into the distance.

As a reader, he enthusiastically devoured the books available to him. This included books owned by his older brothers.

He also began writing at an early age and engaged in the popular 1870s hobby of amateur printing to place his own and writings of others in miniature story papers and chapbooks.

Yet, it seems clear that his father thought that young Edward was wasting his time by writing and he could not realistically make a living from it.

Henry Julius Stratemeyer was some 46 years older than Edward, who was the youngest child in the family. "Julius," as the family called him, was 62 years old when Edward graduated from Public School No. 3 at 16 years of age.

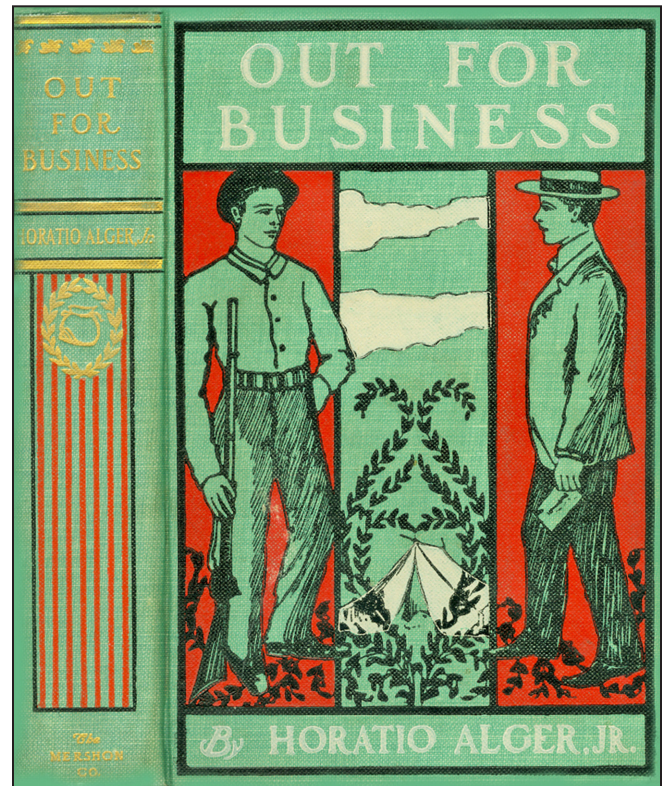
The title and opening lines of his valedictory address hinted at his state of mind in June 1879:

Experience is the school where man learns wisdom.

A young person starting out in life has no experience, and does not, at first, feel the want of it.

He is filled with a desire to accomplish some great thing which will render his name famous in the annals of the world. With this object in view he starts out, but is soon brought to a standstill by a want of experience ...¹

This article is an expanded version of a presentation under the same title at the 51st annual conference of the Popular Culture Association on April 2, 2015 in New Orleans, La.



Julius had a time in his youth when he was willing to take risks. He was an early 49er, seeking gold in California for a couple years before he returned to New Jersey around 1851. Shortly after his return he helped to settle his younger brother's estate, married his brother's widow, and adopted his three sons. He settled down to establish a successful tobacco store in Elizabeth near the crossing of two major railroad lines. His family lived in a home above the shop and Edward was born there.

Several of the Stratemeyer brothers worked in Julius' shop and started their own businesses. In particular, Maurice had a tobacco and music store in downtown Elizabeth. At various times in his life, young Edward clerked in his father's and brothers' stores. He even found time to do some writing at Maurice's store.

The first clear indication that Julius had that Edward could make a living by his pen came when his son showed the check he had received for writing a story for **Golden Days**, the Philadelphia weekly story paper owned and edited by James Elverson.

"Victor Horton's Idea" was a tale of a boy who did not see eye-to-eye with his own father and struck off to

(Continued on Page 5)

Editor's notebook

This issue offers the first part of a project that has been in the works for more than three years: James D. Keeline's ongoing research of documents and letters in the Stratemeyer Records Collection at the New York Public Library relating to heretofore unknown information about the Stratemeyer-Alger completions.

For years, we've known the basics, but not the details of how these 11 books came about. In the late 1990s Keeline began to purchase microfilm copies of several thousand pages of material from the NYPL Stratemeyer files. We knew correspondence and other records concerning the Stratemeyer-Algers were likely included, and he has now extracted the material that forms the basis of his article "A Fluent and Facile Style."

Keeline first presented this topic as a paper at the 2015 Popular Culture Association conference in New Orleans, and he has expanded it for this article, which we plan to run as a three-part series. Part 1 examines how Stratemeyer began to correspond with Horatio Alger in the mid-1890s, with Alger (in failing health) in a letter dated October 26, 1898, asking Stratemeyer to finish his latest manuscript. This letter was already known; Alger researcher Gary Scharnhorst received a transcript of it from the Stratemeyer Syndicate in the early 1980s and excerpted it on Page 144 of his book (written with former *Newsboy* editor Jack Bales), *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger* (1985, Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

The second page of Keeline's photocopy of Alger's original letter is reproduced on Page 1. You can easily detect how Alger's deteriorating health adversely affected his penmanship. To aid in reading the letter, we have reproduced its complete text on Page 7.

Most of Edward Stratemeyer's outgoing replies to correspondence at the turn of the century are missing from the NYPL archive, believed to be in possession of the Stratemeyer family and not available. However, some pertinent documents were recorded by former Stratemeyer Syndicate partner Nancy Axelrad in the latter's personal notebooks, which are held in the Beinecke rare books collection at Yale University Library. Keeline has obtained copies of those notebooks from Yale, and that material fills important gaps in his narrative.

Part 1 covers the genesis of the first two of the 11 "completions," *Out for Business* and *Falling in with Fortune*. In Part 2 in November-December, Keeline will deal with the middle titles and their original source material, with the final books covered in January-February. Enjoy!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

24 August 2015

Hello Bill:

I have returned (via my 2006 Ford Ranger pickup) from my mission to DeKalb and have completed my notes on the unusual copy of *The Train Boy* in the Horatio Alger collection at Northern Illinois University.

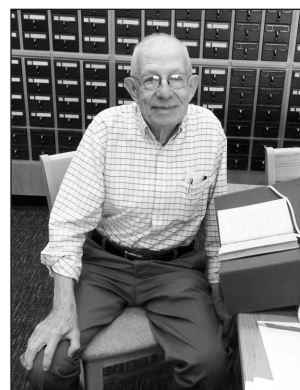
I have a copy of the first edition (per Bennett) in addition to my unusual bound copy that I purchased in Greenwich Village in 1956, and have taken elaborate efforts to identify any printing flaws or type wear to see if a printing precedence could be established. I have sent 12 typed pages of notes to Rob Kasper, and he will see if there are differences in his first-edition copy or the Dillingham version. My initial surmise is that Carleton did just one print run and signatures may even have been left over for Dillingham. It is not like *Huckleberry Finn*, where thousands of copies were printed over time, and every type break can lead to different "states" of the first edition.

What is true is that the bindings on my Greenwich Village copy and the NIU copy differ from each other and both from the usual first edition binding as described by Bennett. The Greenwich Village copy is also conspicuously missing the two front flyleaves, the frontispiece and all five of the illustrations.

I drove to Indianapolis for a Thompson family reunion, then two days in DeKalb, two days at the National Baseball Card Convention, two days visiting old friends in southwestern Michigan and two days returning to Long Island. I set limited objectives each day and had a wonderful measured and leisurely time. The NIU campus was deserted, and I had the Rare Book Room all to myself. Lynne Thomas is still in charge, and the Brad Chase Hursts were on rolling carts awaiting shelving.

At the card show (Rosemont, Illinois), I was invited one evening for a meal at Gibson's that was really very good. I was seated next to an old collecting friend, and at one point he said to me: "Keith, at least two of the collectors at this table have two Honus Wagner cards each."

Sincerely,
Keith Thompson (PF-035)
P.O. Box 67
Bellport, NY 11713



Keith Thompson during his visit to the Horatio Alger collection at Northern Illinois University.

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 3)

New York City to make his fortune like the characters in the dime novels he had read. As an author, Edward knew these portrayals were not realistic, in his story his hero, after many travails which are not nearly as easy of a time experienced by characters in stories face, returns home to tell his chum that "dime novels are bunk."

The serial story was published on five successive Saturdays in November 1889. Stratemeyer was paid \$75 for this effort and thereby gained his father's approval for his writing.

An Undivided Union

In 1894 his serial stories began to be published in book form in publisher libraries; the names of the series seemed to be prescriptive: **Bound to Succeed** and **Bound to Win**. Later in life, when he granted a few interviews, he routinely expressed a sentiment about his youthful reading preferences:

As a boy, I had quite a library, including many of Optic's and Alger's books. At seven or eight when I was reading them I said, "If I could only write books like that I'd be the happiest person on earth."

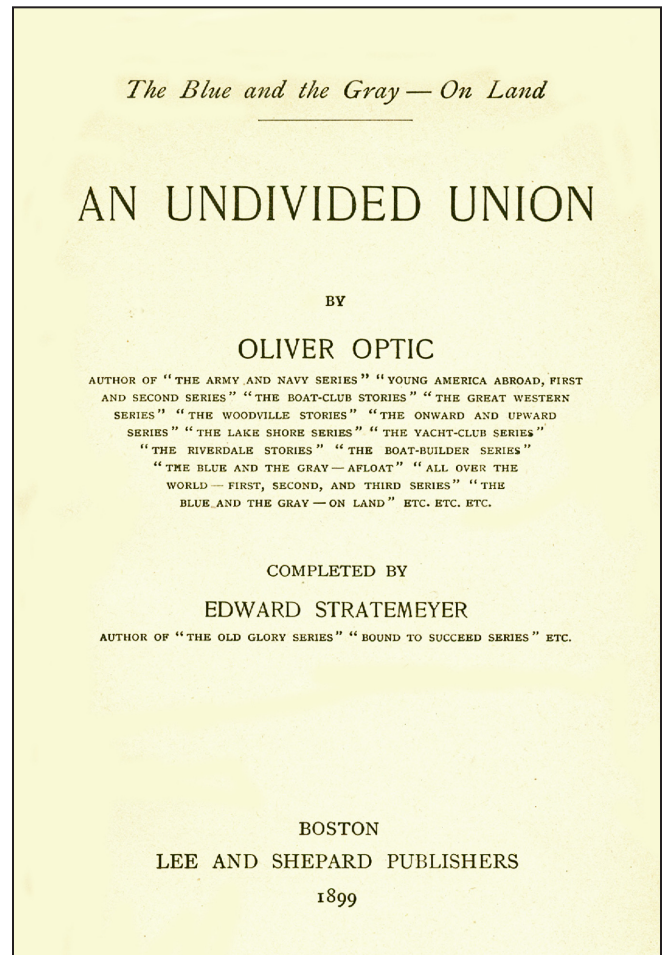
— "Newarker Who Writes for Most Critical of All Readers." *Newark Evening News*, 4 June 1927, Edwin J. Barrett.

All of the variations of these comments were given after Stratemeyer had been asked to write stories as two of his authorial heroes. Nevertheless, his interest in those authors, extending into his youth, seems real enough.

Edward's youthful dream was realized when he was asked by Lee & Shepard's Warren F. Gregory to write the final promised volume in "Oliver Optic's" **Blue and Gray on Land** series, *An Undivided Union*:

Now in regard to completing the sixth volume of the Blue and Gray on Land, to be called "The Undivided Union." We wish to ask what will be your lowest spot cash price for doing same this winter. We prefer to pay for it outright, and thus place the book on a non-copyright basis and know where we stand, and if terms are satisfactory would authorize you to begin as soon as you please, and pay you as soon as the work is satisfactorily completed.

We should expect a careful study of the preceding



Title page from the late William T. Adams' *An Undivided Union*, written by Edward Stratemeyer following an 1898 request from Lee & Shepard's Warren F. Gregory and published in 1899.

five volumes in order that you might enter into the spirit of the writer and the series; and also expect as much faithfulness in local color as you could secure. It would be unnecessary to remind you that you would have a stiff piece of work cut out to follow a man matured by a life-time of successful writing; at the same time it would be a grand thing for you to have performed this piece of work creditably. We believe that you can do it if you give it sufficient time and attention. Haste might lead to unpleasant consequences. Kindly advise us what will be your best cash offer.

— Warren F. Gregory (Lee & Shepard) to Edward Stratemeyer, 15 October 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

Edward agreed and wrote this story in November and December of 1898, receiving \$300 for it. The book was copyrighted on April 8, 1899 and copies were received

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'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 5)

at the Copyright Office on July 13, 1899.

Choosing Stratemeyer for this important volume was interesting. He had only written three volumes for L&S directly before this in 1898: *To Alaska for Gold*, *Under Dewey at Manila*, and *A Young Volunteer in Cuba*. The suggestion that he write this final "Optic" book came from one of his brother authors, George Waldo Browne:

A few months after the death of William T. Adams, ... I was asked who there was among the young writers of juvenile stories to take the place so long filled by the late "Oliver Optic." I replied, without dreaming of being a prophet: "I do not know, unless it is Edward Stratemeyer."

— "Sketches of Writers: Edward Stratemeyer," *March 1902*, George Waldo Browne.

Stratemeyer stated a couple times that although he read "Optic's" stories as a youth, he had not met Adams:

Allow me to thank you for the copy and the printed interview. You certainly got things pretty straight. All but about "Optic." I never knew him personally but after his death all his notebooks, etc. were turned over to me, to finish his book, "An Undivided Union," which is published with both our names on the title page. Alger I knew very well.

— *ES to Louis Ginsberg, 10 November 1920*. See NYPL, box 11

An *Undivided Union* was published first, in 1899, but well before then he had connected with the other boys' story giant, Horatio Alger, Jr.

Alger and Stratemeyer

Stratemeyer became an associate editor for Street & Smith the Monday after his daughter Harriet was born on Sunday December 11, 1892:

Went to work on Street & Smith
editorial staff at Forty
dollars per week, on
December 12th 1892.
Worked three weeks — 120.00
Paid \$50. Paid in full

Baby girl Harriet born Sunday
December 11th 1892, at 8:40
A.M. weight 5 3/4 pounds.

— *Stratemeyer Literary Account Book, v. 1*. See NYPL, box 317.

Over the next couple of years, Edward worked for Street & Smith a couple days a week. In 1894 when he was working on *Good News*, he contacted Alger to obtain a serial for the story paper. Alger politely declined:

It would be pleasant for me to appear in "Good News" again but not on the terms you spoke of. I don't think the publisher would pay me my price for a new story.

I have a serial which appeared in 1886 in "N.Y. Waverly," a paper who lasted but a year. Of course it is quite forgotten by the readers. This story belongs to me. It's a story located in Chicago. I would not sell the copyright but would sell the right of publication as a serial for \$200 with the privilege of a second publication from five years hence — or indeed at any time Street & Smith may desire.

I congratulate you on your accession to the editorship of "Good News" and am sure you will find the position an agreeable one.

— *Horatio Alger, Jr. to ES, 7 March 1894*. See NYPL, box 1. (emphasis in original)

That *New York Waverly* serial was "The Hermit's Apprentice; or, Mark Manning's Mission" that began on June 19, 1886. *Mark Manning's Mission* was published as a book by A.L. Burt in 1905.²

Three years later, Stratemeyer had his own story paper, *Bright Days*, which included a reprint of Alger's "The Young Acrobat" (5 September — 12 December 1896).³

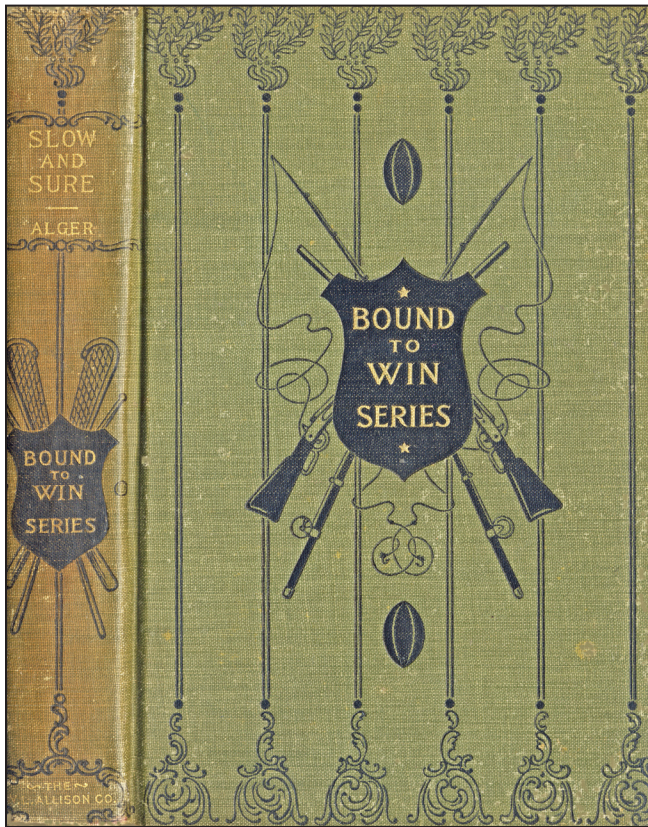
After he sold this publication, he tried to start another called *Comrades* to be published by William L. Allison, his book publisher of 1897, and Alger offered an old *Golden Argosy* serial from 1884 called "Work and Win; or, Jack Drummond's Luck and Pluck." Because "Optic" had used that title, it was ultimately published as *Wait and Win* by A.L. Burt in 1908.

However, Stratemeyer still helped to get an Alger story published by William L. Allison. Twelve books in Allison's *Bound to Win* series had been published in 1897 from Stratemeyer's serials. To this was added a 13th book, Alger's *Slow and Sure*, this reprint edition not dated but probably issued in 1898 based on the ads and this note of appreciation from Alger:

Thank you for your service in regard to "Slow and Sure." I heard something of it. Writers and publishers should help each other instead of doing each other harm. It will help to better in the end.

— *Alger to ES, 26 October 1898*. See NYPL, box 1.

Thus Alger and Stratemeyer were correspondents and likely met one another on occasion, especially when Alger was living in New York City before his health began to decline and he moved in with his sister in Natick,



W. L. Allison's 1898 reprint of Alger's *Slow and Sure*.

Massachusetts. Edward even included Alger on a list of authors with addresses and notes about their principal fields of writing for his planned work as a literary agent, buying serial stories to offer for book publication.

Out for Business and Falling in with Fortune

Horatio Alger wrote a pivotal letter to Stratemeyer on October 26, 1898 [Ed. note: the second page of this handwritten letter is reproduced on Page 1]:

I have been wondering if you can't help me. I have a story two thirds written, but am in a state of nervous breakdown and not only can't write, but can't invent the rest of the story for some time to come. I think of all the juvenile writers you can write most like me.

Of course I want this help to be sub-rosa. Can you take my story and finish it in my style? You will be left to your own discretion pretty much. By way of compensation, if satisfactory to you, you shall take the story and sell it to some periodical under my name. You will divide the proceeds equally with me but I shall retain the copyright and it will appear as my book. I remember Optic did the same only he took somebody else's book and finished it. Do you think you could easily find a market for a new book of mine? Of course we can't get a high price but whatever you can get that

is reasonable would satisfy me. You can collect the money and pay me.

If this proposal suits you I will send it out by express. I fancy it would be easy work for you as you have a fluent and facile style. If you agree, you could read the story and briefly sketch your half to me.

You can have it at any time, but I won't hurry you if you have other work at hand.

— Alger to ES, 26 October 1898. See NYPL, box 1. (emphasis in original)

Although most of Stratemeyer's replies to letters before 1905 are not in the Stratemeyer Syndicate Records Collection at NYPL, it appears Alger was still awaiting a reply on November 2nd:

If the proposal above made you does not strike you favorably, don't hesitate to say so. Perhaps later on, I may be able to do the work myself, but I am afraid it would create a good deal of delay.

— Alger to ES, 2 November 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

Alger was like other traditional authors who had a contract with a publisher to supply books on a regular basis.⁴ He also was used to making additional money by having the story issued as a serial in a story paper. This market was changing with the flagging economy of 1897:

There was a time when the "Through by Daylight" style of Optic and the "Ragged Dick" by you were just the thing, but the market has changed. Boys demand historical tales, works located in strange lands or else business stories, showing the details of great enterprises. The pure and simple domestic tale has been pushed to the rear, no matter how much you or I prefer to write such.

— ES to Alger, 2 November 1898. See Axelrad v. 2, pp. 64-65.⁵

Alger acknowledged Stratemeyer's current sense of the marketplace and the availability for serial sales:

Your last letter rec'd. Since chances of selling serial publications are so poor and prices so small probably we shall have to do without it. I would not agree to have it done short of \$200. Probably that better have you do the job and agree to pay you something. I will agree then to pay you \$50 for doing the work. Soon after the first of February when my publisher pays me off. It may be a day or two before I can examine and read the MS.

— Alger to ES, 14 November 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

After Stratemeyer advised him of the poor market for
(Continued on Page 8)

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 7)

selling serials, Alger agreed to send the partial manuscript to see what Edward could do with it:

I send you the 200 MS pages. 150 more will be required or there about. That is the deficiency is a little greater than I supposed. I can't give you any special suggestions, but shall have to leave matters in your hands.

See what your ingenuity can devise and I will see that you receive some compensation for your work.

The best way perhaps will be for you to read the story carefully and then suggest the plan of a conclusion and submit to me in the rough. You needn't hurry. I give you what time you need for the work.

— Alger to ES, 19 November 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

The story was sent on November 21. Alger mentioned that he was troubled by bronchitis with a corresponding shortness of breath.

Stratemeyer read the manuscript and returned it with a suggestion about dividing it into two stories and adding new material to make it appropriate for publication. These were satisfactory to Alger:

Have rec'd your MS. Will look it over with my sister in a day or two. My eyes are affected and she will assist me.

— Alger to ES, 14 December 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

The next day, Alger wrote to ask for his original manuscript to remind him of what he had written:

I shall have to trouble you to send me my original MS of the story again as I find my memory is at fault in two or three instances. Your suggestions so far as I have read them strike me favorably.

Please prepay express and I will make all right in the end.

— Alger to ES, 15 December 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

A couple days later the manuscript had arrived and Alger thanked him for sending it:

My dear Mr. Stratemeyer,

The MS has arrived. You did well to resend it. I will of course reimburse you. God forbid because I wanted to know if it were really worth fixing up. It is a good deal below my average having been written when I was in a state of nervous depression. Your suggestions will all receive attention. If you think you can win within a few months of care its serial publication. You receive one half, that will settle the matter. But one thing is impos-

sible — to allow its publication in book form outside of Coates. I won't consent to it under any circumstances. I am in no hurry whatever. I haven't the slightest idea of undertaking the revision myself.

Of course I have only taken a casual glance at the MS. My eyes being a good deal affected by my illness, so that it will take me some time to go through it. Go ahead with any other work as I am in no hurry whatsoever. Will communicate with you as soon as ready — If I thought there was a chance of serial publication even for a low price I would send on at once.

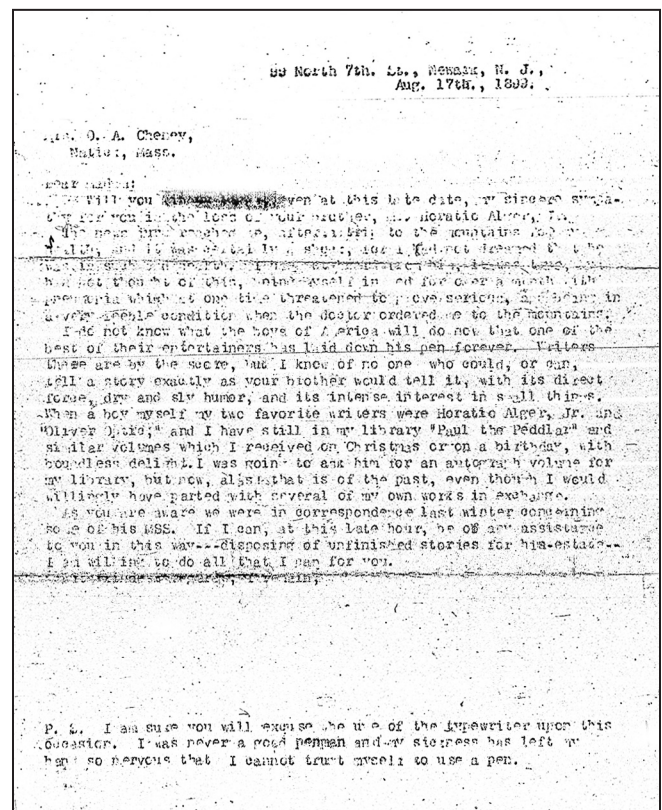
Yours Sincerely,
Horatio Alger, Jr.

It may interest you to hear that when I was in New York about 30 years I earned by par the sum of \$100,000. I congratulate you on the success of your new books.

— Alger to ES, 18 December 1898. See NYPL, box 1.

This was the last extant letter from Alger to Stratemeyer. But it must have been a satisfying one to him. Edward's authorial hero died seven months later on July 18, 1899. At the time Edward was having his own health issues and had gone to the mountains.⁶

Almost a month later, upon his return, he typed a letter of sympathy to Alger's sister, Olive Augusta Cheney [Ed. note: for ease in reading, the full text of this letter is reproduced on the next page]:



Dear Madam:

Will you permit me, even at this late date, my sincere sympathy for you the loss of your brother, Mr. Horatio Alger, Jr.

The news just reached me, after a trip to the mountains for my health, and it was certainly a shock, for I had not dreamed that he was in such bad health. I had not thought of this, being myself in for over a month with pneumonia which at one time threatened to prove serious, and



Olive Augusta Cheney, executrix of the estate of her brother, Horatio Alger, Jr.

being in a very feeble condition then the doctor ordered me to the mountains. I do not know what the boys of America will do now that one of the best of their entertainers has laid down his pen forever. Writers there are by the score, but I know of no one who could, or can, tell a story exactly as your brother would tell it, with its direct force, dry and sly humor, and its intense interest in small things. When a boy myself my two favorite writers were Horatio Alger, Jr. and "Oliver Optic," and I have still in my library "Paul the Peddler" [sic] and similar volumes which I received on Christmas or on a birthday, with boundless delight. I was going to ask him for an autograph volume for my library, but now, all of that is of the past, even though I would willingly have parted with several of my own works in exchange.

As you are aware we were in correspondence last winter concerning some of his MSS. If I can, at this late hour, be of any assistance to you in this way — disposing of unfinished stories for his estate — I am willing to do all that I can for you.

P. S. I am sure you will excuse the use of the typewriter upon this occasion. I was never a good penman and my sickness has left my hand so nervous that I cannot trust myself to use a pen.

— *ES to Olive Augusta Cheney, 17 August 1899. See NYPL, box 1.*

Cheney had been made the executrix of her brother's estate, and part of this role included managing the liter-

ary properties to see what income could be derived from them. While time did not allow Stratemeyer to complete Alger's stories while the latter was alive, new opportunities would soon open.

Edward contacted Cheney again on October 27 to obtain approval to work on the Alger manuscript and divide and expand it as planned. She expressed some interest in the prospect:

During the last year or more of my brother's sickness his mind was clouded and whenever anything was said about the MS to which you refer he said he "would do nothing about it just yet."

I have been appointed executrix of his will and I have possession of all his stories.

I am ready to receive and consider any proposal which you may be ready to make. I should not care to have the story referred to completed unless there seemed to be a reasonable prospect of selling it at a fair price.

— *Cheney to ES, 30 October 1899. See NYPL, box 1.*

In making his offer the next day, Stratemeyer laid out his proposed terms:

The story to be furnished by ES and to be published "By Horatio Alger, Jr., Completed by Arthur M. Winfield" or "Completed by Edward Stratemeyer." (I am now using my nom-de-plume Arthur M. Winfield on all domestic tales and my real name on historical tales.)

"When I complete the MSS if in my judgment it will be better to divide Mr. Alger's MSS. into two or three parts, finishing each part as a story by itself, I shall have the right to do so."

— *ES to Cheney, 31 October 1899. See Axelrad, v. 2, p. 95.*

He may have commented further on the amount of work still needed based on the length of the manuscript. She countered on November 2:

You are mistaken in regard to the length of my brother's story, as written. He told me he had completed one half of it, and I find, by comparing it with his printed books that he was correct.

Then in regard to price. In addition to the royalties on books published previously, he received, for the last four years previous to his death, \$500 each, for two stories per year, to be published in book form, sold outright to Henry T. Coates & Co., and these stories he had already received a good price for as serials going through a magazine.

Then, too, I should be entirely unwilling to have the

(Continued on Page 10)

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 9)

story divided up as you propose. If you wish to take the story and complete it as it is, retaining it in one story I should, under the circumstances, be willing to sell it to you, to be completed under your own or an assumed name, as you choose for \$150 cash. If you do not care to do it on these terms we will drop the matter where it is, as I prefer not to have the story divided under any circumstances.

— *Cheney to ES, 2 November 1899. See NYPL, box 1.*

It seems likely that Edward reminded her that the plan for splitting the manuscript and creating two books had been approved by Alger himself. His letter of Nov. 19 offered \$100 to Cheney if the manuscript was developed into one story or \$150 if it could be published as two books. Things were settled by Thanksgiving:⁷

Your letter containing the cheque and form of contract, was duly received. I have signed the latter, and return it enclosed, with my signature witnessed.

I will send you the MS tomorrow, as I am very much crowded with duties today. I will, also, observe your directions about placing a value on the package. We have been accustomed to do this in order to ensure both parties from loss.

— *Cheney to ES, 27 November 1899. See NYPL, box 1.*

The release (reproduced above) as signed on Nov. 24, 1899, covered the two books to be produced by Stratemeyer from the manuscript fragment.

For a typical Stratemeyer Syndicate series in later

years, the signed release would indicate that the story was written, submitted to the Syndicate and approved. It would next be edited and turned in to the publisher. However, for these stories, it was the beginning of the process. For these first two, Edward would seek a suitable publisher and then write the stories.

He first offered the unwritten stories to The Penn Publishing Co., a firm that had issued several high-priced Alger, including *The Young Boatman, Making His Mark* and *The Odds Against Him*:

Several years ago when I was editing "Bright Days" you wrote to me asking if I had any serials by Horatio

Alger, Jr. which I wanted to sell.

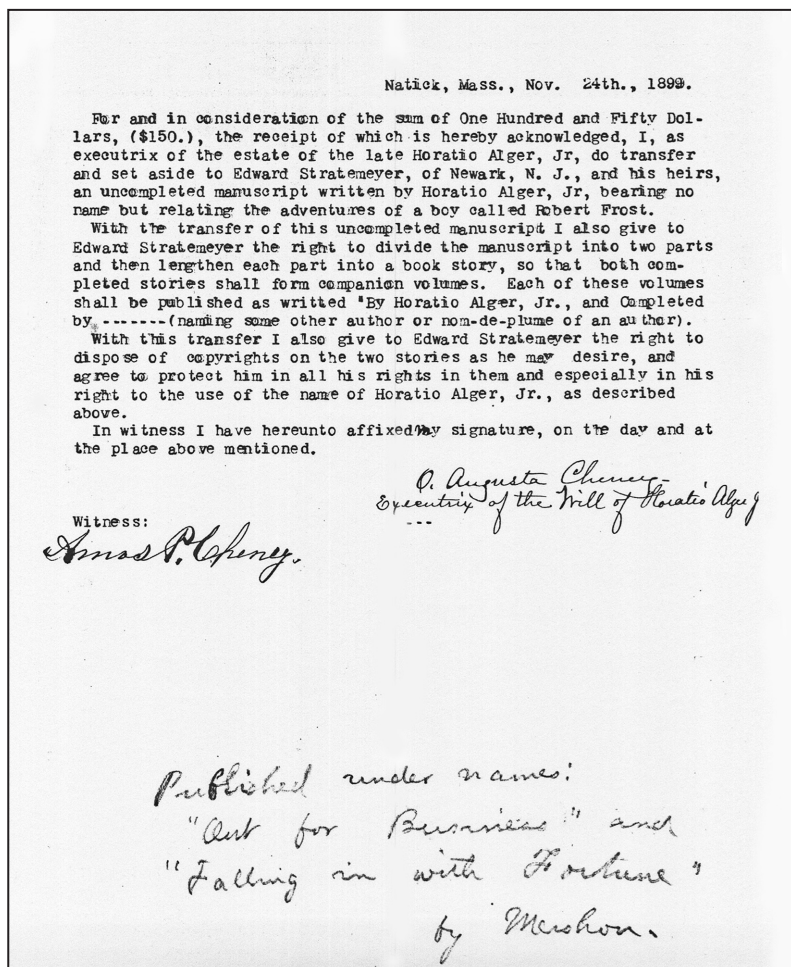
Since that time I have become the owner, through his executrix, of two stories, each about half finished. (ES to say "By Horatio Alger, Jr., completed by Somebody Else.") I am thinking of finishing "By Arthur M. Winfield," using a nom-de-plume... I would not care to use my own name as that has already appeared in connection with "An Undivided Union," the last work started by the late "Oliver Optic."

The stories on hand depict the doings of a country boy first in the country and then in New York and London. They are in the regular

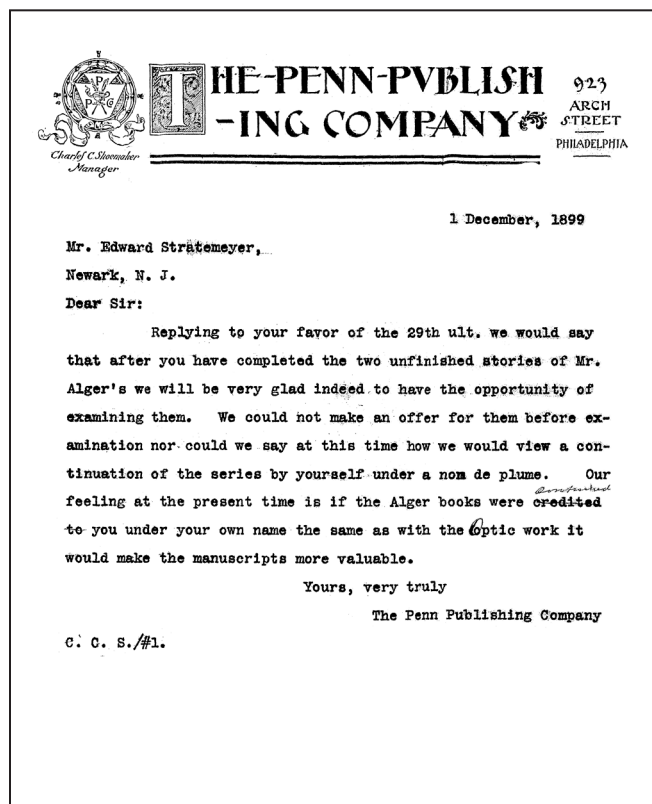
Alger style, in his own handwriting, and the conclusions will be such as he approved of before his death.

Many newspaper critics have said that my "Arthur M. Winfield" books are of the Alger order, and I think so myself. Munsey once said that my serial (now in book form) called "Fighting for His Own" was much like Alger as two peas.

— *ES to Penn, 29 November 1899. See Axelrad, v. 2, pp. 48-49.*



Published under names:
 "Out for Business" and
 "Falling in with Fortune"
 by Mershon.



They replied that they would decide after they had examined the finished manuscripts [letter reproduced above], noting that "... if the Alger books were continued by you under your own name the same as with the *Optic* work it would make the manuscripts more valuable."

— *Penn to ES, 1 December 1899. See NYPL, box 2.*

Stratemeyer's own principal publisher, Lee & Shepard, was managed by Warren F. Gregory. In this immediate period they had both been pleased with the sales of *Under Dewey at Manila* and this was part of the reason he had been asked by L&S to write the last "*Optic*" book, *An Undivided Union*.

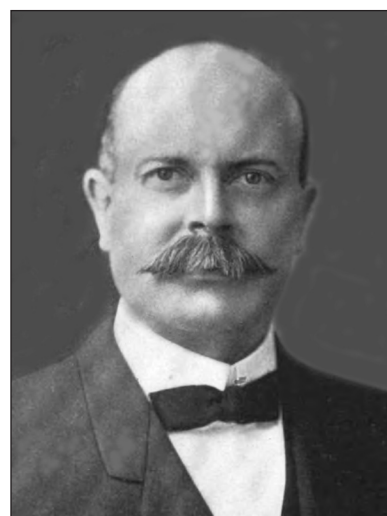
Stratemeyer was trying to find ways to put more of the books he wrote on the market but Lee & Shepard was reluctant to issue too many books, new or old, in a given year. They also wanted to be the sole publisher releasing books with his name on them. This was Warren Gregory's reply:

Your favors of December 30th and Jan. 3rd duly received, and have been carefully considered. We will endeavor to come to the point definitely in regard to your queries.

First. We do think it best, as well as fairest, that you confine your juveniles written under your own name to

our house, until there seem to be more reason for change than appears to us at present. On your books already published by us we shall pay you vastly more than an author of juveniles receives, on average, for MS. sold outright, and much of this without compelling you to wait a long period for copyright returns. We have thus taken upon ourselves a handicap which would make it very hard to compete with other houses, if you were to sell to them books under your own name at an approximately low price, as we understand was the case with the "*Minute Boys*," or even at a much higher price. The public, and certainly the other publishers, would not be apt to draw the distinction between those books and ours that you yourself might make, and we need the protection of control.

Second. In a former letter you stated that if we had your name, exclusively, you thought it only fair that we should issue, at least three books a year. This is perfectly right and we are ready to publish three books a year and push same in our best



**Lee & Shepard general manager
Warren F. Gregory.**

possible manner just as long as the selling quality of your new books makes it profitable for us to do so. We will, therefore, issue "*Fighting in Cuban Waters*" and two more books from your pen during the season of '99, in addition to putting the four Merriam books upon the market and "*An Undivided Union*." This certainly secures to you a most liberal representation for the coming season.

Third. We have understood that Dana, Estes and Co. have felt that you are under obligation to them to produce a sequel to the "*Minute Boys of Lexington*," and while we should have most serious objection to your writing more books than this for them, under your own name, or books for any other publisher, under your own name, while we were prepared to maintain the publication of, at least, three books per year, in good faith, we are willing to compromise the matter by recognizing whatever previous obligation may be felt that you should produce one more book for Dana Estes and Co. under your own name. We, accordingly, have no objection to offer if

(Continued on Page 12)

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 11)

you say to them that you are writing this book for them with the understanding that is be one book only, and that they make no further request from you to write them under your own name, but leave it entirely to you to communicate with them if you are ever in a position to do so and have the wish. If the publication of the Stratemeyer book by Dana Estes and Co. were brought up by other parties, your reply could be that it was done through an arrangement made previous to writing for Lee and Shepard. With every desire to be fair toward our neighbors in the publishing business, we feel like being very explicit on this point. We say the above with no spirit of dissatisfaction, but from the desire that the matter be now settled in a way that will not need to be re-opened at present.

We shall be glad to receive the MS. of "Fighting in Cuban Waters" by Feb. 1st, if possible, and will shortly forward you bill of sale for "An Undivided Union" for signature, together with balance on account for same.

The Old Glory Series gives every promise for being much in evidence the coming season, and we shall give our best efforts to it. We shall be glad to arrange, before autumn for a Stratemeyer circular, to give to the boys' clubs of which you spoke last fall.

— *L&S to ES, 6 January 1899. See NYPL, box 2.*

Gregory was quite annoyed when **Publishers' Weekly** contained an announcement for the **Flag of Freedom** series whose initial volumes followed themes similar to the more expensive **Old Glory** series issued by Lee & Shepard. In the trade it was pretty well known that the "Captain Ralph Bonehill" and "Arthur M. Winfield" books were personally written by Stratemeyer:

We are in receipt of the issue of the Publishers' Weekly of March 11th containing an announcement of the Flag of Freedom series by Capt. Ralph Bonehill. This name is, of course, a paraphrase on the Old Glory series, now so well established by us, two of the books are very nearly counterparts of two successful books in our series. As they will be supplied cheaply to the trade, and as the trade understands who "Capt. Ralph Bonehill" is, in fact our attention was first called to this advertisement by a local dealer, we are bound to suffer severely, and not only in the sale of your books, but we fear also in a certain lowering among the trade of the standard to which you were attaining.

Now, Mr. Stratemeyer, we did not expect this of you; we did not think that you would go into competition with

yourself to this extent, and from the brilliant prospects that you had we do not feel that you will be at all the gainer, to say nothing of the injury to us.

We, of course, understand a certain freedom given to you to write under a nom de plume, but did not expect to be used in this way. Having used you with the utmost honor throughout, and rendered you good returns we feel it proper to ask you what explanation you have to make of this, and also if this is the course you propose to pursue in the future.

— *L&S to ES, 13 March 1899. See NYPL, box 2.*

A few months later, Edward suggested that it might further enhance his reputation to write the Alger stories and have them issued by Mershon:

Will it be better to finish the books under my own name, and thus get the credit before the world of having finished both the writings of Oliver Optic and Horatio Alger, Jr.?

... By doing this, Mershon will have no Stratemeyer books on his list, but I will get the credit of being something of a successor both to Alger and to "Optic" and whatever may have been Alger's shortcomings as an author there is no doubt but what he had and has a juvenile following.

... the books will be no cheap ones as I have already arranged that all of my books hereafter shall be published at \$1.25 and they are going to be made so good that the wholesale price will not be less than 40-45¢.

— *ES to L&S, 14 December 1899. See Axelrad, v. 2, p. 51.*

In this context, it is not a surprise Gregory thought that it was a poor idea for Stratemeyer to place his name on these Alger stories:

Your favor of Dec. 14th in regard to completion of books by Horatio Alger, is at hand.

We have considered the matter carefully and to be frank do not think that we ought to be asked to sanction the use of your own name in this manner, and certainly cannot agree to it. We do not think, moreover, that we are selfish in our position. While recognizing the wide circulation of Mr. Alger in the past, we do not think that you can gain prestige by appearing as his successor; and feel very certain that in any case you would lose more by being regarded as a man who is trying to do too much, and you would gain by any more extended advertising in this manner. We, accordingly, advise that you prepare the work under a nom de plume.

— *L&S to ES, 16 December 1899. See NYPL, box 2.*

With some justification, Stratemeyer felt that his writing career had reached important milestones. He had some books that sold well, his name was rising in public attention, and he had received complimentary notices for his books. In particular, the assignments to write stories as his two favorite authors from his youth, "Optic" and Alger, was a crowning achievement to him.⁸

Even before the Alger books were written, he sent a Christmas care package to his older half-brother George Stratemeyer, the artist and Port Surveyor of Honolulu who left New Jersey when Edward was still quite young. They had not kept up a correspondence so it was a surprise to get a bundle of books, catalogs, and a letter from Edward to share his success.

This gift was described in one of the Honolulu papers and it mentioned the "Optic" and Alger work.

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

George Stratemeyer Gets a Very Real One.

A Brother Whom He Had Not Heard of for Years Sends an Interesting Present.

One of the best Christmas present surprises of the season was received yesterday by Port Surveyor Stratemeyer. It was a package of books from his younger brother in New Jersey and on opening the books Stratemeyer, who had not heard from his brother for many years, found that the sender was the author. This was not the only surprise, for with the package came a catalogue from Lee and Shepard, the Boston publishers, containing a long list of works by the other Stratemeyer.

Edward Stratemeyer is the name of the long-lost brother who suddenly discovered himself in such a pleasing way. He was only a small youngster when the port surveyor bid him good-bye on leaving New Jersey for the far west. Now he is an author whose stories of the Oliver Optic kind are having wide circulation. He has published no less than 125 books or serial stories and has 30 books on the market now. The five sent here, which the young author wanted given to his nephew, George Stratemeyer's son, are printed as a series, in cloth, and handsomely illustrated. They are tales of adventure for boys. The names of the books are "Under Dewey at Manila," "The Minute Boys of Lexington," "Under Otis in the Philippines," and "Bound to be an Electrician." Some very flattering press reviews accompany them showing that they have proven very successful.

With the publishing firm of Lee & Shepard which issued the works of William T. Adams, known all over the world as Oliver Optic, Edward Stratemeyer has taken the place of that distinguished author. The MS left by the late Mr. Adams was turned over to him for completion of the works.



Edward Stratemeyer in 1903, the period during which the "Alger completions" were published.

Another publishing firm has placed in his hands the MS left by Horatio Alger, another widely known writer of stories, so that Mr. Stratemeyer, with half a dozen works contracted for besides these, has his hands full for some time. One of his serials was published in a New York paper, as a prize mystery story, with a prize of \$1,000 for a correct forecast of the last chapter. Twenty thousand answers were received, only 17 of them being correct.

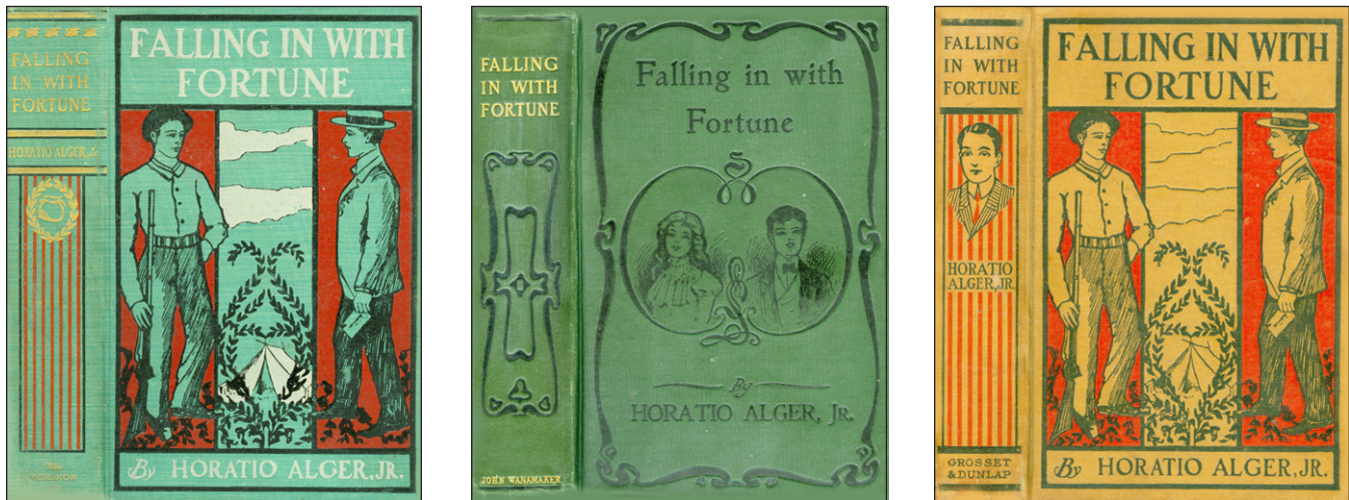
The port surveyor says that his young brother always had a desire to be a writer, but the local Mr. Stratemeyer had no idea that the other one was making the family name so widely known.

— (Honolulu) *Hawaiian Star*, 29 Dec. 1899, p. 6.

As evident in the article, Stratemeyer was very proud of his work on the "Optic" and Alger stories, along with his other writing, to mention them to his brother whom he had not contacted since he was very young. Indeed, he did so even before actually writing the Alger stories.

Ultimately, Stratemeyer turned to William Livingston Mershon to publish these Alger books. Mershon's New

(Continued on Page 14)



Falling in with Fortune: The Mershon first edition and reprints by John Wanamaker and Grosset & Dunlap.

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 13)

York firm had already started the **Rover Boys** and **Flag of Freedom** series by Stratemeyer, and he negotiated a very favorable contract with Mershon that was signed on December 23, 1899. In particular, it was noted that he would receive a total of \$500 for the two Alger books in addition to royalties and advances:⁹

... Also two unfinished stories by Horatio Alger, Jr., as yet unnamed but relating, first, the country adventures of Robert Frost, and, second, the city adventures of Robert Frost. These two stories to be published as "By Horatio Alger, Jr., Completed by Arthur M. Winfield," and to be issued as companion volumes by themselves...

... On the two Alger-Winfield books a royalty of five cents per copy on each volume sold, and the sum of Five Hundred Dollars outright in addition to such royalties. The royalties on all books shall be paid semi-annually, starting February 1st., 1901. Any royalty that has been paid in advance on a book shall be deducted from the first royalties becoming due on that book through sales.

The royalties in advance, amounting to six hundred dollars, and the payment of five hundred outright on the Alger-Winfield books, shall be secured by the notes of the Mershon Company to Edward Stratemeyer...

— *ES contract with Mershon, 23 December 1899.*

Arrangements made for publication, Stratemeyer began the important work of taking the Alger manuscript, dividing it as planned, and writing the new material to form two books. His *Literary Account Books* note that January was used for *Out for Business* and February for *Falling in with Fortune*. He submitted the first manuscript

to The Mershon Company on March 17, 1900:

Rec. from Edward Stratemeyer MS "Out for Business" by Horatio Alger, Jr., and Arthur M. Winfield.
— *Mershon to ES, 17 March 1900. See NYPL, box 2.*

The *Out for Business* portion of Alger's holograph manuscript comprises 13 chapters and 124 leaves. Alger seems to have followed a pattern which allowed 10 leaves per chapter. The place where Edward divided the MS was 4 pages into chapter 13. Stratemeyer's addition is in the form of a typed manuscript with leaves numbered from 125 to 199. These include either 3 or 4 typed pages per chapter. The whole has 33 chapters.

Some edits of the manuscript were made. He also changed the names of some of Alger's chapter titles.

Stratemeyer's typed preface for the book is a single page and dated March 1, 1900. This date may be somewhat arbitrary but it fits in the window between the writing of the story in January and the submission of the manuscript in mid-March. Stratemeyer is specific and accurate about the production of these two books:

The two stories "Out for Business" and "Falling in with Fortune," give to the reader the last tales begun by that prince of juvenile writers, Mr. Horatio Alger, Jr., whose books have sold to the extent of hundreds of thousands of copies, not only in America, but also in England and elsewhere. The gifted writer was stricken when on the point of finishing the stories, and when he saw that he could not complete them himself, it was to the present writer that he turned and an outline for a conclusion was drawn up which met with his approval — and it is the outline which has now been filled out in order to bring the tales to a finish, so that both stories

might be as nearly as possible what Mr. Alger intended they should be. It may be that the stories will not be found as interesting as if Mr. Alger had written them entirely, nevertheless the present writer trusts that they will still hold the reader's attention to the end.

— *Preface for **Out for Business**, 1 March 1900. The Mershon Company.*

As stated, the companion volume, *Falling in with Fortune* was written in February 1900. The extant typed manuscript by Stratemeyer begins with leaves numbered 92 to 176 for part of chapter 12 and all of chapters 13 through 33. Once again, 3 or 4 typed pages form a chapter. The completed manuscript was turned in on March 26, 1900:

We beg to acknowledge receipt of the copy for "Falling In with Fortune."

— *Mershon to ES, 26 March 1900. See NYPL, box 2.*

The copyright for *Out for Business* was processed on June 16, 1900 but two copies were not received until September 20, 1900. The listings in **Publishers' Weekly** announcing both titles to the trade appeared very late in the year on December 22, 1900. It is likely they were offered for sale previous to this date and this was merely a holiday promotion. Newspaper notices about the first book started to appear on March 22, 1901. Also, Stratemeyer was able to send copies to Cheney and she acknowledged their receipt on October 4, 1900:

Your letter, also the two packages of books, came safely to hand. The books look very well. I have been unable to examine them carefully as yet, on account of necessary absence from home for the past five days, but I hope to read them soon.

I received recently a call from a publisher who has taken the story published in Frank Leslie's Magazine for examination. If he likes it I think he will probably purchase it. I have sent for "The New Minister" for examination.

When you are at liberty to examine the two plays I would like to get your opinion of them. I enclose stamps to repay the postage necessary to send me the books forwarded by you.

— *Cheney to ES, 4 October 1900. See NYPL, box 1.*

* * *

Author's note: By this point Edward Stratemeyer had achieved one of the greatest aspirations from his youth. He had not only written like two of his favorite writers, "Oliver Optic" and Horatio Alger, Jr., he had written *as* them as well. A literary mantle had been passed on to him. In Part 2 of the article we will explore the ways other Alger material was adapted for use in subsequent "Alger completion" volumes.

NOTES

1. The full valedictory address is transcribed in the Nancy Axelrad notebooks at Yale, v. 1, pp. 99-101.

2. He also supplied them a short story called "Ben's Atonement" (8 May 1886).

3. Alger's "The Young Acrobat" was first published in **Golden Argosy**, Vol. 5, 30 April — 20 August 1887.

4. Cheney's letter to Stratemeyer of 2 November 1899 mentions two books per year [for Henry T. Coates] with a price for each of \$500. These figures could be an outright salary-type payment, but likely it was an advance against royalties.

This arrangement is a bit like Jules Verne's with Hetzel to provide two "books" per year for a given annual salary. Most of the stories were serialized in Hetzel's **Magasin d'éducation et de récréation** and subsequently published in book editions. A long story like *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* counted as three "books" under the contract. In the later years, particularly after he was shot by his nephew in a fit of temporary insanity, Verne's stories took on a more pessimistic view toward technology and were not big sellers. Few titles from this era are well remembered today except for *Master of the World*, because of the film with the same title.

5. On the same date, 2 November 1898, Stratemeyer wrote to Warren F. Gregory of Lee & Shepard to ask if that firm had ever published any stories by Horatio Alger, Jr., since he intended to offer the stories to them and have them "Completed by Edward Stratemeyer" as he had with their "Oliver Optic" volume.

Stratemeyer tried to express the estimation of Alger books among the boy readers by describing a conversation he heard at Wanamaker's Department Store in a letter dated 30 December 1898.

6. See sympathy letter over Edward's health from Warren F. Gregory to Mrs. Edward Stratemeyer, dated 3 May 1899, and letter of same date from Louis Charles Stratemeyer promising to write the volume in the **Flag of Freedom** series which Edward had begun.

7. Stratemeyer wrote to Cheney on 24 November 1899 in which he reported on writing the last "Optic" story and stated "it brings a sad thought, too, when I think that some day perhaps some younger author will be finishing up Edward Stratemeyer."

8. He mentioned the "Optic" completion and the forthcoming Alger work to Alvah M. Kerr of the **Chicago Ledger** (1 December 1899) and Dana Estes (25 January 1900).

9. "... 2 partly finished Alger books — one regarding country adventures of Robert Frost and the second regarding his city adventures. \$250. per volume and 5¢ royalty on every volume sold (retailing at \$1.25), also Arthur M. Winfield to be credited with completion of Alger stories." — *ES to Mershon, 14 December 1899.*

Sara Ware Bassett: *The Invention Series* — and more

By Bill Gowen (PF-706)

Most authors during the “golden era” of boys’ and girls’ series books built their reputation on that significant corner of the literature. Horatio Alger, Jr., settled on writing for boys after several less-than-successful attempts in adult fiction early in his career, such as *The Disagreeable Woman*. Edward Stratemeyer wrote a limited amount of adult fiction, but the vast majority of his personal writing was for boys. He didn’t turn to girls’ series books *en masse* until after he founded the Stratemeyer Syndicate, through which he hired contract writers to produce series books from plot outlines he had created.

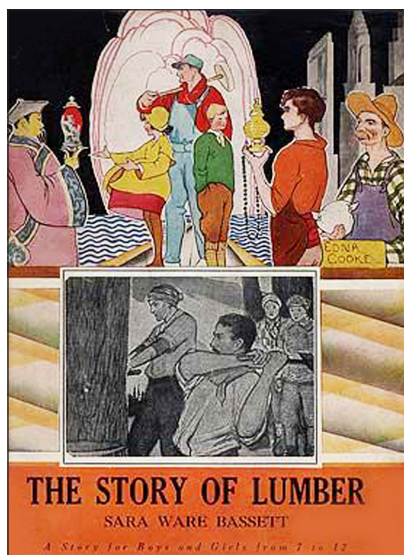
An interesting exception was Sara Ware Bassett, a New England native who enjoyed a writing career spanning some 50 years. In terms of popularity and sales, her adult romance-adventures ranked well ahead of her juvenile series. She was able to write one such book each year on average during the Great Depression and right on past World War II into the mid-1950s, no mean accomplishment. Most of those novels, set in the Cape Cod and Eastern Massachusetts region, were written for Doubleday (and its predecessor, Doubleday, Doran), so they had the marketing and distribution strength of that prestigious publishing house behind them.

The series books

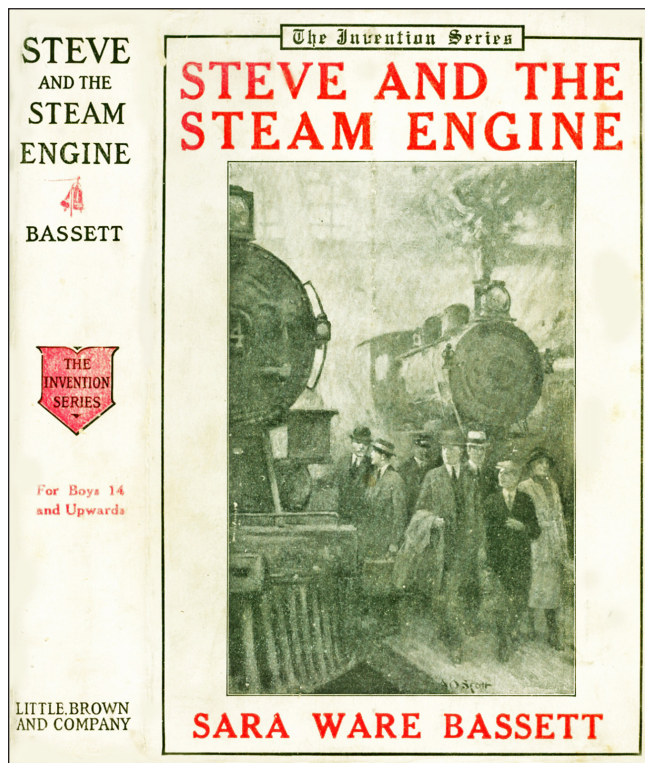
Bassett’s juvenile series books are much less known today. She wrote three series, the **Invention Series** (1920-25) for Little, Brown; the **Industrial Series** (1912-19)

for Penn; and the **Discovery Series** (1926-27), also for Penn. These books’ scarcity reflects their poor initial sales, but they are very well written, and you can order most of the 15 titles in print-on-demand editions if you have the urge to read them.

Of the three series, the six-volume **Invention Series** is the most collectible. It was promoted by Little, Brown as “for boys



Bassett’s initial series book, for ages 7-12, was *The Story of Lumber*, published by Penn in 1912.



14 and upwards.” The **Industrial Series** (seven titles), by the Penn Publishing Company of Philadelphia, is targeted for a younger readership of boys and girls ages 7 to 12. The two volumes of the **Discovery Series**, relating to the explorers Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, were advertised for boys 15 and older [see list of Bassett’s series books on Page 19].

Just from the titles, you would guess these are dry, by-the-numbers histories, but they are not. The **Invention Series** and **Industrial Series** are fictionalized adventure stories — or, more specifically, “success” stories in true Horatio Alger tradition. In the **Invention Series**, the books’ young heroes do not invent the printing press, steam engine or telephone, for example. Within the story, they learn about those iconic inventions and go on to use them to become successful in life and to help those around them.

In *Ted and the Telephone*, 14-year-old Ted Turner (an ironic name, as history shows), uses his locally built telephone hookup to help save a New Hampshire mill town from a devastating flood caused by the overflow of an upriver reservoir. In *Steve and the Steam Engine*, young Steve Tolman “borrows” his father’s automobile without permission and gets into trouble, and doesn’t own up to his misadventure. Upon traveling to New

York, he meets a veteran steamship captain and learns all about the history and perfection of the steam engine. He goes on to use his knowledge of that invention to help rebuild his reputation and the trust of his family and friends.

Each of the six books contains a chapter in which the invention of the title is discussed in historical context. In a preface to *Ted and the Telephone*, Bassett credits the memoir of Thomas A. Watson, *Birth and Babyhood of the Telephone*, for this background. Alexander Graham Bell's famous "Mr. Watson, please come here. I want you," was heard at Bell's tiny workshop in Boston on March 10, 1876. Bell was trying to perfect an invention he called the harmonic telegraph, but by accident, he discovered a method to send the human voice over an electrical circuit. This story is told in great detail by their tutor, Mr. Hazen, to Ted and his chum Laurie, whom he had recently rescued from a potential drowning.

While Bassett's writing style is "of the period," it is at times very atmospheric. Here is an example, from *Ted and the Telephone*:

With September a tint of scarlet crept into the foliage bordering the little creeks that stole from the river into the Aldercliffe meadows; tangles of goldenrod and purple asters breathed of autumn, and the mornings were now too chilly for a swim. Had it not been for the great fireplace the shack would not have been livable. For the first time both Ted and Laurie realized that the summer they had each enjoyed so heartily was at an end and they were face to face with a different phase of life. (p. 152).

Sara Ware Bassett: A true New Englander

Sara Ware Bassett was born in Newton, Massachusetts on Oct. 22, 1872, the daughter of Charles Warren Bassett and Anna Augusta (Haley) Bassett. Her family was descended from the Pilgrims, her American ancestry dating to 1621 when William Bassett and his family landed in 1621 at Plymouth aboard the *Fortune*, a follow-up ship to the *Mayflower* the previous year. The Bassetts immediately made their home in the growing Plymouth colony.



Sara Ware Bassett (1872-1968)



Clearly and evenly the message ticked itself off.
Then there was silence. Page 240.

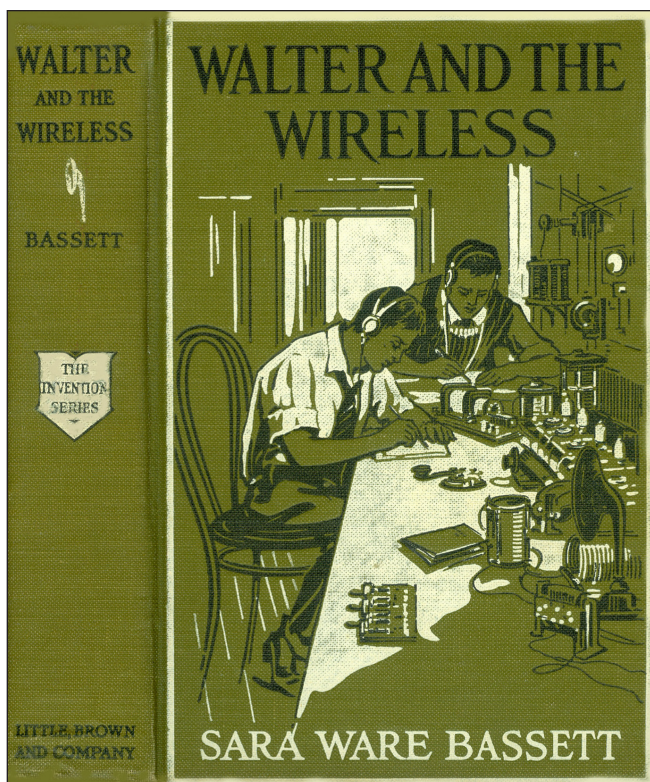
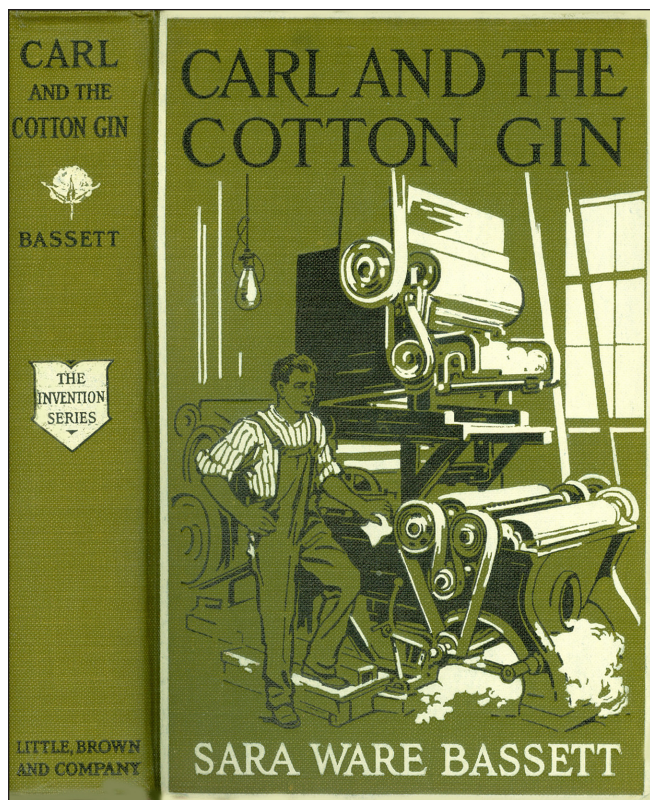
Walter and the Wireless

Sara spent her childhood in Newton, a town outside Boston, and attended public schools there, graduating from Newton High School in 1892. That same year, she entered the Lowell (Mass.) School of Design, at that time part of the Massachusetts Institution of Technology in Cambridge, where she studied textile design. She received an honorable mention diploma for designs that were part of MIT's exhibit at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893.

It seems likely that Bassett's knowledge of textiles helped her in writing *Carl and the Cotton Gin* in the **Invention Series** and *The Story of Wool* and *The Story of Silk* in the **Industrial Series**. However, Bassett never worked for the textile industry, instead deciding to become a kindergarten teacher in 1894, and after studying at the Symonds Kindergarten Training School in Boston, earned a position in the Newton school system, which she held from 1897 to 1917.

Bassett's workload as a teacher was a light one, just two hours per day, which allowed her to pursue

(Continued on Page 18)



Two of the six volumes in Sara Ware Bassett's *Invention Series*, published by Little, Brown and Co.

Sara Ware Bassett: *The Invention Series* — and more

(Continued from Page 17)

advanced studies in her three major fields of interest: English, psychology and philosophy, at Radcliffe College in Cambridge. Her high-profile professors included Charles Townsend Copeland, Josiah Royce and George Herbert Palmer. She also studied at Boston University under Professor Dallas Lore Sharp.

By this time, she had decided to become a writer, but realized she was not yet ready to enter that profession. "I was ill satisfied with my work and was determined to learn how to 'handle my tools,'" she said many years later when interviewed on the occasion of the publication of her 50th book.

The writing came slowly at first, but she sharpened her skills by making contributions to **The Youth's Companion** and other periodicals while still in college. They were for the most part literary articles written anonymously. Her first book was the little-known *Mrs. Christy's Bridge Party*, privately published in 1907. Bassett's next book, written for the age 7 to 12 youth audience, was *The Story of Lumber*, the first of her seven-title series describing various industries.

The adult novels

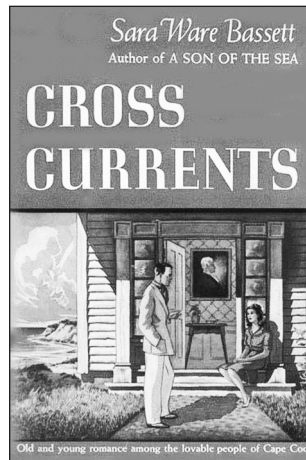
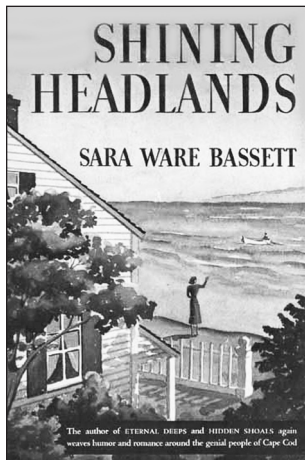
As stated earlier, Sara Ware Bassett's writing career included more than 30 adult novels, most of them romantic adventures set in the environs of Cape Cod and eastern Massachusetts and, as noted above, her first known novel was *Mrs. Christy's Bridge Party* (1907), with no commercial publisher credited in the book.

After a gap of several years, she wrote *The Taming of Zenas Henry*, published by George H. Doran of Boston in 1915. In 1935, that book was adapted for the Hollywood movie "Captain Hurricane," starring James Barton, Helen Westley and Helen Mack and produced by RKO Radio Pictures.

Also for George H. Doran in 1917, Bassett authored *The Wayfarers and the Angels*.

Bassett's next two publishers were Little, Brown and Penn (her series book publishers). For Little, Brown, her adult romance titles included *The Wall Between* (1920), *Flood Tide* (1921) and *Granite and Clay* (1922), while for Penn she wrote *The Harbor Road* (1919), *The Green Dolphin* (1926), *Dayberry Lane* (1931), *Twin Lights* (1932), *Shifting Sands* (1933), and *The Turning Tide* (1934).

In the mid-1930s Bassett switched to Doubleday, Doran, which in 1946 became Doubleday & Company, headquartered in Garden City, New York. Bassett had



chosen wisely: by 1947, Doubleday & Co. had become the largest publisher in the United States, with annual sales of more than 30 million books. Here are Bassett's best-known titles from those publishers:

Doubleday, Doran: *Hidden Shoals* (1935), *Eternal Deep* (1936), *Shining Headlands* (1937), *New England Born* (1938), *An Ocean Heritage* (1940), *Cross Currents* (1941) and *Anchorage* (1943).

Doubleday & Company: *The Beacon* (1946), *Head Winds* (1947), *Within the Harbor* (1948), *The White Sail* (1949), *Echoes of the Tide* (1951), *The Whispering Pine* (1953), *Adrift* (1954), *To Each his Dream* (1955), *South Cove Summer* (1956) and *The Girl in the Blue Pinafore* (1957).

At the time of her being honored on April 15, 1955 by the Boston Authors' Club on the occasion of her 50th book, Bassett was still actively writing as she neared her 83rd birthday. A very private woman who lived in a vintage house in the exclusive Beacon Hill neighborhood in Boston, she said: "I prefer to be represented by my work. I love my writing; it is my boon companion," and she described her perfect day as "a good book, a good play, good music." She seldom listened to the radio and watched no television. "Although we have traveled, our family has never lived outside Massachusetts since 1621," she said. "I stand for what is clean, decent and upholds our religious and moral standards."

Bassett died in Boston at age 95 on July 26, 1968, and is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. She retired from writing the final decade of her life.

Series books by Sara Ware Bassett

The Invention Series

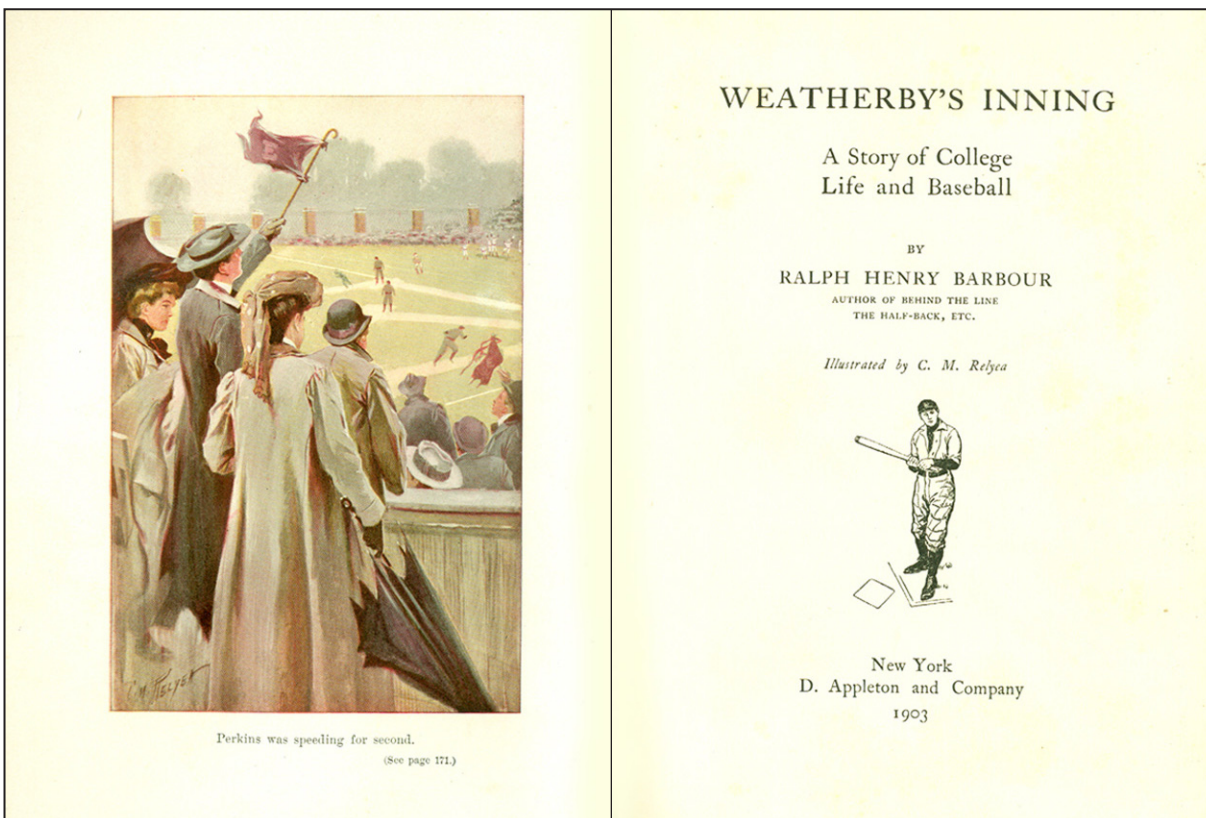
1. *Paul and the Printing Press*
Little, Brown & Co., 1920; artist: Arthur O. Scott
2. *Steve and the Steam Engine*
Little, Brown & Co., 1921; artist: Arthur O. Scott
3. *Ted and the Telephone*
Little, Brown & Co., 1922; artist: Wm. F. Stecher
4. *Walter and the Wireless*
Little, Brown & Co., 1923; artist: Wm. F. Stecher
5. *Carl and the Cotton Gin*
Little, Brown & Co., 1924; artist: Wm. F. Stecher
6. *Christopher and the Clockmakers*
Little, Brown & Co., 1925; artist: Wm. F. Stecher

The Industrial Series

1. *The Story of Lumber*
Penn Publishing Co., 1912; artist: Elizabeth Otis
2. *The Story of Wool*
Penn Publishing Co., 1913; artist: Elizabeth Otis
3. *The Story of Leather*
Penn Publishing Co., 1915; artist: C.P. Gray
4. *The Story of Glass*
Penn Publishing Co., 1916; artist: C.P. Gray
5. *The Story of Sugar*
Penn Publishing Co., 1917; artist: C.P. Gray
6. *The Story of Silk*
Penn Publishing Co., 1918; artist: Hattie Longstreet
7. *The Story of Porcelain*
Penn Publishing Co., 1919; artist: Hattie Longstreet

The Discovery Series

1. *The Story of Columbus*
Penn Publishing Co., 1926; artist: Max Schwartz
2. *The Story of Vasco da Gama*
Penn Publishing Co., 1927; artist: Max Schwartz



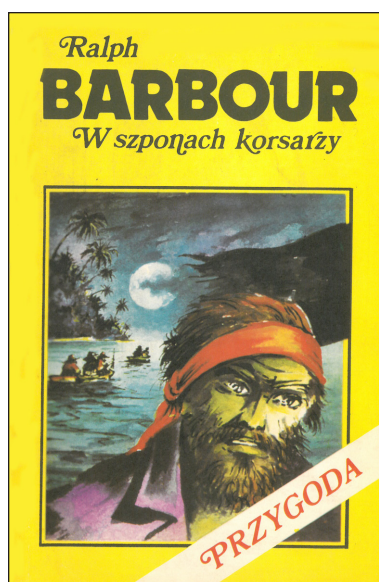
President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

book, with important consequences for him). Winters generally uses her own voice rather than that of Barbour, and the overall plots are very different, with the new book focused more on automobiles and romance than sports and college life.

The other unexpected reappearance of Barbour was a book listing "Ralph Barbour" as the author and *W szponach korsarzy* as the title. I had no idea what the title meant or whether my man was the author, but I took a chance and purchased it from a vendor in Poland, with the cost of postage roughly three times the price I paid for the book. With the lurid cover art as a clue to the plot, I eventually matched up the names of the characters and realized that this was a translation of Barbour's *Pirates of the Shoals* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1932).

Published in Gdansk by Wydawnictwo Morskie in 1990, and, as best as I can tell, translated by Kamil Rowinski and illustrated by Zygmunt Gornowicz, the Polish paperback edition raises more questions than it answers. How did they choose this book for translation? Was it still under copyright, and, if so, did they obtain proper permission or hope that no one would notice? Was the



Jay I. Kislak, a philanthropist and avid collector of early Americana, who has remarked that "I consider collecting a sort of sickness, one from which few people recover." (*Library of Congress Magazine*, July/August 2015, p. 28)

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Jeff Looney (PF-903)
1712 Concord Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22901

translation reasonably faithful, and, if not, how was it tailored to an Eastern European audience?

The great thing about this hobby is that one never runs out of interesting new things to research. Meanwhile, as I gleefully showed off my acquisition of a book I could not read to my family, I had the impression that they were silently acknowledging the wisdom of