



THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



Horatio Alger, Jr.

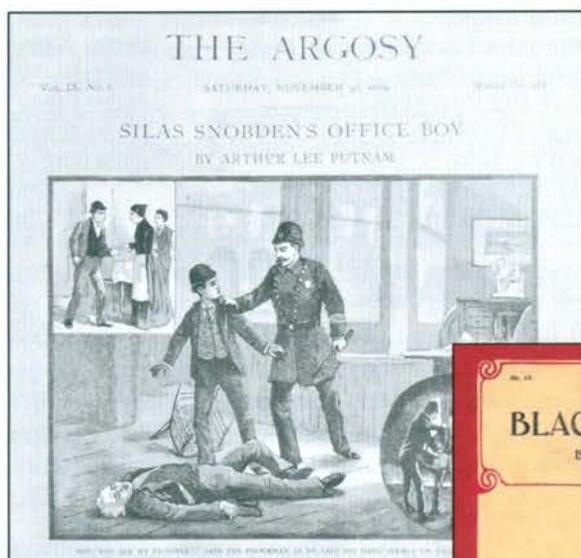
1832 - 1899

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

VOLUME LXI

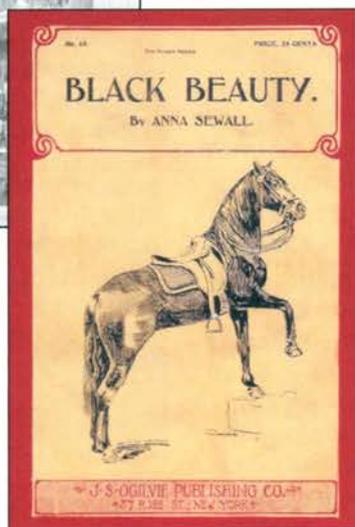
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

NUMBER 6



Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

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"Silas Snobden's Office Boy" in its debut as an 1889 serial in *The Argosy*, and one of the many titles published in J.S. Oglvie's Sunset Series from the late 1890s into the early 1900s.

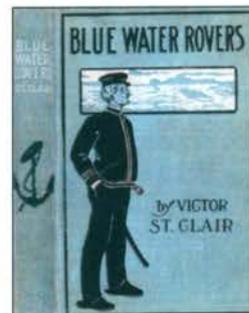
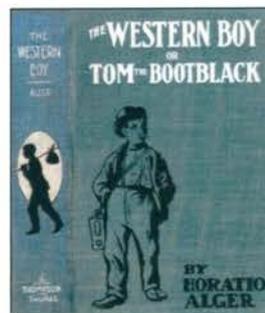
Latest information on 'The Fredericksburg Fourth'

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Thompson & Thomas:

Often overlooked, this publisher deserves respect

-- See Page 14



President's column

Alger does Christmas (includes spoilers)

I am using the advent season to offer a reflection that takes off from a handful of Alger Christmas stories, including "Bertha's Christmas Vision" (1854, 1856), "The Christmas Gift" (1854; included in *Bertha's Christmas Vision*), and "Job Warner's Christmas" (1863). This is inspired by an April '23 visit my husband and I made to the town of Demre (formerly Myra), Turkey, along the Mediterranean Coast in the Province of Antalya. It is there that St. Nicholas (circa 260-343 CE) presided as bishop when Emperor Constantine decriminalized Christianity and then adopted it as the religion of the Roman Empire. Some say Nicholas was imprisoned and tortured when Emperor Diocletian was persecuting Christians, and that he attended the Council of Nicaea in 325.

A stunning 6th-century basilica still stands today, built over an earlier church where St. Nicholas's remains were recently discovered under an excavated mosaic floor. Nicholas, from a wealthy family, was noted for using his wealth to help the poor, including giving gifts to poor children. In a frequently repeated legend, Nicholas once learned of a poor family that could not afford marriage dowries for their three daughters; as a result, the girls faced being sold into slavery or into prostitution. Nicholas secretly tossed three bags of gold down the chimney (or through an open window) of the family's home.

The date of his death, December 6th, is still celebrated as St. Nicholas Day, and it is this St. Nick who gave us Santa Claus. In the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, children receive gifts on this day. It is Thomas Nast who originated the image of Santa Claus with which we are familiar (the Coca-Cola Santa is later). Nast's illustration appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on January 3, 1863, two days after the Emancipation Proclamation.

The huge success of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), served as inspiration to Alger and other aspiring authors of the period. The early portion of "Bertha's Christmas Vision" also owes a debt to Clement Clarke Moore's "The Night Before Christmas" (1823). Bertha, a young girl who lives in a comfortable home (with no parents anywhere I could notice) sits up late, waiting in vain to see St. Nicholas deliver her presents. Finally going to bed and falling asleep, her nighttime encounter is not with St. Nick, nor with the ghosts of Christmas past, present,

(Continued on Page 4)

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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Newsboy ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to "Horatio Alger Society," to **Newsboy** editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047.

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 those free "Alger for sale" ads to the editor at the above address, where you can also send "Letters to the Editor" by regular mail or by e-mail to hasnewsboy@aol.com.

Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

By Scott B. Chase (PF-1106)

Arguably the rarest first-edition Horatio Alger, Jr. book is *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, published, without authorship, by J. S. Ogilvie in 1899 according to Bennett.¹ No, I haven't found an Ogilvie copy, at least yet. There are no known copies of this paperback, which was apparently issued as No. 181 in Ogilvie's Sunset Series. Ralph Gardner gives a nice history of its serialization and other intended uses for the story that were never realized, but states that the title never appeared in bound form.² He must not have been aware of the documentation listing this title in the Sunset Series, which are discussed here. The cover illustration from the serialization under Alger's pseudonym Arthur Lee Putnam in *The Argosy* in 1889 is shown in Figure 1.³

With no known copies to exist, one has to ask if Ogilvie did actually publish *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*? A difficult and maybe impossible question to answer, to prove a

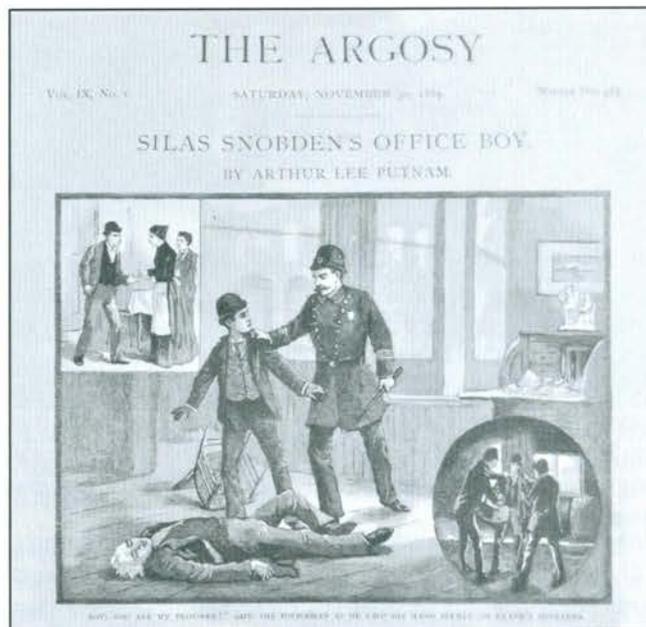


Fig.1: Cover illustration from the serialization of "Silas Snobden's Office Boy" in *The Argosy*, Vol. IX in 1889.

negative, but we can review the available information to reach some reasonable conclusions.

When you consider the broader picture of the research efforts of hundreds of hardcore Alger enthusiasts, who have visited thousands of bookstores and libraries,

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'The Fredericksburg Fourth'

Updates on the auction and exciting Friday dinner venue



"The Fredericksburg Fourth" will be having its Friday evening dinner at the Hope Heroes Southern Kitchen, just a few miles south of the convention's Hampton Inn.

(Photo by Jack Bales)

By Jack Bales (PF-258)
Convention Host

Who doesn't love opening boxes of books? One of the best aspects of planning a convention is admiring the various titles that H.A.S. members donate to our annual auction. (And we are hoping that our auctioneer extraordinaire Bob Huber will be able to make it next spring!) My spare room has several big boxes in it, and I'm sure more will arrive before we head for the Hampton Inn and "The Fredericksburg Fourth," the 2024 Horatio Alger Society convention, to be held here in Fredericksburg, Virginia, from Thursday, May 2, to Sunday, May 5.

Ever since I bought a few of Leo Edwards' Jerry Todd books at a convention auction, which were donated by *Newsboy* editor Bill Gowen, I've become something of a Leo Edwards fan, most of the books set in my home state of Illinois. Within a few months I amassed a fine set of the Todd books. I've picked up quite a few duplicates,

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Editor's notebook

Wishing you the best for the holidays

As the famous song goes, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," and your editor now passes along his greetings for a fulfilling and safe holiday season.

I hope this issue arrives there before you've already taken your tree and decorations down, but with the traditional holiday mailing crush and the post office's ongoing personnel shortage, we'll keep our fingers crossed.

This is our annual color issue, and Scott Chase offers a wonderfully researched, speculative piece on whether or not that most elusive of Algers, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, was ever published in book form. Most Alger experts and collectors have long ago given up on ever finding a copy, which supposedly was published as title No. 181 in J.S. Ogilvie's Sunset Series of paperback

editions, advertised for several years just prior to and after the dawn of the 20th century.

Will a copy ever turn up? The naysayers will likely stand their ground, but thanks to the growth of Internet research tools now available, there seems to be the slightest hope. As Scott says in his article, he will never give up his search for this great rarity.

Baseball in the spotlight: Partic'lar

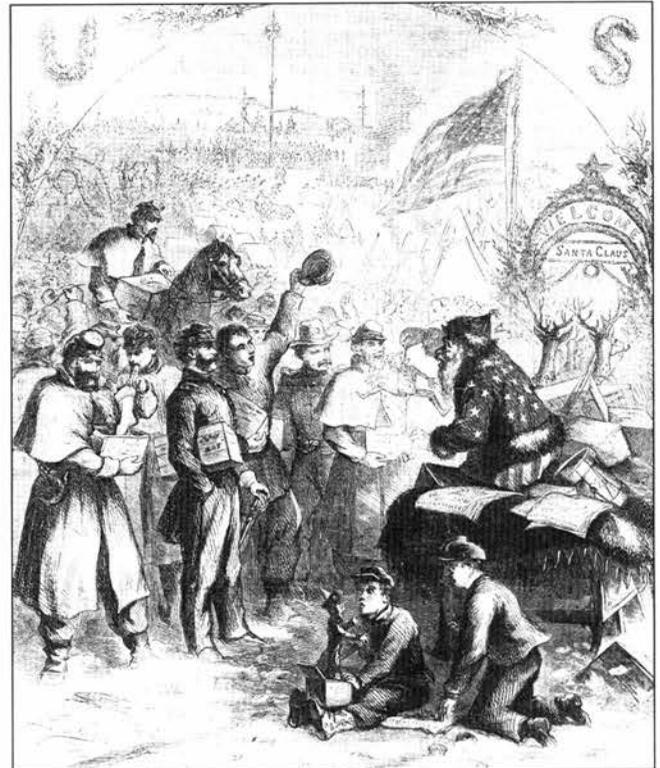


Keith Thompson and son Nathan at the final game of the World Series in Phoenix.

Friend Keith Thompson and his son, Nathan, above, made their annual trek to the World Series, where they witnessed The Texas Rangers' 5-0 Game 5-clinching victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Nov. 1 at Chase Field in Phoenix.

The win snapped a 52-year drought for the Rangers, ending the longest current title-less streak in baseball. Maybe the most important aspect of the championship

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Santa Claus in Camp: This is Thomas Nast's first published drawing of Santa Claus. It appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on January 3, 1863. Santa has arrived by sleigh and is dressed in Union flag attire. He is handing out necessities and copies of *Harper's Weekly* to the Union soldiers. Dangling from a noose in Santa's hand is a jumping jack labeled "Jeff" (Jefferson Davis).

President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

and future, but with a vision of the white-clad figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Their chanted messages in verse are, in effect, that they bear Bertha gifts that are rarer and more valuable than the material baubles with which St. Nick mesmerizes children. These gifts are for life and come from God. Bertha follows these three sisters throughout her life. The gentle morality tale mixes Alger poetry and prose, and it is not surprising that it was originally published in the **Monthly Religious Magazine**. While I doubt that children found this short piece either amusing or especially engaging, the book that bears the story's name has certainly engaged plenty of Alger collectors (a worn first edition adorns my shelves).

Some Alger Christmas stories continue to have Biblical twists. "John Rawson's Christmas Gift" twists the prodigal son parable in such a way that the headstrong

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Latest convention update

(Continued from Page 3)

too (including a signed volume), and I'm donating these and some Alger reprints to the auction.

Deidre Johnson, author of *Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate* (Twayne, 1993) and *Stratemeyer Pseudonyms and Series Books* (Greenwood Press, 1982) sent me a box of nice books, including volumes by John Blaine (Rick Brant series), Bruce Campbell (Ken Holt series), and Harold M. Sherman. I particularly noticed a signed copy of *Ramona's World*, the last book by renowned children's and young adult author Beverly Cleary. She won numerous literary awards during her lengthy writing career, and before her death in 2021 at age 104, the Library of Congress named her a "living legend."

The Horatio Alger collector has much to look forward to with the books that past H.A.S. President and multiple convention host Art Young (PF-941) sent me. I spent one evening poring over the 1867 bound serialization of *Ragged Dick* in **Student and Schoolmate**. Art's other donated Alger titles include *Dean Dunham* (Medal Library number 50); a special edition of *Ragged Dick* published by the Easton Press; the six books in the *Ragged Dick* series, produced by the Horatio Alger Association, in slipcase; and Alger miniature editions published by longtime H.A.S. member (PF-024, now deceased) Gilbert K. Westgard II, including *Robert Lawson*, *Annie Graham* and *The Young Patriots*. Also, Herbert R. Mayes' *Alger: A Biography Without a Hero*, in dust jacket.

Nicholas A. Basbanes took the book collecting world by storm with his 1995 work, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. Art sent me a copy, inscribed to him, of Basbanes' *A Splendor of Letters: The Permanence of Books in an Impermanent World* (2003).

Incidentally, Basbanes has been a columnist for **Fine Books & Collections** magazine for years, and in 2010 he wrote that he had attended Art and Pat Young's Horatio Alger Society convention in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He added that "I gave the keynote address, my third presentation to the H.A.S. over the past 15 years, a personal record for me with one group. I was pleasantly surprised by the gift of a lovely plaque noting this milestone, and wish to express my gratitude in this space to the membership." (A photograph of Art presenting Nicholas Basbanes with the plaque is on the front page of the May-June 2010 issue of **Newsboy**.)

Art sent quite a few other books as well. Thank you, Art and Deidre! The Horatio Alger Society welcomes volumes for its auction! Please email me, Jack Bales, at jbales@umw.edu if you have any questions.

Genuine southern hospitality: I've spent quite a bit of time looking for a restaurant for the Friday night dinner.



H.A.S. members Liane Houghtalin, Jack Bales and Rob Kasper enjoy lunch at the Hope Heroes Southern Kitchen in Fredericksburg.

You would not think this would be all that difficult, but there were some criteria I had uppermost in mind: 1) a good-sized private room, 2) plenty of accessible parking, and 3) a location away from the downtown area where parking is at a premium. I also preferred not to have a "chain" restaurant. I posed the question on the local "Next Door" blog and got several dozen comments and some good recommendations. I started checking them out, and I was pleased when I emailed the Hope Heroes Southern Kitchen and immediately received an enthusiastic reply from General Manager Trent Stinson. I was also impressed that Hope Heroes donates three to five percent of its profits to the Hub of Hope, a "non-profit corporation with the mission of addressing food insecurity in the Greater Fredericksburg region."

I stopped by one day and met Trent and we had a pleasant time talking as he showed me around the restaurant, including the private room. The food, of course, is what matters, and I enjoyed my meal so much I invited Partic'lar Friends Liane Houghtalin, Rob Kasper, and Jeff Looney to come and have lunch with me.

Alas, Jeff could not make it as he was working hard to get the next volume of the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series* finished for the publisher, but on Saturday, November 18, Rob and Liane and I enjoyed a fine meal. I liked the chicken so much when I was previously there I had it again, and the "street corn" was marvelous. Rob said his macaroni and cheese was "the best I've ever had," and he bought two containers of it to take home with him. Liane summed it all up by saying Hope Heroes was "a great find!" I told Trent he could expect us there on Friday evening, May 3.

The restaurant's website says "... we're Southern as all get out. An altruistic, Southern-inspired restaurant where people make a difference by simply eating."

"Where people make a difference" — that's a philosophy of which Horatio Alger would approve!

President's column

(Continued from Page 4)

son who departs makes good while the rich father loses all, only to have his farm restored to him as a Christmas gift by the returning son. A separate story, "The Christmas Gift," is much more secular but also involves restoring a home. It features a wealthy merchant family's small, good deed to a poor boy repaid in a big way when the poor boy inherits money from an uncle and the merchant's family falls on hard times, to the point of losing their comfortable home.

In European peasant tales (see Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales" in *The Great Cat Massacre*), aspirations run only to what the poor could imagine—such as a full belly. Alger Christmas stories often feature a poor boy or girl getting a good meal, warm clothing, a chance to go to school, and brighter prospects in the immediate future. A warm, comfortable home often figures as the unexpected Christmas gift. In "Little Phil's Christmas Dinner" (1867), a friend of Phil Ambrose's deceased father returns from Calcutta, has a chance encounter with poor, suffering Phil, and provides the means of his and his mother's economic salvation, including a good holiday meal and pleasant, new living quarters.

Of note in "The Christmas Gift" is the presence of a Christmas tree in the center of the room at the Dinsmoor house, "brilliant with tapers, which were gleaming from every branch and twig..." There were gifts hanging from the tree. [Uncle Ephraim remarks in "A Sailor's Return: A Christmas Story" (1869) that Christmas gifts were a new-fangled notion and a waste of money.] Images of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and family, gathered around a decorated indoor tree, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1848, and the popularity of the decorated Christmas tree spread rapidly across the Atlantic (although German immigrants decorated Christmas trees as early as the 1830s and may have influenced American practices).

"Job Warner's Christmas" (*Harper's*, November 1863) came out eleven days after Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The war had begun to turn in the North's favor. Alger unabashedly crafted a tale modeled on Dickens. Job Warner is rather like Bob Cratchit except older (50); his salary as an assistant bookkeeper is quite modest, and he has to practice rigid economy to make ends meet for his family consisting of a wife and four children. He has not had a raise in who knows how long, and his boss refused his Christmas Eve request for a salary increase. Making \$700/year then was like earning a little over \$17,000/year today (working full time at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour

would result in an annual salary of about \$15,000). Job wants to buy a beautiful doll as a Christmas present for his daughter, Effie, but the price, \$5 (\$122 today) was just too high. Encountering a poor, orphaned ragamuffin girl seeking help, Job brings her home for something to eat and a warm bed (the orphan takes the place of Dickens's Tiny Tim). Taking care of her would be in lieu of Christmas presents for the family. His boss—admittedly not as tight-fisted as Ebenezer Scrooge—witnesses the act of kindness, knocks on the Warners' door, gives Job a very generous raise, and gives Job more money to raise the orphan girl. Job is able to get to the stores before they close on Christmas Eve, buying the doll, gifts for the orphan, and for the other family members. Unlike Dickens, Alger ends his story with the paterfamilias reading the nativity story from Luke Chapter 2.

Thanks to Bob Sipes, who provided me with quite a list of Alger Christmas (and other holiday) stories. I then realized that the H.A.S. website's **Newsboy** search engine would have been easy enough to use. If you are interested in an Alger Christmas story (or poetry) binge, a large number of these have been reproduced in **Newsboy** and are available to read online; just search "Christmas" (I like the downloadable Excel spreadsheet) and you will find where to locate them in the **Newsboy** archive. Happy reading, and warm greetings for the holidays!

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)
302 S. Chester Road
Swarthmore, PA 19081
Email: cnacken1@swarthmore.edu

Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

was the Rangers' 11-0 record in road playoff games this season.

The Horatio Alger Society is blessed with a trio of real baseball "nuts," myself being a Yankees fan dating back to the 1950s while growing up in the upper Hudson valley; Thompson, whose love for his native Detroit Tigers has been well documented in these pages; and, of course, Jack Bales, who grew up in Aurora, Illinois, and in 2016 experienced the ultimate triumph for a life-long Cubs fan, when they ended a title drought of more than a century by beating the Cleveland Indians (now the Guardians) in seven games. And, I apologize if I have overlooked any other big-time baseball fans within our ranks.

Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

(Continued from Page 3)

reviewed countless private book collections, all over the course of at least six decades, and not a single Ogilvie copy has turned up (unless someone has a copy secretly hidden away), it makes you wonder if Ogilvie did actually publish the book. In addition to this, eBay has now existed for 2½ decades and today there are many online ecommerce sites where people can peddle their books. I, and likely others, have been searching these sites regularly for years for the Ogilvie edition of *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, and to date not a single copy has surfaced.

Going a little further, I have searched on Worldcat for several years and no copies of the Ogilvie edition have appeared there either.⁴ Worldcat is a wonderful tool that itemizes the collections of more than 15,000 libraries in over 100 countries. Searching there for *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* found the 1973 hardcover or paperback printings, but no copies of the Ogilvie edition.

The legwork of the Alger enthusiasts, together with the lack of a copy surfacing online, certainly suggest that Ogilvie may not have ever actually published the title. But we need to look deeper. We need to look at the Sunset Series itself and at the documentation in which *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* is listed in the series.

The Sunset Series was one of many paperback series Ogilvie produced in the 1890s and into the early 1900s. A recent online search of current books for sale shows Ogilvie paperback books in 16 different series, including books in the Sunset Series. An article in the *Cambridge Tribune* from its *Annual Book Number* from 1907 says of the J. S. Ogilvie Publishing Co., "No publishing house in the country outdoes J. S. Ogilvie Publishing Company,

(Continued on Page 8)

16 USEFUL AND POPULAR BOOKS.

THE SUNSET SERIES.—We desire to call your special attention to the following list of novels by the most popular authors in the world, many of which are copyrighted and cannot be obtained in any other cheap edition.

These books are printed from new plates and from large type, and contain from 200 to 400 pages each. Price, 25 cents each.

We guarantee entire satisfaction in every respect. The following list is now ready, and new books will be added from time to time.

- 1 HER LAST THROW. By "The Duchess."
- 2 MR. CLIFTON OF BARRINGTON. By Mrs. J. F. Reichhard.
- 3 THE EVERY-DAY COOK BOOK. Miss E. Neil.
- 4 THE CAPTIVE BRIDE. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
- 5 A MAD LOVE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.

Fig. 2: Sunset Series ad in *The Everyday Cook Book*, No. 3

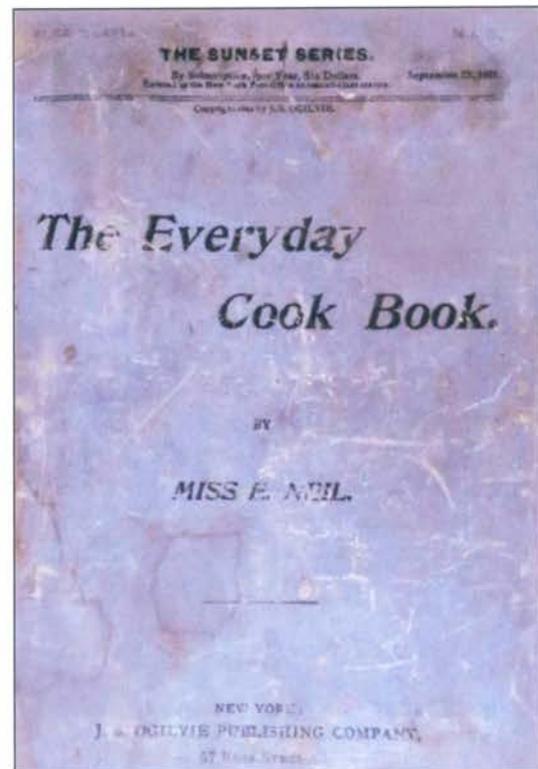


Fig. 3: *The Everyday Cook Book*, (no cover illustration).

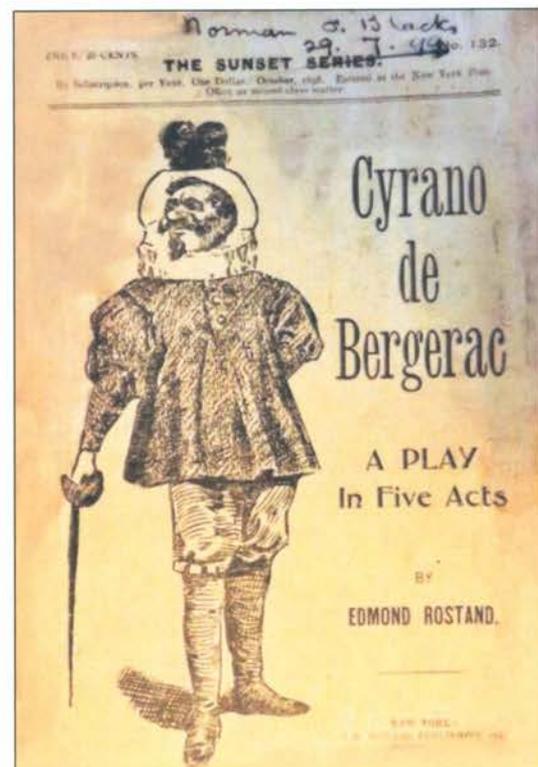


Fig. 4: *Cyrano de Bergerac*, front cover.

Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

(Continued from Page 7)

of New York, in its output of paper covered books at very low prices, thus bringing within the reach of the people at large many books which, but for this method of the Ogilvie house, they would be denied."⁵ The Ogilvie catalogues I have seen substantiate the praise in the *Tribune* article by the huge number of books listed.

The Sunset Series started in 1891 and it ran until about 1920, carrying 355 titles.⁶ The first title in the series is *Her Last Throw* by The Dutchess. It appears Ogilvie had the first 101 titles available when the series was introduced. The heading for the Sunset Series ad in book No. 3, which lists 101 titles, reads "the following list is now ready" (see Figure 2). This book was published Sept. 22, 1891.⁷

Of the 29 Sunset Series books (different titles) in my personal collection and 20 other different titles I have seen in libraries and online, 12 of these books have dates on the front covers or on the title pages. The dates range from Sept. 22, 1891 (No. 3) to February 1900 (No. 147).

I have later reprints of Nos. 185 and 189, neither of which has a date on the front cover or on the title page. My copy of *Sappho* by Alphonse Daudet (No. 147) has the date February 1900 on the title page.⁸ It appears that sometime between January 1899 and February 1900 Ogilvie stopped putting dates on the front covers and instead put them on the title pages.

Another interesting point about the *Sappho* book is seen on the title page. It reads "THE SUNSET SERIES. No. 147. Issued Monthly. February, 1900." The earliest book I am aware of with a monthly date is No. 102, *When a Man's Single* by J. M. Barre, which is dated September 1894.⁹ I have seen four other Sunset Series books online with month dates from 1894, two in January, one in February, and one in March. It appears that Ogilvie issued books "from time to time" from when the series started in 1891 until sometime in 1893. They then began issuing books monthly.

I have reviewed Ogilvie catalogues, discussed later, from two sequential years, 1905 and 1906, and the count difference in the number of Sunset Series listings is 12, consistent with monthly issues. The available information about the total number of titles in the series and the number of years the series ran, leads to the conclusion that except for the first few years, Ogilvie introduced new titles monthly from about 1894 until the series ended about 1920.

The earliest books in the series have no illustration on the front cover. This is true for all the books I've

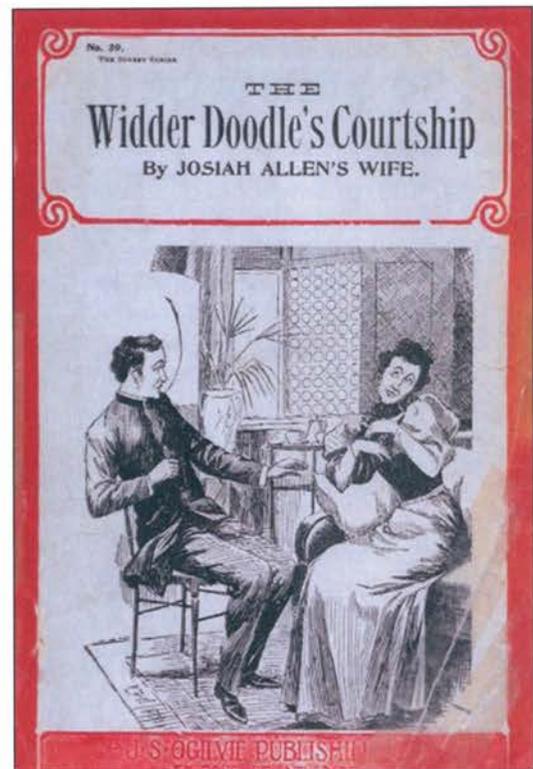


Fig. 5: *Widder Doodle's Courtship*, front cover.

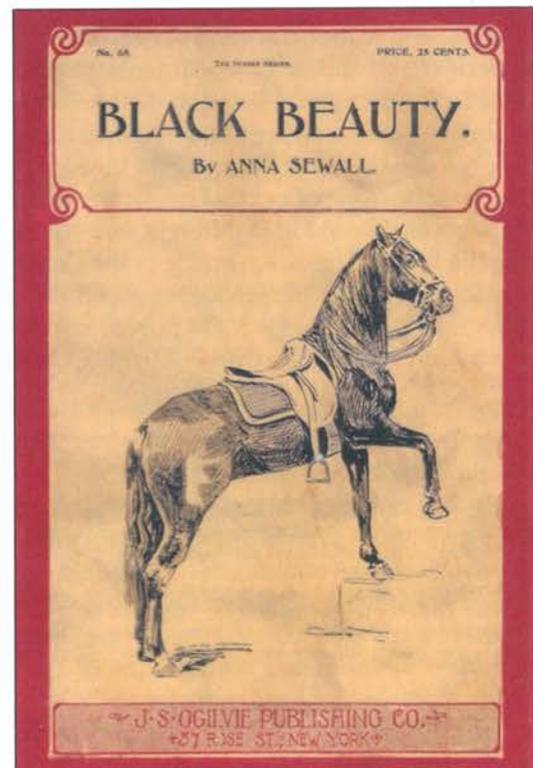


Fig. 6: *Black Beauty*, front cover.

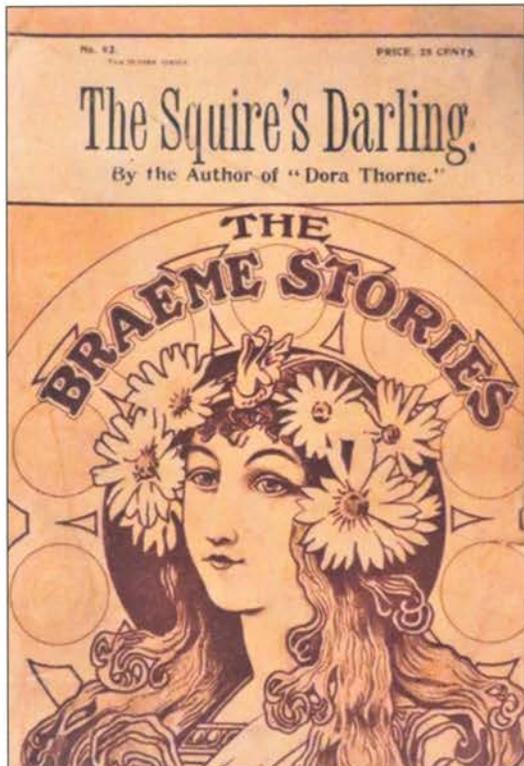


Fig. 7: *The Squire's Darling*, front cover.

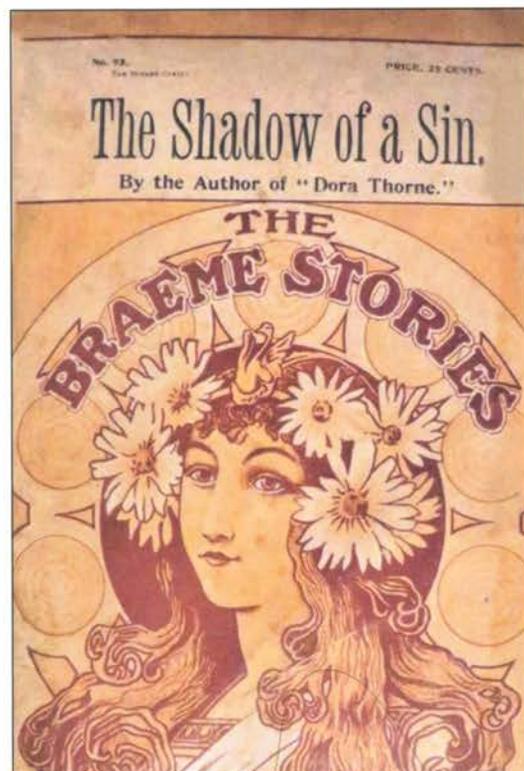


Fig. 8: *The Shadow of a Sin*, front cover.

reviewed up to December, 1895. An example is shown in Figure 3, page 7.¹⁰ There is a gap in my information, with no books found to date, until October, 1898 which does have an illustration on the front cover. This is book No. 132, *Cyrano De Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand, and it is shown in Figure 4.¹¹ Sometime in 1896, 1897 or the first part of 1898 Ogilvie starting adding illustrations to the front covers of their Sunset Series books.

Not only did Ogilvie add illustrations to the front covers, but it appears that some thought was put into the design of the illustrations for many of their books. It can be seen that the designs are tailored to the theme of the book. This was already seen with the book *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which presumably has an illustration of Cyrano himself on the front cover (Figure 4).

Two more examples are shown in the next two cover illustrations. The book *The Widder Doodle's Courtship*, shown in Figure 5, presumably shows the Widder Doodle, or widow, being courted by a young man.¹² The book *Black Beauty*, shown in Figure 6, has a wonderful illustration of that beautiful horse on its front cover.¹³ The "matching" of the front cover illustrations to the theme of the books continued until the series ended.

For now, we can only imagine what the illustration looked like that Ogilvie selected for the cover of *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, but it would have had a contemporary design like their other book covers at the turn of the century, and it would have been consistent with the theme of the book.

Ogilvie also used at least one uniform cover for a subseries within the Sunset Series. *The Squire's Darling* (Figure 7)¹⁴ and *The Shadow of a Sin* (Figure 8)¹⁵, both published from about 1906 to 1917, are part of Ogilvie's series called The Braeme Stories.¹⁶ There were 24 Charlotte Braeme titles in 1906 and 28 titles in 1917 as part of The Braeme Stories (included within the Sunset Series) that have the same front cover illustration. One could surmise that Charlotte Braeme's books were quite popular in the early 1900s and Ogilvie exercised some creative marketing by trying to take advantage of that popularity and simultaneously promote one of the publisher's larger series, the Sunset Series.

As one might expect, Ogilvie did reprints of some of their Sunset Series books, and they issued the reprints with different covers. I have four different titles, two copies of each title, and all four pairs of books have different front covers. An example of one pair is shown in Figures 9 and 10.^{17, 18} These books not only show the different front cover illustrations for the same title, but they also reinforce the matching of the illustrations to the theme of the book. The ladies in their English style hat and clothes in the one illustration, and the castle

(Continued on Page 10)

Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

(Continued from Page 9)

and English looking scenery in the other illustration.

The attention to detail of the front cover illustrations, the “matching” of the illustrations to the theme of the book, and the series longevity show the commitment Ogilvie made to the Sunset Series.

There are a few sources which list the Sunset Series that help to confirm that the Ogilvie edition of *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* was actually published. The first source found to date which lists No. 181, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, is the May 10, 1902 issue of **Publishers' Weekly**.¹⁹ It is in the “Record of Series” section of the “Reference List of New Publications, January –April, 1902.” A portion of the list is shown in Figure 11. The list includes series numbers 164 to 222 without gaps.

The same list, Nos. 164 – 222, without gaps appears in the July 12, 1902 issue of **Publishers' Weekly**²⁰ and again in the January 31, 1903 issue.²¹ In all three issues *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* is listed without credited authorship.

Another source is the *Publishers' Trade List Annual* or *PTLA*. The 1900 and 1901 *PTLA* editions do not list the Sunset Series in the Ogilvie catalogues submitted to the *PTLA*, but the 1902 *PTLA*, published in August, does list the Sunset Series.²² This list is alphabetical, without numbers, but cross-referencing the list shows it includes numbers 1 to 227 with one gap, number 101, and six unnumbered titles. No. 181, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, is listed.

The next source that lists *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* is the 1903 *Publishers' Trade List Annual* Supplementary Index.²³ This was published August 1903 and it is an index of the authors and titles from catalogues from publishers from 1902 and 1903 not represented in the 1902 *PTLA* Index. The Index includes Sunset Series Nos. 133 – 250 with gaps, but like the 1902 *PTLA* the series numbers are not included in the Index. “Sunset” is given after each book title as can be seen in Figure 12 for *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*.

Another source noted by Bennett,²⁴ is *The American Catalog, 1900 – 1905*, in the Record of Series (1900 – 1904) section.²⁵ A copy of a portion of the list in this catalog is shown in Figure 13, page 12. The full list includes numbered titles from No. 164 to No. 250 without gaps, including No. 181, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*.

The best sources for information about the Sunset Series come from the company itself. Two of these

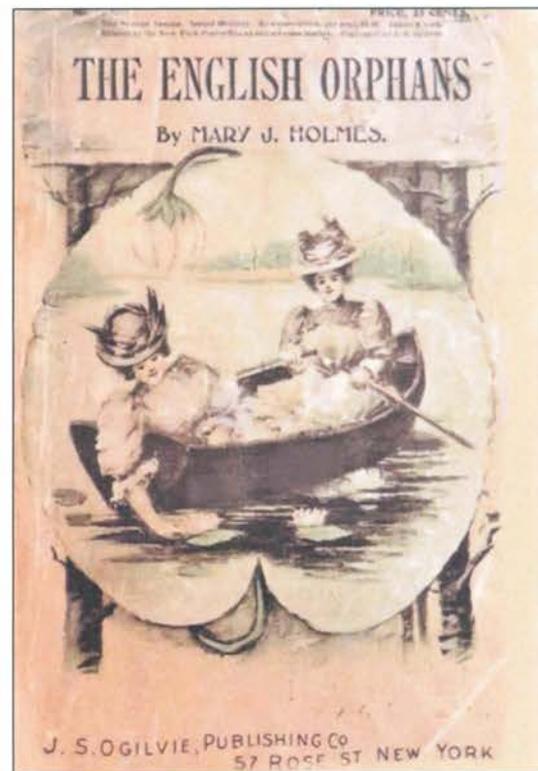


Fig. 9: *The English Orphans*, 1899.

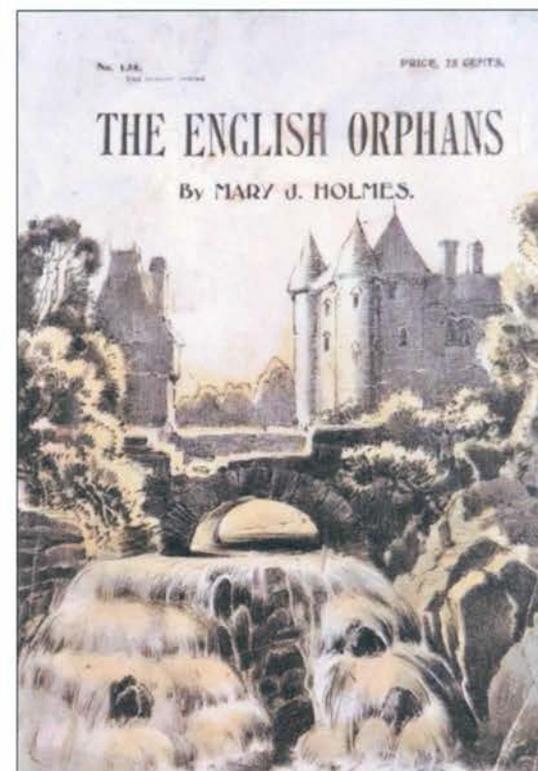


Fig. 10: *The English Orphans*, about 1907.

| Sunset Series, 12 ^o , pap., 25 c | |
|---|--|
| 164. | John Ploughman's talks and pictures. Spurgeon, C. H. |
| 165. | Spurgeon's sermons. Spurgeon, C. H. |
| 166. | Five hundred merry laughs. |
| 167. | Some funny things said by clever people. |
| 168. | The umbrella mender. Harraden, Beatrice |
| 169. | Tour of the world in eighty days. Verne, Jules. |
| 170. | Life is worth living. Tolstoi, Leo. |
| 171. | As in a looking glass. Phillips, F. C. |
| 172. | Lady Valworth's diamonds. "The Duchess." |
| 171. | Tom Brown's school days. Hughes, T. |
| 174. | A house party. "Ouida." |
| 175. | Dark days. Conway, Hugh. |
| 176. | The merry men. Stevenson, R. L. |
| 177. | Mona's choice. Alexander, Mrs. |
| 178. | A mental struggle. "The Duchess." |
| 170. | Mrs. Rasher's curtain lectures. |
| 180. | Tin types taken in streets of New York. Quigg, Lemuel Ely. |
| 181. | Silas Snobden's office boy. |
| 182. | One thousand popular quotations. Ogilvie, J. S. |
| 183. | Reveries of an old maid. |
| 184. | Mahetible Hopkins on her travels. Hopkins, Mrs. |

Fig. 11: Publishers Weekly Sunset Series title list, May 10, 1902.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Silage. Book on. Woll, F. W. | 75 c | Kand |
| Silas Marner. See Eliot, G: | | |
| Silas Snobden's office boy. (Sunset) | 25 c. | J. S. Ogilvie |

Fig. 12: PTLA supplementary Index, 1903.

sources are original Ogilvie catalogues and ads in the back of their books. I have reviewed eight different Ogilvie catalogues and three Sunset Series books with ads for the series in the back of the books.

Two of the catalogues date from before 1900 and neither has a listing for the Sunset Series. The third catalogue, already discussed, appears in the 1902 PTLA. The catalogue Ogilvie submitted for the 1903 and 1904 PTLAs have the same list for the Sunset Series as that in the 1902 PTLA.

The next catalogue appears in the 1905 **Publishers' Trade List Annual**.²⁶ Just like the 1902 catalogue, the Sunset Series list is alphabetical without series numbers. Using the same cross-referencing of the titles to numbered title lists, it is determined the list includes No. 1 to No. 227 listed under the heading "Good Books in The Sunset Series" and it includes *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*. There are an additional 56 titles listed in the "Recent Issues in the Sunset Series" portion.

The heading in the 1905 catalogue "Good Books in The Sunset Series" includes the text "The following alphabetical list of books by popular authors are all well printed on good paper and bound in handsome lithograph cover. They contain from 250 to 400 pages each, and will be sent by mail, postpaid, to any address for 25 cents each." Since No. 181, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, is included in the list, this implies that the book

was available for purchase. We can only hope that a few people did indeed purchase the book back then!

The next catalog is from 1906 and it is very similar to the 1905 catalogue.²⁷ The titles are likewise not numbered, but cross-referencing them in the same manner shows this list also includes titles from No. 1 to No. 227 like the 1905 catalogue, but the "Recent Issues" list has 12 additional titles. This further confirms the practice that Ogilvie was issuing titles monthly. This list also includes *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, it has the same 25 cent purchase offer, and like all the other listings, no author is given.

Additionally, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* is listed in the Ogilvie catalogues submitted to the 1907²⁸ and 1908²⁹ PTLAs, but not in the 1910 PTLA.³⁰ The 1909 PTLA was not checked. The Sunset Series is listed in the 1910 PTLA, but *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* and 9 other titles are not listed. It appears that Ogilvie stopped offering some titles in the 1909-1910 time frame while still offering new titles.

Another source for the Sunset Series is the books themselves. Most of the Sunset Series books have several pages of ads in the back of the book. Three of the books in my collection have ads for the Sunset Series. Book No. 3, *The Everyday Cook Book*, is dated September 22, 1891 and, as mentioned, the Sunset Series list includes No. 1 to No. 101 without gaps.³¹ It is interesting to note that it appears that the first 100 Sunset Series titles were consistently offered from the inception of the series in 1891 until at least 1908 with all 100 titles being available as shown in the 1908 PTLA. An impressive run of titles being available for purchase for about 17 years!

The second book that lists the Sunset Series is No. 134, *The English Orphans*. This book is dated January, 1899 and the Sunset Series list includes No. 1 to No. 36 without gaps.³²

The third book that lists the Sunset Series is No. 40, *A Missing Husband* by George R. Sims.³³ It has a much longer list than the other two books that goes up to No. 319. Based on the ads in the book, this book was published 1911-1915. The list is presented alphabetically by book title, and the series numbers are included. There are more than 50 titles missing from this list that were included in Ogilvie's 1905 and 1906 catalogues. No. 181, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, is not listed in this book.

It appears that Ogilvie continued the practice of only offering for purchase those books in the Sunset Series that were still available and omitted those titles that were no longer available. Maybe at some point a Sunset Series book will be found that not only has a list for the Sunset Series in the ads, but the list will also include

(Continued on Page 12)

Silas Snobden's Office Boy and The Sunset Series

(Continued from Page 11)

Silas Snobden's Office Boy.

Based on the number of listings in publications from 1902 to 1908, including eight of Ogilvie's own catalogues, there is ample information suggesting that *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* was indeed published by Ogilvie. The only remaining point to address is when Ogilvie published the book.

As mentioned, Bennett states the publication year to be 1899.³⁴ This may have been based on the Sunset Series listing noted in the *American Catalogue 1900 – 1905* previously mentioned.³⁵ *The American Catalogue 1895 – 1900* doesn't have a numbered listing for the Sunset Series, but it does list the Sunset Series as shown in Figure 14.³⁶ This shows 36 volumes from the years 1896 to 1899 being published, with series numbers, No. 111 to No. 146. This catalog covers from July 1, 1895 to January 1, 1900.

This listing suggests that only up to number 146 in the Sunset Series was published by 1899. If number 111 is included, then 36 titles were published 1896 to 1899, which is consistent with their monthly release statement over the years 1896, 1897 and 1898.

In the **Publishers' Weekly** Reference List of New Publications, yearly cumulation Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1900, only two titles in the Sunset Series are listed, Nos. 150 and 151.³⁷ They were published May 5 and May 12, 1900, respectively. So, it appears that up to May 1900 only up to No. 151 had been published.

The best sources for the year when *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* was published is the 1902-1904 **Cumulative Book Index**³⁸ and *The United States Catalog Supplement*.³⁹ They have the same listing shown in Figure 15, which give the year *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* was published as 1902. This is consistent with the other sources which don't list *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* prior to 1902, but do list it in 1902 and afterward.

There is considerable documentation to conclude that Ogilvie did indeed publish *Silas Snobden's Office Boy* as No. 181 of their Sunset Series. However, since not even a single copy is known to exist today, anywhere, even though hundreds of hardcore Alger enthusiasts have searched for a copy for decades, the case is strong that Ogilvie never actually published the title. The case is arguably equally as strong that they did publish it. Consider a summary of what is known.

The Sunset Series ran for almost 30 years starting in

| Sunset Series, 12 ^o , pap., 25 c | |
|---|--|
| 164. | John Ploughman's talks and pictures. Spurgeon, C. H. |
| 165. | Spurgeon's sermons. Spurgeon, C. H. |
| 166. | Five hundred merry laughs. |
| 167. | Some funny things said by clever people. |
| 168. | The umbrella mender. Harraden, Beatrice |
| 169. | Tour of the world in eighty days. Verne, Jules. |
| 170. | Life is worth living. Tolstoi, Leo. |
| 171. | As in a looking glass. Phillips, F. C. |
| 172. | Lady Valworth's diamonds. "The Duchess." |
| 173. | Tom Brown's school days. Hughes, T. |
| 174. | A house party. "Ouida." |
| 175. | Dark days. Conway, Hugh. |
| 176. | The merry men. Stevenson, R. L. |
| 177. | Mona's choice. Alexander, Mrs. |
| 178. | A mental struggle. "The Duchess." |
| 179. | Mrs. Rasher's curtain lectures. |
| 180. | Tin types taken in streets of New York. Quigg, Lemuel Ely. |
| 181. | Silas Snobden's office boy. |
| 182. | One thousand popular quotations. Ogilvie, J. S. |
| 183. | Reveries of an old maid. |
| 184. | Mahetible Hopkins on her travels. Hopkins, Mrs. |
| 185. | Ivan the fool. Tolstoi, Leo. |
| 186. | Inside the White House during war times. |
| 187. | The frozen pirate. Russell, W. Clark. |
| 188. | Mystery of a hansom cab. Hume, Fergus W |
| 189. | Called back. Conway, Hugh. |
| 190. | At bay. Alexander, Mrs. |
| 191. | A woman's temptation. Braeme, C. M. |
| 192. | Thrown on the world. Braeme, C. M. |
| 193. | Thorns and orange blossoms. Braeme, C. M. |
| 194. | Repented at leisure. Braeme, C. M. |
| 195. | Lord Lynne's choice. Braeme, C. M. |
| 196. | The false vow. Braeme, C. M. |
| 197. | Her second love. Braeme, C. M. |
| 198. | Her martyrdom. Braeme, C. M. |
| 199. | From out the gloom. Braeme, C. M. |
| 200. | The duke's secret. Braeme, C. M. |

Fig. 13: *American Catalog* Sunset Series title list, 1900-1905.

| |
|--|
| <p>Sunset series [Ogilvie's]. nos. 111-146. '96-'99. 86 v. D. ea., 50c.; pap., 25c. Ogilvie.</p> |
|--|

Fig. 14: *American Catalog*, 1895-1900.

| |
|--|
| <p>Silas Snobden's office boy. (Sunset ser., no. 181.) D. pa. 25c. '02. Ogilvie.</p> |
|--|

Fig. 15: *The United States Catalog Supplement*, Page 1646.

1891. Ogilvie put some effort into the designs of the front cover illustrations from the late 1890s until the series ended about 1920. They reprinted some, if not many, of the titles over the years, and the series included such authors as Tolstoi, Jules Verne, and Charles Dickens, to name just a few. It carried popular books like *Black Beauty*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and many others. It is evident that it was an important series to the company, which is likely why it lasted for as long as it did.

Silas Snobden's Office Boy appeared in at least eight of Ogilvie's own catalogues with the book available for purchase from 1902 to at least 1908. It is evident Ogilvie

was prepared to send copies of No. 181 in the Sunset Series to anyone who sent in the 25 cents.

A possible reason why a single copy is not known to exist today is that because the title was published anonymously, demand for it was likely very low and so printing volume was also likely very low. Ogilvie may have only produced a few hundred copies (or fewer) over the seven or so years they kept the title available. With such low demand, there may have been only one printing and at some point, in 1909 or 1910, they discontinued the title. Copies of this paperback book of such low printing volume from 1902 simply may not have survived.

Whichever scenario you subscribe to, the Ogilvie edition was never published, or it was indeed published but no copies are known to exist, I believe you have a strong argument. We can only hope that if Ogilvie did publish *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, then a copy will surface someday to delight all Alger enthusiasts.

Author's note: I want to thank the many people who laid the groundwork upon which this current research was built. I also want to thank my wife, Lisa, for editing the final version of this article.

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14. Braeme, Charlotte M. *The Squire's Darling*, J. S. Ogilvie, Sunset Series No. 92, circa 1917.
15. Braeme, Charlotte M. *The Shadow of a Sin*, J. S. Ogilvie, Sunset Series No. 95, circa 1917.
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Thompson & Thomas:

Often overlooked, this publisher deserves respect

By James D. Keeline (PF-898)
(First of two parts)

Collectors of Horatio Alger, Jr., "Oliver Optic" and Edward Stratemeyer know that some of the books by those authors were published by Thompson & Thomas in 1902. One of the Alger, *A Rolling Stone*, was the first book edition of the story. But relatively little is known about the publisher in the usual sources such as Stern or the publisher volumes of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

Perhaps it is because the Thompson & Thomas firm relatively short-lived and issued only a few titles for each of the authors. It also did not help that the surnames of the partners were very common and usually only the initials were given.

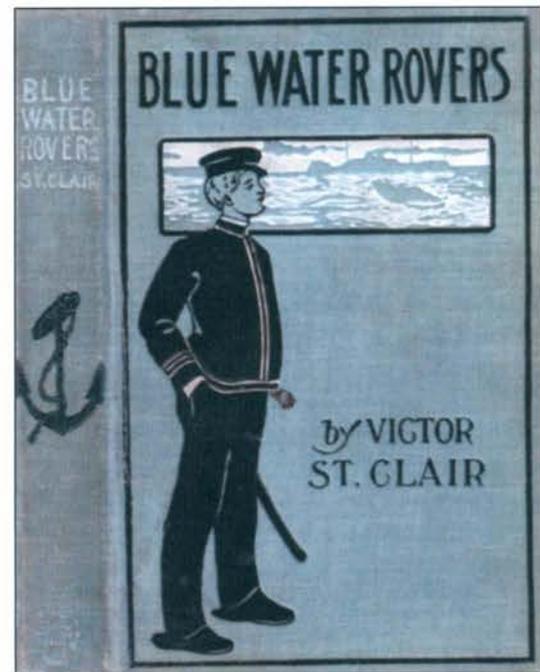
The partnership of Thompson & Thomas was formed in Chicago in 1897 between Charles Cline Thompson and Clinton Eugene Thomas. They offered a selection of books, including historical and humor themes such as volumes featuring Peck's Bad Boy. At least some of their writers were from Midwest and Western states.

Five years after their founding, they sought to assemble a line of boys' books. Although they didn't give it a specific name, a catalog in the *Publishers' Trade List Annual* gave a descriptive title: "A Strong Line of Boys' Books."

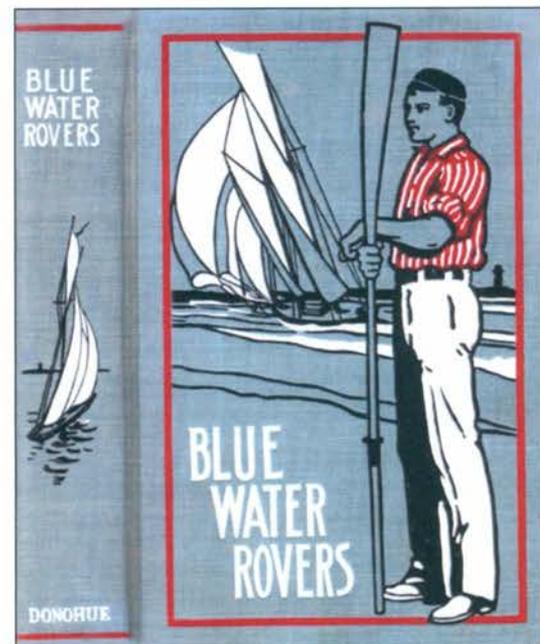
The publisher library included five Horatio Alger, Jr. titles, including *A Rolling Stone* as a first edition and *The Western Boy; or, Tom the Bootblack* as a variant title; four Edward S. Ellis volumes, including two under the author's "Lieut. R. H. Jayne" pen name; and single titles by other authors such as "Oliver Optic" (W. T. Adams) Matthew White, Jr., William Murray Graydon, W. Bert Foster, William Dalton and "Allan Eric" (Charles W. Willis). Also included were George Waldo Browne writing as "Victor St. Clair" for the title *Blue Water Rovers*, and "Capt. Ralph Bonehill" (Stratemeyer) for *The Young Naval Captain*.

These stories had been published before as story paper serials and occasionally as books. At least some of them were the first book editions for the stories.

Recently discovered letters between Edward Stratemeyer and Thompson & Thomas provide some details on the publication arrangements. The books were printed on good paper with solid bindings. The white lettering was prone to flaking, of course, as it was with almost any book of this era. The retail price was \$1.00.

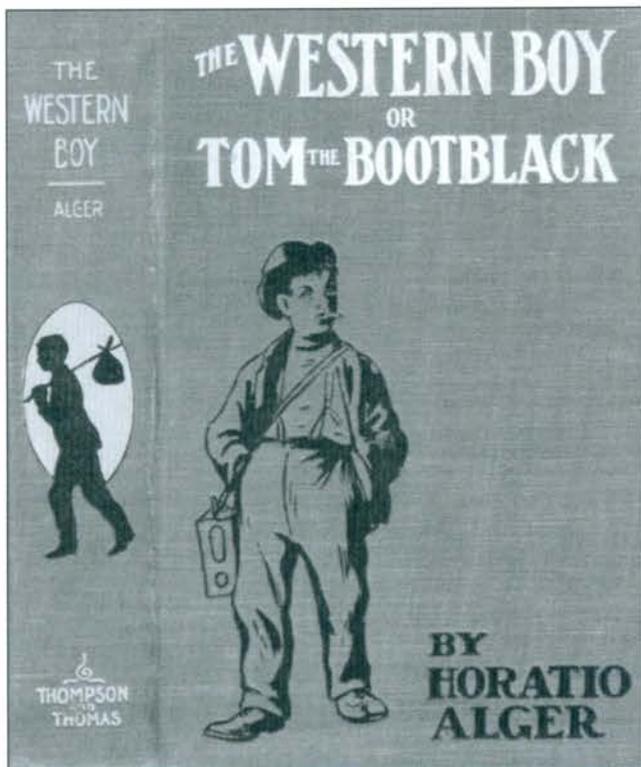


Blue Water Rovers, Thompson & Thomas edition.



Blue Water Rovers, M.A. Donohue reprint.

This was a bit less than books from firms like Lee & Shepard, which were typically \$1.25. But they were not as low as the offerings from Cupples & Leon and Grosset & Dunlap that would become available in the latter half of the decade. Some of the more expensive C&L books were \$1.00 but most ranged between 60



The Western Boy; or, Tom the Bootblack, was one of the Algers published by Thompson & Thomas, including the first edition of *A Rolling Stone; or, the Adventures of a Wanderer* (1902).

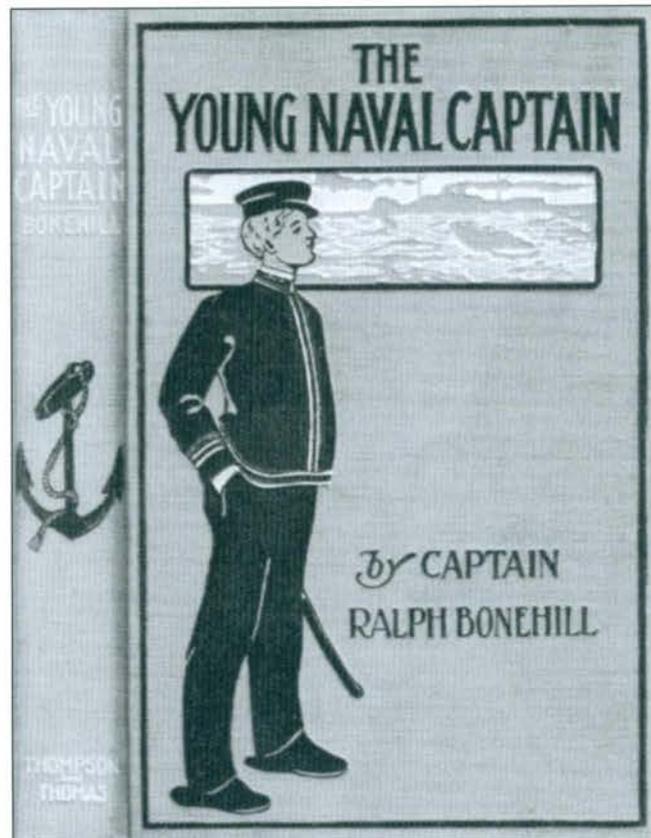
cents and 25 cents. G&D titles were mostly between 40 cents and 60 cents in the early period.

The higher price was one of the reasons why the publisher did not continue to offer the books for a long period. However, there were other reasons as well. The printing plants (page plates, cover dies, etc.) for several of these were sold to M.A. Donohue around 1914. Still, collectors may be surprised that a publisher with a group of books first published in 1902, with no new titles added, continued to offer them through 1913.

Of the early 20th-century publishers with two surnames in the imprint name, it was common to represent a partnership between two men. One was typically interested in the manufacturing and publishing of books. The other specialized in marketing through traveling sales, either making the trips personally or supervising a sales force. In this case, Thompson was the publisher and Thomas was the salesman.

Some publishers sent information to **Publishers' Weekly** so they had regular notices in the trade magazine. However, Thompson & Thomas did not have quite the same level of publicity. So far, no announcement of this library has been found in this or other trade journals.

They also did not send in catalogs in every volume of the *Publishers' Trade List Annual* (PTLA). The first



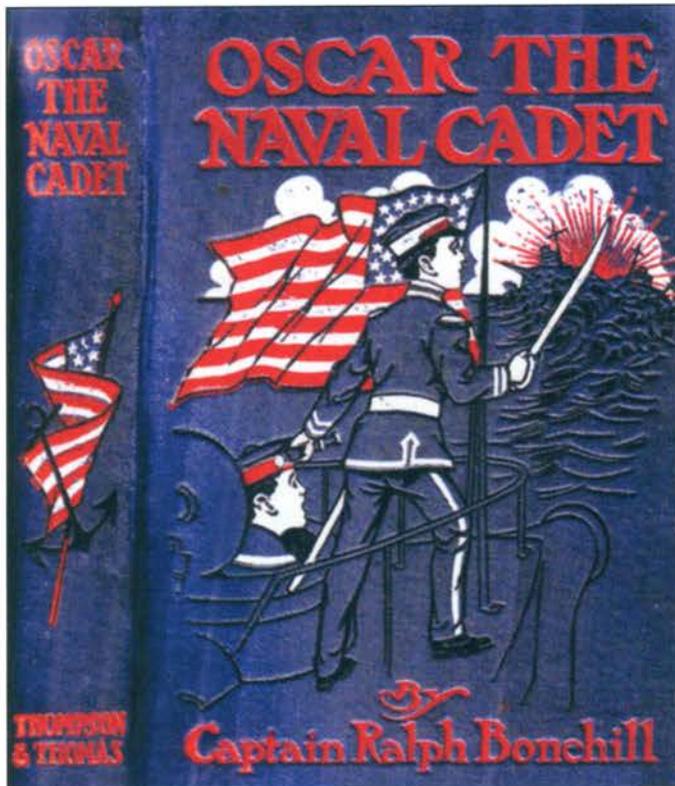
The Young Naval Captain, by Edward Stratemeyer as "Captain Ralph Bonehill," was the first book edition of the 1900 **Golden Hours** serial "Holland, the Destroyer" when issued by Thompson & Thomas in 1902. In 1908, T&T changed the title to *Oscar, the Naval Cadet*, also used by M.A. Donohue (see images on Page 16).

appearance among available volumes was in 1905. The same or similar ads appeared for a few years. Early on, two pages were devoted to the library with six cover images per page. Later, only a single page was used.

As noted above, Edward Stratemeyer provided one of his own stories for the library. It was first published in **Golden Hours** as "Holland, the Destroyer; or, America Against the World" as by "Hal Harkaway" (24 Nov. 1900–12 Jan. 1901). This story was a future history involving a world war. The story features Oscar Pelham, who has developed a submarine he called *Holland X*, which proved to be what was needed by the United States Navy when several countries around the world declared war on the U.S. and attacked on several fronts.

The book edition was first published as *The Young Naval Captain* in the Thompson & Thomas library in 1902. The book used Stratemeyer's personal pseudonym, "Capt. Ralph Bonehill." Four unsigned glossy halftone illustrations were created.

In an effort to reinvigorate sales, the catalog in the
(Continued on Page 16)



The 1908 Thompson & Thomas edition of *Oscar the Naval Cadet* has a slightly larger cover size of 5½ by 8 inches.

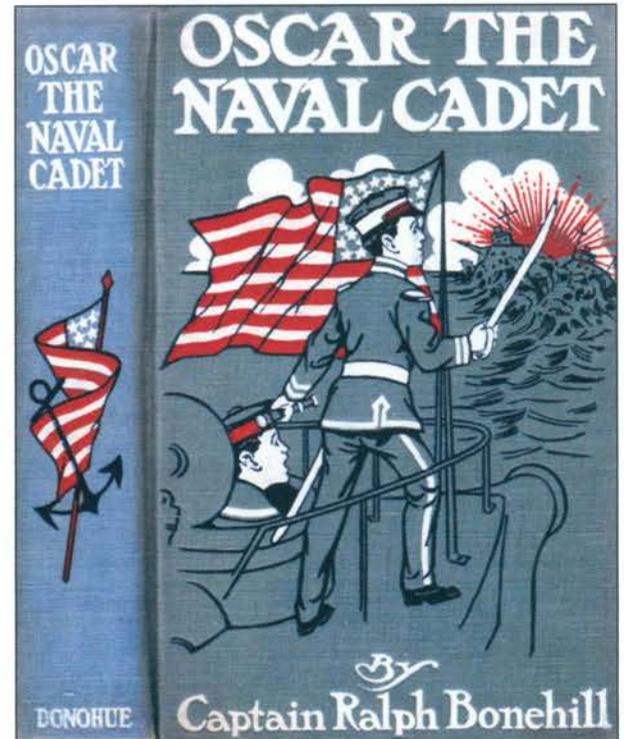
Thompson & Thomas

(Continued from Page 15)

1908 volume of the PTLA described that several books had a “New Edition—New Illustrations—New Type.” Almost half of the 17 books received new titles and cover designs. One of these was the Bonehill book that was now called *Oscar the Naval Cadet*. The 1908 Thompson & Thomas edition was issued with a slightly larger cover size (5½ by 8 inches versus the usual series-book size of 5¼ by 7½ inches). When reprinted by Donohue in 1914, the same cover dies were used, and it came in the smaller size (see above).

Cover dies for books were made from brass, one for each color to be printed. While a printing plate for a duodecimo book is typically thin and weighs about one pound, a brass cover die is much thicker and just over two pounds.

Since the cover dies are expensive to make, so it is understandable why the publishers would want to reuse them whenever possible. Thus, when a cheaper publisher bought the printing plates for the pages and illustrations, they also reused the cover design. Sometimes it might be simplified by stamping the cover in fewer colors. So, for Thompson & Thomas to come up with a new cover and title for *The Young Naval Captain* and other titles was a significant investment and showed some faith that the cost



The Donohue edition in the 5¼ by 7½-inch format.

would be recovered in new sales.

The publisher purchased the stories outright, including the two from Stratemeyer. They paid \$250 for *The Young Naval Captain* and \$100 for *Blue Water Rovers*. Stratemeyer has purchased the latter from Browne and had the author edit the story for book publication after two serial appearances. It is very likely Thompson & Thomas purchased book rights for most of the stories they issued in this series. It was a common preference for publishers, not only for financial considerations but a simplification in the business practices, since they did not need to issue sales reports and royalty payments.

That Stratemeyer would agree to sell one of his own stories outright was unusual since he was working to have his stories published in book form under royalty agreements. This issue is the reason he stopped writing the Minute Boys series that he had begun for Dana Estes. He did sell some stories and even Syndicate series, but he generally avoided this. It may be that he felt the story had limited interest in the 20th Century with all of the new ideas he was developing for his own writing and the Stratemeyer Syndicate, which he founded in 1905.

(To be concluded in the January-February issue)

Author's note: Part two will detail the bibliographic details of the books in this library as well as Stratemeyer's correspondence with Thompson & Thomas.