

# Newsboy



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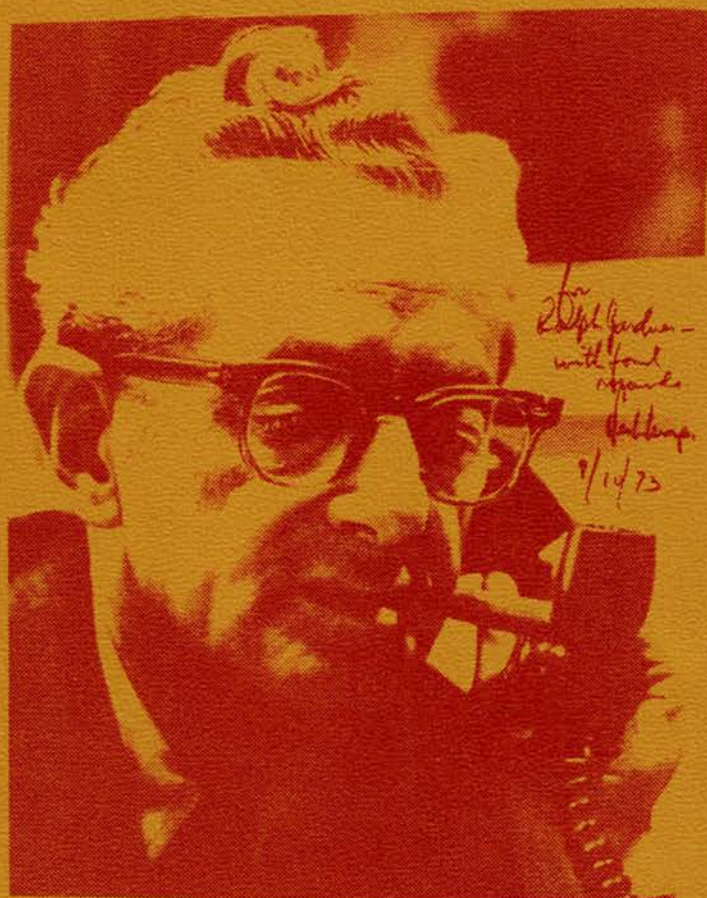
GUEST EDITOR  
Jack Bales  
440 Palace St.  
Aurora, Ill. 60506

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Monthly Newsletter of  
the HORATIO ALGER  
SOCIETY. The World's  
Only Publication Devoted  
to That Wonderful  
World of Horatio Alger.



Founded 1961 by Forrest Campbell & Kenneth Butler



HERBERT R. MAYES

In 1928 the first biography of Horatio Alger, Jr. was written by Herbert R. Mayes. Although it was fictitious, Alger: A Biography Without a Hero was for decades regarded as gospel by practically every critic, reviewer and reference source. Although the author has privately told a few friends the story of this unique debunking biography, it has never before been publicly revealed. However, Herbert R. Mayes has now permitted the Horatio Alger Society and Newsboy to publish by way of a series of letters between him and Doubleday editor Bill Henderson the history of this literary hoax.



## HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive and Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes - lads whose struggles epitomized the Great American Dream and flamed hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans.

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The Newsboy, the official organ of the Horatio Alger Society, is published monthly except January and July and is distributed free to our members. Membership fee for any twelve month period is \$5.00.

Newsboy recognizes Ralph D. Gardner's Horatio Alger, or the American Hero Era, published by Wayside Press, 1964, as the leading authority on the subject.

Please use membership roster for mailing addresses of our officers and members.

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NEWSBOY EDITORIAL

It all started at the 1973 Horatio Alger Society Convention in Indianapolis. After Bill Henderson had read to H.A.S. members excerpts from some of his letters from author Herbert R. Mayes concerning his 1928 biography of Alger, numerous persons had asked, "What is the possibility of having these letters published in the Newsboy?" Well, we all thought it was an idea worth pursuing, so in late May I wrote Mr. Mayes, asking his permission to reprint his letters to and from Doubleday editor Bill Henderson - all of which delved into the history of Mayes' book, Alger: A Biography Without a Hero. He readily assented, and then commenced a whirlwind correspondence between Mayes, Bill Hender-

son, Carl Hartmann, Ralph Gardner and myself - as we sought to locate copies of the letters, work out plans for printing & typing this issue, and finalize all last minute details of production.

Now that it is all over, I'd like to thank the above people for their help and ideas - and especially thank Herb Mayes himself - for without his cooperation this special issue of Newsboy would not have been possible.

Jack Bales  
Guest Editor

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OUR NEW MEMBER--  
HERBERT R. MAYES  
by Ralph D. Gardner

It was last May at Indianapolis. We were back at the motel after our banquet. Bill Henderson had been the featured speaker and a bunch of us were sitting around Dr. Les Poste's room rehashing Bill's subject, "Horatio Alger and Herbert R. Mayes."

There was much discussion, of course, concerning Mayes' 1928 book: Alger: A Biography Without a Hero. We weighed its effect ever since upon Alger collectors and scholars, as well as Henderson's revealing and new disclosures of the author's own efforts to expose and clarify his hoax that a gullible public for a couple of generations accepted as fact.

"Actually," someone suggested, "it was certainly more successful than Clifford Irving's hoax on Howard Hughes. Mayes' book got published and for years people believed it."

"But there's something more important than that," another Alger enthusiast hastened to add. "Herb Mayes' book was the very first on Alger to appear. It definitely served to make people Alger-conscious. It provided a point of departure from which many other studies of the life and works of Horatio Alger took off. Without it, others might not have been challenged to take up the necessary research to produce the Alger



interest we know today."

share this view. And for this reason, among others, I am so pleased that Herb Mayes - who is not only an Alger enthusiast, but is an Alger Hero in the truest sense of the word if ever I saw one - now joins us as a member of the Horatio Alger Society.

The Mayes-Henderson letters which you'll read on these pages provide a superb study - the first and most complete ever to appear in print - of a long-standing literary controversy. These disclosures make this issue of the Newsboy a valuable document, one that all future Alger scholars must examine for their research and writing.

Having spent many years of my life as a news-writer and later in the advertising business, Herb's name was familiar to me even before the day - ages ago - when I picked up his Alger book at a Fourth Avenue bookstall. It probably cost me less than a dollar at that time. Today, as we all know, it is a rare book, regularly bringing a premium price on the rare occasions it is offered for sale. Herb, himself, doesn't own a copy, and is trying to locate one.

I first met Herb Mayes only a year ago, shortly before the publication of Silas Snobden's Office Boy. Bill Henderson, who was the Doubleday editor of that book, had for some time been in correspondence with Herb, who now lives in London. When he visited New York last winter, he invited Bill and myself to lunch, and we became friends. I had brought along my copy of his book and he inscribed it to me thusly: "For Ralph Gardner, With Good Wishes, From the Perpetrator of the Hoax. Herb Mayes."

Another recollection of that meeting was that the 21 Club, where we dined, had six varieties of ice cream on the menu. Herb, an ice cream aficionado, ordered one scoop of each. When the dish arrived it appeared to Herb that there might be merely five different flavors as two of the scoops looked identically like vanilla. This brought to our table the maitre d' who assured Herb that when the 21 Club menu offers six flavors they surely are six different flavors. The crisis quickly ended when Herb (while the

maitre d', the table captain and the waiter stood breathlessly in attendance) tasted his dessert and smilingly acknowledged that only one was vanilla. The other look-alike scoop was indeed banana.

Some weeks ago I was in London, and a highlight of my visit was Herb Mayes' invitation to join him for lunch at his lovely home alongside Hyde Park. There was home-baked cake for dessert. (I am a cake aficionado!), but we had a good laugh when I recalled the ice cream affair.

This entire space could easily be filled with the Who's Who listing of Herb Mayes' accomplishments. To summarize, I'll merely record that our new member, among other positions, has been President, Chief Executive Officer and Editor of McCall's Magazine; Editor of Good Housekeeping; a Director of Saturday Review, etc. etc. His career - which began on The Inland Merchant in 1920 also includes the authorship of a number of books and anthologies, as well as the receipt of innumerable awards and honors for achievement in journalism, advertising, the graphic arts and other fields.

The Who's Who entry also includes Herb's clubs, organizations and business associations. To this imposing list he now adds his membership in the Horatio Alger Society.

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Doubleday & Co., Inc. Publishers  
277 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10017  
April 21, 1972

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
c/o Saturday Review  
380 Madison Ave.  
New York, N. Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Mayes:

On February 11, I wrote to you at your Park Avenue address. Unfortunately, that letter seems to have gone astray.

Recently I had the pleasure of reading your biography of Horatio Alger, which was published in 1928.



We are at present exploring the possibility of issuing a biography of Alger and I wonder if you would be kind enough to clear up a persistent question.

Was your 1928 biography of Alger fiction to a large extent? Was it indeed more a debunking document than a biography? There are persistent rumors to this effect and I would appreciate your setting the matter straight.

Fiction or non-fiction, the book was very enjoyable.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

\* \* \*

One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
May 8, 1972

Dear Mr. Henderson:

Three years have gone by since I lived at 784 Park Avenue. Your letter of April 21st, addressed to me in care of Saturday Review, has just been received - came by way of surface mail. In any case, through Ken McCormick you always can find out where I am. I visited Ken in New York about two weeks ago. Too bad that you and I didn't then have a chance to meet. [Ed. note: Ken McCormick was former Doubleday Editor-in-Chief, is now Senior Consulting Editor].

About Alger. That's a fairly interesting story. Who do you have in mind as author of the biography? Is he likely to be in London? Certainly at any time I'll be glad to talk with him.

Sincerely,

Herbert R. Mayes

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1085 Warburton Ave.  
Apt. 801

Yonkers, N. Y.  
May 13, 1972

Mr. Herbert Mayes  
One Hyde Park Street  
London, W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

Thank you so much for your reply to my letter of April 21. I have long been interested in the facts of Alger's life and the conflicting versions of that life. The biography I mentioned in my previous letter is Ralph Gardner's effort which appeared in 1964 and which I would like to republish.

In the Preface to that biography Mr. Gardner states, "A previous volume, written more than a generation ago, was interesting, but contained few facts, many errors and omissions, and must be considered as fiction." I am sure that Mr. Gardner speaks here of your volume Alger: A Biography Without a Hero, published by Macy-Masius in 1928.

I have recently been in touch with Mr. Malcolm Cowley, who first questioned your biography in The New Republic back in 1945 and has written to you on the subject of the diary that is the basis for your biography. I have also come across the enclosed article by John Seelye, which seems to sum up the sound and fury surrounding Horatio Alger's life.

As the editor of a prominent national magazine has asked me to do an article about the Alger biographies, I wonder if you would do me the honor of commenting on the Seelye article and on the question of Alger's diary? I certainly don't want to repeat any of the critical remarks about your biography without giving you a chance to reply in full.

Again, thank you for your letter of May 8.

Sincerely,

Bill Henderson

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One Hyde Park Street

February



London, W.2  
May 20, 1972

Dear Mr. Henderson:

It now seems certain that I will be in New York again. In July, probably early part. As soon as the dates are fixed, I'll let you know. Then we can arrange to meet and I'll be glad to be of help in connection with the Alger matter.

Sincerely,

Herbert R. Mayes

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One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
July 3, 1972

Mr. Bill Henderson  
Doubleday & Company  
277 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Henderson:

My visit to New York has been postponed. Now it seems unlikely I will be there before Labor Day. Rather than hold you up, I'll try to give here some response to your letter of May 13th.

Not merely was my Alger biography partly fictional, it was practically all fictional. It was written sporadically - a portion in 1927, some portions probably in 1928. Because there had to be a few facts, I corresponded with a handful of people, interviewed a few, and made a visit to South Natick (I think I was there for all of two days). The project was undertaken with malice aforethought - a take-off on the debunking biographies that were quite popular in the 20's, and a more miserable, maudlin piece of claptrap would be hard to imagine, though I surely could not have considered it so bad then as I did later. The story of the venture has been told by me to a few intimate friends over the years, but at no time did I ever put any of it in writing.

Unfortunately - how unfortunately! - the book

when it appeared was accepted pretty much as gospel. Why it was not recognized for what it was supposed to be baffled the publisher (George Macy) and me, and Henry Pringle (who was involved with a biography of Alfred E. Smith for Macy), and the public relations man - Louis Popkin - whose idea it was originally. (I'm reasonably certain that Popkin's wife - Zelda - who was or became a writer of mysteries, was in on the plan. She may still be around and have some recollection of the affair.) In any event, the reviewers, including most of those then well known, treated the book as an authentic effort; which doesn't mean that all of them, or even most of them, liked it. At the time, I think Frank Adams considered it a bore.

One critic - I think his name was Blanchard and that he wrote for the Evening Sun - tore the book to pieces and accused me of being without imagination. That I loved.

One of the first notices was written by Harry Hansen, who was on the Morning World. He not merely liked my Alger, he praised it rather highly, and I believe his concluding line was, "Don't miss it." As a matter of fact, most people did miss it; probably fewer than 1500 copies were bought. Lord knows I received no royalties, or any other payments. I was not acquainted with Hansen then. However, he and Macy were friends, which put Macy in a dilemma. How was one to announce that the book was a hoax without making Hansen look silly? As a publisher, and a fairly new one, Macy felt he was in no position to offend a critic. Hansen was only one of numerous authorities who never expressed a doubt. Macy's decision was to let the book ride, to try to dispose of the print order to get back his publication costs, and then forget about it. My recollection is that he prepared some ads, and that they appeared in a few papers. If you are interested enough to look up the newspapers of the day, it's likely you can get a better picture of the situation than I can give you.

Some years later, on various occasions, a few people wrote to make inquiries about the background of the book. I definitely recall some correspondence with Mr. Cowley who,



along with others, asked for verification of the existence of Alger's diary, which of course never existed. However, the original decision to perpetuate the myth was never changed. I think my response to inquirers was that the "diary" together with all other "research" material, had been turned over to the Newsboys' Home in New York. I feel confident that, right up until the time of his death, George Macy shied away from any discussion.

To return to Hansen. As long as he is alive - and I understand that he still is (I saw him in New York about 14 months ago) -, I would not in any circumstances want the story to be told. Hansen and I became fairly friendly as the years went by. I would not care to embarrass him, though by now he probably wouldn't give a damn.

Over the years, I have, of course, encountered a few books and quite a few articles written about Alger - all subsequent to the appearance of my biography. Frank Gruber may very well have been the first person to do any honest digging. Gruber, who was a writer of mystery novels, came to visit me several times - a pleasant man -, and we kept up some sort of correspondence. Mr. Gardner made a good try, though my recollection is that he too indulged in some fantasy. I never met Mr. Gardner but understand he is, or was, a much respected advertising man. Whoever was the editor of Harper's, somewhere in the 40's, wrote an article titled "Holy Horatio" that was published in Reader's Digest. It was lifted just about complete from my book, as I remember, and had no grain of truth in it. My close and now deceased friend Russel Crouse wrote the introduction to a book called (I think) Strive and Succeed, which was a reprint of three or four Alger novels. Like others, Crouse did no investigating of his own. If he had consulted me about Alger at the time, I'm not sure how I would have handled the situation. There are few men for whom I have felt as much affection.

In my long career as an editor, and as an omniverous reader, I covered biographies galore. You can imagine how often I have had reason to speculate on the conversations quoted, the thoughts and emotions and sighs and cries and laughs recorded - none of which

anybody had been privvy to. How much of biography is pure, unadulterated ke-believe! Now there's something somebody might write a book about.

If you come over here, or when I get over there, we can - if you wish, go into further detail. Meanwhile if you have any specific questions, write to me and I'll try to answer them; all, that is, with the understanding that nothing is used while Harry Hansen is still among us.

Sincerely,

Herbert R. Mayes

P.S. Several weeks ago, during dinner in London, Sam Vaughan told me that Doubleday is contemplating publication of a heretofore unknown novel by Alger. You'd better be sure it's legitimate! [Ed. note: Sam Vaughan is President of Doubleday].

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July 7, 1972

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
One Hyde Park Street  
London, W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

I certainly appreciated your letter of July 3 and your revelations about the 1928 Alger biography. I rather suspect that your biography is about the most interesting work that could be created out of Alger's rather dull life. I really don't blame the critics for falling for it as the literal truth - the book is so much fun to read.

However, I do think the critics should have paid more attention to what you were trying to do there. The book is probably just too subtle a put-down for the harried reviewer to appreciate. As I noted in the most recent draft of my article, "It doesn't even look like a biography. The evidence indicates that Mr. Mayes expected the work to be taken for a satire but misjudged his reviewers."

The article to date consists of a discussion

February



of modern Alger revivals such as the Horatio Alger Society of Mendota, Ill. (H.A.S.), a growing fan club; the Horatio Alger Awards Committee of New York, which honors work and win, rags to riches people; and the interesting modern publishing boom - including our publication early next year of Silas Snobden's Office Boy, the book described to you by Sam Vaughan. Snobden will be a first edition, as it was serialized in Argosy during 1889-1890 but has never been in book form. Since this is a new novel we are looking forward to reviews. Perhaps you would like to review the novel?

The remainder of the article discusses just who Alger was. I talk about your biography, John Tebbel's unimportant rehash of your book in 1963; Frank Gruber's small book and Ralph Gardner's biography of 1964. I then look at the charges against your biography by Gardner, plus more recent charges by Malcolm Cowley, John Seelye and Richard Huber (The American Idea of Success, McGraw Hill, 1971 - a fine book, by the way.) I also examine internal contradictions in your book, which I know you will admit, are not hard to find. I also point out that through the years you have from time to time said the diary did exist and the biography is genuine. But I am afraid the evidence works against that position and as the article stands now your argument seems weak.

I'd really rather reverse your stance in the article. After reading your letter of July 3 I am sure you should have the last laugh. After all, you intended the biography to be known as a hoax. Then, out of decency, you tried not to embarrass your friends and you held to that decent idea through the years. The book really is very funny and your attitude to your friends is, of course, very noble. I'd like to leave it at that and close the books on this mysterious Horatio.

I do not mention Harry Hansen in the article and I know nothing of his review. I am sure, as you note in your letter, "by now he probably wouldn't give a damn." Might I suggest that you write to him at 109 Lorain St., Mt. Vernon, New York and explain the situation so that I can reveal the facts of your letter. This seems to me as the simple, direct solution and I hope you will agree so that I

can quiet the sound and fury of the biography's critics in my article. In short my approach would be that there is little use shouting hoax when Herbert Mayes admits the biography is a hoax and intended it all along as a debunking of Alger - and god knows Alger's myth needed debunking.

As I stated, Harry Hansen's name never appears in the article. I quote only two reviewers from 1928, Halsey Raines in the April 22, 1928 New York Times review, "a full-length and an intensely human picture," and Malcolm Cowley in the April 28, 1928 New Republic, "a little better than average."

In later years, I quote Hal Borland's August 30, 1964 review of Tebbel's book (Times). Borland supports your book and Tebbel's book against Gardner's book.

Borland and Raines are the only two people who might be embarrassed by the article - and if you wish I can remove their names.

I do so much appreciate your letter and your confidence. But I do hope we can work it out with Mr. Hansen so that the article will present you and your great debunking of Alger in the proper light - and so that history can be set straight in your words.

Sincerely,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

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One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
July 12, 1972

Mr. Bill Henderson  
Doubleday & Company  
277 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Henderson:

It seems to me that the Alger business hardly can be of much consequence at this late date; but if you are going to cover it at all, I hope you are going to cover it thoroughly. Surely, in the 42nd Street library,



there must be copies of the newspapers of the 20's - or they'd be on microfilm - and they ought to be scanned for whatever light they can shed on then current reactions to the book. Even my recollection of Hansen's review may not be absolutely accurate and ought to be checked.

In your July 7th letter you refer to "internal contradictions" in my Alger. Far from denying they exist, I'd guess the book literally swarms with them, along with countless absurdities. As a result of your interest, I went to the library at the British Museum to have a new look at Gruber's little volume. In an earlier letter, I said Gruber probably was the first person to make any serious investigation, and I still think so. Yet I suspect that Gruber wasn't as careful as he might have been. There is, for example, on Page 18 a reference to Alger's father. I think it was I, without any basis, who wrote that the senior Alger wanted his son to follow in his footsteps, and that Alger rebelled frequently and that his father always brought him back in line. I would almost swear that I created the alliterative nickname Holy Horatio. Even in the excellent article by John Seelye, of which you sent me a copy, there seem to me to be statements open to question. I mention, for example, the reference on Page 755 to Alger's ability to cure himself of a stammer. I think I created that stammer. On the same page there is reference to Alger's adoption of several newsboys. I know I made that up.

Please get out of your mind the notion that there was anything "noble" about my attitude toward my friends. When the book came out, I didn't even know Hansen. Even Macy, at that time, was merely an acquaintance. But he was my publisher, he didn't want any admission of hoax, and I went along with him. After that, there seemed to be nothing to do but try to perpetuate the myth. It may have been, on Macy's part, an absurd decision, even if from his standpoint a practical one. With hindsight it was even more absurd for me to go along with it. Nevertheless, I did. Then I got to know Hansen a little, developed considerable respect for him, and I believe nothing could have persuaded me to do anything to embarrass him.

Some miscellaneous notes: (1) Louis Popkin, as I told you previously, conceived the idea for a book about Alger. He urged me to write or call on Macy, whom he knew. I don't recall my first contact with Macy - or rather how it came about -, but I think it was through a letter. He liked the idea of an Alger biography, which we first discussed as a serious one. Popkin and I quickly came to the conclusion there wasn't enough about Alger's life to make interesting reading. Popkin then suggested the take-off. Macy's initial reaction was negative; he wasn't confident I could do it, asked that I try a few chapters. I did. Macy was delighted. Popkin volunteered, or was engaged by Macy, to handle publicity for the book. I remember chiefly two of his recommendations: that I write to prominent men to ask how Alger's books had influenced their lives; and because so many men always claimed to have read everything Alger ever wrote, that I compile a list of Alger books and include a number of non-existent titles... (2) In a catalogue recently issued here by the W. H. Allen Publishing Company, I noticed an announcement of a new book by Zelda Popkin, which means she's alive and active. She must very well have some recollections of the Alger affair... (3) Several times over the years I have come across estimates of the total number of Alger books sold. Astronomical figures. I myself once thought Alger the world's most read author. But when I note Gruber's statement that "more of Alger's books have been sold than of Dickens, Thackeray, Hemingway, Faulkner and Lloyd C. Douglas, combined," I think that must be an aberration.

Now back to your letter of July 7th. I never saw Hal Borland's review of Tebbel's book; must have seen but do not remember a review by Halsey Raines. In any event, I am positive I never met Mr. Borland, doubt if I ever met Mr. Tebbel. Your mention of these names would not bother me. The only person I am concerned about is Harry Hansen. And as it was his review that first created a problem, I don't see how you can ignore him.

I am enclosing a copy of a column I wrote for the July 25, 1970 issue of Saturday Review. It offered, as you will see, an excellent opportunity for me to discuss



details of the Alger hoax. I was tempted, but refrained because of Hansen. If I resisted the temptation then, if I decided then not to inquire of Hansen how he would react, surely you can understand my reluctance to write to Hansen now. I wouldn't mind talk-  
ing with him, and would be glad to try to arrange an appointment on my next visit home. Hansen might not give a damn, but I'd want to be damned sure. Do you have a deadline for your article? Is it so urgent that it can't wait until, say, autumn? I do not know you, or anything about you - except that you're a Doubleday editor -, but I'll be disappointed, as I'm certain a man like Seelye would be, if you don't try to cover every detail.

Finally, my thanks for your offer to send me a copy of Silas Snobden's Office Boy (which sounds like a title I might have invented). I accept. I haven't read an Alger story since I worked on the biography: and as I'm now 72, and undoubtedly approaching second childhood, I might enjoy the book very much.

Sincerely,

Herb Mayes

P.S. Please return the enclosed column. It is my file copy.

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July 31, 1972

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
One Hyde Park Street  
London W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

I hasten to reply to your letter of July 12. Thank you so much for your interest in our forthcoming Silas Snobden's Office Boy by Horatio Alger Jr. I will make sure that you receive a copy.

I have tried to be as accurate and in-depth as possible on the Alger article. I have looked into just about every review of note on your biography from 1928 until today. I must confess, however, that I have not seen Mr. Hansen's review and I will go in search

of same.

Your comments about Holy Horatio and Horatio's stammer are most interesting. I will get in touch with John Seelye and find out just where he came up with that stammer. Ralph Gardner's biography also mentions speech difficulties and I will check with him about the origin of this information. Of course Gruber's book is so small, but was the first to try to look at Horatio according to the facts. I regret that Mr. Gruber is no longer living to talk with.

I do appreciate your sending along the Saturday Review piece. I am enclosing your file copy.

Please do check with Mr. Hansen when you visit in the Fall. As of yet I am under no deadline pressure about the article. I will let you know if such pressure does develop.

Please enjoy good English weather. We have had nothing but rain and heat all summer.

Best wishes,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

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One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
September 26, 1972

Dear Bill Henderson:

Instead of the projected visit to New York, I went to Greece. Simply had to get away from the pressures of seeing friends descending on me from home and the prospect of doing the rounds in New York. Now it's nice to be back here.

Is your Alger opus coming along satisfactorily? Did you ever check with John Seelye?

Nothing can keep me away from New York in December. My kids are there, and it's with them Mrs. Mayes and I intend to spend the Christmas holiday. If it isn't too late for you, I'll then be in touch with Hansen.



When you see Ken, please tell him I'll call on him about December 18th.

Sincerely,

Herb Mayes

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October 2, 1972

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
One Hyde Park Street  
London, W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

I don't blame you for going to Greece instead of New York. It seems to be an excellent choice.

I'd be glad to see you when you come to New York in December. I've passed on your message to Ken about December 18. While you are here I'd like to present you with a copy of Silas Snobden's Office Boy. Production tells me we will have finished books by December 22. Perhaps you would like to schedule a review. Pub date is the first week in February.

I can't wait to see what kind of reviews Horatio will be getting seventy-three years after his death. PW [Publishers' Weekly] will be first. I'll send you a copy of their opinions.

Looking forward to meeting you in December.

Sincerely,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

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January 18, 1973

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
One Hyde Park St.  
London, W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

I was delighted to meet you in New York.

Getting you and Ralph Gardner together was a delight too. I hope Horatio was listening as we sorted his life out.

Enclosed is Horatio's latest - Silas Snobden's Office Boy, which so far is battling two hits to no strikeouts in the review column (PW and Kirkus).

As for the redo of Ralph's biography here, it doesn't look that promising. Reprints tend to be ignored by reviewers and other editors are balking. But I hope Ralph does get somebody to do it.

Please take care - and do come to see me again when you visit New York. Ken sends regards.

Best wishes,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

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One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
February 12, 1973

Dear Bill:

Recently I've been plagued with eye problems, have just gone through an operation, am beginning to be able to read again. About the first thing I came across was the "Silas" review in Time. That must have pleased you enormously.

I'm a bit confused by your reference (January 18th) to Gardner's projected biography. I had thought it was to be a completely new job, not a reprint of the Wayside Press book. In any event, I hope he goes ahead with it - the full story really ought to be told.

My regards to you and to Ken.

Sincerely,

Herb

\* \* \*

February



One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
February 12, 1973

Dear Mr. Gardner:

You haven't heard from me - nobody's heard from me for a while - because my eyes have been bothering me and only a few days ago was I discharged from the hospital here after a successful operation.

I had a note from Bill Henderson, which somewhat confused me. "As for the redo of Ralph's biography here," he wrote, "it doesn't look that promising. Reprints tend to get ignored by reviewers and other editors are balking." It was my impression, when the three of us were together in New York, that you were going to write a completely new book, and that it wasn't merely to be a reprint of the Wayside Press book that you and Bill had in mind. Was I wrong?

Whatever the situation, I hope you do do another Alger, with all the information that hasn't previously been available. You know without my saying it again that you can have from me any help I am able to give. Meanwhile, I send you fond regards. It was a pleasure to meet you at long last.

Sincerely,

Herb Mayes

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February 21, 1973

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes  
One Hyde Park St.  
London, W2

Dear Herb:

I was glad to hear from you and to learn that the eye surgery has been a success. Did you receive the copy of Silas Snobden's Office Boy I sent to you? The novel has been somewhat of a curious success over here. Paperback reprint sale to Popular Library - even though the book is in public domain. Some fellow came along yesterday and wants to turn it into a TV series. Next I suppose we will

have Horatio balloons, underwear, who knows?

I keep trying with Ralph's biography, but the folks around here still think that no matter how much we rewrite the book it will be reviewed not at all and thought of as a mere reprint. Perhaps when Horatio replaces Seagull at the top of the charts they will change their minds.

If you return to New York please give us a call. Ralph and I (and Ken) would love to see you again.

Best wishes,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

\* \* \*

Ralph D. Gardner Advertising  
745 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.  
February 23, 1973

Dear Herb:

Yes, apparently the folks at Doubleday are under the impression that any new biography on Horatio would be something of a rewrite of my last one. Neither Bill nor I agree, especially as the new one would be more scholarly, without the dialogue which, I fear, marred my first effort. This one would be loaded with footnotes and the other things reviewers like. Actually we feel that any success "Silas" may have will renew interest and we mean to bring it up again. Let's hope we'll still be able to work on this.

Glad to hear your operation was successful. I really hope we'll meet soon again.

Kindest regards,

Cordially,

Ralph

\* \* \*

April 23, 1973

Mr. Herbert R. Mayes



One Hyde Park St.  
London, W2

Dear Mr. Mayes:

Esquire this is not, but perhaps it is better that the facts appear in Publishers' Weekly. More attention will be given by those caring about books.

They cut about four pages of my article, much having to do with the question of the biography. Well, now we are on record. Horatio can rest easy, that is if he likes being called just plain banal.

What we probably need now is a psychological biography of Horatio. But to really know the truth about the American Dreamer might be too dangerous. I see CIA censorship possibilities.

I'm rushing this to you before I receive any reaction. That should be coming and I'll let you know the details.

I do hope you are recovering from your eye operation. Soon I have to go get my teeth drilled and that alone fills me with fear and trembling.

Best from Ken too.

Sincerely,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

[Ed. note: Bill's article from Publishers' Weekly was enclosed with this letter. This was reprinted in the August and September (1973) issues of Newsboy].

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One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
April 25, 1973

Mr. Bill Henderson  
Doubleday and Co.  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Bill:

First, thanks for sending me the just-received Xerox of your Alger piec. as it appeared in Publishers' Weekly. Secondly, must say I'm disappointed the editors saw fit to cut your mss, especially since I assume the portions eliminated quoted more of the letter I had written to you last July. Your piece as published, it seems to me, may raise more questions than it answers.

When I saw Harry Hansen in New York last December, and he assured me he'd have no objection if the Alger story were told, I promptly informed you, so that you could feel free to include in the article you had in mind the information I had given you. Then you and Ralph Gardner and I had lunch together a few days later. If my memory is correct, you had decided to give up your article assignment, and you and Ralph asked if I would be willing to include the complete Alger story in an introduction - that you wanted me to write - to a new Alger biography Ralph was to do for Doubleday. It seemed an intriguing notion. At the time, I recall believing - or rather understanding - Ralph had an agreement to produce the book for you. My recollection must be correct, because early this year you (or maybe it was Ralph) wrote to tell me the Doubleday editors finally had voted against Ralph's project.

Since you decided to go ahead with your own article, I only wish you had given me a chance to see it before you submitted it to P.W. I'd certainly have asked you - so long as the story was to be told at last - to tell it in detail. At this late date, it seems to me any people interested might want to know every detail of what anybody and everybody remembers. To have quoted my July letter in full, as a case in point, would have been better than using excerpts from it.

I'll be surprised if P.W. doesn't get some querying letters. (Wish you'd keep me posted.) Conceivably enough interest will develop so that Ralph will be urged to go ahead with his own new biography. I wish he would.

Sincerely,

February



Herb

S. Ken and Ralph both must be familiar with your previous correspondence. It might be fair to let them see this letter.

\* \* \*

April 30, 1973

Mr. Herbert Mayes  
One Hyde Park  
London, W2

Dear Herb:

I too was disappointed about the cuts in the article regarding your biography. In the first draft, prepared for Esquire, I had devoted fifteen pages to your biography. Some of this I cut back, the rest was cut by PW. Because they couldn't run the full-length article I agreed to the cuts, thinking it best that some of the story be told, even if it were only part of a longer article about Alger publishing.

I continue to press for the publication of Ralph's biography. Since Silas is doing well perhaps this is the time for another try, but I've been turned down before and I am doubtful. However, if I am successful, we will reserve the introduction of a full telling of your story.

So far I've received no reaction from the general public about the piece. If I do hear anything I will send it to you pronto. I'm watching the letter column in each issue of PW to see if anybody has a thing or two to say.

Thank you for your letter. I will continue to look for opportunities for the full telling of the story of your biography.

Best wishes,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

\* \* \*

May 17, 1973

Mr. Herbert Mayes  
One Hyde Park St.  
London, W2

Dear Herb:

In a short time you will probably be hearing from a fellow named Jack Bales. He is guest editor of the enclosed newsletter, the monthly publication of the Horatio Alger Society. This society is dedicated to keeping Horatio's memory alive and to collecting and selling Alger titles. A fine bunch of people (male and female) that I recently met at the national H.A.S. Convention in Indianapolis. Total membership is about 200.

These are serious collectors and are quite informed about 19th Century literature in general.

Bales would like to reprint entirely your letters to me of July 3 and 12, 1973. I told him that you might be agreeable since you wanted the entire story about the 1928 biography told in full. I couldn't think of a better place than the newsletter for your revelations. H.A.S. is totally dedicated to the truth about Horatio and will make sure the truth gets around.

So far no reaction to the PW piece. I will keep you informed.

Best wishes,

Bill Henderson  
Associate Editor

\* \* \*

One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
May 21, 1973

Mr. Bill Henderson  
Doubleday and Company  
277 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Bill:

Thanks for the copy of Newsboy. I had no idea there was such a publication.



At this stage it probably doesn't matter where the Alger story is told, just so long as it's told in full and will be available to anybody who in future might be interested. Newsboy doesn't carry a copyright notice, or any mention of second-class or other mail privilege, which suggests that copies may not go to the Library of Congress or any other source that might be looked to for reference in years to come. In any event, I'll have no objection at all to publication of our correspondence, provided it appears in complete form. (I seem to have mislaid my copy of the July 12th letter you mention - would you mind sending me a Xerox? Then, when I hear from Mr. Bales, I'll have everything in front of me and can respond properly.)

Kind regards to you - and to Ken.

Sincerely,

Herb

\* \* \*

440 Palace St.  
Aurora, Ill.

Dear Mr. Mayes:

At the recent convention of the Horatio Alger Society, Mr. Bill Henderson, editor of Doubleday Publishing Company, read a letter from you to him regarding your biography of Alger that you wrote years ago. Myself, I have often wondered about this book, and found your letter not only interesting, but positively delightful!! Later, while talking with Bill and Ralph Gardner, we wondered if it would be all right with you if we reprinted your letter in the Horatio Alger Society Newsboy, a tabloid newsletter that is monthly sent to our 200 members? We all agreed that the members would undoubtedly love it as much as we all did, and Bill suggested that I write you. However, if you do not wish it printed, could I still have a copy made from Bill's original for my own personal records? Again, Bill Henderson asked that I write you first.

The reason that I'm writing you is that although the Newsboy is usually edited by our

Secretary, Carl Hartmann, during the coming summer months when I'm home from school, intend to edit it.

Would you be interested in joining the Horatio Alger Society? Enclosed is a short history of it. All the members at the Convention thought that it would be wonderful if you joined, for as I said before, you really made a big impression on everybody.

Yours very truly,

Jack Bales

\* \* \*

One Hyde Park Street  
London, W.2  
June 4, 1973

Mr. Jack Bales  
440 Palace Street  
Aurora, Illinois

Dear Mr. Bales:

Some 45 years have passed since the appearance of my Alger. Certainly it's about time the story of that venture should be told in full, at least to the extent that I can make any contribution to it. I have no objection - quite the contrary - to your use in Newsboy of the correspondence in which I have participated with Bill Henderson since the spring of 1972; but I consider it not unreasonable to ask that the complete correspondence be used. Only in this way, it seems to me, will readers know how the correspondence was initiated and be able to follow it consecutively and with comprehension. In this manner also, any persons interested in pursuing further research will not be at a loss for information.

To be specific, I think you should print Bill Henderson's first note to me under date of April 21, 1972; my response to him dated May 8, 1972; Bill's letter to me dated May 13, 1972; my note to Bill dated May 20, 1972; my letter to Bill dated July 3, 1972; Bill's reply to me dated July 7, 1972; my letter to Bill dated July 12, 1972; Bill's response to me dated July 31, 1972; my note to Bill dated September 26, 1972; Bill's



note to me dated October 2, 1972; Bill's note to me dated January 18, 1973; my note to Bill dated February 12, 1973; my letter to Mr. Gardner dated February 12, 1973; Bill's letter to me dated February 21, 1973; Mr. Gardner's note to me dated February 23, 1973 (I am enclosing a typed copy, because it was written in longhand and Mr. Gardner probably didn't keep a copy); Bill's letter to me (enclosing a Xerox of his article in Publishers' Weekly) dated April 23, 1973; my letter to Bill dated April 25, 1973; Bill's letter to me dated April 30, 1973; Bill's letter to me dated May 17, 1973; my letter to Bill dated May 21, 1973; your letter to me dated May 30, 1973; and, finally, this letter to you.

Now all of the foregoing will represent one hell of a lot of correspondence, in which few of your fellow Society members may be interested, but I hope my request is not regarded as out of line. Then at least there will be available in one place such information as I have been able to provide.

If you proceed with publication of the correspondence, I ask also that the issue of Newsboy be copyrighted, and carry a line saying the material may not be reprinted in whole or in part without prior specific permission from your organization. Thus you will retain total control.

I would also ask that you send me, before

publication if you decide to go ahead, the copy as you intend to use it.

Now as to your request to have copies of the correspondence, in whole or in part, for your personal file: I have no objection whatever.

As to your suggestion that I might be interested in applying for membership in the Horatio Alger Society: that, I think, might be presumptuous on my part. In view of what I did to poor Horatio's reputation, I think nothing would be in order except the Society's conference on me of a dishonorary membership!

Sincerely,

Herbert R. Mayes

P.S.: Should you wish any information about the December 1972 meeting at "21" that was attended by Bill, Ralph and myself, I'm sure you can get all details from Bill and Ralph. For me it was a particularly pleasant occasion.

Another P.S.: When in December I met with Bill (and Ken McCormick) in the Doubleday office, I phoned Harry Hansen and made an appointment to see him. As everybody now is aware, Hansen was charming, assured me he wouldn't mind at all if the Alger story were told.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

Since the sales of CAST UPON THE BREAKERS have exceeded all expectations, the HAS was lucky enough to receive 150 First editions instead of the 50 we had ordered. We have already sold 75, so if you haven't ordered yours yet DO IT NOW. Send to

Horatio Alger Society  
% Carl T. Hartmann  
4907 Allison Dr.  
Lansing, Mi. 48910

Please make the checks payable to the HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY. \$7.20.

THIS IS A MONEY MAKING PROJECT FOR HAS - WE ARE GOING TO USE THE MONEY TO PRINT THE NEW PRICE LIST AND THE NEW TITLE LIST.

The December issue of NEWSBOY is now out of print. I appreciate all the complements received but would like to give credit where credit is due. HUGO was laid out and set up by Gilbert Westgard - he did the research and all the work. So, any credit should

go to Gil. Also with this issue - all the work - typing, layout etc. was done by our Vice-President Jack Bales. It was a big job and Jack, as you can see, did a terrific job.

So to Jack and Gil I want to express the thanks of all HAS members for a job well done.

Because of the importance of this issue to all Alger collectors we are having a larger than normal run. Extra copies are .50¢ each postpaid - send your order to me. If you know of any Library that has Mayes book and would like a copy let me know.

We also have copies of the 2nd printing of Silas - so if you would like one send your check for \$6.95 to me. This is also a money making project for HAS. We need your support.

Carl Hartmann  
Secretary

SEE YOU ALL IN OHIO - MAY, 1973  
Watch for details in the next issue of NEWSBOY.

HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY  
4907 ALLISON DRIVE  
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48910

FIRST CLASS MAIL