



# 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.

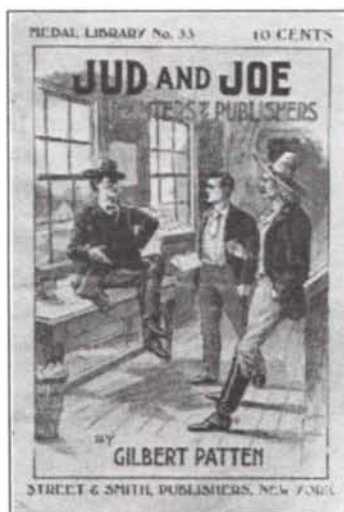
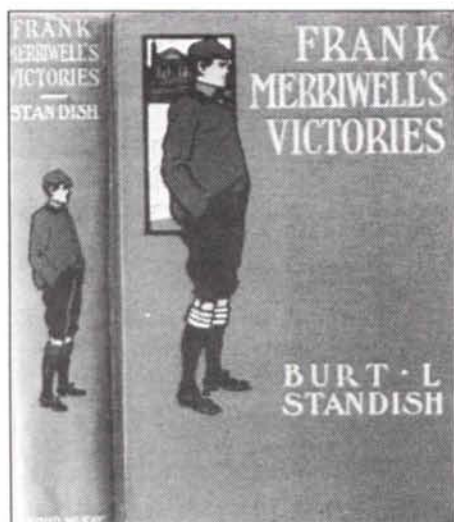
VOLUME XXXII

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1994

NUMBER 5

## Rediscovering Alger

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*A look beyond the Merriwells*

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## Convention '95: A first glance at Corning

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## President's column

This issue, I would like to share some useful tidbits of information. I have decided to label them Tip #1 and Tip #2, having decided that this was more dignified than my original working title of *For God's Sake Listen to Me #1 and #2*.

**Tip #1 (for dog owners):** Let's assume for a moment you are raising a much-loved beagle pup and also have a much-cherished copy of "Work and Win." If you should notice the book lying face up on the floor with your dog stretched on his stomach, paws on either side of the book, nose down to the page, and **its mouth appears to be moving**, it is not, I repeat not, because dogs move their lips when they read.

The image of my dog lying on its stomach reading a good book was so strong that for just a minute I bought it. However, dogs are (and this is a particularly salient point) illiterate. If you don't believe this, show this column to your dog. I guarantee he will not laugh; he will eat it.

How is it that this woman was dumb enough to leave what was once an excellent copy and is now a soggy ruin of "Work and Win" on the floor? I couldn't imagine. I found out later that week by crouching on my hands and knees in the downstairs hall, cautiously crawling noiselessly down the hall like a demented canine spy and peering around the corner into the library. (If you think this image is pitiful, you're absolutely right). Which leads me to Tip #2.

**Tip #2 (for cat owners):** Cats love old books; the aroma acts like catnip. My cat (who if he were a person would dress like Don Vito Corleone in somber blue suits and speak in a whisper) can, and will, jump up and gravely paw and pull at a book until it is loosened from the shelf and falls to the floor where his henchman, my dog (who would wear a striped shirt with plaid pants, golf shoes and a ballcap on backwards) eagerly awaits the cat's orders. ("Godfather," my dog murmurs, lowering his head to his paws).

My house is old, and due to settling, the door to the library no longer latches. Answer: I have tied the door of the library with a nearly invisible elastic cord to the nearest other door, which is the downstairs bathroom. This prevents the library door from being nosed or pushed open. Of course, it also prevents the downstairs bathroom door from being pushed open.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the 1995 Corning convention. Send me \$50 now or I'll bring my dog and cat to the book sale (just kidding)!

Your partic'lar friend,  
Mary Ann Ditch (PF-861)  
4657 Mason St.  
Omaha, NE 68106

## 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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**Newsboy** is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography.

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY H.A.S.

- Horatio Alger, Jr., A Comprehensive Bibliography*, by Bob Bennett (PF-265).
- Horatio Alger or, The American Hero Era*, by Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053).
- The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921).
- Publication Formats of the 59 Stories by Horatio Alger, Jr. as Reprinted by the John C. Winston Co.*, by Bob Sawyer (PF-455) and Jim Thorp (PF-574).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue & Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, by Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales (PF-258).

**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 Robert E. Kasper, 585 E. St. Andrews Dr., Media, PA 19063. 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 such ads or "Letters to the Editor" to **Newsboy** editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 923 South Lake St., Apt. 6, Mundelein, IL 60060.



# H.A.S. is looking ahead to Corning

by William R. Gowen (PF-706)

It seems like yesterday that the Horatio Alger Society held its 30th convention in Grand Rapids, Mich., but more than five months have already gone by.

Now, it's time to start thinking about the 1995 convention, which will be hosted by Dick and Jackie Pope in Corning, N.Y. The dates will be May 4-7, 1995, with a full agenda and registration information to be published in the January-February, 1995 *Newsboy*.

Having grown up in New York State, let me provide a little background on Corning and the area.

Corning, with a population of 12,000, is located in Steuben County, at the foot of the Finger Lakes.

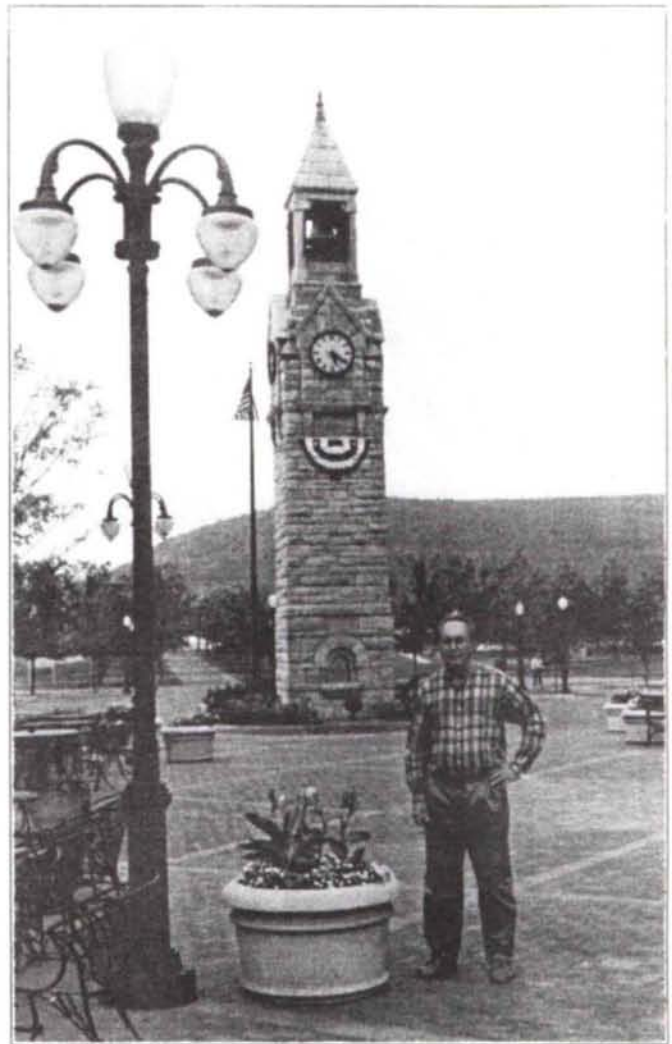
The city itself is home of the world-famous Corning Glass Center and Corning Museum of Glass, which are open to the public (about a half million visitors per year) and located less than a mile from Corning's historic Market Street district and the Rockwell Museum, among other attractions.

Within a short driving distance of Corning are the Taylor Wineries (which hold tours) near Watkins Glen, along with the historic village of Hammondsport, home of aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss. The Glenn Curtiss Museum is open daily to the public.

Slightly more than an hour away are Ithaca, home of Cornell University; and Binghamton. By car, Corning is approximately a 4 1/2-hour drive from New York City.

Travel to Corning is easy — New York Route 17 is of interstate-quality and connects with I-88 at Binghamton (for travelers taking I-90 from New England) and I-390 to the west, which connects with the New York State Thruway (I-90) near Rochester. Corning is three hours from Buffalo/Niagara Falls.

If you intend to fly, you can make connections to the Elmira/Corning airport. Elmira, located about 15 miles east of Corning, was the summer home and is the final



**Richard L. Pope (PF-740) welcomes the Horatio Alger Society to historic Corning, N.Y. for the 31st annual convention May 4-7, 1995.**

resting place of Mark Twain.

Dick has made arrangements with the Best Western Lodge on the Green in nearby Painted Post to be our convention hotel. He has gotten us a special convention double room rate of \$49 per night. A locator map and specific directions to the hotel will be given in the next issue of *Newsboy*.

## Keep those postcards coming . . . please

Executive secretary Rob Kasper reports that he has received between 110 and 120 responses to our postal card survey in the July-August *Newsboy*.

While a gratifying response, it's still well below what we would like in order to make our 1995 H.A.S. roster as accurate and up-to-date as possible. These cards were purchased at the Society's expense, so we hope you will not waste the chance to update our roster, even though

you believe your current listing is accurate.

We have also recently received several U.S. Postal Service change-of-address cards (PS Form 3576). As we stated in the last issue, we prefer not to rely on these cards because the information provided does not include your phone number or the other information we want when making changes to our roster database. Please send us more complete information when you move.



## Editor's notebook

The 1995 Horatio Alger Society convention is less than seven months away, so in this issue we offer our first brief look at Corning, N.Y., the convention site. More information is forthcoming in the next three issues of **Newsboy**, with the full agenda and an article by our convention host, Dick Pope (PF-740) in the January-February issue. Those of us who attended Dick's 1986 series book conference know that we'll have a first-class convention and that there will be plenty to see and do during our three or four days in Corning.

In other news, The response to our membership survey has been very encouraging, with over half our membership returning the prepaid postal cards to executive secretary Rob Kasper. In an ideal world, however, we'd like a 100 percent response, particularly in light of the fact that this entails no expense to you. Simply fill out the card and drop it in the mailbox.

Our goal is to have our 1995 H.A.S. Membership Roster in your hands prior to the convention, so that's why returning the cards is important. We are now in the process of entering our roster into a new computer database, which will enable us to keep track of when members' dues are due and to provide a mailing list for **Newsboy** and other official Society correspondence.

I would like to acknowledge the generosity of J. Randolph Cox (PF-598) for providing a photocopy of the cover of the second issue of **Tip Top Library**, which is reproduced on Page 12. When I asked Randy if he had the first issue in his collection, he descended to his "bat cave" and apologized profusely that issue No. 2 was the earliest he could locate. Well, it serves our purposes just fine. Thanks, Randy.

Those of you who subscribe to **Dime Novel Round-Up** will notice that Randy, who took over as editor this summer, has just put out his first issue (October 1994, Whole No. 629) utilizing desktop publishing. Having gone through that change with **Newsboy** in 1992, I can appreciate the job Randy has done. In his first self-published issue, Randy extends thanks to Gil Westgard (PF-024), who printed **Dime Novel Round-Up** for former editor Eddie LeBlanc (PF-015) for the past five years.

**In this issue:** Carol Nackenoff (PF-921) offers "Rediscovering Alger" (Page 5) while your editor looks at the writing career of Gilbert Patten (Page 11).

**Coming next issue:** An Alger "surprise" and researcher James D. Keeline (PF-898) looks at books that are "Suspiciously like Stratemeyer Syndicate Series."

## MEMBERSHIP

### New members:

Robert L. Williams (PF-945)  
2615 170th Ave.  
P.O. Box 545

Preemption, IL 61276 (309) 534-8249

Bob is a social worker with the Iowa Department of Human Services. He is also a collector/dealer of boys' and girls' series books. He learned about the Society from Bart J. Nyberg (PF-879) and Bill Gowen (PF-706).

### Change of address:

Peter C. Walther (PF-548)  
P.O. Box 41

Walden, NY 12586 (914) 778-4692

Sherwood E. Moore, DDS (PF-732)  
519 Claremont Drive  
Flat Rock, NC 28731 (704) 693-1414

Rick Fuller (PF-917)  
64 E. Lake Shore Dr.  
Ransom Canyon, TX 79366 (806) 829-2595

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bill:

On behalf of the Northern Illinois University Libraries, we would like to express our sincere thanks to the following friends and members of the Horatio Alger Society for their generous support of the repository library.

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**Donor:** Bradford S. Chase (PF-412): "Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt," by Bradford S. Chase; Enfield, Ct., Sandpiper Publishing.

**Donor:** Dr. Martin Kallich: "Julius; or, The Street Boy Out West," by Horatio Alger, Jr.; Phila., J. C. Winston Co.

**Donor:** Dr. Arthur Young (PF-941): "The Boat Club; or, the Bunkers of Rippleton," by Oliver Optic; New York, A.L. Burt Co.; "Risen from the Ranks; or Harvey Walton's Success," by Horatio Alger, Jr.; Chicago, M.A. Donohue & Co.; "Sam's Chance," by Horatio Alger, Jr.; "Shifting for Himself; or, Gilbert Greyson's Fortune," by Horatio Alger, Jr.; New York, Hurst & Co.; "Strong and Steady," by Horatio Alger, Jr.; Chicago, M.A. Donohue & Co.

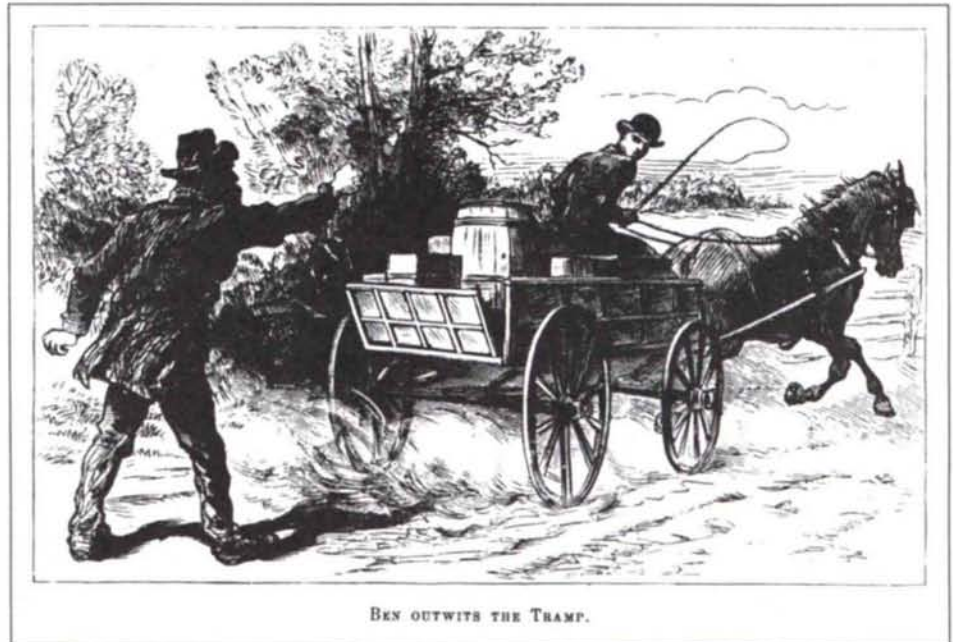
Sincerely,  
Samuel T. Huang  
Curator, Rare Books and Special Collections



# Rediscovering Alger

by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)

**Foreword:** I am a political scientist, trained at the University of Chicago in political theory and American politics. I now teach American politics, constitutional law, gender and politics, and American political thought and culture at Swarthmore College. I joined the Horatio Alger Society a little less than a year ago, once I met Rob Kasper, my neighbor in Media. I started off membership with about 94 titles and, thanks to Rob and to some purchases from Bob Bennett, I'm now up to around 102. I have read these and more. Last spring, my own book, *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, was published.



Alger: "The Store Boy," Porter & Coates, 1887; frontispiece.

I began to think about writing about Alger without a very clear understanding of why I had gotten "hooked" late in my graduate school years. I had written a dissertation on how different segments of the workforce's experiences with changes in the post-World War II U.S. job structure affected their political attitudes, attachments, and agendas.

But I became convinced that survey research was not the best way to get at "worldviews"—understandings of how the world worked. I combatted a long "writer's block" with what I thought would be an article on Alger. Six years later, I signed a book contract with Oxford University Press. And I realized, along the way, how this work united my background in political theory, American political thought, political economy, my love of literature, and even literary theory; I also realized how it got at the patterning of American politics, in which I had long been interested.

Why my title: "Rediscovering Alger"? I want to share three things with you.

First, as collectors and Alger enthusiasts, I thought you might like to hear a few words about some of the finds or gems I discovered while travelling to collections from Boston to California—and sources that helped me think about Alger that aren't often examined. Second are some of the new insights and perspectives I gained on Alger, when Alger scholarship has been served so very ably by authors such as Ralph Gardner and by Gary

Scharnhorst of the University of New Mexico, writing sometimes with Jack Bales.

Third, I want to talk a bit about what interest Alger has to political science or to social scientists. Alger is enjoying renewed interest — rediscovery — in light of new questions, methods and types of inquiry. The number of people teaching Alger these days in courses on American literature, popular culture, history, sociology, and American politics seems to be increasing. I am interested in where Alger fits into a discussion of contemporary political debates and agendas.

Let me turn first to some of the gems, from my perspective. The Harvard University Archives has a wonderful collection of materials from the Class of 1852 — including menus from class reunion dinners, poems composed, songs sung, etc. (Another hobby of mine is food — what great fun it would be to replicate one of these dinners!) Here is a copy of Alger's last will and testament, including the bequest of his calendar gold watch to the son of a niece in San Francisco, Stanley Hemceld (also spelled Himceld).

There are Alger newspaper obituaries. There are faculty meeting notes, including a notice about Alger being admonished about twice missing prayers. There are library charging lists for Horatio Alger, Jr.; I saw what kind of reading Alger was doing, which included quite a few Scottish Enlightenment figures, as well as

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# Rediscovering Alger

(Continued from Page 5)

some literature.

Most important there, for my purposes, were some essays bound in class books: "Cicero's Return From Banishment" (an English Oration Prize); "Athens in the Time of Socrates" (Bowdoin Prize); and "The State of Athens before the Legislation of Solon" (Bowdoin Prize).

This last was a translation *into* Greek of a section of Grote's "History of Greece." (I don't read Greek and had it looked at by some classics scholars; once they assured me that Alger had done a pretty straightforward translation, and that there was nothing particularly noteworthy about the nature of this translation, I simply used the passage and other parts of Grote's History to think about how Alger was reading the classics.) Examination of these essays helped me see how striking was the role that Alger's classics education played in his work.

I discovered that some of his lifelong concerns were already given voice here. I saw, in his reading of the classics, pedagogical concerns: How did Pericles lead? why was one classical author better able to speak to his age than another? Why did Plato/Socrates attack the Sophists—what was wrong with getting paid to train the young in the art of rhetoric? Some of these questions were particularly fascinating, given my training as a political theorist, and given the work I had done on Plato in particular.

These Harvard essays have not been well-enough examined. They also locate Alger in a Harvard Unitarian tradition, Christianizing Plato and thinking about how the cultural elite could speak to an emerging generation, including the working classes. This last issue was one with which Harvard President Edward Everett, for whom Alger ran errands in 1848-49, was especially concerned. Looking at these essays, I began to think about how, after the Astor Place Riots of '49, Alger was sitting at Harvard, yearning for a world in which classes met in the same theater, were moved in common, spoke a common language. He wrote of the theater of classical antiquity:

It must have been an impressive spectacle — that vast multitude — seated tier above tier, bench upon bench, occupied by one common subject of interest, with their passions alternately soothed and excited surrendering their whole souls to the absorbing interest with which the poet had invested the brilliant creations of his fancy. ("Athens in the Time of Socrates")

Another "gem" I found at the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, Mass.) helped me think about another set of Alger questions: Who read Alger? Through what medium? Who bought books? Where did people

have access to Alger stories and novels? How diverse was his audience?

Although it could not help me answer this last question (librarians observing patrons at the Boston Public Library were enlightening here), the American Antiquarian Society's Children As Diaists Collection yielded an unusual find. The Grenville Howland Norcross Diaries recorded the reading habits of a young boy of about 14 (his father was, at one point, Mayor of Boston).

One could see the diversity of one middle class boy's reading diet in the late 1860s. Much more could and should be done seeking out this kind of data. Young Norcross, at any rate, frequented lending libraries, the Boston Public Library, read railroad literature, dime novels, and played an early game of authors (Alger would later appear in the religious suit).

He recited Alger's John Maynard at school in 1868 (having surely read it in **Student and Schoolmate**, where the poem had recently appeared), and then went off to the lending library (Burnham's — probably something like Loring's) and read first "Helen Ford" and then "Ragged Dick," both in 1868. His parents gave him a subscription to an Oliver Optic magazine; his aunt gave him an Optic novel. But middle-class youth of this period appear to use the libraries for a good deal of their fiction reading.

I also read correspondence at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library (Cambridge) between the Brewster parish committee and the Secretary of the Unitarian Society. (The program for Alger's ordination service in Brewster is also here.) I read the Senior Alger's letter trying to quiet down the Brewster affair, and assuring the society that Horatio Jr. would never again seek a pulpit. Correspondence *refers* to a letter of resignation by Horatio Alger, Jr. that isn't there (I wonder where it is?) I read the continuing correspondence from Solomon Freeman, a Brewster parish committeeman, as he continued to try to get the Society to act against Horatio Alger, Jr. Freeman wrote William Allen, publisher of **Student and Schoolmate**, protesting Alger's appearance as an author who purported to seek to exert a positive influence on the young; Freeman tried unsuccessfully to have the Unitarian Society contact Allen to put a stop to Alger's appearance in **Student and Schoolmate**.

The correspondence made me think about Alger's attitude toward the church and the clergy as a force in influencing the young—and how Alger downplayed the role of the clergy and formal religious institutions in moral guidance. In "Ragged Dick," which was underway at the time of the Brewster affair, Mr. Greyson takes Dick to Sunday School; but the clergy drop out in many of Alger's novels. Even in the early novel "Paul Prescott's Charge," Paul is taken in by a church sexton after falling





LUKE SAVES MRS. MERTON'S LIFE.

**Alger: "Luke Walton," Porter & Coates, 1889; frontispiece.**

asleep in a church — we are told the sermon was boring.

Also, the Brewster matter helped me begin to see just what it meant for an author to be totally dependent on his (or her) pen for a living — and how attuned to the market such an author needed to be.

I pursued this theme in a chapter on "The Author in the Literary Marketplace," which examined mass fiction writing, and the way in which expansion of fiction reading, book purchasing, and mass marketing of cheap fiction all helped shape authorship and literary production. The importance of owning and producing oneself was not only an issue for Alger heroes but also for authors.

On this note, a major "gem" in my travels was the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. The Huntington houses 96 letters from Alger to Irving Blake, a young Tribune correspondent. I learned about what Alger was reading, the entertainments he went to or remembered, reflections on political contests . . .

Apart from the letter collection — the largest in a library (Columbia University is next with the Edwin Seligman collection of about 24 letters) — the grounds of the Huntington were unbelievable — it is called the Huntington Library and gardens. Samuel Huntington, a 19th century railroad magnate, built the estate, with mansion, art gallery, and theme gardens. Alger's letters

there date from 1896 to the end of his life; there are also some letters others wrote to Joseph P. Loeb, a San Francisco lawyer and Alger collector. There are several photos (one of Alger's mother that I've never seen or seen referred to). One of these letters to Joseph Loeb, from a Joy Lichtenstein, was especially interesting as I thought about issues of production and consumption — the place of the mass fiction author and of one who depends upon being consumed. Here is his recollection of Alger's 1890 trip:

*He came out here to write a book on the gold mining days, and I cannot remember the name of it, but it never was of much importance. He was a slight man with gray hair, and a gray mustache. He seemed quite elderly to me, but perhaps he was not sixty at that time. He rented a room in a hotel on Sansome Street, between California and Sacramento where the Security Building now is, right across the Street from Wells-Fargo Express. It was a third class hotel, as I remember, and not having to work in the Library some mornings, I would spend the mornings with him. He sat at a small marble topped table, writing on small sheets of paper.*

*The room was terribly cold. He would write a certain length of time and complete a certain number of sheets and then we would go out to lunch. In about two weeks, he had exactly one-half of the book finished, and I remember going*

*(Continued on Page 8)*



## Rediscovering Alger

(Continued from Page 7)

over to the Express office while he sent it back to the publisher. Some evenings we would walk around the lower part of town, and he would stop before some of the cheap stores and examine the goods that were on display and inquire about the prices. He had New England characteristics. He was a bachelor.

Alger's own position at the margins of the economy, at the margins of what genteel culture saw as literary respectability, is highlighted. His slight frame and his slight late literary accomplishments and the drabness of his terribly cold, third-class hotel room all indicate his status as a producer. Staring into the cheap stores and attempting to determine the prices of ordinary goods displayed there, Alger gathers "data" for his stories in the marketplace.

In my book, I go from here to examining the difficult time one had living by writing mass fiction. There was the rapid pace and poor pay; at least Alger owned his own name, unlike the Bertha M. Clays and Old Sleuths of dime novel production, produced by different people. And when and if they "moved" to another publisher, they didn't own their names.

The author also had to be a self-marketer. Alger's reflections on politics housed at the Huntington and in the Seligman letters (and a few at the University of Michigan) helped me grapple with Alger's Whig-Republican politics. You see him as an enthusiastic partisan. He was out in the streets with cousin William Rounseville Alger the night of the Rutherford B. Hayes-Samuel Tilden contest in '76 (as others were, seeking election news). You see his enthusiasm for Theodore Roosevelt, and his narration of an incident in which he was called to the stage as a stand-in once when he went to hear Roosevelt speak at Railroad Hall in New York (the featured speaker had not arrived). You see Alger's hostility to the only Democratic president of the era, Grover Cleveland, and his remark (to Russell A. Alger, a distant relation seeking the Republican nomination in 1888) that the first Cleveland administration was "unamerican, and hostile to the industrial interests of the people."

I thought long and hard about what Alger meant by this remark, and I eventually concluded that there is no way Alger joined in the Mugwump defection of '84 (in which some progressive northern Republicans defected from Blaine to help elect the Democrat, Cleveland).

In this correspondence, one will also notice Alger's disdain for political corruption and for Tammany Hall, and his remarks lauding Teddy Roosevelt's reform police. Alger voices his opinions about William Jennings Bryan, hard money — especially the gold standard — and his enthusiasm about the McKinley election of 1896.

Here is part of one of my favorite letters, penned to young Irving Blake on this occasion:

*I judge by the papers that McKinley will receive 302 electoral votes, and Bryan 300. Both will be elected, and there will be three Vice Presidents. We shall have both silver and gold, and all will be happy. Our incomes will be doubled, and you can drink all the whisky [sic] you want. Perhaps you do now. Let us live and hope!*

Alger's various gold standard remarks got me thinking about the relationship between gold, as the medium of exchange, and *character* in Alger novels. I came to see that the individual Alger hero, whose status is in flux, is much like liquid capital. The value of the individual travels with and is inherent in that person. Once acquired, character possesses the property attributed to gold by the gold standard advocate—for like gold, its value is constant and inheres in the metal. It is of recognized value in any market just like hard currency.

I've discussed both some of the gems I've found and how these pieces helped me think about Alger. But I should turn to what I was interested in doing with Alger (which was certainly NOT to write a biography), and to why I think *academics* have been interested in Alger lately and have even been teaching "Ragged Dick" or another widely available Alger novel in courses in literature, economics, sociology, and political science.

An issue I had been struggling with was the relationship of ideology — or understandings of how the world works — to material conditions.

What was the relationship of such understandings of how the world works to changes in economy and society? How did people make sense of the world in order to act in it? How do changes in economy and society upset — or do not upset — these understandings? Some American political scientists and historians (including myself) have a long-lived interest in the *stability* of these understandings. There seem to be some shared agreements and understandings (how widely? among whom?) *despite* massive transformations in how people live and work. There are formulations — like Alger's — that seem to survive as truths about the way the world works despite the advent of organization, bureaucratization, the corporate form, internationalization of capital and of the division of labor, depression, decline in real wages, etc. The Alger formula voices something thought to be true about America.

One of the most important of these studies talked about "liberal Lockean, Horatio Alger atomistic individualism," claiming that consensus was forged by the 1840s; that experiences could never fundamentally shake self-evident truths. There was, in this view, something distinctive about the United States; here was one answer to the question of why there was no socialism in the United States. This was Louis Hartz's "The Liberal



Tradition in America," a book which, by the use it made of Alger as a symbol, aroused my interest in reading Alger.

Hartz, writing in the 1950s about the static, sterile nature of American political thought by comparison with Europe, talks as if people who bought the Alger myth were dupes; they suffer false consciousness and don't know who they really are. Hartz's work has come under a lot of criticism.

More recently, scholars including literary theorists have gotten interested in the ways people make sense of the world, including the ways they "read" texts. They have been discovering the little guy — what (s)he did, thought, read. They have become interested in popular culture. Some of these scholars look at narratives — the stories people tell themselves about themselves — who they are, where they have been, where they're going.

According to recent approaches, texts don't have "a" meaning; authorial intent doesn't govern; reading (as Janice Radway writes) is not like eating; and Stanley Fish asks "is there a text in this class?"

Rather people *construct* meanings as members of communities. These scholars tend to critique the notion of "false consciousness." Citizens — like readers — are not merely acted upon. If one attends to the "lenses" people use to make sense of experiences, for example, one can argue that people understand justice in particular ways and participate in politics when their sense of justice is outraged.

Scholars attend increasingly to *mentalités* — to the language in which battles are fought out, to modes of resistance and dissent, to the ways in which communities are constituted and reconstituted. Let me note a few examples of some of the fine recent work being done by social scientists and by other American Studies scholars

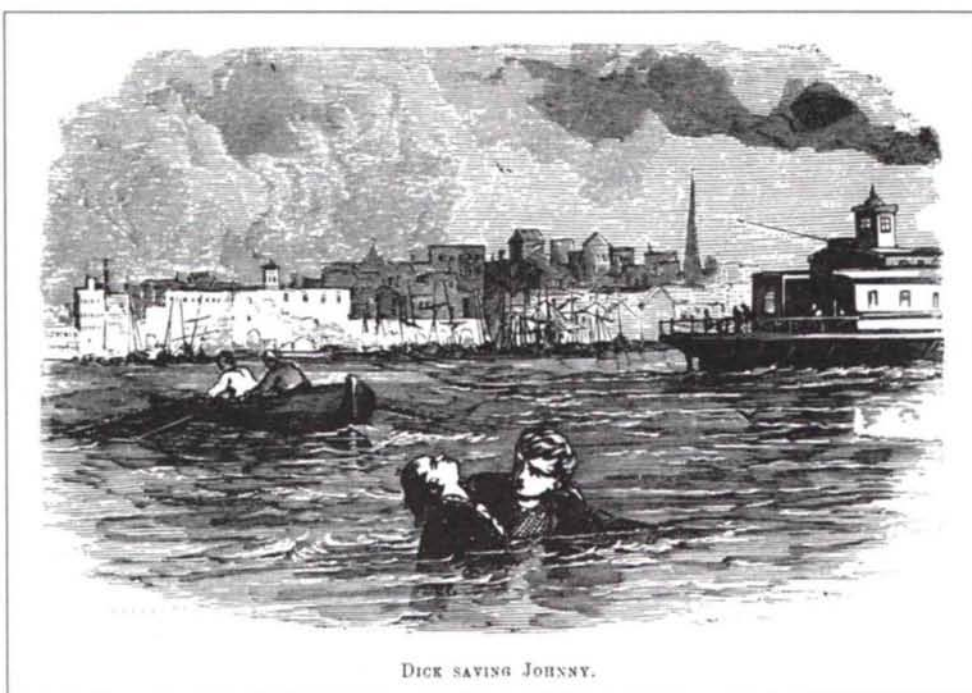
in the field of popular culture.

John Kasson's "Rudeness and Civility" attends to manners and class markers in 19th century America as he looks at struggles over culture and class. When he looks at the Astor Place Riots of 1849, he asks (and provides an answer to) what is going on when a theater audience heaves half a sheep's carcass onto stage during a production.

Michael Denning's "Mechanic Accents" examines dime novels and working class fiction in the nineteenth century, and makes an argument (which I ultimately question) that Alger was merely a ventriloquist — using working class forms but attempting to reform his audi-

ence — whose ventriloquism "fell on deaf ears."

Michael Rogin at Berkeley has recently been "reading" Hollywood movies as speaking to changes in American race and ethnic group relations. George Shulman at the New School for Social Research reads Toni Morrison's



DICK SAVING JOHNNY.

Alger: "Ragged Dick," A.K. Loring, 1868; p. 284.

*Beloved* in light of the American jeremiad and the genre of captivity narratives.

And in a monumental trilogy which I recommend to you most highly, Richard Slotkin at Wesleyan University has examined the role of the frontier myth in American history — most recently in "Gunfighter Nation," which examines the changing role of the frontier myth in the 20th century as reflected in Hollywood movies.

This newer, rich tradition helps me rediscover Alger as an author who wrote in the penny papers next to stories of Molly Maguires, tramps, and romances as well as an author for Grenville Howland Norcross, who picked up bound volumes in Boston libraries at five cents per week. There were different literary vehicles, different audiences, different texts — in effect, multiple Algers. There was Alger the moral reformer, but also

(Continued on Page 10)



# Rediscovering Alger

(Continued from Page 9)

Alger the leveller — bringing down selfish capitalists and arranging justice; bringing Ragged Dick into the dining rooms and parlors of the wealthy on terms of equality. There was Alger who celebrated community and those who preserved it.

I wrote about the way in which the Alger story, formulas, and melodramas became *available* for incorporation as a *language* or grammar of political discourse, carrying multiple possibilities and responses to corruption and to capitalism.

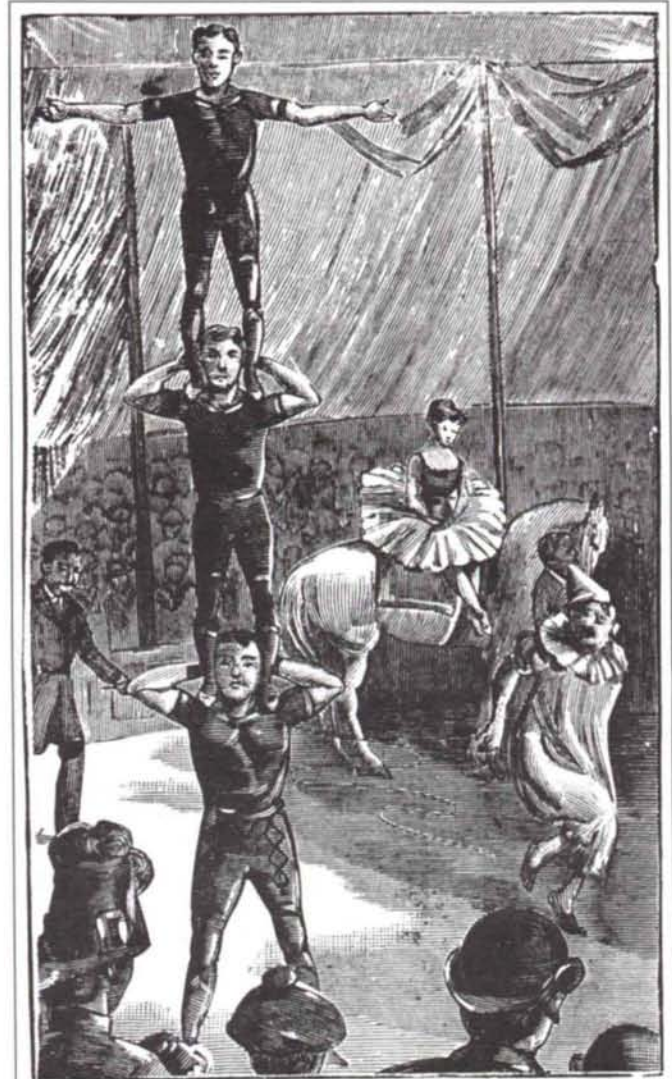
I provide a different kind of answer to why the Alger story survives, and attempt to locate its place in our *contemporary* discourses about difference, virtue, the identity of America, television violence, sex education, urban problems, drugs, English only, etc. My examination of the survival of Alger in modern political discourse is part of the rediscovery of Alger I allude to in the title of this article.

The other part of my job of "rediscovery" was to make sense of where Alger fit into discourse in the 19th century about the identity of the republic, virtue, growing differences of class, immigration . . . I talk about what *kind* of sense Alger made of transformations of economy and society, and to whom.

With whom was Alger engaged in dialogue? I locate Alger amid 19th century authors of religious fiction; in pedagogical debates about how to reach the young and teach lessons of life without turning them off; in a tradition of advice manual authors; amid the discourse of cultural elites who feared democracy and the decline in deference to natural leaders (e.g., James Fenimore Cooper); in a debate about the fate of Jeffersonian ideals, linking property and independence, and amid concerns about what industrialization was doing to independence and republican virtue.

I also place Alger in what I call the "culture wars" of the late 19th century — battles over reading, habits, and class markers.

This included the famed Comstock crusades and the movement to remove Alger, Ellis, Optic, and Castlemon from public libraries. Why did librarians go on a crusade against Alger late in the century? What was the debate over "manly" fiction? What images of manliness and of citizenship were at stake in the differences between those who stressed production of the self and those who stressed production of goods as the essence of manhood? Alger made a lot of sense of the Gilded Age and groped for a language in which to talk about it. In "The Fictional Republic," I have attempted to accord Alger a *seriousness* he is often denied. Alger's stories are not mere fantasy, but rather his texts attempt to name and



THE "THREE STORED" ACROBAT WALKED AROUND THE RIN

Alger: "The Young Acrobat," Street & Smith, 1900; frontispiece.

work out problems.

Alger is not just the romanticizer of a dying era nor an unabashed booster of capitalism. He is not a *great* writer, but a writer who had his hand on the pulse of an era. The optimism Alger exuded was, in considerable measure, via the optimism he had about the health, virtue, and unity of the republic when so many around him saw a world coming apart at the seams.

Having written some 400 pages on Alger, is Alger out of my system? Not at all. I would love to write an article about Alger and temperance politics . . . but my family may kill me if I write another word on Alger. For now, I will have to channel my Alger energies into collecting, while I think about my next research project.

**Editor's note:** This article was presented as the keynote address at the 30th annual H.A.S. convention in Grand Rapids, Mich.



# Gilbert Patten:

## *A look beyond the Merriwells*

by William R. Gowen (PF-706)

He was one of the most widely read authors in history. But there are authors and there are authors. And despite the title of his posthumously published autobiography, William Gilbert Patten wanted to be known as more than "Frank Merriwell's Father."<sup>1</sup>

William Gilbert Patten (hereafter referred to as Gilbert Patten) was born in Corinna, Maine on October 25, 1866, a few monthshy of 30 years from the fateful April 18, 1896 date when the character Frank Merriwell made his debut in Street & Smith's **Tip Top Library**.

*Other authors...  
...other books*

The birth of the dime novel preceded Patten's arrival on this earth by six years and by the time he was 10, he had become an avid reader of this popular form of fiction. A typical nonconformist teen-ager, he decided at around age 13 or 14 that he could write these kinds of stories. His parents, of course, wanted him to become a minister, carpenter or one of the other legitimate professions. "Willie" Patten felt otherwise. "It seems to me that from my earliest thinking boyhood, I have always been a secret or open rebel against restraint," he said.<sup>2</sup>

So during these years, Patten devoured the kind of cheap literature his God-fearing parents regarded as evil. He also got into numerous fist fights with his classmates, which he says "...converted me into a shrinking lad with a sense of inferiority."<sup>3</sup>

What do youngsters with an inferiority complex do? Often they retreat into some secret little world which, in Patten's case, was the world of the dime novel. He probably had no inkling that within two decades, he would become "King of the Dime Novelists."

Since the title of this article is "Gilbert Patten: A Look Beyond the Merriwells," let's first summarize that most prolific phase of Patten's career.

Gilbert Patten, already a successful writer for dime novels, made a fateful career move in 1895 when he



Gilbert Patten just prior to the turn of the century, at a time when fellow writer Charles Hanson Towne remarked to him about his resemblance to another American author: "Ah, there, Edgar Allan Poe. When did you come to life?"

University of Oklahoma Press

began to write for Street & Smith. The genesis for the Frank Merriwell stories came through a series of letters and then a meeting with Ormond G. Smith, who was pleased with Patten's early work for the firm and proposed a new series of stories similar to the Jack Harkaway stories currently running in **Good News**, an S&S publication.

He asked Patten to come up with a catchy name for his new hero (a student at a boarding school or military academy), about which he would write around 20,000 words per week under a pseudonym which became "Burt L. Standish."

"The stories should differ from the Jack Harkaway stories by being American and thoroughly up-to-date," Smith said in his correspondence to the author. Our idea is to issue, say, twelve stories, each complete in itself, but like the links of a chain, all dealing with life in the academy. By the time the readers will have become sufficiently well acquainted with the hero, and the

(Continued on Page 13)

**Editor's note:** This article was presented as a paper at the 24th annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association on April 9, 1994 in Chicago, Ill., and was also presented at the 1994 H.A.S. convention in Grand Rapids, Mich.



# TIP TOP LIBRARY

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

April 25, 1896.

Vol. 1, No. 2.

Price Five Cents

## FRANK MERRIWELL'S FOE

OR  
PLEBE LIFE IN BARRACKS

BY  
Burt L. Standish



FRANK SAW INEZ GAZING AT HIM APPEALINGLY, HER FACE ASHEN WITH TERROR.

Frank Merriwell first appeared in Street & Smith's new Tip Top Library, of which this is the second issue. Tip Top Library was renamed Tip Top Weekly on Feb. 27, 1897 (issue No. 46), and continued through July 27, 1912 (No. 850). The last issue written by Patten was No. 831 ("Dick Merriwell's Counsel") on March 16, 1912.



## Gilbert Patten: A look beyond the Merriwells

(Continued from Page 11)

author will also no doubt have exhausted most of the pranks and escapades that might naturally occur."<sup>4</sup>

Smith went on with further details of what he expected Patten to do with his main character.

Ormond Smith couldn't have realized the impact of what he created. In today's terms, Frank Merriwell became the two-ton gorilla of juvenile fiction. Starting with the appearance of "Frank Merriwell; or, First Days at Fardale" in the April 18, 1896 debut issue of **Tip Top Library** (which was renamed **Tip Top Weekly** with the issue of Feb. 27, 1897), the Merriwell stories became runaway best-sellers.

**Tip Top Library/Tip Top Weekly** totaled 850 issues, running through July 27, 1912. Patten wrote them all, with the exception of Nos. 198-274 when John H. Whitson assumed authorship; Nos. 827-829 (Frederick R. Burton); Nos. 832-833 (Frederick M. Dey); Nos. 834-835 (Almond Wolff); Nos. 836-838 (Whitson) and Nos. 839-850 (Wolff).<sup>5</sup>

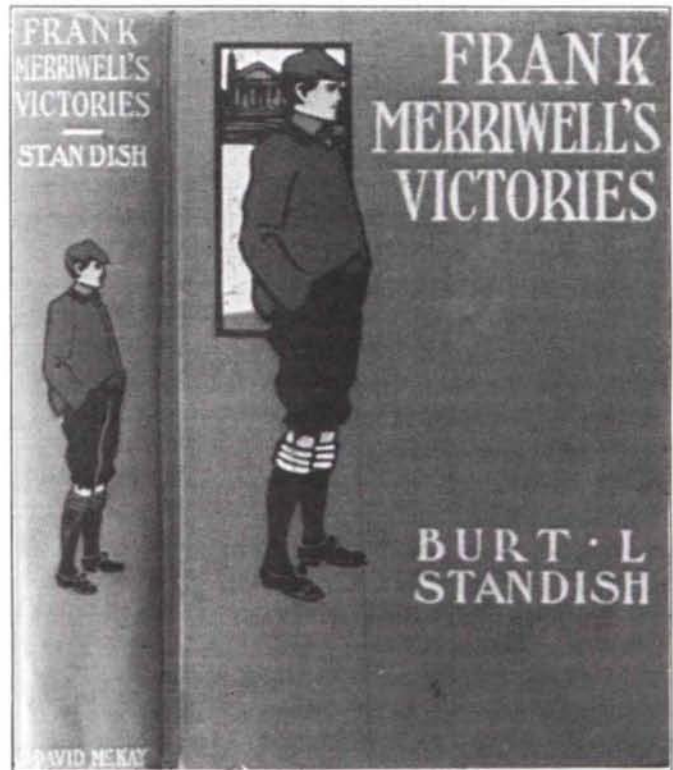
Each issue contained 32 pages with a color cover, a new idea at the time. Obviously, the new so-called "Tip Tops" were a hit with readers young and old alike, and after **Tip Top Weekly** was wrapped up in 1912, S&S launched **New Tip Top Weekly** (Aug. 3, 1912 to March 6, 1915) to cover the adventures of Frank Merriwell, Jr.

The Street & Smith **Tip Top Quarterly** was published for a five-year period (1896-1901) during the run of **Tip Top Weekly**. These 50-cent, large-size magazines (10 1/4 by 6 7/8 inches) combined the first 13 Frank Merriwell stories in one volume.<sup>6</sup>

The first comprehensive reprinting of the Merriwell stories came in S&S's **Medal Library** and **New Medal Library**, which covered 858 issues between Jan. 28, 1899 to Dec. 7, 1915. The Merriwell stories comprised 243 of these 858 issues, with other authors like Alger, Optic, Stratemeyer, Ellis, Otis, Henty, etc. filling out the series. The first eight issues came out bi-weekly with all subsequent issues on a weekly basis.

The paperback books were 7 1/4 by 5 inches and contained 200 to 300 pages — the so-called "thick" Merriwells. The first 378 issues of the **Medal Library** cost 10 cents and Nos. 379 through 858 cost 15 cents. The later **New Medal Library** issues which repeated titles 1 through 378, also cost 15 cents.<sup>7</sup>

Street & Smith then tried a cloth-bound Merriwell edition as part of its **Boys' Own Library** beginning in 1902, which presumably because of higher retail price, was not a big seller. This reprint series covered six books



The hard-cover Merriwells were published starting in 1902 by Street & Smith (six titles) and soon reprinted by Federal. When David McKay took over (above), the number of titles was increased to 28. Each book was a compilation of four Merriwell stories from **Tip Top Library/Tip Top Weekly**.

of about 300 pages, which were reprinted by Federal Book Co. and still later when David McKay took over the **Boys' Own Library**, with McKay expanding the run to 28 titles. Each of these books contained four stories originally appearing in **Tip Top Library/Tip Top Weekly**.

The first 24 McKay titles in the dark-brown covers and internal illustrations are the most sought-after hard-cover Merriwells by collectors today. The six Street & Smith titles (medium green covers) and six Federal reprints (light-bluish gray covers) are even more scarce.

Following the appearance of a Merriwell baseball-only series of eight reprint titles and a similar series of six football titles in 1917, Street & Smith came out with its most popular Merriwell reprint series, simply titled **The Merriwell Series**.<sup>8</sup>

These thick 7-by-5-inch paperbacks, issued bi-weekly, again were around 300 pages in length and covered 245 titles published between January 1921 and June 1930.

S&S tried to up the price to 20 cents each, but rolled it back to 15 cents after the first few titles. As with the earlier S&S thick Merriwells, these had color covers and sold well. Compared with the hard-cover editions, these are relatively easy to find today by a collector because all

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## Gilbert Patten: A look beyond the Merriwells

(Continued from Page 13)

were in print throughout the lengthy period the series was issued.

Later Merriwell reprint series by S&S included a bi-weekly **Burt L. Standish Library** of 41 titles between July 1930 and January 1932; the **Merriwell Library** (Jan. 1932-June 1933) and a brief revival in 1971, the so-called Jack Rudman reprints that covered only three titles of 250 pages in length.<sup>9</sup>

In 1975, Kensington Publishing Corp. of New York issued two Merriwell titles, "Frank Merriwell's Search" and "Frank Merriwell's Power," under its Zebra Books imprint. They did not sell well.

This somewhat lengthy look at the Merriwells provides a perspective of just how big a writer Gilbert Patten had become. Over the course of their publication life (including one uninterrupted run of 37 years), the Merriwell stories (Frank, his brother Dick and son Frank, Jr.) sold a reported 500,000,000 (that's half a billion) copies. Those are incredible numbers.

But back to the main topic. What did Gilbert Patten do beyond the Merriwells? While small in comparison with Frank, Dick and Frank, Jr., this constitutes a fascinating aspect of his career.

Going back to his dime novel days and continuing throughout his career, Patten wrote under a variety of pseudonyms. They included "Emerson Bell," "Barry Tallyho," "William West Wilder," "Wyoming Will," "Lieutenant R.A. Swift," "Gordon Braddock," "Wyl Parton," "Stanton L. Burt," "Harry Dangerfield," "Julian St. Dare," "Morgan Scott," "Gordon McClaren," "Herbert Bellwood" and, of course, "Burt L. Standish."<sup>10</sup>

When their total is combined with the Merriwells, the dime novel stories written under the other pseudonyms comprised a mind-boggling output for any writer. Patten was a writing machine, at first turning out his manuscripts in longhand and later on an early manual typewriter. It was work that seemed not to tax his brain, as there is no great dropoff in literary quality as the years progress.

However, Patten's writing career did take a toll on his personal life, as his necessity to live in New York for long stretches of time caused his first wife, Alice, to file for divorce and his peripatetic lifestyle eventually cost him his second marriage as well.

Patten turned out to be a frustrated dime novelist. He knew as well as anybody (after all, what had his mother told him as a 13-year-old?) that dime novels were considered trash by those in high literary circles. Patten



**Gilbert Patten at work on another Merriwell story.**

University of Oklahoma Press

knew he could write, and he wanted to write something significant.

In his eyes, something significant meant something in hard-cover. While several of Patten's dime novel stories (including the hard-cover Merriwells) were eventually reissued in cloth, they were still dime novels in new clothing. In fact, several of Patten's scarcest hard-cover books are these reprints, which we will discuss shortly.

Patten wanted dearly to write something directly for hard-cover. In a chance meeting just as he was leaving the Street & Smith offices after dropping off a manuscript one day in late 1899, Ormond Smith gave him the opportunity. Following is the exact conversation as recalled by Patten:

"We are preparing to go into the cloth-book field," he told me, "and we want you to write three high-class boys' books for us on a royalty basis. We will make handsome volumes of them, and for each story we'll pay an advance of two hundred and fifty dollars, not to be deducted from your regular royalty payments of ten per cent. When can you give us the first story?"<sup>11</sup>

Patten recalled that he was taken aback by the proposal, saying that his continuing work on the Merriwells might force him to take three or four months for each title in the new series.

"That wouldn't be soon enough," Smith said. "We must have them all in not more than six months. I believe we can arrange to make the Merriwell work easier for you. John Whitson has written some pretty fair juvenile stories for us, and he's coming to town in a week or two. You can let him do most of the work on the Merriwell, furnishing him with the titles, plots and suggestions and reading his finished stories before they are delivered to us. That will afford you plenty of time to write all three of the cloth books in six months. There, now that's settled."<sup>12</sup>



Patten felt that the door was open for him to become a "legitimate" author, speculating that someone else, possibly Whitson, would become the new "Burt L. Standish" for the Merriwells before long.

Thus was born the **Rockspur Athletic Series**, with the first two titles, "The Rockspur Nine" and "The Rockspur Eleven," published by S&S in 1900 and the third title, "The Rockspur Rivals," in 1901. Manuscripts for the three titles had been delivered to Street & Smith between early March and late July of 1900.

However, just as Patten was writing these books, it became evident to him that Whitson was not an ideal stand-in for the original Burt L. Standish, not being too familiar with the storylines of the earlier Merriwell stories; so Patten signed a new contract with Ormond Smith for him to continue his work on the Merriwells.<sup>13</sup>

"I was pleased by the Rockspur books when they were finally issued, for they were, as Mr. Smith had said they would be, really attractive volumes," Patten recalled. "At last I was a cloth-book writer under the name of Gilbert Patten, and I felt that my days of writing so-called dime novels would ere long be behind me.

"But something went wrong. I was told that the established publishers of cloth books were opposed to the invasion of their field by purveyors of dime novels, but I think it was more probable that Street & Smith were not properly organized to distribute cloth books widely to retailers. However that may be, their attempts to break into that field somehow miscarried. Nevertheless, I received between two hundred and two hundred fifty dollars each as my royalty commissions on these books, which attested that they were not a complete flop."<sup>14</sup>

So Patten was a hard-cover author, but not really. Whether through mismanagement of distribution, the prices asked (one dollar per volume), sales were disappointing.

When Street & Smith launched the **Boys' Own Library** hard-cover series in 1902, it priced the books at 75 cents. While the **Boys' Own Library** was a reprint series

of previously issued Street & Smith serial material (including the first six hard-cover Merriwells as already mentioned and initially three other Patten titles originally published as serials in **Good News** written under the "Harry Dangerfield" pseudonym ("The Boy Boomers," "The Boy Cattle King" and "The Boy From the West"), the three Rockspur titles were not included until the 1906 switch of the **Boys' Own Library** to David McKay.

By then, three additional Patten books, two more "Harry Dangerfield" pseudonym serials reprinted from **Good News** — "Don Kirk's Mine" and "Jud and Joe, Printers and Publishers" — along with the single-book title "The Deadwood Trail," had been added to the **Boys' Own Library**.

The latter title, "The Deadwood Trail," carries with it another interesting story. Patten had wanted to create a pair of boys' series, one involving school and sports and the other set in the old west. He decided to call the first book of the latter series "The Deadwood Trail,"

and went to Boston to pitch the idea to Richard Burton, then the editor at Lee & Shepard. Patten had been impressed with the books L&S had published for Edward Stratemeyer beginning in 1898 with "Under Dewey at Manila." Burton said he liked the idea but told Patten to "write the first book and we'll start the series with it,

(Continued on Page 16)

## AN ABSORBING ATHLETIC SERIES.

### The Rockspur Nine

A STORY OF BASEBALL.

### The Rockspur Eleven

A STORY OF FOOTBALL.

### The Rockspur Rivals

A STORY OF WINTER SPORTS.

By GILBERT PATTEN.

There is something wrong with the boy who is not thrilled as he reads these stories. They are full of plot and action and must appeal strongly to all lovers of baseball, football and kindred sports. The description of the games between rival teams makes very exciting and absorbing reading, and few boys with warm blood in their veins, having once begun the perusal of one of these books, will lay it down till it is finished.

In Cloth.

Illustrated.

Price, \$1.00 per volume.

STREET AND SMITH, *New York and London*

**With the three-volume Rockspur Athletic Series (1900-1901), Patten wrote his first books specifically for the hard-cover market.**



# Gilbert Patten: A look beyond the Merriwells

(Continued from Page 15)

if that's what we want."<sup>15</sup>

Patten then attempted to start the book but had a case of writer's block (or just a lack of knowledge of the west in general). When he went to a Boston bookseller for advice, he was told to look up back issues of **Scribner's Magazine** published at the time of the Black Hills gold rush and try to find an article by **Leander Richardson** describing a real-life trek from Laramie, Wyoming to Deadwood City, S.D.

Armed with this background information, Patten completed the book and headed back to the L&S offices, manuscript in hand. A few days later, Burton called and said the story had been rejected.

"But what was the matter with it, sir?" I said in dismay.

"Personally, I think it's all right," the editor said, "but the head of the firm says it's too fascinating. He thinks it would make boys want to run away out West in search of adventures similar to those your hero experienced."

Patten described himself as "astounded" by Burton's reply.

"If that's the reason, he would have refused Stevenson's 'Treasure Island' had it been offered here."

"I think it would have," Burton said.<sup>16</sup>

Disappointed, Patten returned to New York, and after much persistence, found a receptive publisher in D. Appleton & Company. "The Deadwood Trail" came out in 1904. As mentioned, it was added to the McKay version of the **Boys' Own Library** in 1906.

"They urged me to follow it up with a second volume

of the series I had planned, saying that was the only way to make juvenile writing possible. I regretfully admit that I never wrote the second book," Patten said.<sup>17</sup>

Patten did not attempt writing hard-cover books from scratch for a number of years, although the **Boys' Own Library** hard-cover and **Medal Library** paperback editions of his earlier efforts remained in bookstores and libraries.

Another series conceived as serializations in the Merriwell vein for Patten's newly created 1910 S&S magazine, **Top Notch**, was the **Clif Stirling Series**, which he wrote under the "Julian St. Dare" pseudonym. Acting as editor of **Top Notch** ("Edited by Burt L. Standish") while maintaining a heavy Merriwell writing schedule and commuting back and forth from Camden, Maine, Patten soon became editor in name only, with the editing taken over by Henry Wilton Thomas, Sunday-feature editor of the **New York World**.<sup>18</sup>

But **Top Notch** gave Patten an opportunity to get an additional five hard-cover books in print. Now released from editorial duties, he took the Julian St. Dare **Clif Stirling** stories, expanded and reworked them and had them published under his own name by David McKay in the 1910-1916 period.<sup>19</sup> These books were not part of the **Boys' Own Library** although their bindings were similar to those found in the BOL.

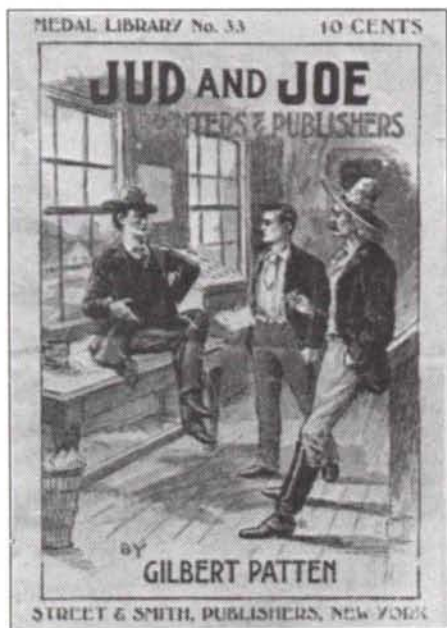
Earlier, Dodd, Mead published a single Patten title, "Bill Bruce at Harvard" (1905). Like the **Clif Stirlings**, it was derived from an earlier serial, in this case one published in **Popular Magazine**.

The publisher with the largest number of Gilbert Patten hard-covers in print was Barse & Hopkins of New York, and in fact, the most successful Patten books in terms of sales were the 16 volumes of the **Big League Series**, another reissue of stories first appearing in **Top Notch Magazine**.

This series was probably successful for two reasons. First, the hard-cover publication of the series (1914-1928) came during baseball's golden age, which began in the early 1920s with the hiring of the game's first commissioner, Judge Kenesaw M. Landis, in the aftermath of the Black Sox scandal and the rise of Babe Ruth as the game's greatest player. Secondly, "Burt L. Standish" on the cover brought back visions of Frank and Dick Merriwell.

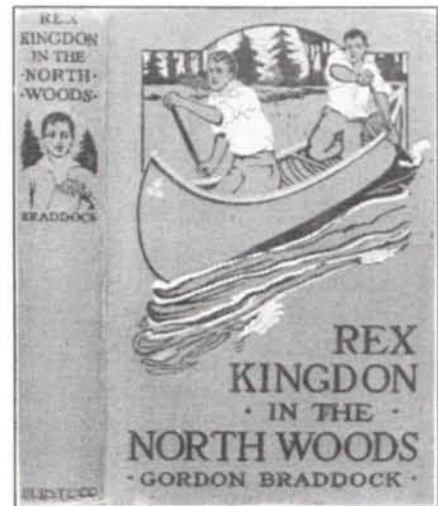
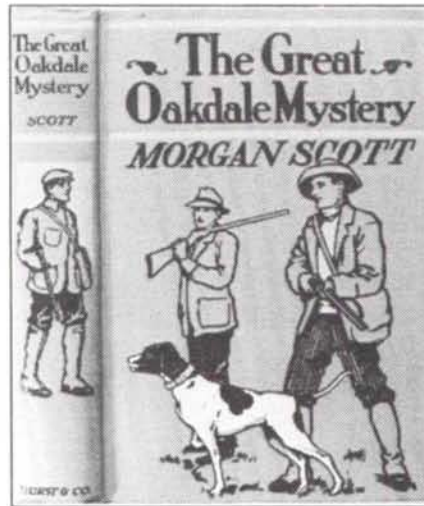
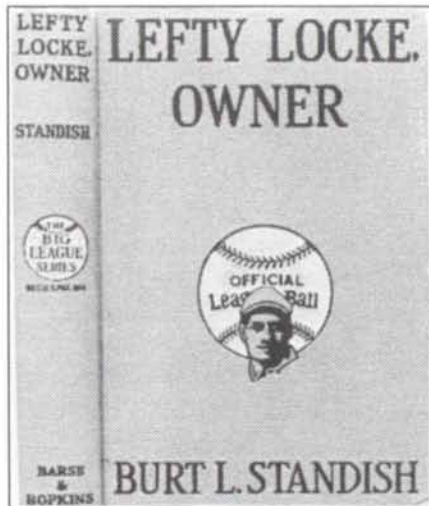
The **Big League Series** was issued in a variety of cover sizes and colors by Barse and Hopkins and its successor, Barse and Company. The books also had clever sports-cliche titles, which further attracted them to sports fans as well as young readers in general. Lefty Locke rises from bush-leaguer to star pitcher to manager and to team owner, truly the American dream.

An interesting sidelight is that Patten first tried to peddle the first story in this series, "Lefty o' the Bush,"



A Medal Library paperback reprint of "Jud and Joe," originally an 1896 Good News serial under the "Harry Dangerfield" pseudonym.





For the Big League Series, left, Patten revived the "Burt L. Standish" pseudonym for stories Barse & Hopkins reprinted from Street & Smith's Top Notch Magazine. The Oakdale Series, by "Morgan Scott," and the Rex Kingdon Series by "Gordon Braddock" were hard-cover originals by Hurst & Co.

to *The Saturday Evening Post* in Philadelphia, and when editors there wanted to chop it up into two or three short stories, Patten decided that rather than take the time to do that because he needed the money immediately, he had it published in *Top Notch* and thus was begun the **Big League Series**.<sup>20</sup>

The six-volume **College Life Series** was issued by Barse and Hopkins (and later, Barse and Company) from 1914 to 1925. These books were issued under Patten's own name and like the **Big League Series**, came in a variety of binding formats.

Patten's other two non-Merriwell series were conceived as books from the ground up and they appeared under two of his most famous pseudonyms. The series were published in deluxe editions by Hurst & Co.; they are the **Oakdale Series** (1911-1913) under the "Morgan Scott" pen-name and the **Rex Kingdon Series** (1914-1917) under the "Gordon Braddock" pseudonym. Both were later republished in somewhat cheaper editions by fellow New York publisher A.L. Burt.

These books contain some of Patten's finest writing. Rex Kingdon is the hero of stories bearing his name, which take place in school and outdoors settings. In addition to the five books published, a sixth ("Rex Kingdon and his Chums") was promoted but apparently is a phantom title.

The six-volume **Oakdale Series** is set at the school of the title, and the main hero, Ben Stone, holds an uncommon place in boys' series fiction in that he has a physical deformity (a partially severed ear) as well as a shadowy past, but rises to heroic deeds nonetheless. This is in contrast to Stratemeyer's "clean-cut, broad-shouldered lads."

Ironically, Patten expressed disappointment that he had ended up selling these books to a so-called "cheap"

publisher:

"However, I was shooting too low and wasting my ammunition; I should have harkened to Dodd, Mead and Company — or earlier, to D. Appleton and Company."<sup>21</sup>

So that's a look at Gilbert Patten's hard-cover juveniles in his writing world beyond the Merriwells. Even counting the 28 Merriwells and the other derivations from dime novel stories, only 76 titles reached hard cover. Of the 76, fewer than 20 were conceived from the start as hard-cover boys' books. Although that may comprise a nice literary output for most writers, it is but a tiny fraction of what Merriwell wrote. The King of the Dime Novelists, who died in 1945, never made the honor roll of America's literary elite.

Those remaining among his millions of readers would beg to differ.

## NOTES

1. William Gilbert Patten (1866-1945) left the manuscript to a heretofore unknown and unfinished autobiography at the time of his death. The materials had been stored in the basement of his daughter-in-law's home in California. Hollywood producer Tony London discovered the manuscript in 1959 while searching through the Patten materials at the request of Mrs. Harvan Barr Patten. With the support of the Patten family, London set in motion the publication of the autobiography by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1964 under the title Frank Merriwell's "Father." This book is the source for much of this article with specific page references listed below.

2. Patten, Gilbert. "Frank Merriwell's 'Father.'" Norman, Okla., University of Oklahoma Press, p. xix.

3. Ibid.

(Continued on Page 18)



# Gilbert Patten: A look beyond the Merriwells

(Continued from Page 11)

4. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 175.
5. LeBlanc, Edward T., editor. **Street & Smith Dime Novel Bibliography, Part II: The Merriwells**. Fall River, Mass., 1990 (self-published), p. S&S-II-10.
6. LeBlanc. Op. Cit., pp. S&S-II-96 through S&S-II-100.
7. LeBlanc, Op. Cit., pp. S&S-II-101 through S&S-II-113.
8. LeBlanc, Op. Cit., pp. S&S-II-124 through S&S-II-135.
9. LeBlanc, Op. Cit., pp. S&S-II-145 through S&S-II-146.
10. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 325. This list is credited as first appearing in **Dime Novel Round-Up** in March 1945 in an article by David C. Adams. "Gordon Braddock," a known pseudonym, is not listed; instead is listed "Burt R. Braddock."
11. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 191.
12. Ibid.
13. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 192.
14. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 194.
15. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 197.
16. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 198.
17. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 199.
18. Reynolds, Quentin. "The Fiction Factory: From Pulp Row to Quality Street." New York, Random House, 1965. p. 165.
19. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 251.
20. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 282.
21. Patten, Op. Cit., p. 251.

## Gilbert Patten's hard-cover books 1900-1928

### Single titles

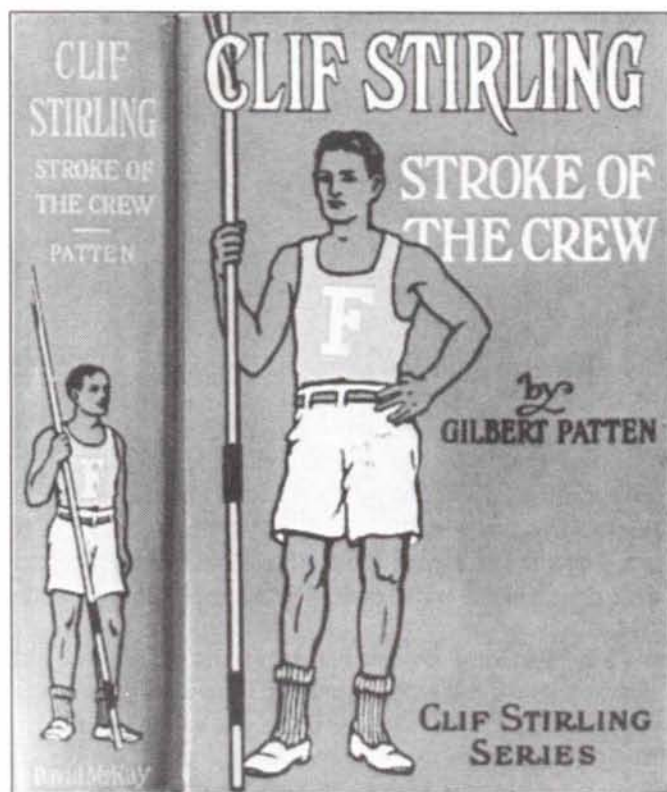
The Deadwood Trail ..... D. Appleton, 1904  
Bill Bruce of Harvard ..... Dodd, Mead, 1910

### Rockspur Athletic Series

The Rockspur Nine ..... Street & Smith, 1900  
The Rockspur Eleven ..... Street & Smith, 1900  
The Rockspur Rivals ..... Street & Smith, 1901

### Boys' Own Library

The Boy from the West ..... Street & Smith, 1899 (1902)  
The Boy Cattle King ..... Street & Smith, 1899 (1902)  
Don Kirk's Mine ..... Street & Smith, 1899 (1902)  
Jud and Joe ..... Street & Smith, 1899 (1902)



The Clif Stirling Series, published by David McKay, reprinted stories originally written under the "Julian St. Dare" pseudonym for Top Notch Magazine.

The Boy Boomers ..... Street & Smith, 1899 (1902)  
The Deadwood Trail ..... David McKay, 1906 (1906)

### The Frank Merriwell Series (by "Burt L. Standish")

Frank Merriwell's School Days ... Street & Smith, 1901 (1902)  
Frank Merriwell's Chums ..... Street & Smith, 1902 (1902)  
Frank Merriwell's Foes ..... Street & Smith, 1902 (1902)  
Frank Merriwell's Trip West ..... Street & Smith, 1902 (1902)  
Frank Merriwell Down South ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Bravery ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Races ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour ... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell at Yale ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield ... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Courage ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Daring ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Skill ..... Street & Smith, 1903 (1903)  
Frank Merriwell's Champions ..... Street & Smith, 1904 (1904)  
Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale . Street & Smith, 1904 (1904)  
Frank Merriwell's Secret ..... Street & Smith, 1904 (1904)  
Frank Merriwell's Loyalty ..... Street & Smith, 1904 (1904)  
Frank Merriwell's Reward ..... Street & Smith, 1900 (1906)  
Frank Merriwell's Faith ..... Street & Smith, 1900 (1906)  
Frank Merriwell's Victories ..... Street & Smith, 1900 (1907)  
Frank Merriwell's Power ..... Street & Smith, 1900 (1907)  
Frank Merriwell's Set-Back ..... Street & Smith, 1901 (1907)



Frank Merriwell's False Friend ....	Street & Smith, 1901 (1907)
Frank Merriwell's Brother .....	Street & Smith, 1901 (1907)
Frank Merriwell in Camp .....	Street & Smith, 1904 (1908)
Frank Merriwell's Vacation .....	Street & Smith, 1898 (1908)
Frank Merriwell's Cruise .....	Street & Smith, 1898 (1908)
Frank Merriwell's Lads .....	Street & Smith, 1911 (1915)

### The College Life Series

Boltwood of Yale .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
The College Rebel .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
On College Battlefields .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1917
The Call of the Varsity .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1920
Sons of Old Eli .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1923
Ben Oakman, Stroke .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1925

### The Big League Series (by "Burt L. Standish")

Lefty o' the Bush .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
Lefty o' the Big League .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
Lefty o' the Blue Stockings .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
Lefty o' the Training Camp .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
Brick King, Backstop .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1914
The Making of a Big Leaguer .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1915
Courtney of the Center Garden .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1915
Covering the Look-in Corner .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1915
Lefty Locke, Pitcher-Manager .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1916
Guarding the Keystone Sack .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1917
The Man on First .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1920
Lego Lamb, Southpaw .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1923
The Grip of the Game .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1924
Lefty Locke, Owner .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1925
Lefty Locke Wins Out .....	Barse & Hopkins, 1926
Crossed Signals .....	Barse & Co., 1928

### The Clif Stirling Series

Clif Stirling, Captain of the Nine .....	David McKay, 1910
Clif Stirling, Behind the Line .....	David McKay, 1911
Clif Stirling, Stroke of the Crew .....	David McKay, 1912
Clif Stirling, Freshman at Stormbridge .....	David McKay, 1913
Clif Stirling, Sophomore at Stormbridge ...	David McKay, 1916

### Rex Kingdon Series (by "Gordon Braddock")

Rex Kingdon at Ridgewood High .....	Hurst, 1914
Rex Kingdon in the North Woods .....	Hurst, 1914
Rex Kingdon at Walcott Hall .....	Hurst, 1915
Rex Kingdon Behind the Bat .....	Hurst, 1916
Rex Kingdon on Storm Island .....	Hurst, 1917

### The Oakdale Series (by "Morgan Scott")

Ben Stone at Oakdale .....	Hurst, 1911
Boys of Oakdale Academy .....	Hurst, 1911
Rival Pitchers of Oakdale .....	Hurst, 1911
Oakdale Boys in Camp .....	Hurst, 1912
The Great Oakdale Mystery .....	Hurst, 1912
The New Boys at Oakdale .....	Hurst, 1913

## Notes on book listings

**1. Boys' Own Library.** This publisher's series was launched by Street & Smith in 1902 as a means of reprinting in hard-cover many of the stories and serials to which it owned the rights and had appeared in such periodicals as **Good News**. Authors included Alger, Ellis, Rathborne, Stratemeyer, Otis and Lounsbury. In 1904, the **Boys' Own Library** was leased to Federal Book Co., and in 1906 the rights were sold to David McKay, which added and deleted titles from the S&S listings.

The earliest advertisements for the S&S **Boys' Own Library** show 87 titles, soon increased to 100 and finally to 135. During the McKay period, advertisements vary as to the number of titles listed, peaking at 156.

By looking at the ads, it appears that three Patten serials from **Good News**, "The Boy Boomers," "The Boy Cattle King" and "The Boy from the West," were included by Street & Smith in the **Boys' Own Library** early on; two more Patten serials from **Good News**, "Don Kirk's Mine" and "Jud and Joe," were added soon thereafter. Later, "The Deadwood Trail," originally published by D. Appleton & Co. in 1904, joined the list. All six of these books have uniform brown-cloth illustrated bindings with gold spine lettering. The 1899 dates listed for the first five titles are the **Medal Library** copyrights; they precede the period (years in parentheses) when the books appeared in hard-cover.

**2. The Frank Merriwell Series.** Although only the first six titles actually appeared in Street & Smith and Federal hard-covers, the titles added by McKay also carry S&S copyrights, which are out of sequence with the advertised listing which is followed on Page 18. The years shown in parentheses are the years in which the books appeared in hard-cover editions by Street & Smith and McKay.

**3. The College Life Series.** The Barse & Hopkins bindings include large (8 1/8 x 5 3/8) blue cloth with gold lettering (first printing) and navy blue cloth with white lettering for the first two titles, all with frontispiece and internal illustrations; and for all six titles, medium (7 7/8 x 5 1/4) olive-green cloth with black lettering (with internals), and standard-size (7 5/8 x 5 1/8) blue cloth, internals eliminated. The latter format was also used for the Barse & Co. reprints.

**4. The Big League Series.** The first-edition format for the first 11 titles is large (8 1/8 x 5 3/8) dark olive-green ribbed cloth with black lettering and having a frontispiece and internal illustrations. The first 11 titles were reprinted in medium (7 7/8 x 5 1/4) brown cloth and retained the internals. Subsequent printings by B&H were standard size (7 5/8 x 5 1/8) slate-blue, brown or light gray, with internal illustrations eliminated. The Barse & Co. reprints were also in the light-gray binding, usually in a pebbled finish.

**5. The Clif Stirling Series.** The first four titles initially appeared with gold spine lettering while "Clif Stirling, Sophomore at Stormbridge," only appears in cream-colored spine lettering, as are reprints of the first four titles. This title also repeats the cover and spine illustrations (a baseball player) used for the first title.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bill:

Brad has made me aware that there was some talk last May about the possibility of holding an Alger convention in the Reno/Carson City, Nevada area in 1996 or later. I told him, and later, Rob Kasper, that I would be most willing to host a convention here, but that all members should be aware of the pluses and minuses of holding it here.

**The pluses** — Ideal weather in early May. This is a tourist and convention-oriented area with low room rates and low food costs. There is much to see and do within an hour's drive, ranging from historic Virginia City to the truly beautiful Lake Tahoe. Donner Pass and California's mother lode country are not much more distant. San Francisco and Yosemite National Park are close enough for a full day's trip. For those so inclined, the casinos are always ready to make you comfortable while you help "make Nevada green." A final plus is that the members who live in the western half of the country are more apt to come to a meeting here.

**The minuses** — It's a long way from there to here for

most Alger people and, depending on the mood of the airlines at the time, it can be costly. Note that New York City to Oklahoma City is about 1,500 miles; Oklahoma City to Reno is **another** 1,570 miles. There are literally no Alger (and almost no collectible juvenile) books in northern Nevada. San Francisco is the closest possibility and what few that are available are very expensive. Members should not come here thinking they will find books. It is problematic whether we could expect many outside dealers and/or collectors (if there are any) to become involved in the book sale.

I hope that we could get some indication from the **Newsboy** readers on whether they would come to a convention in the Reno/Carson City area. That information would be useful to have in hand before a decision is to be made on whether or not to hold it here. I'd be interested in receiving comments directly and hearing the comments you glean from your contacts.

Sincerely,

Rolfe B. Chase (PF-602)

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Carson City NV 89703 (702) 885-6812

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