



Horatio Alger, Jr.

1832 — 1899

THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



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

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NUMBER 4

Additions to the Alger canon

Including a newly discovered short story:

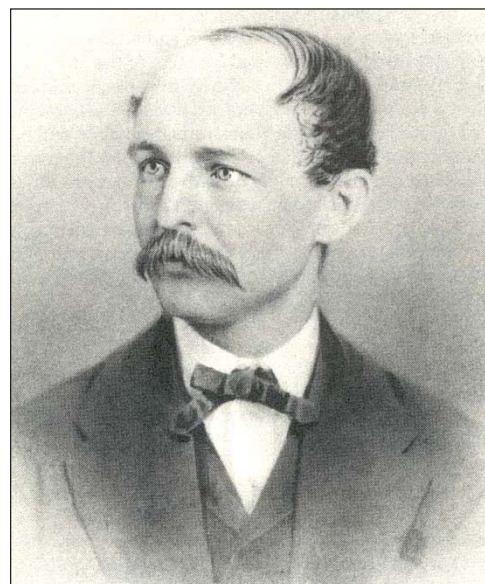
The Little Savoyard

A True Story of Street Life in Paris

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Writing Stories for Boys

Essays by Horatio Alger, Jr.,
James Otis, Harry Castlemon
and William O. Stoddard



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President's column

The Dog Days of Summer have passed and we now face the shorter, cooler days of Autumn. While I enjoy the long, bright, sunny days of Summer, I look forward to the shorter days of Autumn and Winter, when I can spend less time dealing with yard work. I also have more time to pursue, read, and research books. Speaking of research, Cary Sternick's new blog "Thoughts of Bibliomaven" (<http://bookofbibliomaven.blogspot.com>) is a great example of a book collector giving back to the community. Cary discusses authors, publishers, books, series, with great scans of all that he discusses. This blog not only provides a wealth of information, but it stimulates the desire to collect and research the books you and I enjoy. I recommend that you bookmark the site and visit it often.

I trust that each of you are working to catalogue your Alger books published by Hurst and forward the catalogue to Brad Chase (bschase@aol.com). I admit that while I have started, I have not finished the effort, but I plan to shortly. I look forward to the publication of the Hurst Alger bibliography and expect it to provide relevant information regarding many authors that Hurst published along with Alger.

One of the reasons I am a member of the Horatio Alger Society was my grandfather. He was a reader, and while his primary genre was westerns, he also had a few boy's series books, including Alger. His copies were later Donahue and New York Book formats, but I still enjoyed reading them. I am not sure where those books are as he sold me his books a few years ago, and the Alger books were not to be found. He was more than my grandfather, he was my close friend. He died Sept. 3rd at 98 years of age. He was still driving in May, but at that age a change in medication can send a man spiraling out of control. The changes he experienced over 98 years were enormous and thought-provoking. I am 38 years old. What will our world look like in 60 years? Will books even be published in paper form? Will all current paper media be digital or published in some as yet unknown format? What will the antiquarian book collecting scene look like since many of the existing population may never have read a book published on paper? Will public libraries exist as we know them today? Will anyone visit the NIU Alger repository or other university collections?

I may never see these questions answered, but looking

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HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive & Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Horatio Alger, Jr., his works and influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series, pulps and dime novels.

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Additions to the Alger canon

By Bob Sipes (PF-1067)

For avid book collectors, the thrill of the hunt itself is only superseded by the acquisition of that long-sought-after item. The excitement of a new acquisition is further increased when investigation identifies a previously unknown printing, binding, or published piece. This article will present unknown printings of short stories, poems, and miscellaneous material.

There have been many attempts to create a comprehensive list of Alger's works. The 1999 revised edition of Bob Bennett's Horatio Alger bibliography, *A Collector's Guide to the Published Works of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, is the most definitive reference for the Alger canon. The only reference to extant material regarding Alger is *Horatio Alger, Jr., An Annotated Bibliography of Comment and Criticism* by Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, published in 1981 by Scarecrow Press.

While these two works provide the a near complete view of Alger material, ongoing research will continue to bring to light new Alger bibliographic information regarding short stories, poems, articles, and related material. The digitalization of periodicals allows for easy and thorough searching for Alger related material that has not been catalogued due to time and logistics. Since 1999, there have been a few additions to the Alger canon published in *Newsboy*.

Whenever I stumble across Alger related material, physical or digital, I document it for later research and publication in *Newsboy*. During the past summer I had the opportunity to do some research and located undocumented publications of known short stories, poems, and related material. I also located a previously unknown short story by Alger which is presented later in this edition of *Newsboy*.

The list below provides new additions to our body of knowledge regarding Alger's works. I have categorized the items by type and in many cases, I provide some description of the material.

Poems

- "At Shakespeare's Grave," *The Round Table A Weekly Record of The Notable, The Useful, and the Tasteful*, 30 April 1864, 313. This poem concludes a larger article on Shakespeareana and references the earlier printing in the *Boston Transcript*.

Short stories

- Rev. Horatio Alger Jr., "The Boarding School Drudge", *People's Illustrated Monthly Telephone*, March 1882, 1:12. This item was published by George H.

Gilman of Houlton, Maine. This information was provided by Joe Rainone, who located the item.

- "Bread Upon The Waters," *Paterson Daily Guardian*, 09 June 1859.

- Caroline F. Preston, "The Donation Party," *The Leisure Hour Library*, 09 Nov. 1889, 3:268. This is a reprint of "Our Minister's Donation Party."

- "The Little Savoyard. A True Story of Street Life in Paris," *The Flag of Our Union*, 03 April 1869, 24:14. This is a previously unknown Alger short story.

- "The Merchant's Crime. A Novel," *The Star-Sayings Novel Supplement*, 25 March 1894, 2:28. This was published as a supplement to the *St. Louis Star*.

- "The Merchant's Crime. A Novel," *Grit Story Supplement*, 03 March 1895, 13:12. This was published as a supplement to the *Pennsylvania Grit*.

- Charles F. Preston, "Miss Frizell's Boarding School," *The Flag of Our Union*, 06 Sept. 1856, 11:36. This is a previously unknown story.

- Caroline F. Preston, "My First School; or, Teaching Young Ideas in Pumpkin Hollow," *The Leisure Hour Library*, 13 April 1889, 3:238.

- "A Neighbor's Revenge," *Horatio Alger, Michigan Farmer and State Journal of Agriculture*, 15 Jun 1889, 20:24. This is a previously unknown title; however, it may be a reprint of "A Neighbor's Quarrel" from *The Yankee Blade*, as this printing states the source as *The Yankee Blade*.

- Caroline F. Preston, "The New Sofa," *Michigan Farmer and State Journal of Agriculture*, 24 Nov. 1888, 19:48. This is a previously unknown title; however, it is probably a reprint of "The Old-Fashioned Sofa" from *The Yankee Blade*, as this printing states the source as *The Yankee Blade*.

- Charles F. Preston, "Shall I Be Responsible," *Zion's Herald*, 23 May 1878, 55:21. This is a previously unknown story.

- "A Snowball Fight; and What Became of It," *The Flag of Our Union*, 27 Feb. 1869, 24:9.

- "That Ear Trumpet," *Michigan Farmer and State Journal of Agriculture*, 08 Nov. 1890, 21:45. This is a previously unknown title; however, it is a reprint of "Aunt Jane's Ear Trumpet".

- "Tommy's Adventure," *The Flag of Our Union*, 17 April 1869, 24:16.

Biographical

- "New England Historic-Genealogical Society," *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Con-*

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Editor's notebook

This has been a busy year for this series book fan. First came the annual Popular Culture Association conference in New Orleans in April, with our Dime Novels, Pulp and Series Books area of interest offering numerous presentations of great interest. Our well-organized group, headed by area chair Pamela Bedore of the University of Connecticut, includes several Horatio Alger Society members who contribute regularly to *Newsboy*.

This was my first visit to New Orleans since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and it was nice to see the city having recovered as well as it has, although there remains much to be done. I finally got to visit the World War II Museum, which is undergoing a major expansion. Originally founded as the D-Day Museum, it now covers all of World War II, which has helped to draw additional funding for the expansion.

A full report by Pamela on the 2009 New Orleans PCA conference is available in the June issue of *Dime Novel Round-Up*. Next, we head to St. Louis on March 31-April 3, 2010.

We were only back home a short while when it was time to hop Amtrak for the trip to Charlottesville, Virginia, for the H.A.S. convention. I was pleasantly surprised that Chicago has direct service to Charlottesville via Amtrak. The train, named The Cardinal, takes a circuitous route to New York via Indianapolis, Cincinnati, through Kentucky and West Virginia before heading into Virginia. Following the stop in Charlottesville, the route turns north through Washington, Philadelphia and on to New York. My 21-hour trip, in both directions, was right on schedule!

The third out-of-town trip was in mid-July to New England and then to upstate New York for a get-together among fans of the Tom Swift books at the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport, N.Y. Curtiss, the great aviation pioneer and inventor, is thought to have been Edward Stratemeyer's model for the fictional Tom Swift character, a theory discussed in longtime H.A.S. member John Dizer's book, *Tom Swift & Company*.

Anyway, a group of about 15 enthusiasts, organized by Tom Swift fan George Dombi of Detroit, gathered to celebrate Tom's 99th anniversary. Dizer's report on this mini-convention can be found on Page 9, along with several photographs. Dizer received a plaque of appreciation from the group, the citation reading "For making the study of Tom Swift, and series books in general, a respectable endeavor."

President's column

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back on my grandfather's life, I can't help but wonder that should I live another 60 years, what changes will I have experienced?

The series book scene has been rather dry this summer both in availability and purchases. However, I have discovered a new (to me) area of research and collecting to pursue. There are numerous e-books by many authors available online. The Gutenberg Project, Google books, and many other digital media projects have made books readily available. Many of these books I never knew existed or I did not realize their contents. The power of the Internet search engine has opened up a whole new reality for literary research and my brief comments are not even scratching the surface.

There are also many private digital collections with subscription plans that contain even more data that is not available to the public Internet search engines; therefore, most people outside of literary academia are not aware of these collections and the data they contain. You can gain access to these repositories from many universities such as NIU.

What I have been focusing on is collecting digital copies of poems, short stories and serials of authors of interest located in periodicals that have been made available through digital collections. The beauty of this is that I may never own a paper copy of Alger short stories located in Gleason's *Flag of Our Union*, but I can own a digital copy and I can read it at any time. Also, the various items that are located online, may be index references instead of full copies. This provides new avenues to pursue for your physical collection. I believe I am going to write a full-length article regarding this in the near future.

My family and I are doing well. Sofia and Channing are ever more active and mischievous and a joy, most of the time, to raise. I hope you and yours are all doing well and sharing fun and excitement.

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A special centennial Tom Swift conference is planned by James (PF-898) and Kim Keeline for San Diego next July. So, it looks like your editor will have another busy year of travel in 2010!

Additions to the Alger canon

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cerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America, Sept. 1863, 7:9. This brief describes the 05 Aug. 1863 meeting of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society and notes that "Rev. Horatio Alger Jr. of Cambridge was chosen Assistant Recording Secretary."

- Items of Maine News, *Maine Farmer*, 05 Aug. 1876, 44:36. This brief notes that Horatio Alger, the popular juvenile author, is summering at Bar Harbor, Mt. Desert.

- "A Card From 'Edmund Kirke,'" *The Critic: a Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts*, 01 Feb. 1890, 13:318. This is a letter from James R. Gilmore, who wrote *The Life of James A. Garfield* under the Edmund Kirke pseudonym to the editors of *The Critic*. He clears the air regarding their previous comments from an earlier issue in which they presume him to be dead and his wife a widow. He states that his wife filed the lawsuit because she is the owner of the copyrights since he transfers ownership to her as she handles his affairs. I was unable to locate a copy of the earlier issue in time for this article; however, it appears from James' letter that *The Critic* reported that the judge ruled in his favor rather than Alger's. I am not certain of the final judgment since Scharnhorst and Bales in *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, stated that the lawsuit was unsuccessful in their notes on page 185.

- "Untitled Advertisement," *Michigan Farmer*, 15 May 1897, 31, page 387. This is an advertisement for a contest to determine who can form the greatest number of words from the word "Enthusiastic." The contest was ran to promote the *Woman's World* and *Jenness Miller Monthly* periodical. The Board of Award consists of Rev. Joseph Sauderson, D.D., author, scholar, and divine; Horatio Alger, Jr., an author whose name needs no comment and John Habberton, equally celebrated.

Obituaries

- "Obituary/Horatio Alger," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 27 July 1899, 77:30. This is a nice obituary that mentions *Ragged Dick* and that Alger wrote 70 books with more than 800,000 copies published.

- "Literary Notes," *The Independent (Boston)*, 27 July 1899, 51:2643. A single paragraph with a brief outline of his life.

- No title, *The Literary World; a Monthly Review of Current Literature*, 22 July 1899, 30:15. A single dramatic paragraph lamenting his death. "How the boys

will miss Horatio Alger, Jr., whose death at Natick, on July 18, robbed the book world of one of its most absorbing and exciting story tellers. It is not every author whose successful work dates back to his thirteenth year, so Mr. Alger has done a long day's work. Saddest among the many who mourn him will be the street urchins and "Ragged Dicks," who found in him an every-ready champion and friend.

- "History As It Is Made," *The Chautauquan; A Weekly Newsmagazine*, Sept. 1899, 29:6. A very brief paragraph noting his death and stating "...He aimed to make honesty and industry attractive to young readers and the favor his books enjoy attests his success."

Book reviews

- "Boston," *The Round Table. A Saturday Review of Politics, Finance, Literature, Society and Art*, 02 Dec. 1865, 13. A review of *Paul Prescott's Charge*.

- "Library Table," *The Round Table. A Saturday Review of Politics, Finance, Literature, Society and Art*, 20 Oct. 1866, 4:59. A lengthy and somewhat unfavorable review of *Helen Ford*.

- "Books for Young Folks," *Christian Union*, 04 Dec. 1890, 42:23. A short rather unfavorable review of *The Odds Against Him*.

Parodies and humor

- "Important News This Funny World," *Puck*, 21 Feb. 1914, 75:1926. A paragraph describing the 30 dollar-a-week salary office boys at Ford Motor Company receive and stating that librarians who removed Alger books on the grounds that they promoted false expectations of business life were wrong, and that if Horatio Alger's books had a fault, it was that they were too conservative.

- No title, *Puck*, 02 Dec 1916, 81:2074. Humorous newspaper headline. "Errand Boy's toil wins seat on Change and Partnership." *Puck* comment — "Boy, page Oliver Optic and Horatio Alger, Jr."

- By the Author of "Horatio Alger" (Charles Battell Loomis), *Bernard the Bartender*, *Puck*, 07 Mar 1894, 35:887. This is a parody of the typical Alger plot with evil winning out over a hero who would not meet Alger's standards.

The story "The Little Savoyard" that follows on pages 6-7, is a new addition to the canon of Horatio Alger, Jr. It was written for The Flag of our Union and tells the story of how a young street entertainer, or Savoyard (a term derived from London's famed Savoy Theatre), reunites with his family. The story is comparable to many of Alger's short stories and follows Alger's recurring theme of rags to riches through chance and birthright.

The Little Savoyard.

A True Story of Street Life in Paris

By Horatio Alger, Jr.



It was the twelfth night after Christmas — an evening celebrated in England, France and Germany by fetes and brilliant entertainments, in which the children bear a prominent part. This festival has not yet been introduced into America, but as it is greatly enjoyed and eagerly looked forward to by young people abroad, the time may come when it is adopted here.

I must ask the reader to accompany me to an elegant mansion in the aristocratic boulevard of Malesherbe, in the city of Paris. It was easy to see that something was going on inside, for it was brilliantly illuminated, and from time to time brilliantly dressed figures were indistinctly seen through the openings of the heavy curtains.

It was a Twelfth Night Fete. The saloon was fairly ablaze with light. Multitudes of children, dressed with taste and elegance, moved about gracefully in childish dances, or eagerly partook of the bonbons which on that occasion are always liberally supplied. Among them moved elegant ladies, most of them being parents of children present, who with smiles watched the enjoyments of the little ones.

At last came the grand ceremony of the evening. This was the cutting of the Twelfth Night Cake, a rich loaf of mammoth proportions, of which each guest was entitled to a share. The cutting of the cake was watched with interest, and the pieces were drawn by lot. Just before this was done, however, the Countess de C—— said to the hostess:

“Will you gratify me in a little caprice?”

“Certainly,” said the hostess, complaisantly.

“It is this: I wish my portion of the cake to be given to the poorest little boy we can find in the street.”

The French are always fond of novelty, and this “caprice” struck the hostess as promising a pleasant variety.

“It is a good thought,” she said. “I will at once dispatch Antoine on your errand.”

Antoine was at hand, his services being liable to be called upon at any moment.

He shrugged his shoulders as the message was given him, and thought there was no accounting for the caprices of fine ladies. But of course it was not for him to remonstrate, and he went out to execute his errand.

Reaching the street, he looked around him, hoping he might not have far to go in the cold, for it was one of the coldest nights of the winter.

“Ah, there’s a little vagabond, luckily” — (gamin was what he said, for that is the French name of a street boy) —

he said to himself. “Now to capture him.”

The boy referred to was a ragged little Savoyard, of ten years old, apparently, who was standing opposite, with his little violin under his arm. He had been about the streets all day, playing wherever he could get listeners. From some places he had been driven off with abuse, for his instrument was far from being a superior one, and poor little Carlo was only a passable player.

The poor fellow had suffered not a little with cold, for his clothes were thin, and by no means sufficient for the season, and he had had nothing to eat since the crust of bread which was given him in the morning by the speculator who had brought him, with several others, to Paris, and now lived on their earnings, dolling them out the smallest allowance of food that would keep soul and body together.

After wandering about the whole day, little Carlo had strayed into the Boulevard des Malesherbe, and had paused in front of the beautiful mansion where the fete was going on. He could see indistinctly the forms of the children who were participating in the fete, and it is quite likely that the poor little fellow felt a sorrowful envy of those whose lot was so much brighter than his.

His gaze was so intent that he did not notice the appearance of the servant, until Antoine, having crossed the street, laid his hand on his shoulder. Carlo started in alarm, and tried to tear himself from the servant’s grasp.

“Not so fast, little chap,” said Antoine. “I want you.”

“I didn’t do any harm,” said the little Savoyard, trembling; for he supposed Antoine’s intentions were unfriendly.

“Who said you did? I only said that I wanted you.”

The little Savoyard looked at him distrustfully. He had met with so little kindness in his life that he regarded strangers as enemies rather than as friends.

“You are to come up with me into yonder mansion,” said Antoine.

“Where the lights are?” asked the ragged boy, in surprise.

“Yes. Come, hurry along. I don’t want to stay out here in the cold.”

“But why am I to go up there?” asked Carlo, puzzled.

“You will know when you get there. All I can tell you is that my mistress wants you.”

“Perhaps I am wanted to play on my violin,” thought the boy; and with this thought he followed the servant to the entrance of the mansion.

A moment later he was ushered into the brilliant saloon, blazing with lights. He looked around him, dazzled and nearly blinded by the glare. There was a chorus of ejaculations, and the young gentlemen and ladies gathered around the timid little Savoyard, who stood bewildered in the midst of the magnificence.

In the midst of it, the Countess de C——, whose caprice had been the cause of his appearance, advanced towards the little boy, and gently removed his tattered cap.

“Ah, but he is pretty,” she said, as his chestnut hair fell in

a natural wave over a fine brow, which seemed white in comparison with his sunburnt cheeks.

His eyes were a bright hazel, his features were exquisitely turned, only thin from want of sufficient food. In spite of his rags, it was easy to see that he was gifted with beauty.

"Countess, you will soil your gloves," said a guest, as she took the little boy by the hand and led him forward into the centre of the saloon.

"Then I can buy another pair," she said, indifferently. "It is I who sent for you," she said to Carlo. "I will tell you what to do."

The drawing commenced. The little Savoyard followed the directions of the countess, and his share of the cake was handed him.

"Whoever finds the ring in his slice shall be king of the fete," said the hostess, in explanation; "or if it is a young lady, she shall be queen. The king or queen has the right to select one of the opposite sex to share the honors of royalty."

"May I eat it, madame?" asked the Savoyard, with a longing glance at the cake he held in his hand.

"Yes, my child; but have a care not to swallow the ring, if it should be within."

All the children were eagerly examining the slices, in the hope of finding the ring which was the prize of the evening.

In the midst of it, the little Savoyard drew the glittering circlet from his cake, saying to the countess:

"I have it, madame."

"The king! The king! The little Savoyard is king!" shouted the children.

"You are the king of the fete!" said the hostess, advancing and leading forward Carlo, who seemed bewildered by the enthusiasm.

It was a strange scene — the little ragamuffin in the centre of the saloon, surrounded by elegantly-dressed children, over whom he was called to exercise sovereignty. The children enjoyed it better that if one of themselves had been chosen.

"A queen! A queen! He must name a queen!" shouted all.

"Look around you," said the hostess. "It is for you to choose a queen from those present."

The little Savoyard looked around him a moment, then went back to the Countess de C——.

"I want her to be queen," he said.

"But," said the countess, "It is the custom to choose a young girl."

"I want you to be queen," he persisted.

"Why do you choose me?" she asked.

"Because you are kind to me," said Carlo. Besides, you look like my mother."

"Like your mother? Is she living?"

"I don't know, madame; but I have her picture."

"Show it to me," said the countess, who seemed to be moved by a strange interest.

Carlo drew from under his ragged vest a small locket, suspended by a plain white string. The picture, though stained and discolored, presented the face of a beautiful young lady of twenty.

No sooner did the countess cast her eye upon it than she uttered a cry of joy, and threw her arms around the astonished boy.

"My boy, my boy, my own little Victor! Are you again restored to me?"

All the guests gazed in astonishment at this unexpected tableau. The countess, quickly recovering herself, said, while an expression of joy irradiated her sweet face:

"The picture is mine, as you can perhaps discover by examining it. Eight years ago, I was journeying in the northern part of Italy with my husband and my little Victor, then four years of age, when he suddenly disappeared from me. We had no doubt that he was stolen, and offered a large reward for his recovery, but without success. From that day I have mourned for him as for one whom I never again expected to see in this world. It is doubtless God who by such strange means has restored him to me."

"Are you my mother, then?" asked Carlo.

"Yes, my child." And again the mother clasped the boy, ragged and dirty though he was, to her heart.

This time he returned her caress.

"Then I shall not be hungry any more?" he said.

"No, my poor child."

"Let him tell us his story," demanded the children.

So seated on a fauteuil in their midst, the little Savoyard told his story in answer to the numerous questions that were poured in upon him. As far back as he could remember, he wandered about with his little violin, in Italy first, but for the last two years in Paris, where he had suffered every discomfort and privation. He was in the charge of an Italian named Giacomo Bartoni, who professed to take care of him, and to whom the violin belonged.

"We will send for him tomorrow," said the countess. "I must buy the violin of him as a memorial of the years of terrible privation which you have passed."

That night the little Savoyard, who was accustomed to sleep on a bed of straw, rested his weary limbs on a bed of down, in the beautiful city mansion of the Countess de C——. The next morning, he was arrayed in a suit of elegant boy's clothing, in which he looked transformed. Scarcely was the metamorphosis complete, than his Italian master, who had been summoned, made his appearance, and bowing almost to the ground, was admitted into the presence of the countess.

"Do you recognize this young gentleman?" asked the countess, pointing to Carlo, who now looked like a little prince.

"No, madam."

"Yet you ought to know him well. It is the little Savoyard Carlo."

Giacomo was overwhelmed with astonishment.

"But I do not understand," he said.

The explanation was briefly made. The Italian was paid a munificent sum for the violin which is now the only link which united the little Count Victor with the poor little Savoyard of former years. He is now at a military school, and bids fair to maintain by his talents the distinction of the illustrious family to which he belongs.



The Glenn H. Curtiss Museum of Early Aviation and Local History in Hammondsport, N.Y., hosted this summer's Tom Swift convention.

Photos by
Ron Benninghoff



Tom Swift was the topic during lunch at one of the area restaurants visited during the convention on July 24-26.

A convention group portrait following the Saturday evening buffet-style chicken dinner put on by the Glenn Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport, N.Y.



Tom Swift and the Hammondsport convention

By John T. Dizer (PF-511)

As scholars commonly agree, there is a strong connection between Glenn Curtiss of Hammondsport, New York, and Tom Swift of the fictional upstate New York town of Shopton. Since it is nearly one hundred years since the young inventor first appeared in *Tom Swift and his Motor Cycle*, Tom Swift enthusiast George Dombi from Detroit felt it appropriate to celebrate with a Tom Swift mini-convention. Activities were centered at the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport, in the heart of New York's Finger Lakes region.

Stephen Disney from New York, James and Kim Keeline from San Diego, Bill Gowen from Chicago, Jim Towey from Connecticut and others all helped in the excellent planning. Many of the attendees wore custom-made Tom Swift shirts and caps provided by Neil and Meg Morrison of Boston, while Alger researcher and author Brad Chase (PF-412) and Jack Dizer attended, as did Tom Swift fan Dick Pope, who put on the very successful Corning series book conference in 1986, and also hosted the 1995 Horatio Alger Society convention.

The Tom Swift convention ran from July 24 to July 26. It was headquartered in the Microtel in Bath, N.Y., with excellent meals enjoyed at area restaurants. Incidentally, Bath was the home, some say, of the eccentric Wakefield Damon, who tried to run his motorcycle up a tree before selling the machine to Tom Swift back in



Jack Dizer (PF-511) is presented a plaque by James Keeline (PF-898) on behalf of fellow Tom Swift fans. The inscription: "For making the study of Tom Swift, the Stratemeyer Syndicate and series books in general a respectable endeavor. Presented at the Tom Swift Convention/Hammondsport, N.Y., July 2009."

Photo by Bill Gowen



Tom Swift convention attendees receive a guided tour of the Curtiss Museum.

Photo by Ron Benninghoff

1910. The meetings were held at both the Microtel and the nearby Curtiss Museum, where the group also toured the marvelous collection of early motorcycles, airplanes and other memorabilia and watched a film on the life and career of Glenn Curtiss, the "father of naval aviation." Only Tom's "Red Cloud" was missing.

During the weekend there were excellent presentations at the hotel by Bill Gowen and Jim Towey. In the museum's theater, James Keeline gave a presentation on Tom Swift's place in the popular media, and Jack Dizer spoke on "How Tom Swift Invented Everything." After his talk, Jack was presented with a "Lifetime Achievement Award" plaque by the group.

This was a fun convention, attended by well-known collectors and scholars. It was informative, both on Tom Swift and series books in general. Although the participants were obviously knowledgeable and erudite, the convention was low-key with a minimum of on-upmanship. This was a welcome change from some earlier conferences.

James and Kim Keeline will be hosting the centennial 2010 Tom Swift Conference in San Diego next summer. It promises to be another great occasion.

The Writer: Serving authors since 1887

By James D. Keeline (PF-898)

The Writer, which first published the series of four "Writing Stories for Boys" articles on the following pages, was a monthly trade magazine for people working in all phases of writing, editing, and publishing. It was initially edited by William H. Hills and Robert Luce of Boston, Massachusetts, and eventually Hills alone, followed by a series of editors over the years.

The first issue was released in April 1887. The latest issue available online from Google Books is from December 1920, when Margaret Gordon was the editor. According to WorldCat.org, volume 117 of **The Writer** was issued in 2004 by periodical giant Kalmbach Publishing Company of Waukesha, Wisconsin. By that time it was called "The oldest magazine for literary workers."

From the beginning, the plan for the publication was to include original and reprint articles and reviews of a practical nature. They avoided esoteric topics in favor of ones which would help people write better as well as place their material in the market.

For a time, the demand seemed large enough that a second publication was issued for several years. This magazine, called **The Author**, was intended to be distinct, and readers were urged to subscribe to both. It was published on or around the 15th of each month, so if one did subscribe to both, it would be like having a semi-

monthly publication on this topic. **The Author** was begun in January 1889 and continued at least through January 1892, the last issue available online.

Apparently, **The Writer** is still being issued by Kalmbach and is therefore characterized as "The oldest magazine for literary workers." According to Wikipedia.com, currently it is a monthly magazine for writers. As Wikipedia describes, "Over the years, the magazine has gone through a number of physical changes. The first issue had only 18 pages; and for years **The Writer** had no illustrations. Currently, **The Writer** has more than 60 pages per issue, and includes color photographs on both the cover and interior ... As part of its 120th year celebration in 2007, **The Writer** began reprinting a past article in each issue of the monthly magazine (a practice it has continued into 2009)."

The Wikipedia article on **The Writer** is available by visiting http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Writer. (*Editor's note*: Although this writeup appears solid, Wikipedia articles have often been known to lack total accuracy).

The Writer's current Web site is: www.writermag.com

As noted above, it has vintage articles posted on the site by such writers as Somerset Maugham, Irving Stone, Louis L'Amour, Faith Baldwin, George Bernard Shaw and others. This online "Classic Writer" page is available by visiting www.writermag.com/wrt/default.aspx?c=ss&id=111

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Moving?

*If you are moving, please send your new address and phone number to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255**. Also, please provide any recent e-mail address updates.*

Writing Stories for Boys

Introduction: Horatio Alger, Jr.'s essay "Writing Stories for Boys" appeared in the professional journal *The Writer*, Vol. IX, in February 1896, and it first was published in *Newsboy* in the June-July 1976 issue. Also during the mid-1890s, *The Writer* published essays on the same theme by fellow authors of juvenile fiction William O. Stoddard (September 1895), James Otis (October 1895) and Harry

Castlemon (January 1896). Some of these have also been reprinted in various publications devoted to the research and the collecting of dime novels and boys' books. Possibly for the first time, all four essays have been assembled as a group and are reprinted in this issue of *Newsboy*. The titles of the four articles varied slightly and are reproduced here as originally published in *The Writer*.

Writing Stories for Boys

By Horatio Alger, Jr.

When I began to write for publication it was far from my expectation that I should devote my life to writing stories for boys. I was ambitious, rather, to write for adults, and for a few years I contributed to such periodicals as *Harper's Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Putnam's Magazine* and a variety of literary weeklies. I achieved fair success, but I could see that I had so many competitors that it would take a long time to acquire a reputation. One day I selected a plot for a two-column sketch for the Harpers. It was during the war. Thinking the matter over, it occurred to me that it would be a good plot for a juvenile book. I sat down at once and wrote to A.K. Loring of Boston, at that time a publisher in only a small way, detailing the plot and asking if he would encourage me to write a juvenile book. He answered: "Go ahead, and if I don't publish it, some other publisher will. In three months I put in his hands the manuscript of "Frank's Campaign." This story was well received, but it was not till I removed to New York and wrote "Ragged Dick" that I scored a decided success.

I don't intend to weary the reader with a detailed account of my books and the circumstances under which they were written. It is enough to say that I soon found reason to believe that I was much more likely to achieve success as a writer for boys than as a writer for adults. I therefore confined myself to juvenile writing, and am at present the author of more than sixty boys' stories, besides a considerable number of serials, which may eventually appear in book form.

As may be supposed, I have some idea in regard to the qualifications that are needed in an author who would

succeed in this line of work, and will set them down briefly, at the request of the editor of **THE WRITER**.

A writer for boys should have an abundant sympathy with them. He should be able to enter into their plans, hopes, and aspirations. He should learn to look upon life as they do. Such books as "Sandford and Merton" would no longer achieve success. Boys object to be written down to. Even the



Rollo books, popular as they were in their time, do not suit the boys of to-day. A boy's heart opens to the man or writer who understands him. There are teachers and writers who delight to lecture the young. They are provided with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a schoolboy's heart, if I may adapt a well-known line of Tennyson's. Those parents who understand and sympathize with their boys have the strongest hold upon them. I call to mind one writer for boys (he wrote but a single book) whose hero talked like a preacher and was a perfect prig. He seemed to have none of the imperfections of boyhood, and none of the qualities that make boys attractive. Boys soon learn

whether a writer understands and sympathizes with them. I have sometimes wondered whether there ever was a boy like Jonas in the Rollo books. If so, I think that while probably an instructive, he must have been a very unpleasant companion for a young boy like Rollo.

A writer for boys should remember his responsibility and exert a wholesome influence on his young readers. Honesty, industry, frugality, and a worthy ambition he can preach through the medium of a story much more effectively than a lecturer or a preacher. I have tried to make my heroes manly boys, bright, cheerful, hopeful, and plucky. Goody-goody boys never win life's prizes. Strong and yet gentle, ready to

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Writing Stories for Boys

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defend those that are weak, willing to work for their families if called upon to do so, ready to ease the burden that may have fallen upon a widowed mother, or dependent brothers and sisters, such boys are sure to succeed, and deserve success.

It should not be forgotten that boys like adventure. There is no objection to healthy excitement. Sensational stories, such as are found in the dime and half-dime libraries, do much harm, and are very objectionable. Many a boy has been tempted to crime by them. Such stories as "The Boy Highwayman," "The Boy Pirate," and books of that class, do incalculable mischief. Better that a boy's life should be humdrum than filled with such dangerous excitement.

Some writers have the art of blending instruction with an interesting story. One of the best known — perhaps the best known of juvenile writers — excels in this department. Carrying his boy heroes to foreign lands, he manages to impart a large amount of information respecting them without detracting from the interest of the story. I have never attempted this, because it requires a special gift, which I do not possess.

One thing more, and the last I shall mention — a story should be interesting. A young reader will not tolerate dullness. If there are dull passages which he is tempted to skip, he is likely to throw the book aside. The interest should never flag. If a writer finds his own interest in the story he is writing failing, he may be sure that the same effect will be produced on the mind of the reader. It seems to me that no writer should undertake to write for boys who does not feel that he has been called to that particular work. If he finds himself able to entertain and influence boys, he should realize that upon him rests a great responsibility. In the formation period of youth he is able to exert a powerful and salutary influence. The influence of no writer for adults can compare with his. If, as the years pass, he is permitted to see that he has helped even a few of his boy readers to grow into a worthy and noble manhood, he can ask no better reward.

— *Horatio Alger, Jr.*

New York, N.Y.

How to Write a Story for Boys

By William O. Stoddard

A proposed writer's prospect for success might be found out before he began. His probable hold upon his readers might be guessed pretty nearly correctly if one knew what kind of boy he was at fourteen and what kind of boy he had grown to be now. It is hard even to talk about boys to a fellow who never was one, or who does not really love to go back there and see the folks and visit around and find that things

are just about what they used to be. The power of mental resurrection is part of the power to tell a story.

If I were about to try to write a story for boys, I think I should go at it like a boy. That is really the way I began life, and it is the best way I know — better than being a girl. Then I would look the world over, especially the things that are worn out and that scholarly old people have done with. The boys have recently reached those very things and like to get in among them. One of them always bears the outer semblance of a dog. I would hunt up something, an old war, a ship, an Indian, or a gun, or something heroic, without any formulated moral to kill its usefulness. Then I would think up a story that would twist in and out around that find, and I would get in myself among a crowd and tell that story to the other fellows. A man who will do that will find himself shutting out a heap of things that he might put into his yarn if he were writing it instead of telling it. I have an idea that those are the things which some editorial readers like, but which the young people skip.

Boys will sit still better and listen without remarks if there are some girls in the room, for they are afraid of girls. Put some girls into the story, but do not ask for the opinions of your lady friends, for you will not like what they will say of the girls you have invented. Put them in, anyhow, and then the other girls that your boy readers live among will come and listen, to know what became of them, and their older sisters and their aunts will want to know if the girls in the story behaved with propriety and if the boys were properly put down.

Every boy wants the boy in the story to be put down and to have some hard luck, and then to come up again. What they do not care a cent for is a fellow with nothing but good luck; for in their real life they never met that fellow, and he is a kind of muff, anyhow.

Robert Bonner once said to me: "I print the *Ledger* for the boys and girls of Dutchess County under twenty." Paraphrase that saying of an authority altogether unquestionable, and it informs any person intending to write for the young that if he or she has no near-by neighbors with whose ways of thinking and doing he or she is thoroughly familiar, then the attempt might as well not be made. Equally distinct and correct is Mr. Bonner's implied declaration, that when one pretty thickly settled neighborhood of young people has been perfectly analyzed and understood, there need be no further worry about the literary demands of any other collection, at least in this country. There are but differing strata of minds and tastes, and a study of journalistic successes will obtain a perfect explanation of their nature. No two young people are alike, but the lines of character have not yet deepened; artificial likes and dislikes are but partly formed; and there is a wonderful similarity in the earlier activities of human thought and feeling.

At the same time, there is an almost universal readiness to take without question certain kinds of mental impressions, and as universal a disposition to react against, almost to

resent, the approach of certain other kinds. For instance, no boy will read a book unless he can somehow feel that he knows the fellows, no matter where they lived or when, and that under similar circumstances, arranged a little differently to suit, he and his crowd of fellows could and would have done as well, or better, or have done something else, suggested incidentally by the author, that would then and there have been an improvement. If any story is altogether outside of him and beyond him, he cares little for that book, no matter if it is as full of adventures as the siege of Jerusalem.

Young people's literature, periodical and other, is a creation of the present, a mighty good one, and it is improving in the most encouraging manner. Many periodicals and publishing houses which printed the wrong things are dead, others have repented, and are doing well. Better conditions of life, better mental and moral inheritance, better primary education have prepared, and must continually prepare, a vast and increasingly vaster multitude of better brains, more normal, pure, vigorous, and exacting young tastes and requirements. The thing that was without form and void is so no more. Nevertheless, there were masterpieces struck out by genius in the earlier days.

There is no living publisher who, if an exact, impossible parallel for "Robinson Crusoe," were brought him, or a new "Pilgrim's Progress," would print and bind them. They would not find a sale if he did. Yet of those two old gems of perfect art there are more copies sold and read each year than of all the new books of the year put together. There is hardly a boy or girl too young to read them, and the old boys and girls of seventy and upward take them into corners, where they can read them over again without being caught at it. Now, if any fellow with a pen in his hand and a story in his head wants to catch up with Bunyan or Defoe, well he won't do it; but if he will listen to them for a moment, he may catch it that they told their stories as if they were true, and every boy believes, until he is unlucky and stops to think, that Crusoe and Friday, and the pilgrim and most of his giants, are alive to-day. For my own part, I cannot write a book at all until I have actually made the intimate personal acquaintance of the boys and girls who are to figure in it, so that they will be confidential and tell me how they feel and what they mean to do.

I have discovered among them, as I made their acquaintance, one lot after another, walking around with them, a power of observation, bringing them a minuteness of knowledge and a positiveness of opinion concerning the small, but infinite world in which they live that is astonishing. I would never write so long a sentence as that in a book for boys. What I mean is that I knew more about trees, plants, fish, squirrels, "mushrats," the way to hunt a woodchuck, and a thousand other things, including some stone arrowheads I owned, than half a dozen ignoramuses like me would think of knowing to-day. I knew more, too, about old people and their faults, and the

proper way to bring up boys, than anybody above or beyond twenty-five can possibly know.

The boy that the other boys will take to in a story must have precisely that worldly wisdom. They will vote down, very correctly, any other fellow.

On the whole, therefore, attempting to answer the question, "How to Write a Book for Boys?" In wish I could make myself understood in saying "Do not write at all. Tell it. If, like Bunyan or Defoe, if you can make the other boys forget that the story is either written or printed, they will listen as long as you can keep awake to tell. And does not any man wish he could do a thing as well as he can advise how to do it? I do."

— William O. Stoddard

Madison, N.J.

How to Write a Story for Boys

By James Otis

It seems to be supreme egotism for one to give advice to another on such a subject, and, therefore, as an apology for the existence of, the request of the editor of **THE WRITER** is quoted: "Practical hints from you on the subject of writing stories for boys would be of interest to readers of the magazine."

When one has demonstrated that this line of work or that style of story is not satisfactory to editors, and has paid for such experience by hard labor, his mistakes should serve others as "practical hints."

The boy who wishes to criticize harshly says that the story in question was "written for babies," and such a criticism must be due to the fact that the author has neglected to recall to mind his likes and dislikes when he was a lad, or that he has erred by writing as he would speak to a child. A boy of from ten to fifteen years of age, if he be bookishly inclined, is much farther advanced in his reading than in his sports or his studies; with the putting on of his first pair of trousers he has a horror of being in any way considered young, and is more inclined to follow his elders in their line of reading than in anything else. As a matter of course it is impracticable to write particularly for a boy of eight years and for another of ten; but it is possible to interest with the same story young people of from eight to fifteen years of age, if the author will take the trouble to go back in memory to his pin-feather stage of existence, striving to construct such a tale as would then have interested him. This done, he will neither write above the heads nor beneath the feet of his readers.

Carelessness in stating alleged facts is a serious offense in the eyes of the boy. He will forgive a glaring improbability when it is boldly labelled fiction; but you deliberately insult him when you state that which he can ascertain from books of reference is absolutely incorrect. This is best illustrated by

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Writing Stories for Boys

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an experience of mine in connection with one of my books, published by Harper & Brothers. The incorrect statement made was regarding the depth of water at a certain point on Tampa bay, and I gained my information from an old chart of the Florida coast, carelessly giving no heed to the fact that there might be a later publication bearing on the subject. In less than thirty days from the issuance of the book four letters were received from as many readers, in which the mistake was pointed out, with more or less sarcasm as to the wisdom of the author. The latest coast survey had discovered that this particular portion of the bay was dry at low water, and at least four boys had made themselves acquainted with that fact. It was an error such as an older reader would have passed by unnoticed, or with a smile of pity because of the author's ignorance; but a boy does not allow anything of the kind to go without rebuke, and always remembers it to the disparagement of the writer.

The boy is willing to read a certain amount of descriptive writing as the price of the more exciting portions of the story, much as he is willing to take castor oil in order to gain the dainties which are given as reward; but give too large a proportion, either of pen pictures or of oil, and he rebels. It would seem that he prefers to recognize the characters by some peculiarity of speech or of action, rather than by words, and fortunate indeed is that author whose story is illustrated by an artist thoroughly in sympathy with the work. For example, "Toby Tyler" was an ordinary sort of story, but, being illustrated by W.A. Rogers, the most careful and the most pleasing of all illustrators who portray boy-life, it was raised at once to a much higher class than was really deserved, for in each picture the readers saw the same characters, with the same peculiarities of feature and of dress, as if they were so many photographs. In that case it was the illustrations, rather than the letter-press, which made the success. As a matter of course, an author cannot always choose his illustrator, but this is possible in many cases, particularly when he enters into partnership with an artist, and thus submits his manuscripts to the publisher fully illustrated. In such case his wares receive more attention, and he himself is better pleased, because the pictures are such as he desires.

Do not make the mistake of confounding action with sensationalism. There is an abundance of healthy incident in the life of every boy, and the author will have no difficulty in finding all he needs; but when he goes into the blood-and-thunder style of stories he is committing a deliberate and needless crime. To make the young reader acquainted with a hero who flourishes a revolver on every occasion, and who places no value whatever on human life, is to familiarize him with criminals and crime in a greater degree than would be

possible in his everyday life. Why deal with murder, whether the victims be Africans, Indians, or, "tough" characters, when it is possible to write quite as entertainingly of innocent amusements? Why should a boy be taught that there are other boys who roam around the world killing their fellow-beings, and thus winning for themselves the names of heroes, when such is not the fact? Or, even though it were true, why thus cheapen human life in the minds of the young, giving them to understand that to kill a man under certain circumstances is praiseworthy? The imaginary "Red-Handed Bandit of the Plains" is capable of more mischief from the pages of a book than he could ever work as a living being, for the officers of the law would soon hunt out the real fellow, or he die "with his boots on," while the fiction hero always settles down to a happy life, honored and respected because of the wealth he has obtained lawfully.

It is true there is good demand among publishers for "Treasure Island" and "Captain Horn" stories, and there is also a field for respectable burglars and gentlemanly sneak thieves; but it would be much better for the boys if the demand was never satisfied, as for the public if the field remained unoccupied.

This is not a plea for "goody-good" stories; there is really no demand for such stuff nowadays; but it is sound advice for either young or old authors to keep as far from blood-shedding in their writing as they would in their daily lives. The American boy does not actually need gore, nor would he indulge in it for the fact that there are writers who are more than willing to pour it out for him by wholesale.

— James Otis

Portland, Me.

How to Write Stories for Boys

By Harry Castlemon

The more I think upon the subject you have given me to write about, the more I think I do not know anything about it. After engaging in the business for thirty-three years, I feel that I cannot give any advice save that which I have given a hundred times before — and it does not seem to do any good.

Writing comes as easy to me as falling off a log. "How did I ever come to write juvenile books?" is a question I have answered scores of times, and I will now answer it again.

When I was sixteen years old I belonged to a composition class. It was our custom to go on the recitation seat every day with clean slates, and we were allowed ten minutes to write seventy words on any subject the teacher thought suited to our capacity. One day he gave out "What a Man Would See If He Went to Greenland." My heart was in the matter, and before the ten minutes were up I had one side of my slate filled. The teacher listened to the reading of our compositions,

and when they were all over he limply said: "Some of you will make your living by writing one of these days." That gave me something to ponder upon. I did not say so out loud, but I knew that my composition was as good as the best of them.

By the way, there was another thing that came in my way just then. I was reading at that time one of Mayne Reid's works which I had drawn from the library, and I pondered upon it as much as I did upon what the teacher said to me. In introducing Swartboy to his readers he made use of this expression: "No visible change was

observable to Swartboy's countenance." Now, it occurred to me that if a man of his education could make such a blunder as that and still write a book, I ought to be able to do it, too. I went home that very day and began a story, "The Old Guide's Narrative," which was sent to the *New York Weekly*, and came back, respectfully declined. It was written on both sides of the sheet, but I don't know that that was against the rules. Nothing abashed, I began another, and receiving some instructions from a friend of mine who was a clerk in a book-store, I wrote it on only one side of the paper. But mind you, he didn't know what I was doing. Nobody knew

it; but one day, after a hard Saturday's work — the other boys had been out skating on the brick-pond — I shyly broached the subject to my mother. I felt the need of some sympathy. She listened in amazement, and then said: "Why, do you think you could write a book like that?" That settled the matter, and from that day no one knew what I was up to until I sent the first four volumes of the Gunboat Series to my father. Was it work? Well, yes; it was hard work, but each week I had the satisfaction of seeing the manuscript grow, until "The Young Naturalist" was all complete.

About this time the war broke out, and after that I didn't do much work. I was in a fever of suspense, and I wanted to take a hand with the defenders of my country; so at last I enlisted in the navy. But there were some things in that trunk besides my manuscript that I didn't want anybody to see, so I locked it and put the key into my pocket. Well, I went down to Cairo as landsman, served on several boats, getting my promotion as fast as I learned my duties, and was finally ordered to the navy yard as assistant to Fleet Paymaster Dunn. Learning from some of the other clerks that my appointment was likely to be permanent, I sent home for my trunk; for I could not forget the manuscript I had left behind. I carried the trunk from the express office to the wharf boat myself, took out that manuscript, and never stopped until I had read it all over. It didn't need any correcting — I had

written some portions of it over five times — and the next thing was to find a publisher. Finally my choice fell upon Rickey & Carroll, of Cincinnati. I got a letter from Mr. Carroll — how well I remember it, for I have quoted it to amateurs more times than I know of — who thus told me the truth in plain language: "You are very young. Nobody knows you; but if you choose to send us what you have written, we will give you our opinion of it." I copied it and sent it off, and that's the way I found a publisher. After four years of steady

writing, I had four volumes in his hands. All that I received for the books was six hundred dollars. But then the copyrights have come back to me. I have received a good deal more since.

Now I don't know whether anyone else can make anything out of my experience or not, but there is one thing about it: If you are going to make a success out of this business, you must work and work hard for it. Don't write until you have something to say, and then write just as you would talk. Whatever your own opinions may be, keep them to yourself. Boys don't like fine writing. What they want is adventure, and the more of it you can get into 250 pages of manuscript, the better fellow you are.

Don't work six months on a manuscript, and then tell the editor that you dashed it off at one sitting. He does not want such a story as that. If it did not cost you any trouble to write it, it will cost him less trouble to read it. He'll put it in the waste-paper basket. Don't think you have chosen an occupation that is going to make you rich right along. For ten years of my life I never made more than enough to pay for my board and my clothes; now the case is different. Don't become a literary "hack."

How those fellows make so much money by writing beats me. I have one publisher, and he will not permit me to write for anyone else. He pays me a fair price for my books, and I hope is making money out of them. Anyhow, he takes my copyrights as they come back to me, and that amounts to considerable. I don't write over two books a year — sometimes not that; but when they are done they suit me. I said that writing is as easy as falling off a log to me, and so it is; but when I come to correct and revise for the eye of the public, there's where the fun comes in. I make ten or fifteen pages out of a day's work, but when I come to review it, I cannot turn out more than five or six. So you see that no matter how deep a fellow gets into this business, he's got to work; and the more he works, the more success he'll meet with.

— *Harry Castlemon*

Westfield, N.Y.



BOOK REVIEW

Mark Connelly: *The Hardy Boys Mysteries, 1927-79, A Cultural and Literary History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2008. 262 pages, illustrated case binding with 27 internal photographs. ISBN: 978-0-7864-3386-5. \$49.95 at www.mcfarlandpub.com; available for about 20 percent discount at www.amazon.com.

Reviewed by William R. Gowen (PF-706)

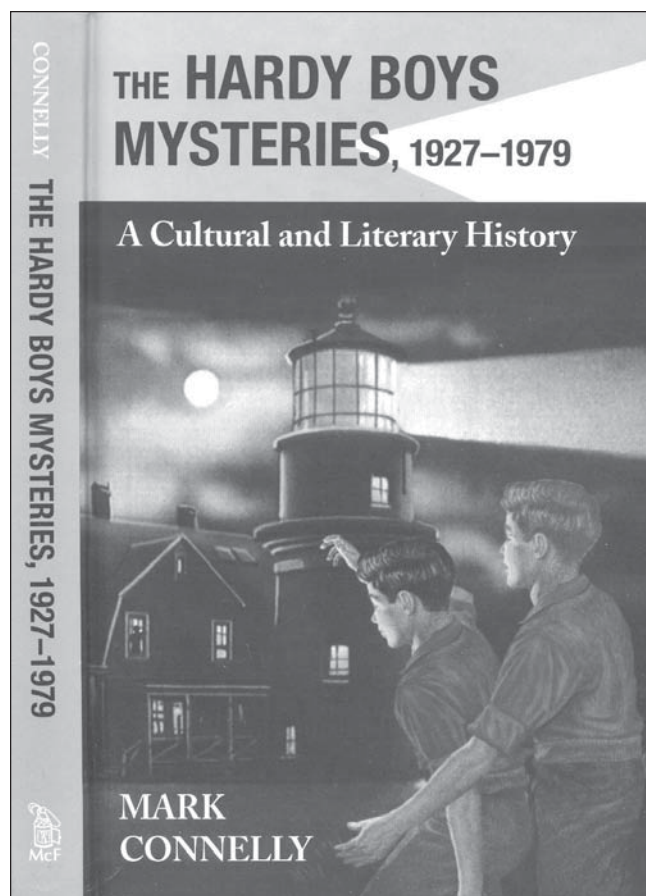
The “big two” of the Stratemeyer Syndicate, The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew, are ingrained in our culture. While Nancy received highly praised comprehensive treatment with Melanie Rehak’s *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her* (Harcourt, 2005), the Hardy Boys kind of lagged behind in having a worthy historical appraisal. Much has been written about Frank and Joe, of course, but there’s not much out there that sets the thumbs a-tingling within the boy detectives in all of us.

Well, the wait is over. Mark Connelly, a member of the English faculty at Milwaukee (Wis.) Area Technical College, has come through with as fine a treatise on the Hardy Boys as we’re likely to get. He uses respected attributed source material (Deidre Johnson, John Dizer and James Keeline among many), organizes his book in a well-thought-out way and closes with such interesting supplements as a Hardy Boys chronology, a listing of the 58 books from the Grosset & Dunlap era (the scope of his study), “Twenty Opening Lines,” and “Hardyisms,” all of them fun to read.

But it is the 15 chapters found in the main body of *The Hardy Boys Mysteries, 1927-79, A Cultural and Literary History* that makes this an important work, both for the dedicated scholar and casual reader. Connelly opens with a brief history of the Stratemeyer Syndicate, calling on the respected research of Johnson, Keeline and others, rather than repeating misinformed “facts” about the Syndicate that circulated for decades.

Connelly then revisits one of the 1970s’ most important personal reminiscences about Edward Stratemeyer and the Syndicate: author Leslie McFarlane’s *Ghost of the Hardy Boys* (Methuen, 1976), devoting a whole chapter to the crucial McFarlane era. Subsequent chapters follow the Hardy Boys saga chronologically, starting with the so-called “weird period” attributed to contract writer John Button, starting in the late 1930s.

Some of the key middle chapters include Harriet Stratemeyer Adams’ overseeing the rewriting and condensing of the early Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books, along the way removing racial stereotypes and making the books more attuned to an era of political correctness.



Connelly delves into race, gender and class equity, with chapter titles such as “Hardy Family Values,” “Law and Order” and “Action, Not Violence.” These sociological topics are dealt with, not through the lens of ivy-covered academia, but in accessible terms, making the book a real page-turner.

Connelly does not overlook the expanded role of the Hardys in popular culture, devoting a chapter to their various incarnations on stage, in film and television, including parodies of the young sleuths that carry their own special social commentary.

The concluding chapter returns to the topic of series books in general, dating back to Franklin K. Mathiews’ magazine article “Blowing Out the Boys’ Brains,” a diatribe against books produced in the early days by the Syndicate, which Mathiews believed were harmful to impressionable youth. Connelly’s glimpse of the attitudes toward inexpensive juvenile literature through the mid-20th century includes the post-World War II influence of a newcomer — television.

In summary, Mark Connelly has produced a most readable and important history, not only of the Hardy Boys stories themselves, but how they found a niche within the mainstream of American popular culture.