ma's eyes we see a far more fallible Joseph Smith and sense the tension that gripped the prophet in his own country.

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The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr. By Gary Scharnhorst, with Jack Bales. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Pp. xxii, 199. Illustrations, notes, index. $17.95.)

The name Horatio Alger readily evokes images of the rags-to-riches story in United States culture. The substance of Alger's fictional heroes and Alger's own life up to now have been clouded by myth, distortion, and deliberate falsification. The historian will have an easier time in understanding Alger's work and life after reading this biography by Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales.

For the most part Alger led an uneventful life (1832-1899) as a writer of fiction and poetry. Even so, his biographical record was all but systematically destroyed by himself and his family. In his thirties, while employed as a Unitarian minister in Brewster, Massachusetts, there was public outcry over Alger's acts of pedophilia with young boys in his parish. Alger's father and the Unitarian church joined forces to limit the extent of public exposure in order to protect the reputations of both family and church by an agreement that Alger would never again use his clerical title or take a post as pastor. The authors claim that Alger atoned for his perfidy all his life by working on behalf of homeless children and street urchins through the Children's Aid Society and the Newsboys' Lodging House as well as depicting the hard lot of the New York "street Arabs" in his fiction.

As they unfold an interesting story, the authors nonetheless treat the ambiguities in Alger's life very gingerly. They are energetic, however, in their denouncement of those historians and journalists who continue to cite a spurious life of Alger written in 1928 by Herbert R. Mayes and later admitted to be a hoax based on fabricated sources. They demonstrate that twentieth century scholars have made no effort to consult the purported sources and simply relied on Mayes's "interpretation" of them. The authors, by rigorous research, provide a useful introduction to students of the falsehoods that can masquerade as the art and craft of history.

There are several psychological questions that remain unresolved. For example, between 1869 and 1879 the financier Joseph Seligman employed Alger to tutor his five sons. Between 1872 and 1878 Alger also contributed serials to *Young Israel* that included the publication of the first three Luck and Pluck

stories. After Seligman's death Alger in the 1880s peppered his fiction with anti-Semitic stereotypes. By 1883, however, he was employed as tutor to Albert Cardozo's children and tutored in other prominent Jewish households as well. These contradictions are not adequately analyzed by the authors.

Scharnhorst's book reveals a sadness no less than irony in Alger's third-rate career as a writer. Twentieth century critics who point to his popularity in the nineteen century and his post-World War II revival as a defender of capitalism misunderstand his ethic and are unaware of the unfavorable reviews and the condemnation of his themes and literary style by the 1880s when some libraries banned his books. Historians have also inflated his gross sales. *Ragged Dick* (1868) was his only best-seller. Alger never did achieve the success he hungered for among adult readers.

The authors offer a perceptive "Afterword" on the abridged reissues of Alger's novels, between 1899 and 1920, that turned upside down the original moral thrust of the books. After 1920 Alger was canonized as a "success Mythmaker" (p. 152), although his books fell into obscurity. In sum, this book is a fine piece of scholarship and presents a useful case study and reminder to all who read and write history about past failures in historical method.

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Books and Libraries in Camp and Battle: The Civil War Experience. By David Kaser. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. xiii, 141. Notes, illustrations, pictures, maps, bibliography, index. $27.95.)

In this brief but stimulating study of the role of reading among Civil War soldiers, David Kaser sees the war as a watershed in the history of reading and the history of leisure in America. To Kaser, the Civil War not only brought about a significant change in what, why, and how Americans read but it also altered dramatically the nature and character of certain American institutions, especially public libraries and the publishing industry.

Though by the middle of the nineteenth century America had a high literacy rate and a plentiful supply of reading matter, it still lacked, according to Kaser, one major commodity necessary for large-scale readership, namely, leisure time. Long hours on the job and a Christian ethic that regarded large blocks