The Dean of Dime Novelists and the Merriwell Saga, or, The Life and Career of William Gilbert Patten

John Levi Cutler

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THE DEAN OF DIME NOVELISTS AND
THE MERRIWELL SAGA;
OR,
THE LIFE AND CAREER OF WILLIAM
GILBERT PATTEN

A THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts (in English)

By
John Levi Cutler
B. A., University of Maine, 1931

University of Maine
Orono
May, 1933
I have read Mr. John L. Cutler's thesis on William Gilbert Patton and consider it worthy of acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.

Milton Ellis
I have read Mr. John L. Cutler's thesis on William Gilbert Patten and consider it worthy of acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.

Richard Q. Wood

James Monroe
WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN
1930
PREFACE

William Gilbert Patten is the last and greatest figure in the history of the dime novel. Representing, as he does, the transition of the dime novel writer to the field of the pulp paper magazines, he is the fitting climax to a period of prolific fictioneering unparalleled in the history of literature in any time or place. Of the school of fiction hacks who swamped the country with stories of wild adventure from the Civil War to the World War, not one stands on equal footing with the creator of Frank Merriwell. Judged by any standard he is easily the best, overshadowing such lofty figures as Edward Zane Carroll Judson and Colonel Prentiss Ingraham of Buffalo Bill fame.

As criteria for judgment we must select the standards of his school, the standards by which a dime novelist must sink or swim. Three indexes of greatness, to which all others may be reduced, are quality, quantity, and the reading audience commanded. Here Patten's pre-eminence becomes patent. Since the quality of his work will be discussed at length below, it is necessary merely to state that his saga of Frank Merriwell, book by book, has undergone republication biennially for
over thirty years, almost a unique achievement for a dime novelist, and one that testifies to his enduring merit. As for quantity, Patten need bow to no man. He is probably the most prolific writer of fiction the world has known. Forty million words stood to his credit late in 1932, a figure which no doubt has increased perceptibly since that time. His audience was, and is, legion. For twenty years he dominated the field of juvenile fiction. It is impossible to number the actual amount of readers, but the sale of the Merriwell stories—at least one hundred and thirty-five thousand weekly—far exceeded that of any other series.

A few years ago, under the caption, "Suggestion for a Biography," George Jean Nathan paid tribute to Patten's accomplishment, thus:

I doubt in all seriousness if there was an American writer of twenty-five and thirty years ago who was so widely known and so widely read by the boys of the time. His readers numbered millions, and included all sorts of young men, rich and poor. For one who read Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn," or "Tom Sawyer," there were ten thousand who read Standish's "Frank Merriwell's Dilemma, or the Rescue of Inza," and "Frank Merriwell at Yale, or Winning the Last Quarter Mile." For one who read Thomas Nelson Page's "Small Boys in Big Boots," or Judge Shute or Archibald Clavering Gunter—or even, for that matter, Horatio Alger, Oliver Optic

or Edward S. Ellis--there were five hundred who weekly followed with avidity the exploits of Standish's magnificent Franz........Surely, such a fellow is just as deserving of a biography as the department store owners, safety-razor manufacturers and ham actors whose lives currently line the library shelves. His influence on American young men was vastly greater than any of these, and the man himself, together with his story, is surely of considerably more interest. Standish was one of America's most peculiarly eminent practitioners of the art of fiction. His curious song deserves to be sung.

Patten, to be sure, led no dime novel existence like that of Judson or Ingraham, but his song is none the less curious. Up to the present his has been a story of ups and downs, of frustrations and triumphs, with an as yet unrealized dream. Furthermore, his life parallels with astonishing faithfulness the vicissitudes and fortunes of the dime novel. He is inextricably bound up in the history of the movement. When the house of Beadle collapsed late in the nineties, his fortunes collapsed with it; and when the five-cent weekly was erected on the ruins, Patten was largely responsible for its success. Again, at the decline of the latter Patten became a pioneer in the field of pulp paper magazines as the creator of Top-Notch. His relation to the history of the dime novel is symbiotic. That some knowledge of his career--a literary career in the truest sense of the word--is inevitably necessary to the student who
would understand properly the story of the dime novel, is the justification for the ensuing study.

A once enthusiastic reader of Patten's "Merriwell Saga," the writer has endeavored to present a picture of the man and his magnum opus; first, by describing the literary movement to which both belong; second, by offering a biographical study of the author; and third, by examining in some detail the work itself. In the preparation of Chapter 1, THE DIME NOVEL IN AMERICA, he has drawn freely on Edmund Pearson's monograph, Dime Novels, which contains liberal quotations from the Beadle publications and many elsewhere unobtainable details about the authors. In securing data for the biographical chapters, he has visited New York City for an interview with Mr. Patten, and the author's birth-place, Corinna, Maine.

The writer is indebted chiefly to Mr. Patten, who supplied much of the biographical material and willingly entered into correspondence about the work, and to Dr. Milton Ellis, without whose criticism and suggestions for organization this study could not have been brought to completion at the present time.
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Chapter 1

THE DIME NOVEL IN AMERICA, 1860-1925

In June, 1860, the dime novel suddenly appeared on the American scene with the publication by Erastus F. Beadle of Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter. This work initiated a type of literature, best described as romantic sensationalism, which flourished like a huge fungus for half a century and rotted speedily when its nutriment drained away. Out of its fragments was to spring another fungus which flourishes today under the name of pulp paper fiction.

The phenomenal growth and huge commercial success of the dime novel were the direct products of the tremendous social and economic forces at work in the America of the later nineteenth century. Its romantic content was similarly derived. The same decades that saw the rise to wealth and power of John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie saw the owners of the dime-novel factories become affluent. The same decades that saw a pioneer population acquire national character saw its exploits celebrated and its adventure-loving appetite fed by tons of cheap books, patriotic in content and emo-
tional in appeal. The success of the dime novel was a triumph of business enterprise. Its founder, Erastus F. Beadle, it is said, retired at the close of the century with a fortune of three million dollars, to be followed shortly after by his greatest competitor, George Munro, who had acquired ten millions. A less happy fate awaited most of the other publishers; for, as in all competitive businesses, the rule was "survival of the fittest," and the slogan, "let the devil take the hindmost."

The decline of the dime novel is as easily understandable as its rise. Unlike the oil and steel men, the dime novel moguls were not selling commodities; they were in the amusement game, like Barnum, catering not to a steady public need, but to a fickle public taste. Early in the present century that taste shifted rapidly to the offerings of the just-begun movie industry, which purveyed a more easily comprehended sensationalism, and had the added advantage of being a novelty. Faced by a descent as sudden as their rise, the more adaptable and far-sighted publishers in the field initiated the vogue of the pulp paper magazine, which addressed its appeal to a mature public. The amazing success of this venture is blatantly evident on every newsstand in the country.
Related to literature as jazz is to music or as billboard ads are to painting, the dime novel represents a vast undercurrent of subliterary fiction brought to an equally vast public by the methods of Big Business. It was read without difficulty; it required nothing like cogitation. It was simply felt. In its heyday it degenerated to the level of puerile readers for whom it symbolized adventure—adventure every week, and for only a dime. And yet this cheap amusement, masked in the guise of literature, was the only vehicle that celebrated on a grand scale the Winning of the West. Its writers, many of them never west of the Alleghanies, were the sole Homers of the first American event of epic proportions.

Amusing as this circumstance may appear to the ribald, and deplorable as it may seem to the serious, it remains, nevertheless, a fact, and serves as one of many reasons for regarding the dime novel as a social phenomenon and viewing it dispassionately. Facilitated by business enterprise and a wealth of raw material, the dime novel evolved through the eternal laws of supply and demand—the supply of ever more thrilling amusement at the demand of the juvenile American mind. Of doubtful value as a literary movement, its story, in its social significance, is a fascinating record of a
nineteenth century, one hundred per cent American pastime. As a type of fiction the dime novel existed in its germ some years before the appearance of Malaeska. In the early part of the century, James Fenimore-Cooper popularized the Indian and trapper in the "Leather-Stocking Tales," and the sea and Revolutionary period in The Pilot, thus opening the eyes of contemporary writers to the glorious possibilities of the American Frontier and American history as scenes for tales of romantic adventure. Among the immediate imitators of Cooper, two authors, Robert Montgomery Bird and William Gilmore Simms, are important forerunners of the dime novel.

A writer of Mexican romances and of novels of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Bird produced in 1837 a thrilling yarn, Nick of the Woods, a story of the Kentucky frontier in the 1780's. This work is, says Carl Van Doren, "a powerful and exciting tale......wherein he attempted to correct Cooper's heroic drawing of the Indian by presenting him as a fierce and filthy savage utterly undeserving of sentimental sympathy." As we shall see, both this conception of the Indian and its opposite play a role in the dime novel.

Writing in the fashion of Cooper, Simms, a native of South Carolina, produced a large number of historical and Indian romances. After completing a seven-volume epic of the Revolutionary period, he turned to the Frontier for inspiration and wrote a series of melodramatic tales greatly inferior to his earlier work. Carl Van Doren describes his *Border Beagles* (1840), *Beauchampe* (1842), and *Charlemont* (1856), as amazingly sensational—bloody and tearful and barbarously ornate." Continuing his description of Simms' work, the same critic writes:

The defect of Simms was that he relied too much upon one plot for each of his tales—a partizan and a loyalist contending for the hand of the same girl—and that he repeated certain stock scenes and personages again and again. His virtue was not only that he handled the actual warfare with interest and power but that he managed to multiply episodes with huge fecundity.

Here are all the tools of the dime novel maker: the cliché plot, stock scenes and characters, a sense of drama, and fertile imagination. Equipped with these, writers of far less talent and background than Simms's were able to produce the tons of "thrillers" that held the attention of young America for half a century. Contemporary with Simms lived and wrote Joseph Holt Ingraham, who possessed all the attributes of the dime novelist—even the deficiency in background.

2. Ibid., p. 64.
With the advent of Ingraham, the dime novel received its true character. To be sure, this prolific writer never was associated with the Beadle hacks; in fact, he died in 1860, the very year in which the dime novel first appeared. His early works, however, were "thrillers" of the first water, and in the 1870's were republished by Beadle in ten-cent lots. In their sensational incident, their swashbuckling style, and their strange blending of fact and fiction, they were true dime novels. The first was Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf, published by Harper and Brothers in 1835. Its loosely constructed plot is filled with exciting and romantic incident. As the story opens, Lafitte is planning to raid the treasure-house of a wealthy Spaniard of Jamaica. He really doesn't care for this type of work; he prefers to meet the enemy on equal terms on the high seas; but his covetous crew threatens to mutiny. During the raid he carries off a beautiful girl, Constanza, whom he regards throughout her captivity with a pure affection, even though "the curve of her shoulders is faultless, with lovely arms that would have haunted Cassanova in his dreams." Thrilling episodes follow. There are a storm at sea, a pursuit in a French frigate by Constanza's lover, Count D'Oyley, several naval encounters, and an

early climax in the escape of Constanza. The story then shifts abruptly to the events that lead to Lafitte's command of an American battery in the War of 1812—his temptation by the English, his mental travail, and his final decision that he is, first of all, an American. Besides its highly improbable incident, and its celebration of Lafitte as a patriotic gentleman, the story introduces three characters destined to play important roles in the dime novel: the swashbuckling Irishman, the stupid Dutchman, and the faithful negro servant, all of whom speak in dialect. Lafitte was followed in rapid succession by The Beautiful Cigar Vender, Moloch, the Money Lender, and some thirty others. Ingraham wrote of all places and all times in blood-and-thunder style. Eventually, he gave up this pursuit, became a clergyman, and produced his famous novel, The Prince of the House of David (1855). Though a more legitimate literary endeavor than his earlier work, The Prince had popularizing qualities which made it one of the best sellers of its day.

Edward Zane Carroll Judson, an imitator of Ingraham, is a transition figure, who, writing before its inception, lived well into the dime novel period. Under the pseudonym of 'Ned Buntline' he produced novel after novel of the sea, the Indian, and the Far West. His career was
as improbable and exciting as his wildest novels. As a boy he ran away to sea, received a midshipman's license, and fought seven duels with his messmates. In 1844 he returned to dry land to edit a magazine, *Ned Buntline's Own*, deserting the publication in 1858 after killing a man whom he had accused of graft. In the Civil War he received twenty wounds; then, after a trip west, where he met William F. Cody and induced him to come east, he settled down to the profession of a dime novelist, deriving, according to hearsay, twenty thousand dollars annually from his writing.

Judson was far more prolific than his master, Ingraham. He produced, in all, about one hundred novels, most of which were published by Beadle as dime novels in the period from 1870 to 1886, the year of the author's death. His stories were hastily written and poorly constructed; and his prose was far inferior to Ingraham's; but he told exciting yarns about strange places. To these facts must his popularity be attributed. Two brief examples will suffice to show how far prose degenerated in the years between 1835 and 1870. Here are the opening lines from *Lafitte*:

1. For a biographical sketch of Judson, see, Pearson, Edmund, *Dime Novels*, p. 113.
In one of the romantic bays with which the southern shore of the island of Jamaica is indented, and on one of the rich autumn evenings peculiar to the tropic seas, a long, low black schooner, very sharp in the bows, with all her light sails drawing freely, and a red and blue signal fluttering aloft, might have been seen bowling merrily over the miniature waves of the bay, which glittered in the sunlight as if overlaid with gold.

In the same informative and somewhat pretentious spirit, Judson began his Red Ralph, the Ranger; but owing to his ignorance of some elementary principles of grammar, his efforts lack the desired dignity of Ingraham. He succeeded notably, however, in conveying information, thus:

It was a beautiful place, that of Edgar Rolfe, situated upon the banks of the James river, chosen by his father, when hand in hand he roamed through the forest with the noble-hearted and queenly Pocahontas, whom he married, and who died but too soon after she gave birth to her only son—died a stranger in a foreign land, but not unwept did she perish.

With the emergence of such fertile fictioneers as Ingraham and Judson, there was lacking only a man of sufficient business enterprise to turn their wares to account. And indeed, a decade before Beadle began to publish dime novels, some effort was made in that direction. In 1851 Robert Bonner bought the New York Ledger.

1. Pearson, Edmund, Dime Novels, p. 115. This work is also the source of the succeeding excerpts from dime novels quoted in this paper.
and filled its pages with the sensational stories of these precursors. Shortly after, in 1855, the publishing firm of Street and Smith entered the field with the \textit{New York Weekly}. Aside from these two, there was no other purveyor of native romance at a small price. Most of the fiction of the day was published in book form, the prices ranging from a dollar to a dollar and a half for each. The chief literary periodicals, toward 1860, were publishing the novels of Hawthorne and the English Victorians—stuff too "highbrow" for a large reading public accustomed, for a generation, to tales of external and romantic adventure. The time and place were ripe for the appearance of a publisher who could supply cheaply priced fiction on a large scale. They conspired to find the man, Erastus F. Beadle.

Erastus F. Beadle was born in the village of Piers-town, Otsego county, New York, on September 11, 1821. Four generations of Beadles had lived in Salem, Massachusetts, and had fought in the Revolutionary and French and Indian wars. The grandfather of Erastus removed to New York in 1796. His son, Flavel, the father of Erastus,

\footnote{1. For a biographical sketch of Beadle, see \textit{The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels}, a catalogue of the novels presented to New York Public Library by Dr. F. P. O'Brien.}
married Polly Tuller of Massachusetts, and in 1833 took his family west to Michigan Territory. Pioneering, however, was not to his taste, and two years later he returned to New York, settling again in Pierstown. Young Erastus became the apprentice of a miller, and in this capacity laid the foundation of his future career as a printer and publisher. One of his tasks was the labeling of bags of grain. For this job he devised a set of crude block letters cut out of wood. In a short time he had developed a thrifty little business of labeling. He gave up the project in order to work in the printing shop of Elihu Phinney, of Cooperstown, moving to Buffalo in 1847 to set up a business of his own. In a few years he was well established, and was issuing two magazines, The Youth's Casket, and The Home Monthly. His brother, Irwin, a journalist, was prospering moderately at the time by the sale of ballads and songs on penny sheets. In 1856 Erastus conceived the idea of selling a collection of songs for a dime. With Irwin, he published the Dime Song Book, that year. The immediate success that rewarded their effort gave Erastus a second brilliant idea. He would publish dime books.

Buffalo, he decided, was too small a town for such a venture. Accordingly, he removed to New York City in
1858, and founded Beadle and Company, the concern which was to publish for forty years a popular literature unexcelled in quantity in any other period of history. The firm specialized in dime publications. There were joke books, song books, almanacs, letter writers, books of fun, and a series called "Lives of Great Americans," besides a few magazines. The personnel consisted of Erastus and Irwin Beadle, Robert Adams, a business associate, and Orville J. Victor, the editor of the dime novel department. The "General Agents," Ross and Tousey, left the firm in 1864 to found the American News Company, which distributed the Beadle books.

Beadle's purpose, of course, was to make money. He did. He retired in the nineties with a fortune of three millions, derived from the sale of sensationalism. He was not devoid of conscience and ideals, however, and he had worthy intentions. He was greatly impressed with the vastness of America, her past history, and the epic struggle going on in the Far West. It was his intention to celebrate his country in the dime novel; and to this end, he demanded from his authors stories that were national in character, and American in setting. In 1884

1. For a complete list of Beadle and Company's publications, see The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels.
he stated to the New York correspondent of the Boston Evening Transcript:

"Every one was publishing books with thick paper and wide margins—trying to see how little they could give their readers for a dollar or a dollar and a half.......Well, I took the other tack, and thought I would see how much I could give for ten cents; cash sales, no credit. Every one said the project would fail, but it didn't."

Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter, Number One of "Beadle's Dime Novels," bore witness to the publisher's good faith. It appeared in June, 1860, a small book of 128 pages, measuring four by six inches. The cover was salmon colored, and bore a picture of Malaeska attired in native costume—-the first of the so-called "yellow-backed Beadles." The author, Anne Sophia Winterbotham Stephens, was a woman of some culture and education. After serving on the Portland Magazine for some years, she removed to New York and later traveled abroad. She was known to, and respected by, Dickens, Thackeray, and Hawthorne. Malaeska was first published as a prize story in a New York Magazine, The Ladies Companion. Greatly impressed at a reading, Beadle decided to use it as the first story in the new venture. He paid two hundred and fifty dollars for rights of publication. These facts, the recognized author, the amount

1. Dime Novels, p. 98.
paid for the story, and the conservative magazine from the pages of which it was taken, indicate that he intended to offer respectable fiction to his readers.

**Malaeska** is stirring and exciting, even sensational in spots; but it is by no means cheaply lurid in the sense that the later dime novel was. Following in the tradition of Cooper, it deals with the "noble savage." The scene is the valley of the Hudson in the eighteenth century. Nothing about the opening lines suggests the dime novel. On the contrary, one is reminded of *Rip Van Winkle*:

> The traveler who has stopped at Catskill, on his way up the Hudson, will remember that a creek of no insignificant breadth washes one side of the village.

The story concerns the trials and tribulations of William Danforth and his Indian bride, Malaeska. Their marriage antagonizes both whites and Indians, with the result that skirmishes are fought continually. In one of these battles Danforth receives his death wound, and there follows a heart-rending scene in which he reproaches himself for not acquainting his wife with the white man's god. He dies in great agony after telling Malaeska to take their little baby to his mother and father at the settlement. Cast out by the cruel parents, Malaeska returns to the forest, where she rejects a formal proposal

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1. *Dime Novels*, p. 3.
of marriage made by a great chief:

"Malaeska, my wigwam is empty; will you go back?"

But her thoughts are all for Danforth, whom she pictures as living in the Happy Hunting Grounds. She points overhead:

"He is yonder, in the great hunting-ground, waiting for Malaeska to come. Could she go blushing from another chief's wigwam?"

The tale ends in tragedy with the death of Malaeska and her baby. Some characteristics of the book were to be used again and again in the later dime novels: the noble savage, the innumerable fights, and the perfervid oratory. Its diction, too, was freely imitated: for example, "One more redskin bit the dust," and "Touch but a hair of her head, and by the Lord that made me, I will bespatter your brains on yonder tree!"

Malaeska was an immediate success. Gratified, Beadle decided to publish a dime novel every two weeks. In a year's time he was producing one each week. The books that followed were of the same romantic and adventurous type. Stories of cruises and privateering, of the Revolutionary and French and Indian Wars, of colonial times, and of Indians poured from the presses in rapid

succession. They were by no means hack work. To be sure, the sensational bits grew more and more prominent, and characterization was never stressed; but they were grammatical, and showed evidence of careful construction. The locale was American, whether on land or sea; and the hero was a young man of whom America could be proud. Patriotism and poetic justice received great emphasis; the wages of sin and of virtue were always paid in full.

Even more emphasis was placed on propriety. The early stories were almost indecently moral. The characters were incapable of harboring an impure thought, and so were the authors. The finicky "limb," for example, was frequently employed as a euphemism for "leg." Descriptions of feminine pulchritude began with the hair, descended lingeringly to the neck, and then made a long jump to a "pair of tiny feet." There was nothing for publication in between. The hero never smoked, chewed, cursed, or drank, and often his cheek was virgin of that sullying instrument, the razor. As for the Indian, wicked he might be, but sinister thoughts of sex never entered his head. Pearson offers some interesting comments on the high morality of the red men:

1. Dime Novels, p. 37.
Their maiden captives might be in deadly peril of their lives; they might even have to undergo the torture of the blazing pine splinters; they might be scalped or burned at the stake—but their honor was as safe as if they were in a convent. The Indians were, all of them, gentlemen. A thousand paleface damsels were captured by redskinned warriors during the progress of the dime novel, and some of them may have suffered death or grievous torment. But not one of them, Heaven be praised, ever came through the experience otherwise than as virgo intacta.

By far the most famous and widely read novel of this early period was Edward S. Ellis' Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier. After being cleverly advertised by posters and placards, the story was distributed on October 1, 1860. The scene is western New York soon after the Revolutionary War. Seth, a war scout, appears suddenly from the wilds of New Hampshire and warns Alfred Haverland that his family is in danger of attack by some dastardly Mohawks. Many adventures follow. One by one the members of the household are captured by the Indians, and rescued in the same progression by Seth. A brief quotation will serve to illustrate the author's highly compressed narrative style. Haverland's daughter, Ina, has left the party in a boat, and has stepped ashore for exercise:

"Ina! Ina! what do you mean?" asked her father sternly.

1. Dime Novels, p. 36.
"Oh, nothing; only I want to take a little run to ease my limbs."
"Come back here instantly!"
"Yes—oh, father! quick! quick! come take me!"
"Seize the oar and shove out!" commanded Seth, springing into the water and shoving the boat off.
"But, for God's sake, my child!"
"You can't help her—the Injins have got her. I see 'em; drop quick, they're goin' to fire! look out!"

With a great display of woodcraft, Seth trails the Indians and rescues the girl. Throughout the story he talks a "hickish" and eccentric dialect in a high, squeaky voice. At the last, he unmaskes as Eugene Morton, erstwhile lover of Haverland's sister, Mary. He now speaks flawless English in a deep bass. Reported as killed in the war, he had heard a rumor that Mary was about to marry another man—hence his disguise. The pretext was flimsy, of course, but it made possible a surprise ending—later a favorite device with the authors. In novel after novel the clown, the dude, or the stupid stranger distinguished himself and then unmasked as Captain Percy Cholmondelay of the Royal Artillery, or some other equally illustrious figure.

Seth Jones, alone, went far toward making Beadle's fortune. The manuscript cost the publisher only seventy-five dollars, and from it some 600,000 copies were printed and sold. The story has been translated into several foreign languages. It was republished in English as late
as 1907. Ellis, the author, was nineteen when he wrote it. He became a prolific dime novelist, producing dozens of similar yarns. He had, however, a bent for history, as his titles demonstrate: Life of Pontiac, Life and Times of Boone, Marion's Men, and Life of Tecumseh. In his later years—he died in 1916—he broke away altogether and turned to history and biography, winning a respectable place in those fields. Among his best works are a history of the United States, and biography of Thomas Jefferson. He was one of the few dime novelists to attain the distinction of a place in Who's Who in America.

Anne Stephens and Edward S. Ellis are fair representatives of the early dime novel. They maintained to the highest degree the standard Beadle had set. The contumely which the later dime book earned was lacking in the early years. For the most part the reception was favorable. In 1864, William Everett pronounced them "exceptionally moral," saying that they "do not even obscurely pander to vice or excite passions." Indeed, they could not well be otherwise than "exceptionally moral," so long as the authors observed the various regulations and prohibitions sent to them in circular

1. A nearly complete list of Ellis's dime novels is given in The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels.
form. The Beadle literary standard left no loop-holes to potential purveyors of vice. The circular follows in part:

Authors who write for our consideration will bear in mind that
We prohibit all things offensive to good taste, in expression or incident--
We prohibit subjects or characters that carry an immoral taint--
We prohibit the repetition of any occurrence, which, though true, is yet better untold--
We prohibit what cannot be read with satisfaction by every right-minded person--old and young alike--

Success, as hinted above, was immediate. Good selection, wide appeal, and cheapness of price made it inevitable. Young and old, alike, gobbled up the novels as fast as they poured from the printing shop. The standing order of the American News Company was for sixty thousand copies weekly. The Civil War aided the sales tremendously. Bales of the stories were shipped to the military camps each week, and were read to tatters by the romance-loving soldiers. When the lines fronted one another on the eve of battle, the Union and Confederate picketmen—tradition has it—swapped the books in friendly fashion. In 1861 Beadle achieved something like fame with the publication, in a twenty-cent edition,

1. See the Introduction to The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels.
of Mrs. Orville Victor's Maum Guinea and her Plantation Children; or, Holiday Week on a Louisiana Estate. Both President Lincoln and Henry Ward Beecher, it is said, praised the work as being second only to Uncle Tom's Cabin in influencing anti-slavery feeling.

Encouraged by success, the astute publisher opened a London office in 1862, with the intention of flooding England with the rising tide. The books were printed from the American plates and covered abroad. There they became popular enough to earn the names, "shilling shocker" and "penny dreadful."

By 1863 five million dime novels had been sold, and competition became inevitable. In rapid succession rival companies sprang into being. The "Ten Cent Novelettes" of Elliot, Thomes, and Thompson, a Boston company, appeared in 1863. Four years later Robert Dewitt of New York brought out "Dewitt's Ten Cent Romances," imitating the Beadle novels even to the orange covers. The greatest rival, however, was George P. Munro, a former employee of Beadle and Company. In 1866, Munro left his sixteen-dollar-a-week job as a wrapper of bundles, and, joined with Irwin Beadle, who had been pushed out of the original concern for drunkenness, began to issue "New Dime

1. Mrs. Victor was the wife of Orville J. Victor, Beadle's editor.
Novels" with Irwin's name on the covers. When Erastus stopped this action by injunction, he published "Munro's Ten Cent Novels." The sequel to this affair might well be entitled *Cutthroat Competition; or, The Biter Bit*; for George's own brother, Norman Munro, soon established another dime novel factory and became a serious competitor. Street and Smith of New York had been in the game of cheap fiction since 1855 with the *New York Weekly*. Later this firm was to be the leader in the field; but for thirty years the fight for supremacy was between Beadle and the Munro brothers.

With the entrance of new blood the dime novel swung into its great period of sensationalism, the era of the prolific hacks. The fiction degenerated almost overnight. The Munros went in for material of a blood-and-thunder type that made the previous novels tame by comparison. Beadle countered by "killing a few more Indians," and by resurrecting the lurid tales of Joseph Holt Ingraham. In addition, he created new series. The "Pocket Novels" appeared in 1869, followed by the "Boy's Library of Sport and Adventure," the "American Tales," and "Frank Starr's American Novels." This last was a blind. Having no outward connection with Beadle, it was published under the address of 41 Platt Street. Forty-one Platt Street, however, was the side entrance to Beadle and Company's pub-
lishing house on William Street; and Frank Starr was Beadle's foreman printer.

The first great trend of the overwhelming amount of fiction that now appeared was toward the Frontier, the wild regions of the West and Southwest. Famous public figures such as "Buffalo Bill" (William F. Cody), "Texas Jack" (J. B. Omohundro), and "Wild Bill" Hickok were celebrated by the hacks. Story after story appeared about each man—blends of factual biography and pure fiction. Cody and Omohundro were introduced to the dime novel public by Edward Zane Carroll Judson; but their most prolific biographer was Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, the adventurous son of Joseph Holt Ingraham. In the more quiet moments of his eventful life, the colonel produced over six hundred "Buffalo Bill" stories, as well as numerous plays and short sketches. Like Judson, he led a dime novel existence. He fought in the Civil War for the Confederacy, and then under Juarez in Mexico. In 1866 he took part, briefly, in the Austrian war with Prussia, and the Turko-Cretan struggle. After becoming embroiled in several squabbles in Asia and Africa, he returned to enter the Cuban war for independence.

1. For an excellent biographical sketch of Colonel Ingraham, see "Dime Novel Days" by Gilbert Patten, in the Saturday Evening Post, March 7, 1931.
On his native soil once more, he went west to look the ground over and meet some of the famous plainsmen. Finally, he began to exercise his pen in behalf of Beadle. When pressed for time, he was a speedy performer. On one occasion he wrote a 30,000 word novel in twenty-four hours. His stories were "written away" from an "opening situation" of his own invention. "Crack! Crack! Crack! Three more redskins bit the dust!" Once he had put these words on paper, he had no difficulty in finishing the story.

Colonel Ingraham was by no means the only speed artist of the Beadle establishment. Judson himself once wrote a six-hundred page book in sixty-two hours. In the heydey of the era, when the machinery was running smoothly, Beadle kept many of his hacks in a large room just above the printing shop. Page by page, as the authors wrote, the material was set up in type and placed in the presses. All of these men were capable of producing fifty to seventy thousand words weekly—the average gait in long-hand. With the advent of the typewriter they improved rapidly. Their achievements, judging by quantity, give a decidedly amateurish tinge to the highly-touted prolixity of Anthony Trollope.

Along with the welter of hastily written fiction they produced, many of the writers adopted pseudonyms.
Thomas Chalmers Harbaugh, author of many western stories, signed himself, 'Captain Howard Holmes.' Two other westerners, Arthur Grissom and John H. Whitson, liked, respectively, 'Albert Cecil Gaines' and 'Lieutenant A. K. Sims.' Colonel Ingraham had three gorgeous pen names: 'Dr. Noel Dunbar,' 'Colonel Leon Lafitte,' and 'Major Dangerfield Burr.' The names were often adopted to conceal the identity of the author, or to protect him from the charge of writing hasty, hence careless, work. Some of them were owned by the publishers, who used them in various series. Protected in this fashion, a long string of stories could be continued for years without detection of substitute hacks.

As the sensational content of the novels increased, one of the early traditions vanished. The hero needed no longer be a paragon of all the manly virtues. He could smoke and chew, if he so desired; and he even drank on occasion. He was no longer necessarily a law-abiding citizen. He preserved to the end, however, a high standard of sexual morality. Even so abandoned a scoundrel as Jesse James, a popular dime novel figure later on, treated the ladies with strict propriety. The heroes of Major Sam S. Hall, a writer of westerns, indulged freely in tobacco and alcohol, commenting on
the process in a rich dialect. Here is a typical passage from Hall's *Giant George, the Ang'lar of the Range,* 1
A Tale of Sardine-Box City, Arizona:

Hoop-la! Set 'em up! Sling out yer p'ison before I stampede through yer hull business! I'm ther Bald-headed Eagle o' ther Rockies, an' are a-huntin' sum galoot what's got ther sand ter stomp on my tailfeathers. Shove out a bar'l of bug-juice afore I bu'st up yer shebang; fer my feed-trough are chuck full o' cobwebs, an' as dusty as Chalk Canyon. Hoop-la!

The deep purple style of the hacks manifested itself in the titles of their stories. Number Five of Beadle's original "Dime Novels," *The Golden Belt; or, The Carib's Pledge,* had determined that the form was to be double, with its parts separated by a semicolon and a comma. Its alliterative possibilities did not escape the sensationalists. Major Hall produced two beauties in *Double Dan, the Dastard; or, The Pirates of the Pecos,* and *Ker-whoop! Ker-who!; or, The Tarantula of Taos.* Equally worthy titles followed, and the form reached its peak both in length and sheer felicity of expression with William Eyster's *Belshazzar Brick, the Bailiff of Blue Blazes; or, Four Horse Frank's Frolic at Bad Luck Bar.*

The seventies passed with the promiscuous and wholesale slaughter of Indians and bison, and with blood gushing as liberally as the oil wells of Rockefeller. As the decade closed, the dime novel world was enlivened by a great fiction war among the six-cent weeklies. A host of these magazines had sprung into existence side by side with the various ten-cent series. Besides Bonner's New York Ledger and Street and Smith's New York Weekly mentioned above, there were James Elverson's Saturday Night, a Philadelphia publication, George Munro's Fireside Companion, Norman Munro's Family Story Paper, and Beadle and Adams' Saturday Star Journal. Rivalry, at first keen, grew bitter. Irritated at the decline in circulation of the New York Weekly, Street and Smith attempted to corner the market of cheap fiction. The action ended in ludicrous failure. Gilbert Patten describes it, thus:

They began their campaign by putting some of the leading writers for the weeklies, including 'Ned Buntline,' under contract to write for them exclusively. Other well-known authors in the field were notified that Street and Smith would

1. On the death of Robert Adams in 1866 Beadle took the former's brothers, William and David Adams, into the firm, changing the name from Beadle and Company to Beadle and Adams.
2. "Dime Novel Days" by Gilbert Patten, Saturday Evening Post, Feb. 28, 1931, p. 129.
buy their entire output at top rates. What followed might have been expected. Seizing the truly golden opportunity, the fiction hackers plied their pens with frenzied vigor, and stories rolled in upon Street and Smith in a flood.

So inundating was the flood that the firm's editorial staff was insufficient to meet the emergency. In some cases, it is said, where the manuscripts bore the names of writers of recognized ability to satisfy their clientele, the overworked and wearied editors accepted and paid for them with no more than a cursory inspection. Later much of this pig in a poke was found to be of such poor quality that it could not be peddled out for consumption.

The other six-cent weeklies went merrily onwards. The great "flood" hadn't even begun to exhaust the fertility of the writers.

By 1880, public interest in the western fiction was beginning to wane. The American youth, to whom for ten years this swashbuckling sensationalism had been mainly addressed, was beginning to center his imagination on the great city, the metropolis. The urbanization of the country that followed the Civil War and paralleled the rise of industrialism, paved the way for stories of city adventure. Accordingly, the publishers developed a second major field in detective fiction. Through the eighties the stream of westerns kept on flowing, most notably in Edward L. Wheeler's "Deadwood Dick" stories, which appeared in "Beadle's Pocket Library." The detectives, however, were more popular.
Norman Munro was largely responsible for the success of the detective fiction, with the publication of the "Old Cap Collier Library." This series had its inception in an actual murder mystery. On August 6, 1881, the population of New Haven, Connecticut, was horrified at the discovery of the drowned body of Jennie E. Cramer, a local girl who had disappeared from her home some days earlier. The case was never solved, and hence received great publicity. In 1883 Norman Munro achieved a tremendous success with the story, Old Cap Collier; or, 'Piping' the New Haven Mystery. Others followed in rapid succession, the series numbering over seven hundred titles at its conclusion in 1898. The author of the first story is unknown, the titles being accredited from the start to W. I. James, a pseudonym owned by the Munro firm. Old Cap was a favorite from the first. Though he had none of the finesse of Sherlock Holmes or Monsieur Lecoq, he epitomized the young boy's idea of a great detective. He possessed miraculous strength, changed his identity like a chameleon, and always "got his man." In the New Haven Mystery, for example, he hurled twenty-one men through the air on various occasions, was shot at twelve times, was blown up once, was buried alive once, fought five men at once seven
times, and adopted eighteen disguises. Coincidence aided him considerably in the solution of crimes. The villain usually boasted sneeringly of his misdemeanors, and Old Cap "just happened" to overhear him.

Almost equally famous was the "Old Sleuth Library," published by George Munro, the erstwhile employee of Beadle. The creator of Old Sleuth was Harlan P. Halsey, one-time head of the Brooklyn Board of Education. Starting in 1872, his stories appeared spasmodically in the six-cent weekly, *Fireside Companion*. In the eighties and nineties they jumped into prominence along with "Old Cap Collier," and attained the dignity of being published separately as a "Library." Old Sleuth was much like Old Cap, not so strong, perhaps, and a little more brainy. Much of the popularity of the series was owing to the author's liberal use of Bowery and underworld slang.

*Old Electricity; The Lightning Detective*, published in the "Old Sleuth" series in 1885, opens in intriguing style:

"Don't wink your peepers, Larry."
"What's up, cull?"
"That's what's up. Keep your eyelids raised for strangers."

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"Oh, stash it! and throw in your light, chummie. What's the 'peep' now?"
"Things are 'clouding.' Old Electricity is mousing around."
"The devil you say! Do you suppose he's piping on this 'lay' in hand?"
"Yes, blast his buttons; he's worse than forked lightning. Just when you think your 'layout' is all right, he's sure to 'flash his glim' in on you."

In an attempt to capitalize on the fame of Old Sleuth, Beadle and Adams pirated the title and issued a series of their own. Munro promptly sued them, carrying the case to the Supreme Court of the County of New York. The verdict, given in 1889, decided that Old Sleuth was his exclusive property.

In order to meet the competition of the Munro brothers, the house of Beadle countered with two new characters: "Broadway Billy," a detective, and "Jack Harkaway," a dare-devil schoolboy. The latter, who appeared in a long series, enjoyed a long period of popularity. He was the creation of Bracebridge Hemyng, a competent English author, imported to write exclusively for Beadle and Adams. The early stories, written in England, were reprinted in New York, where the author continued the series. Jack was an entirely new character to the dime novel public—a combination Tom Jones and D'Artagnan. He traveled all over Europe rescuing beautiful girls and fighting duels on the field of honor, and then came
to America with his creator to become embroiled in a number of battles with the Indians.

The nineties were a period of upheaval in the dime novel world. The houses of Munro and Beadle declined rapidly, and the dime novel proper went out of existence. Henceforth, the youth of the country were to be entertained not by "dime novels" but by the "nickul libruries," 1 as Irvin S. Cobb phrased it. Under the fierce competition of the eighties the price had been almost universally reduced by the publishers. The fiction no longer appeared in the little booklets of the early days, but in a much cheaper and larger pulp paper edition. And simultaneously with their appearance in cheapened form, the stories underwent a moral transformation.

In 1892 Erastus Beadle retired to Cooperstown, New York, to spend the remaining two years of his life in affluence. Now managed by William Adams, the firm of Beadle and Adams shot its last bolts in the "Broadway Billy" and "Jack Harkaway" stories. It was no go. In 1898, after thirty-eight years of constant publishing, the company tottered into the hands of M. J. Ivers and Company, who let it lapse into oblivion after three more

unsuccessful years. George Munro retired soon after Beadle with the fortune he had acquired from the sales of "Old Sleuth" stories. Norman Munro survived the nineties chiefly with his sensational six-cent weekly, *Golden Hours*, but dropped into the discard some time before 1910.

The Big Three were Frank Tousey, the firm of Street and Smith, and Frank A. Munsey. The highly popular nickel libraries of the former two were responsible for the collapse of Beadle and Adams, and Munro.


In nearly every one of these series the hero returned to virtue. Resuming his earlier standard of morality, he could no longer touch tobacco and alcohol. Street and Smith's Nick Carter, the famous detective, was notoriously ascetic. Perhaps his abstinence accounted for his mental acumen—he was far brainier than Old Cap and Old Sleuth, who smoked, drank, and even gambled—though
it is doubtful. At least, one of the many authors of the series, Eugene Sawyer, acknowledged that he had drawn freely on Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq. So vastly popular was Nick that the series numbered over a thousand titles. These stories, from 1910 on, have undergone constant reprints in a fifteen-cent, paperbound edition. This fiction was hacked out at a tremendous rate. Its most prolific author, Frederick "Van Rensselær" "Marmaduke" Dey, once produced three of the novels in a single week—seventy-five thousand words. Questioned as to his method of plotting, he replied, "I go ahead and get myself into the most impossible snarl I can; and then I get out of it."

The detective figured again in Tousey's "Secret Service." This series featured Old King Brady and Young King Brady, two feeble imitations of Nick Carter. The authorship is uncertain, though accredited to Francis Doughty, an archaeologist. According to the

2. Street and Smith's "New Magnet Library," in print today, contains 1117 "Nick Carter" novels.
title pages they were written "by a New York detective." The Bradys solved their cases together, usually in the sinister Chinatown of New York and San Francisco. Love interest was supplied in Alice, their female helpmeet, whom Young King Brady regarded with a pure affection. Week after week, in the writer's recollection, the ardent young detective importuned her to marry him, but she kept putting him off. So far as the writer can determine, this "courtly love" situation first entered dime novel fiction with Edward L. Wheeler's "Deadwood Dick" stories, published in Beadle's "Pocket Library" in 1884. Deadwood Dick was similarly unhappy. Calamity Jane was deaf to all his proposals, though she stuck by him throughout the whole of his bloodcurdling adventures.

Frank Tousey's "Wild West Weekly," a "Library" published from 1895 to 1925, continued this tradition. The protagonist, Young Wild West, was a curly headed youth of twenty, slim and graceful, with cheek virgin of the razor. Despite his effeminate appearance he was manly—a dead-ly shot with the rifle, and a splendid rider both of horses and buffaloes. His companion was Arietta, a girl with a penchant for getting herself captured by Indians or dastardly renegades. Young Wild West spent all his time rescuing her, but he never received so much as a
kiss. These stories were traditional in their openings. Many of them, the writer recalls, began with, "Crang! Young Wild West's Winchester spoke, and another redskin bit the dust." This was about 1920. Fifty years had not served to change the opening materially from In-1 graham's.

The late nineties and early 1900's saw the rise of a new type of fiction. Developments in the fields of science and invention had begun to stimulate the popular imagination some years before—chiefly through the fertile pen of Jules Verne. The French author's stories of remarkable adventure—in balloons, in submarines, and even on comets—found an eager American public. Interest was also raised to fever pitch by the publicity accorded to such "electrical wizards" as Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla. The impact was felt in the dime-novel world almost immediately. Shortly after 1895 a huge stream of pseudo-scientific fiction appeared in Norman Munro's six-cent weekly, Golden Hours. The stories dealt in the main with electrical marvels: "gravity nullifiers," electrical airplanes, and vehicles for interplanetary travel. Tousey continued the type in the "Frank Reade Weekly," celebrating the youthful Frank Reade as a super-Edison.

1. See p. 24, above.
Despite the addition of "science," this fiction remained true to the dime-novel genre--sensational and romantic adventure. The opening chapters of a story usually described the hero in the process of inventing a marvelous whatnot. The whatnot soon got him into trouble. Perhaps he had to protect it from dastardly thieves until it was safely patented; or perhaps he got in it or on it, or put it in his pocket or a freight car, and went to the Antipodes, where, after many narrow escapes from death, he triumphed through its agency. If the whatnot was too revolutionary in its nature--a gravity nullifier or a death ray, for example--the author disposed of it by exploding it or sinking it beyond recovery in ocean depths. Safe and sound, the optimistic hero, if he appeared in a series, foolishly began on a second whatnot. But that was another story.

By all odds the most popular figure in this twilight period of the dime novel was Frank Merriwell, the protagonist of Street and Smith's "Tip Top Weekly." Frank was almost entirely a new character to the dime-novel public--the ideal school and college athlete. The creation of Gilbert Patten, he was introduced to his readers on April 18, 1896, and reappeared every week until 1916, giving way at last to the rising movie industry. This series was the bonanza that the dime novel publishers
dreamed about and seldom saw. A "sell-out" from the first, it earned, with the passing years, a huge fortune for Street and Smith. The publishers never disclosed the actual sales figures, but Patten, the author, estimates that at least 200,000 copies were distributed each week until the latter years, when the movie at last captivated the readers of the nickel libraries.

The years from 1910 to 1925 saw a rapid and relentless decline. The seed of success, sown in the 1870's, proved also to be the germ of destruction. That early decade had determined that the dime novel was to be an amusement appealing primarily to young readers. On that basis its structure had been erected. And there was needed only a more thrilling and equally inexpensive amusement to topple it over. The movies offered just such entertainment, even to the fatal similarity of price—five cents. The inevitable result was the flow of the American boy's pocket-money into the box-offices of the movie houses.

Frank A. Munsey and Street and Smith survived the catastrophe by developing an entirely new field—pulp paper fiction for mature readers. Late in the nineties Munsey had converted his juvenile weekly, *Golden Argosy*, into a story paper for adults. Street and Smith countered
with the Popular Magazine, similarly designed, publishing the early work of Herbert George Wells and H. Rider Haggard. When the circulation of the nickel libraries fell off, these adaptable publishers concentrated on their new venture—and became, eventually, the owners of the most prosperous pulp paper establishments in the United States. The Tousey fiction factory was less fortunate. One by one, its nickel libraries went out of existence. On Frank Tousey's death in 1915, his widow, Rosalie Tousey, continued with only two of the old weeklies, "Secret Service," and "Wild West," with the price raised to seven cents. These two, the sole representatives of the once huge number of dime novel publications, went out of existence in 1925, when Street and Smith bought the copyrights and titles from Mrs. Tousey.

Of the original dime novel fiction there survive today Street and Smith's huge libraries of paper-bound fifteen-cent books, among them the "Nick Carter Series," the "Buffalo Bill Series," and the "Merriwell Series." These libraries are reissued whenever the supply on hand becomes low. So far as the writer can determine, the only original fiction being published today which can truly be said to belong to the dime novel genre, appears in Amazing Stories and Science Wonder Stories, the
twenty-five cent pulp paper magazines initiated by Hugo Gernsback in 1925. The stories in these publications are in the same pseudo-scientific vein as those of the late nineties. They reflect, of course, more recent developments in science, carrying them to lurid conclusions. Einstein has unwittingly fathered a host of stories of space-time travel, and various atomic theories find expression here in the exploration of atomic solar systems and molecular universes. This type of fiction will undoubtedly die, when, in the future, the ever romantic movie begins to celebrate the Machine Age in its customary "colossal" manner.
Chapter II

LIFE OF WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN
MAINE, 1866-1891

William Gilbert Patten, or Gilbert Patten, as he prefers to style himself, was born in Corinna, Maine, on October 25, 1866, the son of William Clark Patten, a moderately successful farmer. Of his ancestry he possesses no authentic information, but adduces a sketchy legend:

Three brothers came from Scotland to America in early Colonial days, one settling on the Penobscot, one on the Kennebec, the third going out into the world and disappearing.

This statement tallies on the whole with the history of the Patten family as given in the Genealogical and Family History of the State of Maine. The Pattens, it appears, migrated from Essex County, England, to Scotland in the sixteenth century. In 1630 some of their

1. The source of the following biographical statements, unless otherwise acknowledged, is the writer's interview with Gilbert Patten in March, 1932.
2. In a letter to the writer, November 25, 1932.
descendants crossed to Ireland, whence, two generations later, Hector Patten proceeded to America with his three sons, John, William, and Matthew. Soon after his arrival in Boston in 1727, he removed his family to Maine, settling on the site of Saco, in view of Merry-meeting Bay. The record traces only the descendants of John, Hector's oldest son, with whom it is clear that Gilbert Patten has no connection. It is probable that the author is descended from either William or Matthew, whose family histories are not given.

Of his immediate ancestry, Mr. Patten recalls that his paternal grandparents were Matthew and Martha Patten, who settled in Newport, Maine, but he is unable to relate any circumstances of their lives. Equally bare is his account of his maternal grandparents, John and Betsey Simpson. John Simpson, he recalls, was a sea-captain of Searsport. Married some time before 1824, the year of their son's birth, Matthew and Martha Patten settled in Newport, living there for the remainder of their lives, probably on a small farm. John and

1. Mr. Patten was able to give only this sketchy information in a letter to the writer, April 30, 1933.
2. Federal census reports for Newport, 1870, list a Matthew and a Mary C. Patten, aged 78 and 73, respectively, living on a small farm. The "Mary C." denotes either a second wife, a mistake on the part of the census taker, or an error of Mr. Patten's memory which supplied "Martha."
Betsey Simpson, it seems likely, lived in Searsport during their youth and middle age. Their daughter, Cordelia, was born about 1826, and their son, Alfred, about 1832. At John Simpson's death—at some time prior to 1850—the family removed to Newburg, settling on a small farm of some fifty acres.

William Clark Patten, son of Matthew and Martha Patten and father of William Gilbert, was born in 1824, probably in Newport. In his youth he was a woodsman and river driver on the Penobscot, a fitting occupation for the giant he was. At maturity he stood six feet four inches in height and weighed two hundred and thirty pounds. Good-natured, and of an easy-going disposition, he was, says his son, "a good, solid, honest Maine man of no distinctive talents." In 1852 or 1853 he married Cordelia Simpson, the ceremony being performed in Newburg. The young couple were a strangely contrasting pair, for the slender, one-hundred-and-ten-pound Cordelia was small indeed beside her heroically-proportioned

1. Census reports for Newburg, 1850, list Betsey, Cordelia, and Alfred Simpson, but not John, hence the inference of his death—divorce being unlikely.
2. See note 2, preceding page. The record of his marriage states that he was living in Newport about 1852.
3. In a letter to the writer, November 25, 1932.
4. Record of Marriages, Penobscot County. Neither the specific date nor the officiating clergyman is given. The marriage is recorded amid the entries of 1852 and 1853.
husband.

Just where William and Cordelia made their home is not known, though it was probably in the vicinity of Newport and Newburg. Shortly after 1856, the year in which a daughter, Zelma, was born to them, they departed to Illinois. There he had an experience which, years later, he dearly loved to relate to his son and to the neighbors. He once attended an open-air political speech delivered by Abraham Lincoln. Evidently struck by his towering form, the president-to-be inspected him closely. Then he called him up to the platform, where the two stood back to back to see which was the taller. It was with wholly natural pride that William told of the incident.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, William contracted malaria, and, given up by several physicians, returned to Maine to die. In his native state, however, his health began to improve, owing, it is said, to his use of Indian Collogog, a patent medicine, which reduced

1. Patten described his parents in a letter, November 25, 1932.
2. Patten was unable to supply any details about the excursion to Illinois beyond these few facts.
his fever and set him on the road to recovery. Though drafted for military service, he was excused because of his still precarious health.

At some period in his life he had learned carpentry, a trade which stood him in good stead in Corinna, the town in which he settled on his return to Maine. His household consisted of four members—his wife, his daughter, his mother-in-law, Betsey Simpson, and himself. The home he chose for his family was a small, square, story-and-a-half structure in the western part of the village, not far from the present Stewart Memorial Library. There, on October 25, 1866, his second child was born, a son, William Gilbert. In the following year Zelma, a frail child, died and was buried in the Corinna cemetery. Patten has no recollection of her, of course, but remarks: "According to my mother, who may have had the usual favorable prejudice of most mothers, my sister was unusually talented and wise far beyond her years." It is probable that Betsey Simpson

1. Concerning the name William Gilbert, there is some ambiguity. Census reports for Corinna, 1870, list George W., age four years, as the son of William and Cordelia Patten. Barring an error on the part of the recorder, it is likely that the change came about through a reversal of his given names. Patten was called "Willie" as a boy, and signed his first novels "William G." Probably the "Gilbert" was acquired later.

2. In a letter to the writer, November 25, 1932.
The author at his birth-place, Corinna, Maine, 1924
died shortly after 1870.

Like her husband, Cordelia Patten, possessed no definite talents. "She was," says her son, "simply and merely a good housewife, and a loving, almost adoring mother." These parents were typical of many country people of their generation. Of little formal education, they settled down in the thriving community of Corinna with the hope of growing with the town. Though William Patten never grew wealthy at his trade, he was able to earn a comfortable living for his family. The town offered a very fair amount of work to a competent carpenter, for at the time it was growing steadily.

Corinna has a history similar to that of many other Maine towns. Its site was purchased in 1804 as a land speculation by John Warren of Boston, a brother of the Revolutionary War general, Joseph Warren. Settlers bought the land and pioneered in the wilds of Maine, erecting log cabins and breaking out farm land on the Warren site. In 1816 some twenty families in residence

1. Census reports for Corinna, 1870, list Betsey Simpson, age 67. Since Patten has no recollection of her, it is likely that she died before he was more than seven or eight.
2. In a letter to the writer, November 25, 1932.
applied to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a township charter, receiving it in December of that year. As the town grew, the original log huts were replaced by frame buildings. Farming and the milling of lumber became the chief occupations.

By the middle of the century there were three grammar schools and two churches, the Baptist and the Union, the latter a fusion of Methodist and Congregational. Shortly after 1850 Corinna Union Academy was founded on the donations of the townspeople. Its purpose was to supplement the grammar school system. A quarter of a century more added two sawmills, another church, and a town hall built of brick. The Civil War stirred the town but little. Practically all of her volunteers returned unscathed.

With the pioneer days over, the ground broken, and steady prosperity in sight, the townspeople began to think of higher education for their sons. The fruit of their cogitation was the installation of college preparatory courses in the Academy. To this end in 1879 Wyman B. Piper, most famous of Corinna's school teachers, organized three courses: College Preparatory, Classical, and Scientific, all of them heavily weighted with Greek, Latin, and mathematics. As his contract stipulated, Mr. Piper received a salary of one hundred dollars a year,
furnishing the fuel and repairing the windows by his own labor.

Such was the environment in which Gilbert Patten spent his boyhood. With its steady growth and excellent school system, the town offered many solid advantages to a growing boy. Certain influences, however, tended to make Gilbert, or Willie, as he was called, somewhat unhappy as a youngster. To begin with, his devoutly religious mother wanted him to become a preacher, and supposed mistakenly that enforced church attendance would inspire Willie with religious zeal. But her son was a rebel. He reacted against this procedure, evolving finally a belief in a supreme power in no way connected with the orthodox forms of church worship. Though commonly understood today, this attitude was entirely inexplicable to many parents of two generations ago. It caused, naturally, some misunderstanding. In recording this experience, Patten added, "It seems to me that, ever since my earliest thinking boyhood, I have always been a secret or open rebel against restraint of thought and undue restraint of action—or what seems to me like undue restraint."

1. Letter to the writer, November 25, 1932.
2. Ibid.
Another emotional disturbance in these early years arose from his failure to make friends among boys of his own age. Both his father and his mother were extreme pacifists, to whom even boyish "scraps" were sinful. Patten commented on the effect of their pacifism, thus:

The pacifism of my two hundred-and-thirty-pound father and my timid one-hundred-and-ten-pound mother, both of whom lectured me almost daily on the shamefulness of fighting, had increased my own natural aversion to brawls and converted me into a shrinking lad with a sense of inferiority.

Part of his timidity had its origin in his physical growth. He inherited in large measure his father's huge physique, but weight came only with maturity. His rapid growth—at fourteen he was well over six feet in height and weighed but one hundred and fifteen pounds—sapped his strength. Mild brown eyes and fair hair further contributed to his embarrassment. A shy and retiring boy, he turned in his loneliness to reading, finding in that pursuit a solace for his lack of companionship.

He remembers particularly assuaging his huge and indiscriminate hunger with Morgan's Masonry, the Bible, a history of the Civil War illustrated with woodcuts,

and Joseph Holt Ingraham's novel, *The Prince of the House of David*. The last, regarded by his mother and the neighbors as semi-inspired, was especially fascinating. He read it literally to pieces. Later he discovered to his amusement that the author had also written *Lafitte*, a blood-and-thunder novel of the dime novel type. This early reading was supplemented, of course, by scores of dime novels. Characteristically, his parents frowned on such cheap fiction; so, in common with many youngsters of his generation, he indulged secretly in the sinful pleasure. He records a frequent experience, thus:

A boy lay reading in bed in a big, unfinished chamber of an old house in Corinna, Maine. He was reading by the yellow light of a kerosene lamp that stood on a wooden chair beside the bed. The lamp had been placed in that low position so that its light, shining through an uncurtained window a few feet away, would not fall upon the gable end of a lurching barn at the rear of the house, where it could have been seen by the boy's father and mother, who occupied a bedroom on the first floor. The greater part of the chamber was in shadow and darkness. The position of the lamp compelled the boy to lie close to the edge of the bed and hold his book extended at an angle to permit the light to fall upon the fine print that covered the pages. Entranced, spellbound, the young reader followed the swift course of the sanguine tale............

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There were sounds in the shadow-haunted chamber, the faint rasping of an unoiled door hinge, the soft sluff of a stockinged foot, the creak of a loose floor board. Holding a candle and shading it with one hand, the boy's nightgowned mother stood in the doorway.

"Willie!" she whispered. "What are you doing, Willie--reading at this hour? It's midnight, and after. You'll ruin your eyes. If your father ever caught you-- What's this?"

She had advanced quickly to the bed and taken the little book out of the boy's hand. One glance at its cover was enough. "A dime novel!" There was reproof and sorrow in her voice and on her face. "Where'd you get it? Such dreadful stuff! It'll be the ruination of the boys of this country." ........ She carried away the little book she had caught him reading. As she took away the kerosene lamp also, he could not fish a companion book from under his pillow, where it lay hidden, and go on with his forbidden pleasure after her departure. He was compelled to resign himself to sleep and dreams.

Though he read more than most boys, Willie was by no means wholly a recluse. He had, of course, the average youngster's passion for baseball; and though he played the game badly, probably because of poor co-ordination, he managed to learn a great deal about it. It was doubtless in their fondness for sports that he and his father had most in common. William Patten was a vigorous, athletic man, who enjoyed strenuous action. Skating was one of his enthusiasms, and he had some reputation as an accomplished performer. His differences with his son arose over the matter of
books. A man of no formal education, and inured from boyhood to hard physical labor, he couldn't entirely understand a boy who preferred reading and writing to play, and idle day-dreaming to some manual occupation. Less religious than his wife, he felt no great concern over his son's unorthodox spiritual development, but he was perplexed at his "unhandiness." Willie showed no evidences of becoming a carpenter, or, for that matter, anything useful. Laziness was the trouble, he guessed. Perhaps his son would outgrow it.

Willie, however, showed no immediate improvement. His grammar school record was undistinguished, for he studied only the subjects he found to his liking, history and geography. To his teacher, Hosea Rackliff, he seemed lazy, if not stupid. He chafed under the formality of the classroom, and longed for the hours of freedom when he could read whatever he wished. Furthermore, he conceived a dislike for Mr. Rackliff, a dislike that became mutual when the teacher failed to understand him.

In the spring of 1880, in his fourteenth year, he graduated from grammar school and entered Corinna Union Academy, where he continued his lackadaisical career.

1. Mr. Patten records his dislike of school in a letter of November 25, 1932.
Friction continued at home. His parents could not conceive that he was deriving more benefit from his extensive reading than from the school work that was hateful to him. Though his studies lagged, he was using his time to good advantage. Aside from his exploration of the world of books, he was writing stories, inspired, of course, by the dime novels that constituted his chief literary diet. "I was trying to write stories," he has said, "even before I knew how to spell some of the simplest words." His early attempts proved abortive; he began a story only to drop it, half-finished, for another. At the age of fifteen, however, he began, and nearly completed, a western novelette featuring a person called "The Diamond Sport." This, the magnum opus of his minority, satisfied him in every detail. He was sure it was good stuff, and to it he gave most of his hours of freedom from school.

The Diamond Sport went unfinished for a time, for the author found his parents unsympathetic. To his mother any traffic with dime novels was a sign of incipient depravity; and Mr. Patten had a profound distrust of the pen. If Willie didn't care to study,

he could find a job, they intimated. Matters reached a climax in the late spring of 1882. Ordinarily an easy-going parent, Mr. Patten found his patience exhausted. Ascribing Willie's aversion to school work to sheer laziness, he issued an ultimatum—study or go to work. Young Patten, however, had a will of his own. For the past year he had been emerging from his shyness and fighting his way to respect among boys of his own age, in defiance of his parents' admonitions against "scrapping." A true rebel, he adopted a third alternative unforeseen by his father. He ran away.

His adventure was of six months' duration, and took him to a scene not far from Corinna—a machine shop at Biddeford. He did not find the new life congenial. On his own for the first time, he discovered that hard labor was the only resource of the unskilled—a discovery that resulted in his determination to secure further education. Then, too, he had trouble with his employer, a Mr. Gooch, who made unflattering remarks about his gangling immaturity. His very small pay was a further source of dissatisfaction. Finally he screwed up his courage to the

1. The circumstances of Patten's excursion to Biddeford, his return to Corinna, and the writing of the first two stories are given in "The Man Merriwell" by James M. Cain. Saturday Evening Post, June 11, 1927, p. 12.
point of asking for a "raise," intimating to his little tyrant that ninety cents a day was inadequate for a hard-working man. Mr. Gooch promptly fired him, and bade him grow some hair on his face if he expected a man's wages. Willie returned to Corinna with a two-fold ambition—to raise a beard, and earn, at some future date, more money with his pen than Mr. Gooch had ever seen.

On his home-coming, on a winter night late in 1882, he created something of a sensation. His father and mother were attending an evening service at the Union Church when they heard the news of his arrival. They left the meeting hastily to welcome the prodigal; but their joy was soon tempered with dissatisfaction. They had expected repentence and abject submission, and found cocksureness and strong determination. Willie seemed not at all chastened by his venture into a cold, hard world. He had returned with clothes on his back and money in his pocket, confident that he could shift for himself at any time. He announced in no uncertain terms that he was going to be an author.

His parents fought this proposal, but they were on the defensive from the start. Feeling that he had proved his manhood, young Patten yielded not an inch, seeing to it that the matter was settled on the night
of his return. He waved aside his mother's often-reiterated suggestion of the ministry, and poohpoohed his father's discussion of the solid advantages of a carpenter's trade. Finally Mr. Patten gave in, deciding that his son should have a chance to prove his worth. His leniency arose partly from his pride in Willie's new-found assurance, and partly from his conviction that, if opposed, the boy might again run away. There were not many young fellows, he later informed his wife, who had pluck enough to make their own way in the world. He gave Willie a month to win success with his pen.

Willie settled down to writing in earnest. His ambitions were crystallizing into a definite plan. He would re-enter the Academy the next year, and after finishing the course, obtain further education at Colby College, supporting himself by his pen. Meanwhile, he would try to sell some stories. After two days of strenuous effort he completed a short story entitled A Bad Man, and mailed it immediately to the Banner Weekly, one of the numerous Beadle publications.

1. Patten gives a parallel account of the writing of these first two stories in "Dime Novel Days." Saturday Evening Post, February 28, 1931, p. 7.
In nervous trepidation he waited for the reply, which came by return mail in the form of a rejection slip. Most disheartening was the fact that the manuscript was not returned. Apparently the editor had deemed it worthless. Considerably chastened, he began another, The Pride of Sandy Flat, carefully suppressing the news of the rejection from his parents. With this second story he enclosed a letter asking whether his work revealed any literary talent, and inquiring about the fate of A Bad Man. After ten days of anxious expectation he received an answer from the pen of Orville J. Victor, the editor of Beadle and Adams's dime-novel department. Mr. Victor was of the opinion that he was definitely talented. The Pride of Sandy Flat was accepted, and at a second reading, A Bad Man had also made a favorable impression. A check was enclosed in payment for both stories—six dollars. Striving to conceal his elation, the author showed the check to his father. Evincing no surprise, Mr. Patten asked how long it had taken to produce the stories. On being told two days for each, he grunted noncommittally. When the check was cashed for "real money," however, he spoke enthusiastically to the neighbors of his son's success.

With the approach of the summer of 1883, Willie realized that he was not going to grow wealthy at the
rate of three dollars a story. Since he was desirous of continuing at the Academy, and felt that he must help pay his way, he looked about for a summer job, finding one as a reporter on the Pittsfield Advertiser, a country weekly edited by Charles Haskell.

In the fall he re-entered the Academy, finding the third-year course in English literature much to his liking. Among the poets he was especially fond of Wordsworth. Nature poems impressed him particularly, and inspired many imitative attempts. A second burst of reading was inevitable. The year passed quickly as he reveled in the works of Poe, Stevenson, John Townsend Trowbridge, and Hawthorne. At seventeen he was promising himself that one day he would write a novel as great as The Scarlet Letter.

In the summer of 1884 he found employment on the Eastern State, a Dexter newspaper. Of this second experience in the field of journalism he vouchsafes the information:

While on the Dexter paper I was offered the editorship, the editor, R. O. Robbins, having got tangled up in a libel suit instituted by the picturesque Dr. Fitzgerald, of

1. Patten records this incident in a letter of May 11, 1933.
2. Ibid.
that town. I thought myself too young and inexperienced, and another youngster, about my own age or a little older, got it.... Oh, Dr. Fitzgerald was a famous quack who boasted he had the biggest cupola and mortgage on his house of any man in Dexter.

During his last year at the Academy, his parents were gratified at his marked improvement in his studies; and he himself was reading Dickens, who became his chief literary idol. He records the discovery of the great Victorian author, thus:

Before I left Corinna I had found Charles Dickens. What a find he was! What tremendous times I had with him! He introduced me to the most fascinating crowd of persons--Oliver Twist, Fagin, Bill Sikes, Nancy, Dick Swiveller, little Nell, David Copperfield, Agnes and Dora, Steerforth, Sydney Carton, and many, many more whose names do not come back to me so readily. And so I came to know that there were stories a hundred times more gripping and stirring than any dime novel possibly could be.

Sometimes, I told myself, I'd write a great novel--at least one great novel--like those of Dickens.

Now, in his eighteenth year, he was improving physically. His large frame was filling out, his hair was darkening, and a light down was appearing on his chin--the opening gun in the campaign against Mr. Gooch. He also found a sympathetic friend in a schoolmate, Alice Clair Gardner. Alice was the youngest

child of Thomas R. Gardner, a well-to-do farmer who had settled with his family in Corinna in 1845. By far the most brilliant student at the Academy, Alice possessed distinct talents for music and painting. In addition she was interested in literature. When young Patten later launched his career she proved most helpful in the role of adviser and critic.

It was almost with regret--so pleasant had the last few years been--that he left the Academy and began to plan ways and means of going to college. Unable to find a position to his liking, he created one by founding a weekly newspaper, The Corinna Owl. Aided, no doubt, by his previous experience on the Pittsfield Advertiser and the Eastern State, he was able to keep the paper going for a year, in the capacity of editor and sole owner. He describes it as "a typical country weekly," its contents consisting of local news items and

1. Census reports for Corinna, 1850, list Thomas Gardner's real estate at $800, a total that had swelled considerably by 1870, the reports of that year listing his property at $6,100. The same reports list Alice as the youngest of five children, her age being given as five in 1870. She was, then, about one year older than Patten.

2. According to the testimony of Mrs. Gertrude Nutter of Corinna, given to the writer in May, 1932.
some of his own verse. This venture was undertaken in the summer of 1885. But the population of Corinna was not large enough to support a newspaper, and at the end of a year the youthful editor was forced to recognize that The Corinna Owl, now deeply in debt, was a decidedly unprofitable investment. As he was still a minor—he was not quite twenty at the time—his parents insisted that he abandon the paper. They feared, quite naturally, that they would be obliged to settle his debts. But young Patten was something of a businessman. With considerable acumen he negotiated the sale of the weekly to the owner of the competing Pittsfield Advertiser, and with the proceeds he discharged all his debts and had enough money left for a new venture.

Since his earliest recollection he had wanted to see the world, especially the West, which had been celebrated so extensively and intensively in dime novels. It may be that the novels of Prentiss Ingraham, the most-admired author of his early years, inspired this desire.

1. The career of The Corinna Owl was given briefly in "The Voice of Broadway" by Louis Sobol. New York Journal, Nov. 21, 1921. The writer regrets that he has been unable to secure any copies of the paper, Mr. Patten having preserved none, and there being none available in Corinna.
In any event, in the fall of 1886 he packed a bag and left Corinna for the scene of Cody's triumph and Custer's defeat. Woefully short of funds, he could go no great distance and make no extended stay. He reached Omaha, Nebraska, and then turned back, full of enthusiasm for a country which he was acquainted only from a few days' observation from a car window. He arrived back in Corinna with only ten dollars in his pocket, but a world of confidence in his voice. He felt sure that he could write western stories with a realistic touch.

Faced by the necessity of earning money, he turned seriously to the production of dime novels. He had no enthusiasm for cheap fiction; he was simply looking for a profitable field. Long since, his taste for "thrillers" had waned, ousted by his growing appetite for Stevenson, Hawthorne and Dickens. He was, however, well acquainted with the type of fiction in demand; and in addition he was well equipped. As a starter he unearthed his early attempt, The Diamond Sport, revised it in the light of his first-hand acquaintance with the West, and sent it

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to Beadle and Adams. William Clark Patten's misgivings about his son's ability vanished with the arrival by return mail of a check for fifty dollars. With something of a thrill the young author held in his hands, not long after, a volume from Beadle and Adams's "Half Dime Library," entitled, *The Diamond Sport; or, The Double Face of Bedrock*, by William G. Patten. As he gazed with pardonable pride at the "by-line," he little realized that later he was to regret bitterly the use of his own name, the name that rubber-stamped him as a writer of dime-novel "thrillers."

His career was successfully launched. A second novel sold for seventy-five dollars, and a third for one hundred. He now turned out story after story, varying in length from book-length novels to short sketches. He was paid in proportion to length. Checks for sums as great as one hundred and fifty dollars began to arrive regularly. Alice Gardner was of invaluable aid. In the role of critic, she corrected and copied his material, thus contributing largely to his early success. Finding their companionship congenial, the young author centered

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2. According to her own statement in a letter to the writer, January 31, 1933.
his affections on her, proposing marriage shortly after his twentieth birthday. On December 25, 1886, the young couple were married at the home of his parents, where they lived until leaving Corinna in the following year. Abandoning all idea of college, young Patten supported himself by the production of dime novels. It was un-thinkable at the time to forego such a profitable source of income for the commercially doubtful benefit of further education. That dream was over.

Some time in 1887 the Patten household moved to Camden, to live in a small house in the southern side of the town overlooking Penobscot Bay. In Camden Willie con-tinued his literary career writing and selling stories steadily through the winter of 1887 and 1888. The summers of those years he devoted to the management of a professional baseball team.

His club represented Camden in the tri-cornered Knox County League, the other two members being Rockland and Thomaston. Among his players was the later famous Bill Carrigan of the Boston Red Sox. Patten recalls that he

paid Carrigan twelve dollars a week and board for his services. Early in the season the race for the Knox County pennant became a four-cornered affair, owing to the machinations of Maurice "Mike" Powers, subsequently a member of the Cincinnati Reds. Powers, who was attending Holy Cross at the time, was in the habit of playing on bush league teams during the summer vacation periods. In the summer of 1887 he attempted to "put one over" on the managers of the league by offering his services at a prohibitive cost. In an informal gentleman's agreement the managers decided not to employ him at any price, and told him to "roll his hoop." In revenge Powers imported six players from the Holy Cross varsity, and entered the league as the representative of the neighboring mill town of Warren. The chief contenders for the pennant that year were the Rockland and Powers teams, the Thomaston club folding up early in the season, and Patten's Camden team being left far behind. Rockland finally claimed the championship though Powers's team won a majority of the games. Rockland's win came about by the decision to discount the Thomaston games, thus reducing the victories of the Warren team to a minority.

In the following year Patten's team was composed largely of college players who were attempting to earn
a little expense money. After whipping them into good shape, the youthful manager went out for the pennant, his rivals that year being Rockland and Vinalhaven. Rockland, however, forged ahead rapidly at the start, for the manager had bought a broken-down big league pitcher, "Gramp" Morse, to scare the opposing players into submission. Morse succeeded in his job by the simple expedient of hitting the batters with wild pitches, until finally no one dared oppose him. In midseason Patten decided to put a crimp in Morse's style, and telegraphed to Boston for the toughest pitcher he could obtain. In a few days there arrived in Camden a hulking, illiterate thug, C. F. Nickerson, better known as "Old Nick." Old Nick wasn't obliged to use force. He was terrifying simply to behold. He subdued Morse by announcing at the opening of the following game, "Dere won't be nobody hit dis afternoon wit' de ball, see?" It was not until the close of the season, when Camden had the pennant safely clinched, that Old Nick's valor was tried. At that time the smallest player in the league squabbled with him and chased him out of the ball park. But Camden had won the championship, and Patten was satisfied.

Meanwhile the author had been writing steadily for Beadle and Adams, his stories appearing frequently in
the "Half Dime Library." His income for 1887, $1,700, mounted in 1888 to $2,000. In 1889 he left Camden for Manchester, New Hampshire, to occupy an editorial position on the juvenile monthly, *American Young Folks*. Some months later he returned to Camden to continue his career as one of Beadle's hacks.

He was now the sole support of his parents. Some time before, his father, attempting to show some young skaters how to cut fancy figures, had fallen on the ice, lameing himself permanently. The injury grew worse, finally leaving him completely incapacitated. With this new burden on his shoulders, Patten kept on writing such stuff as *Hustler Harry the Cowboy Sport*, and *Wild Vulcan, the Lone Range Rider*.

By 1891 he was becoming dissatisfied with the life at Camden. He wanted a change of scene. With characteristic decisiveness he made ready to move his small household to New York. Apart from the drawback of expense, the city offered him a number of definite advantages. There, in the heart of the dime-novel world, he could meet not only the most famous authors in his field,

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1. Patten is unable to recall the date of his father's accident.
but the editors on whose judgment he depended for a livelihood. Acquaintance with the big city would also give him an invaluable background for stories, would provide impetus and stimulation. At Camden he was in danger of going stale, of writing himself out. Leaving his parents in Camden, he and his wife left Maine in September, 1891, to occupy a small Brooklyn apartment. He was off on a new venture.
Chapter III

LIFE OF WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN
NEW YORK, 1891-1913

The New York of the nineties presented a splendid prospect to the young author. Most thrilling of all, however, was his first glimpse of a dime-novel notable. He tells the experience best in his own words:

When I first saw the dome of the World Building, it was a gilded dream that towered into the sky above the surrounding roofs. People went up into it at that time to get what was called a bird's-eye view of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Jersey, and the Harbor. Now it's sunken and dwarfed by the towering buildings which surround it.

But the sight of a far more insignificant publishing house gave me a thrill. This was the house of Beadle and Adams, an unimpressive four-story structure, old-fashioned even then, at 98 William Street. Thither I hastened at the first opportunity. I climbed the stairs—there was no elevator—and waited respectfully outside Mr. Victor's open door, to which I had been directed.

A slim man with a military air, longish hair that touched the collar of his dark Prince Albert coat, and a drooping mustache of iron gray, stood beside Victor's desk. He was talking to the venerable editor in a modulated voice in which I fancied I detected the softly pleasant slurrings and elisions of a cultured

Southerner. I knew him from pictures of him that I had seen and I wanted to speak to him when he came out and walked past me with a slight limp. I was restrained by a sense of his greatness and my own insignificance.

"Wasn't that Colonel Ingraham who just left?" I asked Mr. Victor as soon as I could with politeness, after I had introduced myself to the one whose literary ability and editorial judgment were in the greatest degree responsible for the success of the house of Beadle.

He told me that it was, and smiled a little at the elation of the raw youth from Maine over his good fortune in having at last beheld at close range one of his boyhood heroes.

Through the kindly offices of Mr. Victor, who became a firm friend, Patten met many famous dime novelists: among them Thomas Charles Harbaugh, a prolific writer of westerns, William H. Manning, another writer of westerns, Frederick Dey, author of numerous "Nick Carter" stories, and his boyhood idol, Colonel Ingraham. With the Colonel he began a friendship which lasted until the latter's death, years later.

With the chameleon adaptability of youth, he slipped easily into the new life, hacking out fiction regularly. In common with many of his associates, he adopted a pen-name created for him by Mr. Victor. He had told the editor of his brief trip west; and as a result Mr. Victor's fertile mind conceived the euphonious name, William West
Wilder—Wyoming Will. Under this pseudonym he wrote a number of thrillers, receiving the customary hundred and fifty dollars for each. Despite their promising outlook, however, the next few years were years of gradual misfortune.

In a few months he realized that his market was declining. The western story was fading out of the picture, and the detective fiction to which he immediately resorted did not sell readily. More than once he discussed this situation with Colonel Ingraham. The Colonel, whose writing career had been occupied solely with the production of fiction of the "Buffalo Bill" type, believed firmly that the western story would never die. Patten was not so confident. Custer had been dead for nearly twenty years, he remarked. He was already looking for a new field of endeavor. But the Colonel was obdurate. Most significant of his inability to look ahead was his comment on the horse. That noble animal,

1. Patten tells of the adoption of this pseudonym in "Dime Novel Days." Saturday Evening Post, February 28, 1931, p. 126.
he said, was still going strong, and no monstrous mechanism like the still experimental horseless buggy could ever supersede him. Patten, however, swung with the tide. When the western story faded he turned to detective fiction and thence, for a time, to nothing.

The house of Beadle was succumbing to the onslaughts of its competitors. Mr. Victor began to buy fewer and fewer new stories, and to reprint old material—sure sign of approaching dissolution for the pioneer of dime novel factories. Patten, who was turning out such stories as Nobby Nat, the Tenderfoot Detective, and Spotter Bob in New York, found his rates cut from one hundred and fifty dollars to one hundred and twenty-five. When, shortly, he was cut again to an even hundred, he found himself in straitened circumstances, for his expenses had mounted. A son, Harvan Barr, had been born to the young couple in April, 1892. As the sale of dime novels lessened, Patten eked out his meager income by selling a few short stories, but the return from them was small and uncertain. Finally he became destitute—unable even to pay his rent. Penniless, and in danger of eviction, he appealed to Mr. Victor, early in 1894, for advance
money on his story, *Fire-eye, the Thug's Terror*. It was a hard and fast rule of the Beadle establishment to pay only upon publication; and *Fire-eye* was to be distributed ten days later. Mr. Victor was obliged to refuse Patten's request, but he promised to speak to William Adams. Patten was summoned to the private office of the head of the concern, where he was informed that for once the rule would be broken. Shaking his head sorrowfully, Mr. Adams handed him a check, saying that a deduction had been made for the advance payment. Patten looked at it. It was for ninety dollars—a deduction of one dollar a day. He left the office, vowing never to write another dime novel, applauded in the determination by Mr. Victor. And indeed, he never did write another for Beadle and Adams.

A further period of adversity followed his separation from the Beadle publishing house; for his action had cut off his one source of revenue. The shabby treatment accorded him after several years of faithful hack-work kept him from returning; and he had too much pride

1. This incident and the succeeding events which led to Patten's employment by Street and Smith are recorded in "Dime Novel Days." *Saturday Evening Post*, February 28, 1931.
and faith in himself to waste his time in vain regrets.

He states of the penurious period:

The going became pretty rough after I left Beadle and Adams with the determination never to write another dime novel. Though I soon managed to tie up with the American Press Association to do a six column boiler-plate page called Some Odd Stories, I received only thirty dollars for that. It was sent out to country newspapers at intervals of three weeks. The papers used it at the rate of two columns a week, which made my revenue from that source exactly ten dollars weekly.

At that time—in the spring of 1894—Bill Nye was writing for the same association and receiving, it was whispered, twenty thousand dollars a year. M. Quad, also on the staff, was said to receive ten thousand. But Patten wasted little time envying Nye and Quad. He soon broke into the stable of fiction hacks operated by Norman Munro, who was publishing the "Cap Collier Library." After writing just one "Cap Collier" story, he became acquainted with William C. Dunn, Munro's printer, through whose friendship he became a steady writer for the six-cent juvenile weekly, Golden Hours. Among his stablemates were John De Morgan, high-salaried hack,

Cornelius Shea, writer of westerns, Harrie Irving Hancock, the author-to-be of the famous Dick Prescott stories, and Albert Stearns, humorist and author of Chris and the Wonderful Lamp and Sindbad, Smith & Company. Unlike these, however, he was not placed under contract; consequently he felt his position insecure.

From Golden Hours he received the largest prices of his career, up to that time—two hundred and fifty dollars for each sixty thousand word serial; but he could sell such a story only once in six or eight weeks. Though a recently purchased typewriter—still something of a marvel at the time—had greatly increased his speed, he was writing far below his normal rate. Ambitious to live well and associate with successful people, he looked about for ways to supplement his income. Dissatisfied with the returns from his serials, occasional short stories, and humorous poems, he resolved to break into the publishing house of Street and Smith, then the most progressive factory in the dime-novel field. On a spring day of 1895 he entered the office of that concern and stated his business to a clerk. He was told summarily that Street and Smith had a safe full
of stories and were not in the market, an allusion to the fiction war of the late seventies. He turned away reluctantly.

A week later he returned to the attack, better armed. A friend had advised him to interview G. C. Smith, the son of one of the original proprietors; so he presented his card, inscribed below his name with Boston Globe, American Press Association, and Golden Hours. Patten had no formal connection with the Boston Globe, but a syndicated serial of which he was the author was then appearing in its pages. The imposing array created an impression. The last title was especially potent, for Golden Hours was the strongest competitor of Street and Smith's weekly, Good News. Shortly after, he was ushered into the office of Edward Stratemeyer, editor of Good News; and after a brief consultation he was given a title, The Boy from the West, and told to write the opening chapters for approval. In high spirits Patten set to work, soon submitting two installments; but Stratemeyer's offer of one hundred dollars for the entire story— it was to be

1. See Chapter 1, p. 27.
a sixty thousand word serial—chastened him. To his assertion that he was getting two hundred and fifty dollars for the same amount of work for Golden Hours, the editor evinced only disbelief. In order to reach an agreement, Patten decided on a bluff:

I reached for the two installments I had written for Stratemeyer and put them into my pocket.

"The title is yours," I said, "but this much of the story is entirely mine. I shall finish it and sell it somewhere else."

But he didn't let me go. He haggled with me. I came down to two hundred dollars; he came up to one hundred and twenty-five. Eventually I said I'd write that one story for him for one hundred and fifty dollars, just to show him what I could do. He said he'd have to interview Mr. Smith about it. He came back from the interview and told me to go ahead with the job.

Though he did not realize it, this conference was a momentous event in the young author's life, for it began his relations with the concern for which over a period of twenty years he was to write some twenty-five million words of fiction. As yet, however, his great hero, Frank Merriwell, was unborn. Through the summer of 1895 he wrote a series of boys' stories for Good News, maintaining the high standard he had set for himself in the production of The Boy from the West. In the autumn of that year he returned to Maine with

his family to live with his father and mother, who had remained in Camden. In the seacoast town he continued writing for Good News.

Shortly before his return he had received a setback in a venture into the field of drama. He had found time, in the summer of 1895, to turn out a melodrama, Men of Millions, the story of an ambitious, social-climbing wife who nagged her husband continually. He found a producer who set a date for a New York appearance. A company was organized; and it was decided to take the play on the road pending the New York opening. Trouble developed at the first rehearsal. The leading lady, a Miss Hopkins, went on an emotional "jag" in the role of the ambitious wife, ruining Patten's conception of the part. To a careful explanation that restraint should be her cue, she paid no attention. The result was an inevitable "flop." On the first night in a New Haven theater the college students "razzed" and hissed her until she left the stage, fainted in her dressing room, and refused to make a reappearance. The comedian promptly got drunk.

1. The play has been published as Nan the Mascotte. Boston, Walter Baker and Company.
2. A detail added to this study by Mr. Patten.
When the producer washed his hands of the matter, the youthful dramatist found himself with no means for reorganizing the company. His career as a playwright was terminated as abruptly as it had begun. Somewhat disgruntled, he had returned to Maine to visit his parents.

In December, 1895, Street and Smith were casting about for a new project, a scheme for reviving the five-cent fiction market. The older types of stories were definitely on the decline. Western stories were selling desultorily, their vogue long past; and of the detectives, Nick Carter alone sold readily. On the other hand, stories celebrating the exploits of a boy hero had a vast appeal, as the works of Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic testified. Finally they decided to publish a long series of stories in which one main character was to appear, an adventurous schoolboy. Their idea was not unlike that of the earlier "Jack Harkaway" series, except that the locale must be American. They were not long in selecting as the author Mr. William Gilbert Patten, who had done promising work on Good News.

1. The events which led to the creation of the "Merriwell Series" are recorded by Mr. Patten in "Dime Novel Days." Saturday Evening Post, March 7, 1931. A similar account is given by James M. Cain, op. cit.
In the same month they approached Patten with the idea. Pleased with the project, the faithful hack wrote for further information, which came on December 16 in the form of a long letter describing fully what was wanted. He was to create his own character, a young man with a "catchy" name, and take him through military school and college, supplementing his scholastic career with vacation adventures. If the idea caught on, he could write twenty thousand words weekly on the new series, submitting any additional material he wrote to Good News. Patten resolved to try it out. For some time he gave his attention to the inner workings of boys' schools, sending for numerous pamphlets and advertising matter in order to acquaint himself with the new background. He was well acquainted with sports. Though no athlete, he had always been interested in baseball, football, and other school and college games. In the spring of 1896 he felt well equipped for his task, and sat down to his typewriter in exuberant spirits.

The first story came easily. After inventing a sure-fire name, "Frank Merriwell," and devising a pseudonym, "Burt L. Standish," he began to write. In four days he completed the twenty thousand word episode, Frank Merriwell; or, First Days at Fardale. The
publishers accepted it without demur, and printed it for distribution on April 18, 1896, in the "Tip Top Weekly," a new creation. The first edition was a sell-out, far exceeding the fondest hopes of both author and publishers. Shortly after, Patten received a contract for three years at fifty dollars a week. Two considerations induced him to sign—his need of a steady income, and his belief that the work would not be a great burden. During the writing of the next few stories, however, he realized that he had sold himself into virtual slavery.

He settled to work in grim earnest, for the task was not easy. Reasoning from his experience with the first story, he had expected to devote at most five days a week to the Merriwell saga, using the remaining two days for more serious work—perhaps on the great novel he had dreamed about. But he soon discovered that he would have to spend all his spare time reading for background. The first two years were most difficult. He had no regular hours, no systematic method of study or writing; he sat down to his typewriter at any hour of day or night and ground away. He needed the seven days allotted, and more, too. Indeed, there were many times when he finished the installment barely in time for the last mail to New York. Recalling the long grind, he has
I had forgotten, temporarily, that I was still young and full of the joy and love of life. I'd forgotten the old adage, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Nor did I realize that I would have to be continually reading along the lines of my work and making rather copious notes from that reading in order to give the stories an essential color of verity—the atmosphere of being written by someone who knew all about military-school life, college life, railroad life, the sea, woods, horses, dogs, wild animals, birds of the air, trees, plants, sports of all kinds, America, foreign lands, and a thousand other things with which no one man could possibly be familiar. In short, I had taken on a job which no man could fill as it should have been filled—anyhow, not for more than a limited period of time.

Despite his deprecatory statements, however, Patten filled the job well enough to please both publishers and public. In the first three months, the circulation of the "Tip Top Weekly" mounted to 75,000; and it reached the hundred thousand mark in a year, eventually earning a fortune for all concerned but its author. He received as the reward of his voluntary slavery fifty dollars weekly and no more; furthermore he sold the stories outright, thus cutting off all future chances of royalties.

On his return to New York, early in 1898, he developed a routine that made the work easier. He employed

a stenographer to save his fingers, which were woefully bruised by incessant hammering on the typewriter; and tried dictation, which became his salvation. Every morning he dictated regularly from nine to one, spent the afternoon in recreation or writing other material, and utilized the evening in study on background and characterization. He describes his method, thus:

I used to begin dictating at nine o'clock in the forenoon. I strove to have two or three chapters plotted out in detail at that hour, so that I'd be ready to start when my stenographer arrived. I had to pace the floor while dictating; when I sat down I ran down and, in a minute or two, came to a full stop. When the narrative flowed fast I walked fast; when it came hard and slowly I walked slowly. I once put on a pedometer, which registered four miles and a quarter at the end of a forenoon's labor.

When the yarn flowed freely dictation would be over for the day by twelve o'clock or 12:15, but sometimes it would continue to nearer one o'clock. At the end of the stretch I was often worn out and compelled to lie down for ten minutes or so before I could eat lunch. After lunch I had a nap of thirty or forty minutes. Then I got out into the open air for a while. Persons who saw me walking about or loafing in the afternoon occasionally said: "Well, you have a snap. Don't you ever work?"

He was trying constantly to augment his income of twenty-six hundred dollars a year, but he found time at the first of it for only a few short stories on the

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side. Even out of working hours Frank Merriwell occupied all his thoughts, becoming a virtual obsession. In order to retain his sanity he found it necessary to push aside all thought of his character after each period of dictation. With practice he became so successful that each morning he was obliged to look over the preceding day's work in order to orient himself.

In the summer of 1898 he separated from his wife, Alice Gardner Patten, who returned to her home in Corinna and instituted action for divorce. This was granted in September of the same year, on grounds of incompatibility. The son, Harvan, was sent to Camden, to live with his grandparents, Patten's father and mother. Two years later the author married Mary Munn, a Baltimore woman of Scotch-German descent. His first wife also remarried.

At the present writing she is Mrs. Lee Morris of Bremer- ton, Washington.

With the coming of April, 1899, Patten completed his first contract with Street and Smith, and renewed it without the loss of a week's time, being advanced voluntarily by the publishers to sixty dollars for each

1. Beyond this bare statement Mr. Patten vouchsafes no information about his second marriage.
installment. As the "Merriwell Series" grew in popularity, Street and Smith raised the author's salary with each renewed contract. From sixty dollars he rose to seventy-five, one hundred, one hundred and twenty-five, and finally—in the last four years, 1909-1913—to one hundred and fifty a week.

The years from 1896 to 1913 saw few changes in Patten's literary life. They were simply a steady grind on the "Tip Top Weekly." For seventeen years a Frank Merriwell story appeared every week without a hitch; and Patten was responsible for nearly every word of the twenty millions written. For a single period of five months, in 1900, an experienced hack, John H. Whitson, took over the work in order to give the author opportunity for another project. Unwilling to relinquish entire control, Patten plotted and outlined in advance the actions of his hero, and the substitute followed his plan rigidly. In addition, he read and modified each story before it found its way to the press. Remembering vividly the experience of Edward Zane Carroll Judson, he determined not to let matters get beyond his
control. He devoted this five months' respite from the "Merriwell Series" not to a much needed vacation but to the production of the "Rockspur Series," three books bound in cloth by Street and Smith. The assignment—he was doing the work at the request of his publishers—was easy, for his work with the Merriwells had supplied him with the necessary background and a facile and rapid style.

His most radical departure from the popular story of the day was on the side of character. He attempted to motivate all action from character to ensure plausibility, devoting at intervals two or three pages to a description of his hero in a characteristic occupation. Ormond G. Smith noticed this departure from the norm and spoke of it to the author. The incident took place at a luncheon engagement with Patten in the heyday of the Merriwells.

"It seems to me," he said, "that these stories ought to have more action—incident, you

1. Patten records Judson's experience in the Saturday Evening Post, March 7, 1931, p. 36. In the midst of a serial Judson left work to go on a binge." On his return he found that a substitute hack employed as a stopgap had killed his hero. He groaned deeply and then repaired the damage, running the hero through the remaining installments as a ghost who haunted the villain to his doom.

know, excitement, something going on."

Patten, a little surprised, asked where the stories seemed to lag.

"Well," said Smith, "last week you had a story that shows what I mean. For two pages Merriwell does nothing but take care of his horse--feeds him, waters him, rests him, and so on. I don't believe that appeals to boys."

"I think you're wrong," said Patten. "In the first place Merriwell has been repeatedly identified as a humane character. He is kind to animals; it is part of his nature. In the second place, nine-tenths of the boys who read these stories are of the age when they are crazy over horses. They know all about horses. And when they read how Merriwell was considerate of his horse, that brings the story close home to them. Those two chapters are just as interesting to them as though I had had Frank ride the horse in front of the express train and grab the girl off the cowcatcher. Get your mind off action. Action is what killed the old dime novel. It is all right for a few pages, but it gets pretty tedious unless there is some character mixed up with it that you can get interested in."

To convince Mr. Smith further, Patten pointed to the fact that the circulation of the "Tip Top Weekly" was rapidly increasing. Admitting that the last argument was incontestable, the Smiths decided to let the author have his own way. At the time, in the early nineteen hundreds, at least one hundred and thirty-five thousand Merriwell stories were being distributed every week throughout the country. Patten was an emblem of

1. This figure is admitted by the publishers. Mr. Patten thinks, however, that the actual sales figure was nearer to two hundred and fifty thousand. For obvious reasons Street and Smith would be unlikely to admit such a circulation.
good luck to the firm, and the owners had no intention of interfering with his work. This huge figure by no means indicates the actual number of readers, for usually each copy of the weekly changed hands until it was completely worn out. It is evident from the fan mail the author received that the stories appealed to girls as well as boys; for of the thousands of letters sent by admirers, many were from ardent feminine supporters of the great Frank.

During the seventeen years of writing on his magnum opus, Patten lived alternately in New York City and Camden. With the steadily increasing prosperity his saga brought him with the passing years, he was enabled to build a summer home in Camden, where he generally spent the warm months. After dictation began to alleviate his burden, he began to live a bit. In company with other successful writers, he strolled down Broadway of an afternoon, dressed swankily and sporting a cane, enjoying hugely the color of metropolitan life and the half-bohemian existence of an up-and-coming author. When, on occasion, he wanted a week of leisure for a pleasure trip, he turned his literary treadmill a little faster. On one of these sprints he accomplished fifty thousand words in a week, two and one-half Merriwell
stories—his best record for speed. Cited beside Edward Zane Carroll Judson's six-hundred-page book in sixty-two hours, and Colonel Ingraham's 33,000 words in twenty-four hours, this accomplishment seems meagre; but Patten was turning out material greatly superior in content to the old dime novel.

His friendship with the old colonel had continued with the passing years. The veteran warrior and writer visited him several times in his Camden home to talk over the old days. In the late nineties Patten had found an opportunity to prove his friendship, and the aging writer was eternally grateful. When the house of Beadle and Adams collapsed in 1897, and went, in the following year, into the receivership of M. J. Ivers and Company, the colonel found himself with no market for his Buffalo Bill stories. Hearing of his trouble, Patten found the destitute old man contemplating a trip to Cuba on a gun-runner. With some difficulty he dissuaded him from such a desperate course, and appealed to Ormond Smith, who engaged him to write his western stories for forty dollars a week. In this occupation the colonel continued until his final illness, early in 1904. Patten records his
pathetic and courageous end, thus:

In the spring of 1903, while at my place in Camden, Maine, I received a message from Ingraham saying he was on his way back from a visit with his family in Chicago, and that he was coming to see me. On arriving he paused on my veranda to look out over the blue bosom of Penobscot Bay, sparkling in the sunshine of a gorgeous day. His cheeks were smooth and there was a little flush of pink in them. I told him how well he was looking.

"I'm feeling fine, Gil," he replied. "I've got some good news to tell you. That's one reason why I wanted to see you now." .......

"You know I've been worried some for fear I'd have to have this old bum foot of mine chopped off. Well, I've been to one of the best doctors in Chicago, and he says I won't have to lose it. He says it'll last as long as I live."

"Now that is good news," I agreed.

"Yes, it'll last me through." He laughed.

"You see, Gil, that doctor also told me that I've got Bright's disease and can't live over six months, anyhow."

But the doctor had made a miscalculation of two months. Prentiss died eight months later in a Southern hospital.

Patten felt the loss keenly, for since his boyhood he had revered Ingraham first as a writer, and later as a friend. Other losses followed. In 1907 Patten's aged parents died within six weeks of each other in their Camden home,

the father aged eighty-six, the mother eighty-four. They were buried in Corinna.

No matter what reverses the author met in his personal and emotional life, the Merriwell saga had to go on relentlessly. Upon Frank's graduation from Yale a new protagonist was found in his brother Dick, who held sway for several years of declining popularity. Patten found himself in 1912 with an audience that was ever diminishing. With characteristic foresight he got out before the structure fell.

1. Patten supplied these ages in his letter of November 25, 1932. They do not coincide, however, with the Corinna census reports of 1870, from which the writer calculates that they died at the ages, respectively, of eighty-three and eighty-one.
Chapter IV

LIFE OF WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN
PULP PAPER FICTION, 1913-1933

Early in 1913 Patten approached Ormond Smith, president of the firm of Street and Smith, and informed him that he was unwilling to continue the grind on the fast dying "Merriwell Series." Recognizing that the author's instinct was sound, the astute publisher talked over with him the prospect of creating a new magazine, to be printed on pulp paper, and designed to appeal to mature readers. Responding to Patten's immediate enthusiasm, Smith offered him the editorship, and told him to invent an engaging title. The author suggested Top-Notch, and Top-Notch the new magazine became. In addition to his duties as editor, Patten wrote much of the material himself. After seven highly successful issues of the new monthly, he resigned the editorship to become the magazine's chief contributor, writing under the pseudonyms of 'Gordon Maclaren,' 'Burt L. Standish,' and his own name, Gilbert Patten.
Under his hand Top-Notch became the forerunner of the multitude of sport story pulp magazines of today. Writing at the same steady and prolific rate to which the production of the "Merriwell Series" had inured him, he filled issue after issue with stories of college sports and professional baseball. He created no more heroes of the caliber of Frank Merriwell, for he was now writing for a public that demanded characters well within the bounds of probability. The "College Life Series," and the "Big League Series," which he produced for the magazine during the years from 1915 to 1928, celebrated the exploits of more mature and less versatile protagonists. Perhaps his most famous character in these years was the professional baseball player, Lefty Locke, whose career he traced through five book-length stories from his days as a bush league rookie to his managership of a big league club, the Blue Stockings.

The subsequent fate of the Merriwell saga testifies to his wisdom in dropping it so abruptly. Employing the services of three experienced hacks, John H. Whitson, who had written a few of the stories

1. For the titles in these series, see Bibliography, Part 1, H.
in 1900, William Almon Wolff, and William Wallace Cook, Street and Smith continued the series with the exploits of Frank Merriwell, Jr. But the life blood was gone. The longest epic in existence, the record of the trials and triumphs, of the vicissitudes and fortunes of idealized American youth, came to a straggling halt in 1916. Nineteen years in the making, it contains the prodigious number of twenty-five million words—and remains unfinished. Frank Merriwell, Jr. has yet to complete his course at Yale.

In the same year, 1916, Patten separated from his second wife, Mary (Nunn) Patten. Two years later he married Carol Kramer of New York City. Miss Kramer was born in Rochester, New York, where she received her early education. After further study in Crefeld, Germany, she returned to America and became a resident of New York. Her father, of German descent, had been a Union officer in the American Civil War. Patten's marriage to Miss Kramer took place on June 28, 1918.

1. Street and Smith's paper bound "Merriwell Series" contains 245 titles. Patten is responsible for the first 208 of that number. See Bibliography, Part 1, F.
Always an experimenter, Patten turned in 1918 to the field of drama with a second play, *The Invisible Power*, rewritten from a serial, *The Enchanted Hour*, which he had found time, not long before, to produce for Hearst's "American Magazine Section." The play was a mystery melodrama. Sam Harris, the Broadway producer, was greatly impressed at a reading and planned to put it on the stage; but unfortunately the post-war actors' strike left him only one theatre, already engaged for Collier's racing drama, *The Hottentot*. There followed Mary Roberts Rinehart's *The Bat* and a flood of thrillers far wilder than *The Invisible Power*, leaving Patten's less sensational play with little likelihood of ever being produced.

With his second venture into drama killed at the outset, Patten entered the nineteen twenties still writing for *Top Notch*. In addition, he was carrying on another project begun in 1916--the production, for book publication, of two new sets of juvenile fiction, the "Rex Kingdon Series" and the "Oakdale Series." By 1925 he completed eleven titles. Similar to the early books

1. For these titles see Bibliography, Part I, J.
of the "Merriwell Series," these stories dealt with preparatory school life, tracing, in the main, the athletic records of their protagonists.

As in the years of the Merriwells, Patten now spent much of his time at his summer home in Camden, in the house he had erected in 1908. This building is situated on the site of his parents' home in the southern part of the town. After the death of his father and mother, Patten had the old house moved to a corner of the lot, and built a modern Colonial structure in its place. Ideally located on a hillside, "Overocks" commands a view of Penobscot Bay and the Camden hills. Until 1930 Patten managed to spend a few months of each year in Maine, where, in addition to his writing, he pursued his principal form of recreation--fishing. In the past years he has made many trips to the northern part of the state, especially the Moosehead region. Of late his interest in baseball games has begun to wane. "I go to baseball now," he says, "but don't get much kick out of it. Honestly I don't believe it is as colorful as it was once. But I still can catch a fish out of Moosehead Lake, I hope; and maybe I'll snatch a few trout from the brooks this year."

1. In a letter of April 30, 1933.
After completing the two series for Top Notch in 1928, Patten found a new market in the western love-story magazines, and began to produce for them a type of fiction which he cordially detested, writing in hack style, story after story of an ephemeral nature. He disposed of 1928 and 1929 in this fashion and entered the thirties with no brighter outlook. Then, to his great satisfaction, the Merriwell saga entered on what bids fair to be a second great period of popularity. In July, 1931, the King Features Syndicate approached him with the idea of publishing Frank's career in comic strip form. An artist, Jack Wilhelm, was employed who drew the characters satisfactorily; and the venture went through without a hitch. After a few weeks, however, Patten felt that much of the dramatic value was being lost; accordingly, since that time he has blocked out in advance the details to be pictured, leaving only the actual drawing to Wilhelm. Gratifyingly enough, the strip has proved exceedingly popular, and appears today in two hundred papers.

With the renascence of Frank Merriwell in pictured form, Patten was able to interest a publisher in a projected revision of the stories. His plan was to revise and modernize thoroughly each tale, cutting out a good deal of the slapstick, and improving the diction, an
eight years' task, he calculated, at the rate of a revis-
vision every two weeks. In 1931 he began the job, but the
financial depression forced the publisher to call the deal
off, for a time at least. Approached by a radio concern, he set about writing one-act plays, serial episodes, built around his hero. Electrical transcriptions were to be made, and the plays broadcast. This project also hung fire until, disgusted, he aban-
donned the work late in 1932.

The syndicated comic strip, however, still keeps his hero in the public eye; and with the popular imagina-
tion settled at the present on athletes of every de-
scription, Frank Merriwell's ultimate comeback appears most likely. Early in 1933 there seemed some prospect of continuing the revision of the stories. Patten has taken up the work again; and a fresh onslaught of Frank Merriwell fiction awaits only the lifting of the clouds of financial depression. Ultimately, Frank will figure

1. In a letter of February 24, 1933.
toward pictures celebrating the athletic life. The tremendous success of Johnny Weismüller in *Tarzan, the Ape-Man*, and Buster Crabbe in *King of the Jungle* testify that the public is interested in watching famous athletes in vigorous action. In *Frank Merriwell* the producers should find a gold-mine. Any well known all-round athlete, young and good looking, would fit the part to perfection, a part, by the way, already familiar to the movie public through thirty-five years of republishing in one form or another. Apparently the movie magnates have recognized the potentialities of Frank, for two concerns have recently approached Patten on the subject.

Meanwhile Patten lives in his New York apartment in Hudson View Gardens, still clacking away at his typewriter in the production of hack fiction in order to obtain his daily bread and butter. In person he is a big, broad-shouldered man, well over six feet in height. His most distinguishing features are a ruddy complexion, snow-white hair, and an aquiline nose. He keeps his weight well below the two hundred mark by diet and exercise, confessing at the present to "one hundred and seventy-five pounds in the nude."

1. In a letter of November 25, 1932.
Taking mental stock after a writing career of more than forty-five years, he feels satisfied with life. He said not long ago, "Life has always been a grand adventure for me, even at its dullest. It's still the greatest invention I know of." Possessed of an easy-going temperament, excellent health, and a keen mind, he has been neither soured by adversity nor swelled by success. His sole worry arises from a misunderstanding with Street and Smith about his pseudonym, 'Burt L. Standish.' Though the name is Patten's own invention, the publishers today are employing several writers who make use of it--this over Patten's protest. Recent publicity, however, is swiftly spreading the fact that he is the original writer under that name. Nothing else bothers him. To be sure, he has not realized his pet ambition of writing a great novel; but to the "not" he would add a "yet." He can still do it, he is convinced, once he finds enough leisure.

As a writer primarily of juvenile fiction, he has always had an interest in young people, an interest he traces back to the early days of the Merriwell stories,

when he began to receive numerous letters from his readers. Many persons have testified that his hero first inspired them to secure further education at college. Patten is a firm believer in college life, and loses no opportunity to encourage youngsters. His ambitions for his son, Harvan Barr, have been disappointed. After the death of his parents in 1907, Patten sent Harvan to Hebron Academy to prepare for college. In 1912 the young man entered the University of Maine; but midway of his freshman year he ran away for no discoverable cause." He is now living in California. The author speaks regretfully of his own lack of a college education. In a recent radio broadcast he said:

I have in my life one great regret. I did not go to college.
But I have also a great consolation. Through my writings—especially the Merriwell stories—I have, perhaps, caused thousands of boys who would not otherwise have done so to obtain a college education.
It is truly said that material wealth is not everything. The young man with a college education, good health, and the world before him is wealthy even though he has not a dollar to his name.
Every boy, every girl, should go to college.

1. Patten spoke briefly of his son in a letter of November 25, 1932.
2. A broadcast delivered on April 30, 1933, on the program "Roses and Drums," WEAF network, National Broadcasting Company.
Perhaps Patten's most notable trait is his amazing adaptability—his ability to foresee the inevitable and to act accordingly. In his career this trait has been exemplified several times—in his recognition in the early nineties that the sun of the western dime novel, as then written, had set; in his realization in the early nineteen hundreds that the day of the pulp paper magazine had dawned; and in his recent preparation for the debut of his hero on the air. The ease with which he effected these transitions stands in sharp contrast to the difficulties of many other dime novelists, whose pathetic obituaries are occasionally printed in the daily newspapers. Practically all of the old writers for Beadle and Adams died in bewildered destitution.

In his religious and political views Patten maintains an independent and open-minded attitude. He cast off early the trammels of inherited Republicanism and Methodism, substituting free-thinking in their places. Questioned as to his political views, he replied: "Formerly politically a republican. Now, and for many years past, an independent. Believe that

1. In a letter of November 25, 1932.
politics and municipal government must somehow be wholly dissociated to reduce graft and corruption." The last remark resulted, no doubt, from his long residence in New York City, where he has had opportunity to observe the machinations of Tammany which culminated recently in the Walker debacle. On the much discussed question of the Eighteenth Amendment, he remarks:

Am a believer in temperance and was, for a brief time, a believer in prohibition. Am now grimly satisfied that prohibition has been a major calamity to this country and has woefully set back the cause of temperance. In this belief I am militant, and probably intolerant, as nothing irritates me more than what I regard as the persistent intolerance or stupidity of the honest radical drys.

As for religion, he is "a firm believer in a Creative Force and Intelligence usually called God," and "would give much to be firmly convinced of an individual life after death." He has never been a proponent of any orthodox sect.

Happily married, he enjoys life thoroughly in spite of financial reverses. "I'm poor," he says, "but I've had fun. I've even been through hell and found that extremely interesting." He lists as the

1. In a letter of November 25, 1932.
2. Ibid.
3. In a letter of April 30, 1933.
authors who have been most influential in his literary and mental life: Dickens, Stevenson, Spinoza, and William James. Though he admires and reads with pleasure many of the novelists of today, none of them, he thinks, will supplant Dickens. Independent and level-headed, he supports heartily "modern developments or ideas of science, government, marriage, and morals." He seems to have grown with the times.

Chapter V
THE MERRIWELL SAGA

Young Patten embarked on a literary career in his early teens, when, exhibiting the fertility of his mature years, he wrote a number of stories, patterned, of course, on his reading of dime novels. He recalls little of this work today, except that it was shot through with misspellings. Unfortunately, he preserved none of these attempts at fiction, thus we are unable to pass upon their merit and promise. A likely parallel may be suggested in the youthful literary effort of Booth Tarkington's Penrod, who produced that famous "thriller," Harold Ramorez; or, The Roadagent.

In the succeeding years he turned his attention to verse, producing poems which he characterizes today as "nature stuff" and "terrible." He admits the influence of Wordsworth and Bryant, but refuses to make comparisons. Rhyme was the only virtue of his productions, he says. Again, it is impossible to give an example. Until 1913, when he was appointed to the editorship of Top Notch, Patten preserved, for sentimental reasons,
scrap books of his early work. At that time he consigned to the flames all his productions from the earliest efforts to the last dime novels published by Beadle and Adams. He relates this act with huge satisfaction, for it helps him forget the William G. Patten of dime-novel days. In the same spirit he has dropped the "William," preferring to style himself "Gilbert Patten."

Of his early dime novels twenty-five survive in Dr. F. P. O'Brien's collection of the Beadle publications, now owned by the New York Library. According to Patten they are unbelievably bad--hackwork definitely imitative of the western and detective fiction of the dime-novel type. They were written for bread and butter, as a stop-gap, until such time as the author could produce the great novel he had dreamed about. Recently he said of them:

In my own case I have preserved none of the fiction I did for Beadle, and I would be very happy were there none in existence. They were very crude, juvenile things--and I'm sure 'things' is the right word.

In the production of such fiction he acquired only facility in writing. Nothing else was carried over to

1. See Bibliography, Part I, A.
2. Letter to the writer, December 22, 1931.
his magnum opus, the saga of Frank Merriwell. He had not yet become an author of stories about boys for boys. His heroes throughout his apprenticeship with Beadle had been adult. When, however, he left Beadle and Adams in 1894 to write for Norman Munro's Golden Hours, he found himself in a new medium. Golden Hours featured juvenile heroes in its pages, and Patten was not long in producing the type of story in demand, rapidly becoming an experienced hand as a writer of juveniles. After producing Bicycle Ben, The Boy from Maine, and several others for Munro, he began to contribute to Street and Smith's Good News, a similar publication. His first assignment was to write the opening chapters of a story to be called The Boy from the West. Previously the title had been given to Oliver Optic and Harry Castlemon, both of whom had failed to deliver satisfactory opening chapters. Patten's material pleased the editor, and resulted in his continuing on Good News with The Boy Boomers, The Boy Cattle King, and others. Having served a two years' apprenticeship (1894-1895) in the production of juvenile fiction, he began in 1896 on his greatest work, the "Merriwell Series," hacking out over a

period of seventeen years something like eighteen million words of fiction, a grand total of two hundred and eight full-length novels.

In the autumn of 1895, after the failure of his play, *Men of Millions*, he had left New York for Camden to visit his parents. Early in December he received a letter from Ormond G. Smith, his publisher, informing him that the firm was contemplating the publication of a new boys' "library," a series of stories about an American preparatory school and college athlete, and intimating that Patten seemed to be qualified for the authorship. Immediately interested, he wrote for further details, receiving on December 16, 1895, a long letter describing fully what the publishers had in mind. The letter follows:

December 16, 1895.

Gilbert Patten, Esq.
Camden, Maine

Dear Sir: Replying to your favor of December 13, at hand today, we beg to state that the material of which we wrote you in our last letter is intended for a library which we purpose issuing every week; something in the line of the Jack Harkaway stories, Gay Dashleigh series which we are running in Good News and the Island School series, all of which are expressed to you under separate cover, the idea being to issue a library containing a series of stories covering this

1. This letter is reprinted from "The Man Merriwell." *Saturday Evening Post*, June 11, 1927, p. 129.
class of incident, in all of which will appear one prominent character surrounded by suitable satellites. It would be an advantage to the series to have introduced the Dutchman, the Negro, the Irishman, and other dialects that you are familiar with. From what we know of your work, we believe you can give us what we require, and would be pleased to have you write us one of these stories at once. Upon receipt of it, if satisfactory, we will be prepared to make a contract with you to cover twenty thousand words weekly for this library and a sufficient number of Good News stories to keep them running in the columns of Good News, if you believe you can turn out this amount of work.

It is important that the main character in the series should have a catchy name, such as Dick Lightheart, Jack Parkaway, Gay Dashleigh, Don Kirk, as upon this name will depend the title for the library.

The essential idea of this series is to interest young readers in the career of a young man at a boarding school, preferably a military or a naval academy. The stories should differ from the Jack Parkaways in being American and thoroughly up to date. Our idea is to issue, say twelve stories, each complete in itself, but like the links in a chain, all dealing with life at the academy. By this time the readers will have become sufficiently well acquainted with the hero, and the author will also no doubt have exhausted most of the pranks and escapades that might naturally occur.

After the first twelve numbers, the hero is obliged to leave the academy, or takes it upon himself to leave. It is essential that he should come into a considerable amount of money at this period. When he leaves the academy he takes with him one of the professor's servants, a chum. In fact any of the characters you have introduced and made prominent in the story. A little love element would also not be amiss, though this is not particularly important.

When the hero is once projected on his travels there is an infinite variety of incident to choose from. In the Island School Series, published by one of our London connections, you will find scenes of foreign travel, with color.
This material you are at liberty to use freely, with our hero as the central character, of course, and up-to-date dialogue.

After we run through twenty or thirty numbers of this, we would bring the hero back and have him go to college—say, Yale University; thence we could take him on his travels again to the South Seas or anywhere.

If you can do the opening stories of school life, you will be able to do them all, as we shall assist you in the matter of local color for the stories of travel.

This letter will, of course, be held as confidential. After you have fully examined the Island School material, kindly return to us.

Yours truly,

Through the winter of 1895-96 Patten read a great deal of material for background. He was, of course, entirely unfamiliar with boarding-school life, but he supplied the deficiency by studying catalogues, pamphlets, and actual stories that dealt with such schools. Though he followed most of Ormond Smith's suggestions, he made no use of the "Jack Harkaway" stories. He was determined to create an entirely new character, one that had no kinship to the ordinary protagonists of the dime novel. It was his intention—so far as permissible in juvenile fiction which demands continuous action—to develop a character that would suggest incident, rather than a stock hero to be thrown haphazardly into unmotivated action.

Following the first suggestion of a "catchy name," he devised "Frank Merriwell," which he explains
Thus:

For my hero I took the given name of Frank to express one of his characteristics—open, on the level, above-board, frank. Merriwell was formed by a combination of two words, Merry—expressive of a jolly high-spirited lad—and well, suggesting abounding physical health. I've never heard of a person, living or dead, whose family name was Merriwell.

In addition, he decided to surround the hero with "suitable satellites" and to supply a "little love element." Finally, to the "advantage" of the series, he introduced characters who spoke in dialect. Nothing more was required for success than a fertile imagination, a facile style, and sheer, dogged determination; and these he possessed in abundance.

It is manifestly impossible to give a complete picture of Frank Merriwell's career, a career that occupies the better part of 208 novels of some 80,000 words each. A sketch of the most essential details must suffice.

Like Minerva, Frank sprang from the head of his creator full-grown, or nearly so. He first appeared to his public as a candidate for admission to Fardale, a mythical New England academy. His character was thrown into strong relief in the opening lines of the first

"Get out!"
Thump! A shrill howl of pain.
"Stop it! That's my dog!"
"Oh, it is? Then you ought to be kicked too! Take that for your impudence!"
Cuff! A blow from an open hand sent the boyish owner of a whimpering poodle staggering to the ground, while paper bags of popcorn flew from his basket and scattered their snowy contents around.
"That was a cowardly blow!"

The last remark was Frank's. Alighting from the train at the Fardale railroad station, our hero had been just in time to see a dark-complexioned and hot-tempered youth strike a small popcorn vender. Frank immediately rebuked the assailant, and finding that persuasion was unavailing, knocked him out with a short right to the jaw. This incident disclosed two things to the reader: that Frank could be relied upon to fight on the side of right on any occasion, and that he was a boxer. As the reader followed his career at Fardale he discovered that Frank had almost a perverted sense of justice, and that in addition to being a boxer he was a player of football and baseball, a swimmer, a wrestler, a track man—he excelled in every division, weights, field events, and dashes—a marksman, a ventriloquist, and even a scholar; and he possessed championship proportions in

all these departments. He had a body like Tarzan's and a head like Einstein's—the perfect union of brain and brawn. As the story progressed details of his pre-Fardale life were added. Frank was the son of a wealthy mine-owner who had inherited a passion for gambling. Upon learning of this degrading habit, Mr. Merriwell's wife had died of grief, and Mr. Merriwell had gone west, leaving his infant son under the guardianship of his brother, Asher Merriwell. Before going west Mr. Merriwell placed a fortune in a bank to provide an allowance for Frank, and left him a ring with a peculiarly scratched black stone. Asher had provided a tutor for the boy in Professor Scotch, a brilliant and eccentric scholar who loved his pupil despite his merry and sometimes dangerous pranks. When Frank was a manly youth of sixteen, he was sent to Fardale in preparation for his future matriculation at Yale.

At Fardale Frank immediately became popular with the students and faculty. His winning manners and athletic prowess, it seems, made general favor inevitable. His enemies were few but bitter; for all of them, for sundry reasons, had felt the moral and well-nigh mortal weight of his fist. Chief among them was Bart Hodge, the youth whom he had punished for striking
the small seller of popcorn. Frank's first years at Fardale tell the story of his struggle against the evil machinations of Hodge in every side of school life, curricular and extra-curricular. He bested him on every occasion, however, the feud terminating when he risked his own life to save Hodge's. His enemy had a change of heart, and became Frank's closest friend. In like manner Frank won over Jack Diamond, a Virginian whose sectional partisanship in politics he changed to staunch support of the Stars and Stripes, and Bruce Browning, a huge bully whose pride he chastened. Friends from the first were Hans Dunnerwurst and Harry Rattleton, two good-natured sycophants. Unless they were completely depraved, Frank's enemies eventually became his friends; for our hero never bore malice in his soul, and was ever ready to forgive any number of heinous offences, provided the instigator were genuinely sorry. Those unfortunates who persisted in their persecutions even after Frank had rescued them from grave peril were confined in madhouses and prisons, or met sudden and violent deaths.

With this nucleus of friends at Fardale, Frank found himself battling against a mysterious gang of thugs who were bent on abducting him. Discovering that
they wished to secure the peculiar ring his father had left him, he guarded the talisman carefully, always managing to outwit his enemies. After he had been some time at Fardale his uncle died, appointing Professor Scotch as the guardian. With the professor, Frank and his friends sought to broaden their minds by summer travels in Europe. Their adventures abroad were a succession of rescues; they solved the entanglements of new friends, and escaped by hair's breadth margins the many dangers in which they became embroiled. Frank, of course, was the master mind on every occasion.

The years at Fardale became a record of triumphs in athletics, in scholarship, and against evil of any kind. From his first days at school Frank had been in love with Inza Durrage, the daughter of a wealthy burgher of Fardale. He had first seen Inza when she was about to be bitten by a mad dog, and with characteristic decision and lightning speed had saved her from almost certain hydrophobia. Inza was a beauty--deep black eyes and hair, and an imperious temperament. She returned Frank's affection, the affair going to the length of two kisses, at widely separate intervals, during the Fardale days. After finishing his secondary school career in a blaze of glory, Frank entered Yale.
Fortunately, Mr. Burrage decided to remove to New York, thus giving Frank a chance to run down from New Haven occasionally to rescue Inza from kidnappers and the like.

Bart Hodge, Jack Diamond, and Bruce Browning entered Yale along with Frank. College life offered no insurmountable difficulties. On a slightly more mature scale, Frank repeated the successes and triumphs of Fardale. He "made" all the varsity teams in his freshman year, usually winning the games in the very last moments of play. It was seldom that he managed to play an entire game; for his ever-vigilant enemies had a nasty habit of abducting him just before a crucial contest, and he escaped from their clutches only in time for the final seconds—a brief margin, but enough for a win. Though he excelled in every sport, Frank was above all a baseball player. He soon became Old Eli's star pitcher. In this capacity he evolved a curve that the major league "hurlers" of today have not yet succeeded in duplicating—his famous double-shoot, a ball that curved in two directions on its way to the plate.

Early in his college career an emotional disturbance entered his life. He twice rescued Elsie Bellwood, the beautiful blond daughter of a grizzled and horny-
palmed sea captain. Something about Elsie intrigued our hero from the outset. He began to think more of her than he did of Inza. Perhaps it was because Elsie was clinging and affectionate, whereas Inza was spirited and self-willed. The ever-conscientious Frank confessed to Inza that he was in doubt about his feelings. Inza made him choose between them; and when Frank finally selected Elsie, the remarkable woman said she would always love both of them. With the heroic example of Inza before her, Elsie decided that she was not to be outdone, and determined to give up Frank. Thus, when our hero went to her home town, Castine, Maine, on a visit, it was to find her in company with Evan Hartwick, his arch-enemy at Yale. Hiding a breaking heart under a scornful laugh, Elsie cut him dead. Broken-hearted, Frank flung himself into a gay life in an attempt to forget. Finally, though, he rescued her in the nick of time from the depraved Hartwick, who had so far forgotten himself as to attempt an assault on her virtue. While Hartwick was dying, fittingly enough, of an apoplectic stroke, Frank held Elsie in his arms. They were reconciled.

With his mind at rest our hero returned to Yale and continued his strenuous athletic career. Time and again he was kidnapped just before a crucial contest; but he
escaped each time to win the game in the last few seconds of play. During the summers he added to his reputation of a world traveler. Having exhausted the possibilities of Europe and other centers of civilization, he explored darkest Africa. In the heart of the jungle Frank again rescued Elsie, who had, it seems, been traveling in the same country. He returned to America to continue his college career, but circumstances conspired against him. His fortune, unwisely invested, was lost. Nothing daunted, Frank went to work on a railroad, where in time he settled a huge strike, recovered his fortune, and resumed his college activities.

During his senior year at Old Eli Frank learned that his father was definitely dead. Mr. Merriwell, as events turned out, had remarried in the West, the fruit of his second union being Dick Merriwell, a wild, unmanageable boy of fifteen. Frank found this half-brother in the heart of the Rockies. Neither Dick nor his mentor, old Joe Crowfoot, liked Frank. Dick was contented with western life, for old Joe had taught him Indian lore of every kind—even how to imitate the cries of wild animals. He resented fiercely Frank's determination to take him east. In a rage the Indian tried to kill Frank. Dick showed he was made of the right stuff by
rescuing his half-brother; and the three became good friends when Frank asserted that he harbored no resentment toward old Joe. Lost in admiration at the magnanimity of Frank, Dick willingly undertook the long journey east and entered Fardale. Twice his yet primitive impulses induced him to run away—each time to be followed and brought back by his watchful brother. He then settled down to follow in Frank’s footsteps, duplicating in time most of the latter’s exploits.

In due time Frank graduated from Yale with the highest honors. After touring the country as an amateur athlete, and amazing the population with his dazzling double-shoot, he settled down in Bloomfield and established a school for wayward boys. There he redeemed and thoroughly Americanized many incipient villains. Resentful at first, the boys in the end came to worship him, resolving to pattern their conduct on his. Frank, now twenty-four or twenty-five, and in the spring of life, let his fancy lightly turn to thoughts of love. Again he became upset emotionally. Elsie, who was always getting into difficulties of one sort or another, had been rescued from a burning ship by Bart Hodge, his firmest friend. Frank perceived that they loved each other. Taking mental stock of himself, he realized that his one true love all along had been Inza. He went to her and made amends.
They were married, and for a time Frank settled down to a peaceful life, Dick becoming the cynosure of the reader's eyes.

Dick's career at Fardale and Yale, however, is so similar to Frank's that it would seem repetitious and tedious to give it here. In the profusion of the Dick Merriwell novels that now follow, an occasional Frank Merriwell novel appears to spin out the tenuous thread that makes of the series a single unified work.

Leaving Inza to take care of the home, Frank went periodically on journeys that carried him to the farthest reaches of the planet. Previously he had become thoroughly acquainted with the United States, Europe and Africa. He now set out to explore the fastnesses of South America. As a philanthropic filibuster he settled the turbulent difficulties of the Central American republic Tampano and then penetrated into the wilds of Peru in search of Inca treasure. His hair-raising exploits make the labors of Hercules and the wandering of Ulysses seem pitifully small and localized. But throughout all his triumphs he remained the same modest and self-deprecating young man, beloved by his friends respected at least by the worst of his enemies. He was no small factor in promoting international peace.
Wherever he went he proclaimed his Americanism and made the Stars and Stripes adored. Finally, like Penelope's man, he returned to Inza, taking a hand in the rearing of his son Frank Merriwell, Jr. By the time Dick had graduated from Yale and had topped off his education with a period of adventurous world travel, Frank, Jr. was ready to begin preparatory school and follow in the steps of his illustrious father. He did.

Beyond recording his birth, however, Mr. Patten had nothing to do with Frank Merriwell, Jr. That young man's career was traced by the three substitute hacks who were employed on the saga after the original author had begun to write for *Top Notch*. To their credit, be it said that there is no distinguishable difference between their work and Mr. Patten's. But after all, their task was easy. The trail was already blazed; they had simply to travel over a well worn road. They could use any of the earlier stories by doing little more than inserting a "Jr." in the titles and revising the football and baseball rules. The structure of this juvenile epic is the product solely of the genius of Mr. Patten. Like Homer, he had his lesser Vergils.

1. See Chapter IV, p. 93.
Should Patten ever recast his work in its rightful form, he might appropriately begin;

Favor my song, O Muse, of the Merriwell Blood triumphant,

thus establishing his theme at the outset, for his epic records the successes of three mighty heroes who sprang from the same germ plasm and triumphed because of their heritage. As the reader follows the career of Frank, realization dawns on him slowly that that young man wins his battles and resists his temptations because he has Merriwell blood in his veins. As he reads on and sees Dick change from a surly cub to a young man socially acceptable in any sphere, he realizes that the Merriwell haemoglobin content is amazingly potent. And his realization of this fact turns to certain conviction when he meets Frank, Jr., and finds him a perfect replica, physically, mentally and morally, of his illustrious sire. The Merriwell blood will out; and its color is red, not blue. Herein lies the unity of the Merriwell series, and plot in the largest sense.

Naturally Patten had no realization that his epic was going to achieve such form. In fact, at the outset he only knew, in a vague sort of way, that he was going to put Frank Merriwell through preparatory school and
eventually through college. He had no idea that there
was, or would be, a Dick Merriwell. Dick owes his exis-
tence to the fact that his brother was rapidly growing
out of the class of juvenile heroes. Frank could not
remain eternally young like the Katzenjammer Kids or
Skippy; he had to grow up. When he finished his first
year at Fardale, he had to begin a second, then a third
and a fourth. When finally Frank was nearly through
Yale, his creator decided to bring in a younger hero to
occupy the ground floor. Fortunately, he had shrouded
the doings of Merriwell pere in a cloud of mystery,
speaking of him vaguely as having gone west shortly
after Frank was born. The purpose of this action was
to excite the interest of the readers, who, he was well
aware, would read each succeeding story in the hope of
seeing the mystery cleared up. Thus, unconsciously,
he had set the stage for the appearance of Dick, for
it was not at all improbable that Mr. Merriwell had
remarried somewhere in the hinterland of America.

Regarded as a single work, the actual story of
the Merriwell dynasty Frank I, Dick I, and Frank II,
is a huge novel consisting of some nine hundred chap-
ters of twenty thousand words each. A series of dis-
creet episodes which record the athletic triumphs and
adventures of three wonderboys, it has a single tenuous thread for binding—the love affair of Frank and Inza. Observing strict chronology, it follows the career of Frank through preparatory school and college, picking up the Dick story before permitting the strenuous Frank to retire for a well-merited vacation. Just before Dick settles down to a tame existence, Frank, Jr., a virtual reincarnation of his father, appears on the scene ready to enter Fardale. To be sure, there are comparatively long threads which occupy several chapters, but they remain in the background, entering the main action in a climax episode, and then disappearing for good. Two such threads, for example, are the mystery of Frank's father, and the discovery of the brother, Dick. What unity there is is achieved through the love affair of Frank and Inza, which runs through the entire work. Though Dick's career occupies nearly as much space as Frank's, it may be regarded not as an unwarranted excrescence, but a long-winded and too faithful restatement of the main action. Equally vulnerable with Frank, Dick experienced a long-drawn-out affair of the heart with June Arlington, a girl not unlike Inza.

Each twenty-thousand-word chapter is a complete story in itself and can be read and understood
independently of its predecessors. Let us consider one of them, No. 256, entitled Frank Merriwell's Mysterious Move; or, Thirteen Pieces of Silver. The story opens with a scene in the Grand Central Station in New York. Frank and a friend, Dick Starbright, the author informs us, were about to return to Yale after rescuing Inza Burrage from a depraved kidnaper. Something in the morning paper gave Frank a start, and after examining some silver half dollars in his pocket, he told Starbright that he was not going to New Haven. Checking that young man's curiosity—but not the reader's—by promising to explain later, he hastened back to the hotel and induced Inza and her father to leave immediately for the country. Trusting him completely, the two left in his company for a small town some distance away. On the train our hero happened to notice a swarthy Italian who was supplied with half dollars similar to his own. He shadowed this man back to the New York Bowery, and disguising himself as a Bowery tough, followed him to his destination, a small leather-shop. That night he entered the cellar of the shop through an unused door, and there he found what he had suspected from the very first—a gang of counterfeitters at work! A crash at the front of the shop, he realized instinctively,
preluded the appearance of the police. Immediately he hastened back to the door, barring the escape of the several criminals with the pressure of his mighty shoulder. In the morning he rejoined the bewildered Burrages and showed them a clipping of the news item he had read at the station the day before. After the rescue of Inza it seems that Mr. Burrage had hastily moved from one hotel to another. The item merely stated that the police were looking for a Mr. Burrage who had settled part of his hotel bill with spurious money. Our hero's half dollars had come from the same source. Realizing that Mr. Burrage must have obtained the money innocently, quick-witted Frank had removed him from the scene until he could apprehend the criminals. He feared that Mr. Burrage might suffer from shock if arrested. The thirteen pieces of silver, by the way, were a collection of the counterfeit half dollars which Frank thrice threw away, the money being returned to him as many times by sheer coincidence.

The episodic plot is never more complicated than this; and Patten reduced it to a formula. Frank always battled against odds, and won. And in the process of winning he demonstrated those manly qualities which endeared him to millions of readers.
On one occasion, at least, Patten produced an episode of considerably more weight than the average. *Dick Merriwell's Regret* records the story of the death of a lonely college student, an incident unmistakably suggested by Charles Macomb Flandreau's short story, *Wellington*, which appeared in the author's *Harvard Episodes*. Flandreau's story told with stark simplicity and restraint the aftermath of Hugo Wellington's death, as related to Mrs. Haydock by her son, Philip, a student. Wellington was scarcely known to his classmates, and even his death made no great impression until Nate Lawrence, the conscientious president of the class, asked Haydock to write a letter of condolence to the mother. To secure further details, Haydock went to Wellington's rooms, and found out from the landlady that Mrs. Wellington was arriving on the afternoon train. Immediately he persuaded several students to attend the funeral services, and went to the station to meet the mother to whom he introduced himself as one of Wellington's friends. The deception worked smoothly. Lawrence arrived with an armful of roses "from the class," accompanied by several "friends." After the services Haydock took Mrs. Wellington to her train. In the coach he learned from her remarks why the deception had been successful.
In his letters Wellington had told her that he was a close friend of the most popular students on the campus, Haydock among them.

In Patten's hands the story loses much of its original force, and becomes for the most part a melodramatic and sentimental "splurge" of the type calculated to appeal to young readers. Using the details of Wellington, our author simply expanded them and used a chronology better suited to his purpose. At the opening Ellis Preston, a frail but gritty youth, refused to say his prayers to a group of bullying sophomores. Dick Merriwell and his chum, Brad Buckhart, came to his rescue, and in the squabble that followed Preston managed to slip away to his room to write a letter to his mother. Early in the evening some sophomores burst into his room, seized him, and escorted him to a canal not far away. Still persistent in his refusal to pray, he was immersed three times in the icy depths. After Dick again rescued him, he hastened to his boarding house and went straight to bed with a high fever, for a cold "had settled on his lungs." He died two days later, shortly after writing a note to Dick apologizing for his cowardly behavior

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1. Harvard Episodes was first published in 1906; Dick Merriwell's Regret, in 1907.
in running away on the afternoon of the hazing. Except for exaggeration in the direction of sentimentality, the remaining details parallel closely those of Wellington. Dick, for example, had a number of long-drawn-out conversations with Mrs. Preston during her stay—he, of course, had been the idol of Preston's letters—and arranged matters more thoroughly than did Haydock. He visited five florists' shops in his efforts to keep up the deception, saw to it that some twenty students attended the funeral, and escorted Mrs. Preston back to the station in company with thirty fellows who "stood with uncovered heads, until the train pulled out." Brad Buckhart brought the "roses from the class." Haydock had referred tersely to Lawrence's similar action as "a nice little lie." 1 Dick was more formal:

Dick stepped forward and grasped the Texan's hand.
"They're fine, Brad," he said, "and it was splendid of you to think of this beautiful piece of deception."

As far as the action of the entire epic was concerned, background played an unimportant role. Though Frank traveled to the farthest reaches of the globe,

1. Dick Merriwell's Regret, p. 80.
exploring and visiting every region known and unknown, the scenes of his activity proved neither a hindrance nor an aid. Frank triumphed solely because of his Merriwell blood.

Background did, however, provide a stimulating variety, a change of scene. If Patten had confined his hero just to New York City, for example, it is safe to assume that he would never have fought his myriad battles. The romantic readers might stomach fifty triumphs in the metropolis, but they would inevitably have rebelled at nine hundred. Recognizing such a possibility, the author sent Frank all over the world, with the result that some millions of fans, in their stupendous gullibility, swallowed the same pill with a different coating nearly a thousand times.

The various scenes, to be sure, suggested incident of an obvious sort. In France our hero fought a duel with a count, and in Peru he found an Inca treasure. In the African jungle he slew "Numa, the Lion," and in the American West he discovered a gold-mine. But he fought other duels, found other treasures, and discovered other gold-mines. The main plot alone saved the work from oblivion. Readers who early discerned the artifices read on eagerly to the consummation of Frank's love
affair, which came with exasperating slowness, and exhibited interest only in scenes with which they were totally unfamiliar.

They were properly fooled. Though Patten has never traveled outside the United States, he has received hundreds of letters from readers who assumed that he was a world-wide explorer. He supplied his deficiency in the matter of background by reading travel books and geographies which dealt with any particular scene he wished to incorporate in the epic. Furthermore, he kept his descriptions within the bounds of popular imagination—hence his settings carried conviction as accurate representations. Whether the scene was Maine, his home state, or South America, he wrote with the same general familiarity, and the same disregard of detail. Maine, any reader could gather, was a place full of hills, lakes, and summer resorts, where the natives dropped the final "g" from participles and said "b'ot" and "c'ot" instead of "boat" and "coat." Peru was a warm country full of jungles and a lofty mountain range, the Andes, inhabited by swarthy Spanish-speaking people who displayed no interest in the abundant remains of the Inca civilization. These general features, repeated often though never at great length, always accurate as far as they go, were convincing enough to satisfy a not overcritical juvenile public.
By far the most outstanding feature of the Merriwell Series is its characterization--Patten's forte. The work abounds with characters of all sorts: paragons of all the manly virtues, wicked villains, beautiful girls, comic personages, and a host of stock types, the stupid Dutchman, the crafty Indian, the filibustering Irishman, the faithful Negro and the usual sycophants that hang worshipfully about any great hero. Of all these the Merriwell boys are the least real; yet to the infantile minds for which they were intended they are the most vivid. When Patten first conceived the name, Frank Merriwell, he determined to make his hero ideal. He explains his method, thus:

Characters were perhaps the hardest. When you're writing regular fiction, you draw your characters from life. But when you're writing for boys you draw your characters from the imaginary world that boys live in. When I conceived Frank, I think I hit on approximately the boy that every kid would like to be. Not, mind you, the boy that every kid ought to be. That was the Horatio Alger idea--a moral in every story. But my boy pointed no moral; he was just every boy's ideal picture of himself.

Thus Frank came to stand as a living example of such abstractions as loyalty, courage, faith, honesty--in fact, of the twelve Boy Scout maxims and the

Y. M. C. A. precept of a sound mind in a clean body. In adhering to this policy Patten endeavored to anticipate any charges of priggishness by making Frank tolerant of his friends' minor vices. Frank, of course, could neither swear, smoke nor drink, but it was not for moral reasons that he eschewed such habits. As he frequently explained, when questioned by his friends, swearing was useless, and smoking and drinking impaired the efficiency of an athlete. He didn't regard such habits as sinful; they were simply unhealthy. It was an important element of Frank's character that he expressed his views on such matters only when pressed. In the writer's memory he never volunteered any lectures. Here is the most marked difference between Frank and Dick, and the one that accounts for the comparatively small popularity of the latter. Though Dick had all the accomplishments of his brother, and, indeed, was scarcely distinguishable from him in most respects, he had an irritating habit of chiding his friends. Patten himself thinks that Dick's former surliness accounts for his inability to "catch on." It is far more likely, however, that he offended his youthful
admirers with lectures like the following:

"The secret of your restlessness and inability to fix your mind on any one thing for more than a brief period of time is before me now," declared (Dick) Merriwell. Tucker flushed a bit.
"You're talking in riddles," he said.
"Then I'll make myself plain."
"I wish you would."
"You have an enemy. You're following the old Bible admonition to love your enemies. This enemy of yours is very dear to you. Your affection for him is increasing every day. At first you didn't care much for him, but you jollied along with him just because other chaps seemed to like him. You know that's natural. Lots of us do that. If we find a person or a thing is very popular with the masses we conceive a liking for him or it ourselves. Follow the crowd, that's the motto. In this manner you became acquainted with your enemy. You took him to your bosom, but not until he had become exceedingly familiar to you did you actually seem to love him. Like others, you fail to see through the little scoundrel, for he's a little fellow. To you he seems perfectly harmless, and rather jolly and companionable........ every day he's destroying your will power....... etc. etc. etc.
"Now, hold on!" cried Tucker. "Explain yourself. What's his name?"
"C. I. Garette."
"Oh, say Dick; that's all bosh. You're old fashioned. I don't deny that drinking hurts a chap, but cigarettes--oh, ha! ha! ha!
"You're not the first one I've heard laugh at such an assertion, Tommy, but I've told you the sober truth. Cigarettes dull the faculties, stunt and retard the physical development, unsettle the mind, and rob the persistent user of will power and ability to concentrate.......... The cigarettes you inhale have interfered with

1. Dick Merriwell's Regret, p. 110.
your ability to study, and thus they are the direct cause of the worry you blame for your nervousness. Tucker, you're a jolly chap, and I like you, but I wish you'd cut those little paper-wrapped devils out of your list of friends supposed-to-be. You won't find it easy, old chap. They've got a great hold on you, and you'll have to fight hard to shake them.... etc. etc. for several pages more.

No normal boy could read such stuff without conceiving a dislike for the speaker. That boy heard the same lecture once a week in a Sunday School class, free of charge. He was not likely to squander a nickel for information already too familiar to his unwilling ears, for information that he was beginning to disbelieve, anyhow. For the same price he could attend a movie, where he would be free from moral discourses of dubious validity.

This penchant for preaching was the only failing that made Dick human, albeit a little unpleasantly so. Frank, too, had a human weakness. From his father he had inherited a strong passion for gambling. Bit by bit he learned that it was a bad habit and eventually overcame it. To be sure, a man of his judgment couldn't possibly lose; so, be it cards or horses, he always emerged the winner, but his ill-gotten gains got him into trouble every time, and finally he learned his lesson. Some vestiges of his habit must have remained,
however; for he transmitted the passion to Frank, Jr., who fought the battle anew.

Frank's satellites ranged from slightly imperfect replicas of himself to the most outlandish of personages. Bart Hodge, at first a bitter enemy and later a staunch friend, nearly approached the Merriwell standard of perfection. He was just a little smaller than his idol, a trifle less handsome, and just a shade less proficient in athletics. His similarity to Frank was the price he paid for his friendship. As a villain, Bart emerged much more clearly. Inventive of wicked plots, and stopping little short of murder, he battled for several episodes on equal terms with Frank—only to lose his identity when he became the latter's friend. Bruce Browning and Jack Diamond were similar to Bart in their attempt to pattern their conduct on Frank, though they fell more often. The former was an easy-going and lazy giant, the latter a hot-tempered Virginian with the ideals of the Old South.

Hans Dunnerwurst and Harry Rattleton were two famous comic characters. Neither athletes nor scholars, they were simply a couple of good-natured boobs who laughed at Frank's jokes and wept at his set-backs. Usually timid, in a pinch they showed their worth and fought
like bearcats. Their humor, unconscious on their part, arose from impediments. Hans spoke broken English in German word-order, and Harry was an inadvertent Spoonerist, producing remarks like "I seeel filly, I mean I feel silly" and "straight as the fly crows--I mean the cry flows--I mean the crow flies." Josh Crane, a native of Maine, traveled about with Frank on his various expeditions. He spoke a comic dialect, presumably that of a New Englander, frequently saying "Waal I dunno but I'll be ruther glad ter git my hoofs on United States soil ag'in. That's natteral enough fer me, yeou know, fer I've gut a little gal back there a-waitin' fer me." Like Harry and Hans, he seemed timid until Frank met with reverses. Loyalty and admiration were his distinguishing traits. Irish dialect was introduced by Barney Mulloy and Terry O'Hara. In Peru, true to type, they followed the path of more celebrated Hibernians. Barney became a colonel in the army of the Republic of Tampano, and Terry, adviser to the President. Their speech was identical. Here is a sample of Barney's: "This day Oi were promoted to be a colonel in the army. Phwat do ye think av thot? It's Colonel Mulloy now, so it is." The reader can imagine the exotic effect the author secured when he made these characters converse together—a strange
mixture of Yankeeisms, Irish dialect, German dialect, Spoonerisms, and Frank's flawless but somewhat stilted Americanese.

The influence of Dickens is observable in two queerly individualized characters, old Joe Crowfoot and Cap'n Walter Wiley, referred to as the Windjammer. Old Joe's Indian name was Shangowah. Attired in a dirty red blanket, he traveled all over the American West inveigling white men into poker games, professing ignorance with the bland innocence of Bret Harte's "Ah Sin." He usually won by skillful cheating. A peculiar mixture of rascality, loyalty, dignity, and sly humor, he is the most fully developed and most convincing character Patten has drawn. The Windjammer was a grizzled sea captain, who was fond of telling tall tales. He had likewise a penchant for whiskey and cards. He spoke at great length in an exotic dialect composed of polysyllabic words promiscuously mispronounced and misused. Here is one of Wiley's typical speeches delivered after Frank, an incorrigible joker, had suddenly awakened him with a loud yell and a shove into a pool of water:

"Why do you disturb the placid peacefulness of this pellucid morning with the ponderous

1. Frank Kerriwell's Triumph, p. 40.
pyrotechnics of your palpitating pleasure?" inquired Wiley. "Did it amuse you so much to see me take my regular morning plunge...... This was my morning for plunging, so I plunged. But what was that elongated, ear-splitting vibration that pierced the tympanum of my tingling ear? Somehow I fancy I heard a slight disturbance. I was dreaming just at that moment of my fearful encounter with Chinese pirates in the Indian Ocean some several years ago. Being thus awakened suddenly, I did my best to repel the boarders, and I fancy I shot a number of holes in the ambient atmosphere around here."

The Windjammer was drawn from life--an actual Walter Wiley with whom the author was acquainted. His character as portrayed in the epic, Patten says, is not in the least exaggerated. Patten tells the story of his incorporation, thus:

He asked to be let into the Herriwell stories, and was duly proud when his desire was granted. Immediately he bought himself a new outfit from head to foot and assumed an air of prosperity, even of affluence.

An acquaintance met him, looked him over appraisingly, and said: "Seems to me you're putting on a lot of dog, Cap'n, for a fellow that's been out of a job for six months or so. How do you do it?"

"Oh," replied Walter airily, "I'll never have to work any more. Gil Patten has incorrigitated me in his stories, and he has to renumerate me weekly--I mean powerfully--for the privilege. I'm drawing down an ambiguously commensurate sty-pen."

The female characters were not developed particularly well. Elsie Bellwood and Inza Burrage, between whom Frank found it so difficult to choose, were almost stock types. Inza was strong, self-willed, independent, and a brunette. Elsie was frail, irresolute, clinging, and a blonde. Both were beautiful, both were generous, and both loved Frank deeply. When they were not being rescued from mad dogs, runaway horses, or sinister abductors, they strove to outdo each other in magnanimity, each renouncing Frank in turn to leave the field clear to the other. Occasionally other females intruded, but, except in the case of Dick's June Arlington, not for long. One of these was Paula Benjamin, who "moved in Boston social circles." Though she was supposed to be in love with Jack Diamond, her brief appearance was most strongly marked by her professed admiration for Frank. The reader gathers that most of the women fell for our hero first, and then accepted his friends as the best available substitutes. Every girl whom Frank met eventually took mental and physical—in the most innocent sense—stock, decided that she was not good enough, and bestowed her favors
regretfully on some local swain. Frank's friends were never jealous, even when our hero flirted outrageously with their sweethearts. There is about such situations a strong flavor of divine right; and one can imagine them—if a subject of such gross indelicacy ever presented itself to their minds—subscribing cheerfully to "ius primæ noctis."

Of the villains only a brief mention need be made. Unless utterly depraved, they eventually reformed and did their best to emulate the example of Frank. Occasionally, however, one appeared, like Evan Hartwick, who dared to threaten one of the heroines with a fate worse than death. For such a vile cur, hanging was too good. His passion ended either in apoplexy or permanent mental derangement. Any lesser crimes, from attempted mayhem to thwarted homicide, were freely forgiven by Frank, against whom they were usually directed. He knew that the instigators would eventually see the light.

Of almost equal importance to characterization is the element of humor, which runs as an undercurrent throughout the entire work. It is manifested chiefly in slapstick repartee, in clashes of dialect, and in sheer horseplay. Repartee usually takes the form of
puns, bandied back and forth between two contestants. Here are Dick and his friend, Tommy Tucker, in top form:

"See you have a new suit of clothes, Tommy," observed Dick. "Sure," answered Tucker. "Did the tailor I recommended suit you all right?" "Yes," was the answer, "but it was a lawsuit." Tommy dodged as if expecting another cushion to come sailing through the air, but Dick refrained from hurling one at him. "Gee!" cried the little fellow, as if struck by a sudden thought. "I havn't seen anything of your dog, lately, Merriwell, old fellow. Where is he?"


"No," returned Dick solemnly. "He went round behind the house and died by the yard." With a dismal groan Tucker keeled over, holding both hands to his heart. "That was a very remarkable thing," he murmured, reviving after a few moments, "but I know of a woman who was turned into wood."

"Now Tommy, Tommy," cautioned Dick, "don't make any statements you can't prove."

"I'll prove it. I'll prove it to you all. You'll all acknowledge that I've spoken the truth." "Well, go ahead. How was this woman turned into wood?"

"She was placed on a vessel, and then she was aboard." etc. etc. etc.

More successful, perhaps, are the pages in which two speakers of dialect are engaged in heated argument.

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Here is a typical passage. John Anderson, one of Frank's cowboys, is rebuking Herman Schnitzledinkle, a tenderfoot who has lost his horse:

"Somebody bane careless 'bout letting dese horse get away," said Anderson, as he drew rein. "Faller who done it he batter tak care, mebbe he lose hees yob."

"Who vas you talking to mit such sauciness, Mr. Puncher-cow?" demanded Herman, rising with an assumption of dignity and squaring himself before Anderson. "I'm retty to let my job lose me any minute at, py Chorch!"

"Ay s'pose so," drawled Anderson, surveying the Dutch lad from his hair to his heels. "You bane no gude at any kinder yob. You big, fat lobster. You nevar larn to rode horse. Ay tank you nevar larn to be gude vor notting. You mach 'bliged to 'pinion of Yohn Anderson."

"Vot's dot?" squawked Herman wrathfully. "Vot sort of language was trying to talk you, anyhow? Vy don't you learn to speech the United States language? Nopody couldt understood vot you vas speaking, you wooden-headed chumps. Vot for dot horse to me you pring? I don't vant him. He won't ride me no more, anyway. He vill my neck proke uf he tries to ride me some more, undt so I vill not did it. Took him away. Took him away. Took yourself away along mit him. The looks of you I don't like at all. You vas homely enough an express-train to wreck. Put dot in your smoke undt pipe it.

Anderson surveyed the frothing, fuming lad as if he did not quite comprehend the meaning of it all.

"Vait," he said. "Ay vill vent and got a faller to interpret vat you mane, so Ay could understood him. Vy you spik Dooch language in United States? It bane oll rate in Holland. Bameby mebbe, you larn to spik 'Merican language goot lak Yohn Anderson." etc. etc. etc.

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Patten adopted with a vengeance Ormond Smith's suggestion of introducing dialect. He has not only Dutch-men, negroes, and Irishmen; he has Scandinavians, French-men, Germans, Spaniards, Indians, Jews, and even Chinese—all of whom speak twisted and tortured English. He has Southerners who say "suh," Yankees who say "beant," Westerners who say "pard," and Bowery thugs who say "dis" and "dat." And he handles their conversation with skill. Though his ear is not always accurate--his Yankees have too many "r's," for example--he records the speech with rigid consistency, and "puts it over" with colorful and telling effect.

Horseplay is yet another predominating type of drollery. Usually it took the form of elaborately conceived practical jokes which resulted in the decided discomfiture of the victim. Frank, who had a Gargantuan sense of humor, was usually the instigator. An accomplished ventriloquist, he provoked many classroom uproars both at Fardale and Yale, the affairs usually terminating in wholesale wreckage of furniture and features. Of an inventive turn of mind, he conceived on occasion such merry pranks as putting a turtle in the bed of a nervous friend and smashing a bag of rotten eggs in the face of an enemy—accompanying such exploits with peals of inextinguishable laughter.
In the course of this study the writer has several times referred to Patten's style as facile and rapid; and those adjectives perhaps describe it almost fully. His sentences flow along smoothly and easily with only an occasional sense of strain, and with next to no lapses of grammar. The one pronounced mannerism of the work Patten attributes to the fact that he dictated the stories to a stenographer at the rate of four thousand words a day, and seldom found time for revision. He refers to the stilted diction which Frank and some of his friends invariably employed—even in times of great emotional stress. He contends that "nice homely dialogue" is possible only when the author can spend a goodly amount of time on his material. Here is an example of what he attempts to account for. The scene is Peru. Frank is at the bedside of a dying treasure-hunter, a Mr. Siegrist, who wants him to be his partner:

Merry meditated briefly.
"The proposition comes suddenly, Mr. Siegrist," he said. "I have been some time away from home. When I left the United States I had no thought of remaining away for any great length of time. Circumstances have led me farther and farther from home, and I have been today rejoicing in the

1. Frank Merriwell in Peru, p. 47.
thought that there was no longer anything to prevent me from turning my face northward."

"You are a man of great business interests? Perhaps you feel you cannot neglect your business. Mr. Merriwell, think what it will mean to you if we enter into partnership and this effort to recover that vast treasure is crowned with triumph. We shall both become rich men--rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

Frank smiled.

"I am so situated," he said, "that the mere desire for riches might not be sufficient to induce me to participate in such a project. I will confess, however, that there is something else which influences me strongly. It is my natural love of adventure. I feel it pulsing strong in my veins."

There is another equally valid explanation, the writer feels, of this type of formal prose. In Frank the author had created a being superior in every department of life. Naturally, the speech of such a paragon would be extraordinary. When Patten put words into his hero's mouth, he was, it seems likely, merely trying to keep him "in character." Those of his satellites who were not definite speakers of dialect used a brand of English just a shade less formal than that of their superlative idol. Instead of regarding the mannerism as a blemish, the discerning reader must conclude that Frank spoke, as he should, like a person "with a college education."

It was altogether fitting and proper that he should do so.
Commenting on the epic as a whole, Patten remarked recently:

I have no reason to blush for the morals or ethics of the Merriwell stories. I did my best to keep them clean and make them beneficial without allowing them to become namby-pamby or Horatio Algerish. From the view point of today, they are in many spots extremely sentimental—perhaps humorously so. But that was the tone of the day in which they were written. The humor is often slapstick, but that was the humor which the youthful readers liked then—and which the mass of them still like. It has to be broad to amuse the average youngster, and many of the grown-ups as well.

Patten's best explanation of the facts on which these implied charges are based lies in his phrase, "the tone of the day." Undoubtedly the moral standards of Frank Merriwell were the moral standards of the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds. Our hero cultivated the virtues of the day and eschewed even the minor vices. He neither smoked, drank, nor cursed.

There was at the time—there still is—a well-established belief that smoking affected the "wind," that it would eventually "get" an athlete. More seriously, many persons were firmly convinced that a smoker was headed straight for perdition. Finally, the use of cigarettes was still something of an unmanly habit. In fact,

1. In a letter to the writer, January 6, 1932.
among the vulgar they were commonly referred to as "pimp-sticks." Naturally, Frank, a red-blooded athlete, could not smoke them and still be what his creator intended, an ideal youth and an example. For obvious reasons, he likewise could not be permitted the use of alcoholic beverages. Swearing—another minor vice—was, of course, ungentlemanly. Actually, none of the characters cursed, so to speak, "right out in print." A strict prohibition—observed throughout the course of the dime novel—forbade any diction of an offensive nature. Foul-mouthed characters had to be content with the use of "filthy language" or "frightful curses." There was, of course, any amount of "wooden swearing," like "Gee Whillikins," "Thutteration," "Jiminy Christmas," and "Gosh hang it all."

Patten treated sex with still more circumspection, in accordance with the most conservative standards of the juvenile literature of the day. An assault on maidenly virtue was unpardonable, even though it was never consummated. Nowhere in the Merriwell plots was there a hint of a wronged girl. Even lawful pregnancy was discussed with the utmost delicacy, and in the briefest fashion. Here is a passage in which the
reader learns for the first time that Elsie Bellwood Hodge is expecting a "blessed event." Bart, her husband, explains the matter to Frank:

"While I'm glad I'm going home, Kerry, I am sorry at the same time to leave you just now. Only for the fact that I must be there when--when it happens--you know--I'd stay here until you were ready to leave for Bloomfield, Frank. If Elsie hadn't written me just as she did in that last letter--"

"Bart, I'm a bit conscience-stricken because I've kept you away so long. This is a time when you should be with Elsie. She needs you....."

In addition to the morals of the day, some characteristics peculiarly the author's own were reflected in the work. Frank's ideas on religion were similar to his creator's. He believed in a Supreme Power, but had no definite connection with orthodox Christianity. He had, however, a profound respect for the views of others, and became at times a militant defender of the faith. During the hazing period at Yale, it was the frequent practice of the nastier bullies to force prayers from victims whose piety had exasperated them. Though usually tolerant, Frank could not stomach such abuses, and charged to the rescue with the cry of sacrilege. Dick Merriwell and Frank, Jr. were similarly constituted.

1. Frank Merriwell's Lesson, p. 256.
Patten's fondness for baseball is everywhere evident in the stories. Though he treats every conceivable sport in exhaustive and exciting detail—even managing to include some thrills in a billiard match—baseball is his forte. No doubt his early familiarity with the game accounts for his ability to make a Yale-Harvard contest not only exciting and vivid, but faithfully accurate. From the first his young readers kept close tabs on the games, and were quick to write him if he so much as dropped out half an inning or issued a pass on only three balls. Even today, in the preparation of his comic strip, he has to exercise great care in order to avoid a flood of unanswerable letters. In the writer's opinion he attains the quality of uniqueness as a reporter of baseball games, and is, in fact, at his best in describing any kind of contest. Even though it is a foregone conclusion that Frank must plunge through for the final touchdown or smash out the winning homer, the games will entertain thrillingly any lover of sport, young or old.

The appalling superiority of Frank Merriwell in every physical activity imaginable is part and parcel
of his creator's personality. Patten admits that Frank came to be not only young America's ideal but the author's own. In making his hero a paragon of manly strength and muscular co-ordination, he was compensating for his own clumsiness as a youth. This process of "wish-fulfillment" was, of course, an unconscious expression on the author's part, but is recognized by him today as an undoubted fact. Frank is emblematic of his interest in youngsters. Through him he preached, with a large measure of success, the gospel of good health and fair play. Like many authors before him, he succumbed to the charms of his own creation:

"Did I love Merriwell?" he has said. "Not at first. Those early stories were more of a joke to me than anything else. But when it got so that a half million kids were reading him every week—and I think there were that many, when you stop to think how the stories were lent from hand to hand—I began to realize that I had about the biggest chance to influence the youth of this country that any man ever had. And when you get the messiah complex you are lost. Yes, I loved him. And I loved him most because no boy, if he followed in his tracks, ever did anything that he need be ashamed of."

PART 1—THE WORKS OF WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN.

A. Fiction published by Beadle and Adams, New York, 1883-1895.

A Bad Man, a short story, Banner Weekly, 1883.

The Pride of Sandy Flat, a short story, Banner Weekly, 1883.

The Diamond Sport; or, The Double Face of Bedrock, No. 489, "Half Dime Library," 1886.

Captain Mystery; or, Five in One, No. 519, "Half Dime Library," 1887.

Daisy Dare, the Sport from Denver; or, The Toll-takers of Colorado, No. 531, "Half Dime Library," 1887.

Hustler Harry, the Cowboy Sport; or, Daring Dan Shark's General Delivery, No. 545, "Dime Library," 1889.

Colonel Cool, the Santa Fe Sharp; or, The Lucky Pards of Goodenough, No. 631, "Dime Library," 1890.

Wild Vulcan, the Lone Range Rider; or, the Rustlers of the Bad Lands, No. 682, "Half Dime Library," 1890.

Aztec Jack, the Desert Nomad; or, The Vulture's Swoop, No. 641, "Dime Library," 1891.

Goldglove Gid, the Man of Grit; or, Desperate Durg's Desperate Scheme, No. 648, "Dime Library," 1891.

Old Plug Ugly, the Rough and Ready; or, The Last Stroke of the Land Sharks, No. 656, "Dime Library," 1891.

The Giant Sport; or, Sold to Satan, No. 663, "Dime Library," 1891.

Old True Blue, the Trusty; or, The Marauder of The Mimbres, No. 669, "Dime Library," 1891.

Hurricane Hal, the Cowboy Hotspur; or, Old True Blue's Pilgrimage in Satan's Section, No. 676, "Dime Library," 1891.


Old Misery, the Man from Missouri; or, The Mystery of the Mountain League, No. 714, "Half Dime Library," 1891.

Violet Vane, the Vanquished; or, The Life Struggle at Shanty City, No. 750, "Half Dime Library," 1891.

The Sparkler Sharp; or, The Spotter Sport's Unknown Foe, No. 689, "Dime Library," 1892.
Clear-grit Cal, the Never-say-die Detective; or, The Strange Case of Captain Scudd, No. 774, "Half Dime Library," 1892.

Sam Sheridan, the Secret Service Special; or, The Jamboree at Early Bird Bar, No. 789, "Half Dime Library," 1892.

Old Burke, the Madison Square Detective, No. 756, "Dime Library," 1893.


Sharper Stokes' Double Deal; or, Disaster, the Border Nomad, No. 836, "Half Dime Library," 1893.


Fire-eye, the Thugs' Terror; or, Cockney Bob's Big Bluff, No. 810, "Dime Library," 1894.

B. Some Odd Stories, a six-column boiler-plate page.
   New York, American Press Association, 1894.

C. Fiction published serially in Norman Munro's Golden Hours, a juvenile weekly, New York, 1894-1895.

   Bicycle Ben.
   The Boy Centaur.
   John Smith of Michigan.
   The Winged Demon.
   The Boy from Maine.


The Boy Boomers.
The Boy Cattle King.
The Boy from the West.
Don Kirk's Mine.
Jud 'n Joe.
F. The "Merriwell Series."* Published in Street and Smith's nickel library, "Tip Top Weekly," 1896-1914. Subsequently the stories were bound in paper, three and four to a volume, and issued at three year intervals by Street and Smith, 1900-1933. The first 28 of them were bound in cloth. New York, A. L. Burt Co., 1915-1925.

Frank Merriwell's School Days.
Frank Merriwell's Chums.
Frank Merriwell's Foes.
Frank Merriwell's Trip West.
Frank Merriwell Down South.
Frank Merriwell's Bravery.
Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.
Frank Merriwell in Europe.
Frank Merriwell at Yale.
Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.
Frank Merriwell's Races.
Frank Merriwell's Party.
Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.
Frank Merriwell's Courage.
Frank Merriwell's Daring.
Frank Merriwell's Alarm.
Frank Merriwell's Athletes.
Frank Merriwell's Skill.
Frank Merriwell's Champions.
Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.
Frank Merriwell's Secret.
Frank Merriwell's Danger.
Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.
Frank Merriwell in Camp.
Frank Merriwell's Vacation.
Frank Merriwell's Cruise.
Frank Merriwell's Chase.
Frank Merriwell in Maine.
Frank Merriwell's First Job.
Frank Merriwell's Opportunity.
Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.
Frank Merriwell's Protege.
Frank Merriwell on the Road.
Frank Merriwell's Own Company.
Frank Merriwell's Fame.

* Unable to secure the original 940 titles in the "Tip Top Weekly," the writer offers the 208 titles of Street and Smith's paperbound series.
Frank Merriwell's College Chums.
Frank Merriwell's Problem.
Frank Merriwell's Fortune.
Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.
Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.
Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.
Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme.
Frank Merriwell in England.
Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
Frank Merriwell's Duel.
Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.
Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories.
Frank Merriwell's Confidence.
Frank Merriwell's Auto.
Frank Merriwell's Fun.
Frank Merriwell's Generosity.
Frank Merriwell's Tricks.
Frank Merriwell's Temptation.
Frank Merriwell on Top.
Frank Merriwell's Luck.
Frank Merriwell's Mascot.
Frank Merriwell's Reward.
Frank Merriwell's Phantome.
Frank Merriwell's Faith.
Frank Merriwell's Victories.
Frank Merriwell's Iron Nerve.
Frank Merriwell in Kentucky.
Frank Merriwell's Power.
Frank Merriwell's Shrewdness.
Frank Merriwell's Set-Back.
Frank Merriwell's Search.
Frank Merriwell's Club.
Frank Merriwell's Trust.
Frank Merriwell's False Friend.
Frank Merriwell's Strong Arm.
Frank Merriwell as Coach.
Frank Merriwell's Brother.
Frank Merriwell's Marvel.
Frank Merriwell's Support.
Dick Merriwell at Fardale.
Dick Merriwell's Glory.
Dick Merriwell's Promise.
Dick Merriwell's Rescue.
Dick Merriwell's Narrow Escape.
Dick Merriwell's Racket.
Dick Merriwell's Revenge.
Dick Merriwell's Ruse.
Dick Merriwell's Delivery.
Dick Merriwell's Wonders.
Frank Merriwell's Struggle.
Frank Merriwell's Honor.
Dick Merriwell's Diamond.
Frank Merriwell's Winners.
Dick Merriwell's Dash.
Dick Merriwell's Ability.
Dick Merriwell's Trap.
Dick Merriwell's Defense.
Dick Merriwell's Model.
Dick Merriwell's Mystery.
Frank Merriwell's Backers.
Dick Merriwell's Backstop.
Dick Merriwell's Western Mission.
Frank Merriwell's Rescue.
Frank Merriwell's Encounter.
Dick Merriwell's Marked Money.
Frank Merriwell's Nomads.
Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron.
Dick Merriwell's Disguise.
Dick Merriwell's Test.
Frank Merriwell's Trump Card.
Frank Merriwell's Strategy.
Frank Merriwell's Triumph.
Dick Merriwell's Grit.
Dick Merriwell's Assurance.
Dick Merriwell's Long Slide.
Frank Merriwell's Rough Deal.
Dick Merriwell's Threat.
Dick Merriwell's Persistence.
Dick Merriwell's Day.
Frank Merriwell's Peril.
Dick Merriwell's Downfall.
Frank Merriwell's Pursuit.
Dick Merriwell Abroad.
Frank Merriwell in the Rockies.
Dick Merriwell's Pranks.
Frank Merriwell's Pride.
Frank Merriwell's Challengers.
Frank Merriwell's Endurance.
Dick Merriwell's Cleverness.
Frank Merriwell's Marriage.
Dick Merriwell, the Wizard.
Dick Merriwell's Stroke.
Dick Merriwell's Return.
Dick Merriwell's Resource.
Dick Merriwell's Five.
Frank Merriwell's Tigers.
Dick Merriwell's Polo Team.
Frank Merriwell's Pupils.
Frank Merriwell's New Boy.
Dick Merriwell's Home Run.
Dick Merriwell's Dare.
Frank Merriwell's Son.
Dick Merriwell's Team Mate.
Frank Merriwell's Leaguers.
Frank Merriwell's Happy Camp.
Dick Merriwell's Influence.
Dick Merriwell, Freshman.
Dick Merriwell's Staying Power.
Dick Merriwell's Joke.
Frank Merriwell's Talisman.
Frank Merriwell's Horse.
Dick Merriwell's Regret.
Dick Merriwell's Magnetism.
Dick Merriwell's Backers.
Dick Merriwell's Best Work.
Dick Merriwell's Distrust.
Dick Merriwell's Debt.
Dick Merriwell's Mastery.
Dick Merriwell Adrift.
Frank Merriwell's Worst Boy.
Dick Merriwell's Close Call.
Frank Merriwell's Air Voyage.
Dick Merriwell's Black Star.
Frank Merriwell in Wall Street.
Frank Merriwell Facing His Foes.
Dick Merriwell's Stanchness.
Frank Merriwell's Hard Case.
Dick Merriwell's Stand.
Dick Merriwell Doubted.
Frank Merriwell's Steadying Hand.
Dick Merriwell's Example.
Dick Merriwell in the Wilds.
Frank Merriwell's Ranch.
Dick Merriwell's Way.
Frank Merriwell's Lesson.
Dick Merriwell's Reputation.
Frank Merriwell's Encouragement.
Dick Merriwell's Honors.
Frank Merriwell's Wizard.
Dick Merriwell's Race.
Dick Merriwell's Star Play.
Frank Merriwell at Phantom Lake.
Dick Merriwell a Winner.
Dick Merriwell at the County Fair.
Frank Merriwell's Grit.
Dick Merriwell's Power.
Frank Merriwell in Peru.
Frank Merriwell's Long Chance.
Frank Merriwell's Old Form.
Frank Merriwell's Treasure Hunt.
Dick Merriwell Game to the Last.
Dick Merriwell, Motor King.
Dick Merriwell's Tussle.
Dick Merriwell's Aero Dash.
Dick Merriwell's Intuition.
Dick Merriwell's Placer Find.
Dick Merriwell's Fighting Chance.
Frank Merriwell's Tact.
Frank Merriwell's Puzzle.
Frank Merriwell's Mystery.
Frank Merriwell, the Lion-hearted.
Frank Merriwell's Tenacity.
Dick Merriwell's Perception.
Dick Merriwell's Detective Work.
Dick Merriwell's Commencement.
Dick Merriwell's Decision.
Dick Merriwell's Coolness.
Dick Merriwell's Reliance.
Frank Merriwell's Young Warriors.
Frank Merriwell's Lads.
Dick Merriwell in Panama.
Dick Merriwell in South America.
Dick Merriwell's Counsel.

G. Fiction other than the "Merriwell Series," 1900-1916.


Rockspur Eleven.
Rockspur Nine.
Rockspur Rivals.


Clif Stirling, Captain of the Nine.
Clif Stirling Behind the Line.
Clif Stirling, Freshman at Stormbridge.
Clif Stirling, Sophomore at Stormbridge.
Clif Stirling, Stroke of the Crew.

"College Life Series"

Boltwood of Yale.
College Rebel.
On College Battlefields.
Call of the Varsity.
Sons of Old Eli.
Ben Oakman, Stroke.

"Big League Series"

Lefty o' the Bush.
Lefty o' the Big League.
Lefty o' the Blue Stockings.
Lefty o' the Training Camp.
Brick King, Backstop.
Making of a Big Leaguer.
Courtney of the Center Garde
Covering the Look-in Corner.
Lefty Locke, Pitcher-Manager
Guarding the Keystone Sack.
Man on First.
Lego Lamb, Southpaw.
Grip of the Game.
Crossed Signals.


"Rex Kingdon Series"

Rex Kingdon of Ridgewood High.
Rex Kingdon in the North Woods.
Rex Kingdon at Walcott Hall.
Rex Kingdon Behind the Bat.
Rex Kingdon on Storm Island.
"Oakdale Series"

Ben Stone at Oakdale.
Boys of Oakdale Academy.
Great Oakdale Mystery.
New Boys at Oakdale.
Oakdale Boys in Camp.
Rival Pitchers of Oakdale.

K. Non-fiction. Autobiographical articles.


"Dime Novel Days." The Saturday Evening Post, February 28 and March 7, 1931.


A. Source Material.

The Beadle Collection of Dime Novels, a catalogue of Dr. F. P. O'Brien's collection, now owned by the New York Library. New York, 1922. The introduction to this catalogue contains a full description of the Beadle publications, and an excellent biographical sketch of Erastus Beadle.

Pearson, Edmund, Dime Novels; or, Following an Old Trail in Popular Literature. Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1929. In compiling this monograph, Mr. Pearson had access not only to the Beadle novels in the New York Library, but to the private papers of Dr. F. P. O'Brien, the sole repository of much of Beadle's business correspondence, and of many biographical details about the authors. His book is further valuable as a source in that it contains liberal excerpts from many dime novels.


B. Historical Works.


C. Magazine articles regarding the dime novel.

"Confessions of a Dime Novelist, an Interview" by Gelett Burgess. The Bookman, August, 1902.
"Dime Novel Makers" by George C. Jenks. The Bookman, October, 1904.

"Dime Novel Days" by Gilbert Patten. The Saturday Evening Post, February 28 and March 7, 1931.

PART III--SOURCES OF DATA FOR CHAPTERS II, III, AND IV, LIFE OF WILLIAM GILBERT PATTEN.

A. The chief source of information was the writer's interview with Mr. Patten in March, 1932. In addition, the writer has been in correspondence with Mr. Patten since December, 1931.

B. Magazine Articles.

"Sand on the Diamond" by Gilbert Patten. Outlook, June 13, 1923. This article is an account of Mr. Patten's two years' managership of a Camden baseball team.
"Suggestion for a Biography" by George Jean Nathan. The American Mercury, September, 1925.
"The Man Merriwell" by James M. Cain. The Saturday Evening Post, June 11, 1927. Mr. Cain's article resulted from an interview with Mr. Patten.
"Dime Novel Days" by Gilbert Patten. The Saturday Evening Post, February 28 and March 7, 1931.

C. Newspaper Articles.

"The Voice of Broadway" by Louis Sobol. New York Journal, November 21, 1921. Mr. Sobol's column contained a biographical sketch of Mr. Patten, based on an interview.
"Creator of Frank Merriwell," Rockland Courier-Gazette, January 16, 1932. A reprint of a radio address delivered by Mr. Patten.
"Gil Patten, Author of Frank Merriwell," Portland Sunday Telegram, December 18, 1932.