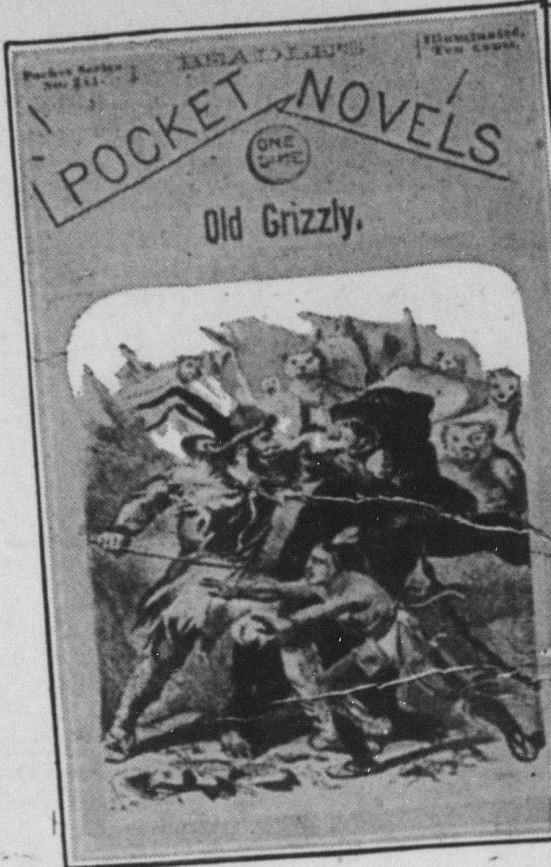
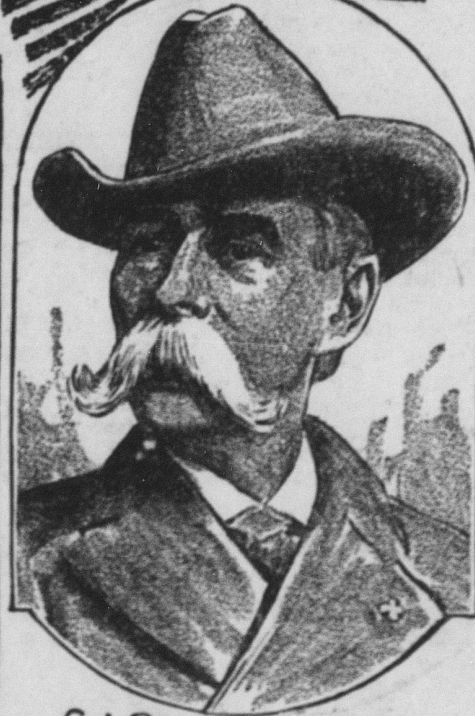
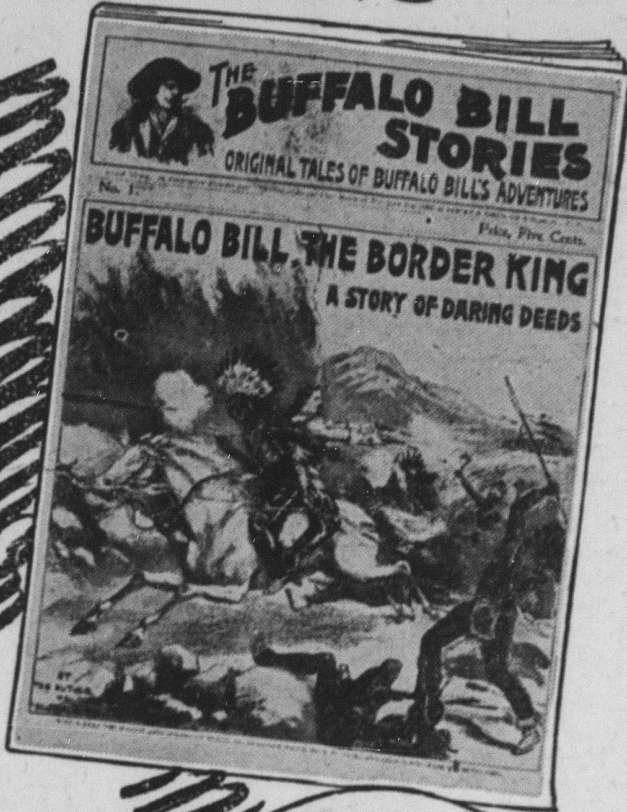


DIME NOVEL HEROES

and the Men Who Made Them



"Ned Buntline"



Col. Prentiss Ingraham



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON
THE increasing popularity of "Hobby Shows" through the country is bringing into the limelight once more a type of native literature to which an older generation of Americans looks back with fond memories. For nearly all such exhibitions display examples of the little yellow-backed books which the boys of yesteryear read in secret with avid interest, their enjoyment heightened by the almost-certain knowledge that discovery meant a stern "What's this! . . . Reading a dime novel!!!!" from disapproving parent or teacher.

Those of a later generation who get their vicarious thrills from watching movie melodramas or listening to radio murder mysteries, are likely to be scornful of the blood-and-thunder heroes whose desperate deeds and hairbreadth escapes so enthralled Dad. "Aw, bunk!" they say, "I betcha there never was any such fella as Daredick Dick, the King of the Cowboys, or Captain Cool Blade, the Man-Shark of the Mississippi!"

Maybe not! But ask Dad about some of the other dime novel heroes. . . .

Didn't he smuggle a copy of "Buffalo Bill, the Border King" up to bed with him one night and there, by the dim light of the old coal-oil lamp, read how "with one leap the Border King sprang up behind his disguised pard, back to back, and opened fire with his trusty revolvers on the yelping redskins? And, a few months later, didn't he go down to the county seat town and with his own eyes see that same "Border King" enter the arena of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, ushered in by a blaring band and the excited yells of several hundred young Americans like himself? That tall, long-haired, buckskin-clad figure, sitting on his white horse with regal grace—wasn't he a story-book hero come to life? Yes, sir!

Despite the fact that many a Bloody Pete and Dead-Shot Dick and Reckless Ralph existed only in the fertile imagination of old Erastus F. Beadle's scribbles, some of the characters immortalized in that prolific publisher's "Dime Novels," "Half-Dime Library," "Pocket Novels," or "Boys Library" were real persons, even though they never had one-tenth of the adventures ascribed to them. Chief among them, of course, was this same "Border King."

William Frederick Cody, youthful guide for army officers in Kansas in 1866-67 and hunter who supplied meat for builders of the Kansas Pacific railroad, may have been dubbed "Buffalo Bill" by the grateful K. P. workers, or he may have won that sobriquet in a buffalo-shooting match with Billy Comstock. But it remained for two dime novelists, Edward Zane Carroll Judson, who wrote under the name of "Ned Buntline," and Col. Prentiss Ingraham, to make it world famous.

Other dime novel heroes who had counterparts in real life were "Wild Bill," "California Joe," "Texas Jack," "Pawnee Bill," "Capt. Jack," "Arizona Joe," "Buckskin Sam," "Roving Joe," "Fancy Frank," "Deadwood Dick," "Diamond Dick," "Calamity Jane," "The Evil Spirit of the Plains" and "Old Grizzly."

James Butler Hickok, a native of Illinois, a soldier and scout in the Union army in Missouri during the Civil war, Overland stage driver, marshal of roaring Kansas cow towns, gambler and gunman par excellence, was already famous as "Wild Bill" before ever Buntline multiplied his adventures tenfold in the little yellow-backed books. Even after his assassination in Deadwood, S. D., in 1876, he was still good "copy" for the dime novelists, as he has been for the more serious historians, several of whom have tried to sort out the fiction from fact and write authentic biographies of him in recent years.

However, "Texas Jack" was a name of Buntline's manufacture for John R. Omohundro, a native of Virginia who emigrated to Texas before the Civil war, became a mustang-breaker and rancher, a soldier in the Confederate army and afterwards a hunter, scout and Indian-fighter until his death in Leadville, Colo., in 1880.

In 1875 Buntline brought Cody, Hickok and Omohundro to Chicago, wrote a play, "Scouts of the Plains" for them in less than four hours (which prompted the classic remark of one reviewer: "One wonders why it took him so long!") and presented them in it to the public next day.

The case of "California Joe" is similar to that of "Wild Bill" in that he was famed under that name before ever the dime novelists took him up. Although one of Ingraham's novels characterized him as "The Mysterious Plainsman, An Unknown Man, whose real identity, like that of the 'Man of the Iron Mask' is still unsolved" there was no real mystery about his identity. He was Moses E. Milner, a Kentuckian, who first crossed the Plains in the Golden Days of '40, was

(Reproductions of dime novels from the collection of Charles Bragin, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

a miner in Montana and the Pacific Northwest and for a brief time chief of scouts for Gen. George A. Custer during the campaign of 1867-68 against the tribes of the Southern Plains. He also served as a scout and guide for army officers in Wyoming and Montana in the 70s, was a prospector in the Black Hills gold rush and met the same fate as his friend, Hickok. Like "Wild Bill" he was shot down from behind by an assassin in 1876 just before setting out from the old Red Cloud agency in Nebraska to guide the expedition of Gen. Ranald S. Mackenzie against the Sioux and Cheyennes.

"Pawnee Bill" was Maj. Gordon Lillie, a native of Illinois, who went to Oklahoma in the early days as a "Boomer," was a friend of the Pawnee Indians, who adopted him into their tribe, was associated for a time with Cody in the Wild West show business and later had a similar show of his own. He is still living in Oklahoma as the prosperous owner of a ranch, famous for its herd of buffalo.

"Capt. Jack" was John Wallace Crawford, a native of Ireland, a boy soldier in the Union army, a prospector and miner in the Black Hills, a scout for the army in the Sioux war of 1876 and until his death in 1917 was widely known as a chautauqua and lyceum lecturer under the name of "Capt. Jack, the Poet Scout."

"Arizona Joe" was Joseph Bruce, a noted frontier character, a miner, Indian fighter and a close friend of "Texas Jack" Omohundro. "Calamity Jane" was the notorious Martha Jane Canary, a native of Missouri, who, dressed in men's clothes, worked as a teamster with Gen. George Crook's army in the Sioux war of 1876, was a picturesque figure in the Black Hills gold rush and later drifted to Montana where she died in 1903. "Fancy Frank" was Dr. Frank Powell, who started in life as a newspaper reporter, studied medicine, had a varied career on the frontier, was associated with Cody in the Wild West show in which he was known as "White Beaver" and the "medicine man of the Winnebagoes" and ended his career in his native Wisconsin where he was mayor of one town and a practicing physician in another.

Both "Buckskin Sam" and "Roving Joe" were somewhat anomalous characters in that they were both heroes of dime novels and writers of such literature. "Buckskin Sam" was Maj. Sam S. Hall, born on the frontier where he led an adventurous life before turning his attention to producing such thrillers as "Double Dan, the Dastard; or, The Pirates of the Pecos" and "Ker-whoop, ke-whoop; or, The Tarantula of Taos." Later he made his home in the East where he, "a wiry little man," according to one historian, "occasionally showed his virile Western manhood by going on a shooting rampage at his home in Wilmington, Delaware." Joseph E. Badger was also a Westerner who wrote the story of his life on the frontier, calling it "Roving Joe" and signing it "A. H. Post." Later he became one of Beadle's star writers under his own name of Badger.

As for "Deadwood Dick" and "Diamond Dick," the "originals" of both have been legion. But the best evidence is that "Deadwood Dick" was a purely fictitious character, created by Edward L. Wheeler, a writer for Beadle and Adams, and the first "Deadwood Dick" story appeared in Beadle's Half-Dime Library in 1878. "It was not Wheeler's first novel," says Edmund Pearson in his book "Dime Novels; or, Following an Old Trail in Popular Literature" (Little, Brown and Company) "but never again in all his list of alliterations did he ever chance upon a name so felicitous or a character so appealing to his readers as that of Deadwood Dick."

As early as 1906 an "original" of "Deadwood

Dick," a certain Frank Palmer, died in Denver. In 1929 another "original" died in Los Angeles—this time being Richard Bullock, who had been a guard on the stagecoaches which brought bullion out of the Black Hills. In recent years, and until his death in 1930, a certain Richard W. Clark of South Dakota was widely publicized as the "original of Deadwood Dick." Says Pearson, "There is a far-away resemblance between the pictures of the old frontiersman, aged eighty-two (in 1928) and the drawings of the young desperado of the eighties in Mr. Wheeler's stories. I fancy that this distant resemblance is all that obtains between the career of Richard Clark and Deadwood Dick."

As for "Diamond Dick"—in 1882 Beadle and Adams published "Diamond Dick, the dandy from Denver. A true story of the mines of New Mexico" by Maj. Sam S. Hall ("Buckskin Sam"). But the great popularity of the "Diamond Dick" stories came in the late eighteen nineties and early nineteen hundreds, when, according to dime novel experts, this form of literature was beginning to "degenerate" from the virility and red-bloodedness (or goryness) which characterized the early ones.

But in the minds of many people, Dr. Richard J. Tanner of Norfolk, Neb., is the "original of Diamond Dick." A native of Illinois, he went to Nebraska at the age of nineteen, became an expert with both the rifle and pistol and after a career of 20 years with a circus, where he was billed as "Diamond Dick," he decided to study medicine and retired from the show business. For a quarter of a century he concealed his circus identity and was known only as a country doctor in a Nebraska town. Then in 1925 when he took part in an American Legion show in Norfolk, the fact that he was the former "Diamond Dick" was made known.

"The Evil Spirit of the Plains" was Dr. Frank Carver, a frontiersman and buffalo-hunter (a far greater one than Cody, according to some authorities and better entitled to the title of "Buffalo Bill," mainly because of his victory over "Buffalo Jack"—Jack McCall, the slayer of "Wild Bill" Hickok—in a buffalo-shooting contest) who was for a time associated with Cody in the Wild West show business and later, when he and Cody quarreled, produced his own show.

"Old Grizzly" was one of the most interesting of all the "originals" of dime novel heroes. He was James Capon Adams, born near Seneca Lake, N. Y., who became famous as a bear tamer because he was accustomed to go about the country riding on an enormous grizzly bear with a second similar huge beast as a sort of a body-guard for him. His dime novel fame started in a book written by his nephew, James Fenimore Cooper Adams, who was himself later known as "Bruin" Adams and was the subject of several dime novels by Col. Prentiss Ingraham.

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NEW SOURCE OF OPIUM
The control of the drug traffic is likely to be complicated by a discovery which has recently come to light in Hungary. It is a process for extracting morphine and other drugs from the straw and chaff of the opium poppy. Hitherto only the seeds have been used and the residue has been discarded as waste,

but by the new process it will be possible to produce 800 grams of morphine base and 80 grams of codein base from a single ton of poppy straw. The resultant increase in the output of these drugs will make it necessary for the authorities to exercise even more careful control over the traffic in opium.—Tit-Bits Magazine.

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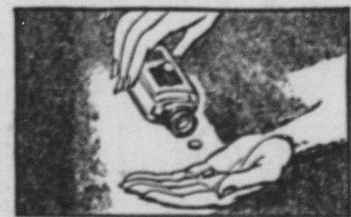
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