

# DEADWOOD DICK AND HIS PALS OF GORY FAME NOW STAND VINDICATED BEFORE EYES OF WORLD

From the Storm-Battered Woodshed to the Hushed Splendor of New York Public Library Is Quite a Leap, but Devotion of Dr. F. P. O'Brien Has Made It Possible

HAS COLLECTED WORKS OF BEADLE AND ADAMS AFTER 32 YEARS' SEARCH

And Now That Enthralling, Forbidden Dime Novel of Boyhood Days Has Been Lifted From Obscurity of Corn-silk Cigarette Cache and Stamped With Approval

THE dime novel stands vindicated before the world! That enthralling, deliciously forbidden mentor of boyhood has been lifted from the obscurity of the corn-silk cigarette cache, stamped with the approval of men of letters, and established upon the proud eminence of authentic literary merit.

It is a far cry from the woodshed to the hushed splendor of the New York Public Library; it is an amazing transition from the ignominious exile of parental disapproval to the acclaim of critics.

The return of Deadwood Dick, Big Foot Wallace, Idaho Dan, Old Bull's Eye and all the storied company of deathless heroes which thrilled the juvenile breast of yesterday is no less a real triumph than that of Julius Caesar when he and his swarthy legions swung down the Via Sacra with the spoils of Asia in their train.

The outward manifestation of the dime novel's conquest over bigotry and prejudice is to be found in the bronze and marble exhibition room of the New York Public Library, where, guarded from dust and decay by innumerable glass cases, are 1480 little paper-covered books, comprising all that was best of this unique and altogether noteworthy phase of our national literature.

They represent the devotion and generosity of Dr. Frank P. O'Brien, of 418 West Forty-seventh street, New York, the donor.

When Dr. O'Brien arrived in this country from Ireland, at the age of nine, he had six pence—the sum total of his savings and the limit of his financial resources. His first act ashore was to have this changed to American currency; his second was the purchase of an alluring volume dealing with the romantic adventures of Mustang Sam, the King of the Plains.

Since that time, thirty-two years ago, Dr. O'Brien has devoted his entire spare time to the collection of the publications of the immortal firm of Beadle and Adams, the pioneers and sole dispensers of the true dime novel. The results of his labor of love, in the course of which he visited twenty-five States and conducted numerous individual researches, has been presented to and accepted by the library.

### Woodrow Wilson Called Literature Excellent

A man of horror broke from the lips of the maiden, and then her overtones from her eyes and she hung a lifeless weight across the stumpy right arm of the outlaw.

Dr. O'Brien's contention that the dime novel is endowed with true literary merit has not lacked the confirmation of scholars. No less a personage than Woodrow Wilson, when surprised in the act of perusing one of its thrilling conclusions, replied that he was reading literature of undoubted excellence.

Abraham Lincoln always said that Mrs. Victor's "Maum Gulten" was vastly superior to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" as exposition of slave conditions before the Civil War, and yet that volume created by the creator of one of the most perfect compositions in the English language—cost ten cents and was religiously banished by all thoughtful parents.

Only recently the dime novel found an ardent champion in Irvin Cobb, whose impassioned defense of that much-maligned institution pointed out the indubitable fact that there was no taint of sex tipped with its riddle pages, that the problem is banned and that overripe sentiment is conspicuous by its absence.

"An abundance of action, yes," said Mr. Cobb in effect, "but all good, clean, rapid action; and what, after all, is half so interesting as action?"

### Dr. O'Brien Long Recognized Value of the Dime Novel

Belated as has been the recognition due the dime novel the proper place which it should long ago have assumed in literature has been clear to Dr. O'Brien ever since he first scanned the gripping pages of California Joe and Mustang Sam.

"When I was a boy," he said, "I had the most insatiable appetite for books about the West. There was a glamour about Buffalo Bill particularly that has not worn off in all these years. Even today the very thought of him makes my blood tingle."

"I used to read the Beadle Series in all my spare time, my average being six a week. Remember, the ninety-eight page dime novel of those days was in such fine print that it was the equivalent of a 300-page novel today."

"I often sat up in bed until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, reading the latest issue. I can remember them now; I can even remember the plots of some of them."

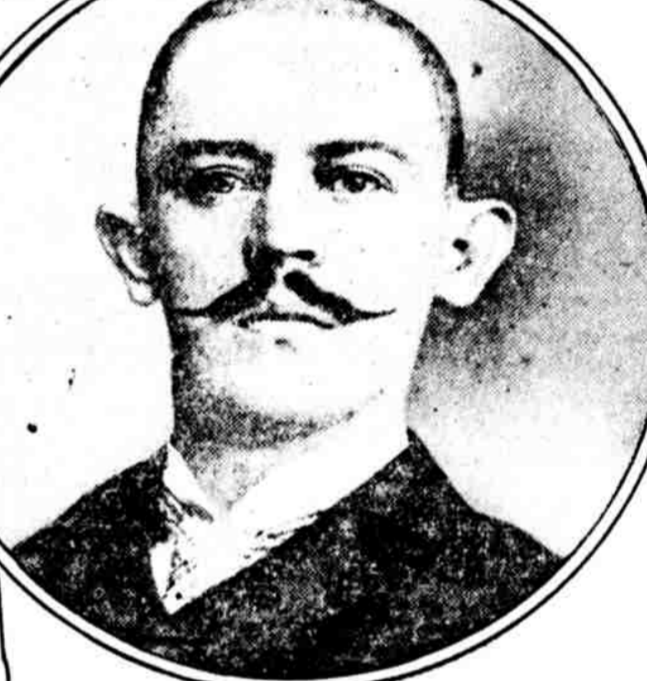
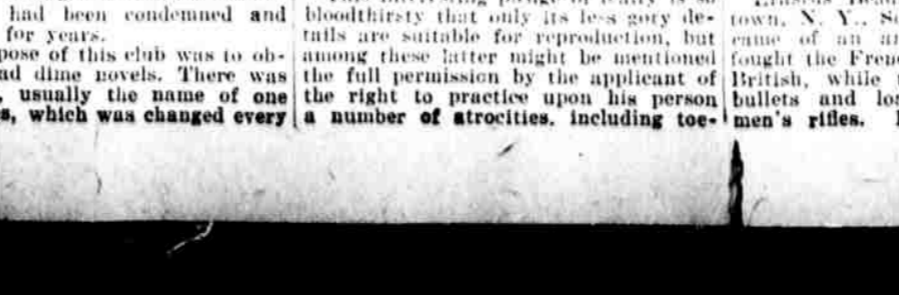
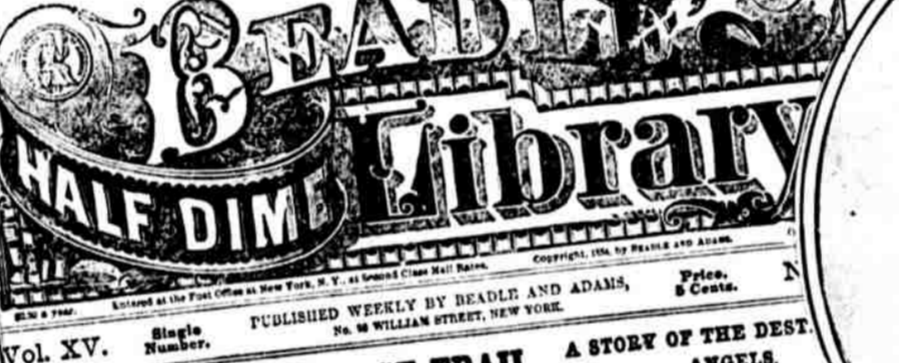
He leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes and ticked them off on his fingers:



Dr. Frank P. O'Brien, of New York, who has placed collection of dime novels in New York Public Library



Ernest Beadle, author of dime-novel fame



Edward W. Wheeler, originator of Deadwood Dick

stock, and his early life was that of the pioneer. But pioneer's initiative took a different turn with young Ernie. He conceived the idea of marking flour bags with rude printing blocks, which he carved himself from hardwood. With these he toured the country, marking the farmers' flour bags and making money, until he decided to enter the printing trade, which he proceeded to learn with characteristic thoroughness. By 1852 he owned his own printing shop.

After a few preliminary experiments with ten-cent handbooks, all of which have been preserved in Dr. O'Brien's collection, he launched his great idea in 1859. The good fortune which attended the venture was phenomenal.

It was a situation to try the nerve of any man, but Monack Nat did not quail, faced as he was with overpowering odds.

"You feeds!" he hissed. "You think to draw from me some sign of despair, but you will fail!"

With a proud gesture he drew himself erect and looked the howling savages full in the eye.

The Civil War proved a boon indeed for the house of Beadle & Co., for the shivering and inexpensive dime novel met the needs of the soldiers for quick entertainment in their spare moments. Millions were sold, and the public demanded more.

The period of Western expansion which followed the war was marked also by a corresponding Western expansion in the dime novel industry.

Particular efforts were made to obtain the services of famous hunters, guides and Indian fighters in order to satisfy the public demand for the Western atmosphere. Beadle himself made an extensive tour of the region beyond the Mississippi, observing for himself the life and habits of the citizenry and the conditions under which they lived.

Of the above celebrities two were personal friends of Dr. O'Brien. With Buffalo Bill he maintained a more or less regular correspondence, begun in the pursuance of his quest for interesting items of the Beadle collection, and continued in the friendship which resulted.

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, who died in 1901, was an old and valued friend of Dr. O'Brien's. The nature of their meeting is little less romantic than those tales which emanated so profusely and successfully from the Colonel's mind.

One day a handsome, husky stranger, wearing a long, flowing mustache and an air smacking of open plains, entered Dr. O'Brien's office for professional treatment.

At last, the stranger, moved by spasm of pain, gave vent to his feelings in manner so picturesque, and so unmistakably flavored with the alkali of the West, that his native State could no longer remain in doubt.

"Excuse me," said Dr. O'Brien, "but could it be that you are the Ingraham who is one of the valued contributors to the Beadle novels?"

"You called the turn, Doc," rumbled another in the huckberry.

"Colonel Ingraham was the real biographer of Cody," says Dr. O'Brien, "and was considered the foremost authority on matters of western life, his life and personality of that great man."

"You Are Dealing With a Man Not a Defenseless Woman!" "Do not move!" ordered Major Harrington, from between clenched teeth. "My revolver is at your heart, and the slightest evidence of treachery I will use it. You are dealing with a man, now—not a weak and defenseless woman!"

With a snarl like that of a wild beast, Cactus Joe slunk into the night.

Like all things which become both cheap and plentiful the dime novel, having had its day, was threatened with the lack of a loving hand to preserve it. Fortunately, that prolific breeder of content, smothered any impulse which the public at large may have felt to save it.

It was sometimes necessary to advertise widely for certain rare volumes, and it was found impossible to pursue his investigations without carrying on an extensive correspondence, not only with former writers whose works appeared under the Beadle banner, but with noted antiquarians and book dealers in all sections of the country, of whom he knows hundreds.

Search Most Successful When He Explored Attics "But my search was most successful when I combed my attention to attics," says the doctor.

"Most of my finds, and they were well up in the hundreds, were made in the antique horsehair trunks and the old-fashioned chests of drawers which nestle in the eaves of nine out of ten American homes.

"Sometimes, when my researches had isolated some particularly desirable volume in such a place, the difficulty would arise of the reluctant owner to part with it for sentimental reasons."

"More than once I have been held up for several years by this sort of thing, when I could not find another copy elsewhere."

Some of the novels, especially the Western ones, have risen in value from ten cents to many dollars. They vary in price from \$10 to \$62 now, according to the difficulty in getting them.

"The Grizzly Adams is worth \$62 now, and in short time will be priceless. The California Joe volumes are valuable, too."

The character whose exploits form the central theme of the latter work was a historical character, Dr. O'Brien says, about whom mystery and a certain quality of unique intrepidity have woven a veil of legend and romance.

"It is definitely known that he fought in the Civil War under an assumed name," the doctor says, "and that his deeds were of the sort to gain him frequent mention. He is known to have captured a Confederate battery single-handed."

"The secret of his identity has never been solved. He is the Man in the Iron Mask of nineteenth century America, a dashing, obscure figure who carried his life in his hand and seemed to attach no importance whatever to it."

"He flashed up and down the State of California like a fiery meteor, and wherever he went there was sure to be action and excitement."

New York itself, citadel of commerce and stronghold of the matter-of-fact, was leveled upon by the imagination of the Beadle school for a situation untried in the domain of the dime novel.

Long before O. Henry came out of the South to touch its prosaic towers and bastions with his magic wand, the novelist found in the bustling Manhattan with a mantle of delightfully mysterious adventure and intrigue which, while paralleled perhaps by actual conditions today, was devoid of the blatant sex did quality which now forces itself upon the attention.

In the pages of Beadle's Dime Novel Library moved a world of secret, of mystery, of subterranean passages, riverside caves and faces at the window at night.

And through it all a thread of intangible optimism that assured the venturesome reader that right, though temporarily defeated by the villain, would triumph in the end and that the final paragraph would find that despicable individual breathing his last.

What a joy to the Beadle school of literature, be his locks white as snow and his memory clouded with the mists of time, can forget that ineffable thrill which scurried up and down his spine when he sat for the night reading "Jack Harkaway in New York, or The Adventures of the Travelers' Club!"

Beadle Novelist Took Heroes to South America And still farther afield ranged the bounding imagination of the Beadle novelist. He took his heroes to South America, where breath-taking adventures transpired on the Argentine pampas. He inquired his countless characters in the slough of the Florida Everglades, where they combated snakes, Indians and circumstances. He took them upon the deep and engaged them with ferocious and altogether unprincipled pirates.

Not only did the Beadle publications confined to novels. In addition a number of specialized journals, such as the "Tobacco," "Housewife's Manual" and "Ladies' Letter Writer," were published. The latter is of particular value in that it presents a compilation of ballads of a bygone day, many of which have completely passed beyond the ken of our present generation.

It is to be observed that sentiment is more firmly entrenched here than in the dime novel, as witness: "Plea, Father Don't Drink Any More," "She Walks the Life Away," "Dear Father, Come Down With the Stamps," "Bright, Bright Wine," "The Crackdown's Chant," "Charge the Can Cheerfully," "The Boy Who's Name Is Kept Real," "The Boy Who's Name Is Kept Real," "The Boy Who's Name Is Kept Real," "The Boy Who's Name Is Kept Real."

"Then do the dog you are and bounding the door he harked his Bowie knife the crackling hours. The knife he took once and buried itself in the girl's neck, the while a terrible shriek rent the air."

And there was an oath and a curse.

This interesting pluck of fealty is so blithely that only its less gory details are suitable for reproduction, but among these latter might be mentioned the full permission by the applicant of the right to practice upon his person a number of atrocities, including toe-