

THE MAN MERRIWELL

By James M. Cain

ILLUSTRATED BY N. L. BLUMENTHAL

THROUGH the streets of a little town in the state of Maine, on a winter night in the early 80's, a woman was running madly. Behind her, in half-bearded fashion, lumbered a man. As he puffed for breath he brought her to ease the pace. "There's no harm," he kept repeating, and in between times he tried to reason with her.

Of course, he admitted, he was glad Willie had come home. Anyman would be glad if his only son had run away and then come back again. But when, if the boy had kept body and soul together for six months, all on his own, it stood to reason he wouldn't up and die in the time it would take them to walk home. And another thing—just because a fellow had poked his head in the door and said Willie was back, why had they left the meeting and lit out this way hell-bent for election? They ought to have stayed until the meeting was over. It wouldn't hurt Willie to wait a little while. It would teach him a lesson. Maybe then he would get it through his head that when he ran away from home he might have to whittle his ribs while before he saw his folks.

And so he argued that the voice of Patten seemed the least bit wistful; for as it happened, Brother Nickerson was to expound the Book of Revelation at the meeting tonight, with the aid of a great chart wherein would be depicted all the queer creatures of the Apocalypse. And when Brother Nickerson concluded the Book of Revelation, a man didn't stay away if he could help it.

The Prodigal

HIS wife paid him no heed whatever. Leaving him far behind, she ran on, plunging through snowdrifts and scrambling over icy pavements. In a few minutes she was slipping on a door, raising down a hall, and tumbling into a kitchen, there to fly into the arms of a tall, lean youth who had been thawing himself out by the parental stove.

Her joy was brief. For this boy of sixteen, who had ideas no stranger than he must needs run away from a home where he had always been cock of the walk, had come home with ideas strange still. No pentecost prodigal, he, ready to atone for his transgression by settling down into the first useful occupation that might present itself. Not at all. His pleaded guilty to nothing; he had money in his pocket and clothes on his back; and those, he seemed to think, proved that he had not wasted his time. As for a useful occupation—poof! He had better aspirations. His lovely dreams, it appeared, were filled with the screams of bullets, the snorting of buffaloes and the whooping of Comanches. In brief, he would be author he, and sign his name for books.

Far, far into the night his father and mother talked over the blow that had befallen them. "How'd he get that fool idea in his head?" fretted the father. "Seems like to me after he spent six months out in the world he would be learned some sense."

"I was hoping he would be a preacher," said the mother sadly.

"I was hoping he would be a carpenter, and maybe earn enough to pay for his keep," replied the father. "I know



"I Was Hoping He Would Be a Preacher," said the Mother Sadly

where I can get him a job at a dollar and a half a day right now, and he can make two and a half as soon as he learns the trade." His voice grew warm as the full enormity of the situation began to dawn on him. "Doo-gone 'it!" he exclaimed. "I got a notion to take him over to that job tomorrow anyhow. I got a notion to put him to work and see if that don't beat some sense in his head." And so he stood six feet three, and was so huge in proportion that Abraham Lincoln had once singled him out at a crowd and challenged him to a nail-splitting contest; it seemed that he was able to make good on his notion. "No, you can't do that," said the mother quickly. "What's going to stop me?" "His right to run away again." "Youth, he sure is bull-headed." The father was silent a few minutes. "Well," he reflected after a time, "you got to admit he's got the pluck." Dark though the future might appear, he could not resist a smacking pride that his son had gone over to Biddeford, the mill town, and held

his own there without asking help from anybody. "He sure ain't afraid of nothing," he mused.

The mother sighed. The pluck in question seemed a long way from the ministry and the Book of Revelation.

"Gams we better leave him alone," said the father. "I don't know much about this writing business; it ain't in my line. But it's a cinch he ain't like no other boy that we ever seen, so maybe he knows what he's doing."

"Yes, I guess we better leave him be," said the mother sadly.

And the decision, no doubt, was a momentous one for the boy who was steering away in another part of the house. For this William Gilbert Patten was promptly to receive his eminent name as Bart L. Standish, and in no great length of time to give a writing world that sobriest humans of them all, the Hon. Frank Merriwell, A.B., Yale.

He did not, of course, call for an ax and have the pedagogue Frank cloven full-grown from his brow at one fell swoop.

He had not, in fact, even thought of Frank at this time; other studies were more pressing. For one thing, although his parents were committed for the moment to an attitude of watchful waiting, they were practical folk; and if the prospects of literature were not visible pretty soon, they might deliver an ultimatum that would mean the ministry, the carpentry, another trip into the coal, and so forth. For another thing, there was a little affair of honor with Mr. Gooch, boss of the mill at Biddeford.

"A Bad Man"

MRR GOOCH, in firing him, had not only refused to give him the raise he deserved but had hidden him so he got some hair on his law, else he wouldn't so work for the sixty cents a day he was getting. And it had become his ambition first to get some hair on his law, and second to make enough money to go over to Biddeford and snap brightly fingers at Mr. Gooch and Mr. Gooch's \$1800 a year. So heigh-ho for the inkpot.

After three weeks, however, things looked black indeed. His first story, *A Bad Man*, had hardly been dry on the paper before he shipped it off to the *Banner Weekly*, a publication of the Messrs. Boodle & Adams, in New York, and it was rejected by return mail. What was almost as distressing, it had not come back with the note of rejection. With heavy heart young Patten went to work on another. The *Pride of Sandy Flat*. To his father, who made inquiries a little more pointed than mere courtesy demanded, he made evasive replies, angling to mention the note of rejection.

"It always takes a little time," he explained. "A whole lot of editors have got to read the stuff before they take it."

By the time *The Pride of Sandy Flat* was done he was blue indeed, and when he sent the story off he included a very humble letter to the editor of the *Banner Weekly*, Mr. Orville J. Victor, in which he respectfully asked whether he revealed any talent as a writer. And P. S.—where was his other story?

He trembled when he opened the reply. Yes, said Mr. Victor, literary talent was plainly visible. The *Pride of Sandy Flat* was accepted. Through some oversight *A Bad Man* had not been returned, but now that it had had a second reading it, too, was accepted. Check was enclosed to pay for both stories—for six dollars.

He drew a long breath. Farther out of that moment he got something which enabled him to describe so believably, in later years, how Merriwell felt when the plotters had been failed and our friends would breathe freely at last.

"I heard from those stories today," he said nonchalantly, tossing the check to his father as he sat down to the supper table that night.

Long and loud did the elder Patten stare at it. "How long did it take you to do them stories?" he asked.

"Oh, couple of days apiece, I guess."

"If'n!" said the elder Patten, in the manner of a man who makes mental calculations.

The third story, which was really a short novel, sold for seventy-five dollars. The check he showed not only to his father but to Henry Clark, a friend. And that night a boy pedaled frantically up to the village store on his high-wheeled bicycle and burst into the room where men were buying out plug, twist and loose chewing.

"Willie Patten got seventy-five dollars for one of them stories he's writing!" exclaimed the boy.

Tip spoke Hosen Rackoff, the school-teacher. "Henry Clark," he said sternly, "you shut up with that foolishness. Willie Patten ain't got sense enough to make seventy-five dollars even if he worked for it, let alone making it by something he writes."

But Henry Clark insisted that he had seen the check; and later on Bill Patten came in and confirmed the great news about his son, and excitement was intense in Corinna that night. The fourth story, a full-length novel, sold for \$150, and by that time Willie Patten felt himself seasoned for a venture he had had in mind for some time. He would try his hand at dime novels.

The Birth of the Dime Novel

ASINGULAR accident? Not at that time. It is new quite forgotten that the dime novel has an ancient and thoroughly honorable history. In the beginning it was not the biographer of detectives, horse thieves and train robbers at all, but the historian of an epic achievement—the conquest of a continent. Its originator was Erastus F. Beadle, a native of Otsego, New York.

In 1857, when he was in his thirties, Beadle made a trip from Buffalo, where he had set up shop as a printer, to Nebraska, where he had taken up land and respected to settle. For various reasons his enterprises did not turn out very well, and he was forced to come back. But he had seen things that opened his eyes. He had found out first-hand what was happening on the plains; he had had his own previous stonied by Indians and had come into uncomfortably close contact with a scaly expedition.

What he saw convinced him that there was something really wrong with the literature that his

country was producing. The imaginative tales turned out by the disciples of Irving, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier and Poe might be all very fine in a literary way, he reasoned, but they were woefully out of touch with the times. Such stuff, it seemed to him, gaped at the clouds while the elephants were marching by; the real romance of America, the great field for her literature, lay in the West. That was the land that was on everybody's tongue; that was the land that was forever on the floor of Congress, with great debates on whether Missouri should be admitted slave or free, and whether we should insist on fifty-four forty or fight; that was the land where spanglers were railing back a frontier on Indians and buffaloes; that was the land where the excitement was, where life had color, favor and zip; that was the land that people wanted to read about.

Accordingly, as soon as he could get his affairs in order, he moved to New York and prepared to sting his saga. His plan, first, was to publish novels based on life as it was lived on the plains. His plan, second, was to sell them for ten cents.

When they leaped the price at which the books were to be sold, his friends threw up their hands and threatened to have him put in the booby hatch. Other publishers, when rumors reached them, smiled. It was a pretty dream, they said, but the thing couldn't be done. Beadle went ahead with his preparations. It took him a year or two, selling jockey books, song books and such things, to get together the necessary money, but presently he was ready. He would need a printer, he realized, so he engaged Robert Adams, who had set type for him in Buffalo. He would need an editor, so he engaged a shrewd young man named Orville J. Victor, the same Victor who many years later was to write a letter of encouragement to a very discouraged young man living in Corinna, Maine.

Victor soon made connections with a

staff of writers; and on June 15, 1860, Beadle published his first dime novel. It was called *Malaska, or the Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, and it was written by Ann S. W. Stephens, who was to follow it with a number of others. It set the pattern for Beadle publications for a long time to come. In that form it was a little booklet of 125 pages, about the size of a baseball game. The printing was on white rag paper and compared favorably with good printing today. The cover was of heavy salmon-colored paper, bearing on the front a steel engraving of the hero. The story itself was most dignified. Several of the chapters start off with quotations from poetry; the style is rather literary; there is no suggestion of cheapness anywhere in it. It had a sale, in its first year, of 300,000 copies, and within a few years it had been translated into five languages.

Foreign Influence

MALASKA was followed by others in rapid succession. Some of them, in their day, were celebrated. Seth Jones, or the Captives of the Frontier, by Edward S. Ellis, published also in 1860, had a sale of 750,000 copies, and was translated

"Puritas Dei Nunc Was the Greatest Victim of All Literature!"

into seven languages. Marnie Graham, or Christians Among the Shores, by Mrs. Mattie Victor, wife of the editor, caused almost as much talk during the war as Uncle Tom's Cabin. When Henry Ward Beecher came back from England, where he had gone as Lincoln's representative, he wrote that this little book had done much to influence British public opinion. Lincoln himself, after Beadle had sent him a little package of samples, became a dime-novel fan. The soldiers in camp, finding that dime novels helped to while away many a tedious day,

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Frank Harriott Won All the Harvard Games Single-Handed in the Last Minute of Play

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gobbled them up by the million, boasting sales beyond Beadle's wildest dreams. By the time the war came to an end the experiment was an assured success. In 1844 Robert Adams died, and Beadle took his two brothers, David Adams and William Adams, into partnership, the firm becoming Beadle & Adams, under which name it was to do business for thirty years. Beadle was made. It was his turn to ask, "Who's hoary now?"

To this flourishing concern Willie Patten submitted his first dime novels. They were, at the most charitable estimate, poorly. *Clear-Girl Cal*, the *News-Say-The Detective*; *Fire-Eye*, the *Thang's Terror*; *Wild Vulcan*, the *Loose Ranger Rider*, and so on. But they were published. Money began to pour in—or at least so it seemed in Corinna. Bill Patten's eyes bulged many a time at the \$250 checks which his quaver fish of a son received for one of these tales; down at the village store they shook their heads and muttered, for all this streaked of black magic.

So, after four years of it, when he was just turned twenty-one, Willie Patten decided it was time for him to go to New York. He had a little money now; he had served his apprenticeship as a writer; he had even won on the money received from the sale of *The Corinna Owl*, a weekly newspaper that he had started, taken a trip West and viewed at first hand the scenes of the epic tales he had been writing. Within a short time he had wound up all his affairs and was ready to start.

All his affairs? Not quite. There was a little affair of honor, one that involved the light but genuine hair that now grew on his face, and the \$2500 he had made in the past year as compared with a certain \$1000.

When he got off the train at Redford he headed straight for the mill. "Where's Gooch?" he demanded of the first millhand he met.

"He? Willie?" exclaimed his former buddy. "Buy, I didn't hardly know you at first. You're a sight lookier than you was. . . . Gooch? Ain't you heard? Gooch is dead."

Ten Years After

Col. Prestiss Ingraham leaped breathlessly around his small room in Fifty-eighth Street and glared belligerently at Patten, who had backed up long legs on a trunk.

"No, sah!" he roared, while his small frame quivered with indignation. "The West's story now will be dead. So long as the American people have one drop of red blood left in their veins, I tell you they're gair to read 'West's stories!'"

"Cutter's been dead pretty near twenty years," said Patten.

"Buffalo Bill ain't dead!" the colored shot back with heat that was palpable, slow, through the medium of the dime novel, he was Buffalo Bill's official biographer. "If you think he is, he went on 'go down to Philadelphia, where he s' showin' now, and watch him shoot. He can hold up his end of it, even with that little Oakley gal."

"They say she's pretty," said Patten, who had an eye to such things.

"— as a picture," said the colored, who also had an eye to such things, and stroked his flowing silky moustache. But in a moment he resumed fiercely: "And while you're down there, just count the people that come to see that Wild West show and see if Buffalo Bill is dead yet. And if you'll pardon a little pride of author's ship, I'd just like to o'ly yo' 'testify that my last stories about Buffalo Bill are sellin' bigger than ever. No, sah, Buffalo Bill's not dead, and neither is the West's story."

Patten listened with half an ear. He was an older Patten now, with ten years in the literary trenches behind him, several of them devoted almost exclusively to this same kind of Western story that he was

now beginning to have his doubts about. They had been glorious years in all truth. He had come down to a New York that was probably grander than any New York before or since. It was no New York as yet, innocent of Subways, wherein you traveled uptown and downtown on elevated roads that still used steam engines, and some town on cars still drawn by horses. Brooklyn Bridge was then one of the wonders of the modern world, and Steve Bradis had just settled the big argument by jumping off it and living to tell the story. The theatrical district still lay between Fourteenth and Twenty-third streets; grand opera was given in the Academy of Music on Fourteenth, hard by Tony Pastor's Theater and Huber's Museum; Maggie Clive was just then singing *Thru Jim Down, McClintock*; John L. Sullivan still reigned supreme, holding court nightly at one or the other of his three saloons, Irish gangs still ravaged the Bowery, where beer gardens, open of front so you could see the drinkers and the dancing girls within, lined most of the way. The Palace Building was still the tallest building in the United States, and victims to New York ascended in its dome of "solid gold" to refresh themselves with a bird's-eye view of the city. The Hoffman House still attracted many customers with its elaborated oil paintings of the female nude. It was a wide-open town, with everybody having a roaring good time.

Portrait of a Modest Man

Patten loved it. Especially he loved the lambargery of it. This crowd loved to be fooled and it good-naturedly didn't give a boot how often you were fooled so no man fooled by a good show. He loved the hamburgs who provided the literary show, who handed up propitious tales about Indians chasing pioneers over the plains and being in turn rescued by a man-riding herd of buffaloes. They were a picturesque crew, who loved the West because it was the big show, and who were as much a part of it as the advance boys upon a part of a circus— fellows like Joseph E. Badger, whose manner creation was Mustang Sam. "You ax who I be? I'm Mustang Sam, the high mark-a-muck of E Pluribus Unum. . . . I kin yoll leader, run farder, ride faster, shoot straighter, jump bigger, sell bigger bills, eat more good beef and jump outside 'o more olein' lightnin' than any two-legged critter as was ever puffed." Old Coomes, who lived in Iowa, and was one of the few dime-novel writers crazy enough to invest his money profitably; Edward L. Wheeler, who called everybody paup and was suspected of never having been farther West than West Philadelphia; Harlan P. Halsey, who wrote the delightful detective stories signed Old Sleuth; John R. Coryell, who originated the New York skin show, properly known as Sam S. Hall, who occasionally showed his virile Western manhood by going on a shooting rampage at his home in Wilmington, Delaware.

And Patten lived as long as any at the monkeyshine staged daily by Buffalo Bill and Ned Buelline, his first official biographer, known in private life as Col. E. Z. C. Judson. That was when they were first trying to put over Buffalo Bill as a character in dime-novel fiction. Six or eight times a day, both Colby and Judson, in full Western regimentals, would come galloping down Broadway and dismount at the office of the publisher in Rose Street. Ordinarily they were occupied with business of the very first importance; actually they were occupied with nothing more important than to provide a show for the crowd that always awaited them, and incidentally to make a little extra publicity for the Buffalo Bill stories.

Most of all, Patten loved this same Colonel Ingraham who was now posing the

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him, and so on. I don't believe that appeals to boys."

"I think you're wrong," said Patten. "In the first place, Merriwell was born and respectfully 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 just coming to 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 pages are just as interesting to them as fiction. I had had Frank ride his horse in front of the express train and grab the girl of the cowatcher. Get your mind of 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." Smith was still dubious. "I'll ask you one thing," said Patten: "Do the stories sell?"

Smith laughed, turning to his brother who was sitting two weeks for the stories and all right. If they haven't got excitement, they've got something, and so might as well let him alone and let him do his stories his own free way."

"Characters," Patten explains, "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 goal in every story. But my boy pointed no moral, he just was. The boy's ideal picture of himself. And I never did anything cleverer than when I made Frank, right in the first story, an expert ventriloquist."

"The kids had all heard of this trick, and they had all gone out back of the barn to practice, in a secret effort to acquire it. So when Frank appeared as a master of this mysterious art they felt in love with him at once."

"But Frank wasn't the only character. There had to be others, especially villains. For a long time Bart Hodge was the chief villain of the series. He was the boy who owned the little pop-corn vendor at the railroad station. Bart, however, eventually renounced his evil ways and became Frank's closest friend. Then there was Porfias del Norte, who appeared when I took Frank out West for a time."

The Greatest Villain of All

"Friends have told me that Porfias del Norte was the greatest villain of all literature. He had every human depravity, and a few depravities that had not heretofore been regarded as human. He stepped at nothing—not even mayhem. His word was not worth the breath it took to utter it. He had not the slightest chivalry toward women and children. He associated with low characters. He was prolific of plots, schemes and intrigues. His lightning word was a curse."

"Then there had to be comic characters. It is a curious thing, but you cannot give boys and humor. They do not understand it. Slapstick is what they get far out of. That is the reason for such characters as Harry Rattlefist, who always said things like 'I feel fly—I mean, I feel silly.' Boys think that very funny. And Hans Danzerrant, the Dutch boy; and Ephraim Gallop, the lank Yankee boy, who every time things began to get hot, would moan, 'I wish I was to turn on the farm.'"

"Only twice did I draw characters from life. Once was when I used a friend of mine, Capt. Walter Wiley, and put him into the stories, name and all. He had been a swimming man and was a pious fellow, and he went over great with the boys. In the stories he was always referred to as the Windjammer."

"The other time was a little different. Here Patten reasons to laugh. "One time I met a lady I knew, up in Maine—a Mrs. Gardner, and she said to me, 'Mr. Patten, my boy reads about Frank Merriwell every week, and he wants to know if you couldn't put him into a story?'"

"So I said that would be easy enough, and I asked her one or two questions about what kind of looking boy he was, since I had never seen him, and then I put him into a story. He only appeared for a sentence or two, did Earl Gardner, as a freeman at Yale who wanted to meet the great Frank Merriwell, but never had the chance, and I thought that would be the end of it. But within two weeks I had a hundred letters from boys all over the country, demanding that I give them more about Earl Gardner. So Earl Gardner became one of the most popular characters in the stories."

A Real Boy Hero

"A trust," said O. Henry, "is its own weakest point"; and the same principle held true for Merriwell. It was his very popularity that led to his downfall. For in spite of all that Patten did to stunt his growth, he grew bigger and bigger and older and older, until so boy in the world could be expected to take an interest in him. His story, indeed, for just from several full years of his life, is the story of Patten's desperate efforts to keep alive the spark of youth within him. Other characters might stay the same age for years. Matt and Jeff had the same now as they did seventeen years ago; the Katzenjammer Kids never grew up, and neither does Chester Gump. But Merriwell had no such luck. He was the lid of thousands of boys who kept looking on him as closely as thousands of other boys had finished the first year at Fardale he had to go on to second year; there was no more chance that he could be sent to repeat the course than that he could be sent out to rub a hank. And after four years at Fardale he was through at Fardale; the big question was what to do with him next."

In accordance with the original plan, he went to Yale. He was a great boy at Yale; he made the football team every year, and was all the Harvard games single-handed in the last minute of play. He was elected to all the best fraternities; he led his class with honors. In fact he was really the most remarkable student that Old Eli ever had.

But at the end of his junior year, the same old question came up; in another year he would graduate, and be a man, and out of the aim of boys forever. The situation was rather serious. The circulation was now 185,000; much depended on Merriwell, so far as the publishers were concerned, and also so far as Patten was concerned. His original \$50 a week, after a number of raises, had become \$150; and in the early 1906's this was not so momentous at all.

To give time to think, Patten took Frank out of Yale. He contrived a dastardly plot whereby Frank lost all his money and had to go to work on a railroad. Here, at least, it would be harder for the boys to keep tabs on the hero, since they were no longer semesters marking the time so easily. And while Frank worked on the locomotive, Patten ratched his brain as to what to do. And finally he decided he would retire

Frank and invent a long-lost brother, much younger than Frank, who would resemble juvenile interest.

So Frank settled the great strike on the railroad, recovered his fortune, went back to college, graduated at the end of a year, and the stage was all set for Dick. The advent of Dick presented some difficulties, as Frank was an only child, as all the readers knew. Nevertheless, Merriwell pitched his own tale, and Merriwell's twin, and Patten let it be known that on this trip he had got married, and Dick Merriwell was the result of that union. So Dick Merriwell finally appeared on the scene, much to the surprise of Frank, who read it, and said:

"But Dick was a dreadful boy. The readers still numbered thousands, of course, for the name Merriwell was potent. But the boys never took to Dick as they had taken to Frank."

"The reason," says Patten, "was that Dick was not the character that Frank was. I couldn't make him a replica of Frank, you know; he had to be different. But it was necessary to talk with Dick, and every day dress. Dick was all right, but not many boys wanted to be like him. And then I suppose I had got careless. Frank's ventriloquism was a big hit. But Dick's capacity to talk with his hands never went over. It just didn't click. I guess I had written Merriwells too long."

And so, after a few years of Dick, the Merriwell series came to an end. After Patten gave it up, two or three others tried to carry on, but without success.

Frank's Long-Lost Brother

Shortly after the Merriwell stories started, Bertie and Adolphus started their own. After the Adolphus, Patten and Arthur Grissom, first editor of Smart Set, persuaded Street & Smith to give the column a berth. And they then continued to receive the attention that Merriwell had, but to an ever-diminishing clientele.

In 1904, just before he died, the editor went up to visit Patten in Maine.

"How's Little Lord Merriwell?" he asked.

"Paying a hundred and fifty a week," said Patten. "How's Buffalo Bill?"

"Dead," said the editor. "Cody's not, but Buffalo Bill is." He sighed. "Oh, he couldn't, something's happened, to this country. Things aren't what they used to be."

In addition to the Merriwell stories, Patten has written seventy novels of standard length, besides innumerable serials. He has also written a number of novels gathered into book form. The Merriwells, in their retirement form, are still on sale on the newsstands. He estimates that in his life he has written 40,000,000 words of fiction, or enough to fill eight five-foot shelves. He is now in the hands of Gilbert Patten, having dropped the Williams because it reminded him of the days when he was called Wilkie. Oddly enough, although he is easily the country's most prolific literator, you will not find him in Who's Who.

"Did I love Merriwell?" he says. "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 best 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 statistics compiled you are lost. You've loved him. He's loved you, because no boy, if he followed in his tracks, ever did anything that he had to be ashamed of."