

# "Skinner" Achieves His Ambition—Almost; Gets Into the Movies But Not as a Bill Hart

## Adventures of the Literati on a Book Selling Campaign Among the Cape Cod Folk

By Henry Irving Dodge

I've been a motion picture fan for a long time. One particular kind of picture is like bread to me—the hell-roaring, knock-down-and-drag-out kind. I never seem to get tired of it. It's the picture—with variations—where the government agent, storekeeper or the like has his ramshackle structure somewhere on the edge of an alkali desert and at the base of mountains, so located for spectacular effect, which shall be hereinafter described. Adjacent to said postoffice is usually a vast barroom, the principal furniture of which seems to be huge stone cuspidors. Also there are tables and a long bar and a fat-faced bartender, with hair slicked down on the side and a ready-to-duck look in his eyes. Incidentally, there are seated and in juxtaposition to the huge cuspidors groups of mustached, smothered and armored men of the Billy-be-damned type. Also there is a chaste señorita, who rustles for drinks. At one side is a roulette wheel.

### The Boss of the Show

And the whole outfit is owned and presided over by a slender, dandified looking man with a little black mustache, dressed à la Broadway, which, of course, is sinister. This gentleman, who always stands at the end of the bar, is enamored of the chaste one—otherwise there wouldn't be any plot. Always there is the Mexican half-breed for a villain, or a drunken Injun. Mexico ought to sue the motion picture world in general for such exploitation.

Our hero, of course, is a near-Herculean, sharp-featured chap, wearing a big hat and leather breeches that must weigh a ton in such weather. He always looks at you with half-closed eyes, giving the impression that he's very chivalrous but a very dangerous proposition to tackle. You know at once, or you would if you were a fan like me, just what he's going to do when the time comes.

Suddenly the half-breed grabs the chaste one around the waist. That's the cue for our hero. Now there's the devil to pay. And, my, how that hero, scorning the use of a gun, does knock 'em out. One after another of the huge fellows is felled by him in the general head-over-heels mix-up. John L. Sullivan in his prime never could have wrought such havoc with a whole barroom full of toughs.

I have been fed up with that sort of thing for years. And yet I love it. There is a little theater near where I live, and I go into the concrete gallery thereof and sit in a 17-cent log seat—the most aristocratic part of the house—along with a bunch of coatless and, for the most time, breathless men and boys smoking cigarettes, pipes or cabbage leaves, as per pocket. We love that sort of thing, the dashing up and down mesquite-covered hills by the hero and his pursuers, or the mad race of the machine carrying the Eastern scoundrel, who is trying to escape with the money he has swindled these poor, untutored sons of the plains by selling them fake mining stocks, and whose bones, if he escapes the bullets of the justly indignant ones, will later be found on the alkali plains.

**An Element of Weakness**  
The way these lily fingered Easterners go out and beat the Westerners at their own game, and in their own barnyard, at that, is a weakness in the story one has to overlook. But what's weakness of plot among fans?

Then the inevitable happens. The Wall Street sharp escapes through a rain of bullets that makes one wonder at the inefficiency of powder and ball. He comes to New York and we next see him seated in a magnificent dining room, surrounded by beautiful women and swells. Suddenly they all look around as if an argument were taking place out in the hall. Then in lumbers the hero, spurs and sombrero discarded for store clothes, holds the whole crowd up and makes the sharper disgorge, notwithstanding the pleadings of the beautiful blonde daughter, whom the hero immediately worships. Or our hero goes down to Wall Street and with the few thousand bucks the boys in the hills have lent him for his joy ride East upsets all the calculations of the Standard Oil crowd. That's a part of the picture I don't care for. There's something improbable about it that jars me.

Another thing jars me. I hereby register my solemn protest against it. I mean the rape scene. I hate, loathe and abominate it. It is rarely dramatic and always brutal; it is an appeal to the bestial side of us, and the obsessed producer believes many

persons like it. They don't; it's revolting to them. I know this from observation.

### Picks the Hero Part

If I were ambitious to be a moving picture actor I'd want to be the hero. I wouldn't be the fellow with the little mustache and supercilious smile that stands at the end of the bar and performs the feat of keeping one eye on the cash register and the other on the señorita without getting cross-eyed. Nor would I be the half-breed greaser that does the other fellow's dirty work and then gets cheated out of the honorarium agreed upon—not on your life. The hero for mine every time. Now, I want to tell you how, if I had such an ambition, destiny, the universal corrector, would have set me straight.

One hot afternoon I chanced into the editorial rooms of a big publishing house, name for obvious reasons omitted. There I met my friend Joseph Anthony, the novelist, who recently was made manager of the great campaign, subscribed to by all our big publishers, for promoting the reading of books throughout the length and breadth of the land. Said Anthony:

"I start for Cape Cod to-night." It was then 3 o'clock. "We've got a caravan, a wonderful little book store on wheels, perambulating through the Cape calling the attention of the farmers and fisher folk to books. I'm going to meet representatives of the news service of four great motion picture companies, Pathé, International, Fox and Kinggram. They're going to make pictures of the young ladies who manage the caravan in the actual act and operation of promoting book reading."

"Gosh," I said, "that looks good to me. I've never seen motion picture men at work."

"Come along," said Anthony. "Chance of your life." He seemed enthusiastic.

"Too late for the bank. Will you loan me the money to go?"

"You bet," said he. That showed how sincere he was.

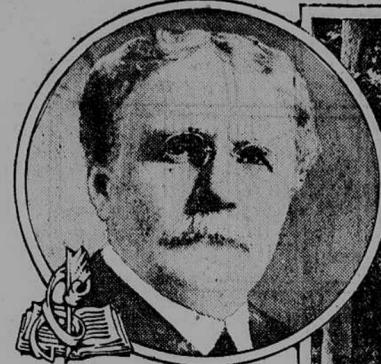
### Off for the Cape

We reached Falmouth-on-the-Cape about noon, as I thought, but it was really only 8:30, for we'd left Fall River at an unheard-of hour, just at the amber of dawn. The air was crisp, and we walked from the depot to the heart of the town through wonderful trees and past white houses with green blinds and tall peaked roofs. What an atmosphere! Now for the first obstacle.

It seems that the publishers had thought that as Joe Lincoln was so associated with the literature of Cape Cod it would be a good scheme for him to pose in the pictures, and I understood that Lincoln had agreed to do so. But it seems there had been a mixup of dates, and Lincoln had gone away fishing for trout in a mountain stream instead of remaining and fishing for publicity in the streets of Falmouth. But Anthony was a man of resource. Said he: "We've got the caravan, which I have learned is just pulling into Falmouth. We'll take that. And," turning to me, "how would you like to pose as an author-promoter of book-reading among the children here?"

The idea didn't quite square with my ambition to emulate Bill Hart or Mitchell Lewis or Tom Mix or Doug Fairbanks, but destiny, the corrector, did seem to think it was more appropriate for a kindly, middle-aged gentleman to pose in a semi-pedagogic way than to attempt to sit a bucking bronco or scramble up the corner of a hacienda. Furthermore, I was a writer and as such, I deemed it my duty to overcome any scruples I might feel, and still furthermore—here's a secret—I was eager to do it any way.

After some searching, we found R. W. Sears, of the International, who had been searching for us. Of course, Sears was disappointed that the Lincoln hadn't turned up.



**HENRY IRVING DODGE,** creator of "Skinner," who tells of his adventures as a roving movie star in the interest of the "Buy-a-Book" campaign

leaving, and a great awning that could be let down. This beautiful book store on wheels was presided over by two exceedingly competent and charming young women, namely, Miss Mary Frank, of New York, and Miss Genevieve Washburn, of Duluth. And right here we encountered obstacle number two.

The young ladies of the caravan were quite loath to enter into our scheme for motion picture exploitation of their enterprise—mind you, these ladies were a part of the great campaign before mentioned and were in the employ of the publishers—it didn't seem to square with their dignity. And this obstacle was what threw me into the spotlight, made me the protagonist.

Said the resourceful Sears: "You ladies think it over a bit. We'll be back presently."

Then when we were some distance away he turned to Anthony.

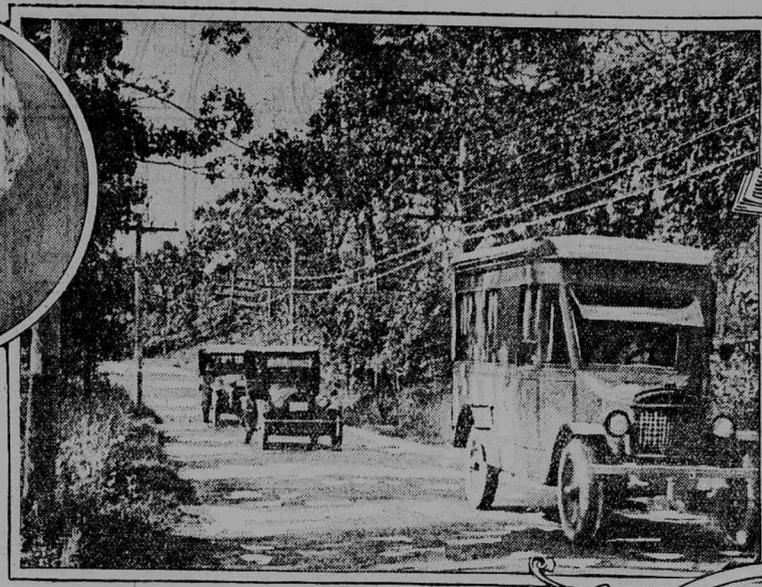
"Supposing we go down to the beach, near some fishermen's huts, and have Dodge pose with a book and surrounded by a lot of children."

"Good," said Anthony, and forthwith procured a jitney.

### The Lure of the Camera

We journeyed to the beach, a mile distant. No setting could have been better designed, even by Griffith. There were the huts—rose-vine covered most of them—the little wharves, the great spools of fish nets, the boats, and all the rest of it. But the children, oh, where were they? Dodge, sitting alone on a boat and reading a book would have conveyed nothing. We were perplexed until Anthony spied a mongrel pup. That settled it. We knew a small boy must be near by somewhere. So we coaxed the pup to us, and presently the small boy appeared, but would not approach closer than fifty feet. "Just wait," said Sears. "If there's a child within fifty miles of this place, I'll get him or her or it." Forthwith, he unpacked his camera and fixed it to the tripod at the water's edge. "That's the lump of sugar," said he, and waited.

Goodness knows where they came from, the very boards of the boat-house seemed to ooze them, three, four, eight, seventeen, by actual count, standing about in groups at safe distances, each group with its



small dog of the variety known as barnyard. At this moment destiny brought a fisherman to the beach, fully equipped in sou'wester and oilskins. And what could have been more wonderful? This self-same fisherman had once acted for a moving picture outfit out of Kansas City way, where he had strayed years before. The lure of the sea had brought him back. We engaged him at once.

Sears borrowed a pair of high

**THE Book Caravan on its way. Looks like a hard life, doesn't it?**

eight, barefooted and carrying in her arms a baby of six months, a wonderful child from what I could see of him through the smudges on his face. To my left, smuggling close and all attention, was a group of boys and girls, all the way from three to ten. I have read in public a number of times, but I never had so attentive an audience as I had



rubber boots and then planted his tripod in the water, some distance out from shore. Then we called for volunteers among the children. Seventeen responded. Then Sears had me sit on the edge of a half-overturned boat, with a medical book on my knee, borrowed for the occasion—there was no other quickly available. At my right was a little girl of

**BUSINESS is good. While some chance motorists are looking over the fiction supply Mr. Dodge demonstrates the value of a picture book**

when I mumbled those medical terms, the smudge-faced baby watching me with a keenness that made me feel guilty, just as if he shrewdly sus-

pected that I was trying to put one over on him.

There was one boy so obsessed with the idea of being the star that we had to keep him out of the picture by force. He was a fat boy, about twelve, and he wore knee breeches and city togs and a little red cap—not the type we wanted. And he had a contempt for the chil-



**HERE are the presiding geniuses of the Book Caravan. They are not at home in their library, but in the big truck in which they tour Cape Cod, selling books to people of rural districts**

dren of the beach. He had come from some town up in Maine a trifle bigger than Falmouth. He was the Peck's bad boy of the occasion, one of those smart aleck "hello-your-own-self" propositions, quick witted to the 7th power. Finally, Sears, in desperation, called him over and had him support one of the legs of the

held aloof, made the attempt. Now Coolidge said what the rest of us had said, used the same arguments, and in a few moments the lady consented. What's the answer? Psychologists please take notice. Maybe it was his name. Coolidge is one to conjure with in Massachusetts these days.

Very good. Miss Washburn negotiated the winding path and brought the huge machine up not far from the vine-clad porch and near the haystack. Then the cameramen planted their tripods in the adjoining cabbage patch. The door of the caravan was opened and the farmer's wife appeared from her own porch in the most natural way in the world. Miss Frank shook hands with her, steps were lowered by a small boy—not the lad from Maine, we'd seen to that—and the lady of the farm entered the itinerant book store. And the cameramen kept on grinding in the cabbage patch. Presently, with much smiling and talking and gestures of general feminine affability, Mrs. Farmer left the shop bearing with her one of Joe Lincoln's choicest.

### Ha, an Idea!

And now a wonderful car, carrying a number of society women, approached. It halted. Instantly an idea struck Coolidge. He called to a little girl in the car to come over and be one of the group. Then we invited all the ladies in the car to join our little party and they did so, with affected reluctance. Then the folding tables and books were stacked on them and a lively, brilliant scene was staged, Miss Frank and Miss Washburn circulating and talking books, while I sat at a table to one side with a group of children, poring over the pages of a great picture book, my little audience laughing uproariously whenever they got the cue from the cameramen to do so.

I really felt sorry for Peck's Bad Boy, he strove so hard to get into that picture. But at each attempt one of the cameramen would give him something to do somewhere near and behind the machine. But I have a suspicion that when these pictures are shown there will appear in one of them a freckle-faced, fat boy with a red cap somewhere, somehow. You see if he doesn't.

An amusing thing happened while we were taking the farm pictures. The good Cape Cod housewife had been handed the copy of the Lincoln book for picture purposes only, but she took it for granted that it was a bona fide gift and stoutly refused to give it back.

"This was given to me, and I'm going to hang on to it," she said.

And she did. A little argument was pending when Joe Anthony, with a keen sense of humor of the situation, quietly assured the ladies of the caravan that he would replace the book by one fresh from the press.

### Men of Resource

Presently train time, 5:15, approached. The camera men folded their instruments, even as the Arabs had done, and we said goodbye to two of the cleverest girls that ever sold books or negotiated a caravan among farmers and fisher folk, and took a train for Boston. And those camera men! I never saw so resourceful a bunch before—shrewd, ingenious, absolutely on the job, determined to get the goods, tactful and, best of all, human. And they put up with my inexperience and blundering, which must have tried their patience, not in an indulgent way, mind you, but in a spirit of helpful comradeship. And when we got to Boston "we-all" ranged along the sit-up-to counter at the North Station and had all sorts of things and fried potatoes and coffee. And then Anthony and I said goodbye to the knights of the camera and boarded a car in the subway for our hotel. We were dead tired, but it was one of the happiest days I ever had in my life.

The camera men told me that the pictures would be out in about two weeks, so now I am haunting the movies, watching for that freckle-faced fat boy with the red cap, of course.

## Hunting the Tiger in India's Jungles

**W**HAT lion hunting is to the African explorer or native, so is tiger hunting to the people of Asia, though between the two tigers are more ferocious. While it is no unusual occurrence for a young tiger to start out as a man-eater, the lion very seldom bothers a human being until it gets old and cannot capture the swift-running antelope or other animals on which it feeds. As a result tiger hunting is by far the more exciting sport, as the Asiatic people join heartily in any hunt for the ferocious beast that doesn't hesitate to take away one of their number for a meal.

India probably has suffered more from the savage man-eater than any other section of Asia, and it is here that most of the tiger hunting takes place. From the fact that the tiger can hide itself in the jungle so thoroughly that it is very difficult to discover, hunting of this beast is exceedingly dangerous, and especially if the hunters go out on foot. Because of its size the elephant is usually used for tiger hunting, but even this big and brave beast is hard to train for the purpose. Only one or two out of a hundred elephants will stand up and face the tiger, while even some of them that have been

in several hunts will suddenly bolt and run just as fast as their legs will carry them if the tiger makes a stand or begins to charge.

A favorite native method of hunting the tiger is to follow it after the beast has carried off one of their cattle, as it is well known that the tiger becomes quite sleepy when a big meal is finished. During this drowsy spell the natives build a bamboo platform about twenty feet high and then wait for the tiger to finish the rest of his meal. After a short time they are rewarded by seeing him arise, give a few yawns and begin to eat once more. But this probably proves to be his last meal, for the hunters stationed on the bamboo platform raise their guns and each aims for the head. Sometimes the tiger is only wounded and begins to spring against the platform. But even with his sharp claws he cannot climb the smooth, hard face of the bamboo poles. It may be a source of wonder as to why the tiger is not shot just as soon as it gets drowsy, but it almost always happens that he goes to sleep in a thicket where he cannot be seen very easily, while he always eats out in some open place. If shot while in the thicket there would be great danger of only wounding him, as well as a poor shot spoiling the skin.

The tiger can be caught in nets, but this is not possible unless a kind of rocket is employed to scare it so badly that it bounds into the nets

before realizing just where it is going. These rockets are made something like the fireworks which we call "chasers," only they are much larger, and if one of them is thrown into the beast's place of concealment such a commotion is caused that the tiger is not long in making a dash for other cover. When it does the powerful nets get tangled in its claws and the more it struggles the more securely does the tiger wind itself into the folds of the net. After it has exhausted itself from struggling one of the bravest hunters ventures near and puts the beast out of its misery. Another method on somewhat the same order is employed by taking large leaves and coating them with a very sticky substance. These leaves are placed along the path which tigers are in the habit of using, and when one of them sticks on its feet the tiger first shakes, much as a cat does with paper boots, but finding this unsuccessful rubs it against its face. By this time it has walked on some other leaves and soon its eyes are closed tight from the glue rubbed off on them, while some of the leaves stick so tight that the tiger begins to roll over and over on the ground in its efforts to get free. After it has howled and struggled to the point of exhaustion it is easy for the natives to creep up on and dispatch it with their spears, as the blinded beast has no way of defending itself. Before guns were in such general

use in the native districts a form of bow-and-arrow trap gun was often used in hunting the tiger, and in this method none of the hunters was compelled to expose himself. The bow was set by fastening it between two posts placed in the path, the string drawn to its limit and a stick inserted between the bow and the string, this keeping the weapon bent. A long wedge is placed between the stick and the bow and the trigger cord tied to its projecting end, after which the arrow is put into place. As soon as the tiger presses the cord this crude looking weapon acts so quickly that the beast is usually hit near the shoulder by the poisoned arrow. Many methods are used for snaring the tiger, and though these properly come under the title of trapping rather than hunting, some of them are very interesting. Quite a few of these are constructed on the well known principle of the common mouse trap, being built of very strong timbers and baited with a young goat. Of course, this is a cruel method, as the poor little goat is tied inside and its cries attract the tiger to the trap. Another more humane way of using the goat is by placing it in the middle of a large pit, and when the tiger is attracted by its wailings the hunters take careful aim and shoot before it can spring on its intended prey. The tiger hunter is always welcome in a district where those tigers called man-eaters are known to exist.