

# OLD BOYS STILL YEARN FOR THE DIME NOVEL

By ARTHUR CHAPMAN

Drawing by LOUIS M. GLACKENS



If Lu Senarens has a somewhat weary look, remember he has written about 35,000,000 words of dime novel "copy"

ONCE every three months or so a limousine draws up in front of the Twenty-third Street office that still bears the familiar name of Frank Tousey, publisher of dime novels, and a prosperous-looking man steps out.

The prosperous individual makes his way up stairs to the Tousey office and proceeds to buy up all the dime novels in sight. Sometimes he spends \$50 on these paper-backed works which were plentiful a generation ago, but which now are getting into the class of literary curiosities.

When our hero—to lapse into the vernacular of the dime novelist—has bought all the paper covered books in sight, and when his plaintive "Aren't there any more?" has been met with a final "No" on the part of the office staff he goes home to an orgy of old-fashioned reading.

The man in the limousine is simply one of the oldtime dime novel fans who has found no substitute for his favorite reading. He is the proprietor of a big hotel in New York, and has money enough to buy plenty of books. But that is not the idea, not at all. He is one of a considerable army that the recession of the dime novel wave has left stranded. Not all the others own limousines and can drive up to the one plant where literature of the old-fashioned sort is being produced. Most of them write letters which usually begin:

"I used to read your stories years ago, and would like to reread them. I would like to get, in particular, a story entitled 'Old King Brady's Last Chance.' I have not been able to get any copies in my town and would be obliged if you can get one for me, and also other stories of the same kind," etc.

No end of letters in similar strain are received at the office where the dime novel is making its last stand. There is something pathetic about them. They tell of a desire for entertainment which the "movie" has not satisfied, and which is not satisfied by more pretentious magazines which some of the old publishers of dime novels are bringing out today.

At the New York Public Library these classics of a by-gone age—"Nick Carter," "Deadwood Dick" and the like—are kept for the sake of these oldtime fans who have not found anything in the way of entertainment to take the place of the dime novel and the nickel library. The only trouble is that these relics from the dime novel age are read so consistently that their flimsy covers are worn out and their edges are ragged. When the present supply is gone, apparently, the dime novel reader is in for a hard time, for many of the oldtime favorites are out of print. At the second hand bookshops in New York, where old magazines and paper-backed books are dealt in, it is said this type of literature is scarce. A few years ago the bookstores were flooded with them, but to-day dime novels are rated in the curio class. Many of them are at a premium. Thrillers which originally sold for five cents will now command 25 cents, and are almost impossible to get, even at that price.

The motion pictures put the dime novel in its present precarious state of existence. But wait. The victory is not yet to the interloper who appeared so unexpectedly on the scene. The hero was thrust back to the edge of the precipice, and for a time it looked as if he was going to be thrown over, with no miraculous escape possible. But right at the same old psychological moment that has saved so many desperate situations there came a sudden change in public sentiment. The "movies" themselves went into a bad slump. It was no longer possible to pack the crowds into any kind of a showroom that had a string of electric lights in front. "Thriller" screen stories in general were the heaviest sufferers.

At the same time there came stirrings which indicated that the dime novel was not dead. Our hero shook off the hands of the movie villain and, staggering to his feet, exclaimed huskily:

"Stand back, villain! I refuse to be thrown over this cliff."

Such is the situation to-day. The dime novel, almost at the point of death, shows signs of a come-back. Nobody pretends to know just why. Perhaps it is because of the steady increase in prices of movie shows, or perhaps it is because no drama of the blood-stirring type can provide the thrill that the printed word gives. Incident on the screen has its limitations; but incident on the printed page, never. The callowest movie fan knows



roid; stand, you ruffianty crew, or I'll make buzzard food of you!" was the title of this Deadwood Dick cover picture. We simply can't improve on it. It is the perfect dime novel

that star actors who act in thrillers have substitutes to do the dangerous work. The matinee idol carries the action right to the point of the leap across the chasm and then some athlete from a circus does the leaping. Or the hero puts on the gloves and gets all ready for the sanguinary conflict that is to decide just where the heroine's fair hand goes—and then some professional prizefighter gives and takes all the really hard blows.

But the hero of a dime novel never turns to the author and whines: "Say, old man, you've got to have some one substitute for me in the big fight scene and in that scene where I jump out of the burning building with the heroine in my arms. I can't run the risk of having my profile mugged up. The movie fans would quit writing for my picture."

The dime novel hero just runs right along doing his duty as soon as he sees it. He is always dependable and he never has to hire his work done—and all this may be the reason why he is staging this come-back.

Lu Senarens, who has been editor of the Tousey publications for years and who has been writing and editing dime novels and their like since the game began, probably knows more than any other man about this class of literature. But Mr. Senarens says he doesn't know what has made the dime novel come back. He does know that he is glad to see the revival, as he believes the dime novel

**RADIO AS THE DIME NOVEL FAN WOULD HAVE IT**

XYZ Broadcasting Station, Dreamland—No limit to meters

6 P. M.—Reports on the dime novel crop.

7 P. M.—Titles of the week's new dime novel issues.

8 P. M.—Authors' readings from unpublished stories by the writers of the Nick Carter, Deadwood Dick, Old Sleuth, Old King Brady and other series.

10 P. M.—Bedtime story: "The Three Grizzly Bears and Calamity Jane, or the Talking Coyote of Dead Man's Gulch," by the author of the Young Wild West stories.

never has done harm and certainly has been the means of providing untold thousands with the Gilbertian "source of innocent merriment."

Mr. Senarens is to be found at his desk at the office of the Tousey company, 168 West Twenty-third Street. Only it is the Tousey company no more. The name of Frank Tousey, Inc., which was continued as a corporate name years after the death of Mr. Tousey, has just been discontinued and the publications of the firm are now brought out by Harry E. Wolf. After Frank Tousey's death his brother conducted the business several years. Then it was sold to the present publishers.

Mr. Senarens knew the dime novel publishing business in its golden days. Besides Tousey there were several firms in the business. There was Beadle & Adams, who published many popular successes from their house in William Street. They also published "The Saturday Star Journal," and thrived from 1870 to 1897. Street & Smith had several characters that "went over big," chief of these being Nick Carter. Tousey, besides pub-

lishing Old King Brady and other hits, was bringing out a weekly entitled "Happy Days." Then there was the Munro house, that brought out thrillers and more pretentious books in paper covers. Other houses in New York were in the field. Cleveland had no less than three publishers of dime novels or nickel libraries.

The great essential was to find a character that would do well to serialize. When that was done the game was plain enough sailing. All that was necessary was for the author to bring out one of these stories—from 40,000 to 33,000 words—every week. That sounds like a lot of wordage, but in reality it is not so difficult, according to those "in the know"—provided you have the trick of writing incident. But if you haven't the knack it is hopeless to try it, as they'll carry you out raving after a week of effort. Last Sunday The Tribune told the story of Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey, author of the Nick Carter series, who committed suicide a short time ago in a New York hotel. He had the necessary gifts of imagination and facility of composition



Here is a cover illustration for a story about Frank Reade jr., and his "Steam Horse." Lu Senarens wrote countless scientific stories of this sort, in advance of the submarine, airship, etc.

to make a success of dime novel writing. But he had not written any such stories for years before his death. The market for his wares had almost vanished, and he was too old to wait for the come-back.

Most of the firms that published dime novels went out of business altogether when the movie competition swept the boards almost clean. Some of them were successful in publishing a higher type of magazine. More pages were added, better writers were secured, expensive covers were put on and the publication names were changed. A new audience was found for these magazines, as it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the readers of the cruder publications would follow along in such radical changes.

Old Cap Collier, King Brady, Old Sleuth, Deadwood Dick, were some of the names that made the greatest appeal to dime novel readers. When a popular character was created it often followed that more than one man worked to keep that character before the public fifty-two weeks in the year. Sometimes an author might be sick or he might feel the need of a vacation—in which case a substitute would pound out a story or two to bridge the gap. But mostly the stories were written by the men who originated them, as it was found that the intimate touch was sometimes lacking when others did the work. Writers who created favorite characters were known

The late Edward Van Rensselaer Dey, author of the Nick Carter stories, which sold by the millions before the advent of the movies

to take a justifiable pride in their creations. They suffered or triumphed with the personages they had created, and naturally they were averse to having others breaking in and spoiling things.

When one considers it, the situation is quite the same in higher lines of work. Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes, and a feverish public nearly drove him to desperation writing new stories. E. W. Hornung had the same experience with Raffles, who had to keep committing crimes in order to satisfy the demands of magazine readers. To-day any magazine editor will assure a writer that if said writer can create a character that is worth running a series about the reputation and fortune of the author are as good as made.

If any one thinks the dime novel writer should not be brought into such comparisons he is mistaken. It is no small gift, this successful writing of dime novels. More people are born to tight rope walking than to dime novel writing. To keep incident moving in lively fashion and to make one's characters seem vital the while requires something more than mere knack. Many good writers have tried it—men who have made reputations in higher lines of work—and have fallen down.

Here is the way dime novels are written: The author calls on the editor and hands over a list of titles, with descriptive sub-titles. These may read as follows: "Old King Brady's Great Triumph; or, the Mystery of a Night-hawk Cab"; "Old Cap Collier's Fight; or, the Wharf Rats of New York"; "Young Wild West; or, Defying the Blackfeet."

There may be twenty titles or more in the list submitted by the author. The editor checks off the titles that sound interesting to him. These titles are forwarded to the artist who does the covers, and pictures are drawn without regard to any story. In fact, there isn't any story—not even in the author's head. The story is to come later.

The author starts work on the titles which have been selected. While he is writing the story the artist is busy making the cover. The artist, like the author, must be gifted with imagination. He takes his cue from the title and sub-title of each story. Nothing else guides him. If the title concerns a hansom cab, a street fight is drawn, with a cab in the foreground. The artist knows the characters in the series under way. He draws each of these main characters true to type.

The author, who is now pretty well along with his story, may be given a look at the picture which is to go on the front cover. If he hasn't as yet put anything in the story which might fit the picture, he proceeds to do so. In fact, the artist may have suggested something which will bridge a hard place in the plot. Thus, in the construction of a dime novel, there is perfect team work among editor, author and artist.

Early in the game it was discovered that cleanliness was the best policy in the dime novel business. Some of the less scrupulous publishers were inclined to overstep all bounds of good taste. They had their heroes committing murders and piling one atrocious crime atop of another. Then an element of sex began to creep into some of the stories. To the credit of the publishers it is to be said that these things were soon corrected.

"We never get a protest about dime novels to-day," said Mr. Senarens. "The stories are kept absolutely clean. Nor do they glorify crime. The oldtime hero who waded through blood is no more. The stories are kept lively and full of incident. About the most the hero does in a physical way is to give the villain a punch on the jaw. The most successful writers are those who keep their stories free from anything which would give offense. Where do we get the writers of these stories? Well, a newspaper man now and then demonstrates the gift. As one gets accustomed to the work it is possible to turn it out rapidly. We have had some very good writers doing the work for us—men who have made considerable successes in literature."

The dime novels are printed as regular weekly publications, under general titles, some of which are "Pluck and Luck," "Work and Win," "Fame and Fortune" and "Wild West." A historical series is printed under the general title of "The Boys of '76." In this are printed historical romances of the Revolution, similar to those made popular in book form

## THE SCHOOL OF AUCTION BRIDGE

By R. F. FOSTER

THERE are several ways of making tricks with a trump suit at the command of the declarer, but there is always the risk of being unexpectedly overtrumped. The high cards in plain suits are never a certainty until the last of the adversaries' trumps are gone.

There are three ways of making tricks at no-trumps, and they are also more or less of a speculation. By making tricks it should be understood that the sure tricks are not referred to. They will make themselves any time. It is getting the tricks that are not sure that wins in playing no-trumps.

If there are three clubs to the ace king in one hand and three to the queen in the other

♥ Q973	♥ K106
♠ Q95	♠ J842
♦ A8754	♦ J103
♣ 8	♣ 763
♥ A8	♥ J542
♠ 1063	♠ AK7
♦ Q92	♦ K6
♣ KJ1092	♣ AQ54

the suits that have at least seven between the two hands, only two or three of which are winners.

Apart from the science of making re-entries there are two ways of making extra tricks which are peculiar to the play of no-trumps. One of these is finessing. The other is playing for splits.

A finesse is trying to win a trick with a card which is not the best you hold in the suit. The typical example is ace and queen in one hand, small cards in the other. If the king is on the right of the queen you can make two tricks by leading from the weak hand to the strong and finessing the queen. The same lead, to the queen, is made if ace and queen are divided.

With three honors in the suit, such as ace queen jack, or ace jack ten, it is necessary to arrange for two leads from the weak hand, if possible, so as to make two finesses, if the first one succeeds.

The second of these positions, ace jack ten in one hand, combines the tactics of finessing with playing for splits. Not only are the two finesses arranged for, but the play is based on the probability that the king and queen are split, in which case only one of them will take a trick.

It is rather remarkable that there is no chapter in any book on auction devoted to playing for splits, although there are many hands in which they are the principal hope, quite apart from finessing. The simplest po-

sition is when there are seven cards between the two hands, divided four and three or five and two. If the six cards in the hands of the opponents are split you can make a trick or two with your long cards. In the second column is an elementary example.

Z dealt and bid no-trump, which all passed. A led the nine of spades. Against trump contracts the lead of the ten or jack is considered better. Against no-trumpers the fourth best is more informative. The declarer takes a look at his prospects.

The high cards in the combined hands that are sure winners are two spades, three clubs and two diamonds. Two tricks must be picked up somewhere to win the game. As there are no suits that offer any chance for finessing, these extra tricks must be made, if at all, by playing for splits.

There are two splits possible to play for, one in each of the red suits. The usual rule is to select the suit that is longer in one hand, and, if possible, the suit that will lose the lesser number of tricks in getting it cleared up. Both these considerations point to the diamonds as better than the hearts.

If the diamonds are not split game is impossible, but on the chance that they are split Z leads three rounds of the suit at once. With the queen of clubs as a sure re-entry and spades still stopped, Z can win the game by playing for the split, as the hearts are stopped against any play, provided neither jack nor queen is played second hand if hearts are led.

It is not at all uncommon for a good player to make two tricks in a suit of seven cards in which he has nothing but the ace, if he can stop the other suits. By leading a small card and letting it ride he can lead the ace and another next time. If the outstanding six are split the fourth card is established for a trick. There are frequent opportunities for combining the two plays in the same suit, the finesse first and then the split.

BRIDGE PROBLEM NO. 106

♥ 1054	♥ Q
♠ 104	♠ K5
♦ —	♦ 94
♣ 8	♣ 10
♥ 86	♥ Y
♠ 96	♠ A B
♦ Q5	♦ Z
♣ —	♣ K
♥ K	♥ A7
♠ A7	♠ J7
♦ J7	♦ K

Hearts are trumps and Z leads. Y and Z want all six tricks. How do they get them? Solution next week.