

BLACK FEATHER

By HAROLD TITUS

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WNU Service

CHAPTER VI—Continued

He ended with the question directed at Standing Cloud and the old chief rose quickly to his feet, amidst a growing tumult of voices. Black Beaver was up, as well, and crying to be heard, but with a majestic, silencing gesture, Standing Cloud stayed him and checked the confusion of voices.

"The little trader has spoken!" he cried. "The little trader has said he will do things which we can see with our own eyes. If the little trader's medicine is greater than Black Beaver's will we not be pleased to see it, my children?"

They would be pleased to see it, indeed! Cries of approval resounded. Short harangues followed. Rodney declared that he would start at dawn, so all might see, and turned to watch Rickman speak lowly and energetically with Black Beaver, urging the magician to some further strategy.

CHAPTER VII

Night again, and Rodney Shaw had his simple camp beside the head-waters of the Laughing Musquash.

Camp, for him, meant a fire and a cleared place in which to lay his blanket. Not to lay his body. Just the blanket. A blanket spread half upon the ground and mounded up with branches to the size of a man's body and the balance spread across this hummock which would appear to vengeful eyes in the faint glow from embers as the figure of a man asleep . . .

While he smoked in triumph with the old men last night, he had watched Burke Rickman's face. He had seen the man stalk, finally, to his canoe with defeat gnawing at his pride. And he knew what to expect.

Fine opportunity, this, for a trader outgeneraled as Rickman had been! A chance for the attainment of a triple objective with a single blow. With Shaw gone, vengeance would be his, trade would be secure for the company beyond any possible challenge, and with Shaw unreturned from this errand into Windigo country, the influence of Black Beaver, already bought and paid for by Burke Rickman, would never again in that generation be questioned.

Just before sundown Rodney came to the deposit of white clay. He filled the square of sheeting he had brought with him, bound it to a package with thongs, and, in the last of daylight, made his camp which was to be no camp.

At some little distance, back against the bole of a tree, flintlock across his knees, he sat down to await what he told himself might be the most momentous interval of his life.

Rodney, even with the conviction that his life would be sought before dawn, dozed; wakened . . . dozed . . . wakened again with a start.

No sound, and yet an awareness of near danger spread through him like fire. He felt the skin of his back creeping and softly, slowly, making not the slightest rustle, he rose to his feet, rifle at ready.

His camp fire still glowed. He could see, from where he stood, the blanket folded over its deceptive pile of boughs. But not a sound. . . . And then suddenly a man stood before him, an outline of darkness against darkness. Vague, indistinct, unreal.

But the click of a hammer was not unreal! It was like a shot itself in contrast to the silence of the night and Rodney could discern then a kneeling figure strained forward and the faint gleam of light from the embers was caught on the barrel of a rifle as it swung into position.

He went blind with rage for an instant and heard himself cry out as the other rifle cracked and he fired blindly, wildly and knew he had missed when a gun clattered to rock and the vague figure swayed and lunged toward him.

He threw himself forward, grappling for the man's throat. A fist bashed into his mouth, throwing him to one side. He floundered to his knees and grappled again. His hand clutched Rickman's powder horn and jerked it loose and dropped it as he swung for better hold.

Rickman hurled himself on Rodney, bearing him down, and they rolled on the ledge. Fingers had Shaw's throat, now, holding him briefly while the other hand rummaged for a knife. But Rodney shook off the grip and prisoned the fumbling hand; rolled over; was free. Shaw worked a foot behind Rickman's, a hip against his hip. One hand over a shoulder and on the throat, the other encircling the man's waist, he heaved with all his strength, and slowly his enemy yielded, fighting the leverage, making ragged sounds.

But he could not break the hold, could not stand against it. He did twist from Shaw's grip as he fell,

though, and went sideways and down, over the rim of the ledge, disappearing from sight as Shaw poised to spring.

With a cry Rickman struck the water and Rodney, teetering on the edge, strained his eyes to mark the place where he would emerge. He heard, but could not see. The man gasped hoarsely as he came up but he began to swim at once.

Seconds passed for Shaw, dragging out painfully as the fear that the man would escape him became manifest.

"You wolverine!" he cried. "You dog, Rickman! . . . While a man sleeps, you'd . . ."

He stilled his own breathing for an instant and heard Rickman crashing through the forest, making downstream, far enough away to make pursuit futile.

And now Shaw returned to his establishment with half a hundred-weight of white, smooth clay in a package, with hunters trooping through his gate to stare at this



"That Is the Important Matter, Major!"

burden and chatter about it and, finally, touch, with old men and young men overstepping natural reticence to make voluble protestations of friendship.

That was Rodney Shaw's hour of triumph. He had discredited the jessakid, and more. He had lifted himself in the eyes of these natives to a figure that would go down in song and story.

And in the house of the other trader was only black and murderous despair.

No Indians except that handful which had accepted his credits appeared before Rickman, to beg tobacco and wheedle further presents. The place was all but deserted by natives and his men went about the tasks of repair to which they had been assigned with hushed voices and frightened glances at the commander's quarters.

Rickman considered this and that: night raid, ambush, long waits for a chance shot from a distance. None would do. Shaw was no fool. He would not expose himself or go unguarded, now. And, in a few days, his brigade would arrive and he would have men in plenty to protect him.

His face writhed in agony as he thought of those oncoming canoes. A week of trading and the Pillagers would be obligated beyond repair. So long as Shaw lived and was free to meet and greet hunters—

So long as the man was free! Then he stretched, as a man will who is suddenly at peace after prolonged trouble. And he laughed.

Rickman sat down after his laughter, and drew paper and quill and ink before him and began to write, slowly and at length. Then, staring through the paneless window, he saw Conrad Rich across the enclosure and summoned him with a shout.

"Yes, Burke?"

"There'll be a canoe leave tonight," the trader said. "Four men. Select them from the best. Antoine will be in charge."

"A canoe? Tonight? For Michillmackinac?"

"That! And by way of Green Bay. With the current behind, it will be a quicker march."

"But . . . but . . . I don't . . ."

"No, you wouldn't even guess! It's this, Rich: the upstart trader is a fugitive. Back yonder they've only guessed his destination, it's likely. This letter to MacIver"—tapping the paper—"it makes guessing unnecessary. And what else it contains makes impressive the necessity of having the law reach even to here!"

So a light canoe left the lake of the Pillagers and went swiftly down the Mississippi and on the third day after its departure Rodney Shaw's canoes, armed.

Goods were hustled ashore and into the trading room and Indians came hurrying, staring much and crowding greatly and talking in high-pitched, excited voices. Their futures lay wrapped in those travel-stained packages.

In the morning trading began, with hunters and their families thronging the stockade through all the hours of daylight and for long after darkness had fallen.

They moved about eyeing this, fingering that. Little offered was new; the great bulk of the goods were staple, and after the inspection a pipe was lighted and, squatting on the floor about Shaw, while Basile and others brought goods, the debts were accepted. Tobacco was passed but Shaw shook his head firmly at requests for whiskey. When the trading was finished, whiskey would again be passed; not before.

For days this procedure was routine. For hours at a time Rodney sat on the floor of his trading room, bargaining, arguing.

"Net thread, my brother?" he might say. "Four plus of net thread. That is all. The ball of thread is the skin. Skin for skin. Or."

"No, Zhing-wauk. No spirits. No more than the taste when we end our trading. At the grand medicine I will give my brothers plenty. Not before."

After the fifth day following Basile's arrival, few hunters remained near the establishment and Rodney's men were busy with preparing the place for the rigorous seasons to follow. But some Indians remained nearby and among these was the Weasel, once ejected from the post but, in this period of Shaw's good will toward the band as a whole, tolerated within the stockade.

He was given no attention, shouldered out of the way, while Shaw dealt with more dependable individuals.

Then the Weasel would seat himself at a distance and scratch his back with a stick and lament.

Each day he performed so, but each night he paddled from his lodge across the lake to the company fort and met Burke Rickman and whispered what he had learned.

And so Rickman paced his enclosure and drank and fumed and counted the time, reckoned the miles his letter to MacIver would be borne that day, estimated the weeks it would be before the opposition fort would find itself without a leader.

The canoe reached Mackinac. Rickman's letter was handed at last to Donald MacIver. And the Scot, and other company heads read and frowned and set their minds to the task in hand.

MacIver climbed the hill and sat with the major and the grizzled old officer, veteran of many an Indian battle, was far less comfortable than he would have been under fire of hostile savages.

He grumbled and protested and roared. But he gave in, knowing a surrender in the field, in such an instance, was a lesser hazard than a disturbance in Washington, and a canoe with Capes, the lieutenant, and four soldiers embarked that day, the warrant for Rodney Shaw safe in an official dispatch case.

And then, indeed, the major was in for it.

Flying up the hill to the fort, Annette Leclere burst in upon the old soldier. And the major Mydeared and There-thered, and paced before his desk and pulled at his mustache and harrumphed as he admitted that, yes, soldiery was on the way to bring young Rodney Shaw back to answer to a charge of murder.

"But it is not so, major! It is common talk in the town that the thing was infamously gotten up to delay Rodney! Your own surgeon has said the man died from no knife wound!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Faltbooting, New Sport in America, Is Old in Many European Countries

"An outdoor sport, new to America but practiced for years in many European countries, made its debut in New York recently when a special train was chartered to take over 200 persons interested in faltbooting to the Connecticut river to enjoy the introduced sport.

The faltboot originated in Germany, observes Albert Stoll, Jr., in the Detroit News. It is a folding boat which, when assembled, combines many of the features of an Eskimo kayak with those of our Indian canoe. It is made of rubberized sail cloth, waterproof canvas and sticks, and can be folded into a couple of bundles about as large as a suitcase. The "boat" can be assembled in a few minutes and holds water-tight compartment fore and aft. A cockpit in the center will hold one or two persons. It has a low center of gravity and will not tip easily and can breast rapids, small falls and white waters found

"But the warrant exists!" the major thundered. "And Leslie's man Giles does not deny the story that Shaw and his employer quarreled over the goods. What can I do?"—And his boots went clump, clump, clump as the lovely Annette dropped her face into her hands and wept.

And after a time he patted her hand and his gruff voice grew almost gentle.

"There! . . . That's better, my dear! . . . And what is that in your hand? A feather? A black ostrich plume . . . Oh, I did not know it was some secret!"—as, flushing quickly, Annette thrust the remnant of the black plume into her bodice and began to talk of Giles . . .

So down the hill again as the sun sank went Annette, dismayed but purposeful; and along narrow streets. And a few who happened near felt their eyes bulge as the mademoiselle walked alone on the beach with the garbled and leathery Giles, now an employee in the great warehouse . . .

At midnight the major roused at the rapping and descended to his door and there was Annette.

"Giles will make affidavit!" she gasped. "He tells that Leslie gave his goods to Rodney without reservation! He tells before witnesses, and he will say so to the marshal and the justice!"

"So all is settled!" boomed the major. "So when young Shaw returns he will be vindicated and free to—"

"Returns? Returns!" The sharpness of her cry, so in contrast to her look of a moment before, caused the major to hesitate. "That is the important matter, major! That he be not returned! Do you not understand?"—with an impatient stamp of a tiny foot. "Burke Rickman is there. If Rodney is taken from his establishment by soldiery, even for a brief absence, his trade will be gone! It is all Rickman asks, major! Another message must be sent, recalling the lieutenant and voiding the warrant!"

Annette clasped her hands beneath her trembling chin in an ecstasy of hope which went out like a snuffed candle when the major thrust up his arms in a helpless gesture. Because, that day, an order had arrived calling a detachment to Detroit and the garrison would be so drained of men that it would be impossible to spare others for such an errand as was proposed.

Indeed, he'd write an order to recall Capes! He'd write an order that would bring Capes back to his post without even stops for food and rest! On his honor, that order would be something to read; he'd write an order to peel a man's ears, but he could not send it. There was no chance . . . no chance whatever. But let any company or individual come to him again and try to wheedle him into pulling chestnuts from the fire and see what happened. He'd skin them alive, he would . . . But this time nothing could be done. Nothing whatever . . .

And so, as eastern stars faded, Annette went slowly down the hill, cheeks as wet with tears as the grass was with dew, the black feather tight in a hand which clenched desperately.

Nightfall. And a canoe making its weary way toward Rickman's establishment, stared at in the gathering dusk by men at the stockade gate.

"The fort!" came a voice from the canoe, as paddles ceased dipping. "Is this the Astor establishment?"

"Yes! Who asks?"

"Capes, from Mack—"

"Ah, Capes! Capes, at last! Land here! Capes! Here, you men, help them! So. Quickly, but easy . . . Ah, Capes!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Keeping Up With Science By Science Service

Science Service—WNU Service.

Wide Usefulness of Bags Despite the Tin Can's Rise

Paper Lining Prevents Sifting of Contents

By ROBERT D. POTTER

New York.—The tale of the tin can's rise to a well-earned niche on America's family cupboard shelves is well known, but the advances in another packaging method—the bag—are little noted. This is because the bag is seldom used by the average family except as a temporary container from the grocery store and possibly for sugar, salt and flour.

But bags are not "dead" in any sense, for they still build the homes of America and its highways, as only two examples.

Burlap, commonest fabric for rough bags, was first imported in volume from India just before the turn of the century. With the present 1-cent-a-pound import tax, burlap still is considerably lower in cost than domestic cotton fabric.

Some Modern Improvements. Bags have now been so improved that manufacturers can claim to offer any degree of protection from air, acid, dust, oil, moisture, odors or vermin.

The crinkled paper linings for bags allow them to offer serious competition with rigid containers. Materials that formerly sifted through cloth bags can now be shipped satisfactorily and cheaply. These linings permit shipment without contamination of the contents from foreign materials or outside odors.

Multiwalled bags, first introduced only a little over a decade ago, have taken over the greater part of the world's cement output and virtually all the packaging of hydrated lime and gypsum plaster.

Ocean Currents Play Tricks for Mariners

Washington.—Queer pranks and conditions played by localized ocean current rips have been reported to the hydrographic office of the United States navy.

While on a voyage from Balboa, C. Z., to San Diego, Calif., recently, the American steamer Jefferson Myers reported a current rip directly across its path that had water with a temperature of 84 degrees Fahrenheit and deep blue in color, on its south side. On the north side, however, the water was dark green and had a temperature of only 68 degrees. Similarly when the ship passed over the rip the air temperature changed from 84 to 68 degrees.

The British steamer Pentridge Hill reports, while on a voyage from Rotterdam to Rio de la Plata, South America, a current rip in the South Atlantic that, for five miles of length, had the appearance of breakers in very shallow water.

A current rip was described near the equator in the South Atlantic by the American vessel Charles Pratt, which turned the ship's course off five degrees.

Moon Mountain Changes Call for Explanation

Washington.—While astronomical findings indicate that the moon is lifeless and, indeed, probably without an atmosphere, there are some matters of lunar topography that need more explanation. Appearing in the magazine Popular Astronomy, published by Goodell Observatory, of Carleton college, are drawings made of mountains on the moon which show changed markings from time to time that must be attributed to something—haze, melting snow, or jets of steam.

Pico, an 8,000 foot peak on the moon, was the mountain chosen for study by G. W. Rawstron, amateur astronomer of Liverpool, England. Some 48 drawings of the mountain, made with a four-inch diameter telescope, show that light and dark areas on the lunar mountains vary from time to time.

Penguins Qualify as Old Southern Family

Washington.—Penguins can easily qualify as an Old Southern Family—very much so, since the place they apparently like best is the chill-watered region surrounding the icebound continent of Antarctica. Little land is theirs, and that mostly stones; but after all penguins need only enough dry space for their family-rearing activities. Outside of that, the more sea the better, from the penquin's point of view. For the sea means fish, and fish is what penguins live on.

Babylonians Were Fathers of Science, Says Orientalist

Knew Much of Medicine and About Astronomy

By DR. WALDO H. DUBBERSTEIN
The Oriental Institute,
University of Chicago

Chicago.—Assuredly the ancient Babylonians deserve the title "Fathers of Science."

Through 3,000 years of documented history we can trace their slow steps toward modern science. We today have no reason to feel smugly superior in our advanced knowledge. The really hard steps in progress are the first ones. Those were taken for us thousands of years ago.

Four thousand years ago, Babylonian surgeons set broken bones, made major and minor body incisions, and even attempted eye operations. A pictorial representation shows the physician with his inevitable case and bandages.

Sicknesses were known by specific names, and symptoms were recorded. Magical and religious elements of Babylonian medicine are easily over-emphasized, while honest medical prescriptions are overlooked. There is a reasonable purpose in Babylonian magic. Once gods and demons had been accepted, then charms and incantations for their control were also necessary. Had magic been omitted, the patient would certainly have lacked confidence in his physician. It was part of his professional "bedside" technique. But scores of simple medical prescriptions have no magic in them. Some even have real medicinal value.

Mathematics and Astronomy. Mathematics was obviously practical in a complicated business development such as Babylonia experienced almost 5,000 years ago. Ancient textbooks offer simple and complex problems.

In the oldest texts are found addition, subtraction, division, multiplication, and fractional numbers. Square and cube root tables, as well as multiplication tables, were also compiled. Even the theorems commonly ascribed to the Greek Pythagoras and Thales, who lived in the Sixth century B. C., seem to have been known, empirically at least, in Babylonia 4,000 years ago.

Astronomy began its climb toward a respectable science as an assistant to that pseudo-science, astrology. Yet by 2000 B. C. Babylonian astronomy had assumed much of its later form as a practical science. The necessary adjustment between the lunar and the solar year was made by inserting extra months. All this demanded specific astronomical information. The path of the sun through the heavens had been charted through the 12 constellations, whose names still survive in our zodiac.

It was their practical compilation of observed phenomena, as well as their discovery of general truths, that made the Babylonians pioneering scientists.

New York and Los Angeles Centers for Television

Hollywood, Calif. — New York and Los Angeles are the two most logical choices for the beginnings of commercial television broadcasting in America, reports the scientific committee of the research council of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences here.

The great need for talented actors is a primary reason for this decision. On the New York stage and radio and in Hollywood's motion picture studios are the best actors in the country.

Geographically Los Angeles excels New York in its facility for television broadcasts on the "line of sight" properties of the television waves, also reports the committee. While New York and its surrounding area can be covered from towering Manhattan skyscrapers the city of Los Angeles has its own natural high landmarks.

Rattles More Used by Adults Than by Babies

Chicago.—Almost 5,000 years ago babies in the old city of Kish in Mesopotamia were kept happy with rattles, says Richard A. Martin, archeologist, of the Field Museum of Natural History, here. Yet, rattles have been used more by adults than by children in most lands explored by science.

Soldiers in ancient China were stirred by music of bronze rattles in military orchestras. African tribes devised many kinds of rattles for use in magical rites. Egyptians had a kind of rattle called a sistrum, made of a staff with metal rings dangling at the end, and used in solemn religious ceremonies. American Indians used rattles in religion and magic.

Rattles unearthed at Kish include some shaped like goats and hedgehogs, to catch the babies' eyes, as well as amusing them with the jingle of pebbles inside the hollow toys.

Cutwork That Is Anything but Work

"Cutwork without bars?" Exactly—and that's the very reason this lovely Wild Rose design for doilies or buffet set is so easy to do. So encouraging, too, for the beginner who'd like to try her hand at it. Aren't they life-like—these roses? Delicate shades of pink would be most realistic, of



Pattern 5503.

course, but the pattern is no less lovely if worked in thread to match your linen. A refreshment table set with these would be most tempting! In pattern 5503 you will find a transfer pattern of a doilie 11 by 17½ inches and one and one reverse doilie 6 by 9 inches; material requirements; illustrations of all stitches used; color suggestions.

To obtain this pattern, send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) to The Sewing Circle Household Arts Dept., 259 W. Fourteenth St., New York, N. Y. Please write plainly your name, address and pattern number.

Uncle Phil Says:

Yes, Somebody Else

When a speaker abuses mankind in general, his hearers approve because they know somebody else "who is just like that."

"Laugh at the world, and the world will laugh with you."

You don't have to fool all of the people all of the time. A majority of one is enough.

To every young maiden marriage is a solemn thing; and not to be married still a more solemn thing.

Airplanes "drone" and "zoom," but no word seems to be perfect in its application to an airplane's noise.

Sometimes nothing can beautify the ugly business district of a little town but a big fire.

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HOW LONG CAN A THREE-QUARTER WIFE HOLD HER HUSBAND?

YOU have to work at marriage to make a success of it. Men may be selfish, unsympathetic, but that's the way they're made and you might as well realize it. When your back aches and your nerves scream, don't take it out on your husband. He can't possibly know how you feel.

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