

# BLACK FEATHER

By HAROLD TITUS

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WNU Service

## CHAPTER I

Two weeks of toilsome travel behind, two leagues of gently ruffled water before, the great canoe swung on to the end of its march, bearing a lamb to the slaughter.

That is what Donald MacIver was to say, when the leagues had been cut to canoe lengths.

But Rodney Shaw looked like no sheep, no innocent, as he sat there with one arm thrown easily over the mess basket. He looked like no beaten trader, either, though the number of packs was small, indeed. He had more the look and bearing of an emperor in his royal barge despite his youth and apparent poverty. Though, of course, emperors have been young and poor.

His eight boatmen sang so in lusty voices, as they sent the 40-foot North canoe along. Eight boatmen, gaily dressed as voyagers should be for the rendezvous.

Roaring home, after a year inland, minds and hearts fixed ahead!

Behind the canoe was the broad expanse of Lake Michigan's northern extremity; against its birch bottom pattered the indigo waters of the narrowing strait and that island, Mackinac, was the great depot of the fur trade, the chief gateway to the old Northwest and, in this year of 1818, the seat of a monopoly which was making aimless wanderers or mere employees of traders such as this Rodney Shaw.

Not all Mackinac slept late that June morning. The place was active. Few had slept late as had Donald MacIver, but then . . . he had wintered at Fond du Lac.

For Ramsay Crooks, however, there was no rest when others stirred. He was early at his desk, across which flowed a record of that bitter struggle, that bitter scramble for fur. Conrad Rich, an elderly clerk, toiled at another desk; men came and went, but toward none did Crooks so much as look.

He was preoccupied with what lay on his desk and what might come from the westward, yonder; so preoccupied that when the fight which began outside with a yelp and a shout grew until a thousand men were close-pressed about the battle, Crooks gave little heed.

True, he looked closely before the affray was over, even moved to the window to stare; none with warm blood in his veins could have been wholly immune to such excitement. He watched men, under MacIver's direction, start up the hill with a heavy, limp burden.

Donald MacIver entered, removing his beaver hat, wiping his broad forehead.

Crooks nodded. "A brawl is required to wake the revelers," he observed, not ill-humoredly, but still with a tone of implied rebuke.

"Brawl! Ramsay, I'd not 've missed you fer mooch! 'Twas th' boatman Rousset, tryin' his strength w' my own Nadeau Nadeau, ye'll ken, carried th' black feather off w' us last summer. What men! Nadeau, th' strongest fighter 'til now, 'nd Rousset, th' untried. Ye should 've seen them strain! I'd 'd risked mooch on Nadeau Heart 'nd strength, th' mon has, but he could nae compare w' Rousset. A horse, he is, a buffalo of a mon! He left my poor Nadeau in such condition I'd skye a copper for his chances. I had him lugged tae th' post surgeon like ye'd lug a package! Yon goes Rousset, noo. W' th' black feather in his own cap!"

"Rodney Shaw will arrive today," "Comin'! You're informed, then?" "While you danced. He is come, Donald,"—nodding impressively—"and the last challenge to our superiority in the northern department is removed!"

Crooks began to pace the floor slowly.

"Ay, he's been a burr, a thorn! Courageous, audacious, the last of the independent traders to yield. It will be heartening to report this achievement to Mr. Astor during his stay with us."

"Perhaps he has obsairved it close-in on him; one by one the unattached forts have given up since congress helped us drive the nor'-westers back into Canada. But this Shaw! he shrugged. "A parsistent mon! A trader to put shame on all but th' one of our company. Had th' Burke Rickman, he's th' best mon we've had to drive out obstinate opposition!"

From outside came the sound of wheels and a gig, drawn by a pair of horses, drove past, a girl alone on the high seat.

"Yon goes one that makes a child of Rickman!"

"Indeed! Poor Rickman, in Annette's toils!" Crooks confronted MacIver. "Mark you, Donald, 'tis not a bad asset, having one like she is, here. For two seasons, now, every unmarried trader young enough to hope for her smiles has struggled to make a record that might be outstanding in her eyes." "And for his pains, been made to suffer th' ailments of th' damned!" laughed MacIver and the stark cleared his throat sharply.

"But there are duties, Donald," Crooks said, sorting papers from his desk. "The schooner will be laden by night. The captain will sail with the first fair wind. Mr. Astor and I will be gone and you will be in command and . . ."

A shrill whoop floated in from the beach. A shout. A rifle cracked. A strange canoe was out there, deep voices of the singing oarsmen sounding up the wind.

Rodney Shaw stared at the colorful spectacle before him. Lodge and tent and dwelling; craftsman's yard and shop and the high-perched, white-walled fort itself emptied to join the welcome.

Mackinac welcomed this arrival as it had welcomed many another. Oars were hoisted now and voy-



He Found His Balance There and Charged, Head Down.

ageurs, waist deep in water, shoved the canoe gently into the shallows, guarding its tender birch bottom from boulders.

Old Basile put down the steering oar with its carved blade, stepped over the side and bowed a long back for his trader. Shaw lowered himself to the firm shoulders and, his calves clasped by Basile's wiry hands, was borne ashore, his well-rubbed boots thus kept dry.

The crowd pressed closely about, but one was making his way through it now impatiently, cursing hoarsely. This was Rousset, with the black feather, insignia of invincibility, thrust into the knot of the yellow kerchief which covered his shaggy head.

"Make way!" he shouted. "Make aside for the black feather! But what a strange brigade is this?"

His great hands grasped shoulders, his stout elbows prodded ribs. Basile was directing the placing of packages, his eyes and attention all for that labor. He did not see Rousset because his back was toward the man; if he heard the fellow's orders he gave no heed. So the hand on his arm spun him about roughly.

"Does one shout in your ear, old man?" Rousset demanded. "Did you not hear the voice of the black feather commanding you to stand aside?"

Basile struggled to release the arm. He put up his other hand in a gesture of protest, but for the inflamed eyes of the bully it was a move of resistance, a challenge to superiority. The hand was struck aside, a fist crushed into Basile's chest and he went down.

"Hold!" This was Shaw, striding forward. "Hold, you!"

But Rousset would not hold. He stopped, great hands clenching to

seize upon and break Basile's body. Shaw rushed.

He grappled for Rousset adeptly. One foot set itself quickly behind the boatman's, his hands clamped the man's body at the gay sash and with a twist and a shove, the bully went reeling backward, roaring, against the press of the crowd.

He found his balance there and charged, head down. But a hand on his neck deflected him, a swooping foot tripped him. He stumbled and would have fallen but for the quick arms which seized him and lifted him and turned him over as he writhed and raised him high and let him drop his length on the shingle.

His heels were grasped by angry hands; his back scrubbed through loose gravel as he was jerked to the water's edge. One foot was dropped, a wrist caught up instead; he was swung once, twice, thrice in widening arcs. He was let go and fell with a cry and a splash into knee-deep water under the bow of the unloading canoe.

Then Rodney Shaw turned, the rage already dying in his gray eyes. He brushed his palms together briskly as though to free them from the dust of an empty honor . . . Briskly, at first, and then the movements slowed until he stood there, hands half extended and motionless, staring up at her.

She sat on the high seat of her two-wheeled vehicle, looking at him across the heads of the murmuring crowd. Her horses pawed, but she held them with firm rein, body swaying a bit as their restlessness moved the gig. She smiled! Fire, in that smile, incitement and challenge and defiance, because Shaw had opened his mouth as if to speak, as though to let an amazed, incredulous ejaculation be jolted between his lips.

A voice, then, said to him: "I am Ramsay Crooks!" Shaw came back to controlled faculties slowly, a bit bewildered, perhaps somewhat abashed. A man looked twice at Ramsay Crooks. Astor's liege man, dominant figure in the trade of the Northwest.

"I am Shaw," he replied simply. Crooks stopped. He picked from the gravel at his feet a black ostrich plume, the one knocked from Rousset's cap. He extended it with a gracious and graceful gesture.

"Yours!" he said and smiled. A stir behind Crooks distracted Shaw's steady gaze. The tandem team was moving away. The head of the driver turned ever so slightly and the pert chin lifted in tantalizing challenge.

Shaw took the black feather absently.

Night, with logs blazing on the hearth, because the strait winds are cold, even in June. They sat before the pilastered fireplace in the high ceilinged room. Rodney Shaw, independent trader, and John Jacob Astor, who ruled a territory that was to be the heart of a nation. Ramsay Crooks was there, as well, but in the background.

A German baker's boy who had become the richest American through his handling of fur, was Astor; fur and tea and ships and land, but always fur.

There had been no talk of the errand which brought Shaw hither until after the meal, and then not until pipes had followed the gorging.

As Mr. Astor talked in his broken English, Ramsay Crooks listened closely and toyed with a rosette of gay ribbons.

"So," said Astor with a shrug. "Das ist vat Crooks asked you to come here. Ja!"

Shaw had scarcely moved since Astor began.

"And that is what I came to hear," he said quietly, and yet the words carried a ring of excitement. "That is what I expected to hear; your proposal, Mr. Astor, is that I surrender my independence. The offer to come and trade at your account and risk is scent to the bait."

Astor nodded casually but perhaps in his eyes was a glint of something not casual.

"I came to hear this; I came all this way, the length of Lake Michigan, sir"—voice mounting and trembling ever so slightly—"to say to you, No! To say No a thousand times! I came all this way, sir, to say that you may rob me, badger me, persecute me, but I am not to be driven out. That, Mr. Astor, is what I came to say."

But now Astor's short, stocky body bent forward a bit and his harsh, strong mouth loosened somewhat as with incredulity. "Was? . . . You coom? . . . you coom"—lifting a plume hand—"just to say No to me? His brows were gathered close, puzzled rather than angered.

"Ay! And ten thousand times, No!"

A slow flush had crept into Astor's face and he gripped his chair arms.

"You 'ink dot's smard? You 'ink dot's good sense? You 'ink when all iss amalgamation a young man shows sense to—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Aztecs of 400 Years Ago Knew Much of Insects, Including Black Widow Spider

The average Aztec of four centuries ago knew more about insects than the average city-dweller today, says Dr. C. H. Curran, associate curator of insect life of the American Museum of Natural History.

Proof of the Aztecs' lively interest in natural history, writes Dr. Curran, is handed down to us chiefly by the Spanish writer Sahagun. His diligent pursuit of information on the subject is evidence that a definite interest in insects and their ways existed before the present era of systematic science.

The black widow spider of the Aztecs was the same as that which has attracted so much attention in the United States during the last few years. The Aztecs did not look upon it as deadly, but they did consider it poisonous. Sahagun wrote of this spider: "There are some poisonous spiders in this country, they are black and have a reddish tail. The stings cause great fatigue for three or four days, although they do not kill with their stings."

This is as true today as it was at the time of the Spanish conquest. The bite may prove to be of little or no consequence, it may result in serious illness for a few days, or it may prove fatal if inflicted on a sensitive part of the body. The virulence of the bite depends upon its location, the condition of the spider at the time of the bite, the amount of venom injected and the health of the individual.

The Aztec treatment for the bite of the black widow consisted of the application of a compress soaked in an alkaline solution in a container of water. It is noted that at the present time the bites and stings of insects are treated by keeping them moist with an alkaline solution, such as baking soda. Aside from complete rest, which the Aztecs seem to have recognized as beneficial in the case of black widow spider bite, the treatment recommended today provides the intravenous injection (in solution) of the drug known as Epsom salts.



## TIT FOR TAT

The two men had been partners in business for more than fifty years. But now the partnership was about to be dissolved, for one of the two lay dying.

The sufferer called his friend to his bedside. "I know I haven't much longer to live, old man," he said. "Before I go I've got a confession I must make. During our years of partnership I've swindled you out of thousands of pounds. Can you forgive me?" "That's all right," said the other cheerfully. "Don't you worry about it, I poisoned you."

## He Hit Him

Lawyer—Then you admit that you struck the plaintiff with malice aforethought? Defendant (indignantly)—You can't mix me up like that. I've told you twice I hit him with a brick and on purpose. There wasn't no malice or nothin' of the kind about it—just a plain brick like any gentleman would use.

## Jam for Nothing

A Scotsman was observed by a constable walking up and down a busy London street with a large piece of bread in his hand. "What are you doing with that bread?" asked the policeman curiously. "Well," replied the Scot, "I'm looking for the traffic jam."

## Heard in Court

Magistrate—What is the man charged with? Constable—He is a camera fiend of the worst kind, sir. Magistrate—But he shouldn't have been arrested just because he has a mania for taking pictures. Constable—It isn't that, sir—he takes the cameras!

## ONE THAT DON'T COUNT



"Today I can feel the spring vibrating through every nerve!" "Well, that one on your side is all out of whack."

## And the Broom

"You say you cannot get along with your husband. People must learn to bear and forbear. Did you ever try heaping coals of fire on his head?" "No, I don't know as I ever did. But I've tried hot water."

## Not a Dull Sport

A man in an insane asylum sat fishing over a flower-bed. A visitor wishing to be friendly walked up and said, "How many have you caught today?" "You're the ninth," replied the fisherman.

## Eavesdropper!

Uncle George—So this is the baby, eh! I used to look just like him at that age. What's he crying about now? Little Niece—Oh, Uncle George, he heard what you said.—Washington Post.

## Any or All

Shopper—I wish to buy a fashionable hat. Clerk—Yes, madam, we have it. Will you have it funny-looking at the back, front, sides, top or all over?

## TINNED OR CANNED



"Let me read you this article on milk." "You may, if it's condensed."

## Super-Clever

Madge—My husband is a clever man, to say the least. Marge—Your husband would have to be more than clever, darling, to say no more than that.

## Proof

"I heard a new one the other day; I wonder if I've told it to you?" "Is it funny?" "Yes." "Then I haven't."

## The Swimming Can Wait

Dora—So he's teaching you to swim? How much have you learned so far? Cora—That he's twenty-one, single, and has a good job.

## WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK... By Lemuel F. Parton

Foe of Demoniac Forces. NEW YORK.—Anatole France concluded his "Revolt of the Angels" with the observation that man's only hope lay in "The Conquest of the Demons of Anger and Fear in His Own Soul." The quotation may be a bit awry, since the book is not at hand, but it is pertinent to today's news of the expedition to the arctic in the interest of demon-slaying—the first of its kind, barring Siegfried's hunting trip in the land of the ice queen.

The above allusion suggests no over-simplification of the purposes of Dr. George W. Crile, famous surgeon and bio-chemist, who is heading a voyage to the Arctic. Specifically, he fights the demoniac forces of anger and fear which now range the world and which any newspaper reader can recognize on sight. At seventy-three, he hopes to find in the Far North knowledge which will strengthen his arm and temper his sword, supplementing knowledge which he previously gleaned in the African jungles.

Seals and walrus, neither of them particularly angry or scared, will be studied by Dr. Crile—not as examples of dignity and complacency, but as the owners and proprietors of certain unique energy-releasing mechanisms that seem to work better than the human carburetor, the suprarenal gland system. Dr. Crile has dissected and studied about 800 jungle animals in the interest of civilized human behavior, and now, to piece out his mosaic of life energy, he goes North—of to the ant but the sea lion.

These researches have enabled him in certain instances to cure chronic anger and fear. He finds that in this day of newspapers, radio and press agents there are high-voltage stimuli loose everywhere which make high blood-pressure the curse of the age. The name "John L. Lewis" will make one citizen apoplectic, while "Tom Girdler" will induce a similar embolism in another.

For aggravated cases of this kind, Dr. Crile has a simple "Demercation" operation, in which he throtles down the too rampant adrenal glands. Judging from the past, he could operate on the opposed principals in a labor dispute and have them falling over each other to sign an agreement.

A resident of Cleveland, he is the founder and head of the Cleveland Clinic, which is carrying through profound studies of the adrenal and thyroid glands, and of bodily metabolisms generally. His researches in the world war vastly widened and deepened the knowledge of the mechanized functioning of the endocrine glands.

These discoveries led him to describe the human body as an automobile, in which the brain is the battery, the suprarenal gland system the carburetor, the liver the gasoline tank, the muscles the motor, and the thyroid gland the gearbox.

In Africa, Dr. Crile shot and dissected hundreds of animals, from the smallest up to lions and rhinoceros. He finds that lions have a sympathetic gland reinforcing system which enables the adrenals to deal action hormones with a tremendous kick. That's what makes the lion such a good self-starter and the sure winner of any jungle track meet. Lions, tigers and ferocious lone workers in general have this hair-trigger starter.

Herding animals have a less sensitive starting and stimulating mechanism. Less complex, cold-blooded creatures, like crocodiles, with special defensive armament, have an even slower takeoff, but Dr. Crile's main point is that they all have an ignition system which perfectly serves their survival needs.

As Dr. Crile sees it, the maladjustment or malfunctioning of our energy apparatus releases un Governed emotions, precipitated in body poisons, and helps put the world even more out of plumb than it naturally seems to be. An artificially changed environment—with all the new problems of urban living and an unstable and complex economy—makes people keep on getting mad about things which they can't possibly affect or control, unlike the animals, and renders latterday man a signal failure in the main business of life, which is "continuous adaptation."

At home in the wider generalizations of his subject, Dr. Crile sees here the collective elements of social instability—Fuehrers, mobs, demagogues, kluxers, messiahs, warmongers, and inflammatory and provocative inciters of world demagogues in general. He thinks a general all-around job of scientific human reconditioning is possibly the only answer.

He is a native of Ohio, Ohio, taking several academic degrees before completing his medical education in a number of foreign universities.

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## Prize Applique Quilt With Much Variety



Pattern 1458

Here's simplicity in needlework in this gay applique quilt, Grandmother's Prize—they're such easy patches to apply! If it's variety you're looking for, make this your choice. There's the fun of using so many different materials—the pleasure of owning so colorful a quilt that fits into any bedroom. And if it's just a pillow you want, the 8 inch block makes an effective one. Pattern 1458 contains complete, simple instructions for cutting, sewing and finishing, together with yardage chart, diagram of quilt to help arrange the blocks for single and double bed size.

Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

## Household Helps

Do you know the proper thing to say when you sit on a wad of chewing gum?

If your suit is washable, here is the correct command—if you want to get rid of the chewing gum and not your garment:

"Bring me an egg white, some soap and some lukewarm water. Then stand back and watch me soften the gum with the egg white—so! And finally wash it completely away with the soapy water."

If your suit isn't washable, the fabric-saving element is carbon tetrachloride, which will remove all traces of stain.

The authority for these points of chewing gum etiquette is a new booklet called "Handy Helps for Homemakers," which has been prepared by a group of home economics authorities. This booklet is a convenient, compact handbook of practical remedies for the most common household problems. It is divided into four sections: laundering (which includes not only stain-removal formulae, but also detailed advice on the proper way to wash various fabrics); home lighting; heating; and cooking.

The writers of the "Handy Helps for Homemakers" booklet have confined the chapter on "Cooking" to an informative discussion of meat-selection rules, suggestions for improving actual cooking technique and a summary of the merits and problems of home canning.

A copy of the "Handy Helps for Homemakers" book can be secured by sending 5 cents to cover postage and handling to Miss Boyd, 210 S. Desplaines St., Chicago, Ill.—Adv.

## Reading a Book

Many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of a man—has decided his way in life.—Emerson.

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