

ETHNOLOGY

# "Deadwood Dick"—Indian Version

## The Red Man's Version of the Western Thriller Depicted in Work of Art by Four Successive Authors

By DR. FRANK THONE

**B**ANG! And another Paleface bit the dust!

Thus Deadwood-Dick-in-reverse might have been written by an Indian author, if Indians had been authors back in the days of the paper-back "thriller" that was the pre-movie ancestor of today's "Westerns." (How many a substantial American parent, who now loudly laments the debased cinema preferences of his children, used to sneak out to the barn for drafts of forbidden excitement out of those flaming red-and-yellow covers!)

Most of us retain, from those surreptitious readings in those strictly unauthentic histories of Indian wars on the Plains, a sort of hazy impression that life consisted then of furious gallopings away from overwhelming hordes of yelling, painted horsemen; of even more furious gallopings back again with the Cavalry who had come just in the nick of time to save the beleaguered outpost, not to mention the Girl (almost invariably yellow-haired); of picking off whole tribes of befeathered warriors with a miraculous trusty rifle that never missed its target; of a general super-Homeric, hyper-heroic atmosphere where life was really worth while.

The curious thing is, that the Indians seem to have had something of the same idea too. True they had little knowledge of writing and none of printing: "lead slug" to them most emphatically did not mean something in a type case.

### Now In Museum

But a most vivid graphic record of the Indians' point of view, back in the exciting days when the West was "plenty wild" is now in the hands of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, D. C. There is no writing in it, only pictures. But the pictures are worthy of any of our boyhood blood-and-thunder masterpieces both in liveliness and in crudity. And thanks to the long memories of a veteran soldier of the old West and an elderly Crow Indian, we have at least a tolerably well connected interpretation and a story of the thrilling events recorded by the four successive authors of the book.

For the heroes of this Indian picture-record of daring deeds on the Plains recorded their own stories—or at least all but the concluding chapters thereof. There is plenty of battle, murder and sudden death—including the deaths of the four horsemen of this Western Apocalypse. The man who first depicted, in childish drawings of brown and yellow and red, the outstanding facts of his violent life was killed by the second author. Author number two added some drawings of *his* high heroisms in battle and raid, until he was knocked off in his turn by author number three, who likewise drew until he died at the hands of author number four. The last recorded act in the book is depicted as a parley which will decide between peace and war. Thus on a note of dramatic suspense this saga of the West closes, and thus it was found in the grave with the bones, presumably, of its last possessor.

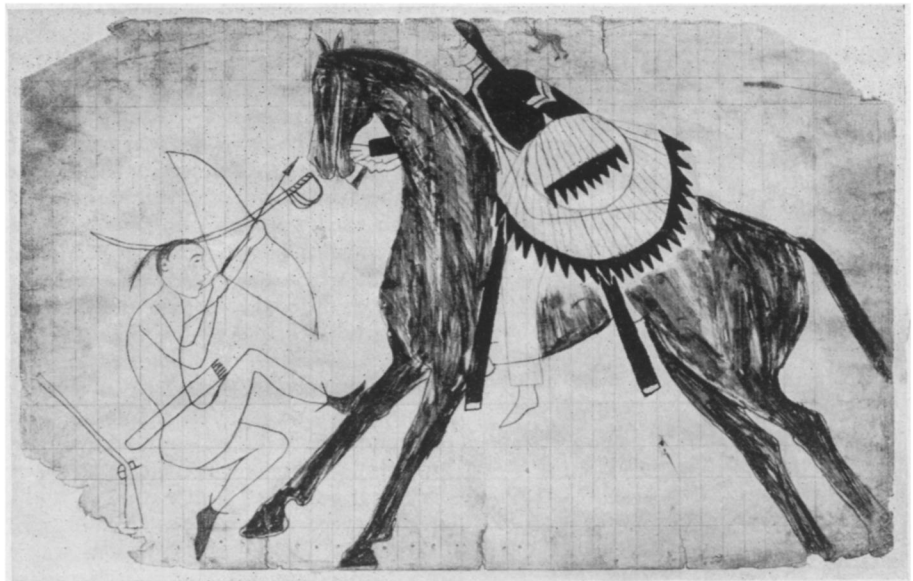
It is well that the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology was able to enlist the assistance of two first-class rememberers of the Old West, for the book was found under such obscure and ill-recorded circumstances that without their

aid the sheets would have been largely unintelligible.

The tale of the book itself is roughly this: About twenty years ago a man named Volley Warren, with a ranch near Bozeman, Montana, was present when workmen digging a railroad cut on his land broke into an Indian grave. It is not certain any more just where his ranch was. The nearest settlement was one of the numerous places in the West dedicated to the famous explorer Lewis whom President Jefferson, somewhat anticipating Horace Greeley, told to "go West." But whether it was Lewiston, Idaho, or Lewis, Montana, or Lewistown, Montana, the surviving next of kin of Mr. Warren no longer know.

### Found in Grave

The grave contained the bones of an Indian man, with some of the usual funeral gifts an Indian took with him to the Happy Hunting Grounds, and wrapped in a blanket an old Army ledger. The book was somewhat disintegrated by its long burial, so that its leaves had become loosened. But the paper was in good condition, and when the leaves were lifted apart it was found that each page bore a large drawing of an Indian, usually on horseback, shown at the climax of some bold or bloody deed.



### CHANGED PLACES

*Clad in a captured or stolen non-commissioned officer's coat, the mounted brave charges his dismounted enemy and parts his scalplock for him by throwing a cavalry saber.*



### A CAPTURE

*Yellow Horse gets him some army mules. A raid on a military wagon train in 1868 might have been the occasion of this exploit.*

The other objects taken from the grave became scattered and lost. The book, in time, passed into the hands of a nephew of the rancher, D. S. Warren, at that time living in Des Moines, Iowa. He in turn loaned it to Curator E. R. Harlan of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa. Mr. Harlan sent it to the Smithsonian Institution, where photographs were made of the pages. The original was then returned to Mr. Warren.

Gen. Hugh L. Scott, veteran Indian fighter and peacemaker, who died in Washington only a year ago, examined the drawings and interpreted them as completely as he was able. After his passing, Gen. Scott's closest Indian friend, Richard Sanderville, 70-year-old Blackfoot, a leading expert in the remarkable Indian sign language, also looked them over, checking and confirming his white friend's interpretation.

### The Indian's Coup

The two experts, white and red, agreed that the drawings in the book were records of the "coups," or daring exploits, perpetrated by several different Indians. A "coup" was some conspicuous feat, usually of more than ordinary hazard, by which a young warrior endeavored to enhance his prestige among his people. It might be slaying an enemy (white man or Indian of another tribe mattered not), or it might be merely getting an opponent into a helpless position and then "counting coup" on him with a riding whip or some other method of "tagging" him. It might be raiding an Army picket-line

and running off the mules. It might be what we white men would regard as cold-blooded murder, or on the other hand the perpetration of some schoolboyish prank at the risk of his own life. (Sampson's Hallowe'en stunt of carrying off the Philistines' city gates could certainly have been nicked on his coupstick, if Sampson had been a Plains Indian.) The word itself appears to be of French origin.

### Increased Prestige

A young man with plenty of "coups" to his credit was usually well regarded in his village. The young squaws would look upon him with secretly favoring eyes, their fathers more openly approve him. He was in the same fortunate position as a college athlete with half-a-dozen 'varsity letters to his credit, in one of our own more cultured communities. Naturally, a record of one's "coups" was a good thing to have.

It may well be that the book came into the possession of the first diarist, a Sioux named Yellow Horse, as the result of a coup. It is not likely that he bought it; more probably he either stole it from an Army post and made a clever get-away, or took it as part of his share of the loot after a raid on an Army train, on a day when it was the Indian's turn to be in luck—for Deadwood Dick to the contrary notwithstanding, the Redskin's role was not limited to a monotonous program of dust-biting whenever the white fighter had a mind to do a little target practice. There are plenty of gray-haired retired

cavalrymen who can tell you otherwise!

However he got hold of the blank ledger, Yellow Horse made proper use of it. He filled the first eight pages with crude but spirited pictorial records of his "coups." Most of these consisted of riding down white men, sometimes shooting them, sometimes merely "counting coup" on them with his quirt or his pistol. One of his victims is dressed as though he might be a preacher.

### Horse Stealing

Two of Yellow Horse's "coups" involved horse-stealing raids. In one of them he shows himself pursuing the fleeing white custodians of a herd of horses and mules, ardently reckless of the shower of bullets they are sending back at him. The other is of a raid on an Army mule herd, with no white enemies in sight. Old Army records suggest that this might have happened in 1868, when a band of Indian allies under the leadership of Old-Man-Afraid-of-his-Horses did succeed in running off a big lot of mules.

But Yellow Horse, having taken the tomahawk, was slain by the tomahawk. His record breaks off abruptly, and gives place to that of another Sioux, identified as Little Bear. Little Bear not improbably killed his predecessor and calmly appropriated all his valuable "coups."

Little Bear lived to record only three "coups" to his own credit. But they were first-class "coups." The first picture shows him riding in front of a village of his tribe's enemies, the Crows, taunting them into wasting their ammunition by uselessly firing at him, while his Sioux companions, saving their shot, await the moment when they can charge with least risk to themselves and most damage to the enemy.

Little Bear's second "coup" was a more personal affair—a duel. An enemy Indian on foot has shot an arrow at him, missed, and is about to fit another to his bowstring. Little Bear kills his foe by riding him down and throwing a cavalry saber at his head.

### A Corporal's Coat

This particular Indian apparently gloried in the possession a soldier's uniform and saber — battle trophies, no doubt. His dark blue coat bears a corporal's chevrons.

With his captured cavalry trappings, Little Bear seems to have become imbued with the cavalryman's headlong courage. The third of his pictured "coups" shows him riding straight at the muzzles of a battery of artillery—"charg-

ing an army, while all the world wondered." He brandishes his saber. A shell bursts beside him, filling the air with flying scraps of iron. He must have got back alive from this personally conducted charge of the Indian Light Brigade, for the picture is his own handiwork. But it is the last we see of Little Bear.

The next Indian who owned the book, inheriting it possibly by personally arranging the demise of Little Bear, was a Crow named Crane. Crane seems to have been a riotous, reckless, hellroaring fellow, always hunting trouble and having no difficulty in finding it. Yet he seems to have been able to get the better of all of his arguments (except of course the last one), for he filled many pages of the book with records of his "coups."

His record is markedly different from that of the two preceding owners of the book, in that white men never figure in his "coups"; only other Indians. Either he was on friendly terms with the whites or (much more likely) there weren't any in his neighborhood to pick a fight with. His style of drawing also was cruder and more hasty than that of either Yellow Horse or Little Bear.

The last possessor of this compositely-

edited picture-record was a warrior named Howling Wolf; it is not certain what tribe claimed him. His most striking contribution is the last picture. Howling Wolf stands before an inter-tribal conference. Before him, on the ground, are a peace-pipe and a scalp. If he picks up the one, it means peace, if the other, war.

Did he pick up the peace-pipe and spend his last days quietly at home, until his time came to be taken out to the burial ground, with his precious historical picture-book laid in a blanket beside him? Or did he take the war-path, returning "upon his shield" to take his book the sooner to his last bed? No one knows.

It is in keeping, though, with the drama that strides through the whole book, that even in his last sleep he could not remain undisturbed; and that his rude resurrection should have taken the form it did. Against the railroad as against the plow, symbols of the white man's dominance, the old Indians always cherished an especial hostility. And the railroad won the fight, so ruthless that it would not even let him lie in his grave. The white man, mounted on the iron horse, at last "counted coup."

*Science News Letter, June 1, 1935*



Poison Ivy, Poison Sumac

VACATIONISTS as a rule dread nothing more than "getting a dose of poison ivy." The unsightly blisters, the unendurable itching, the frequently prostrating allergic "shock effect," can combine to ruin a holiday as hardly any other woodland plague is able to do.

Yet it is not necessary to spend one's vacation in a constant state of "ivy jitters." For everybody except the most extremely sensitive, ivy poisoning can be both prevented and cured.

The best prevention is to keep away from it. To do so, you must know it when you see it. That is not difficult. Poison ivy is either a slender low shrub or a vine that clings tight to trees and stone walls with thousands of little roots. Its distinguishing mark is the triple leaf: "Leaflets three, let it be!" states the old rule-of-thumb rime. Its flowers are a loose cluster of inconspicuous greenish bloom; its fruits (frequently persistent from the previous winter) are pallid waxy berries. Don't touch it, and you won't get "bit." The notion that ivy can poison at a distance is simply superstition.

If you find you have touched it, wash your hands at once, and very thoroughly. Strong laundry soap is best; the alkali helps to kill the poison. A more thorough remedy, for cases that actually develop, is a 5 per cent. solution of potassium permanganate. This stains the skin brown but the stain can be removed later with a weak solution of oxalic acid, or just by thorough washing.

To prevent ivy poisoning, wet exposed parts of the skin with a five per cent. solution of ferric chloride in a half-and-half mixture of water and alcohol. Don't wipe off the solution; let it dry on the skin. This will neutralize the poison.

SEISMOLOGY

# Severe Earthquake in July If Apparent Rule Operates

LATE July should see, somewhere in the world, a severe earthquake with its focus, or center of motion, relatively close to the surface of the earth.

That is the indication which may be inferred from a report presented before the meeting of the American Geophysical Union, by Prof. H. Landsberg of Pennsylvania State College. Prof. Lands-

berg did not himself venture an earthquake forecast, but he did show a remarkably close hookup between deep-focus earthquakes and shallow-focus quakes following three months later, as a rule in some remote part of the world.

The Formosa quake of the Easter week-end was a deep-focus disturbance, its center being some 35 kilometers, or 22 miles, beneath the surface of the earth. On the basis of Prof. Landsberg's correlations, a destructive shallow-focus earthquake may be expected to occur about a week before the end of July.

Prof. Landsberg also discovered a correlation between deep and shallow-focus earthquakes with a much smaller time lag—some three days before and three days after the deep-focus quake.

How the deep quakes set off the shallow ones is not understood. It is conjectured that the deep-focus disturbances set up strains which the shallow ones relieve.

*Science News Letter, June 1, 1935*

● RADIO

Tuesday, June 4, 3:30 p. m., E.S.T.  
**THE MEANING OF MATHEMATICS,**  
 by Dr. E. R. Hedrick, Professor of  
 Mathematics, University of California at  
 Los Angeles.

Tuesday, June 11, 3:30 p. m., E.S.T.  
**ASTRONOMY AS A HOBBY,** by Dr.  
 Oliver J. Lee, Director, Dearborn Ob-  
 servatory, Northwestern University.

In the Science Service series of radio ad-  
 dresses given by eminent scientists over  
 the Columbia Broadcasting System.