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Did You Know? Tidbits

“Blackmail”

Did you know that the word “blackmail” came about because of tribute exacted by the Black Huns and the Black Danes [yes Black Danes]?

According to David Mac Ritchie:

“The expression applied by the inhabitants of Wales to the tribute exacted from their prince, Meredith, by the Danish pirates [Black Danes] of the year 987 A.D., virtually signified “black-mail.” And, moreover, “the tribute of the black army” precisely phrases the tax paid by Theodosius to Rugilas, King of the Huns, five centuries before. It was *black-mail*. That is the origin of the term. *Dane-gelt* was *black-mail*, equally with the tribute paid to the black Huns by the Romans.” [p.134]

He also proclaims:

“Black-mail,” for example, is an appropriate term not only when applied to the tribute exacted by the Black Huns and the Danes, but also when it is employed in such an instance as that of Henry Faa, chief of his clan in the latter part of last century, to whom “men of considerable fortune paid a gratuity, called blackmail, in order to have their goods protected from thieves.” [p.170]

Note:

MacRitchie, David. 1884. *Ancient and Modern Britons; A Retrospect*. London: K. Paul, Trench & Co.