

LORD OF THE DESERT

PAUL DE LANEY

CHAPTER VI.

At the Foot of the Rimrocks.

It is the second night of Bertha's captivity, barring the night of her capture. After securing her on the horse at the time of that fearful event, the Indians kept moving at a rapid rate until about 10 o'clock the following morning, when they stopped and butchered a mule for dinner. To them the mule meat was a dainty dish of which they partook with a ravenous appetite, but to the girl from Edinburgh mule meat was not tempting, when in fact she had no appetite at all. The gluttonous feast of these savages added to the disgust and horror that surrounded the captive. The whole had seemed like fiction, a horrible nightmare to her.

The first night out had been spent in a small basin, surrounded by rimrocks with narrow outlets and these had been carefully guarded by the dusky sentinels. No fires were kindled during the night and a stillness and quietude pervaded the camp, and this, with the demeanor of the Indians, showed that they were not only uneasy but strictly on their guard.

A vigilant watch had been kept over Bertha the whole night long, though she had been made as comfortable as Indians' ingenuity could provide.

Early the following morning another mule was butchered, a hasty breakfast prepared, and the band moved on to the south.

The course during the day lay over a rough country. It was taken as if the Indians had intended to obscure their trail. To the right and left stood the towering rimrocks and their trail led through the lava beds. Only those who had attempted to pass through this section of country can comprehend what is meant in speaking of the lava beds. Huge boulders and smaller ones of every description, round rocks, flat rocks, standing upon edge, square rocks and diamond-shaped rocks, sinks and crevices, all so rough and rugged and uneven that it was difficult for the party to keep together without even its own members becoming lost from one another.

Up and down the steep declivities, around the high ridges of boulders and over the beds of shattered rock made the travel difficult and monotonous, but no trail was left behind. To track the red men to this vast section of the lava beds was to lose them. Here, only courses are followed, and not trails for it is properly called, "the trailless section of the desert."

On this morning Bertha had been relieved from the cramped position on the animal which had conveyed her, by being freed from the ropes which bound her, but she had been the more closely guarded. Without food for two days and nights and the hardships of a day on the desert, and a day in the lava beds, it would have told on most women, but with the slightest indication of fatigue Bertha looked as firm and defiant as ever. She was a Lyle!

In the middle of the afternoon a halt had been made and a consultation held by the Indians. The main body with most of the animals proceeded to the southeast, while Chief Egan, with a few of the animals in charge of a dozen of his chosen warriors, took a westerly course and the wily chief took with him his fair captive. The main band proceeded on its way to a designated meeting point, while the chief made this detour to consummate the last object of his trip.

The chief and his small band were more than ready to start. Realizing that his mission was to capture a white woman, he was not at all surprised to find that he was to avoid falling into traps, he traveled through a more obscure country than ever, and was still more cautious about not leaving any trail behind. That night he camped at the foot of a high wall in the shadow of the projecting rimrocks. No eye could see him in the immediate vicinity for the boulders that lay about him, and the smoke from his camp was allowed to drift against the rock walls and mingled with the clouds above.

At the camp the scarred-faced old warrior chief took more interest in his white captive. He had her quarters prepared some distance from the main camp and while he, himself, looked after her wants two of his most trusted warriors were placed on guard. At supper time Egan, by gestures, plead with the young woman to eat. While the terrible experience through which she had gone would have taken the appetite of most women of her age, she was too common sense and matter-of-fact to lose her permanently. She was really hungry, but had not reached that state of starvation at which she felt as if she could partake of mule meat. But a lucky incident occurred. Even while old Egan was tendering her a slice of mule prepared in the most dainty manner from the Indians' standpoint, a warrior close at hand, in attending to the animals, flushed a sage hen. Bertha, although unacquainted with this bird, knew it to be a palatable one. She pointed to the bird in its flight with a sign to old Egan that if she had one of these she would prepare it herself and eat of it. No sooner than the chief went to the quiver of his hunting arrows, drew forth the choicest ones, and in a few moments was speeding among the rocks in search of the sage hen. In a short time he returned and gallantly dropped the tender bird at her feet, and with an expression of pride pointed to a scar in his neck through which his arrow had passed.

But of this gallantry Bertha took no notice. Soon a fire was kindled and with woman's culinary knowledge she soon prepared and ate a meal of which she was in much need.

Long after midnight, when all the clouds had passed away and the moon had risen above the distant rimrocks on the east and its light had fallen upon the camp beneath the rimrocks, old Egan appeared at Bertha's quarters. It was such a man as lovers would walk in civilization. It was such a night as would thrill the hearts of all people. It was such a night as the Indian warrior would venture upon a deed of daring. It was such a night as aroused the deepest passions in the bosom of the marauding chief.

He motioned his warriors, who were on guard, to take their leave, and then attempted a conversation by signs and nods with Bertha. Hoping that it might mean her escape, she tried to understand him. With this encouragement he grew more bold and approached her more closely. Woman's intuition told her at once of

and rode away. The Indians drove the horses into a deep canyon penetrating the rimrocks, and the stillness of approaching night closed the scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Trapper of the Rimrocks.

He was known from one end of the desert to the other, as well by the red men as the white. His life was spent in solitude. When the snows of winter began to fly and others fled to shelter he worked the more persistent. For eight months in the year his solitude was complete, so far as the rest of the world knew for it was in the winter time that the wild animals of the desert widened their range in search of food, owing to its scarcity at this season, and many of all kinds were tempted to partake of the fresh morsels of antelope, deer, rabbit and sage hen, so long before the mule rose, and had been waiting in hiding for an opportunity. Rushing forward like a wildcat he seized the wicked old warrior by the throat, and there was at once a grapple between giants.

But in the case of the silent prayers of Bertha for the success of her unknown rescuer and his determined grip on the old chief's throat, the latter gave a cry that reached their feet the entire detachment of warriors, and they came like a storm to the aid of their chief.

CHAPTER VII.

A Woman's Scalp.

It is at another point in the lava beds from that described in the last chapter. While many walls join together from different directions, yet one point on the rimrocks commanded a view in all directions. Upon this point stands an Indian. His arrow-like form silhouetted against the horizon gave him the appearance of an inanimate rather than an animate body. The afternoon sun was not far above the distant rimrocks. It was a picture for an artist to draw. The rugged rocks along the earth's surface, the walls which they formed, the many directions toward the pedestal formed center, at the top of which projected the flat rimrocks, and these crowned by the statue-like form of the Indian, whose gaudy war bonnet indicated that he was a chief, made the view a romantic one indeed.

It was old Egan. He was looking to the west into the very face of the setting sun. Were it not that he raised his hand occasionally to shut out the blinding rays of the sun from his eagle-like eyes, one would have easily mistaken him for a statue on a great pedestal.

"If they disappoint me," murmured the Indian in his own tongue, "it will take many more white scalps to pay the penalty," and at the same time he toyed with a scalp of long hair, that of a woman, tossed by the wind at his belt.

But his mind was soon relieved on this point. From the shadow of the



Hammersley.

rimrocks in the distance, a little north of west, he saw a lone horseman coming in a swift trot. He began to descend to the same side upon which the horseman was approaching, taking care to examine his bow and quiver, tomahawk, and scalping knife to see that all were intact. Seating himself upon a boulder that jetted from the wall many feet above the level plain, he waited the approach of his visitor. When the latter came within hailing distance a familiar salute from each showed the mutual recognition.

A few minutes later the horseman was at the foot of the precipice and asked the old chief if he was entitled to receive his reward. The chief drew from his belt a woman's scalp and exhibited it to the horseman. The latter dismounted and climbed to the place where the old chief sat.

After a few minutes' conversation, and the visitor seemed to understand the Indian language perfectly, they climbed the rimrocks together. The visitor rose when they reached the summit of the rocks and drawing a thin piece of cloth from his pocket, but which was broad and wide, he waved it above his head until it was caught in the breeze and unfurled like a flag. Then other objects were seen to emerge from the shadows of the distant rimrocks and soon a band of horses driven by white men were coming across the plain.

The two men on the top of the rimrocks conversed familiarly. While the reader already knows that one was Chief Egan he has also surmised that the other was Dan Follett, which is true. To look upon the countenances of these two men was an interesting study. The old Indian chief, a marauding bandit, bore scars showing the terrible episodes of his life, while the Canadian Frenchman bore marks placed there by time which showed the villainous character of the man. The one, robbed of his country, forced to the barren rocks and lava beds for existence, had become an outlaw from necessity. The other, containing a mixture of blood of the exiled criminals of a superior race mixed with that of the most bloodthirsty and treacherous of an inferior race, was a villain from choice and by nature.

"If I had not produced the horses, Egan, what would have been the result?" inquired Follett, with a twinkle in his eye.

"More pale face scalps would have been swinging here very soon," replied the chief, pointing to his belt. "And if I had not proved to you that I had killed the girl, what would you have done?" inquired the chief, with a look of bravado upon his face. "You know too well, chief, what we would have done. The Lord of the Desert would have swept it clean of Egan and his tribe!"

There were blurring looks and grim smiles from each, but the arrival of the band of horses caused them to rise to their feet, and with a shout from old Egan's lips his warriors appeared from a recess in the rocks below, heretofore unobserved. The chief charged of the band of animals representing the prize money for the murder of Bertha Lyle.

Taking the woman's scalp, Dan Follett climbed down the rocks and joining his men they saluted the Indians and rode away.

The trapper of the desert was a young man of eight and twenty years. For ten years he had been known upon the desert. While he was a man of peace, yet his keen grey eyes and firm set chin told those who saw him that he would face the worst of the human race in any kind of an encounter as readily as he would battle alone with the fiercest animals of the desert. If by necessity arose, his hair was also light and he wore a gleam of friendliness upon his face. But the cloud that drove this gleam of sunshine away when he became angered was an immediate warning not to trespass against the will of this man of firmness, and his well proportioned form was able to carry out the desire of the mind. He was five feet, ten, weighed 180 pounds, and with all this possessed well proportioned muscles, as lithe as rubber and strong as gutta serena.

He was known simply by the name of William Hammersley, but his ancestry and place of birth were as mysterious as the man himself. When first known he was on the desert engaged in trapping, and as he had no competitors, he had no enemies. His abode, a crude affair, partly a cave and partly a house in the rimrocks, was always welcome to the weary traveler or stockman, who happened to pass his way, but this did not happen often, as few people traveled that way. He was a friendly host and looked to the comfort of his guest, but he had little to say and asked but few questions. A guest after leaving his place knew no more of him than when he came, and there was always a feeling on the part of the visitor that no extended conversation was desired. And the wishes of William Hammersley were usually respected.

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A first step was to educate the traveling public up to a proper comprehension of what baggage really is, for the ideas some entertain of what constitutes the same have been decidedly peculiar. The railway people, however, have their ideas on this point, and theirs

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The system of checking baggage is pretty much the same on all the large roads and at the Chicago depots of the Northwestern, the Chicago and Alton, Burlington and Quincy, Milwaukee and St. Paul, or of the great eastern lines, such as the Grand Trunk, an interested observer may study the methods which have become so perfect and satisfactory that the Great Eastern Railway of London, England, adopted the same details May 1, 1902.

There are three different kinds of checks to deal with. First comes the local baggage check, which covers baggage checked from one point on a long line to another point on the same road. If the piece of baggage checked with one of these local checks is to go via a junction, there is a space on the check for the instructions. This check is made out in duplicate and the part which is handed to the passenger is an exact fac simile of the portion known as the strap check and which is attached to the passenger's baggage. Second comes the special check which is used for checking baggage to points off the company's line. It is much larger than the local check. The strap portion shows where the baggage is checked from and where it is going to, and the city or State, as the case may be. It also shows the roads over which the particular piece of baggage is to travel and the junction points where it is to be transferred to another road. A third kind of check is what is known as a depot or identification check. This check is used for giving to persons bringing baggage to the depots and who are not ready to check the same out, through some reason or other, such as not having purchased their ticket, etc. Carriers are always bringing baggage to the depots, and this check is used in their case. They deliver the baggage to the railway officials and take the check back to the person from whom they received the baggage.

There are many ways in which baggage goes astray, but under the system now in use it is a rather easy matter to trace it. Every piece of baggage when checked is entered on a form supplied for that purpose. When the baggage is received into the car the man in charge also enters it on another form, but he goes the man in the station one better and describes it in a column set aside for that purpose. This occurs all along the line, and every man taking charge of the baggage makes a record of it as he receives it. These forms are sent into headquarters daily, and some idea may be had of the number of pieces that are handled in one day when it is stated that some roads have 250 trains daily, carrying from 50 to 150 pieces of baggage each. In this way a record of all baggage is always had at headquarters or the divisional points.

The station or identification check referred to above was introduced for the purpose of avoiding mistakes in the way of passengers claiming baggage as their own, when, as a matter of fact, it never belonged to them, although it resembled what really did belong to them. The great similarity of baggage, of course, was accountable for this trouble, but the identification check has served the purpose for which it was introduced. The baggagemen have no more trouble with passengers coming in and endeavoring to locate their belongings. All they have to do now is to present their identification check and they get their baggage. Another feature in connection with unmarked baggage is that advantage is taken by evil-disposed persons, who, in some unaccountable way, acquire a knowledge of what a certain piece of baggage contains. They use this knowledge in making a claim, and by proving the contents the baggage is handed over to them. In such cases the claimant generally pleads that he or she, as the case may be, has lost the check. In such cases a charge of twenty-five cents is made, which goes to cover the clerical work connected with the delivery of such a package.

When the enormous amount of baggage handled by the railways of the country within a year's time is considered, it is wonderful that there is not more of it finds its way to the "Old Horse," or lock-up, as the storeroom for such baggage is called by the railway men. It is pointed out in this connection that last year on two roads in America 7,000,000 pieces of baggage were carried, and out of this lot there were only three pieces which could not be located. In the course of a year, however, a railway company has a considerable amount of unclaimed packages on its hands. It is not as bad as formerly, however, for the system of charging for storage has made the traveling public take a little more interest in their belongings. A piece of baggage is kept at a station thirty days before it is sent to the "Old Horse," and is always kept a year before it is put under the auctioneer's hammer to be disposed of to the highest bidder.

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To the uninitiated it would appear that the immigrant would be the one to cause the baggage department of a railway the most trouble, but this, it appears, is not the case. The railway people say the boot fits the other foot. The immigrant, by the time he reaches the new land, has generally had it installed into his brain that once he arrives and has handed his baggage over to the railway people he has nothing more to worry about. Therefore he makes it his business on arrival to place his belongings in the hands of the railway people and worry no more about them.

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There are three different kinds of checks to deal with. First comes the local baggage check, which covers baggage checked from one point on a long line to another point on the same road. If the piece of baggage checked with one of these local checks is to go via a junction, there is a space on the check for the instructions. This check is made out in duplicate and the part which is handed to the passenger is an exact fac simile of the portion known as the strap check and which is attached to the passenger's baggage. Second comes the special check which is used for checking baggage to points off the company's line. It is much larger than the local check. The strap portion shows where the baggage is checked from and where it is going to, and the city or State, as the case may be. It also shows the roads over which the particular piece of baggage is to travel and the junction points where it is to be transferred to another road. A third kind of check is what is known as a depot or identification check. This check is used for giving to persons bringing baggage to the depots and who are not ready to check the same out, through some reason or other, such as not having purchased their ticket, etc. Carriers are always bringing baggage to the depots, and this check is used in their case. They deliver the baggage to the railway officials and take the check back to the person from whom they received the baggage.

There are many ways in which baggage goes astray, but under the system now in use it is a rather easy matter to trace it. Every piece of baggage when checked is entered on a form supplied for that purpose. When the baggage is received into the car the man in charge also enters it on another form, but he goes the man in the station one better and describes it in a column set aside for that purpose. This occurs all along the line, and every man taking charge of the baggage makes a record of it as he receives it. These forms are sent into headquarters daily, and some idea may be had of the number of pieces that are handled in one day when it is stated that some roads have 250 trains daily, carrying from 50 to 150 pieces of baggage each. In this way a record of all baggage is always had at headquarters or the divisional points.

The station or identification check referred to above was introduced for the purpose of avoiding mistakes in the way of passengers claiming baggage as their own, when, as a matter of fact, it never belonged to them, although it resembled what really did belong to them. The great similarity of baggage, of course, was accountable for this trouble, but the identification check has served the purpose for which it was introduced. The baggagemen have no more trouble with passengers coming in and endeavoring to locate their belongings. All they have to do now is to present their identification check and they get their baggage. Another feature in connection with unmarked baggage is that advantage is taken by evil-disposed persons, who, in some unaccountable way, acquire a knowledge of what a certain piece of baggage contains. They use this knowledge in making a claim, and by proving the contents the baggage is handed over to them. In such cases the claimant generally pleads that he or she, as the case may be, has lost the check. In such cases a charge of twenty-five cents is made, which goes to cover the clerical work connected with the delivery of such a package.

When the enormous amount of baggage handled by the railways of the country within a year's time is considered, it is wonderful that there is not more of it finds its way to the "Old Horse," or lock-up, as the storeroom for such baggage is called by the railway men. It is pointed out in this connection that last year on two roads in America 7,000,000 pieces of baggage were carried, and out of this lot there were only three pieces which could not be located. In the course of a year, however, a railway company has a considerable amount of unclaimed packages on its hands. It is not as bad as formerly, however, for the system of charging for storage has made the traveling public take a little more interest in their belongings. A piece of baggage is kept at a station thirty days before it is sent to the "Old Horse," and is always kept a year before it is put under the auctioneer's hammer to be disposed of to the highest bidder.

Contracts on all tickets read that the railway companies do not assume liability except for wearing apparel, and then only for the sum of one hundred dollars. All the railway companies in America carry free 150 pounds, but over that weight a charge of so much per hundred pounds according to distance. When there is over 150 pounds an excess baggage check is issued. These differ, the same as the local and special checks, and show the weight, the amount collected, routing particulars, junction points, etc.

To the uninitiated it would appear that the immigrant would be the one to cause the baggage department of a railway the most trouble, but this, it appears, is not the case. The railway people say the boot fits the other foot. The immigrant, by the time he reaches the new land, has generally had it installed into his brain that once he arrives and has handed his baggage over to the railway people he has nothing more to worry about. Therefore he makes it his business on arrival to place his belongings in the hands of the railway people and worry no more about them.

A patient suffering from typhoid fever should take to bed during first symptoms and remain there till convalescent.

Booker T. Washington's daughter, who recently was reported to be doing well at Wellesley College, has now, it transpires, been forced to leave the institution and go to Bradford Academy. It is said she failed in music. While Miss Washington was taken up and made much of by the Northern girls at the college, her reception by girls from the South was, it is declared, of a nature to give the faculty some embarrassment.

Bridget as a Mrs. Malaprop. Bridget, who came to this country last year, has a limited vocabulary, and while she is learning fast, some of the words and expressions that she has acquired do not always fit, her ear not having been accurate in getting the right term. Thus the other day she said to her mistress:

"Mum, shall I fix that Kansas back duck for dinner?"

Again, Bridget was telling a tale of a missing friend in this city, when she exclaimed:

"Do you know I believe when Katie turns up she'll be found in the Potash Field!"

While at work on Friday a tremendous blizzard burst by in the subway rattled the dishes in the kitchen and the girl cried out:

"There goes that rapid transom again."

A good many town men devote nearly all of Saturday to waiting to get shaved.

THE handling and checking of baggage on our big railways, is a problem that has offered innumerable annoyances and disputes ever since the first rail was laid in the United States. The owner of the traveling trunk has ever been the butt of unlimited sarcasm, the victim of exaggerated witicism, and the "amasher" has become a monstrous being, in paragraph and cartoon, whose sole aim in life was to wreck, ruin and destroy the property of others. Much has been accomplished, however, during the past decade by the baggagemen's association to remedy the conditions which existed years ago, and the result of their conferences, and the rules which they have from time to time adopted, have had the effect of lessening by fully 75 per cent, the troubles which existed before railways learned how to properly look after the baggage committed to their care.