

# LORD OF THE DESERT

By PAUL de LANEY.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A Compact.

When Hammersley entered his home he found three of the cowboys who had started in pursuit of Egan and his band of warriors to recapture Bertha Lyle. They had followed the Indians to a point opposite the trapper's abode and had come to his place the night before to secure his advice and assistance. One whose habit it was to stroll about camp in the early mornings had taken his stroll this morning with the fatal result already known to the reader.

Hammersley concluded that it was proper to inform these brave men of the situation. He told them that Bertha Lyle was safe and advised them to bury their dead comrade while he returned to escort her into camp.

On the previous night when the trapper had left Bertha concealed in the opening in the rimrocks two of the Indian searching party had come so close that she became alarmed for her safety and stole away as quietly as a shadow. She soon found herself safe, however, as the footstep and low guttural-like murmur of the Indians indicated that they had passed on to the north. But she had some difficulty in finding her way back and she had not felt sure of finding the trapper again, who was now diligently searching for her, until she ran almost into his arms.

The trapper had proceeded with her as near his home as he thought was safe and had left her secreted with the admonition not to leave under any circumstances until his return, and proceeded cautiously on foot. While approaching a secret passage that led to his cavern, in the early morning he heard the rifle shots and immediately ascended to the summit of the rimrocks to reconnoitre. When he discovered what had taken place he supposed that a band of cowboys had taken lodging in his quarters, as was their custom, and that the Indians having attacked the place the white men were defending it to the best of their ability.

Having a greater object in view than the ordinary warfare with Indians, he signalled both sides to desist and while the white men did so out of respect for the trapper's judgment, the Indians did so because it was the best thing for them to do.

It was late in the forenoon when the trapper returned with the young woman. The men had buried their dead comrade in the crude manner of the burial of the desert. They had wrapped his body in his blankets and placed it deep in the sands and piled the lava rocks upon the grave to prevent the prowling coyotes from disintering it. They were sore at heart over the loss of one of their best companions, but the thought of the safety of the niece of the Lord of the Desert and the honor of escorting her into his presence, somewhat mitigated the terror of the blow.

Hammersley had a great deal to tell him. To acquaint Lyle, the invalid father of his daughter's presence and to bring the daughter to the disfigured father whom she believed was dead, was a trying ordeal for such a tender-hearted man. Then he felt it incumbent on himself to acquaint the cowboys of the truth of the whole matter—of their employer's guilt, of the presence of the long lost Lyle and of the plans on foot to right the numerous wrongs which had been perpetrated. He had only entered the apartments of the invalid that morning hurriedly to explain the cause of the rifle shots from the front of the cavern, and to let him know of his return and to ascertain his immediate wants.

While James Lyle was maimed and disfigured in body he still possessed a clear brain. And the brain of the confined invalid, when clear, seems to be brighter than the ordinary. Whether the vigor intended for the weak points go to the brain or the prostrated invalid concentrates all force upon this organ, or whatever may be the cause, this often proves true. Hammersley needed counsel and, while the daughter was bright and possessed extraordinary intelligence for one so young, he decided first to consult the experienced father.

Having provided temporary quarters for the young woman and requested the cowboys to remain until he could consult with them on matters of importance the trapper quietly stole away to the invalid's room. The consultation lasted several hours but when he returned it did not take long to begin the plans formed. He went straight to Bertha and acquainted her with the fact that her father still lived and then conducted her to his presence. The scene that followed is doubtless familiar to the reader's imagination. The trapper left them alone together and returning called the men together and made them acquainted with the entire situation.

When these hardy men of the desert heard the story of the trapper to say that they were indignant would be putting it mildly. They had never suspected treachery in the mysterious disappearance of James Lyle and now that the wicked Lord of the Desert had been proven guilty and had also conspired to have the child murdered by Old Egan, they were ready to attempt anything. The further fact of their long chase and the loss of their comrade in the cause did not soften their temper. They would have gone straight to the stone house and deliberately killed Martin Lyle and his colleague, Follett. But Hammersley impressed them that there was other work more important just at this time.

The cowboy of the Oregon desert of those days, like the cowboy of this section today, was a man of intelligence. Some of them may have been guilty of some hasty committed offense in the east which was the real cause of their presence in this coun-

try, but as a rule they were men of courage, honor and intelligence.

The story of James Lyle had opened a way not only to punish Martin Lyle and Follett but also to right the wrongs done other persons. It was decided to make the work complete, and the cowboys and the trapper then and there entered into a solemn compact to give the matter their undivided attention until the wrongs were righted.

For many years the trapper had been saving his earnings to make a trip to New York and attempt to carry out the plans of James Lyle. He had no other motive than ferreting out a great wrong and punishing a great crime, and all of this was inspired in him through sympathy for



Al Beach.

the invalid under his roof. It was his intention when his earnings were sufficient to take some one into his confidence whom he could leave in charge of his invalid friend while he was away, as it would require considerable time to look after the details of the matter, even should he be successful in getting a starting point.

But now that he had three colleagues in the persons of the three cowboys, the sailing appeared more easy. One of them, Al Beach, was especially shrewd and had had experience in business in the East, and it was therefore agreed that he should make the trip while one of the other men, Oscar Metzger, should return to the Stone House, report that all were killed except himself, and at the same time do a little detective work by "pumping" Leonidas Liggett, the cook at the Stone House, whom it was thought knew more than he had ever divulged. The third, Julian Byrd, was to remain about the place for an emergency, while Hammersley should pursue his vocation of trapping as if nothing out of the ordinary had transpired.

The following morning every person set about to perform his respective portion of the compact.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Jim Lyle's Story.

The cripple had told Hammersley long before, and had repeated to his daughter, the plot into which he and his brother had entered to defraud the elder brother of his inheritance and of the Lord of the Desert's subsequent attempt to put him out of the way. They had seen an advertisement in a New York paper stating that William Lyle had inherited a fortune and the legacy, which consisted wholly in cash, was ready for delivery upon proof of the identity of the person named. They went to New York and Martin, who somewhat resembled the legal net, swore to the rights of William Lyle and James swore to his identity, the agreement being that they should share the ill-gotten gains equally. They remained in New York until communication could be had with the courts of Scotland. The evidence sent was so accurate as to details that the money was sent without hesitation.

During their stay in New York they busied themselves looking up the whereabouts of the defrauded brother, who was a dissolute fellow and who had become a physical wreck at last accounts. He had married in New York and had one child—a boy, and later had drifted to Chicago and then no trace had been heard of him. But they learned that there was a sailor who was intimately acquainted with the circumstances, but who at the time had gone on a long voyage to sea. They had taken the precaution to find the sailor's address and the cripple had remembered it. It was the purpose in sending Al Beach to New York to find this sailor if possible and then trace down the right heirs to the property, hoping this means to bring the Lord of the Desert face to face with the law and mete out punishment to him. This had been the sole desire of the cripple and trapper for many years, and they had been working together to carry out the plan prompted by the sole desire that justice be done.

The cripple had long since paid the penalty of his crime and while he related the circumstances with some embarrassment his conscience was now at ease for the part he had taken in the swindle, except that he desired to see the real heirs in possession of their inheritance.

But the part of the story that made tears come to the eyes of Bertha followed this. On the return of Jim and the Lord of the Desert to their ranch where now stands the great Stone House the brothers grew more distant from each other. Scarcely a civil word ever passed between them and Martin was continually plotting with Dan Follett.

One cold winter day while James and Follett were riding the range they took shelter from a snow storm in a cavern in the rimrocks. Unexpectedly James the Canadian approached him from the rear and gave him a stunning blow across the head with a branding iron which he had carried into the cavern. He repeated the blows until he thought his victim was dead and dumped his body into a crevasse by the wall of the cavern.

It was the following day before James Lyle regained consciousness, and the snow and sleet had blown in from above almost covering his body. His hands and feet were frozen, but notwithstanding this condition he climbed out of the crevasse and half-walking and half-dragging himself, he started for the ranch to inform his brother of the murderous assault of the Frenchman.

He arrived late at night in a blinding snow storm and was about to enter the house when he saw the Frenchman and his brother in earnest conversation, and heard the Frenchman give the details of his own murder and saw his brother pay him \$500 for the deed.

He went to the stables, procured a horse and rode away in the blinding storm. After this he lost consciousness and did not regain it until he found himself in the trapper's home, who had found him and rescued him from the storm on the plains.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Surprises.

Dan Follett reached the Warm Springs village and found the warriors of his tribe anxious for a raid on the Plute camp. They were largely in the minority and of a less warlike spirit but had suffered much from the depredations of the greater tribe. When Dan told the chief that Old Egan had a large number of mules and horses in camp near Ash Butte, and that there were only about 35 men in charge of them, the leader of the Warm Springs band was elated and lost no time in selecting 50 of his bravest men and setting out with them on the warpath. Follett adopted the Warm Springs head dress and, although he needed but little painting, he also did this out of an abundance of precaution that the Snake warriors might not discover him and wreak vengeance upon the Lord of the Desert for the betrayal.

As stated at the beginning of this story, the Snakes were the most cunning and most treacherous Indians of the desert. They were feared and dreaded by all other tribes and were rarely ever caught napping on the war trail. After recovering the additional band of ponies for the supposed murder of Bertha Lyle, Old Egan had only gone 50 miles away and decided to spend a few weeks on the good grazing grounds at the foot of Ash Butte, where water and game were also abundant.

He had played a clever ruse on the Lord of the Desert. When he first had to abandon hope of recapturing Bertha Lyle he was for a time at a loss what to do. But Indian sagacity is as deep as Indian treachery and a Snake was never known to stop at anything short of accomplishing an end. The Chief knew of the estrangement between the Lord of the Desert and the trapper and rumored that the Lord of the Desert had committed some crime which was the cause of this estrangement. He concluded after weighing matters carefully, that it would be doubtful if the trapper would permit the girl to go to her uncle and he decided to take his chances at least in getting the reward for putting her out of the way before the Lord of the Desert learned of the escape, and then he would take his chances on settling the matter with the man of the Stone House, who dared not push the matter too far for fear of exposure. Searching among his large number of scalps torn from the heads of Immigrant



The Canadian gave him a stunning blow.

women he had found one that compared with the color of Bertha Lyle's hair and rushed on to meet his engagement with Follett and received the reward without question, as the reader already knows.

He had joined the main marauding party at Ash Butte and sent couriers to his other war parties to join him there for a few weeks celebration. He only had 35 men with him now and these spent their time in various ways: tending the band of horses, a little independent scouting and hunting, but mostly in the Indian's favorite pastime of lounging about camp.

Dan Follett knew the lay of the country as well as any Indian of the desert. There was not a foot of it that he had not ridden over time and again, and not a watering place at which he had not camped. He led the Warm Springs warriors to the place in the night time and it was decided to make the raid at midnight and get a good start before the following morning.

While the Snakes felt reasonably safe, yet they guarded their band of stock with care. The animals were all driven to camp at night and pickets were kept on the watch to keep them from wandering away or to keep the Lord of the Desert's cowboys from retaking them should he discover the fraud of the scalp. But cautious as they had been the Warm Springs warriors led by Follett, dashed suddenly upon them in the cover of the darkness of the midnight hour and drove the entire band of animals away exchanging only a few shots with the surprised guard.

warriors were assigned to this duty and Dan Follett and the chief and 40 warriors acted as a rear guard.

"Pretty easy work!" remarked Follett to the chief in the latter's tongue, for the half breed knew all of the Indian languages of the plains.

"Ugh!" replied the chief pointing back toward Ash Butte.

"Old Egan has not been sleeping," replied Follett, as he saw a rich flame of fire rise from the summit of the peak and then saw it smothered and flash up alternately.

It was evident to them that the Plutes were signaling to other war parties of their tribe, and they had wasted no time in doing so. It had only been a few hours since the raid was made and yet the Plutes had ascended this high peak and started their signal fires.

It was nearly noon the following day before the raiders stopped for rest and to prepare a meal. They had just passed through a canyon and had entered another plateau. A lookout was sent to the top of the rimrocks near at hand to make observations. He had barely reached his station when he made hurried signals that put the whole camp in turmoil. Two bands of mounted Plute warriors were approaching from different directions at a rapid speed—one was coming from the southeast and the other was coming from the southwest and each of these bands outnumbered the raiders.

All was hurly burly in the camp and the meal was finished as they moved along, every warrior taking a piece of mule meat in his hand and eating it as they hurried away.

But a clash seemed unavoidable. The band of Plutes from the southwest was traveling the trail that the raiders intended taking, and the band from the southeast was making for the canyon through which they had just passed.

The wary Egan had discovered the route taken by the Warm Springs warriors and had signaled his bands, who were coming to join him accordingly, and they were at once upon the trail of the raiders and Old Egan had already joined the band coming from the southeast in person.

There was but one hope for the raiders and that was to make a detour and avoid the party coming from the southwest and then make their escape with as many of the stolen animals as possible.

Dan Follett now became the most active man among them.

## CHAPTER XV.

### Indian Telegraphy—A Captive.

When the sun was a little less than two hours high the smoke began to curl from the rimrocks at the point where the raiders' outlook had stood at noon. The Warm Springs warriors, headed by their chief and Dan Follett, had made a detour to the south of the main trail and hoped to avoid the band of warriors from the southwest by hiding among the sand dunes until they had passed. But when they discovered the smoke rising from the rimrocks they feared that they were discovered and that the Snakes were already signaling their whereabouts to the two approaching bands. The war party from the southeast, which had been joined by Old Egan himself early in the forenoon whose horse had escaped the vigilance of the raiders the previous night, upon reaching the noon camp a scout to search the plains for the escaping raiders. He had no sooner reached the summit of the rimrocks than the cloud of dust among the sand dunes showed him that the raiders and their horses were there; and the cloud of dust farther on to the southwest gave him the further knowledge that the other band of Egan's warriors had seen the early morning signal fires and were coming to aid in recapturing the stolen horses. The lookout gathered several arms full of sage brush from among the rocks and started a fire, the Indian's means of telegraphy, and soon signaled the two Plute bands of the whole situation.

With a shout of exultation Egan's braves hurried toward the common center.

The only hope before the raiders was to evade the Snakes until nightfall to make their escape in the darkness.

It was their intention, in case they encountered the Plutes, to have 40 of the warriors under their chief and Dan Follett engage the enemy while ten of the raiders would attempt to escape with the horses. But in case of defeat the raiders were each to select an extra horse, abandon the others and make their way out of the country as best they could. If night should come upon them before the arrival of the Plutes, then they had great hopes of escaping. But they were doomed to disappointment.

Suddenly before sundown a band of Plutes from the southwest was upon them. The raiders took shelter behind the sand dunes and with this advantage, held their enemy at bay for some time. The men with the horses proceeded at a rapid pace, while the fight continued in their rear and as the Plutes pressed the raiders they backed from sand dune to sand dune, disputing every inch of the ground. While it was a warm and determined engagement there was but little fatality as the men of each side sheltered themselves behind the sand dunes. But this scene was changed about the time of sunset. The other band of Plutes arrived and attacked the raiders from the other side. Thus attacked from front and rear the Warm Springs warriors were compelled to retreat and as they did so a great yell arose from the Plutes who gave them a warm chase. When the raiders overtook the party in charge of the stolen horses they hurriedly took possession of an extra horse each and abandoned the others, hoping to escape in the darkness.

But the Plutes were not satisfied with finding a portion of their horses. Flushed with victory a majority rushed on while a few stopped to corral the horses that had been abandoned.

Dan Follett was no less daring than he was a villain. Seeing in the dusk of night a small detachment of the Plutes, he turned and drew his revolver and faced them, considering

that every moment's time should be gained at this point that was possible. He was a splendid marksman and when the Indians had approached within range of his revolver he began firing, and in his madness rushed toward them. He repulsed and routed them for a moment, but in his zeal he made a fatal mistake. Flushed with his gain of time he had crowded them still farther when, suddenly, he discovered that a larger detachment of well mounted Plutes had encircled him and cut him off from the main band of his friends. He turned and attempted to ride through the Plute lines but discovered that his revolver was now empty and there was no time for reloading. They surrounded him instantly and took him a prisoner, and when the flashing marauding chief, for it was Old Egan himself who led the band, laid his hand upon Follett, he exclaimed:

"You make better Plute than Warm Springs Indian. Warm Springs Indian coward, run away and leave you, Plute stay with you, and now you stay with Plute," chuckled the old chief as he ordered his men to bind the captive securely and guard him closely.

The Plutes pursued the raiders for some distance and took several more horses and prisoners before they abandoned the trail.

It was late in the night before the camp was established, and the Plutes were tired and hungry, but there was one prisoner whose security was looked after and his name was Dan Follett.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A Big Haul.

Bertha had spent several days with her father and provided for his every wish. Hammersley had rearranged things generally about the place, giving his home a better appearance. Julian Byrd, the cowboy, had also been busy and besides providing game and other essentials a good supply of wood had also been stored away for the approaching winter. It was not known how long it would take Al Beach to ferret out the whereabouts of William Lyle, or his descendants and it was decided to wait his return before action and, in the meantime, preserve a silence as to the safety of Bertha and her father as well as to keep secret all of the matters agreed upon.

As the episode of Bertha's arrival and the stirring events thereafter had prevented the trapper from looking after his traps for a longer period



She saw a sight that dumfounded her.

than usual, it was decided that he should now make the rounds that he had started upon in which he was thwarted by discovering Old Egan and his party with their captive. Preparations were completed one night for the trip. Julian was to accompany the trapper, while Bertha remained by her father and administered to his wants. She was admonished by the trapper to remain close and at no time show herself should anyone appear. He gave the place the usual appearance of his absence, after Bertha had taken her quarters in the secret chamber, and he and the cowboy left early in the morning to visit the traps, expecting to be gone several days.

The first day out was spent in taking coyotes from the traps near at hand. These cunning animals had occasionally been caught by the bait set for them, but yielded the least percentage of revenue, according to numbers, of the animals that fell victims to the trapper's strategem. The plains fairly swarmed with these animals, yet the number of marten and wild cat caught by the traps was almost as large. The trapper paid especial attention to the latter class of animals, however, as their skins were much prized in the market and brought large prices.

When they had reached a point among the most cavernous rimrocks the traps showed greater success in the finer fur catch as this was the abode of the marten and wild cat. After they reached the point at the edge of the natural meadow, and were at the edge of the great barren waste that extended to the rocky gorges surrounding Stein's mountain, they came upon the big traps. Here they found evidences of big game also.

While passing along a deep gorge the trapper's eyes brightened and he exclaimed: "Grizzly, sure as you live!" He then pointed to where he had left a huge trap and then to the trail left behind where the bear had dragged it, and the heavy weight attached to it, on the gorge. The trapper immediately looked to his rifle and followed the trail eagerly. It brought back the old times—the occupation which he had followed so long alone and the exciting events in a trapper's life.

"Be on the lookout!" cautioned the trapper to his companion, "he may show fight when we come upon him, and it will not do to get too close to him."

On they followed the trail losing it occasionally among the rocks but as soon as soil and sage brush were found they found the evidences again. They had entered a sub-canyon and were passing through a point at which a late spring seep from the mountain side had moistened the ground and produced a high growth of sage brush along the banks of the channel of the gulch and the trapper again preserved unusual precaution. As they were elbowing their way through the tall sage brush that overlapped the channel, the trapper carrying his rifle ready for action, there

was a swish, an unearthly cry, and a mountain lion sprang up in the sage brush to the left and tried to leap upon the two men. But Hammersley fired instantly and the charge entered the animal's heart. They approached the dead animal cautiously and found why it had reared up so straight in the air and been unable to leap. One of Hammersley's great traps had cut its saw-teeth deep into the animal's left hind leg and held it fast.

The animal had been caught several days previously, and had dragged the trap to this point where it became entangled and could get no farther. They lost no time here, however. This was a big haul, but the trapper was more desirous of overtaking the grizzly.

But they were not kept long in suspense. They came to a narrow point in the canyon where the big animal had attempted to force the heavy weight that was attached to the trap between two huge boulders and had pulled upon it so strongly that it had become fastened and the animal could go no farther. With a surly growl he warned them of their danger before they even saw him. As he tore against the chain attached to the trap for his freedom, however, they saw the side of his huge body beyond the boulder.

Hammersley watched the great animal for a few moments and then approaching the boulders cautiously, he placed his rifle on the boulder and fired a ball into the animal's brain, killing him instantly.

Grizzlies, even in those days, were rare catches and the trapper informed Byrd that he was now satisfied with the trip and they proceeded to skin the animal and prepare for the return. It was necessary to spend the night here, which they did, but before it was late they had the skin of the mountain lion also beside the grizzly's, and early the following morning started home, gathering up the hides of marten, wildcat and coyotes as they proceeded; and it is needless to say that when they arrived home they were loaded down, in fact, the horse which had been left hobbled on the way was pressed into service and was also loaded with all that could be conveniently packed upon him.

Bertha was greatly surprised and interested in the skins of the great wild animals, but she had news for them that she deemed of more importance to their future and the projects they had in view.

While they were absent some one had entered the front apartments of the place and had spent the night. Woman's curiosity led Bertha to break the admonition given her by the trapper. She had done so without exposing herself or the secret chamber, however, and this mitigated her crime. But the discovery that she made, she thought might be of importance to her friends.

Upon looking through an aperture into the front room she had seen a sight that dumfounded her. The face was first like a dream to her. It seemed darker and wore a more forlorn look than when she had last seen it. The man was bareheaded and bare-footed and he had no coat. His feet were a mass of wounds, freshly made, and she knew that he must have traveled many miles over the sharp rocks and through the sage brush, for his pants legs at the bottom were worn into shreds.

Again and again she watched him as he prepared and ate his meal. She knew that she had seen him before, but where? But when he prepared to leave in the morning she recognized him. He placed a pair of the trapper's old moccasins on his feet, after he had wrapped them well, placed a bundle of food in a bag and then took an old hat he found hanging on the wall, when he placed the hat on his head, the broad brim shaded the face and cut the profile down, making it recognizable. It was Dan, Follett!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Trapper's Story.

"Tell us, Mr. Hammersley, about yourself," said Bertha, the night of the trapper's return after supper was over and the evening was before them. "Father," she continued, "has told me very much about you, but he only knows your late life. We are under so many obligations to you that I—we feel interested in your early history, your childhood, your birthplace, your father and mother, your brothers and sisters—everything about you, Mr. Hammersley!"

"You ask something that I know but little about, myself," replied the trapper. "I have been on these plains so long that the past all seems like a dream. In fact, it is so much like a dream that I sometimes get it confused with my dreams and scarcely know which is real and which a dream."

"I was born in New York City. At least, when I first recollect, we were living in Boston, and my mother told me that I was born in New York, and that we had lived in Chicago. My step-father was a big coarse fellow, a ship-carpenter, and as soon as I was large enough to be in the way he was very cruel to me. It seems that he and my mother were married when I was only two years old, and that my father had died when I was only one year old. I do not even know his name. It is unfortunate, too, but I was so young and knew not the importance of having my own name, so I took the name of my step-father, though I bear the given name of my father. This much I learned, but I do not remember how I learned it."

"Anyway, my mother died when I was still a mere child and then I was sent to a sort of orphanage or place for the poor, and as soon as I got old enough to leave the place I did so, and drifted into the streets—was a common street arab for several years—sold papers, shined shoes and did such things as that class of boys do until I was fifteen years old. In the meantime I had been reading cheap novels—I had picked up a smattering education at the orphanage, and kept up reading. My soul was fired to west and kill Indians, and be a hunter and trapper and do such other things that a frontier life might lead to."

"Well, one day I met Leonidas Lig-