

LORD OF THE DESERT

By PAUL de LANEY.

CHAPTER XXI—Continued.

Hammersley was non-plussed. It came his turn to explain, but being a man of veracity he did not know how to meet a liar. But he related his story in a straightforward manner without comment, and remembering the message from the Lord of the Desert, he drew it forth and handed it to the general.

"Both stories seem to be straight," said General Crook, "but No. 1 is dark enough to have Indian blood in him and this being the case the burden of proof is cast upon him. But you may put them both in safe-keeping until morning and we will take them along with us to the 'Stone House' they tell about and let this 'Lord of the Desert' identify his messenger."

Immediately upon the departure of the guard with the prisoners, General Crook gave orders for the preparation of ten days' rations for one company of soldiers, and ordered the march to begin at daybreak the next morning.

Shortly after the departure of the guard and the prisoners the shout "halt!" then a gunshot, followed by several others, was heard.

"What means this?" asked the general of a staff officer as he rushed to the door.

In a few minutes a strong guard appeared with Dan Follett, two stalwart soldiers on either side of the Canadian holding him fast.

"What does this mean?" inquired General Crook.

"Just as we had unlocked the door of the guard-house," replied the officer with a salute, "this prisoner drew a knife like a flash, stabbed the nearest guard and made a break for liberty, and had he not run into the arms of a detachment of soldiers who were on their way to load, he would have made good his escape."

"Search him to the skin, place him in irons and release the other prisoner!" promptly ordered the general. "I might have known that that Indian was a liar!" said the old warrior to himself.

The general was about half undressed and was hurrying to bed in order to get a little sleep before the early morning march when he was disturbed again. An officer was admitted who had long been on the general's staff and who, with a familiarity with which such association countenances, said: "We searched the prisoner and here is what we found next to his skin" at the same time producing a belt with a bag attached to it.

General Crook opened the bag and to his astonishment found the \$10,000 therein.

"Well, if this don't beat me!" said the old veteran. "An Indian is the most incomprehensible being on earth. Where on earth did he get this money? What on earth was he going to do with it? If this ain't a puzzle! Send for his companion—or rather the man whom we brought here with him."

Hammersley was sent for and again told his story, not varying one point. "Has anyone in that country great wealth?" inquired General Crook.

"The Lord of the Desert is supposed to be very rich," replied the trapper.

"You say he and the 'Lord' are friends?" queried the officer.

"Yes, in crimes and damnable deeds, replied the trapper.

"What do you know?" asked General Crook.

"I know a great deal, General," replied the trapper. "It is a long story, and some of it is unpalatable," he continued, "but when we reach the Stone House I hope to enlighten you."

General Crook then informed the trapper of the finding of the money on the person of Follett.

"I think I understand it now," said Hammersley, after hearing this. "Follett—that is the half-breed's name—knew that I had been requested to come to you, and for some reason he decided to intercept me and prevent your learning of the predicament of the Lord of the Desert. They may have fallen out. He simply robbed the Lord of the Desert, and intended, after killing me, to make his escape. I can explain it in no other way. Before attacking me with his knife he must have attempted to shoot me, for I am sure I heard the snap of a revolver hammer or that of a gun."

"Here are his weapons," said one of the officers, and upon examination it was found that the hammer of one of the revolvers rested on a percussion cap that had failed to explode, though its battered condition showed that an attempt had been made to fire it.

"Guard him close and see that he is kept here until my return," commanded the general, as he dismissed those present and placed the bag of money in the iron depository of the command.

Long before the dawn of day the soldiers were astrid. Everything was work and bustle about the fort, in preparation for the march at break of day. At this time the march would begin for General Crook was an officer of the old school and his orders would not be varied to a hair's breadth in any detail.

At dawn of day the company moved out with General Crook and his staff in the lead, and Hammersley as chief guide and scout. It was the purpose to march by day for two days and then to change the march to night time, so as not to be detected by the Indians in the vicinity of the Stone House.

fort. Many of them were in the mountains throughout the day securing timbers for the buildings, while the hammers about the fort reminded one of the building of a new town.

Even the guardhouse was a crude affair, hurriedly thrown together to imprison refractory soldiers.

Follett began planning early to escape. He saw that if once freed from the irons on his legs, that he could break his way through the roof at night and get away unobserved.

When the last meal was brought that night he implored the soldier to assist him in removing the irons, but the soldier had no sympathy for him. Although the wounded guard was only slightly injured, there was not a soldier in the fort that was not prejudiced against the man who had made the knife thrust.

But there was a certain pluck that seems always to attend the wicked and the daring for a certain length of time. Loophole after loophole is offered them for escape, and opportunity after opportunity for reform. The case of Dan Follett was no exception.

Upon testing the locks of the irons which bound his ankles he discovered that one had failed to lock, and it was easy to draw forth the bolt and likewise release one limb. With one limb free he tied the loose end of the shackle to the belt at his waist, and when all was quiet in the fort he silently removed the slabs at the corner of the roof and climbed out and stole away like a cat.

Once among the rocks of the desert, he pounded the remaining lock into pieces and was soon walking as free as before he fell into the hands of the soldiers.

Fortune still favored him farther. He found his stolen Indian pony still fast in the gulch, where he had left it the night of his capture, and, mounting the animal, he rode away like the villain on the stage, he exclaimed:

"Now for a ride night and day! I will beat General Crook and his men to the Stone House and warn Egan of his danger, and we will away to the lava beds, and from that point continue to harass Uncle Sam and his subjects to the end of our lives! Hammersley, the trapper, and Lyle, the 'Lord of the Desert,' you may yet fall into the clutches of the half-breed!"

CHAPTER XXII. Cruel Revenge.

The siege is nearing a crisis at the Stone House. Almost a week has passed since the arrival of Egan and his braves. He has been reinforced almost daily, until the plate swarms with savages. His last reinforcements arrived at nightfall, and the morning is set apart to determine the long-drawn-out struggle.

The Lord of the Desert has truly risen to the desperate man that he is. Without sleep night or day he has kept his enemy at bay. His best marksmen have been kept at the loopholes and a standing reward of \$50 for every fatal shot fired has been offered, with a discount of \$10 for every wasted load of ammunition. The results have been astounding. Nearly every bullet that has been sent forth has found a victim. Once, twice, thrice, four, five times have the Indians been repulsed by the wonderful marksmanship of the cowboys. It seemed impossible to reach the stone wall, so fatal were the shafts of lead.

Tunneling had been attempted, but the rocks, so numerous a few feet beneath the soil, made this impossible at every point. The impatience of Old Egan grew beyond control.

At nightfall he had called a council of the chiefs. He determined to end the siege. "Tomorrow," he said, "when the morning star begins to fade, I will lead my men over the stone wall! We will capture the 'White Grizzly' and his cubs, and my men may put them to torture! We will divide his guns and powder and shot among the bravest warriors, and his wealth shall go to the chiefs who are the first to cross the wall. Then we will drive away his cattle and his horses to our village, and the hungry squaws and children shall feast!"

In the quiet preparation for the morning attack an unusual silence pervaded the place. The Lord of the Desert was the more watchful. He had long been taught that Indian silence was not a sign of inactivity. He cast many glances in the direction of the fort, as he had done for the past day and night. It was high time that assistance should arrive.

He sometimes doubted. Was the trapper absent from home? Could it be possible that he had refused to go his errand? He knew that the trapper could be depended upon in all cases of humanity, but his guilty conscience told him that he did not merit aid from any human hand. What had become of Dan Follett? Oh, he was merely sulking in some safe retreat—perhaps doing him a service in some way! "Dan will show up, he'll show up! I can always count on Dan showing up!" exclaimed the Lord of the Desert, half audibly.

The Lord of the Desert had no thought of looking after the safety of his treasure for all these days, or perhaps he would not have thought so favorably of Dan, and confided so earnestly in his "showing up."

But Dan Follett "showed up." Not as the friend of the besieged of the Stone House, but to warn Egan and his followers of their danger.

It was nearly midnight when he arrived, for he had been compelled to travel a long distance since nightfall to arrive ahead of General Crook and his command. He had passed them during the day, by shadowing them from behind the rimrocks, but after the plain was reached between the rimrocks and the Stone House he was compelled to secrete himself until night to prevent them from seeing him.

He knew that Crook's men would arrive at the Stone House between midnight and day, and he did not hesitate in his course. He rode boldly up to the warriors, who immediately surrounded him. He demanded a conference with Old Egan.

When brought before the band of chiefs before the band of chiefs, he told the story partly in detail, and the Indian was finally convinced. But it was not long until he had positive proof. Indian scouts had been sent out hurriedly, and one of their number soon returned bringing the news that men numerous as the stars were coming, armed with long guns with long knives on the ends of the barrels.

Old Egan took in the situation at a glance. He dismissed his warriors and beckoned Follett to remain.

"We have been enemies," he said to the Canadian. "Now we will be friends. We have but little time for talk, but the important Indian like revenge. Trapper has done me great wrong! You, Trapper did you great wrong! You may live with my people. You may be my friend. You know the 'White Grizzly' niece; she not dead!"

Dan Follett rose to his feet in surprise. But the chief remained calm and continued his conversation. He told him the facts of her escape, and the fraud in the scalp he had given him, at the same time repeating that he and the Canadian were friends now.

"But where is she?" inquired the Canadian. A hundred things entered his mind. With Bertha Lyle in his possession, he could get revenge on Hammersley, on the Lord of the Desert, on everybody! With her under his control, he could demand a ransom. He could make terms with General Crook, he could possibly get possession of that \$10,000. Plans came on so thick and fast that they clouded his brain, and he saw a thousand advantages in the possession of Bertha Lyle as a prisoner in an Indian village.

"Where is she?" he demanded again.

"But wait!" said the chief. "You are too impatient to make a good brave for Egan's hand. I told you she escaped. The trapper still has her."

"But I have been to his home in his absence," said Follett, "and she was not there!"

"He hide her when he go away," replied the chief. "He fear someone steal her! Now, me and my men will bury away tonight. We will go to lava beds, where soldiers never find us; and if they find us, four, ten, twenty, go to trapper's home while he away and get girl and bring her with you! See! make trapper mad, you get even, and you have white squaw. Egan a good friend as well as bad enemy."

but General Crook informed him that they had "whole" breeds to deal with just now, and that he would take up Follett's case later.

Hammersley, at the head of the band of cowboys, had followed the trail of the Indians all day and kept General Crook posted. The latter moved out with his command from the Stone House at sunset, intending to travel by night so as to keep the Indians off their guard. He started out on one of his determined chases, never intending to return until he had punished these bandits, the most troublesome and bloodthirsty at that time roaming the American plains.

CHAPTER XXIII. —at Hell's Trap.

Hammersley had located the Indians at "Hell's Trap." Upon being notified of this, General Crook had come in advance of his command, which was to march by night, to view the situation.

It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when he and the trapper stealthily climbed to the top of the rimrocks overlooking this remarkable place, and lying flat on the capstone of the rimrocks, they looked into the Indian camp below. There was nothing about the place to indicate a trap or place for a harsh name. It was a beautiful natural meadow in the bend of a mountain stream, surrounded on three sides by towering rimrocks, the river forming a distinct peninsula, almost creating an island, so close did the entrance point of the stream come to the point of exit after making the circuit of the little valley.

Through this narrow neck the Indians had entered, and while their animals grazed on the luxuriant grass they had pitched their tents among the willows bordering the stream and prepared for a few days' rest after their long siege at the Stone House. Here game and fish were plentiful, and the haunches of deer and antelope, and fish fries alternating the feasts on the Lord of the Desert's table for the braves, instead of a "Hell's Trap."

Here they felt safe. In this amphitheater they were isolated from the world, and there were numerous outlets through the rimrocks where they could make their escape if attacked, and they had as prisoners four cowboys, the only persons they had discovered on their trail from the Stone House, and they now felt as safe in this retreat as if among the lava beds of the Klamath country.

They regarded a casual lookout as being sufficient for their safety from surprise, in view of the fact that hunting parties were continually covering the territory in the immediate vicinity of the camp.

It was a continuous feast and holladay for the hunted bandits, they called this "Hell's Trap," said General Crook as he looked down upon the placid scene.

"There is no reason for it now, it is true," replied the trapper, "but I have seen it when the name of Hell's Trap was not too harsh for it. The river, now fordable at most any point, rises from the snowbeds of the great mountains yonder. The warm south winds at times start the snow to melt, and the water comes dashing down from every point, filling the ravines and gulches, and these flow into the river, making it a rolling sea of water as suddenly as a cloudburst. It is on these occasions that the place bears the appearance of a 'hell's trap.'"

"It has always been a great grazing place for wild animals of all kinds, and the rise often comes down upon them suddenly and fills the banks all around them and breaks across to the narrow neck, imprisoning them completely before they have time to escape. No living thing can ford the river during the rises."

"The Indians make it a point to take advantage of these rises. They stand guard outside, and as soon as the water is at its highest they rush through the current overflowing the neck and slaughter the animals by the wholesale. In this manner they long ago secured their winter meat food. This has given it the name of 'Hell's Trap.'"

After a few minutes in silence General Crook remarked that there seemed to be four canyons, or outlets from the place, through the walls of the rimrocks, besides the main entrance through the "strait" or neck. But the trapper showed him the fifth.

"To make a wholesale capture," remarked the general, "I will have to station me at all of those points and charge in over the 'neck.' My men will arrive about midnight, and I will then require your assistance in stationing the men for an early morning attack," he continued.

Before the trapper had time to respond, if he had intended to reply, a light caught the eyes of both men that riveted their attention in the same direction.

They placed their field glasses to their eyes and a groan escaped simultaneously from each. The sight that greeted them, has often been seen on the American border. Human beings put to torture by savages, in full view of friends who were unable to render them aid!

The savages marched forth into an opening four white men in single file their arms bound to their sides, and each being led by a painted warrior.

The general and the trapper immediately recognized the men as four of the cowboys who had been sent out on the trail of the Indians from the Stone House. This is the first that either had known of their fate. General Crook, as well as the trapper, had supposed that all of the men were safe. The latter had not seen these men since two days before, but he supposed that they had either lost the trail or were lingering somewhere close at hand among the rimrocks. But they had acted indiscreetly and had been entrapped by the Indians, and were now about to pay their last earthly penalty.

The mode of the American savages' torture of his prisoners is well known. It has been described often enough, with its harrowing variations. The Snake Indian was the most cruel, and in this case his incentive was great. Many of his companions had fallen

for the occasion he entered the channel of the stream and hugged the banks with the aloneness of a beaver, always keeping in the shadows of the willows and never raking his weight upon his feet until he knew they were firmly placed.

While his task did not prove a difficult one, it was a tedious one. His bearings had been so well taken that he recognized the very clump of bushes in which Bertha's tepee was pitched without trouble. Farther away from the stream he saw the diamond thicket to which Oscar Metzger, the other captive, had been taken, and from which the four cowboys on the previous evening had been taken for their last walk.

Like a snake he crawled up the embankment through the dense undergrowth, moving inch by inch, until he reached the rear of Bertha's tepee, and while the guards dozed near the front he ripped a hole in the rear wall of the tent and soon gave Bertha an assuring touch that told her a friend was with her.

In a few moments time they had retraced the trapper's steps to the rear of the stream, in the same manner as he had approached, and Bertha, hiding in a dark nook under the willows, which hung over the embankment, Hammersley went to attempt the release of the other prisoner.

He found Metzger so securely tied that even the Indians did not fear his escape. Round hand and foot and stretched full length between two saplings, his body barely touching the ground, he was enduring a torture that would have killed an ordinary man. But his was one of those iron constitutions of the desert.

The trapper was a welcome visitor and his knife furnished immediate relief. When released from his cramped position the cowboy stood erect and exercising his limbs noiselessly for a moment he indicated that he was ready to go. The trapper handed him a revolver and a knife and the two walked silently away ready to defend themselves, even unto death.

When they reached the place where Bertha was concealed the trapper was struck with awe. He saw twigs of willows and tops of sage brush and chunks of wood floating down the stream. These increasing at every moment. Seizing the woman he drew her after him and Metzger followed at a rapid pace.

It was two hundred yards to a shallow place in the stream and when this was reached the river was already rising at a rapid rate. The trapper seized Bertha in his arms as if she were a mere child and plunged into the foaming rapids, followed by the cowboy. Against the heavy current which almost swept their feet from under them, they made the farther shore, and as they ascended the bank, the trapper exclaimed:

"Great luck! A head rise!" Hammersley and his companions ran across the open meadow for the nearest opening in the rimrocks. The light of breaking morn made them recognizable to their friends on guard in the rimrocks who could scarcely restrain applause. But the drilling of a soldiers life prevented this outbreak.

The water came with a rush down the mountain stream. The sound changed from a murmur over the pebbles to a ripple over the rocks; and then to a roar over the boulders and against the angular banks. So loud followed the growing roar that the savages were awakened. Dan Follett rushed to the tepee of his fair captive and finding that she was gone he kicked the drawny guards in their sides and gave the alarm.

The whole camp was astir instantly. Discovering the fleeing fugitives, Follett plunged into the stream, followed by some of the most daring warriors, and gave pursuit. But when within 50 yards of the opening in the rimrocks where the fugitives had passed safely through a clond of smoke rose, a report of a dozen rifles rang upon the morning air and a half dozen Indians sank down in the meadow. Another volley and the ranks were thinned to a remnant.

Follette remained untouched. He turned and tried to rally the men who had been following in the rear and were now panic-stricken. At least one-fourth of the entire war party had rushed across the stream unarmed in pursuit of the fugitives. When they returned they found the river in these few minutes a seething foam, made black by the earth gathered by the flood as it came. To cross the stream was a task no warrior would attempt. They turned for other openings in the rimrocks. But here they met with disappointment. When approaching these points, and safety seemed just in sight, they were met with volleys from the soldiers' rifles that mowed them down like grass before a scythe. Another opening and another was tried with like results, until terror-stricken they ran about the meadow, hiding here and there in the tall grass soon to be spied out by the revengeful soldiers and shot like sage hens.

But the daring Follett would not give up. He saw old Egan organizing the men on the other side of the river, and plunged into the mad stream to join him, and made the other shore. Mounting their horses, the chief and half-breed led the men to the "neck" where the water was rapidly rising to the danger point. But here the, real slaughter began.

General Crook led his men in person, and when the savages were in easy range he gave the command to fire. It was a deadly fire. Every shot found its mark. The savages fell from their horses like hail. Some of them tried to dash through the lines while others turned back toward the raging torrent.

"Charge," came the command from Crook. It was not technically a humane warfare, though it was conducted according to human tactics. Every shot that was fired was fired by a man mad for revenge. They charged upon the savages, sparing none and taking no prisoners, for they refused to surrender and did not ask for mercy. To the brink of the stream they ran, many falling pierced with lead before they reached this point. Some plunged into the flood never to rise again; others made it across to fall before the rifles in the hands of the guards at the openings in the rimrocks.

But the story is better told in the

the torture was kept up almost until sunset, when the last life succumbed, and the savages were even then desecrating their mutilated bodies when interrupted by a chorus of yells from the center of the bend in the river.

Turning their glasses in this direction, the two white men saw another sight that startled them still more. A mounted party had just passed through an opening in the rimrocks, and was ording the stream and heading toward the Indian camp.

In front rode an Indian warrior, next came a white man bound to his horse, then came a white woman, her feet bound by a rope which encircled the horse upon which she rode; then followed two warriors mounted on one animal, and bringing up the rear was Dan Follett!

"Bertha Lyle, as sure as I live!" gasped the trapper.

"And that cursed half-breed!" exclaimed General Crook.

The trapper started to rise and rush to the rescue, but the cool-headed general restrained him. "Cool, my boy! Cool!" he advised. "Careful work requires careful action, and I see now that we have a lot of both on hand!"

The trapper had already informed General Crook of the entire situation, so far as he knew it, but both were at a loss to understand how Follett had escaped and how he had succeeded in enticing Bertha and her companion from the secret caverns of the trapper's home.

"We will solve these mysterious problems later, young man," said the general. "We have practical ones ahead of us now!"

Old Egan greeted Follett with full fellowship as a chief, and cast a vindictive glance at his fair captive. The party was soon dismounted, and while Metzger, the cowboy captive, was led away and bound to a stake where his late friends had been confined, Bertha was given a tepee all to herself among the willows, and two little some braves were placed as guards over her.

"This complicates matters," said General Crook. "I intended opening the campaign at daybreak tomorrow and not leaving one of the red devils to sleep the night, after witnessing the butchery of those poor fellows a while ago, but now that cannot be done for it would hazard the girl's safety and life. It will never do to shoot into the place while she is in it."

"I'll rescue her before morning, General," said the trapper.

"It's a ticklish job, young man, but if you succeed, my men will do the rest!"

Night was now coming on, and they returned to the temporary quarters of the great Indian fighter, in a secret nook among the rimrocks, there to plan the rescue of the woman, and the early morning attack.

(Copyright, 1902.) CHAPTER XXIV. "Dunder and Blixen."

It was after midnight before the troops arrived. It was also this hour before the Indians had quieted down to sleep. The afternoon's war dance over their captive victims, the wild excitement of the torture and the arrival of the Follett party with the two captives had aroused the blood of the savages and many tales of former acts of bravery, and deeds of daring were told beneath the willows and the tepees in Hell's Trap, that night.

Hammersley had decided to go on his mission of rescue alone. It was decided first to station the troops at every point at which the Indians could possibly escape and then for the trapper to attempt the rescue.

Follett rushed to the tepee of his fair captive.

Should he fail or fall in the attempt it was the purpose to force the best terms possible with the savages, but should he succeed, it was the determination to wreak that merciless revenge upon the Indians that the occasion seemed to justify.

The men had all been informed of the torture and death of the four white men and of the arrival of the two new captives, and this stirred the soldiers to a revengeful spirit that caused them to forget their tired and hungry condition and loss of sleep. They now felt that they had at last encompassed the enemy and they were eager to strike the blow.

Ten well armed and equipped soldiers accompanied by five cowboys were placed in each gap in the rimrocks and 100 men, including cowboys and soldiers under General Crook, guarded the neck of the peninsula.

It was half way between midnight and dawn when the trapper started on his perilous mission. Armed suitably



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