

# LORD OF THE DESERT

By PAUL DE LARRY

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CHAPTER I.  
THE OREGON "DESERT."

From the north boundary line to the south boundary line of the state, there lies in Eastern Oregon a strip of territory about 400 miles long and about 200 miles wide, which was once known as the Great Oregon Desert, and through which ran the old Oregon trail.

This desert, unlike most deserts, contains many oases. There are running streams of pure water, and numerous springs boil from the sides of the mountains and rise even from desert sands; and wherever this water touched the parched soil, beautiful meadows of native grass greeted the eye of the occasional adventurer.

But these seemed few and far between in early days; and for lack of knowledge of their location many a weary traveler lost his way between them, and his bleached bones, for many years afterward marked the last place where he laid himself down to rest.

Even in these days when much of the ground, accessible to water, is occupied by the pioneer homesteaders, one may travel a hundred miles or more without encountering a single human habitation, or living thing.

The Oregon desert is practically a succession of mountain plateaus. It is at a high altitude at every point. To reach it from most any direction one must climb a great mountain range, and meander at intervals among snow-capped peaks and through rock-bound canyons and gulches; and to cross it, one must reverse wide stretches of barren plains that never taste of water, except from the melting snows of winter, and must also encounter lava beds and walls of rock seemingly insurmountable.

These plains remind one of a huge extinct volcanic crater, although they cover thousands of acres in area, and it takes days of travel to cross many of them. They vary in size, however, from small plateaus of a few acres to the illimitable outstretched plains. But they all bear the same character.

The traveler, whether passing through a small basin or a great plateau, is struck with same impression. A wall surrounds each of these basins or plateaus and separates one from another. The walls consist of rocks piled upon one another with masonic care, the joints being packed as perfectly and smoothly as if done by skilled human hands, and they rise perpendicularly from ten to two thousand feet into the air, and to make them the more difficult of ascent, a thick layer of flat rocks lie along the top of the wall extending out on either side into wide eaves and sheltering them like the rim of a hat, or the eaves of a flat roof, and these are called the *ribs*.

While they appear to be a succession of plateaus, independent of one another, and in no wise connected whereby one might scale the walls which separate them, yet with seldom an exception, nature has contrived to the rescue, and by the same process through which the great upheavals were caused and these mountains of lava rocks and plains of volcanic ashes were formed, serpentine "spine" canyons, gulches and rifts cut the walls, and through these the traveler may find his way from one basin to another.

The smaller plains were the scenes of many conflicts, and were often places of great slaughter. In early days, bands of deer and antelope often wandered into them, and the watchful Indians came upon them, and guarding the only places of outlet, would charge down upon the engaged animals and slaughter a whole herd. And the animals were not the only victims to Indian cunning and bloodthirstiness. Many an immigrant train whose members had become exhausted and careless from want of proper food and water, to gather with the deer and antelope still bear their names from one end of the desert to the other, and there is no landmark that guides the traveler through the plains that does not recall some memory of the terrible crimes of these two chiefs and their bloodthirsty warriors, and many of these were committed even after the arrival of the bold and determined General Crook.

But in early days wherever there was water and nature's meadows, and fields of grain, horses and cattle were plentiful, and wild game, from the monarch grizzly to the common jackrabbit, including elk, deer, antelope, mountain sheep, mountain lions, cougar, coyote, wildcat and marten roamed at will, and were seldom ever disturbed by the hand of man. The flesh of the game animals was the tenderest and best, while the furs produced in this section were considered the best in the market.

It was the paradise of the hunter and trapper.

CHAPTER II.  
THE LORD OF THE DESERT.

In the center of one of these plateaus containing hundreds of thousands of acres of land, is a low round mountain. From the plateau it looks like a mountain peak, and is called Mount Juniper, but from its base to its summit it is only about one thousand feet. Its south side is covered with ruddy evergreen of the juniper species, from which the mountain takes its name, while the north and east and north-west sides are barren, and huge boulders lie piled upon one another, and deep canyons cut their way down its sides.

tched to juniper posts, protects this meadow from the stock for which it is intended.

At the foot of the mountain, and surrounded by tall clusters of junipers, is a large single-story house, built of the rocks that from time to time have rolled down the mountain. In the front are stables, corrals, hay racks, watering troughs, and all the appurtenances of an old-time western ranch. To the west is a garden spot irrigated from pipes that run from a reservoir fed by springs higher up the hill, and in the rear is a young orchard where every indication points to the fact that the trees are being nurtured and cultivated for export purposes. In front of the great stone building beautiful walks are laid out, along which shrubbery, roses and flowers of many varieties grow, with a beautiful green lawn for a background. Fountains play in the sunlight through the heat of the day, and the ice-cold spring water is thus tempered for the tender roots of the young vegetation.

The grounds about the house, including orchard, garden, stables and cowsheds, are inclosed with a rock wall several feet high, with loopholes here and there in the wall, which show that the place was constructed with a view of being able to defend itself in case an attack was made from the outside.

But it is the interior of the house that the reader should see. In the front room there are easy chairs, lounges, tables, books and writing materials. On the walls there are pictures. To stop here one would imagine himself in a cultivated home in a thickly settled country, but in glancing further one sees reminders of the fact that one is in reality in a frontier place of abode. By the side of the outer doors stand the latest manufacture of rifles, and guns of all makes hang in the racks over the doors and along the walls. Large revolvers swing from points here and there like ornaments, while numerous

varieties of this deadly weapon adorn the tables in the room.

In the main bedroom this same abundance of firearms exist, and in this room, at the front corner, a large table stands in one corner and upon it is fastened all of the latest improved apparatus for loading and reloading cartridge shells, and an abundant supply of ammunition is at hand to withstand an ordinary siege.

The other rooms of the building are only ordinary bedrooms, showing the lack of care and attention usually found in bachelor's quarters, while the dining-room and kitchen are large and are frequently visited and occupied by the owner, and they must be kept intact, or the derelict may suffer more than a storm of words. But the other rooms of the house present a different aspect; the beds are unmade, and men's wearing apparel are scattered about the floor, broken matches, half consumed candies, and in fact, a general miscellany of unimportant things make up the debris of the rooms. But there is a deserted appearance about the place. Save a single note from the cooking apparatus, occasioned by the work of a stout, round-faced Englishman, who might be taken for almost any age, and who does the work of chef, cook, dishwasher, housekeeper and man-of-all-work, in performing his routine labors, no other sound is heard.

But there are two occupants of the place at this time. In the front room a man sits in a peculiarly-constructed chair in deep meditation. An anxious look occupies his countenance, and now and then a cloud seems to obscure his whole face. It lights up with a beam of pleasure for a moment, as if the way looked clear to the thinker, then the clouds again, followed by glooms of light and grimaces caused by a tortured conscience. The chair upon which he sits is a home-made affair. It has huge posts and a high back, with long, awkwardly-constructed rockers that give it the appearance of having been made for a giant. The front posts extend up almost even with the arm-pits, and support wide arms—so broad that they look like tables. In the left hand of the man occupying the chair is a book, but the thumb only marks the place to where he has read and his arm lies carelessly on the table-like arm of the chair. On the right table, or arm of the chair, sits a goblet half-filled with old Scotch whiskey, the right hand clasping it gently. Although the glass is conveyed to his lips occasionally it is never permitted to become empty, a demijohn within easy reach being drawn upon at intervals when the fluid runs low in the glass.

The chair does not only look as if it had been made for a giant, but a modern giant does occupy it. Six feet three, when standing, large limbs and spare hands, the man shows wonderful strength, though his constitution has been battling with Scotch whiskey and a remorseful conscience for many years. A broad mouth, long nose, deep set eyes, large ears and high cheek bones show as plainly as does his brogue that he is a Scotchman. Like his servant of the kitchen, he might also be taken for almost any age. His smooth-shaven face, reddish complexion and close clipped hair, give the casual observer the impression that he is not more than forty, but the wrinkles in his face and neck, the inevitable markers of time, and the solid gray that intermingles the light red hair, tell the close observer that he is at least sixty, not more.

"Will she make it here without a

meshap," he muttered, with an anxious look upon his face, and then in almost inaudible tones, "What will be the result if she reaches this place in safety? But she will never do it!" and he took a quaff from the goblet, to relieve the terrors of his soul, which were depicted in his face.

CHAPTER III.  
A Midnight Surprise.

"And how did you leave dear uncle?" inquired a young woman in a voice of innocence.

"Oh, in the very best of spirits," replied a rugged frontiersman, covered with the dust of the plains.

"And how long shall it be before we reach his place?" inquired the same female voice.

"Within about two days—that is if nothing happens to prevent it," replied the man.

"But nothing can happen to prevent it, except an extraordinary event, can it?" inquired the girl assuredly, and continuing as if to remove all doubt, "You look fresh, your men are all fresh and your horses look as if they were anxious to start on the return journey."

"That is all true, Madam, but in this country we never count on anything until it's accomplished, and the 'extraordinary' is likely to happen any time."

"Oh, then are we to pass through a dangerous section?" inquired the maiden with some alarm.

"No, not particularly, but when the Snakes are skulking among the rocks they are likely to strike at any time," replied the frontiersman.

"What kind of snakes are they?" inquired the young woman. "I have read of your American snakes," she continued, "and know that there must be very many varieties, and that they must be dangerous, but never read of them biting people on horseback."

"But these Snakes bite at any time and in any place," replied the man with a smile. "They prefer the dark however, and more often strike from ambush. To be plain with you, Madam, and you must be a nervy girl to have crossed the ocean and come this far glancing further one sees reminders of the fact that one is in reality in a frontier place of abode. By the side of the outer doors stand the latest manufacture of rifles, and guns of all makes hang in the racks over the doors and along the walls. Large revolvers swing from points here and there like ornaments, while numerous

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"Will she make it here without a

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Oysters. If you want to try a can of the finest, largest, plumpest, and most delicious canned oysters you ever saw, ask your grocer to send you a can of Monopole. There is only one packer in the United States who puts up as fine goods as Monopole and therefore they are not to be had under any other brand. Under the Monopole brand we also have packed a full line of canned fruits and vegetables, spices, coffee, baking powder and the like. They are packed under a beautifully embossed blue and gold label. The label is fine, but the goods are finer. Your grocer handles them or can get them for you. See that he does it. Wadhams Kerr Bros., Packers, Portland, Oregon.

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Blobs—Her father's cook objected to any further additions to the family.—Philadelphia Record.

## Rheumatism

The liniment bottle and flannel strip are familiar objects in nearly every household. They are the weapons that have been used for generations to fight old Rheumatism, and are about as effective in the battle with this giant disease as the blunderbuss of our forefathers would be in modern warfare.

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