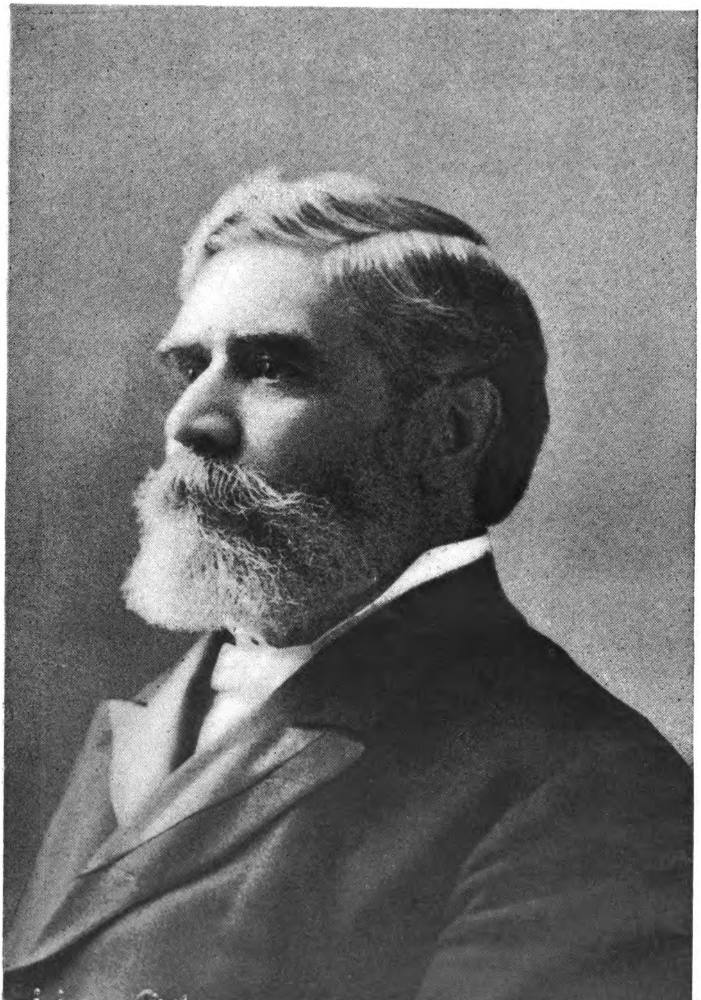

S. D. Woods

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF LIFE ON THE PACIFIC COAST

By
S. D. WOODS

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The Hon. Samuel D. Woods, the author of this volume, is one of the first citizens of California. He rose in life through his own resolute efforts; took up the practise of law; was for a long period a member of the Congress of the United States; and has been an actor in all the crowded and picturesque events of the Far West since the Civil War.

Mr. Woods has earned the right to be heard. So now, at the request of his many friends, he is printing the varied and entertaining reminiscences of his long and honorable career.

DEDICATED

TO

EDWIN MARKHAM

My beloved pupil of long ago—he and I can never forget the little schoolhouse in the sunny Suisun hills, where we together found our lives.

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Chapter XXII

THREE HEROES—AN INDIAN, A WHITE MAN AND A NEGRO

THE doctrine of the natural depravity of man is often overthrown by some splendid exhibition of qualities in the individual that lifts him into something fine—some act that quickens our pulses. We are often compelled by the logic of the heart to conclude that *ex cathedra* deductions of the churchmen are imperfect measurements of the spirit.

The schoolman may analyze motive and passion,—in fact all the emotions that lie at the base of human character, and arrive at conclusions that establish to his satisfaction formulas by which he measures the moral fibers of the average human life, but the schoolman fails in emergency and his rules go to pieces in the storm of experience. No man can be measured except by what he can do—what he has done. His aspiration and dream are fleeting as the summer clouds until they become fixed by action. A single act in hours of emergency discloses weakness or strength, and be that act heroic or mean, it permanently fixes moral status. The Master knew this when He taught the multitudes "you shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs

of thistles?" If a man's action be mean, men thereafter may be deceived in him by the glamuor of his repute, but the man himself forever knows what he is, and there are two in the universe to whom he stands naked—himself and God.

If we have in these pages dwelt long in the desert and among the dwellers therein, it is because we have never been free from the fascination that possest us while we were part of it and them. We feel that to lose the memory of them would be a spiritual loss and leave a vacuum in our moral make-up.

The chill of an autumn morning at Big Pine, a little village in Owens River Valley, drove us to the warmth of a grateful fire in a little hotel. We had found an old magazine and were engrossed in its pages when an Indian came in with an armful of wood which he threw down just at our back. We were startled for the moment and looked up and met one of the surprises of our life. Before us stood a majestic man. His face had in it the strength and beauty of a great spirit; he towered over six feet in the splendid proportions of a Greek statue. He smiled his apology for disturbing us, and a "kingly condescension graced his lips." We felt as one who had seen a vision. We had seen thousands of Indians, fine models of natural men and had often from the artist's standpoint admired and wondered at their perfection, but never such as he who stood before us. As he went out, we turned to a man who sat by the fire and asked him "who is that man?" He seemed surprised and said, "Why, don't you know him?" "That is Joe Bowers, chief of the Inyo Piutes," and then with the enthu-

siasm of his respect for the noble Indian, gave us the story of his character and career. It is no fairy story, altho it seemed as unreal. It was the story of a humane, heroic man worthy to be made immortal. His tribal name we do not know—we never knew.

The opportunity to become familiar with such a man, to learn from him the rareness and beauty of a life begun in an Indian cradle, educated by its own supreme quality, was not to be lost, and in after days Joe Bowers and we became friends, not friends as the world understands it, but friends in its noblest sense—followed by a companionship that had in it an ever increasing charm. He grew, as the days passed, it seemed, taller, statelier, more serene and majestic. We found that to be counted worthy to be his friend was to hold a certificate of good character.

Physically he was without flaw, tho at the time we first met him, age had begun its disintegrating work, and he had lost some of the superb energy of his earlier manhood. He was still, however, a magnificent human shape. Six feet in height, he stood in repose the perfection of grace and strength. About him was something that always compelled attention and awakened admiration. Into him had entered the majesty of the heights that environed his youth, ever present about him as he grew to manhood. He had been nourished by the silence of lonely places, enriched by the heavens and the earth. The voices of streams and storms; the coo of birds; the scream of the eagle in the sky were utterances of the oracles whose meaning he may not have always ac-

curately interpreted, but he knew by the response of his own nature that they were as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

There was an impressive dignity in the poise of his head firmly set upon massive shoulders. Authority and power were in this poise, and few men would be reckless enough to treat him with disrespect, for he compelled homage by his mere presence. No one ever approached him more than once with condescension, for to such he was the very spirit of unspoken scorn. To gracious demeanor and word he was open and sweet. The summer sun never made the eastern heavens more radiant than did kindly words make this brave and rugged face—a face wherein spirituality had set its lines of power and traced a network for the play of delicate emotions. It was the face of one born for empire, the widest empire possible to the limitations of his life. In other places and times he would have been a ruler of a nation rather than chief of an untutored tribe. It was after all in the deeps of his eyes that one caught a glimpse of the rarely endowed spirit that made him the master of situations perilous to himself as well as to others. They were eyes "to threaten and command," at times like the heavens, full of beauty, glorious with the lights of the dawn and the shadows of the sunset, cloudless and serene, and then again full of thunder and lightening and storm. He feared nothing but dishonor, loved nothing but things noble. His chief qualities were a power to command, courage, and beneficence.

His career as chief in desperate times of conflict

with the whites will demonstrate all we have written, and a recital of his acts during these desperate times marks him as one of the most glorious examples of the perfect man—a Christian by instinct, profoundly religious without instruction, a man of peace in the midst of war, one of the few upon whom Nature had conferred the patent of a noble.

It is but fair to say that doubtless he was greatly indebted to tribal virtues. A close study of the Piutes disclosed to us that when unsullied by the vices of civilization they were, in the mass, governed by noble racial instincts. As a tribe they were remarkable for two great virtues—honesty in the man and chastity in the woman. Their laws were as stern as those of Judeans. In the warp and woof of these great qualities, it is not a matter of wonder that there should be woven now and then a character of supreme grandeur, a focalization of spiritual force, clear-eyed enough to see truth that was universal, as operative in the solitudes of Inyo as under the dome of St. Peter. The uplift of tribal virtues must at some time and place produce exceptional characters. If Judean philosophy found speech in Isaiah and David, why should not the moral genius of the Piute live in Bowers, individualized and illuminated.

The pages of history are made enticing by many a story of human action along the lines of endeavor, stories that thrill, comfort and inspire us when we become sore and tired with the endless strife of the selfish. They lift us above the sloughs of despondency, when we are nearly suffocated and out of moral

breath. Such is the story of Joe Bowers' humane conduct during the Indian War of 1856. The vast territory lying south of the Sierras in California was Indian territory under the protection of two companies of United States soldiers, at Fort Independence, near the present town of Independence. The steady encroachments of the whites made the Piutes restless, and the constant brooding over foreign occupation ripened into a fighting mood. It was the old story. As the strain became more tense, individuals first protested to their chief, and then the tribe was aroused to council and war-councils were held with all the mysticism invariably a part of such councils. At these Bowers presided with authority, which was a part of his being. He had taken accurate account of conditions, recognized the sure results to his tribe of the incoming of the whites; knew that possession and domain would pass out of the hands of his people, and that slowly but surely the time was coming when they would "read their doom in the setting sun." But with the largeness of his wisdom, he also knew that resistence to the inevitable was vain. He had talked with the Commander at the Fort for the purpose of ascertaining the military resources of the United States in case of war, and armed with knowledge, quickened by his own intuition, he knew that protest was hopeless,—that slaughter of his tribe must result, and that however long the contest might be waged, and with whatever first victories to his people, that ultimately they would be crusht and subjugated. His great heart was sorely torn and disquieted, but he saw his way clearly as all supreme souls do, and

he acted at his own personal peril for what he knew to be the best for those who looked to him for guidance. The Indians were now at a fever heat, and a final council was called to declare for war or peace.

It was a great concourse of subchiefs, medicine men and representatives of the old and young of the tribe. It had a peace party headed by Bowers, and a war party headed by a fiery young subchief, second in command to Bowers. For days the discussion went on. Bowers told them that the handful of soldiers at the Fort were but a part of a great army like them beyond the mountains, where thousands and thousands of white men had had like contests, and that there had always been but one result—the subjugation of resisting tribes, and that they could not escape a like fate in case of war. Into the scale for peace he threw all his tremendous influence. For them he had been until now Father and Guide. Never before had his wisdom and justice been questioned. The final vote was taken and it was for war. Then Bowers rose to the height of majestic action. He told them that he would not fight and that if they went to war, they must find a new chief and leader. Had he been an ordinary man, this would have been his death sentence, for it was the law of the tribe that if a chief refused to fight when his people called for war, he forfeited his life. He looked serenely into the face of fate, but conquered since the law was waived. He was retired as chief only during the war, and the hot-headed subchief was chosen as warchief.

Bowers' moral grandeur now was exhibited, in that while his people were fighting the whites, he

went about saving their lives. To lonely miners' cabins in far-off canyons he went, warning the miners to flee to the fort. He was asked by them what they should do with their possessions, and he said, "Leave them as they are, I will protect them, and when the war is over, come back and you will find all as you leave them." At the door of each cabin he planted a long, slender reed upon which was fixed some mystic symbol. This was notice to the Indians that the cabin and all about it were under his protection. Many a miner, whose life would have been sacrificed, was thus saved.

At one point on the mesas, that lay about the base of Waucoba Mountain, sixty miles from the fort, over a range of lofty mountains, two men had their camp where they were herding over two hundred head of cattle, fattening upon the white sage abundant there. These he warned to flee to the fort, telling them to leave their cattle to him, and that they would be safe. Grateful for their lives thus saved, the men told Bowers that his people during the winter might become hungry, and that for his services, he was at liberty to kill as many of the cattle as he chose. This offer was accepted. The same mystic symbol of his protection and authority was posted at this camp; all was saved; strange as it may seem, when the war was over, miners and cattlemen returned to find all as they had left it, except the cattlemen found a pile of heads, twenty in number, carefully preserved as evidence of the number the Indians had killed and eaten. As the men examined these heads, they found that in every instance they were of inferior cattle,

and they said to Bowers, "Why, Joe, you killed only the poorest of the cattle. Why didn't you pick out better ones?" With a winning smile, so common to him, he replied, "Oh, maybe so, poor steer plenty good for Injun." This reply had in it neither music nor rhetoric, yet one would hunt in vain the literature of all times and ages to find words into which had been breathed more of the fine beauty of a great soul. Thus during the entire war, waged with the savagery of Indians, without mercy or quarter, did Bowers pass from point to point of danger, saving the lives and property of the enemies of his tribe, but while his people knew of all that he did, they lifted no hand against him. Let no man say in the presence of such moral strength that the wild man of the earth's waste places "is of the earth earthy."

When the war ended, Bowers, having been justified for his actions, rose again, by the grandeur of his character, to his chieftainship, never thereafter to be challenged. We remember the last time we saw him on a lonely trail crossing the desert mountain, between California and Nevada. We were both alone and were surprised to see each other, and I said, "Where are you going, Bowers?" He replied, "Oh, some bad man make trouble between Piutes and I go fix him." It seems to us always afterward that we were glad of our last view of him as he was thus on a mission of mercy.

In consideration of his services, the Government at the close of the war placed him upon the pay-roll of the army in some subordinate office,—a sinecure sufficient to sustain him in comfort in his declining years.

If he had been an Anglo-Saxon, in some center field of the world, he would have been part of some noble chapters of history.

In a solitary miner's cabin on the eastern slope of the White mountains, we found living in the quiet of a remote, secluded life, two men nearer to David and Jonathan in the beauty of their friendship, than any two we have ever met. One of these was W. S. Greenly, whose qualities of mind and heart were charged with that magnetism which flows from a great purity of life. He was at once a hero and a martyr, for, with an equipment of power large enough to have made him a dominant figure in commercial, political and social life, he lived beyond his opportunity because he loved, with a love passing that of woman, the man who was his companion in loneliness. Greenly is dead. This we learned not long ago when we wrote hoping to find him still adorning our common human nature with the nobility and the sweetness that made our acquaintance with him a fruitful memory. No braver, kindlier heart ever beat within a human bosom. He was a strong man, with all the modest gentleness of a woman, and in him it was verified that "the bravest are the tenderest." Those who knew him honored him with great honor, and to be his friend was a choice thing. The serenity of his temper was as unvarying as the seasons. Impulse had no part in his mental action. He was not slow to action, nor hurried in speech. Benevolence was his basic quality. His days had not always been full of peace, nor his life without stirring events, which marked him as a man for great emergencies.

Between him and Bowers, the Piute Chief, there existed a warm friendship, as each recognized in the other a man. Ordinarily, there existed reasons why they should have been enemies, for Greenly was the man who led the force that finally defeated the Piutes and destroyed them, broke their war spirit and ended forever their struggles against the supremacy of the whites.

At the time the war broke out, Greenly was a young man who had come into the Owens River country to try his fortunes. At this time the region had great repute for its supposed mineral wealth and had thus attracted many aspiring young men of great ability. The dream of wealth had lured them from the comforts of Eastern homes, to brave the perils of the frontier. For a while Greenly watched the events of the war and as the soldiers, unused to the methods of the Indian warfare, suffered defeat, he became satisfied they were unequal to the conflict, and that if the whites were to be victorious, an important change must be made in the personnel of the fighters, as well as in their tactics. He, with others, had sought the protection of the Fort, and there were then gathered in the place a number of young men, brave and active, who chafed at confinement, and grew restless from the frequent defeat of the soldiers. Following one of these most serious defeats, Greenly took up the matter with the Commander, and formulated a plan by which he, as leader, and his associates, as his comrades, should offer to the Commander of the fort their service as fighters, provided always that Greenly should direct the

further campaign, and that he should have supreme authority and the soldiers be subordinate to and subject to his commands. At this time the Indian forces, numerous and defiant, by reason of their successes, had established their central camp at a point about half way between the Fort and Owens Lake, which was distant about sixteen miles. The commander at first repudiated Greenly's plan, and refused to surrender his command of his soldiers. What other course could be expected, for pride is ever greater than discretion. Greenly, however, was master of the situation. He knew how desperate the situation would be before long, when supplies became exhausted, and no opportunity for replenishment, for the Indians held every road leading into the valley, and no chance existed for getting word to the outside world for relief. These facts, day after day, he urged with eloquence and persistence, until the logic of the desperate situation became unanswerable, and he had his way.

At once he armed his little band of independent fighters, and inspired them with his own spirit, and thus equipped was ready for the field. He desired, however, before the execution of his plan, to give the Indians a final chance to retire from the conflict and determined to visit their camp and submit terms to their chiefs and fighting men, in council. Eight miles down the desert valley nightly the Indians held their war-dance—their method of keeping hot their hate and courage. Their fires were visible from the fort, and here several hundred warriors danced themselves into the frenzy of battle.

One night, unarmed, Greenly mounted his horse and left the fort, alone and defenseless, except as he was defended by his own courageous and quenchless spirit. He rode through the darkness into the excited camp, and coolly dismounting, tied his horse, entered the council chamber, and called for the chiefs. The audacity of his act compelled their respect, for the Indians are great worshipers of heroes. Far into the night he urged upon the chiefs the hopelessness of their case, the certainty of defeat and the consequent result. While they gave him respectful attention, they were unmoved, and he might as well have spoken to the dead. As the dawn began to break in the East, he mounted his horse for his return, but not before, as his final word, he had told the chiefs that he would drive them and their warriors into Owens Lake. On his return to the fort he organized his men into fighting order, and, supported by the soldiers, started forth to keep his word; and keep his word he did, for after desperate charges and almost hand to hand fighting, the Indians began to fall back toward the lake. By Greenly's command, the squaws and papooses were allowed to escape into the protection of the sagebrush, where they crouched like quail, safe from the onslaught. Slowly the Indians, mile after mile, were pressed down the valley, until before them shone the waters of the sullen lake. Then they remembered Greenly's threat, and they fought with new desperation. But as steady as the march of the sun in the heavens, on and on and on they were pressed until the shore was reached, and on into the lake. The

Indian war was over, and the dead warriors of the tribe floated in the sullen waters.

The memory of this terrible day kept the peace ever afterwards. Greenly resigned his command, went about his work, a modest, retiring man, out of whom could be drawn the details of his achievement only by loving persuasion. Oh, how mean we sometimes feel, when we in our hours of doubt challenge the capacity of mere men to be almost like unto God, when we call them clay only and deny to them their divinity.

This same war disclosed another heroic soul, a simple black man—a negro servant who, in an hour of peril, to save those whom he served, gave up his life, his body to mutilation and torture.

Near the railway of the Carson and Colorado Railroad, in the Valley of Owens River, one always notices, rising out of the level plain, a peculiar mound of rock, a mere volcanic puff covering not more than an acre of ground. Its peculiar color and situation always attract the attention of the traveler and upon inquiry he is informed by some trainman that it is known as "Charley's Butte." The story connected with it, which gave it its tragic baptism, is well known, and upon inquiry this is what is told:

During one of the fiercest days of the Indian war, a family consisting of several men, women and children, were fleeing to the fort. In the party was an old negro servant named Charley, who had been with the family for years. He was a patient, faithful man, always recognizing the relation of a negro to the white man, even in his state of freedom. He was a

typical Southern negro, with all the loyalty peculiar to those who lived with and served the Southerners. The party were mounted upon horses, and were urging them to as great speed as possible, over the broken and rocky way towards the fort, still some six miles away.

Just as they forded Owens River, a warwhoop was heard in the distance, and soon there rode into view a band of painted warriors on the war-trail. They had discovered the fleeing family and were riding in fury to cut off their escape. The horses of the fleeing party were worn with long riding, and with whip and spur they failed to preserve the distance between the pursuers and the pursued. Charley, with a little girl in front of him, was riding in the rear. For several miles the life race was kept up, but slowly the warriors gained. At last Charley saw that unless something heroic was done, they would be overtaken and slaughtered. Then it was that his soul acted, and he determined to sacrifice himself for their salvation. Slipping from the horse, he told the little girl to ride as fast as she could and tell those ahead to keep up their run for the fort and lose not a moment. The little girl said, "What are you going to do?" To which he replied, "Never mind what I am going to do, but you ride and do as I tell you." He knew he was facing an awful death at the hands of the infuriated savages, whom he was robbing of their prey.

Armed with a rifle and two revolvers, he turned and faced his foes, calm and certain. His action was notice to the Indians that they were in for a fight, and before that determined negro they halted for

conference. These were golden moments, for every second of delay in the chase meant more chance of safety to those who were, as fast as jaded horses could run, fleeing for their lives. The conference over, on came the Indians, charging upon the lone and silent figure of defense and sacrifice. As soon as they were in range, Charley's rifle spoke with deadly aim. Again the Indians were staggered and other moments cut out of the distance to the fort before the flying refugees. The Indians charged again and again, but Charley's revolvers met their charge and thus, until his weapons were empty and he defenseless, he held at bay the charging demons. On their last charge there came no reply, and they rushed upon the defenseless hero, seized him, carried him to the little Butte across the river, and after terrible torture and mutilation, burned him to death. And this is why the little mound is to-day known as "Charley's Butte." As his torture was producing a wail of unutterable agony, the family rode into the fort and were saved. Find for me, if you can, in any page of heroism a more lofty act of self-sacrifice than this from a poor member of a despised race.

We have long intended and we still intend some day to have a white marble shaft erected on the summit of this sacrificial mound, carved thereon, in letters large enough to be read from the windows of the passing train, "Sacred to the Memory of Charley—a black man with a white soul. Killed in the Indian war while defending his master's family."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."