

PREFACE

There are tears, and sighs, and tender words today for the strong, brave man, Colonel Cody.

The Indians, who had been his foes and then became his loving friends, called him, in their child-of-nature way, affectionately "Pahaska"—man of long hair.

To the white men of his comradeship, he was "Buffalo Bill," and he has gone Over the Divide.

To the Indians, "Pahaska" has gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

To the boys and girls of America and Europe, Colonel Cody, "Buffalo Bill," "Pahaska," has gone up yonder where the light of heaven shines through the stars.

This is why there are tears, and sighs, and tender words today for the strong, brave man.

Pahaska's going away left a deep sorrow in the hearts of millions of people. Even the Indians loved him and grieve because he has gone, and yet Pahaska was one of the greatest Indian fighters. He only fought them when they were doing wrong, and they knew that. At other times he did much to show them how to keep in the right and often when they had troubles among themselves or with the white people, the Indians would send for Pahaska—Buffalo Bill—to help them to settle the troubles among themselves by coming to them and "arbitrating" for them, or in sometimes going to Washington City to talk to the Great White Father for them.

Today they are mourning far more for Pahaska than they would for even a great chieftain, because Pahaska knew better how to help them, and did it.

All over the civilized world white people, especially boys and girls, are mourning because Buffalo Bill has passed away.

Every boy and girl in America and all of Europe should know whatever they can about the famous scout and pioneer, "Buffalo

Bill," whose real name was William Frederic Cody. He was a true-hearted man who loved all children, and nearly everybody else. He delighted to have children about him; strong, healthy boys and girls, and he often sent carriages and automobiles to orphan asylums and to the asylums for crippled children and had them brought by hundreds to enjoy his show. He spent the best part of his young manhood to make homes for boys and girls as well as grown folks, by doing all that he could to open up a vast wilderness where they could have gardens, and orchards, and parks to play and dance and skate in, and where they could have schools, churches and theaters, with all the good that these bring to boys and girls for life.

"Buffalo Bill" risked his life thousands of times and suffered years of hardship and danger to make the great Wild West of America the land of homes that much of it is now. When he began this work he was but a boy himself. At that time there was on the map of the United States in every schoolboy's geography a big white spot on the left side, between the Missouri River and Pacific Ocean, that was named "The Great American Desert." It was a vast stretch of plains, in some places bare and arid, in other places covered with a growth called Buffalo Grass. Over this wilderness roamed mighty herds of buffalo and other wild animals, and the savage Indians, who mostly lived upon the flesh of these animals.

Buffalo Bill and his associates, pioneers, plainsmen, scouts and guides, spent many years in driving away the savages and leading civilized people to this land that has been made to bloom with gardens, fields and orchards, where are the homes of millions of happy people.

Buffalo Bill wrote his own story in this book up to a certain period of his life, and to that has been added, by one who knew and loved him for fifty years, the further interesting history of the big-hearted, warm-souled, brave and daring, but kindly man, who, from an uneducated boy on the far western plains, became the friend and associate of sovereigns and rulers of nations, governors of states, writers of books, captains of industry and leaders of civilization in all that exalts and embellishes enlightened life.

At the time when the Kansas Pacific Road was being constructed

from Kansas City to Denver, I was engaged as "the staff" on the Kansas City Journal of Commerce (afterwards the Journal).

During this period I frequently went out upon the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad for the purpose of obtaining "stories" for our paper. Colonel William Frederick Cody—then called Will Cody—had been engaged by the contractors to supply buffalo meat to feed the graders. Thus I often met Cody, who, by this employment, gained the pseudonym of "Buffalo Bill."

During the many years following my association with Colonel Cody on the plains, he and I were intimate and devoted friends, and I would like to record here my deep sorrow at his taking off, which seems untimely to me for the reason that I am more than three years his elder.

In all the years that followed, I frequently met Colonel Cody, and particularly during his engagement at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Often when he was with The Wild West in the neighborhood of Chicago, he would telegraph me to join him and be his guest. Notably was this the case at the time of his engagement at Buffalo during the Panama-American Exposition, where I remained almost constantly in his company, and afterwards at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha, of which I speak more in detail in the following pages.

There are some persons of the generation just grown into manhood who naturally enough did not comprehend the character of William Frederick Cody. In their generations he was known to them only as a showman. It was impossible for them to even understand and appreciate to the fullest extent the powerful object lesson which he was then bearing to them in The Wild West Exposition. For this they are not to be blamed. His greatest days were before their days.

The fact is that from a boy brought up on the plains of the far west, without the advantages of academic education, he became, from a messenger between wagon trains on the route from the Missouri River to Pike's Peak, the close friend and intimate of men of the better class all the way from simple, everyday manhood to the most exalted sovereigns and rulers of earth's nations.

He was one of the pony express riders who carried the mails on

horseback from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Cal., and whose trail was afterward followed by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads, every mile of the distance between the two cities named, except the short distance between St. Joseph, Mo., and Kearney, Neb., and Omaha and Kearney, the road taking that latter route because of a peculiar incident that occurred during the intervening time.

Mr. Lincoln was president of the United States, and among his prerogatives was that of naming the point from which the trans-continental road should start westward. In St. Joseph one day some young men whose political proclivities in the war time were more intense than their judgment was good, climbed to the postoffice in that city and tore down and destroyed the American flag. This angered Mr. Lincoln and his cabinet to the extent that when the railroad was to be started, Omaha was named as the initial point, and this did much toward the building of Omaha.

As is shown plentifully throughout this book, "Buffalo Bill" served his country as a soldier; his services as one of the most notable of scouts was demanded by the best Indian fighters of the West, and he became the "Chief Scout" of the American Army.

After all of his valuable services as soldier, scout, guide, he gathered whatever evidences he could of the wild life of the West and presented it forty years for the education of three generations of Americans and Europeans as the greatest object lesson in ethnology that has ever been seen in the world.

That such a man's life history should be demanded is the belief of the publishers of this book, and to help the boys and girls of the world, as well as the grown-ups, to know all the truth about this mighty man, now so deeply mourned, the book is published.

Respectfully yours,

WILLIAM LIGHTFOOT VISSCHER.

Chicago, January 25, 1917.