



On the Border with CROOK (1891)

John Gregory Bourke

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John Gregory Bourke (1846 – 1896) was a captain in the United States Army and a prolific diarist and postbellum author; he wrote several books about the American Old West, including ethnologies of its indigenous peoples. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions while a cavalryman in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Based on his service during the war, his commander nominated him to West Point, where he graduated in 1869, leading to service as an Army officer until 1886.

He served as an aide to General George Crook in the Apache Wars from 1872 to 1883. As Crook's aide, Bourke had the opportunity to witness every facet of life in the Old West—the battles, wildlife, the internal squabbling among the military, the Indian Agency, settlers, and Native Americans.

The author is well known in literary and scientific circles by his work, "The Snake Dance of the Moquis," and other ethnological researches. The present volume tells the story, in a fascinating way, of many years of frontier service with General Crook—a story that is far less known in the country than it deserves to be.

Endowed with brilliant talents and devoted to his chief, he saw the salient points of every movement in a then extremely hostile country, and jotted down in his note-books, from which this book is written, all the grave, and various incidents which distinguished General Crook's campaigns against the Apaches, and afterward against the hostile Sioux of the North.

He kept voluminous notes during all these years, and from them has written a book of surpassing interest. The events of campaign after campaign are related in witty narrative form, embracing not only pleasant and often ludicrous incidents, but also hardships—cold, hunger and dangers—borne by the troops in these little appreciated Western services.

Few, except those who followed General Crook in these campaigns, can form any idea of their hardships, and fewer still realize the unwearied devotion displayed by him under the most trying circumstances or his entire disregard of his own personal comfort and the persistence and courage with which he followed out his plans. He cared nothing for personal distinctions, and always seemed the embodiment of duty. He was called a great Indian fighter, but he was the last one to provoke an Indian outbreak and was only satisfied to fight when all means of preserving peace had failed. He had a wonderful faculty for gaining and keeping the confidence of the Indians, and seemed to understand their nature thoroughly.

For nearly twenty years, in all his hardest Indian campaigns, from Mexico to the Yellowstone, from lands of sun to lands of snow. Captain Bourke was the general's intimate and trusted friend, and this book, while not a biography, is full of intensely interesting details of one of the most picturesque and heroic of lives. The conditions of Indian warfare, which he had to meet, are not likely to occur again. The vast regions of former hostile occupancy have dwindled into small reservations, and railroads and civilization have marked the Indian for absorption into the body politic. But this story of the services of General Crook and those who served with him in his campaigns is not likely to be forgotten.

This book is written in a happy vein and the narration of events recorded, while adhering to strict accuracy, is full of vivacity and polish of diction. There is not a dull page in it. Frontier life, in its most picturesque phases, with packers, teamsters, scouts, guides, Indians, and all the incidents of campaigning in a wild and

hostile country appear in realistic color.

Outside the main story of General Crook's services, the book will have a permanent interest for its fascinating descriptions of characters and conditions which we shall probably see no more.

Kindle reformat of 1891 publication; original spellings kept in place; may have occasional imperfection.

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