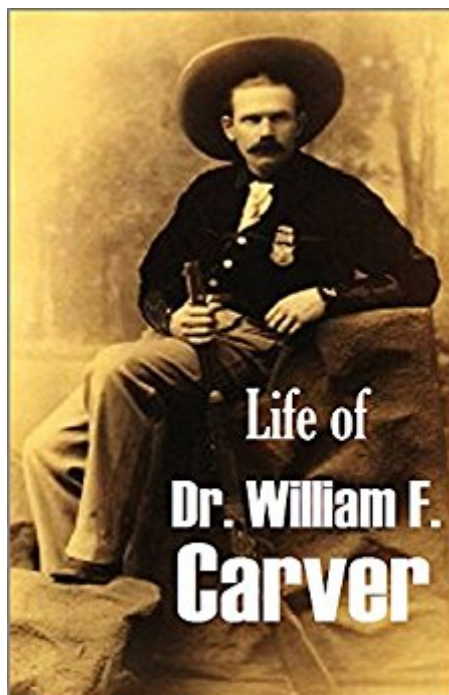




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Life Of Dr. William F. Carver, Of California: Champion Rifle-shot Of The World, His Capture By The Indians (1878)



Synopsis

William Frank "Doc" Carver (1851 – 1927) was a late 19th-century sharpshooter and the creator of a popular diving horse attraction. At Fort McPherson he met Buffalo Bill Cody, Texas Jack Omohundro, and other well-known figures of the day. Carver migrated to California in 1876, where he honed his shooting skills. At about this time he coined the moniker "Evil Spirit," accompanied by a "camp-fire tale" that the name had been given to him by Spotted Tail, the famous chief of the Brulé Lakota, because Carver had felled a rare white buffalo. In December 1877 the Evil Spirit issued a challenge to all comers; he would use a rifle and the challenger could use a shotgun, and the targets would be glass balls thrown from the newly invented Bogardus glass ball trap. He also contended that he could hit more targets from horseback than a challenger could hit while standing on the ground. One of the first significant awards Carver won was for breaking 885 glass balls out of 1000 in San Francisco on February 22, 1878. The gold badge was capped with the image of a grizzly bear and bore an inscription that proclaimed Dr. W. F. Carver the "Champion Rifle Shot of the World." Following his success in California, Carver went on tour giving exhibitions of shooting prowess, which included endurance contests as well as target competitions. Carver also joined the ranks of western figures that embellished their frontier credentials by writing books. In 1878 he published a book, *Life of Dr. Wm. F. Carver of California: Champion Rifle Shot of the World*, which contains his story of his early life and also includes extracts from the press coverage of his first shooting tour across the country. With the universal interest that the unparalleled marksmanship of Dr. Carver has suddenly awakened, naturally comes the question, "Who is this wonderful man, who rides like a Centaur, shoots as unerringly as Death, and combines the modest courtesy of a true gentleman with a more than savage genius for the chase, and cool, courageous skill in the use of its weapons of destruction?" It is our purpose to answer this question with a brief account of the strange, eventful career that has developed the best shot in the world, without an equal even among the Indian tribes who taught his hand its cunning, and helped to train the steady nerve and grand physical force that are his birthright. His exploits are worthy of Cooper's famous heroes, and their narration should have additional interest from the fact that in no instance has it received the aid or coloring of romance or imagination, but is a simple statement of actual incidents in a wild and varied life.

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