

CHAPTER II

INDIAN WAR OF '56

In the growth of the settlement Indians materially aided. They were docile, friendly, willing to work and were employed in taking care of stock and in farm and household work. And yet in 1856 the settlers had trouble with them of so serious a nature as to develop into what has been called the "Indian War."

For an account of this we are principally indebted to Stephen Barton, writing in 1874, when the principal actors in the drama were still alive and he had every opportunity to obtain an accurate version of the matter. Additional facts secured through the researches of George W. Stewart in 1884, are linked in with the narrative which we present here.

In the spring of this year there came a rumor that a large band of cattle on Tule river had been stolen by Indians and driven off. Without investigation hurried preparations for war were at once begun. Scores of young bloods were ready to spring to the service of their country at once. Now, the Indians were generally employed by the settlers in farm work of all kinds, in the care of stock and as household servants, and were proving themselves honest and trustworthy. Therefore, a few of the settlers conceived the idea of hearing both sides of the story and inquired of the Indians what they knew of the stealing, and were soon astonished to find that as a matter of fact, no cattle had been stolen. The Indians said a young man by the name of Packwood had married an Indian girl and that according to their custom her tribe had assembled for a feast. Packwood contributed a yearling calf taken from his father's herd. Thus dwindled to almost nothing the rumor that five hundred cattle had been stolen.

Nathan Dillon, Wiley Watson, Mr. Kenney and several others, feeling that it was an outrage to drive the Indians to the wall on so slight a pretext, undertook to remonstrate. These men were among the most high-minded and substantial citizens of the county, but their arguments proved without avail. The tribe camped a mile below Visalia were ordered to surrender their arrows and to move their camp up to the western edge of the town. A party of mounted men went to the camp of the Yokos, near Exeter, and with yells and shots dispersed the Indians there, who fled, terror-stricken, to the swamps. A band of ruffians met one Indian on the road near Outside Creek and killed him without provocation.

A crowd of lawless men in Visalia conceived the idea of be-