

68  
It is hard to tell how many thieves I did capture that year, but there were a great many. When I started after them I most generally got them. It was in 1877 that the road agents began to hold up the Black Hills stage, and I was sent out from Fort Laramie to assist in capturing some "gentlemen of the road." It was near Fort Laramie, in the fall of 1876, for the second time in my life, I came in contact with the noted Bill Bevins. He had left Cheyenne and made his way over to Running Water. On his way he had stolen a number of horses some time during the night. I started out after the thieves, overtaking them on Running Water. I took the stolen horses away from them, but while doing so Bevins had recognized me and told me he would drop the horses if I would hold off, which I was willing to do on account of his being so friendly to me in my boyhood when I met him at Helena years before. So, taking the horses, I returned them back to the owners, saying that I could not catch the horse thieves; that they had dropped the horses when they saw me coming and had made off to the hills.

Two days afterward the stage was held up at the government farm on the Platte river. I was sent out to trace the robbers up, which I did, catching four of them before sun-down. From that on until the latter part of 1877, I was kept very busy after these road agents, and I caught a good many of them, but as I never kept a record I cannot give their names or the number. Some of them were turned loose, and some were sent to the penitentiary. I followed two of these gentlemen on horseback from Bull's Bend, on the Platte, to Green River, a trifle over three hundred miles, catching them just as they were sitting down to breakfast. I was at the breaking up of these gangs, and I did everything in my power to help capture all the horse thieves that were in the northern country. Kept me busy until I was \* ordered to Fort Reno in December 1877; but I remained at Red Cloud agency until the Indians were moved from there over to the Missouri river. Right after the removal of the Indians I started for Fort McKinney (old Fort Reno, on the Powder river), reaching there about the first of January, 1878. I had not been there but a short time before I found there was a big gang of horse thieves in that locality. They had a regular trail running through Wyoming, from Oregon to Minnesota. They were stationed at points all along the line, so it made it hard to catch them, as there was always a different party stealing horses along the road.

These parties had stolen some horses from the beef contractor at the Post, and I was informed of it. The next morning in going up to where they had stolen the horses, I found their tracks and followed them up. The tracks led toward the Black Hills. Thinking that I could soon overtake the thieves, I started out without any provisions or preparation. After following them about twenty miles, I saw that I would have to make a long ride to overtake them, which I did, following them some four hundred miles without catching up with the band, but capturing one of their number who had turned the stolen horses over to some confederates. I caught this one big fellow, and, working on his fears, made him believe I was going to hang him. Then he gave everything away, which was the means, later on, of capturing the whole gang, or nearly all of them. Anyway, twenty-eight thieves was about the number we got. We had no difficulty in getting this gang of horse thieves after we had them located. \* Every one of the party was sent to the penitentiary, their sentences ranging from fourteen to thirty years. They did not give us any trouble after that.