

THOUGHTAUDIO



BUFFALO BILL CODY

Excerpts From
THE LIFE OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM F. CODY

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CHAPTER VIII: ADVENTURES ON THE OVERLAND ROAD

As the warm days of summer approached I longed for the cool air of the mountains; and to the mountains I determined to go. After engaging a man to take care of the farm, I proceeded to Leavenworth and there met my old wagon-master and friend, Lewis Simpson, who was fitting out a train at Atchison and loading it with supplies for the Overland Stage Company, of which Mr. Russell, my old employer, was one of the proprietors. Simpson was going with this train to Fort Laramie and points further west.

"Come along with me, Billy," said he, "I'll give you a good lay-out. I want you with me."

"I don't know that I would like to go as far west as that again," replied I, "but I do want to ride the pony express once more; there's some life in that."

"Yes, that's so; but it will soon shake the life out of you," said he. "However, if that's what you've got your mind set on, you had better come to Atchison with me and see Mr. Russell, who I'm pretty certain, will give you a situation."

I replied that I would do that. I then went home and informed mother of my intention, and as her health was very poor I had great difficulty in obtaining her consent. I finally convinced her that as I was of no use on the farm, it would be

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better and more profitable for me to return to the plains. So after giving her all the money I had earned by trapping, I bade her good-bye and set out for Atchison.

I met Mr. Russell there and asked him for employment as a pony express-rider; he gave me a letter to Mr. Slade, who was then the stage agent for the division extending from Julesburg to Rocky Ridge. Slade had his headquarters at Horseshoe Station, thirty-six miles west of Fort Laramie and I made the trip thither in company with Simpson and his train.

Almost the very first person I saw after dismounting from my horse was Slade. I walked up to him and presented Mr. Russell's letter, which he hastily opened and read. With a sweeping glance of his eye he took my measure from head to foot, and then said:

"My boy, you are too young for a pony express-rider. It takes men for that business."

"I rode two months last year on Bill Trotter's division, sir, and filled the bill then; and I think I am better able to ride now," said I.

"What! are you the boy that was riding there, and was called the youngest rider on the road?"

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"I am the same boy," I replied, confident that everything was now all right for me.

"I have heard of you before. You are a year or so older now, and I think you can stand it. I'll give you a trial anyhow and if you weaken you can come back to Horseshoe Station and tend stock."

That ended our first interview. The next day he assigned me to duty on the road from Red Buttes on the North Platte, to the Three Crossings of the Sweetwater—a distance of seventy-six miles—and I began riding at once. It was a long piece of road, but I was equal to the undertaking; and soon afterwards had an opportunity to exhibit my power of endurance as a pony express rider.

One day when I galloped into Three Crossings, my home station, I found that the rider who was expected to take the trip out on my arrival, had got into a drunken row the night before and had been killed; and that there was no one to fill his place. I did not hesitate for a moment to undertake an extra ride of eighty-five miles to Rocky Ridge, and I arrived at the latter place on time. I then turned back and rode to Red Buttes, my starting place, accomplishing on the round trip a distance of 322 miles.

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Slade heard of this feat of mine, and one day as he was passing on a coach he sang out to me, "My boy, you're a brick, and no mistake. That was a good run you made when you rode your own and Miller's routes, and I'll see that you get extra pay for it."

Slade, although rough at times and always a dangerous character—having killed many a man—was always kind to me. During the two years that I worked for him as pony express-rider and stage-driver, he never spoke an angry word to me.

As I was leaving Horse Creek one day, a party of fifteen Indians "jumped me" in a sand ravine about a mile west of the station. They fired at me repeatedly, but missed their mark. I was mounted on a roan California horse—the fleetest steed I had. Putting spurs and whip to him, and lying flat on his back, I kept straight on for Sweetwater Bridge—eleven miles distant—instead of trying to turn back to Horse Creek. The Indians came on in hot pursuit, but my horse soon got away from them, and ran into the station two miles ahead of them. The stock-tender had been killed there that morning, and all the stock had been driven off by the Indians, and as I was therefore unable to change horses, I continued on to Ploutz's Station—twelve miles further—thus making twenty-four miles straight run with one horse. I told the people at Ploutz's what had happened at Sweetwater Bridge, and with a fresh horse went on and finished the trip without any further adventure.

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About the middle of September the Indians became very troublesome on the line of the stage road along the Sweetwater. Between Split Rock and Three Crossings they robbed a stage, killed the driver and two passengers, and badly wounded Lieut. Flowers, the assistant division agent. The red-skinned thieves also drove off the stock from the different stations, and were continually lying in wait for the passing stages and pony express-riders, so that we had to take many desperate chances in running the gauntlet.

The Indians had now become so bad and had stolen so much stock that it was decided to stop the pony express for at least six weeks, and to run the stages but occasionally during that period; in fact, it would have been almost impossible to have run the enterprise much longer without restocking the line.

While we were thus nearly all lying idle, a party was organized to go out and search for stolen stock. This party was composed of stage-drivers, express-riders, stock-tenders, and ranchmen—forty of them altogether—and they were well-armed and well-mounted. They were mostly men who had undergone all kinds of hardships and braved every danger, and they were ready and anxious to "tackle" any number of Indians. Wild Bill (who had been driving stage on the road and had recently come down to our division) was elected captain of the company.

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It was supposed that the stolen stock had been taken to the head of Powder River and vicinity, and the party, of which I was a member, started out for that section in high hopes of success.

Twenty miles out from Sweetwater Bridge, at the head of Horse Creek, we found an Indian trail running north towards Powder River, and we could see by the tracks that most of the horses had been recently shod and were undoubtedly our stolen stage stock. Pushing rapidly forward, we followed this trail to Powder River; thence down this stream to within about forty miles of the spot where old Fort Reno now stands. Here the trail took a more westerly course along the foot of the mountains, leading eventually to Crazy Woman's Fork—a tributary of Powder River. At this point we discovered that the party whom we were trailing had been joined by another band of Indians, and, judging from the fresh appearance of the trail, the united body could not have left this spot more than twenty-four hours before.

Being aware that we were now in the heart of the hostile country and that we might at any moment find more Indians than we had "lost," we advanced with more caution than usual, and kept a sharp lookout. As we were approaching Clear Creek, another tributary of Powder river, we discovered Indians on the opposite side of the creek, some three miles distant; at least we saw horses grazing, which was a sure sign that there were Indians there.

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The Indians thinking themselves in comparative safety—never before having been followed so far into their own country by white men—had neglected to put out any scouts. They had no idea that there were any white men in that part of the country. We got the lay of their camp, and then held a council to consider and mature a plan for capturing it. We knew full well that the Indians would outnumber us at least three to one, and perhaps more. Upon the advice and suggestion of Wild Bill, it was finally decided that we should wait until it was nearly dark, and then, after creeping as close to them as possible, make a dash through their camp, open a general fire on them, and stampede the horses.

This plan, at the proper time, was most successfully executed. The dash upon the enemy was a complete surprise to them. They were so overcome with astonishment that they did not know what to make of it. We could not have astonished them any more if we had dropped down into their camp from the clouds. They did not recover from the surprise of this sudden charge until after we had ridden pell-mell through their camp and got away with our own horses as well as theirs. We at once circled the horses around towards the south, and after getting them on the south side of Clear Creek, some twenty of our men—just as the darkness was coming on—rode back and gave the Indians a few parting shots. We then took up our line of march for Sweetwater Bridge, where we arrived four days afterwards with all of our own horses and about one hundred captured Indian ponies.

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The expedition had proved a grand success, and the event was celebrated in the usual manner—by a grand spree. The only store at Sweetwater Bridge did a rushing business for several days. The returned stock-hunters drank, and gambled and fought. The Indian ponies, which had been distributed among the captors, passed from hand to hand at almost every deal of the cards. There seemed to be no limit to the rioting, and carousing; revelry reigned supreme. On the third day of the orgie, Slade, who had heard the news, came up to the bridge and took a hand in the "fun," as it was called. To add some variation and excitement to the occasion, Slade got in to a quarrel with a stage-driver and shot him, killing him almost instantly.

The "boys" became so elated as well as "elevated" over their success against the Indians, that most of them were in favor of going back and cleaning out the whole Indian race. One old driver especially, Dan Smith, was eager to open a war on all the hostile nations, and had the drinking been continued another week he certainly would have undertaken the job, single-handed and alone. The spree finally came to an end; the men sobered down and abandoned the idea of again invading the hostile country. The recovered horses were replaced on the road, and the stages and pony express were again running on time.

Slade, having taken a great fancy to me, said: "Billy, I want you to come down to my headquarters, and I'll make you a sort of supernumerary rider, and send you out only when it is necessary." I accepted the offer, and went with him down to Horseshoe, where I had a comparatively easy time of it. I had always

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been fond of hunting, and I now had a good opportunity to gratify my ambition in that direction, as I had plenty of spare time on my hands. In this connection I will relate one of my bear-hunting adventures. One day, when I had nothing else to do, I saddled up an extra pony express horse, and arming myself with a good rifle and pair of revolvers, struck out for the foot hills of Laramie Peak for a bear-hunt. Riding carelessly along, and breathing the cool and bracing autumn air which came down from the mountains, I felt as only a man can feel who is roaming over the prairies of the far West, well armed, and mounted on a fleet and gallant steed. The perfect freedom which he enjoys is in itself a refreshing stimulant to the mind as well as to the body. Such indeed were my feelings on this beautiful day, as I rode up the valley of the Horseshoe. Occasionally I scared up a flock of sage-hens or a jack-rabbit. Antelopes and deer were almost always in sight in any direction, but as they were not the kind of game I was after, on that day, I passed them by, and kept on towards the higher mountains. The further I rode the rougher and wilder became the country, and I knew that I was approaching the haunts of the bear. I did not discover any, however, although I saw plenty of tracks in the snow.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, my horse having become tired, and myself being rather weary, I shot a sage-hen, and dismounting, I unsaddled my horse and tied him to a small tree, where he could easily feed on the mountain grass. I then built a little fire, and broiling the chicken and seasoning it with salt and pepper, which I had obtained from my saddle-bags, I soon sat down to a "genuine square meal," which I greatly relished.

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After resting for a couple of hours, I remounted and resumed my upward trip to the mountains, having made up my mind to camp out that night rather than go back without a bear, which my friends knew I had gone out for. As the days were growing short, night soon came on, and I looked around for a suitable camping place. While thus engaged, I scared up a flock of sage-hens, two of which I shot, intending to have one for supper and the other for breakfast.

By this time it was becoming quite dark, and I rode down to one of the little mountain streams, where I found an open place in the timber suitable for a camp. I dismounted, and after unsaddling my horse and hitching him to a tree, I prepared to start a fire. Just then I was startled by hearing a horse whinnying further up the stream. It was quite a surprise to me, and I immediately ran to my animal to keep him from answering, as horses usually do in such cases. I thought that the strange horse might belong to some roaming band of Indians, as I knew of no white men being in that portion of the country at that time. I was certain that the owner of the strange horse could not be far distant, and I was very anxious to find out who my neighbor was, before letting him know that I was in his vicinity. I therefore re-saddled my horse, and leaving him tied so that I could easily reach him I took my gun and started out on a scouting expedition up the stream. I had gone about four hundred yards when, in a bend of the stream, I discovered ten or fifteen horses grazing.

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On the opposite side of the creek a light was shining high up the mountain bank. Approaching the mysterious spot as cautiously as possible, and when within a few yards of the light—which I discovered came from a dug-out in the mountain side—I heard voices, and soon I was able distinguish the words, as they proved to be in my own language. Then I knew that the occupants of the dug-out, whence the voices proceeded, were white men. Thinking that they might be a party of trappers, I boldly walked up to the door and knocked for admission. The voices instantly ceased, and for a moment a deathlike silence reigned inside. Then there seemed to follow a kind of hurried whispering—a sort of consultation—and then some one called out: "Who's there?"

"A friend and a white man," I replied.

The door opened, and a big, ugly-looking fellow stepped, forth and said:

"Come in."

I accepted the invitation with some degree of fear and hesitation, which I endeavored to conceal, as I saw that it was too late to back out, and that it would never do to weaken at that point, whether they were friends or foes. Upon entering the dug-out my eyes fell upon eight as rough and villainous looking men as I ever saw in my life. Two of them I instantly recognized as teamsters who had been driving in Lew Simpson's train, a few months before, and had been discharged.

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They were charged with the murdering and robbing of a ranchman; and having stolen his horses it was supposed that they had left the country. I gave them no signs of recognition however, deeming it advisable to let them remain in ignorance as to who I was. It was a hard crowd, and I concluded that the sooner I could get away from them the better it would be for me. I felt confident that they were a band of horse-thieves.

"Where are you going, young man; and who's with you?" asked one of the men who appeared to be the leader of the gang.

"I am entirely alone. I left Horseshoe station this morning for a bear hunt, and not finding any bears, I had determined to camp out for the night and wait till morning," said I; "and just as I was going into camp, a few hundred yards down the creek, I heard one of your horses whinnying, and then I came up to your camp."

I was thus explicit in my statement in order, if possible to satisfy the cut-throats that I was not spying upon them, but that my intrusion was entirely accidental.

"Where's your horse?" demanded the boss thief.

"I left him down the creek," I answered.

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They proposed going after the horse, but I thought that that would never do, as it would leave me without any means of escape, and I accordingly said, in hopes to throw them off the track, "Captain, I'll leave my gun here and go down and get my horse, and come back and stay all night."

I said this in as cheerful and as careless a manner as possible, so as not to arouse their suspicions in any way, or lead them to think that I was aware of their true character. I hated to part with my gun, but my suggestion of leaving it was a part of the plan of escape which I had arranged. If they have the gun, thought I, they would surely believe that I intended to come back. But this little game did not work at all, as one of the desperadoes spoke up and said:

"Jim and I will go down with you after your horse, and you can leave your gun here all the same, as you'll not need it."

"All right," I replied, for I could certainly have said nothing else. It became evident to me that it would be better to trust myself with two men than with the whole party. It was apparent that from this time on, I would have to be on the alert for some good opportunity to give them the slip.

"Come along," said one of them, and together we went down the creek, and soon came to the spot where my horse was tied. One of the men unhitched the animal and said: "I'll lead the horse."

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"Very well," said I, "I've got a couple of sage-hens here. Lead on."

I picked up the sage-hens, which I had killed a few hours before, and followed the man who was leading the horse, while his companion brought up the rear. The nearer we approached the dug-out the more I dreaded the idea of going back among the villainous cut-throats.

My first plan of escape having failed, I now determined upon another.

I had both of my revolvers with me, the thieves not having thought it necessary to search me. It was now quite dark, and I purposely dropped one of the sage-hens, and asked the man behind me to pick it up. While he was hunting for it on the ground, I quickly pulled out one of my Colt's revolvers and struck him a tremendous blow on the back of the head, knocking him senseless to the ground. I then instantly wheeled around, and saw that the man ahead who was only a few feet distant, had heard the blow and had turned to see what was the matter, his hand upon his revolver. We faced each other at about the same instant, but before he could fire, as he tried to do, I shot him dead in his tracks. Then jumping on my horse, I rode down the creek as fast as possible, through the darkness and over the rough ground and rocks.

The other outlaws in the dug-out, having heard the shot which I had fired, knew there was trouble, and they all came rushing down the creek. I suppose, by the time they reached the man whom I had knocked down, that he had recovered

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and hurriedly told them of what had happened. They did not stay with the man whom I had shot, but came on in hot pursuit of me. They were not mounted, and were making better time down the rough canñon than I was on horseback. From time to time I heard them gradually gaining on me.

At last they had come so near that I saw that I must abandon my horse. So I jumped to the ground, and gave him a hard slap with the butt of one of my revolvers, which started him on down the valley, while I scrambled up the mountain side. I had not ascended more than forty feet when I heard my pursuers coming closer and closer; I quickly hid behind a large pine tree, and in a few moments they all rushed by me, being led on by the rattling footsteps of my horse, which they heard ahead of them. Soon I heard them firing at random at the horse, as they no doubt supposed I was still seated on his back. As soon as they had passed me I climbed further up the steep mountain, and knowing that I had given them the slip, and feeling certain that I could keep out of their way, I at once struck out for Horseshoe station, which was twenty-five miles distant. I had hard traveling at first, but upon reaching lower and better ground, I made good headway, walking all night and getting into the station just before daylight,—foot-sore, weary, and generally played out.

I immediately waked up the men of the station and told them of my adventure. Slade himself happened to be there, and he at once organized a party to go out and hunt up the horse-thieves. Shortly after daylight twenty well-armed stage-drivers, stock-tenders and ranchmen were galloping in the direction of the dug-

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out. Of course I went along with the party, notwithstanding I was very tired and had had hardly any rest at all. We had a brisk ride, and arrived in the immediate vicinity of the thieves' rendezvous at about ten o'clock in the morning. We approached the dug-out cautiously, but upon getting in close proximity to it we could discover no horses in sight. We could see the door of the dug-out standing wide open, and we then marched up to the place. No one was inside, and the general appearance of everything indicated that the place had been deserted—that the birds had flown. Such, indeed, proved to be the case.

We found a new-made grave, where they had evidently buried the man whom I had shot. We made a thorough search of the whole vicinity, and finally found their trail going southeast in the direction of Denver. As it would have been useless to follow them, we rode back to the station; and thus ended my eventful bear-hunt. We had no more trouble for some time from horse-thieves after that.

During the winter of 1860 and the spring of 1861 I remained at Horseshoe, occasionally riding pony express and taking care of stock.

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CHAPTER IX: FAST DRIVING

It was in the spring of 1861, while I was at Horseshoe, that the eastern-bound coach came in one day loaded down with passengers and baggage, and stopped for dinner; Horseshoe being a regular dinner station as well as a home station. The passengers consisted of six Englishmen, and they had been continually grumbling about the slow time that was being made by the stages, saying that the farther they got East the slower they went.

"These blarsted 'eathens don't know hanything habout staging, hany-'ow," remarked one of them.

"Blarst me bloody heyes! they cawn't stage in this country as we do in Hingland, you know," said another.

Their remarks were overheard by Bob Scott, who was to drive the coach from Horseshoe to Fort Laramie, and he determined to give them satisfaction before they got over his route. Scott was known to be the best reinsman and the most expert driver on the whole line of the road. He was a very gentlemanly fellow in his general appearance and conduct, but at times he would become a reckless dare-devil, and would take more desperate chances than any other driver. He delighted in driving wild teams on the darkest nights, over a mountain road, and had thus become the hero of many a thrilling adventure.

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It happened on this day he was to drive a team of six pony express horses, which had been only partially broken in as a stage team. As the stock-tenders were hitching them up, Bob, who was standing by, said, "I'll show them Englishmen that we 'blarsted heathens' do know something about staging in this country." We all knew from Bob's looks that something was up.

It required several men to hitch up this frisky team, as a man had to hold on to each one of the horses by the bits, while they were stringing them out. The Englishmen came out from dinner, and were delighted to see the horses prancing and pawing as if anxious to start.

"Ha! my deah fellah, now we will 'ave a fine ride this hafternoon," said one of them.

"By Jove! those are the kind of 'orses they hought to 'ave on hall the teams," remarked another.

"Are you the lad who is going to drive to-day?" asked another of Bob.

"Yes, gentlemen," answered Bob, "I'll show you how we stage it in this country."

Bob mounted the box, gathered the lines, and pulling the horses strongly by the bits, he sang out to the Englishmen, "All aboard!" Bob's companion on the box

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was Capt. Cricket; a little fellow who was the messenger of the coach. After everybody was seated, Bob told the stock-tenders to "turn 'em loose."

We, who were standing around to see the stage start out, expected it would go off at a lively rate. We were considerably surprised, therefore, when, after the horses had made a few lively jumps, Bob put on the big California brakes and brought them down to a walk. The road, for a distance of four miles, gradually rose to the top of a hill, and all the way up this ascent, Bob held the impatient team in check.

"Blarst your heyes, driver, why don't you let them go?" exclaimed one of the passengers, who had all along been expecting a very brisk ride. Every once in a while they would ask him some such question, but he paid no attention to them. At last he reached the top of the hill, and then he suddenly flung three of the lines on the left side of the team, and the other three on the right side. He then began "playing the silk to them,"—that is to say, he began to lash them unmercifully. The team started off like a streak of lightning, so to speak, without a single rein being held by the driver. Bob cried out to the Englishmen, saying, "Hold on, gentlemen, and I'll give you a lively ride, and show you how to stage it in the Rocky Mountains."

His next movement was to pull the lamps out of the sockets and throw them at the leaders. The glass broke upon their backs and nearly set them wild, but being so accustomed to running the road, they never once left the track, and

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went flying on down the grade towards the next station, eight miles distant, the coach bouncing over the loose stones and small obstacles, and surging from side to side, as an eggshell would in the rapids of Niagara. Not satisfied with the break-neck rate at which they were traveling, Bob pulled out his revolver and fired in rapid succession, at the same time yelling in a demoniacal manner.

By this time the Englishmen had become thoroughly frightened, as they saw the lines flying wildly in every direction and the team running away. They did not know whether to jump out or remain in the coach. Bob would occasionally look down from his seat, and, seeing their frightened faces, would ask, "Well, how do you like staging in this country now?" The Englishmen stuck to the coach, probably thinking it would be better to do so than to take the chances of breaking their necks by jumping.

As the flying team was nearing the station, the stock tender saw that they were running away and that the driver had no control over them whatever. Being aware that the pony express horses were accustomed to running right into the stable on arriving at the station, he threw open the large folding doors, which would just allow the passage of the team and coach into the stable. The horses, sure enough, made for the open doorway. Capt. Cricket, the messenger, and Scott got down in the boot of the coach to save themselves from colliding with the top of the stable door. The coach would probably have passed through into the stable without any serious damage had it not been for the bar or threshold that was stretched across the ground to fasten the doors to. This bar was a small

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log, and the front wheels struck it with such force that the coach was thrown up high enough to strike the upper portion of the door frame. The top of the coach was completely torn off, and one of the passenger's arms was broken. This was the only serious injury that was done; though it was a matter of surprise to all, that any of the travelers escaped.

The coach was backed out, when the running gear was found to be as good as ever. The top was soon patched up, a change of team was made, and Bob Scott, mounting the box as if nothing had happened, took the reins in hand, and shouted, "All aboard!" The Englishmen, however, had had enough of Bob Scott, and not one of the party was willing to risk his life with him again. They said that he was drunk, or crazy or both, and that they would report him and have him discharged for what he had already done.

Bob waited a few minutes to give them an opportunity to take their seats in the coach, but they told him most emphatically that he could drive on without them, as they intended to wait there for the next stage. Their traps were taken off, and Bob drove away without a single passenger. He made his usual time into Fort Laramie, which was the end of his run. The Englishmen came through on the next day's coach, and proceeded on to Atchison, where they reported Bob to the superintendent of the line, who, however, paid little or no attention to the matter, as Bob remained on the road. Such is the story of the liveliest and most reckless piece of stage-driving that ever occurred on the Overland stage road. Insert

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CHAPTER X:. QUESTIONABLE PROCEEDINGS

Having been away from home nearly a year, and having occasionally heard of my mother's poor health, I determined to make her a visit; so procuring a pass over the road, I went to Leavenworth, arriving there about June 1st, 1861, going from there home. The civil war had broken out, and excitement ran high in that part of the country. My mother, of course, was a strong Union woman, and had such great confidence in the government that she believed the war would not last over six months.

Leavenworth at that time was quite an important outfitting post for the West and Southwest, and the fort there was garrisoned by a large number of troops. While in the city one day I met several of the old, as well as the young men, who had been members of the Free State party all through the Kansas troubles, and who had, like our family, lost everything at the hands of the Missourians. They now thought a good opportunity offered to retaliate and get even with their persecutors, as they were all considered to be secessionists. That they were all secessionists, however, was not true, as all of them did not sympathize with the South. But the Free State men, myself among them, took it for granted that as Missouri was a slave state the inhabitants must all be secessionists, and therefore our enemies. A man by the name of Chandler proposed that we organize an independent company for the purpose of invading Missouri and making war on its people on our own responsibility. He at once went about it in

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a very quiet way, and succeeded in inducing twenty-five men to join him in the hazardous enterprise. Having a longing and revengeful desire to retaliate upon the Missourians for the brutal manner in which they had treated and robbed my family, I became a member of Chandler's company. His plan was that we should leave our homes in parties of not more than two or three together, and meet at a certain point near Westport, Missouri, on a fixed day. His instructions were carried out to the letter, and we met at the rendezvous at the appointed time. Chandler had been there some days before us, and, thoroughly disguised, had been looking around the country for the whereabouts of all the best horses. He directed us to secretly visit certain farms and collect all the horses possible, and bring them together the next night. This we did, and upon reassembling it was found that nearly every man had two horses. We immediately struck out for the Kansas line, which we crossed at an Indian ferry on the Kansas river, above Wyandotte, and as soon as we had set foot upon Kansas soil we separated with the understanding; that we were to meet one week from that day at Leavenworth.

Some of the parties boldly took their confiscated horses into Leavenworth, while others rode them to their homes. This action may look to the reader like horse-stealing, and some people might not hesitate to call it by that name; but Chandler plausibly maintained that we were only getting back our own, or the equivalent, from the Missourians, and as the government was waging war against the South, it was perfectly square and honest, and we had a good right to do it. So we didn't let our consciences trouble us very much.

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We continued to make similar raids upon the Missourians off and on during the summer, and occasionally we had running fights with them; none of the skirmishes, however, amounting to much.

The government officials hearing of our operations, put detectives upon our track, and several of the party were arrested. My mother, upon learning that I was engaged in this business, told me it was neither honorable nor right, and she would not for a moment countenance any such proceedings. Consequently I abandoned the jay-hawking enterprise, for such it really was.

About this time the government bought from Jones and Cartwright several ox-trains, which were sent to Rolla, Missouri, all being put in charge of my old and gallant friend, Wild Bill, who had just become the hero of the day, on account of a terrible fight which he had had with a gang of desperadoes and outlaws, who infested the border under the leadership of the then notorious Jake McCandless. In this fight he had killed McCandless and three of his men.

The affair occurred while Wild Bill was riding the pony express in western Kansas.

The custom with the express riders, when within half a mile of a station, was either to begin shouting or blowing a horn in order to notify the stock tender of

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his approach, and to have a fresh horse already saddled for him on his arrival, so that he could go right on without a moment's delay.

One day, as Wild Bill neared Rock Creek station, where he was to change horses, he began shouting as usual at the proper distance; but the stock-tender, who had been married only a short time and had his wife living with him at the station, did not make his accustomed appearance. Wild Bill galloped up and instead of finding the stock-tender ready for him with a fresh horse, he discovered him lying across the stable door with the blood oozing from a bullet-hole in his head. The man was dead, and it was evident that he had been killed only a few moments before.

In a second Wild Bill jumped from his horse, and looking in the direction of the house he saw a man coming towards him. The approaching man fired on him at once, but missed his aim. Quick as lightning Wild Bill pulled his revolver and returned the fire. The stranger fell dead, shot through the brain.

"Bill, Bill! Help! Help! save me!" Such was the cry that Bill now heard. It was the shrill and pitiful voice of the dead stock-tender's wife, and it came from a window of the house. She had heard the exchange of shots, and knew that Wild Bill had arrived.

He dashed over the dead body of the villain whom he had killed, and just as he sprang into the door of the house, he saw two powerful men assaulting the

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woman. One of the desperadoes was in the act of striking her with the butt end of a revolver, and while his arm was still raised, Bill sent a ball crashing through his skull, killing him instantly. Two other men now came rushing from an adjoining room, and Bill, seeing that the odds were three to one against him, jumped into a corner, and then firing, he killed another of the villains. Before he could shoot again the remaining two men closed in upon him, one of whom had drawn a large bowie knife. Bill wrenched the knife from his grasp and drove it through the heart of the outlaw.

The fifth and last man now grabbed Bill by the throat, and held him at arm's length, but it was only for a moment, as Bill raised his own powerful right arm and struck his antagonist's left arm such a terrible blow that he broke it. The disabled desperado, seeing that he was no longer a match for Bill, jumped through the door, and mounting a horse he succeeded in making his escape—being the sole survivor of the Jake McCandless gang.

Wild Bill remained at the station with the terrified woman until the stage came along, and he then consigned her to the care of the driver. Mounting his horse he at once galloped off, and soon disappeared in the distance, making up for lost time.

This was the exploit that was on everybody's tongue and in every newspaper. It was one of the most remarkable and desperate hand to hand encounters that has ever taken place on the border.

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I happened to meet Wild Bill at Leavenworth as he was about to depart for Rolla; he wished me to take charge of the government trains as a sort of assistant under him, and I gladly accepted the offer. Arriving at Rolla, we loaded the trains with freight and took them to Springfield, Missouri.

On our return to Rolla we heard a great deal of talk about the approaching fall races at St. Louis, and Wild Bill having brought a fast running horse from the mountains, determined to take him to that city and match him against some of the high-flyers there; and down to St. Louis we went with this running horse, placing our hopes very high on him.

Wild Bill had no difficulty in making up a race for him. All the money that he and I had we put up on the mountain runner, and as we thought we had a sure thing, we also bet the horse against \$250. I rode the horse myself, but nevertheless, our sure thing, like many another sure thing, proved a total failure, and we came out of that race minus the horse and every dollar we had in the world.

Before the race it had been "make or break" with us, and we got "broke." We were "busted" in the largest city we had ever been in, and it is no exaggeration to say that we felt mighty blue.

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On the morning after the race we went to the military headquarters, where Bill succeeded in securing an engagement for himself as a government scout, but I being so young failed in obtaining similar employment. Wild Bill, however, raised some money, by borrowing it from a friend, and then buying me a steamboat ticket he sent me back to Leavenworth, while he went to Springfield, which place he made his headquarters while scouting in southeastern Missouri.

One night, after he had returned from a scouting expedition, he took a hand in a game of poker, and in the course of the game he became involved in a quarrel with Dave Tutt, a professional gambler, about a watch which he had won from Tutt, who would not give it up.

Bill told him he had won it fairly, and that he proposed to have it; furthermore, he declared his intention of carrying the watch across the street next morning to military headquarters, at which place he had to report at nine o'clock.

Tutt replied that he would himself carry the watch across the street at nine o'clock, and no other man would do it.

Bill then said to Tutt that if he attempted anything of the kind, he would kill him.

A challenge to a duel had virtually been given and accepted, and everybody knew that the two men meant business. At nine o'clock the next morning, Tutt

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started to cross the street. Wild Bill, who was standing on the opposite side, told him to stop. At that moment Tutt, who was carrying his revolver in his hand, fired at Bill but missed him. Bill quickly pulled out his revolver and returned the fire, hitting Tutt squarely in the forehead and killing him instantly.

Quite a number of Tutt's friends were standing in the vicinity, having assembled to witness the duel, and Bill, as soon as Tutt fell to the ground, turned to them and asked if any one of them wanted to take it up for Tutt; if so, he would accommodate any of them then and there. But none of them cared to stand in front of Wild Bill to be shot at by him.

Nothing of course was ever done to Bill for the killing of Tutt.

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CHAPTER XI: A SOLDIER

In the fall of 1861 I made a trip to Fort Larned, Kansas, carrying military dispatches, and in the winter I accompanied George Long through the country, and assisted him in buying horses for the government.

The next spring, 1862, an expedition against the Indians was organized, consisting of a volunteer regiment, the Ninth Kansas, under Colonel Clark. This expedition, which I had joined in the capacity of guide and scout, proceeded to the Kiowa and Comanche country, on the Arkansas river, along which stream we scouted all summer between Fort Lyon and Fort Larned, on the old Santa Fe trail. We had several engagements with the Indians, but they were of no great importance.

In the winter of 1862, I became one of the "Red Legged Scouts,"—a company of scouts commanded by Captain Tuff. Among its members were some of the most noted Kansas Rangers, such as Red Clark, the St. Clair brothers, Jack Harvey, an old pony express-rider named Johnny Fry, and many other well known frontiersmen. Our field of operations was confined mostly to the Arkansas country and southwestern Missouri. We had many a lively skirmish with the bushwhackers and Younger brothers, and when we were not hunting them, we were generally employed in carrying dispatches between Forts Dodge, Gibson, Leavenworth, and other posts. Whenever we were in Leavenworth we had a very festive time. We usually attended all the balls in full force, and "ran things" to suit ourselves. Thus I passed the winter of 1862 and the spring of 1863.

Subsequently I engaged to conduct a small train to Denver for some merchants, and on reaching that place in September, I received a letter stating that my mother was not expected to live. I hastened home, and found her dangerously ill. She grew gradually

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worse, and at last, on the 22d of November, 1863, she died. Thus passed away a loving and affectionate mother and a noble, brave, good and loyal woman. That I loved her above all other persons, no one who has read these reminiscences can for a moment doubt.

Previous to this said event my sister Julia had been married to a gentleman named J.A. Goodman, and they now came to reside at our house and take charge of the children, as my mother had desired that they should not be separated. Mr. Goodman became the guardian of the minor children.

I soon left the home now rendered gloomy by the absence of her whom I had so tenderly loved, and going to Leavenworth I entered upon a dissolute and reckless life—to my shame be it said—and associated with gamblers, drunkards, and bad characters generally. I continued my dissipation about two months, and was becoming a very "hard case." About this time the Seventh Kansas regiment, known as "Jennison's Jay-hawkers," returned from the war, and re-enlisted and re-organized as veterans. Among them I met quite a number of my old comrades and neighbors, who tried to induce me to enlist and go south with them. I had no idea of doing anything of the kind; but one day, after having been under the influence of bad whisky, I awoke to find myself a soldier in the Seventh Kansas. I did not remember how or when I had enlisted, but I saw I was in for it, and that it would not do for me to endeavor to back out.

In the spring of 1864 the regiment was ordered to Tennessee, and we got into Memphis just about the time that General Sturgis was so badly whipped by General Forrest. General A. J. Smith re-organized the army to operate against Forrest, and after marching to Tupalo, Mississippi, we had an engagement with him and defeated him. This kind of fighting was all new to me, being entirely different from any in which I had ever before

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engaged. I soon became a non-commissioned officer, and was put on detached service as a scout.

After skirmishing around the country with the rest of the army for some little time, our regiment returned to Memphis, but was immediately ordered to Cape Girardeau, in Missouri, as a confederate force under General Price was then raiding that state. The command of which my regiment was a part hurried to the front to intercept Price, and our first fight with him occurred at Pilot Knob. From that time for nearly six weeks we fought or skirmished every day.

I was still acting as a scout, when one day I rode ahead of the command, some considerable distance, to pick up all possible information concerning Price's movements. I was dressed in gray clothes, or Missouri jeans, and on riding up to a farm-house and entering, I saw a man, also dressed in gray costume, sitting at a table eating bread and milk. He looked up as I entered, and startled me by saying:

"You little rascal, what are you doing in those 'secesh' clothes?" Judge of my surprise when I recognized in the stranger my old friend and partner, Wild Bill, disguised as a Confederate officer.

"I ask you the same question, sir," said I without the least hesitation.

"Hush! sit down and have some bread and milk, and we'll talk it all over afterwards," said he.

I accepted the invitation and partook of the refreshments. Wild Bill paid the woman of the house, and we went out to the gate where my horse was standing.

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"Billy, my boy," said he, "I am mighty glad to see you. I haven't seen or heard of you since we got busted on that St. Louis' horse-race."

"What are you doing out here?" I asked.

"I am a scout under General McNiel. For the last few days I have been with General Marmaduke's division of Price's army, in disguise as a southern officer from Texas, as you see me now," said he.

"That's exactly the kind of business that I am out on to-day," said I; "and I want to get some information concerning Price's movements."

"I'll give you all that I have;" and he then went on and told me all that he knew regarding Price's intentions, and the number and condition of his men. He then asked about my mother, and when he learned that she was dead he was greatly surprised and grieved; he thought a great deal of her, for she had treated him almost as one of her own children. He finally took out a package, which he had concealed about his person, and handing it to me he said:

"Here are some letters which I want you to give to General McNiel."

"All right," said I as I took them, "but where will I meet you again?"

"Never mind that," he replied; "I am getting so much valuable information that I propose to stay a little while longer in this disguise." Thereupon we shook hands and parted.

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It is not necessary to say much concerning Price's raid in general, as that event is a matter of recorded history. I am only relating the incidents in which I was personally interested either as one of the actors or as an observer.

Another interesting and I may say exciting episode happened to me a day or two after my unexpected meeting with Wild Bill. I was riding with the advance guard of our army, and wishing a drink of water, I stopped at a farmhouse. There were no men about the premises, and no one excepting a very fine and intellectual looking lady and her two daughters. They seemed to be almost frightened to death at seeing me—a "yank"—appear before them. I quieted their fears somewhat, and the mother then asked me how far back the army was. When I told her it would be along shortly, she expressed her fears that they would take everything on the premises. They set me out a lunch and treated me rather kindly, so that I really began to sympathize with them; for I knew that the soldiers would ransack their house and confiscate everything they could lay their hands on. At last I resolved to do what I could to protect them. After the generals and the staff officers had passed by, I took it upon myself to be a sentry over the house. When the command came along some of the men rushed up with the intention of entering the place and carrying off all the desirable plunder possible, and then tearing and breaking everything to pieces, as they usually did along the line of march.

"Halt!" I shouted; "I have been placed here by the commanding officer as a guard over this house, and no man must enter it."

This stopped the first squad; and seeing that my plan was a success, I remained at my post during the passage of the entire command and kept out all intruders.

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It seemed as if the ladies could not thank me sufficiently for the protection I had afforded them. They were perfectly aware of the fact that I had acted without orders and entirely on my own responsibility, and therefore they felt the more grateful. They urgently invited me to remain a little while longer and partake of an excellent dinner which they said they were preparing for me. I was pretty hungry about that time, as our rations had been rather slim of late, and a good dinner was a temptation I could not withstand, especially as it was to be served up by such elegant ladies. While I was eating the meal, I was most agreeably entertained by the young ladies, and before I had finished it the last of the rear-guard must have been at least two miles from the house.

Suddenly three men entered the room, and I looked up and saw three double-barreled shot-guns leveled straight at me. Before I could speak, however, the mother and her daughters sprang between the men and me.

"Father! Boys! Lower your guns! You must not shoot this man," and similar exclamations, were the cry of all three.

The guns were lowered, and then the men, who were the father and brothers of the young ladies, were informed of what I had done for them. It appeared that they had been concealed in the woods near by while the army was passing, and on coming into the house and finding a Yankee there, they determined to shoot him. Upon learning the facts, the old man extended his hand to me, saying:

"I would not harm a hair of your head for the world; but it is best that you stay here no longer, as your command is some distance from here now, and you might be cut off by bushwhackers before reaching it."

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Bidding them all good-bye, and with many thanks from the mother and daughters, I mounted my horse and soon overtook the column, happy in the thought that I had done a good deed, and with no regrets that I had saved from pillage and destruction the home and property of a confederate and his family.

Our command kept crowding against Price and his army until they were pushed into the vicinity of Kansas City, where their further advance was checked by United States troops from Kansas; and then was begun their memorable and extraordinary retreat back into Kansas.

While both armies were drawn up in skirmish line near Fort Scott, Kansas, two men on horseback were seen rapidly leaving the Confederate lines, and suddenly they made a dash towards us. Instantly quick volleys were discharged from the Confederates, who also began a pursuit, and some five hundred shots were fired at the flying men. It was evident that they were trying to reach our lines, but when within about a quarter of a mile of us, one of them fell from his horse to rise no more. He had been fatally shot. His companion galloped on unhurt, and seven companies of our regiment charged out and met him, and checked his pursuers. The fugitive was dressed in Confederate uniform, and as he rode into our lines I recognized him as Wild Bill, the Union scout. He immediately sought Generals Pleasanton and McNeil, with whom he held a consultation. He told them that although Price made a bold showing on the front, by bringing all his men into view, yet he was really a great deal weaker than the appearance of his lines would indicate; and that he was then trying to cross a difficult stream four miles from Fort Scott.

It was late in the afternoon, but General Pleasanton immediately ordered an advance, and we charged in full force upon the rear of Price's army, and drove it before us for two hours.

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If Wild Bill could have made his successful dash into our lines earlier in the day, the attack would have been made sooner, and greater results might have been expected. The Confederates had suspected him of being a spy for two or three days, and had watched him too closely to allow an opportunity to get away from them sooner. His unfortunate companion who had been shot, was a scout from Springfield, Missouri, whose name I cannot now remember.

From this time on, Wild Bill and myself continued to scout together until Price's army was driven south of the Arkansas River and the pursuit abandoned. We then returned to Springfield, Missouri, for a rest and for supplies, and Wild Bill and myself spent two weeks there in "having a jolly good time," as some people would express it.

THE END