25th, on leaving Goose Creek, until 9 P.M. Grouard would have had to proceed most cautiously in order to avoid being scalped by Indians. From 9 P.M. until 4 A.M. of the 26th, he would have had to proceed with care in order to avoid breaking his neck in the rough country between Goose Creek and the Little Big Horn. According to this account scout Grouard made the Little Big Horn battlefield before dawn of the 26th, or a distance of 70 miles within a maximum of 18 hours.

Horner Horse, who related the story of the battle many times after he arrived at the agency, maintained that "by noon all of one party were killed, and the other (Reno's) driven back into a bad place. The reason we did not kill all of this party was because while we were fighting his (Reno's party), we heard that more soldiers were coming up the river," whereupon the hostiles drew off. "The troops first charged from up the river," he said. "The all the young bucks charged the troops. "The there was another party of troops on the other side of the river. One half of the Indians pursued the first body of troops; the other half went after the other body." Which shows that Custer's attack was made almost simultaneously with that of Reno.

Custer did not proceed northward over three miles from the spot where Reno's fortifications were thrown up after his retreat across the river, so that he could not have been over two miles from Reno when the latter was holding the Sioux at bay in the timber. Knowing that Custer had intended to strike the village at its lower end as soon as he could make the distance from the point where he and Reno had separated, and the latter having invested the woods on the southeast side of the camp, people cannot but wonder why he failed to hold this point of vantage until he could satisfy himself that Custer had made his proposed attack below. (According to Captain Clifford, p. 51, who came up with Gibbon, this point of vantage consisted of a grove of dead, dry timber, with tall dry grass. Reno had attacked the village from the south, and was checked by superior numbers, his flanks turned, and his line exposed to cross fire. He retired to this timber by the Little Big Horn, and was surrounded by a superior force of Indians, who set the grass on fire, which threatened to burn Reno out of the place. Custer had so disposed his forces that they were not in supporting distance of each other, and his supply and ammunition train, with small escort, was left unsupported and out of contact with the rest of the forces in the face of the enemy.) Instead of doing this, however, Reno withdrew from the woods, retreated across the Little Big Horn, and took up a position inferior to any he had held on the west of the stream, where he was protected by a heavy growth of timber. This retreat is said to have been so precipitous that many of the fleeing soldiers were actually dragged from their horses by the pursuing savages and hacked to death at leisure.

There must have been a respite given the Reno command to gain its second position, for it was then that Benteen came upon the scene from the west, and he was followed somewhat later by McDougal's troop and the pack train. There is no account of the packs having been attacked while on their way southeast over the main trail to reach Reno's position, so it necessarily follows that the Indians at that particular time had withdrawn from Reno to repel the charge of the Custer battalion three miles down the stream. "Indecision" on the part of Reno may have led to the force under himself and Benteen being kept at a standstill while Custer's command was undergoing destruction; but military men used a very mild term when they called it such. (Reno had 404 officers and men, excluding scouts. The Sioux force is estimated at from 3,000 to as high as 9,000 fighting men. Reno's command, after junction with Benteen and McDougal, and not counting his losses: Reno: 138; McDougal: 139; Benteen: 137. TOTAL: 404. These odds would explain Reno's indecision.)
On the afternoon of the massacre (An oldtimer explained the word to me thus: When the Indians defeat the whites, it is a massacre; but when the whites defeat the Indians it is called a battle, JGC). the soldiers of Reno's command distinctly heard a "charge" sounded on a bugle, and they arose with a cheer to welcome Custer, only to be met with a yell of derision from the savages. This circumstance could not have escaped the notice or knowledge of Reno, and yet he claims he had no suspicion that annihilation had overtaken Custer's command. (Of course a man who is hard put in standing off his own imminent annihilation, and is surrounded by overwhelming numbers, and cut off with his wounded from any water supply, is supposed, by the writers of books, to be able to reflect on all sorts of things, such as the significance of Indians sounding bugle calls. And it did not follow from the fact that one Indian tooted an army bugle that Custer was wiped out.) A little later on in the day the white hats and blue coats of soldiers were noticed in the possession of the Indians who swarmed about Reno's entrenched position, but this circumstance does not appear to have made any deep impression on Maj. Reno. (It comes to what the late Gen. Chase said: No officer at that time could believe that regular troops could be defeated, much less annihilated by a tribe of Indians in open battle, JGC.) His "indecision" may have saved his command, but it will never write the name of "hero" on his monument.

Gruard, as stated in his narrative, reached the Custer battlefield about 11 o'clock on the night of June 25th. He had struck the trail of the Custer command where the commands separated, and followed it down to the bluffs on which the bodies of the killed were strewn. On the way to this spot he must, as he says, have passed close to the entrenched position held by Reno, but he did not know it. When he crossed the Little Big Horn he heard (but did not see) the Indians passing backward and forward over the travois trails, but the camp at that time had been moved to a point fully twenty miles southwest of the battlefield. The scout heard no shooting while in the vicinity of the Little Big Horn, and saw nothing which led him to suppose that Reno's command was besieged. He was in the Indian camp at sun-up on the morning of the 26th of June, and left that place with hundreds of the savages in hot pursuit, reaching the Crook command on Goose creek two days afterwards (June 28).

In their haste to get their families out of the way of danger, the Indians undoubtedly left many tepis and much rubbish, and which was, later on, destroyed by the savages themselves, as they had no means to convey it from the spot, the travois having been taken to a point twenty miles to the southwest. The only view Reno's command obtained of the Indian camp was at the (259) time that command was first thrown against the savages. Its consequent retreat across the river cut off the view of the camp entirely, and Reno could not know when the hostile village was moved. Gruard states positively that it was moved on the night of the 25th, and as he visited it on the morning of the 26th when it was located twenty miles southwest of the battlefield, it could not have occupied its former site on the banks of the Little Big Horn on the morning of the 27th of June.

The Indians, whose numbers were constantly augmenting, were getting as rapidly as possible into a section of country where game was plentiful. They therefore had their families with them. They had runners out all over the country, north, east and south; knew that Crook's command was in the valley of the Goose creeks; that Gibbon and Terry were marching up the Yellowstone from the mouth of the Rosebud and that Custer's force was moving rapidly up the latter stream toward the Little Big Horn where their village was located. But they had no idea, as they afterwards said, that Custer would be rash enough to attack...
afterwards said, that Custer would be rash enough to attack them when he discovered their force. They were greatly surprised that he did so.

Grouard had seen their village on two occasions — once before and once after the massacre; and he states that on the morning after the battle of the Little Big Horn there were no less than nine thousand fighting men in the hostile camp. (Logan told me there were many War Tipis, that is, tipis erected by men on war parties, in the hostile camp, which he examined, and said that each of those tipis would hold eight to twelve fighting men. They were small temporary tipis. The ordinary tipi, of larger size, would hold a family, and two or three fighting men. The small tipi were for fighting men only. JGG.) He says there were fully six hundred wickups in the village. (War Tipis referred to by Logan). These wickups were used by the young bucks who had escaped from the different (360) agencies; and the scout thinks there must have been over or quite five thousand of these young warriors, while the force of the village proper was not less than four thousand fighting men. Grouard further says that each wickup would accommodate from six to ten persons, and all of them were crowded to their fullest capacity.

The Indians told Grouard that when Custer's attempt to cross the Little Big Horn had been frustrated, the command headed directly east for the high bluffs, behind which hundreds of Indians were secreted. These rose up to meet Custer as his men advanced. Not knowing that the savages were there, Custer was taken completely by surprise, and attempted, by a charge, to force his way through the enemy to the northeast. But he met with such a withering fire that he was compelled to seek lower ground, and in so doing he met the enemy's force that, by this time, had crossed the river and filled all the draws to the north, and was compelled to feel his way west and south, which accounts for the finding of the bodies of his command lying in almost a perfect circle.

When the charge up the bluff was made, the Indians stated (and they related the story many times to the scout), that an officer on a magnificent animal, unable to check the speed of his charger, rode directly through the enemy's line, escaping the hundreds of bullets that were fired at him. Some of the young braves gave chase, but as they were afoot when the charge was made and lost some little time in getting their ponies, the officer was soon far in advance of his pursuers. They followed him for several miles, however, and watched him as he crossed (381) Poplar creek (due east from the Custer battlefield). Beyond this creek is an immense flat, and while the Indians sat upon their ponies, having given up the chase, and watched the fleeing horseman as he reached the plain, they beheld a puff of smoke, and saw the officer fall from the saddle. They then rode over to where he fell, secured his horse and trappings, and left the body lying where it fell. The officer, for some unknown cause, had ended his life at the point of his own gun.

Grouard's explanation is that the officer, being convinced that the command would perish to a man, did not wish to survive his comrades in arms, so put an end to his life when escape was within his grasp; or, that being unable to rejoin the command, and fearing that his escape would be construed into desertion and forever remain a blot upon his honor, he ended his existence within sight of the spot where the five troops of the heroic seventh met their Waterloo.

This story of the Indians is borne out by a fact: The body of one officer (Second Lieutenant H.M. Harrington of Troop C) was never recovered. It was supposed that he fell in the first charge, and was swallowed up by the treacherous quicksands in the bed of the Little Big Horn; but it is just as possible that he escaped death by the river and found it on the plain east of Poplar creek, though it must be admitted that nothing but the fact that his body was not found on the field of battle lends any evidence to his identification as the officer referred to by the savages.
The Indians were sure that the officer was trying to check the speed of his horse when he passed through their line; but the animal was crazed with fright and could neither be stopped nor overtaken. It went like the wind, and proved itself afterwards to be one of the fleest-footed horses possessed by the savages.

As soon as possible after the battle began, the camp, with the women and children, was moved, the mutilation of the Custer dead having been done by the bucks, Horned Horse, who viewed the scene from a distance, stating that the warriors only desisted in their horrible work from sheer exhaustion.

A great deal has been said and written about the manner in which Custer received his death wound, and to Rain-in-the-Face, whose picture will be found in these pages, (de Barthe's Life of Grouard and Coburn's account of Logan's Narrative of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, both have photographs of Rain-in-the-Face, M.W. Stirling, Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, tells me that the Bureau has no picture of Rain-in-the-Face in its extensive collection, the de Barthe and Logan pictures are of the same Indian, but in different costumes. No one knows who killed Custer. Gen. Scott tells me that the Sioux did not know what General they were fighting, but after they got to Canada, some of the half breeds translated the Bismarck newspapers to them, and told them they had killed General Custer. Before that they thought they had been fighting some of General Crook's men, whom they had previously encountered on the Rosebud with Crazy Horse, June 17, JGC.) has been attributed the killing of this gallant and daring spirit. It is already known that Custer's body was the only one escaping mutilation; (W.R. Logan, who helped bury him, says he was scalped and mutilated, and that the story that he was not mutilated was concocted by the burial party to console Mrs. Custer. Logan told me in private conversation in 1909 at Fort Belknap, Montana, in relation to Custer, that this was the usual story that was always brought home to widows of those killed in Indian fights, and that no one who knew his Indian fights ever believed such stories. Coburn later printed Logan's account of Custer, q.v. JGC.) also that the wound which caused his death was in the head and made by a bullet. No other wound or mark was found upon the body, (Godfrey says "he had been shot in the temple and in the left side.") and it apparently lay where it had fallen. (Godfrey says it was not mutilated, Logan says that it was agreed at the time of burial that this should be the story.)

The reading world need not be shocked by the knowledge that no man has honor in Custer's death. "Nothing can be retentive to the strength of spirit." Rain-in-the-Face did not kill Gen. Custer. But Custer, brave to the last, surrounded by the dead bodies of his relatives and troopers, and realizing the horrors that awaited him as a captive - tortures a thousand times worse than death - turned his weapon against himself and escaped the terrible fate for which the Indians attempted to spare him. (Pure romance! Godfrey says Custer had no powder burned. Logan says "the side of his face badly powder burned." Neither proves anything. The action with the Indians at the finish was at close range. It would be possible for Custer to have been shot at close range by an Indian and thus have been powder burned. Or he might have shot himself, if he had the time, in such a short, sharp, close fight. But if Custer knew anything, he knew that these Indians did not torture prisoners, because they never took prisoners in battle.)

Custer was well known to and by the savage horde which encompassed him. (The Sioux knew they were fighting soldiers, and that is all. They thought they might be Crook and his men, whom they had met before.) There was a chance for his capture, and the only way the General had to defeat it was in anticipating his own end. The gallant Fetterman and Brown died by each other's hands at the Phil Kearney massacre in 1866, and a hundred other cases might be cited of a like nature. (After the Fetterman fight
or "massacre," Colonel Carrington set out from Fort Phil Kearney with a strong force to the scene. Frances G. Carrington, his wife, in her Army Life on the Plains, pp. 153-154, says the following: "Before leaving the fort on this mission of rescue, unknown to us at the time, the Colonel had opened the magazine and cut the Blomars' fuses of spherical case-shot, such as were usually used against Indians prowling in the woods or thickets near by, and so adjusted the ammunition in store by the opening of boxes that by the application of a single match all could be destroyed. His secret instructions, still preserved, were these: 'If, in my absence, Indians in overwhelming numbers attack, put the women and children in the magazine with supplies of water, bread, crackers and other supplies that seem best, and, in the event of a last desperate struggle, destroy all together, rather than have any captured alive.'"

The friends and admirers of Custer have nothing to regret in the knowledge that the brave soldier opened the gateway to eternity with his own right hand.

Among the Sioux there exists a superstition concerning those who suicide. They will not touch the body of a man or woman who meets death at his or her own election. Custer's body was not disturbed. Had it not been for the fact that all the bodies of the Custer command lay in the scorching sun four days before they were recovered, the tell-tale powder marks on Custer's temple would have put at rest the question of Custer's taking off without recourse to the evidence of savages.

Curley, a crow scout, who accompanied the Custer command, and is the only survivor of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, claims to have saved himself by hiding in a gulch while the fight was going on, and afterwards escaping by drawing his blanket about him and passing through the ranks of the hostile, being taken for one of their own number in the excitement which prevailed. (Later authorities deny this. Curley is said to have admitted later that it was not true. Curley is said to have withdrawn, with other Arikari and Crow scouts, before Custer's command began their march, after leaving Reno, Benteen and McDougal.) Curley's account of the battle is meagre, as his time was pretty well occupied in looking to his own safety. His statement that the fight commenced at 2:30 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon (his calculation of time being based (364) upon the position of the sun) and continued until nearly sunset, is entirely overcome by the statements of parties in the Reno command that clothing and guidons belonging to the Custer battalion were seen and recognized in possession of the Indians who besieged Reno's position early in the afternoon of the 25th of June. (The reserve ammunition was in McDougals pack train, which Custer sent for in his last message to get through the Indian lines. That left Custer and his men with 100 rounds of carbine ammunition, and 24 rounds of revolver ammunition, carried on the person by each officer, soldier, scout and civilian.)

Scores of the Indians who were engaged in the attack upon Custer have told Grouard that the fight with the ill-fated command did not last over an hour, at the end of which time every man in it had been killed. "Officers in Reno's battalion," says Finerty, "who, late in the afternoon, from high points surveyed the country in anxious expectation of Custer's appearance, and who commanded a view of the field where he had fought, say that no fighting was going on at that time - between five and six o'clock. It is evident, therefore, that the last of Custer's command was destroyed at an hour earlier in the day than Curley relates." Some of Curley's statements are borne out by facts related by the Indians, while some are not; therefore his story gives rise to many perplexing doubts.

The battle between Reno and the Indians may be said to have been almost continuous from the time of the attack on the morning of June 25th until the forenoon of the 27th, when, upon the approach of Gibbon's column, the hostiles drew off. As positive proof that the engagement
between Custer and the Indians lasted but a very short time may be mentioned the startling fact that but seven of the hostiles were killed during the three days' fighting on the Little Big Horn, and but few (365) were wounded. This statement is made by Grouard after a full knowledge of all the facts, and demonstrates, without further argument, that Custer's battalion was literally swept from the face of the earth by the storm of bullets which savage hatred hurled against it. (After all, Custer was attacking the Sioux camp. When he attacked on the Washita in 1868 he spared no one.)

On the side of the soldiers, some two hundred and seventy officers, privates, scouts, and civilians were killed outright, and many received wounds from which they never entirely recovered. The dead belonging to the Reno command were collected and buried by Gibbon's battalion on the 27th of June, and on the following day the same office was performed by the same command for the Custer battalion. The bodies of the soldiers were, in most cases, horribly mutilated, accounts of which have been published many times. General Custer's remains were not disturbed by the Indians. They were eventually transferred to the military cemetery at West Point, where they rest.

On a knoll overlooking the valley of the Little Big Horn - not far from the spot where Custer fell - a monument has been erected to the memory of the heroes who perished in that unequal battle which has no counterpart in the history of our country. The sides of this mute rememberancer are tablets upon which are engraved the names of those who perished with Custer. Pelic hunters have defaced this monument to a great extent, but its erection at best is but an incident in the wave of regret and sorrow that passed over the nation's heart when the fate of Custer and his gallant followers was learned. - A slight token of the love the American nation cherishes for her heroic dead. - Author.
Crock smiled grimly when he read the telegram and remarked, "I wish Sheridan would come out here himself and show us how to do it. It is rather difficult to surround three Indians with one soldier.

Finerty, War Path and Bivouac, p. 181.

General Grant was much offended with General Rosecrans because of this affair, but in my experience these concerted movements generally fail, unless with the very best kind of troops, and then in a country on whose roads some reliance can be placed, which is not the case in Northern Mississippi.


(March, 1864.) Previous to my leaving St. Louis General Sully, one day, while at Mr. Chouteau's office, took pains to tell me the route he was going to take to the mouth of the Bighorn. He showed me the map, observing that the route from Heart River, at which point he intended to leave the Missouri and strike for the Horn, was the shortest, and could be accomplished in little time. I had been on the Horn, and had also traveled some on the Little Missouri. I knew the latter to be very country, which, further up than I had been, was almost all Bad Lands. This made me observe that I thought he would have a great deal of trouble in getting through with his command; but with a map and some good brandy, in Chouteau's office, one can get through anywhere. I found him convinced that he would meet with little difficulty; but I was satisfied to the contrary.


Though other certainties gradually left him, Custer never questioned his ability to whip all the hostiles in America with his command alone. He smiled with tolerance on those who thought that the impending campaign would be the most bitter and bloody of all Indian wars. While he waited for Congress to release him, he made several brief trips to New York. During one of these, Charles Osborn, associate of Jay Gould, gave a lunch in the soldier's honor. Among the guests was General Grenville Mellen Dodge, Civil War veteran and chief engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad. Dodge recalled later: "Custer, in his conversation and in his assertion of what his regiment would do, said that his regiment could whip and defeat all the Indians on the plains and was very rash in his statements. The lunch was a long one and the champagne flowed freely. I paid little attention to them because I knew they were talking big." (Perkins, J.R.: Trails, Rails and War, Indianapolis, 1927.) Dodge was wrong. This was not big talk. It was Custer's solemn conviction and a direct cause of his death. On the following day, when the soldier called at his office, Dodge told him "that if he was going to fight the Indians with any idea that they were to be easily whipped, he was greatly mistaken." This was probably first of the many warnings men gave the Glory-Hunter. He acceded it no more heed than he did subsequent counsel. "Custer," Dodge relates, "still seemed to carry the idea that the reason the Indians had not been thoroughly punished was because the right kind of troops had not gotten after them." (Ibid.)


The commander of the invincible 7th cavalry may have smiled inwardly at his chief's belief in hard fighting ahead. There was warrant for Terry's conviction. From Arikara scouts and, more impressively, from Charley Reynolds himself, who had gone his lonely way about the hostile camp, Terry had learned this numbered from fifteen hundred to two thousand lodges.
which would shelter from three thousand to four thousand warriors. Reynolds had muttered in his soft apologetic voice that the Sioux were truculent, well-armed and willing to fight. It was the army's intention to carry the battle to them.

Glory Hunter, Van De Water, p. 394.

(As of June 17th, 1876 Terry's Army mustered 905 officers, men and civilians and 35 Indian auxiliaries; Crook's Army mustered 1,100 officers, men and civilians and 250 Indian auxiliaries; Gibbon's Army mustered 478 officers, men and civilians and 30 Indian auxiliaries. The three Armies combined mustered 2,778 officers, men, civilians and Indian auxiliaries.)

The most powerful force the plains had ever seen was to be launched against these chieftains and their clansmen. The plans of the army had the usual virtue of looking well on paper. — Terry and Custer from the east, Gibbon from the north, Crook from the south, were to close in upon the enemy with the smooth facility authors of military plans expect and field commanders seat blood vainly to attain. Custer, Gibbon and Crook, waking old echoes of Appomattox by joint assault on another foe, were to surround and crush the Sioux whose hereditary enemies, the Crows and Shoshones, would block the hostile s escape to the west. Gibbon and Terry were to join hands on the Yellowstone — if the Sioux had not been abolished before they met — and carry out the work of extermination under Terry's command. Crook was to operate independently but in concert. It was an elaborate plan.

Glory Hunter, Van De Water, pp. 394-395.

Charley Reynolds, a drab and wistful figure among the vociferous scouts, confided to Terry and Custer that the Sioux would not run. This, Reynolds offered shyly, would not be like the feeble skirmishes Custer had fought on the Yellowstone in 1873. The Sioux were itching for war. They would take a deal of licking. Reynolds, while he talked, fondled a bandaged right hand on which a felon had developed. He smiled gently at suggestions that he stay behind. He would not miss this campaign. It meant the biggest battle the West had ever seen. No one paid much heed to the soft-voiced, depreciating Jeremiah. How could any one believe him here in the glitter of arms and the cadenced movements of a thousand soldiers and the loading of mountains of munitions into wagons? Terry and Custer were too busy, or too indifferent, to take his words to heart.

Glory Hunter, Van De Water, p. 399.

(Statement by Plenty Coups, a Crow scout with General Crook in 1876.)

"The white men might have done a better job in their fights with our old enemies, the Sioux, the Cheyenne, and Arapaho, if they had been more careful and had kept together better. Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) was wiped out because he did not wait for his friends to help him do a big job." "Why do you believe this? Who told you that Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) should have waited for his friends before fighting?" I asked, to get his personal opinion of the bloody affair on the Little Big Horn. "I have always believed it," he said, leaning toward me confidentially. "Nobody told me; nobody had to. Anybody would believe that way if he knew how things were around the Little Big Horn. I have always thought that The-other-one (General Terry) told Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) to look a little for Three-stars (General Crook), and that when he saw the enemy's trail he forgot, because he wished to fight. The-other-one (General Terry) must have known the country between him and Three-stars (General Crook) was alive with enemies. His wolves (scouts) must have told him this, since any Wolf (scout) would know it.
I have never been told so, but I believe the two dead horses that had iron on their hoofs, the dead horses the buzzards showed me on the Rosebud, had belonged to two Wolves (scouts) sent out by The-other-one (General Terry) to Three-stars (General Crock), and that these chiefs expected to fight together against the village on the Little Big Horn."


"I have forgotten the number of days after Three-stars (General Crock) fought on the Rosebud that the men who had gone away as Wolves (scouts) with The-other-one (General Terry) and Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) came back to our village. We at first believed them Sioux, and a party of young warriors went out to meet them and give them battle. Quickly we saw that Half-yellow-face and White-swan were not with them, and asked about them. White-swan had been so badly wounded on the Little Bighorn that the white soldiers had taken him away on a steamboat, and Half-yellow-face, refusing to leave him, had gone too. When finally Half-yellow-face came back to us, I learned what he saw on the Little Bighorn. He had at first been with Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) but at last, when the soldiers divided, he had been with another chief (Major Reno). He told me that Hair-moccasin, a Crow Wolf (scout), had first discovered the big enemy village and told Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer), and that he, Half-yellow-face, had then tried to stop Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) from attacking it. He said that when the soldier-chief gave the order that divided his men, he had spoken to him, through an interpreter, saying, 'Do not divide your men. There are too many of the enemy for us, even if we all stay together. If you must fight, keep us all together.' He said Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) had not liked those words and that he had replied, 'You do the scouting, and I will attend to the fighting.' As soon as the soldiers had begun to separate into bands, as they had been ordered, Half-yellow-face had stripped and painted his face. 'Why are you doing all of this?' Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) had asked. 'Because you and I are going home today, and by a trail that is strange to us both,' Half-yellow-face had answered. It was then that Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) sent Half-yellow-face with that other chief (Major Reno).

American, The Life Story of a Great Indian, by Frank B. Linderman, pp. 174-175.

Grouard had seen their village on two occasions - once before and once after the massacre; and he states that on the morning after the battle of the Little Big Horn there were no less than nine thousand fighting men in the hostile camp.

The Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard, Chief of Scouts, U.S.A., by Joe De Barthe, p. 358.

The regiment that Custer believed invincible was far from the peak of its fighting strength. Its ranks contained from thirty to forty per cent. recruits. It was grievously under-officered. The commissioned men on detached duty included the colonel, two majors, four captains and seven lieutenants. Several troops had only one officer. So great was the lack that lieutenant John J. Crittenden, 20th Infantry, was detailed at his own request to duty with the 7th Cavalry and died with its leader. The 7th may have been the smartest regiment in the service. It was not the most harmonious, and rumor, on which it had fed in the weeks past, had widened fissures in its structure. In the days to come, those who rationalized and romanticized the tragedy created, among other fictions, the
myth of a feud between Reno and Custer. There is no evidence that this existed. It is probable that, later, Reno grew to loathe Custer's memory as a man will detest another whose death has brought him obloquy. There is scant warrant for the tale of earlier animosity. Generals Scott and Carlington, who joined the 7th Cavalry immediately after the campaign, never in those early days heard the story of this alleged hatred. Colonel Varnum, sole surviving officer who rode with Custer, also denies it. So does Theodore Goldin, veteran of the Little Big Horn. Benteen hated his superior with divine consistency. Other officers in his regiment disliked Custer. The only warrant for the legend of a Reno-Custer feud is the Major's later admission that, through long acquaintance, he had come to have small regard for his Lieutenant-Colonel's military ability.


(1876) The Seventh Cavalry had never had a real pack-train before, because General Terry thought you could catch Indians with a six-mule team, though he never did it himself. Whenever we encountered cavalry from General Crook's Department of the Platte, away from our wagons, the difference was painfully evident, for General Crook was the father of the modern aparejo train. The sound of the pack-train bell means food, shelter, and ammunition to me; without these an officer, even on the verge of victory, must let go and retire to save his men from capture. I fear that the sound of that bell has little meaning nowadays for the men of this age, who listen to the honk of an automobile, which cannot climb mountains where there is no road, as can our long-sailed comrade of the plains, the mule. Pack-trains are expensive to maintain, and the quarter-master-general is always breaking them up to save money. It takes time to make a pack-train and it is not everybody who can make one, even with the money. Custer's train was a disgrace, improvised from the mules taken from the wagon-train, and his packers were without experience. His train was scattered for miles and could easily have been captured had the Indians known about it.

Some Memories of a Soldier by Major-General Hugh Lenox Scott, U.S. Army, Retired, pp. 91-92.
CRAZY HORSE: By far the most active and aggressive fighting chief on the Sioux side of the 1876 campaign was Crazy Horse.

On March 17, 1876, General Reynolds attacked the camp of Crazy Horse on Little Powder River, and captured the camp, and his pony herd of 800 head of horses. Crazy Horse at once counter attacked, drove Reynolds from his camp, and pressing home his counter attack, re-captured his pony herd.

On June 17 Crazy Horse attacked General Crook just south of Rosebud Canyon. Crook had 1,100 men, and 350 Indian auxiliaries. The force of Crazy Horse is estimated at 3,500 to 3,600 men. Crook received such rough treatment in this action that he retired to his temporary base on Goose Creek to evacuate his wounded, and there await re-enforcements and supplies. He did not again take the field until General Merritt came up with a strong force, which nearly doubled Crook's command. By that time Custer had been wiped out, and the campaign was over.

On June 25, Crazy Horse having moved with his forces to the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe camp on the Little Big Horn, took an active part in the fight on that date. This battle included: The repulse of Reno, and driving him from the field to the bluffs east of the Little Bighorn; wiping out General Custer and his entire command; besetting and almost overwhelming Reno and Bemis on June 25 and 26.

On September 9 General Crook's forces attacked and captured the camp of American Horse at Slim Buttes. The camp was a small one. American Horse was killed in the fight. Crazy Horse attacked Crook's forces, attempting to drive them from American Horse's camp that evening, but was repulsed.

U.S. FORCES IN THE FIELD, CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SIOUX, CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHOE, MARCH-SEPTEMBER, 1876, UNDER GENERALS TERRY, CROOK AND GIBBON.

General Crook: 1,100 Officers and men; 350 Indian auxiliaries, June 17.
General Gibbon: 478 Officers and men; 25 Indian auxiliaries, June 17.
General Terry: 905 Officers and men; 440 Scouts and Indians, June 17.

June 17. Crook: Fighting Crazy Horse south of Rosebud Canyon.
Terry: Marching up Yellowstone, on south bank, between mouth of Tongue River and mouth of Rosebud River. Reno, detached from Terry, with right wing of 7th cavalry and 1 Gatling gun, on lower Rosebud, proceeding down the Rosebud to its mouth.

Gibbon: With 400 men near mouth of Little Big Horn. Terry sick on board Far West, coming up Big Horn.
Custer: 31 officers, 585 men, 31 scouts and 8 civilians, as follows: Custer with 212 of his men, dead. Reno with 443, the balance of the force, less most of the Indians which reduces the total of 443, invested by Indians, and hard pressed.
Kirtland: 367 officers and men guarding temporary base at mouth of Bighorn.
General Gibbon's march:

Fort Shaw to Fort Ellis, 185 miles.
Fort Ellis to Bighorn, 208.3 miles.
Fort Shaw to Bighorn, 383.3 miles.
Bighorn to Rosebud, 89 miles.
Fort Shaw to Rosebud, 462.3 miles.

General Terry's march:

Fort Abe Lincoln to Bighorn, 399 miles (about)

General Crook's march:

Fort D.A. Russell to
Ft. Pettermann, (via Laramie) 170 miles (about)
Ft. Pettermann-Goose Creek, 214 miles (about)
Goose Creek-Rosebud Canyon, 35 miles (about)
Ft. Russell-Rosebud Canyon, 419 miles (about)

Generals Terry and Gibbon, march:

Rosebud to Big Horn, 69 miles.
Up the Bighorn to Reno, 65 miles. (about) Approx. 58 to Custer.
Reno to Bighorn, 65 miles. (about)
Total: 199 miles. (total)

Gibbon, mouth of Bighorn to Junction with Crook on Rosebud:
(Terry left for Bismarck July 16.)
Bighorn to Rosebud, 69 miles.
Up Rosebud, 38 miles.
Total: 105 miles.

Crook's march from Goose Creek to junction with Gibbon on Rosebud:
Goose Creek-Gibbon on Rosebud, 150 miles.

Zone of hostile territory: 400 miles by 300 miles or 130,000 square miles.

Bounded: North; valley of the Yellowstone.
East: valley of the Little Missouri.
South: Near headwaters of Powder, Tongue, Rosebud and Bighorn Rivers, about 300 miles up these rivers from their mouths.
West: The Bridger Mountains.

No roads and no bridges in the country. No detailed maps of the country.

Enemy forces: Estimated as high as 9,000 effective fighting men, and as low as 1,000. Number will never be known, but the correct figure might be 2,500 to 3,000.

Enemy equipment: Plenty of horses and primitive weapons. Not so many guns, but a few repeating rifles. Short of ammunition.

Enemy morale: Excellent up to June 26-7. Warlike and aggressive.

Enemy supplies: Buffalo meat, taken from surrounding country. Plentiful.

Army: Staff and line officers, and non commissioned officers all Civil War veterans, as were a substantial number of the enlisted men. These soldiers and officers were also Indian war veterans. Scouting and Intelligence service excellent. But the staff did not credit information given as to numbers and fighting spirit of enemy.
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