

The officers then mingled and talked over the fight. I learned that Royal, with Henry's and Van Vliet's squadrons and my troop E had gone to the extreme left, where the ground was open, and that when the 1,000 or 1,500 Indians had refused to fight in the rocks they had swung around and overwhelmed them, charging bodily and rapidly through the soldiers, knocking them from their horses with lances and knives, dismounting and killing them, cutting the arms of several off at the elbows in the midst of the fight and carrying them away.

They then swung around and passed over the halting ground we had made at 9.30 in the morning, capturing some horses and killing an Indian boy left there. We then all realized for the first time that while we were lucky not to have been entirely vanquished, we had been most humiliatingly defeated, and that the village which Custer was to meet only seven days later, fourteen miles west on the Little Big Horn, contained probably 15,000 or 20,000 souls, perhaps 4,000 or 5,000 warriors, and that perhaps only half of them had met us in battle, and that had my command remained at the village not one of us would have returned.

In fact, I, with General Crook, visited this village site in our fall campaign, and he told me I ought to have been thankful to him for returning me from that canyon as they were as well or better equipped to destroy me as they were to destroy Custer and his command, and here I want to pay a tribute to both Colonel Custer and Captain Henry. I knew both as long as they lived, and have been acquainted with nearly all prominent cavalry officers during my service, and they were always in my mind typical cavalry soldiers of the U. S. Army. I always resented criticisms that were made against Custer by men from General Terry down, who had little or no knowledge of Indian warfare. While a good man, Terry was not familiar with Indian warfare.

The next day we returned to our camp on Goose Creek, where General Crook and all of us made very brief reports of the battle, having little pride in our achievement. General Crook asked for reinforcements, and went into camp awaiting them, meanwhile we amused ourselves by hunting and fishing in the Big Horn Mountains, both General Crook and I being very fond of hunting. We spent much time in the mountains, and some two days later, after the Custer engagement, I and my Lieutenant, Schwatka, went to the peak of the Big Horn Mountains, the northernmost point, thinking we might observe something in that direction, it being about thirty-five or forty miles to the Rose bud. About 2 p. m. we observed