

COPIED from: THE CUSTER FIGHT: CAPTAIN F. (Frederick William) W. BENTEEN'S STORY OF THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN, JUNE 25-26, 1876.
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FOREWORD

p. 7 For the first time since he testified before the Reno Court of Inquiry at Chicago, in 1879, Capt. F. W. Benteen, senior captain of Custer's regiment, the famous Seventh Cavalry, here relates the part he played in that most disastrous of Indian fights on American soil, over which more controversy has raged than over any other battle fought against the red man in the United States.

Much of the account is from his own testimony at the Reno Inquiry; some of it is from an article he wrote, but never published, and some of it is from the personal letters of Capt. Benteen. Certain charges were made against Major Marcus A. Reno and Capt. Benteen by Frederick Whittaker, Custer's biographer. At the last moment Whittaker withdrew his charges against Capt. Benteen. He also utterly failed to substantiate his charges against Major Reno, the verdict of the Court being that "there was nothing in his conduct which requires animadversion from this Court, and that in view of all the facts in evidence, no further proceedings are necessary in this case."

No officer in the Civil War won a more brilliant record than Major Reno, he being brevetted by grades from a lieutenant to a colonel "for gallant and meritorious service." Later, he served as Assistant Instructor of Infantry Tactics at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

The testimony at the Reno Inquiry developed the fact that both Capt. Benteen and Major Reno had done the best that could be done with what they had to do with, after Custer's fatal separation of the regiment; and that, but for their extraordinary heroism and bravery in the fight on the bluffs, following Custer's complete annihilation four and a half miles down the Little Big Horn river, the troops under their charge would likewise have been wiped out.

Capt. Benteen's testimony and extracts from his letters proves absolutely that Custer had formed no battle plans at the time he made his battalion assignments; or,