

I am convinced that when the order brought by Martin reached me, General Custer and his whole command were dead.

It was not evident to me that he expected me to be on the trail. He could have expected no such thing. From the orders I started with, he could not possibly have known where to find me within ten or fifteen miles.

My going back was providential -- or accidental -- or whatever you may be pleased to term it. I supposed Custer had found what he sent ME out to find, and he wanted me as quickly as possible. And I got there as soon as I could.

p. 25 From my orders, I might have gone on twenty miles without finding a valley. Still, I was to go on to the first valley, and if I did not find any Indians, I was to go on to the next valley. Those were the exact words of my order -- no interpretation at all. I at least had to go to the second valley. I understood it as a rather senseless order. We were on the main trail of the Indians; there were plenty of them on that trail. We had passed through immense villages the preceding days, and it was scarcely worth while hunting up any more. We knew there were eight or ten thousand Indians on the trail we were following.

General Crook had fought these same Indians seven days before we did, and he saw enough of them to let them alone. He had a larger force than we had; yet he remained from the 17th of June until the 15th of August waiting reinforcements, and did not think it prudent to go after those Indians.

(Note by E. A. Brininstool: Crook had over eleven hundred men against the six hundred and fifty in the Seventh Cavalry.)

Why I was sent to the left I don't know. It was not my business to reason why. I went.

I consider that I violated my orders when I struck to the right. If I had carried them out, I would have been at least twenty-five miles away. As it was, I was certainly too far to co-operate with Custer when he needed me.

I think after Custer sent Reno across to charge the Indians, his intentions were to get in the rear of the village and attack them from the left. His plan of attack