

HUGHES ACKNOWLEDGES ERROR

At the time, there was much talk among the officers as to the futility of the scout, and even Hughes in his article in the Journal previously noted, slurringly says that "Reno bolted straight for the Rosebud which he struck near its mouth." Both statements were not only unfair but untrue, and long after in a letter, he admitted that he was entirely wrong, and should have never written it. Like some others, he did not like Reno, but it seems significant that Godfrey should have remained silent as to Reno's supposed dereliction, but it probably lies in the fact that the scout accomplished more than Terry's orders contemplated. Reno's crossing to the Rosebud and scouting up its course, furnished Custer with material for his savage attack on the former. I have a copy of Terry's official "Special Field Order No. 2," as well as the accounts of several who took part in the scout, and as an example of looseness of statement, I quote from page 10 of Godfrey's narrative: "Major Reno was ordered to scout to the forks of the Powder,.....then cross over to Pumpkin Creek, follow it down to the Tongue River, scout up that stream and then rejoin the regiment at the mouth of the Tongue." His orders did not direct him to "follow the Pumpkin;" they did not order him "to scout up that stream," referring to the Tongue. I have introduced at perhaps unnecessary length, two minor errors, because they are typical of others.

In his foreword, Godfrey says: "In 1879 my brother officers at West Point asked me to write a paper on the subject (the battle) to be read at the Lyceum. With the aid of my diary, letters, notes and with events fresh in my mind, I wrote up a very sizeable pile of manuscripts. I then cut out much that I know now would be of quite general interest. The rejected material, together with notes and some letters, was destroyed.

p. 8 This destruction has been regretted many a time since, as much of it bears on subjects of controbersy as to the campaign and the conduct of individuals." It is to be hoped that had General Godfrey kept this destroyed material and used it, his account of those parts of the battle and its aftermath that he did not personally take part in, might not only have been more accurate, but somewhat less prejudiced.