THE FIGHT

The winding Little Big Horn River, known to the Indians as the Greasy Grass because the rich forage there fattened their ponies so quickly, flows a little east of north. East of the river the ground is rough and broken and steep bluffs rise in places directly over the water. There was more timber in those days along the stream than we see today. On the west bank of the river lie wide flats where the Indians had pitched their tipis, each tribe with its own camp circle. The Cheyenne circle lay farthest north, with the Sans Arc, Oglala, Minniconjou and Hunkpapa upstream. White Bull's tipi stood in the Sans Arc circle since his wife at the time was a Sans Arc. On the day of the battle he was out before sunup watering his horses and herding them to good grass. When they had settled down to graze, he returned home for breakfast. Later he returned, trying to keep them in a bunch about a thousand yards north of the river. As usual he carried his seventeen-shot Winchester and wore two filled cartridge-belts. It was very dry and dusty and almost windless. His horses were restless as the flies were a terrible plague on the Greasy Grass that summer.

It was not yet time for the midday watering when White Bull heard a man yelling the alarm. Immediately he jumped on his best running horse, a fast bay, and ran his ponies back to camp. About that time everyone had seen the column of dust from the south and the flash of gun barrels in the bright sunshine. First of all White Bull saw his own family rounded up and sent on to safety. Then he rode as hard as he could to the camp of his uncle, Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa circle which the soldiers were approaching. By the time he reached his father's tipi on the north side of the Hunkpapa circle, the women and children had fled and nearly a thousand warriors were gathered to resist the troops. Already some warriors had been shot down by Major Reno's Indian scouts who were running off the Sioux ponies.