

1876

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wounded, so as to move them down to the mouth of the Little Big Horn, a transfer which occupied several days, for the marches had to be short. The same day a reconnaissance was made by Captain Ball, of the Second Cavalry, along the trail of the Indians when they left the valley of the Little Big Horn.⁵⁸ He reported that they divided into two parties, one of which kept the valley of Long Fork, making, he thought, for the Big Horn Mountains; the other turned more to the eastward. He also discovered leading into the valley, a very heavy trail, not more than five days old. This was entirely distinct from the one Custer had followed and indicated that at least two bands had united just before the battle.

In the evening of June 28, General Terry began moving the wounded, but was able to proceed only four miles, on account of the insufficient number of litters. The 29th was spent in making a full supply of them, and in the evening of that day the column started again, the wounded being placed on the steamer Far West, at the mouth of the Little Big Horn, at two o'clock in the morning of June 30, reaching the depot on the Yellowstone the same afternoon. The steamer then proceeded with them to Fort A. Lincoln, the main command reaching the Yellowstone and camping on the bank of the river on the 2d of July.

Attempts were immediately made by General Terry to communicate with General Crook, who was somewhere in that part of the country, in order that concert of action might be established between the two expeditions. Two attempts failed, but a third succeeded; three private soldiers of the Seventh Infantry, James Bell, William Evans, and Benjamin H. Stewart, carried a dispatch through to General Crook and two of them returned with his reply.

As soon as the news of this disaster was received at division