

The camp is placed upon a plateau one hundred and thirty feet above the surrounding valleys. There is only one place where men can enter it, and that place is but twenty feet wide. The peaks tower higher than the little plateau on which lies the fort, but these hills, being perpendicular and terminating in points, would afford no advantage to troops. The road, or shelving-rock layer, leading into the fort is broad at the base, but narrow as one approaches the top, and slopes at an angle of about twenty-one degrees. It would be extremely difficult for soldiers to charge up this shelving rock, and, even did they reach the summit, the breastwork thrown across the entrance would effectually check them.

Trenches are everywhere to be seen, and near the entrance exceed ten feet in depth and are very wide. On the farther side from the entrance there are two places where the hill slopes at an angle of thirty-eight or forty degrees. Of course, it would be out of the question for one to climb up such an incline, but the Indians might slide down safely in case they were compelled to retreat. All other sides of the plateau are perpendicular. Some rifle-pits have been excavated on the hills near at hand, and the Sioux, taking advantage of these, might harass the soldiers should the latter gain access to the camp.

Taken altogether, Shangraux says the fortress is the most impregnable place he ever saw, and in his opinion the two hundred and fifty men who are now in it, and who assert their intention/page 574/to die there before they will leave it, will be able to kill many hundred soldiers before they are whipped. He claims that the only way properly to assault the spot is by cannon. The Sioux have never fought a command armed with Hotchkiss guns and howitzers, and if cannon can be brought near, so that shells can be thrown into the fort, he thinks the Indians will not be able to hold it.