

of the action, and resolved to bring matters to a crisis. He rode up to where the officers of Mills' battalion were standing, or sitting, behind their men, who were prone on the skirmish line, and said, in effect, "It is time to stop this skirmishing, Colonel. You must take your battalions and go for their village way down the canyon." "All right, sir," replied Mills, and the order to retire and remount was given.

239 Troops A, E and M of Mills' battalion, having remounted, guided by the scout Grouard, plunged immediately into what is called, on what authority I know not, the Dead Canyon of Rosebud valley. It is a dark, narrow and winding defile, over a dozen miles in length, and the main Indian village was supposed to be situated in the north end of it. Lieut. Bourke, or Crook's staff, accompanied the column. A body of Sioux, posted on a bluff which commanded the west side of the canyon, was brilliantly dislodged by a bold charge of Troop E, under Capt. Sutorious and Lieut. Von Leutwitz. After this our march began in earnest.

- The bluffs, on both sides of the ravine, were thickly covered with rocks and fir trees, thus affording ample protection to any enemy, and making it impossible for our cavalry to act as flankers. Col. Mills ordered the section of the battalion moving on the east side of the canyon to cover their comrades on the west side, if fired upon, and vice versa. This was good advice, and good strategy in the position in which we were placed. We began to think our force rather weak for so venturesome an enterprise, but Lieut. Bourke informed the Colonel that the five troops of the Third Cavalry, under Maj. Noyes, were marching behind us. A slight rise in the valley enabled us to see the dust stirred up by the supporting column some distance in the rear.

The day had become absolutely perfect, and we all felt elated, exhilarated as we were by our morning's experience. Nevertheless, some of the more thoughtful officers had their misgivings, because the canyon was certainly a most dangerous defile, where all the advantage would be on the side of the savages. Gen Custer, although not marching in a position so dangerous, and with a force nearly equal to ours, suffered annihilation at the hands of the same enemy, about eighteen miles further westward, only eight days afterward.

240 Noyes, marching his battalion rapidly, soon overtook our rear guard, and the whole column increased its pace. Fresh signs of Indians began to appear in all directions, and we began to feel that the sighting of their village must be only a question of a few miles further on. We came to a halt in a kind of cross canyon, which had an opening toward the west, and there tightened up our horses' girths, and got ready for what we believed must be a desperate fight. The keen-eared Grouard pointed toward the occident, and said to Col. Mills, "I hear firing in that direction, sir." Just then there was a sound of fierce galloping behind us, and a horseman, dressed in buckskin, and wearing a long beard, originally black, but turned temporarily gray by the dust, shot by the ~~maiteu~~ command, and dashed up to where Col. Mills and the other officers were standing.

It was Maj. A.H. Nickerson, of the General's staff. He has been unfortunate since, but he showed himself a hero on that day at least. He had ridden, with a single orderly, through the canyon to overtake us, at the imminent peril of his life.

"Mills," he said, "Royall is hard pressed, and must be relieved. Henry is badly wounded, and Vroom's troop is all cut up. The General orders that you and Noyes defile by your left flank out of this canyon and fall on the rear of the Indians who are pressing Royall." This, then, was the firing that Grouard had heard.