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Grouard's explanation is that the officer, being convinced that the command would perish to a man, did not wish to survive his comrades in arms, so put an end to his life when escape was within his grasp; or, that being unable to rejoin the command, and fearing that his escape would be construed into desertion and forever remain a blot upon his honor, he ended his existence within sight of the spot where the five troops of the heroic Seventh met their Waterloo,

This story of the Indians is borne out by a fact: The body of one officer (Second Lieutenant H.M. Harrington of Troop C) was never recovered. It was supposed that he fell in the first charge, and was swallowed up by the treacherous quicksands in the bed of the Little Big Horn; but it is just as possible that he escaped death by the river and found it on the plain east of Poplar creek, though it must be admitted that nothing but the fact that his body was not found on the field of battle lends any evidence to his identification as the officer referred to by the savages. *

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The Indians were sure that the officer was trying to check the speed of his horse when he passed through their line; but the animal was grazed with fright and could neither be stopped nor overtaken. It went like the wind, and proved itself afterwards to be one of the fleetest-footed horses possessed by the savages.

As soon as possible after the battle begun, the camp, with the women and children, was moved, the mutilation of the Custer dead having been done by the bucks, Horned Horse, who viewed the scene from a distance, stating that the warriors only desisted in their horrible work from sheer exhaustion. 17

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A great deal has been said and written about the manner in which Custer received his death wound, and to Rain-in-the-Face, whose picture will be found in these pages, has been attributed the killing of this gallant and daring spirit. It is already known that Custer's body was the only one escaping mutilation; also that the wound which caused death was in the head and made by a bullet. No other wound or mark was found upon the body, and it apparently lay where it had fallen. The reading world need not be shocked by the knowledge that no man has honor in Custer's death. "Nothing can be retentive to the strength of spirit." Rain-in-the-Face did not kill Gen. Custer. But Custer, brave to the last, surrounded by the dead bodies of his relatives and troopers, and realizing the horrors that awaited him as a captive--tortures a thousand times worse than death--turned his weapon against himself and escaped the terrible fate for which the Indians attempted to spare him.*

Custer was well known to and by the savage horde which encompassed him. There was a chance for his capture, and the only way the General had to defeat it was in anticipating his own end. The gallant Fetterman and Brown died by each other's hands at the Phil Kearney massacre in 1866, and a hundred other cases might be cited of a like nature. The friends and admirers of Custer have nothing to regret in the knowledge that the brave soldier opened the gateway to eternity with his own right hand.