

off the leading questions

Creek and with this the fight came to a close.

During the fighting "a dense throng of squaws arrayed in all their finery" was observed, watching events from atop a bluff across the creek. One of the field pieces threw a shell their way, causing them to abandon their lookout. Some of the expedition claim that, during and after the fight, they noticed several hundred Indians in the abandoned camp, about a mile and a half downstream from the battlefield. Some of the men aver that they heard a loud explosion at the campsite and, watching with glasses, saw the Indians who were crowded there "torn to pieces." E. S. Topping, in THE CHRONICLES OF THE YELLOWSTONE, states regarding the setting off of the booby trap, that "nothing in regard to it was positively known till 1877, when a Cheyenne, who had been in the fight, said, that in exploding, it had killed one and wounded six others, two of the latter being squaws." (Topping was not with the expedition but secured his information from men who had been members.) On the other hand, Lt. James Bradley, who interviewed a number of members, says that "the Indians subsequently asserted that they did not disturb the grave."

The number of Indians who took part in this engagement was estimated by the members of the expedition to have been between 1,000 and 1,500. According to Lt. Bradley, some Indians "afterward admitted at Ft. Peck that it was the combined force of three large camps under the leadership of the famous Sitting Bull." Topping states: "Till the last fight [April 18th] all of the Indians engaged were Ucapapas. Many pieces of flour sacks were found on the trip, which were all branded Durfie & Peck, showing beyond cavil that they were Fort Peck Indians. In the last fight they were joined by some Cheyennes and Ogalallas...Scraps of newspapers were picked up and captured from dead Indians, all of which were from The Christian Advocate." Topping states further: "We know from later developments, that the night before [i.e., April 17th], three hundred and fifty Cheyenne warriors, fresh from their agency, had joined the Ucapapas, and had made their boasts that they would ride over the train in the morning." At one time during the fight that took place the next day, the Cheyennes are described as having charged in a regular line. "The new white shirts which they all wore made them appear like troops in uniform." But it is asserted that four of the white men, who had been riding as flank-guard on the side of the column toward which this charge was directed, held their ground and, indeed, ran, firing their repeaters, toward the approaching Cheyennes, who became demoralized and broke. B. F. Potts, Governor of Montana Territory, interviewed some of the members of the expedition very soon after its return to Bozeman and told the Secretary of the Interior, in a letter dated May 7, 1874: "The Indians that fought the expedition were Agency Indians as they had regular U. S. Blankets--like those issued to the Indians and for ammunition they had plenty...which undoubtedly was obtained on the Upper Missouri."

When the fight on Lodge Grass Creek was over, the white men were able to find the body of but one dead Indian, who had evidently fallen too near the corral for other warriors to get him away. Some of the expedition estimated that ten Indians had been killed and many more wounded in this fight. Not a man of the expedition appears to have got a scratch. One horse was killed. Yet as I read the members' stories of the desperate charges and counter-charges and of the huge quantities of lead they threw at one another, they read like descriptions of "Pickett's Charge" at its height. All of the accounts agree that, in all three of the major engagements plus a few little affairs of outposts, one white man was killed and