

There were now many wounded and the question of obtaining water was a vital one, for the troops had been without any from six o'clock the previous evening, a period of about sixteen hours. A skirmish line was formed under Benteen, to protect the descent of volunteers down the hill in front of the position to reach the water. A little was obtained in canteens, but many of the men were struck in securing the precious fluid.

The fury of the attack was not over and the Indians were seen going off in parties to the village. Two solutions occurred, either that the Indians were going to get something to eat and more ammunition, as they had been shooting arrows, or else that Custer was coming. Advantage was taken of this lull to rush down to the stream and fill all vessels possible with water, but the Indians continued to withdraw and firing ceased, excepting occasional shots from sharpshooters sent to annoy the soldiers near the water. About two o'clock in the afternoon, the grass in the bottom was extensively fired by the Indians, and behind the dense smoke thus created, the Indian village began to move away.

Between six and seven o'clock in the evening, the village came out from behind this cloud of smoke and dust, the troops obtaining a full view of the cavalcade, as it filed away in the direction of the Big Horn Mountains, moving in almost full military order.

All thoughts were now turned again towards Custer, of whom nothing had been seen or heard since he gave his orders on the previous day for the first advance by the detachments under Reno and Benteen, and which orders contemplated the support of these by the force retained under Custer's personal command. No one dreamed of the real explanation of Custer's absence, and the impression was that this heavy force of Indians had gotten between him and the rest, forcing him towards the mouth of the Little Big Horn, from which direction the column under Gibbon, with General Terry, was expected.

During the night of June 26th, the troops under Reno changed position so as to better secure a supply of water and to prepare against another