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A detachment at once began to search the village, resulting in thirty-eight guns being found.

As this task was about completed, the Indians surrounded by companies K and B began to move.

As was afterward learned the medicine man who accompanied the band had made a last effort to reassert his power. He had assured those who would believe in him that to the believer in the Messiah who wore a "Ghost shirt," a garment provided for the dancers, which had been "medicined" by him, no harm could come, and the bullets of the soldiers, turned harmless from them, would only kill white men. With blind faith they trusted him. Standing in their midst he took a handful of dust from the ground and threw it into the air, the Indian signal of battle. From under their blankets the waiting warriors drew their Winchesters and began firing rapidly at the troops not twenty feet away.

Nothing can describe the surprise and just anger of the soldiers at this act of unspeakable folly and treachery. The deluded savages had just surrendered "at discretion." They were almost surrounded by four or five times their own number of soldiers and under the lips of the Hotchkiss guns, whose terrible power they were to be the first Indians to feel. Nothing but the blindest and most fanatical faith in the power of their medicine can account for their conduct; this, or the feeling that they would rather die than part with their guns. The evidence, as we shall see, points to the former as the key to their conduct. In a moment the space of a few square rods was like the crater of a volcano. More than thirty soldiers fell under the murderous/page 584/ fire delivered literally in their faces. Nor could it be at once returned without extreme danger that friends would suffer quite as much as enemies. Indians whose guns had been taken seized knives and tomahawks and began an attack, hand-to-hand. One of these standing near the gallant Capt. Wallace, had evidently selected him for a victim and buried a hatchet