

sense to travel over the kind of country I had been sent to explore, unless forced to," and concluding that his battalion would have plenty of work ahead with the others, obliqued to the right to strike the trail of the main column, and got into it just ahead of McDougal and his pack train. After watering the horses of his battalion at a morass near the side of the road, he went briskly on, "having a presentiment that I'd find hot work very soon." On the way he met two orderlies with messages-- one for the commanding officer of the pack train and one for himself, written and signed by the regimental adjutant, Lieut. Cook. They read: "Come on. Be quick," and "Bring packs." Benteen did not return for the pack train, but pushed on at a trot, and (to use his own words) "Got there in time to save Reno's outfit." McDougal came up later, and a junction was then formed. From that time on until the morning of the 27th they were kept busy repelling the attacks of the hostiles.

From this statement of Benteen's it does not seem that he had received any orders from Custer to attack any portion of the Indian village, and this view is further borne out by the statement of Benteen that he carried out the orders that Custer had given him. But both he and Reno must have known that Custer was battling with the hostiles at some point not far distant; and yet no effort was made to reach the Custer command the day of the 25th of June.*

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There is little if any doubt but what Reno's command would have been annihilated had it not been for the timely arrival of Gibbon. The Indians claimed that they had Reno just where they wanted him, but were not given time enough to move their camp far enough from the scene of battle before making their final cleanup of the soldiers. Notwithstanding this claim of the Indians, and admitting that Reno would have taken desperate chances in attempting to go to the assistance of Custer, the people of the United States will always think he should have taken the chances and believe and know Custer would not have hesitated a second in making such a move had matters been reversed. Custer would have fought his way to Reno, under such circumstances, or died on the bluffs in making the attempt.

Grouard, whose acquaintance with the Indians was more extended than that of any man who has ventured to speak on this subject, and who was on the battlefield at 11 o'clock on the night succeeding the day of the butchery, says the Indians told him Custer made an attempt to cross the Little Big Horn where the trail of the command was afterward discovered leading down to the edge of the river. But the Indians met him in great numbers at this point, and he found it impossible to cross. The water was high, and the bed of the river at all times is full of quicksand at this point, and the Indians told Grouard that one of the soldiers' pack mules, loaded with ammunition, was swallowed up in the sand when the attempt to ford the river was made.*

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Custer then seemed determined, after his first repulse, to cross the river at a point lower down. To do this he was forced to back out into the bluffs, and the Indians, divining his intention, crossed the river below his command in thousands, attacking it on all sides at once. Custer must have recognized the almost hopelessness of this position from the moment he found himself unable to cross the Little Big Horn where he first made the attempt; but that he did not lose his head is proved by the fact that he attempted to lead his command on to the bluffs overlooking the valley. As soon, however, as he left the river, the Indians got in between it and his command, so that, with the hostiles occupying the draws on the south, the high bluffs on the east and the river bottom on the west, the