

soldiers were forced to occupy a midway position between the higher points and the valley, and were driven along the slope east and north until the last one had been killed.

"The Indians congregated so rapidly and were in such positions," said one of Grouard's Indian informants, "that there was no earthly chance for the command to extricate itself. The troopers fought bravely and to the end, but the battle was over in less than one hour from the time Custer made his first attempt to cross the Little Big Horn."

255 One peculiar thing about the entire matter is found in the uncertainty expressed by all the officers concerning the time of day when the attack on the Sioux village (made by Reno's battalion) occurred. If, as the official reports claim, Custer was in the valley of the Little Big Horn at eight o'clock in the morning of June 25th, it would seem highly probable that the attack occurred long before noon of that date. Some of Reno's soldiers claim that the two battalions (Custer's and Reno's) were still marching side by side when the indications of the Sioux village were so plain as to be unmistakable, and that the Colonel of the Seventh, elated at the prospect of an immediate engagement, cried, "Hurrah! Custer's luck!" Immediately after this the commands separated, Reno charging down the valley a considerable distance, finally halting in the timber, where he was attacked by superior numbers."

256 Grouard says he first noticed the signals made by the Indians on June 25 between nine and ten o'clock in the morning. These signals indicated a big battle with the soldiers, the Indians having "way the best of it," as the scout expresses it. Grouard immediately repaired to Crook's camp on the Little Goose creek, and imparted his information to the officers he found there (Gen. Crook being up in the mountains on a hunt.) Not having had any experience with Indian signals, the officers in camp ridiculed the idea advanced by Grouard that the troops and savages were engaged. The scout thereupon informed them he would prove he was right, and immediately jumped on one of the best horses in the command and started for the locality whence the signals had been given. The distance from Goose creek to the Custer battlefield is about seventy miles, and as it was close to noon when Grouard started, and the latter part of the trip was made after dark, he necessarily had to ride at the rate of seven miles an hour to reach the Custer battlefield by eleven o'clock.

Horned Horse, who related the story of the battle many times after he arrived at the agency, maintained that "by noon all of one party were killed, and the others (Reno's) driven back into a bad place. The reason we did not kill all of this party was because while we were fighting his (Reno's) party we heard that more soldiers were coming up the river," whereupon the hostiles drew off. "The troops first charged from up the river," he said. Then all the young bucks charged the troops. "Then there was another party of troops on the other side of the river. One half of the Indians pursued the first body of troops; the other half went after the other body." Which shows that Custer's attack was made almost simultaneously with that of Reno.

Custer did not proceed northward over three miles from the spot where Reno's fortifications were thrown up after his retreat across the river, so that he could not have been over two miles from Reno when the latter was holding the Sioux at bay in the timber. Knowing that Custer had intended to strike the village at its lower end as soon as he could make the distance from the point