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 have occupied its former site on the banks of the Little Big Horn on the morning of the 27th of June.

The Indians, whose numbers were constantly augmenting, were getting as rapidly as possible into a section of country where game was plentiful. They therefore had their families with them. They had runners out all over the country, north, east and south; knew that Crook's command was in the valley of the Goose creeks; that Gibbon and Terry were marching up the Yellowstone from the mouth of the Rosebud and that Custer's force was moving rapidly up the latter stream toward the Little Big Horn where their village was located. But they had no idea, as they afterwards said, that Custer would be rash enough to attack them when he discovered their force. They were greatly surprised that he did so.

260 Grouard had seen their village on two occasions--once before and once after the massacre; and he states that on the morning after the battle of the Little Big Horn there were no less than nine thousand fighting men in the hostile camp. He says there were fully six hundred wickiups in the village. These wickiups were used by the young bucks who had escaped from the different agencies; and the scout thinks there must have been over or quite five thousand of these young warriors, while the force of the village proper was not less than four thousand fighting men. Grouard further says that each wickiup would accommodate from six to ten persons, and all of them were crowded to their fullest capacity.

The Indians told Grouard that when Custer's attempt to cross the Little Big Horn had been frustrated, the command headed directly west for the high bluffs, behind which hundreds of Indians were secreted. These rose up to meet Custer as his men advanced. Not knowing that the savages were there, Custer was taken completely by surprise, and attempted, by a charge, to force his way through the enemy to the northeast. But he met with such a withering fire that he was compelled to seek lower ground, and in doing so he met the enemy's force that, by this time, had crossed the river and filled all the draws to the north, and was compelled to feel his way west and south, which accounts for the finding of the bodies of his command lying in almost a perfect circle.

261 When the charge up the bluff was made, the Indians stated (and they related the story many times to the scout), that an officer on a magnificent animal, unable to check the speed of his charger, rode directly through the enemy's line, escaping the hundreds of bullets that were fired at him. Some of the young braves gave chase, but as they were afoot when the charge was made and lost some little time in getting their ponies, the officer was soon far in advance of his pursuers. They followed him for several miles, however, and watched him as he crossed Poplar creek*(due east from the Custer battlefield). Beyond this creek is an immense flat, and while the Indians sat upon their ponies, having given up the chase, and watched the fleeing horseman as he reached the plain, they beheld a puff of smoke, and saw the officer fall from the saddle. They then rode over to where he fell, secured his horse and trappings, and left the body lying where it fell. The officer, for some unknown cause, had ended his life at the point of his own gun.