

foundation. That Custer fought bravely there can be no dispute. The most that can be said is that he rode into a trap and that his command was utterly annihilated. The Indian loss was sixty-three killed, several of whom were killed by their own arrows.* (58 killed, 60 wounded, See Vol. VI, 227 - footnote.) Some writers have asserted that Custer dismounted his men and fought them intelligently and under orders. This is not supported by Indian testimony, which declares that he had absolutely no opportunity to give orders or to do anything but fight desperately for life after the ambush was discovered.

When Reno had reached the high lands on the east side of the stream, he almost immediately joined his forces with Denton, who, in obedience to the order sent by Custer, had returned from the scout across the creek and was proceeding down the east bank. Hearing firing down the creek, Captain Wier was dispatched with his company to reinforce Custer, but soon returned, being unable to proceed against the vast Indian force which confronted him. McDougall had come up with his company and the pack train and Reno, the ranking officer, taking command of the united parties, parked the train in a depression on the hill and set about to entrench as well as possible. It was now 6 o'clock in the afternoon, and they were immediately and furiously attacked. They held their ground with a loss of eighteen enlisted men killed and forty-six wounded until the attack ceased at 9 o'clock at night. Assured by this time of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, and giving up any hope of support from Custer, Reno set his men to digging rifle pits and barricaded the camp with dead horses and mules and boxes of hard bread and the wagons and other camp paraphernalia to be ready for an assault in the morning. All night the men worked while the Indians held a scalp dance just below them in the valley / and in their hearing. By 2:30 a. m. the camp was reasonably well prepared for defense, and at that moment the attack of the Indians was renewed with a fury seldom equalled. Every rifle seemed to be handled by an expert and skilled marksman and with a range that exceeded that of the carbines of the cavalry. It was simply impossible to show any part of the body before it was struck. As the daylight brightened countless hordes of the Indians were seen passing up the valley through