

THE BATTLE OF ROSEBUD.

GEN. CROOK'S FIGHT WITH INDIANS.

ROCK-RIBBED BLUFFS SWARMING WITH MOUNTED SIOUX—NEARLY TWO THOUSAND SAVAGES DEFEATED BY ONE THOUSAND SOLDIERS—BRAVE EFFORTS OF THE ENEMY TO SECURE THEIR DEAD—HOW THE TROOPS ESCAPED AN AMBUSCADE—THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.

The following letter details more fully than any yet published the fight of Gen. Crook on the Rosebud on June 17, and includes the complete list of the killed and wounded:

From Our Own Correspondent

BIG HORN AND YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION,
CAMP CLOUD PEAK, Wyoming, }
Tuesday, June 17, 1876 }

Gen. Crook's long looked-for Indian allies, numbering 180 Crows and 80 Snakes, arrived in camp on the evening of the 14th inst. The event was hailed with more rejoicing than would have been the arrival of thrice the number of regular troops, and it was looked upon as marking a most auspicious era—the beginning of the end of a strangely thrilling war of races. The friendly red men came charging and whooping toward the General's head-quarters as though their lives depended upon the earnestness of their demonstrations. Many of them were rigged out in war costumes of the most extravagant character, looking quite singular in their blotches of paint, their other wild adornments, and still wilder gyrations. To be a Crow or Snake just then was evidently better than to be a savage King, and to watch each individual as Gen. Crook came forward to extend a cordial greeting was worth more than a view of a modern hippodrome. But to have been a Crow or Snake Indian an hour later would have been only one step more glorious than to have been a gorged anaconda or a stuffed bear, for an attack upon the commissary department was what these gallant braves had long been riding for.

Quite late in the evening a council of war was held near the General's head-quarters, which was attended not only by all the chiefs and "head soldiers" of the friendly bands, but also by nearly all of the commanders of battalions and companies composing the expedition. A huge council fire was built, the chieftains and officers forming a large circle around it, and Gen. Crook, with his aids and interpreters, standing within the cordon near the allies. The usual expressions of good-will and eternal fealty were indulged in by the Indians, as were also their boasts of bravery and prowess in battle. They would hunt the Sioux as the bloodhound tracks the refugee, and, once found, they would teach our soldiers how to fight, and how to steal ponies. They were informed by the General that all they were expected to do was to find the villages of the common enemy; he would attend to the fighting, they might have the ponies. Returning to their camp near by, a scene as weird as any ever witnessed took place. Many of them stripped to the skin, with huge daubs of paint all over their bodies and limbs, others in their startling and devilish attire of war, and still others in a ludicrous combination of savage and civilized dress, took part in the oddest of odd dances and contortions. Whether flitting and whooping singly around among the dozens of bright camp fires or dancing hand in hand in groups of a dozen or more, the joyful, yelling, chanting mass resembled more a panorama of thrilling phantasies than aught of natural earth-life, phantasies infernal rather than those of another sphere. The inky darkness preceding a thunder-storm, and the occasional flashes of lightning giving it birth, heightened the wondrous effect as only such elements can. It must have been well on toward dawn when the last of these thoroughly exhausted natives crept off to his robe or blanket, and more than one good round denunciation did the zealous braves get during the night from neighboring white men who could not sleep for the terrible din.

PREPARING FOR ACTION.

During the same evening an officers' consultation was held at head-quarters. The commander in a few words announced his determination to move as soon as the final preparations could possibly be made. The entire cavalry and infantry force was to go, the latter to be mounted upon mules, while the teamsters and a portion of the packers were alone to remain to guard the train and supplies. News had been brought by the Crows that the hostile village was only about ninety miles distant on Tongue River, and he therefore wished to make a quick, bold stroke. No transportation would be taken to retard speedy manœuvring, and every man was expected to carry four days' rations of hard bread and bacon in his haversack. Only one blanket besides saddle-blanket could be allowed, while in addition every soldier was to carry 100 rounds of ammunition upon his person. Officers were to see that these instructions were carried out to the letter. On the day following much time was consumed in getting the infantry mounted upon mules. The animals were chosen from the wagon and pack trains, bridled, saddled, and in a manner "broken in" during the day. There may have been riders, ancient or modern, more famous than these, but if due weight were given to the ludicrous aspect of the undertaking we, who were eye-witnesses to this tumultuous affair under the shadow of the Big Horn Mountains, can never imagine a spectacle more novel in itself. Mules and men were green and stubborn alike. There were mules that had never seen a saddle and men who had never seen a mule—only to wish him further off. Slow, momentous mountings and quick, disgraceful dismountings were the order of the hour. Thus 200 gallant infantrymen were either dashing hither and thither upon 200 kicking mules or else a fair proportion were nervously endeavoring to do so. But fortunately there were no serious mishaps, and night found every man ready with his mule and little bundle, anxious for the start that the end might sooner come.

Early on the morning of the 16th the entire column was in motion, and at the same time the trains were being removed to a point further up stream—a tributary of Tongue River—where better grass could be obtained for the animals and where the handful of men in charge could better intrench and take care of themselves. The command marched in a north-westerly direction, thirty-five or forty miles, over a very broken country, to a point on the Rosebud just inside of the Montana line. During the day large herds of buffalo were seen, and a number were slaughtered by friendly Indians and the military. Just after making camp on the Rosebud several Indian scouts came in and reported seeing ten or a dozen Sioux who had evidently been hunting. No event of note occurred, however, and the morning of the 17th witnessed an auspicious start. The line of march followed the Rosebud—a small, sluggish, almost lifeless stream—with the mountains of the same name immediately on the left and the Wolf Mountains stretching off to Tongue River on the right. Our allies were far out on either flank and ahead so as to, if possible, spy the Sioux village, or at least guard against an ambush. By following the course above indicated the command could cover both the valleys of the Tongue and Little Horn without running much danger of being discovered by enemies lurking in either direction, and then should their position be disclosed in either locality, a quick night march, north

or south, would possibly result in the wished for surprise.

LOCATION AND DETAILS OF THE FIGHT.

Only six or seven miles of distance had been accomplished when a few of the friendly Indians came galloping in with the report that Sioux had been seen on our left. A halt was at once ordered to await information from those who were still out; horses were unsaddled and picketed, and in a few moments the men were stretched out on the luxuriant grass which everywhere abounded. But hardly had this point been arrived at before quick, sharp volleys of musketry in front and to the left startled our thousand men to their feet, and a moment later we realized that the Battle of Rosebud was commenced. Our allies came in whooping and yelling for support, while not far behind hundreds of hostile Sioux took strong positions on the summits of bold bluffs and mountains overlooking the valley. The infantry, on foot, were quickly deployed as skirmishers, advancing to cover behind the brow of a hill, yet some six or seven hundred yards from the savages. The Crows and Snakes, under the leadership of Capt. George M. Randall, of the Twenty-third Infantry, at once advanced on the position of the Sioux, making a most exciting and gallant charge across the intervening mesa. But they had their hands more than full and were becoming slightly demoralized, when a company of infantry and two of cavalry dashed forward to their relief. The bluff was now fairly swarming with mounted savages who were pouring volley after volley upon the rapidly advancing troops and allies. But there was too much firmness and determination manifest in the movements of the troops to suit the foe, and he soon fled in wild disorder. The stronghold was to be a savage's stronghold no longer, and during the balance of the fight it served admirably as a hospital and head-quarters ground. Along its summit, upon either side, were immense ledges of rock, which seemed at some time to have been forced almost vertically upward by a mighty convulsion. Other rocks were strewn here and there over the summit, while the descent of the bluff itself was so abrupt as to render the whole a natural fortification. Had a few companies of infantry been stationed there, they would have laughed at the efforts of anything short of the entire Sioux nation at dislodgment. From such parapets, behind such matchless barricades, a stand for life seemed not so hard a thing to make. Behind a ledge of rocks at the last point contested for, we found nearly a peck of freshly fired cartridge-shells. Many of them were of the pattern used in a celebrated sporting rifle, which is far superior to the Government arm.

A wide and intensely interesting sweep for the vision was afforded us who took a part in the charge and for the first time climbed to the apex. In every direction, save the one from which we had just come, there were bluffs and mountains like the one we were on piled closely against each other. Many were covered with pine, but all had the same stony, precipitous sides, the same ragged, rocky heights. The eye could scarcely rest upon an open or exposed position, for a circuit only limited by the horizon, without seeing squads of the savages, from half a dozen to five times that number, approaching as fast as their fleet ponies could travel. It seemed an uprising of the whole country, and Indians were coming from just such sections as one would least expect to see them in. Strong detachments of cavalry were pressing both flanks of the retreating foe, and he had need of succor. Another mountain-top was gained by the enemy, but now his line extended over a circle of three or four miles, and ordinary bush-whacking seemed to be his game. Seeing that nothing could be accomplished while the Indians were thus flying to pieces one moment and reunited again only for an instant. Gen. Crook determined to recall and concentrate his scattered forces and make a quick dash for the village, which he believed to be near. The order was given, but no sooner would one division attempt to carry it out than the whole strength of the Sioux was thrown upon the retiring skirmish line, and it could do nothing but send back support and again drive off the savages. It was during these rallies and repulses that most of our loss was incurred; the Indians construing such movements into a retreat upon our part and exhibiting the most ferocious courage in consequence. Finally some ten companies of cavalry were sent upon the gallop down the cañon in the supposed direction of the tepees of the red men, while a vigorous attack was made upon them in their strongest position. The troops now swept everything before them, entirely silenced the firing, and saw no more of Sitting Bull that day. Finding quite a large number of wounded and several dead upon his hands, that his rations would only last two days longer, that his supply of ammunition would but little more than outlast another such an engagement, and that his Indian allies refused to pilot him further, Gen. Crook at once concluded to bivouac on the battle-field and return to the supply camp in the morning.

THE FORCES ENGAGED AND THE LOSS.

The number of Sioux engaged is estimated at all the way from twelve hundred to two thousand. Allowing amply for exaggerated ideas, the number can safely be placed at fourteen or fifteen hundred, which would be quite a respectable increase over our own force of a little above one thousand fighting men. Then when it is remembered that the foe had chosen a position which more civilized warriors would call almost impregnable, and which we were compelled to assault in detail; that his fighting was done upon the backs of animals which would scale heights and descend depths with pretty much the same ease that characterizes the break-neck movements of mountain sheep, while we were compelled to follow upon clumsy cavalry horses and mules; and that his arms were superior to our own—when all these points are taken into consideration it will not be difficult to realize what terror this blow carries to the heart of the braves who have never before known absolute defeat. Over ten thousand rounds of ammunition were fired by the troops, while the amount used by the savages could not have been less than a third or a half more as their firing was far more constant and heavy than ours. The Sioux also used arrows, lances, and battle-axes while in close quarters, a number of our men having been slightly wounded by these weapons and two killed by arrows. Our loss was nine killed and nineteen wounded, while the allies lost one killed and seven wounded.

The following is a list of the killed and wounded: Killed—Daniel Marshall, Gilbert Roe, Company F, Third Cavalry; William W. Allen, Eugene Flynn, Company I, Third Cavalry; Antoine Newhirschen, Brooks Conner, Richard W. Bennett, George Potts, Allen H. Mitchell, Company L, Third Cavalry. Wounded—Thomas Meagher, Company F, Second Cavalry; Pat O'Donnell, Company D, Second Cavalry; Henry Stiner, Company B, Third Cavalry; Andrew Grosch, Charles Stewart, James O'Brien, Francis Smith, John Loscoboski, Company I, Third Cavalry; Samuel Cook, John Creamer, William H. Edwards, Company L, Third Cavalry; E. A. Snow, Company M, Third Cavalry; Horace Harold, Company E, Third Cavalry; Phineas Town, Company F, Third Cavalry; John H. Terry, J. A. Devine, Richard Flynn, Company D, Fourth Infantry; Capt. Guy V. Henry, Company D, Third Cavalry.

Thirteen Sioux scalps were brought in by allies and half-breeds at the close of the engagement. Not claiming such ghastly trophies, of course, our troops could point to no evidence equally conclusive as to the number of savages killed by them; but dozens were known to have been slain, and the number wounded was proportionately large. A low estimate of the killed and wounded of the enemy would therefore be about one hundred. Among all the dare-devil feats of the Sioux those made to recover their dead and wounded were most noticeable. No matter where a warrior was seen to fall, three or four of his comrades would dash out, secure the body, lash it to the back of a pony, and make off, even though they had necessary for others to come to my

up one or two of their own number. More than one brave received his death-wound while making such an attempt. But, to say the least, there was a vast amount of either "premeditated courage" or unstinted recklessness manifest in the desperate conduct of the enemy from beginning to end. While he would flee before a steady assault, he would turn with lightning-like rapidity and plunge into death's very jaws in endeavors to cut off detached parties of troops or allies. So close were some of these encounters that wounds inflicted by the savages were fairly burned by the exploding powder, and there are several instances noted in which our men received death-wounds from the battle-axe, arrow, and lance. In one case a soldier was scalped before his comrades, a few yards distant, could rush to his rescue, and in another the Indians had killed a cavalryman in a hand-to-hand fight, plundered his body of watch, gun, clothing, &c., and were just about to scalp him as neighboring skirmishers reached the spot. In charging from or back to cover, down terrific stretches of descent, these matchless riders would swing low on one side of their ponies, quickly change position at an opportunity to fire, and again squirm almost out of sight, with evidently no thought of being unhorsed. If the ground was extremely rough or ordinarily smooth, the Indian used it to advantage all the same. The open space seemed designed for his fearful onslaught; the deep gully or rocky cliff, for his safe retreat. Nor were our friendly representatives of the mountain tribes one whit behind their enemies of the plain in these adjuncts to savage warfare. More than one brave soldier, by accident or otherwise dismounted, owes his life to this wonderful horsemanship, this same unflinching gallantry upon the part of the ever-watchful, ever-present Snake or Crow.

It is now believed that a terrible ambush had been arranged for our entire column by the wily Sioux. A few miles ahead, and directly in our pathway, commences what is known by some as the "Rosebud Narrows," and by native tradition as "Dead Cañon." It is a six or seven mile gash in the Rosebud Mountains, narrow, hundreds of feet deep, and almost overhung by continuous walls of rock. The Rosebud flows at the bottom, and the conformation of the surrounding country is such that we would have been compelled almost to file through on our march. Scattered along the brink of this defile were the Sioux warriors, who were first discovered by our keen-eyed scouts; and as the savage horde first gathered from that direction, it is quite evident that enough of them were there lying in wait to have punished our column terribly, if, indeed, they had not succeeded in cutting it to pieces. Finding their plan balked by discovery, the next best thing was to take a strong position, invite attack, and prove themselves, as they really seemed to think they were, invincible. If their village was near, of which we have little proof, their desperate struggle, even if it was not crowned with victory, was to answer the purpose of covering its removal.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Our wounded were transported hither on *travois*—the regular Indian vehicle, made of long, lithe poles, swung like shafts from a mule at one end and dragging the ground at the other, or each end swung from a mule, hammock-like, for very painful cases. A wicker-work of willows and covered with blankets formed the resting place of the patient in the centre. All of the wounded men requiring hospital treatment are now being forwarded to Fort Fetterman by ambulances. One large deep grave on the grassy banks of the Rosebud contains our silent dead. After carefully packing the earth in the trench, a large fire was built over it, so that when the brutal enemy essays to do his usual rifling and mutilating he will either be foiled or else, perchance, will be compelled to grovel in the embers of many a camp-fire ere his search is rewarded. I am here reminded of the manner in which the simple-hearted Snakes mourned the loss of their single warrior killed. The dead brave was also buried near the battle-field, and all through the night we could hear a single voice near the spot wailing in a most pitiful manner. As we were preparing to move in the morning, it was noticed that one warrior would stoop over the grave and lament most bitterly for some moments, when he would retire to his work of packing up, and another would go through the same performance until a third would come forward as relief, and so on through the band. A few days previous one of their number was accidentally killed by the falling of his horse. Having no relatives to mourn his death, a member of the tribe was appointed to go through the necessary mental suffering. He was stripped, daubed all over with the most sombre shades of paint, and rode back and forth through the camp the live-long day, uttering the most harrowing cries of anguish, and even shedding tears. He was met with expressions of intense satisfaction by his red brethren everywhere, and he himself seemed to enter into the spirit of his imposed grief. If such were the outbursts from the love of only a single comrade by the brave Snakes, thought we, what would be the demoralization of our foes who had just been smitten to the extent of three or four score of their own people?

There were many narrow escapes and thrilling adventures during the contest, and to say that they were met with surpassing courage, and that every incident had its worthy hero, is language none too strong. If ever officers struggled with their whole strength, in unison, to carry the one great end, then ours did. As an organization, the column labored under numerous disadvantages, which in offering the general meed of praise, should not be overlooked. Many of the file were recruits of but a few months' standing; others had been well-nigh disheartened by the management and result of the battle of Powder River, which closed last Winter's campaign; and there were still others who had never heard the terrifying whoop of an Indian or the whistle of leaden missiles. Yet such men were heroes in the broadest acceptation of the term. Look back to it when they may, their work on this occasion will bring only the flush of true pride.

We have advices to the effect that eight companies of the Fifth Cavalry are now on the Little Powder, making their way westward to complete the circle, which means the knell of Sitting Bull. Gen. Terry is somewhere on the Powder, Gen. Gibbon believed to be on the Yellowstone, near the mouth of the Tongue, and our own force, now at the extreme western side of the cordon, in its home camp at the base of the Big Horn Mountain, about eighteen miles north of old Fort Kearny. That grand land mark, Cloud Peak, rises up close behind the first foot-hills which here shelter us, and hence the name of our supply depot. Our wagon train, which is now returning to Fort Fetterman, will at once return with about half a million pounds of supplies. Besides the force of 100 men that goes with it as escort, it will be accompanied back by five fresh companies of infantry and two of cavalry. Two hundred half-breed Sioux and about three hundred Ute and Pawnee Indians are also expected to join us at that time as scouts. All of our Crows and nearly all of the Snakes have already deserted us, their excuse being that they only came to fight one battle and in that one were disappointed in not capturing more ponies. However, many of them are expected to return as soon as they finish their customary *pow-wow*. While speaking of scouts it may be mentioned that "Buffalo Bill," the hunter-actor, will also join us soon in the capacity of scout. He has long wanted to identify himself with Gen. Crook's campaign in this capacity, but not until the last courier went in would the General listen to the employment of any but Indians as scouts. Gen. Crook is now satisfied that he has opposed to him no less than 3,000 well-armed, superbly-mounted warriors, and no aggressive movement will be undertaken until the arrival of needed supplies of ammunition, &c., and the additional force sent for. The greatest of all needs is an adequate corps of competent scouts and, to move in the dim light of our present knowledge of the actual whereabouts and numbers of the foe would only be time worse than wasted. A project, fraught with no little importance to the expedition and danger to the willing hero, is now on foot. Frank Guard, our Kauka scout and guide, who has on several occasions proved himself invaluable, volunteers to alone set out to find the Sioux village, if the General will secure for him the best horse in the command, and aid him in other necessary ways. He would be compelled to run a gantlet fairly bristling with the savage foe for a distance of at least 250 miles. His riding would be done principally in the night, while during daylight he would lie concealed in the groves of pine or almost inaccessible clefts of rock, so numerous in the region traversed. More than one or two men could not hope to steal up to the very shadow of the enemies' tepees and get the information required without discovery and consequent destruction. The brave Frank alone possesses the necessary knowledge for such a thrilling undertaking, as he was long a prisoner of the Chief he is now so ably assisting to overthrow, and during his years of incarceration studied not only the habits of the Sioux, but the geography of their domain as well. It was he who last March accomplished such a wonderful feat in leading our force on its celebrated night march to the village of Crazy Horse. At all events, two weeks will elapse ere we can move again. In the meantime horses are being placed in splendid trim, and all the wear and tear incident to such rough jaunts as the last remedied. No better spot for recuperation than Camp Cloud could be found in the entire Big Horn region. Here we

have an abundance of the most nutritious grasses, water from beautiful mountain streams, good wood adjacent, and fish and game everywhere plentiful.