



LIEUTENANT-COLONEL PLUMER.

Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Plumer belongs to the York and Lancaster Regiment, of which he became Lieutenant in 1876, Captain in 1882, and Major in 1893. Colonel Plumer served in the Soudan expedition of 1884 under Sir Gerald Graham as Adjutant of the First Battalion of his regiment, and was present in the engagement at El Teb and Tamai. He was mentioned in dispatches and received the medal with clasps, the fourth class of Medjidie, and Kheive's Star. Colonel Plumer's operations in the Matopos Hills, in Rhodesia, also gained him considerable credit.

ing solemn utterance to the words of a Psalm he knew by heart), proved a picture of rude simplicity and devoutness that will never be effaced from memory. With prayers and more hymns they passed the time till an hour after sunrise, when I had to take my departure. Hans declined to take my hand as I was leaving, but made no mention of payment. Possibly he had memories of a sovereign previously subscribed. But he said nothing, neither did I, for a good many reasons: one being that he asked me to call in again on a week-day, and he could perhaps give me some shooting. Someone had told him the rooineks were saying the Boers were not such good shots since the decrease of the game and the necessity for hunting for a living, but they were vastly mistaken. He would show me, one day how he could dispel that idea, and he did not go back on his word.

Well, time went on, and the following June it became necessary, in connection with the preliminary survey of our work, to pitch a camp somewhere in the vicinity of Hans's Farm, and, water being scarce thereabouts, I fixed it up with the old man for a pecuniary consideration, a promise of purchase of farm produce such as we might require during our stay, to allow us to take up quarters near a spring on his domains, about half-a-mile from, and in full view of, the farm. Britishers, he had sworn, he would never allow to trespass on his property under penalty of running foul of his pet rifle—an antiquated muzzle-loading instrument he had done duty with at Bronkhorst Spruit, on the stock of which some two-and-twenty small notches were cut, representing the number of rooi-boois (red-bois, i.e., British red-coats) he had accounted for at that massacre. Some how he seemed to have taken a liking for me, and repented for the nonce his bloodthirsty decision.

About the middle of the month one of our staff received a letter from a friend on the Rand giving a gorgeous synopsis of the proposed record reign celebrations in Johannesburg, and urging us to be present if it could be managed. Of course, the idea was out of the question, situated as we were, and one and all dolefully acknowledged the fact. Then it struck one particularly bright individual of our community—five, all told, and Britishers to the finger-tips—why not have a celebration of our own? A day's holiday for ourselves and the Kaffir hands, a couple of bottles of whisky, and something extra in the way of grub instead of bully-beef or sardines. But, best of all, we would invite Hans to come over and drink her Mujes's health in a bumper of his favourite dop! The former suggestions were endorsed on the spot, and we set about making preparations forthwith, and everything the night before the eventful day appeared to be complete. But we had forgotten something. We should have provided our national flag to flutter from the pole of our mess-tent, beneath the shadow of which to banquet and toast our beloved Sove-

reign. It was at that time impossible to procure any semblance of a Union-Jack, and consequently there was a slight depression over the little loyal convalesce. But X—, our bright unit in the shape of a hot-headed Hibernian, came to the rescue in a novel manner. He repaired to the office tent for a quiet hour or so after the rest had turned in, and the result of his labours, as displayed to his delighted admirers in the morning, was a passably designed, fair-sized Union-Jack painted in water-colours on a sheet of tracing cloth. After breakfast we attached it to a strip of bush-stuff and nailed that to the mess-tent pole, giving three hearty cheers as the operation concluded. Then we sent over one of our Kaffirs with a polite verbal message to old Hans to come and join us in a drink. The boy returned more rapidly than we supposed possible, badly blown, and in a pitiful state generally. He had just finished telling us that he had experienced a bad time of it, and that Hans had wrathfully expressed his intention of replying promptly to the message himself, when a bullet sang just above our heads, and in its flight cut a hole clean through our flag on the bottom corner nearest the stick. We just gave a hurried glance in the direction of the farm to catch sight of a wreath of smoke spreading, and then there followed a unanimous stampede for a small isolated clump of bush at the back of the camp. Here we should be in comparative safety, and beyond danger from any marksman at the farm. Then a second bullet passed over the mess-tent with a slight snip, and buried itself in the hillside beyond to the right of us.

"This is getting beyond a joke, boys," I half-whispered. "I wonder what game that old devil thinks he is playing with us now?"

"We stood there for another uncomfortable five minutes, then, as no more shots followed, I ventured to peep round the trees.

"The old villain has shot our flag away!" I announced, as I drew back again into cover. The maker of our national banner started to curse, and then stopped suddenly.

"I'll show him what stuff we are made of!" he said quietly, though defiantly. And before we were aware of his intention he had stepped out into the open and was making towards the flagless tent. We called out to him not to be a fool and return to cover. But he paid no heed to the warning, and we therefore had to await eventualities, fearful lest a tragedy were in store.

A couple of minutes later, peering eagerly round the edge of the bush, we saw X— mounted on a camp stool, hammer and nails in one hand and the broken stick with the flag attached in the other, in the act of fixing it up again in its former position. Not a sign of wavering or nervousness did he display, though it took him fully a minute to complete his purpose. Still there came no shot to break the agony of our suspense. The action satisfactorily accomplished,

X— lowered his hands from their position above his head, turned round on the stool and shook his clenched fist menacingly in the direction of the farm, crying as he did so, "God save the Queen and Rule Britannia you silly old fool!"

That was as far as he got if he intended holding forth any further on the subject, for we watchers at that moment spotted a puff of smoke over in front of the farm, and fell back as one man into cover as a third bullet snipped over the same line of fire, and splattered on a rock not twenty yards distant.

A loud, prolonged curse from the Irishman announced the fact that his artistic production had again kissed the red dust at his feet!

"That was enough for me. "We must fetch him in, boys, or there'll be murder done next shot," I cried. "We can manage it before the old man has time to reload and take aim."

It took is all our time and strength, but we bore him out of danger, kicking and struggling like one possessed. We were all of us cowards not to back him up. Why should a dirty, ignorant Boer be permitted to insult our flag with impunity? He was furious and slanged our chief till I really feared it would lead to ultimate dismissal, despite the extenuating circumstances, for B— was a bit of a martinet with his assailants when it came to disobeying orders after fair warning.

However, by the time he had cooled down somewhat, and under decent control again, one of Hans' Kaffir hands appeared on the scene, and halted some distance off uncertainly.

"What do you want, you black imp?" I shouted to him in Dutch. B— was not an adept at either Kaffir or Dutch, and I invariably acted as his mouth-piece on such occasions.

"Baas says, put that flag up again, and he shoot you all next time!" came the startling reply. "You put up Transvaal-English flag and he no shoot more."

I did not quite comprehend the latter part of the message, and turned to repeat it to the others. But X— was equal to it.

"Curse his insults!" he thundered; "he means the white rag!" Then, turning to the Kaffir, "I'll baas Hans we'll see him and all his breed further first! Now voetzak, you black devil, or I'll knock your head off!"

The boy, thinking he was in for a hiding, took to his heels before I had time to interpose and moderate the reply he was the bearer of.

However, we had not long to wait for an answer, for very soon after we heard the sounds of hoots as Hans jolted up to the tents on his sturdy Basuto pony and called to us that he wanted a few words. Motioning to the others to keep X— in check, I, as the most likely one to deal successfully with him at the outset, went out to interview the daring old Dopper.

The veteran sat there on his pony, rifle in hand, flourishing a vierkleur—a small bunch of red, white, blue and green ribbons tied to a sjambok—the Transvaal national colours.

"Good morning, mynheer rooinek."

he said, roughly, as I coolly walked up to and halted alongside of him. I returned the verbal salute but refused the weather-beaten, dirty paw he extended with curt dignity.

"You refuse my hand?" he grunted. "Certainly," I retorted, "after what has happened. Do you know I could demand satisfaction from your Government for such an outrage on inoffensive and unarmed men?"

The old man lifted up the front of his hat brim and smiled at me amusedly. "I only wanted to let you know that no British flag of that colour ever flies on my farm. If you want one take this and stick it up." He held out his vierkleur. I hesitated and looked him full in the face.

"Then we must honour our Queen under that for a flag?"

He nodded. "Then we'll do without one," I said decisively. "You understand me. If our flag can't go up without murderous interference on your part you may take my word for it yours doesn't take its place. And what's more, you try the business on and—"

At this juncture, watching my opportunity, I dexterously jerked the rifle from his grasp, shouted to the other fellows not to be alarmed at the report, and pulled the trigger with the muzzle pointing harmlessly to earth at twenty yards range. It kicked a bit, but I didn't mind that. Then I handed it back politely to the astonished old Dopper and warned him not to attempt to load it again, or I should get angry with him. We neither of us spoke for close on a minute, but gazed at each other steadily. Presently he motioned me to take back his weapon whilst he dismounted. I complied, but waited for him to speak again first.

"Rooinek," he began at last, "I've never met one like you and your friend who put back the flag before. You've pluck that would do you credit as one of Oom Paul's burghers. . . . But let us say no more about this. It was only my fun, and I wanted to show you the Boers are as good shots as they were in the old days. I will tell the other rooinek I am sorry. I do not tolerate your flag. You will have none of mine. We respect each other and are satisfied. Let us drink and be friends, and then I must leave you to celebrate your festival alone. It is not for me or mine to join in your rejoicings."

After due deliberation I accepted the penitent Hans' apology on behalf of the camp, and when a little later he was prevailed upon to drink to the Queen as vrouw, as he termed it, without betraying his rude, staunch patriotism and lessening his hatred of the British as a community in the slightest degree, even X— thawed a trifle. He met us as temporary boon companions and it ended where it began, and I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion that the old Dopper returned to his squalid farm with a clear conscience of having done his duty to his God, to us, and to his beloved land and folk.

If his precepts had only been as straight as his shooting!



NAVAL BRIGADE OFFICERS.