

hardly sufficient gloaming to set off the flash of the Mausers. There was no sight of the enemy, but there was death all round. But the Highlanders had not suffered the cruel, searching fire for nothing. Beaten back by the Mauser bullets, they came across an outlying trench, which they had passed in the night. This work was held by the Scandinavian contingent, who, unlike the Boers, met our men face to face, and a death struggle ensued at the point of the bayonet, which was, no doubt, quite a refreshing incident to our gallant Highlanders after emerging from the ghastly death trap of the Boers. I saw a few of the wounded of this advance trench. The Scandinavian in command had a bayonet thrust through his stomach, and was dying. He signed to me that he was thirsty. I lifted him up and gave him a cup of condensed milk. A wounded companion lying by his side said, in very good English: "Its no use to give it him, sir, it only comes out of the hole in his stomach." This was true, but still the poor fellow had the sensation of the refreshing draught passing down his throat. It was his last drink. I can see his eager, hungry look even now, and though an enemy, I wish I could have done more for him. A few hours afterwards he was buried by the side of the heroes of the Highland Brigade.

Hot fighting still continued on our right. The Guards and all available troops were pushed forward to check any attempt of the enemy to follow up our reverse. It was strange to see the skirmishing line of the Gordon's come within the zone of the enemy's fire. It was my first experience of smokeless powder—with *both* forces—and there was a strange weirdness about it that struck me forcibly. There was absolutely nothing to denote that men were in bloody conflict, but the ever trickling stream of wounded. Men moved forward—front, half-right, half-left—and bringing their rifles to the ready, no puff of smoke denoted they had fired, and no sign but a sharp report from the enemy's trenches marked the point from which one of our men had received his

quietus. The sharp crackle of the rifles was incessant.

There is little for the picture-maker in modern warfare. Troops are all dressed in monotonous colour, the tone of the landscape. There is no apparent distinctive rank, for the respective grades are ripped from the shoulder-straps; officers carry rifles and bayonets, from general to corporal; the Highlanders wear a kharki apron to hide the target of the kilt; the lances of the troopers are coloured the same hue; cannon are painted kharki, and even war correspondents have been compelled to dye their piebald or grey horses with Condy's fluid, to avoid the vigilant eye of the Boer snipe.

The enemy's position at Magersfontein was too strong for Methuen's little force to attack. Some fifteen thousand Boers were lying behind most perfect defensive trenches, from the head of the Camel Rock to its tail, and in rifle-pits on the plain as far as the river on our flank, some six miles of earth-works. It was a task that a general with 20,000 men would think twice about before tackling, and Lord Methuen had little over half that number. This incident of Magersfontein is the first check, up to date, of the only victorious general in the campaign. Belmont, Grasspan, and Modder River were all positions of considerable strength; but Magersfontein is a tougher nut than all to crack.

---

## II.

### MODDER RIVER, JANUARY 8.

THE CROWN and Royal Hotel, when I returned from the battlefield to Modder River, had never before, in the short period of its existence, seen so many visitors thronged in its corridors, outhouses, or closely nursing the shade of its verandahs. In the evening it was a veritable Hotel Dieu, for its present patrons were the survivors of the wreck of the Highland Brigade—and a more battered and bloody crew I have seldom seen. The ambulance carts, with their smart teams of six or ten mules, were trotting up with their sorry burdens till late at night. By the