

as it was uncomfortable. I stayed longer than I had anticipated with my wife's people, and finally, yielding to an irresistible desire, gave myself up to the service of Her Majesty the Queen.

Within a week the war had broken out in real earnest. Soldiers were wanted on every side. I joined a corps of rough riders, and was not long in getting a whiff of gunpowder, and seeing a little of real soldiering; sixteen hours in the saddle, four hours' rest, and then another long spell will satisfy most men's craving for excitement. To be candid, a married man in my position, although he might not shrink from hardships, naturally would not care to be made a target of to please anyone, whether he was in the right or not, so I felt that I did not care how soon the war was over.

We had been ordered to do scouting work, and I must confess the chances of meeting my friend Staal, remote as they were, added considerable interest to the proceedings. We were, at one time, less than a hundred miles from the memorable spot where I had made the brute's acquaintance, and I even went as far as to make enquiries, with the idea that he might be fighting, and was told on good authority that he was attached to a small force of mounted Boers, probably doing similar work to our own.

It was absurd to fancy we should meet, and in my cooler moments, it seemed hardly worth while to revenge a mere drunken insult, but these moments were few, and rankling in my breast was the memory of the frenzied passion of the time when I had faced him in the train and felt that I was powerless to strike, so I determined to take the chance if it came.

Fortune still continued to smile on me.

One day three of us were sent out scouting among the hills. Our orders were to ride in different directions and meet at a certain place. There was every possibility of a skirmish. On the right was some broken country which the fighting Boer loves so well, affording as it does plenty of cover for loose warfare. Before we had been separated five minutes we heard some twenty or thirty

shots, then a great many more, then a few heads appeared. Our men were adopting the Boer tactics, and fighting in loose order. It was a skirmish, but evidently we had the advantage, being on the higher ground with better cover. A pause, then the shooting grew less frequent; the real battle was not coming off to-day.

One or two riderless horses were galloping about. I saw one, evidently wounded, stumble and fall. His rider, thrown clear of him, was apparently stunned. It was the merest chance that made me dismount and see if he wanted help. As I drew near, a grin of delight must have burst over my face.

What extraordinary luck! The one man in the whole world I particularly wanted to meet was rising, half dazed, to his feet and looking towards his rifle, which had been thrown a yard or two away.

I came rapidly towards him on foot, drawing my revolver as I did so. I was about to redeem my promise. Hate had developed into pity. It was not for me to amuse myself—soldier as I was for the nonce—by boring holes in ill-mannered and unarmed Dutchmen at five yards' range. The situation was almost humorous. I determined to be polite at all hazards.

"Good morning, Mr Staal, I'm really very pleased to meet you, sir. You will probably remember me."

The answer was inaudible, but the start of recognition unmistakable.

"I have come to fulfil a promise I made you some weeks ago. Mr Staal, excuse me," covering him as I spoke with my revolver, "I don't want to kill you, but you must leave your gun alone. Remember you are my prisoner."

The reply was an angry scowl. He made a quick movement forward.

One barrel of my revolver was emptied. A strong right arm that might have done some honest work hung helpless.

The scowl had changed to a look of mingled fear and pain. Possibly he had never suffered acute pain before. I had, but mine was a different sort, and harder to bear.