

the right front, and the Maxim fire from the leading truck was replied to by their quick-firing guns and their pounder Maxims. The firing was very hot. The enemy soon retired, and the train steadily advanced. When the Boers resumed fire from their guns, their gunners were worried as to the proper range by the train's moving to and fro on the line. Colonel Baden-Powell, wishing the train to return, sent out Captain Fitzclarence with a squadron of men to cover the retreat, and a sharp engagement soon occurred. The Boers made persistent efforts to turn the British flank, and Fitzclarence was soon hampered by wounded men, whom he would not leave. A message was sent to Mafeking by the phonophore attached to the railway telegraph, and Captain Lord Charles Beñtinek was sent out with his squadron to disengage Fitzclarence. The enemy retired before midday, and all the British wounded were brought in by the train, on which only three men had been slightly hurt. The spirit of the defenders of the place was shown by the fact that amongst the railway detachment helping to man the lines to the north were two ladies, the wife and daughter of a railway employé. They absolutely refused to take shelter in the women's laager, and wielded their own Lee-Metfords with skill against the foe.

This first engagement with the enemy, in which the conduct of all concerned was highly praised by the commandant in a general order, raised the spirits of the defenders. On October 16th a flag of truce came in from General Snyman, of the Boer army, with a message hoping "that a surrender would be made in order to save further bloodshed, and stating that we might now, if we wished, leave off firing." Baden-Powell's reply was to the effect that "as far as leaving off was concerned, we had not yet begun." The truce lasted until 4.45 p.m., and the inhabitants of the beleaguered town emerged from the shelter of sand-bags, redoubts, bomb-proofs, and cellars, to do a brisk trade in pieces of shells picked up in the streets, sold at from

three shillings to four shillings a piece. Some of the boys in the town did active service in the defence, one playing a man's part well at the loopholes of one fort with his rifle, and another loading the machine belts for a gun. On the night of Thursday, October 19th, there was an impromptu concert at Riesle's Hotel, where men in top-boots, breeches, and shirts, amidst a party of ladies, joined in the chorus of merry songs.

Correspondence between Baden-Powell and General Cronje formed at times a feature of the siege which made the British public smile. In reply to a letter from the Boer general confessing his inability to carry the town by storm, and declaring his intention of bombardment from a siege gun which was soon to arrive, the British leader informed him that the town was surrounded by mines, some arranged to explode of themselves and others connected with headquarters. The gaol, he said, was chiefly occupied by the general's own countrymen, and over this a yellow flag was placed, to enable him to avoid firing on it. He further pointed out that, if the Boer general insisted on shelling a town containing inoffensive women and children, his action would afford a precedent for the British forces when they invaded the Transvaal.

The Boer commander did shell the town, and heavily, with siege guns. On October 24th they opened fire, and at two o'clock a hundred-pounder sent a shell shrieking into the market square. About five shells per hour were sent in from this weapon, and the intervals were filled up by the fire of twelve-pounder Maxims, Nordenfeldts, Hotchkiss, Krupps, and other guns. One of the great projectiles wrecked three rooms at Reisle's Hotel. The enemy were entrenched at about two thousand yards distance, beyond effective rifle range, and the garrison and inhabitants, unable to reply to the heavy large guns, had to dodge the enemy's shells as best they could, aided by certain signals given by horns blown from look-out places. On October 24th and the following day about three hundred shells