

not pass through, however, but dismounting watered their horses at the dam, then, leaving the animals hidden behind the farm buildings, proceeded to push the gun into position behind the orchard wall. This done, they arranged themselves in line on either side, lay down, lit their pipes, and waited.

Half an hour passed, the leaden streak in the east had turned to saffron, and from saffron to pink. The outline of the horizon to the west became suddenly blurred. A ripple, a movement, ran through the prone figures behind the wall. They sat up, cautiously peering through its crevices, with faces alert and eyes fixed on the fast thickening brown mist staining the western skies pale blue.

Then on a rise some mile and a half away a single figure appeared and stood for a minute looking down at the farm, other figures joined him, and then suddenly were gone. A pause followed, a thick mass of dust arose, and then cleared away; another pause, broken by a shrill hissing in the air above, swelling to a roar, a resounding crack, with it a crash, and a fountain of red earth spouted up some hundred yards beyond the farm. A solemn "um, um, um, um," from the slim shape behind the wall rose in instant answer to the challenge, then the sharp rattle of Mauser fire.

"Good," said the Dutch leader, peering from the line of kopjes beyond. "Let them come on, waste their strength against a hundred men and one gun, the fools, then I begin."

The uproar increased. The shells were now falling thick and fast around the white homestead, but for a while sparing it, then at last it came. A dull thud was heard; a ragged brown hole appeared in its white side, a muffled roar from within, and out from door and window trickled thin streams of brown smoke. From that closed side window it poured a volume.

"Shooting at an empty house," said the Dutchman. "Almaagtig, what fools these English are!"