

mistake as to myself. I beg you, therefore, to put an end to a false position, and allow me to leave, before you make any further disclosures which may compromise you and these other gentlemen."

Whether this declaration would have had any pacifying effect upon him had I not prefaced it with my ill-advised laughter I cannot say ; but the laugh seemed to goad him into a paroxysm of such uncontrollable rage that he could barely endure to hear me to the end, and when I ended, he cried, in a voice positively thick and choking with fury—

"You are a liar, a smooth-tongued, hypocritical, cowardly liar ; and having done your dirty traitor's work, you seek to cheat us by these lies. I know them to be lies."

This was unendurable. However much the person for whom this angry fool mistook me deserved this flood of abuse, it was certain that I didn't, and I wasn't going to put up with it. The quarrel, which belonged obviously to somebody else, was fast being foisted on to me, but no man can stand that sort of talk, and my temper began to heat up quickly. I moved a pace or two nearer, to be within striking distance, and then gave him a chance of retracting.

"I have explained to you that you have made a mistake, and in return you call me a liar. I repeat you are entirely in error, and I call upon you, whoever you are, to withdraw your words unconditionally, make such enquiries as will satisfy you of your blunder, and then apologise to me. Otherwise——"

He listened with a smile on his face, and shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, at my unfinished sentence.