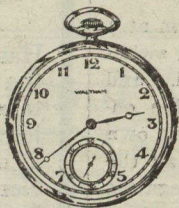


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THE WINDS of the WORLD

(Continued from page 19.)

"Yes. Most extraordinary thing. You know that a few hours ago D Squadron were all sitting about in groups looking miserable? We set it down to their trooper being murdered, and another man being missing. Well, just about the time you and Warrington drove off in the mess shay, they all bucked up and began grinning! Wouldn't say a word. Just grinned and became the perkier squadron of the lot!

"Now they're all sleeping like two-year-olds. Reason? Not a word of reason! I saw young Warrington just now on his way to their quarters with a lantern, and if he can find any of 'em awake perhaps he can get the truth out of 'em, for they'll talk to him when they won't to anybody else. By the way, Warrington can't have come in, with you, did he?"

Kirby ignored the question.

"Did you tell Warrington to go and ask them?" he demanded.

"Yes. Passed him in the dark, but did not recognize him by the smell. No—no! Got as near him as I could, and then leaned up against the scent to have a word with him! Musk! Never smelt anything like it in my life! Talk about girls! He must be in love with half India, and native at that! Brazen-faced young monkey! I asked him where he got the disinfectant, and he told me he fell into a mud-puddle!"

"Perhaps he did," said Kirby. "Was there mud on him?"

"Couldn't see. Didn't dare get so near him! Don't you think he ought to be spoken to? I mean, the eve of war's the eve of war and all that kind of thing, but—"

"I wish you'd let me see the Orders of the Day," Kirby interrupted. "I want to make an addition to them."

"I'll send an orderly."

"Wish you would."

FIVE minutes later Kirby sat at his private desk, while Brammle puffed at a cigar by the window. Kirby, after a lot of thinking, wrote: "Risaldar-Major Ranjoor Singh (D Squadron) assigned to special duty." He handed the orders back to Brammle, and the major eyed the addition with subdued amazement.

"What'll D Squadron say?" he asked.

"Remains to be seen," said Kirby.

Outside in the muggy blackness that shuts down on India in the rains, Warrington walked alone, swinging a lantern and chuckling to himself as he reflected what D Squadron would be likely to invent as a reason for the smell that walked with him. For he meant to wake D Squadron and learn things.

But all at once it occurred to him that he had left the babu's loin-cloth on the inside front seat of the shay; and, because if that were seen it would have given excuse for a thousand tales too many and too imaginative, he hurried in search of it, taking a short cut to where by that time the shay should be. On his way, close to his destination, he stumbled over something soft that tripped him. He stooped, swung the lantern forward, and picked up—the missing leather apron from behind the shay.

The footpath on which he stood was about a yard wide; the shay could not possibly have come along it. And it certainly had been behind the shay when they left the barracks. Moreover, close examination proved it to be the

identical apron beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Warrington began to hum to himself. And then he ceased from humming. Then he set the lantern down and stepped away from it sideways until its light no longer shone on him. He listened, as a dog does, with intelligence and skill. Then, suddenly, he sprang and lit on a bulky mass that yielded—gasped—spluttered—did everything but yell.

"So you rode on the luggage-rack behind the carriage, did you, babuji?" he smiled. "And curled under the apron to look like luggage when we passed the guard, eh?"

"But, my God, sahib!" said a plaintive voice. "Should I walk through Delhi naked? You, who wear pants, you laugh at me, but I assure you sahib—"

"Hush!" ordered Warrington; and the babu seemed very glad to hush.

"There was a note in a corner of that cloth of yours!"

"And the sahib found it? Oh, then I am relieved. I am preserved from pangs of mutual regret!"

"Why didn't you give that note to Colonel Kirby sahib, when you had the chance? Eh?" asked Warrington, keeping firm hold of him.

"Sahib! Your honor! Not being yet remunerated on account of ring and verbal message duly delivered, commercial precedent was all on my side that I should retain further article of value pending settlement. Now, I ask you—"

"Where was Ranjoor Singh when he gave you that ring and message?" demanded Warrington sternly, increasing his grip on the babu's fat arm.

"Sahib, when I have received payment for first service rendered, my disposition may be changed. I am as yet in condition of forma pauperis."

Still holding him tight, Warrington produced twenty rupees in paper money.

"Can you see those, babuji? See them? Then earn them!"

"Oh, my God, sahib, I have positive-lee earned a lakh of rupees this night already!"

"Where was Risaldar-Major Ranjoor Singh when he—"

FOOTSTEPS were approaching—undoubtedly a guard on his way to investigate. The babu seemed to sense Warrington's impatience.

"Sahib," he said, "I am very meek person, having family of wife and children all dependent. Is that rupees twenty? I would graciously accept same, and positivelee hold my tongue!"

The steps came nearer.

"I was on my way to D Squadron quarters, sahib, to narrate story and pass begging bowl. Total price of story rupees twenty. Or else the sahib may deliver me to guard, and guard shall be regaled free gratis with full account of evening's amusement? Yes?"

The steps came nearer yet. Recognizing an officer, the men halted a few paces away.

"Sahib, for the sum of rupees twenty I could hold tongue for twenty years, unless in meantime deceased, in which case—"

"Take 'em!" ordered Warrington; and the babu's fingers shut tight on the money.

"Guard!" ordered Warrington. "Put