

ed Warrington. "Get under cover and watch. Stay here until you're relieved, unless something particularly worth reporting happens; in that case, hurry and report. For instance"—he hesitated, trying to imagine something out of the unimaginable—"suppose the risaldar-major were to come out, then give him the message and come home with him. But—oh, suppose the place takes fire, or there's a riot, or you hear a fight going on inside—then hurry to barracks—understand?"

The wet trooper nodded and saluted. "Get into a shadow, then, and keep as dry as you can," ordered Warrington. "Come on!" he called to the other man.

And a second later he was charging through the street as if he rode with despatches through a zone of rifle fire. Behind him clattered a rain-soaked trooper and two horses.

Colonel Kirby stepped out of his bath-room just as Warrington arrived, and arranged his white dress-tie before the sitting-room mirror.

"Looks fishy to me, sir," said Warrington, hurrying in and standing where the rain from his wet clothes would do least harm.

There was a space on the floor between two tiger-skins where the matting was a little threadbare. Messengers, orderlies or servants always stood on that spot. After a moment, however, Kirby's servant brought Warrington a bathroom mat.

"How d'ye mean?"

Warrington explained.

"What did the police say?"

"Said they were busy."

"Now, I could go to the club," mused Kirby, "and see Hetherington, and have a talk with him, and get him to sign a search-warrant. Armed with that, we could—"

"Perhaps persuade a police officer to send two constables with it to-morrow morning!" said Warrington, with a grin.

"Yes," said Kirby.

"And if we do much on our own account we'll fall foul of the Indian Penal Code, which altereth every week," said Warrington.

"If it weren't for the fact that I particularly want a word with him," said Kirby, giving a last tweak to his tie and reaching out for his mess-jacket that the servant had laid on a chair, "there'd not be much ground that I can see for action of any kind. He has a right to go where he likes."

That point of view did not seem to have occurred to Warrington before; nor did he quite like it, for he frowned.

"On the other hand," said Kirby, diving into his mess-jacket and shrugging his neat shoulders until they fitted into it as a charger fits into his skin, "under the circumstances—and taking into consideration certain private information that has reached me—if I were supposed to be behind a bolted door in the bazaar, I'd rather appreciate it if Ranjoor Singh, for instance, were to—ah—take action of some kind."

"Exactly, sir."

"Hallo—what's that?"

* * * * *

A MOTOR-CAR, driven at racing speed, thundered up the lane between the old stacked cannon and came to a panting standstill by the colonel's outer door. A gruff question was answered gruffly, and a man's step sounded on the veranda. Then

the servant flung the door wide, and a British soldier stepped smartly into the room, saluted and held out a telegram.

Kirby tore it open. His eyes blazed, but his hands were steady. The soldier held out a receipt book and a pencil, and Kirby took time to scribble his initials in the proper place. Warrington, humming to himself, began to squeeze the rain out of his tunic to hide impatience. The soldier saluted, faced about and hurried to the waiting car. Then Kirby read the telegram. He nodded to Warrington. Warrington, his finger-ends pressed tight into his palms and his forearms quivering, raised one eyebrow.

"Yes," said Kirby.

"War, sir?"

"War."

"We're under orders?"

"Not yet. It says, 'War likely to be general. Be ready.' Here, read it for yourself."

"They wouldn't have sent us that if—"

"Addressed to O. C. troops. They had those ready written out and sent one to every O. C. on the list the second they knew."

"Well, sir?"

"Leave the room, Lal Singh!"

The servant, who was screwing up his courage to edge nearer, did as he was told.

KIRBY stood still, facing the mirror, with both arms behind him.

"They're certain to send native Indian troops to Europe," he said.

"We're ready, sir! We're ready to a shoe-string! We'll go first!"

"We'll be last, Warrington, supposing we go at all, unless we find Ranjoor Singh! They'll send us to do police work in Bangal, or to guard the Bombay docks and watch the other fellows go. I'm going to the club. You'd better come with me. Hurry into dry clothes." He glanced at the clock. "We'll just have time to drive past the house where you say he's supposed to be, if you hurry."

The last three words were lost, for Captain Warrington had turned into a thunderbolt and disappeared; the noise of his going was as when a sudden windstorm slams all the doors at once. A moment later he could be heard shouting from outside his quarters to his servant to be ready for him.

He certainly bathed, for the noise of the tub overturning when he was done with it was unmistakable. And

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