

pected to produce action. He was a Bengali babu, bare of leg and fat of paunch, who had enough imagination to conceive of a regiment in receipt of the news, and the mental picture so appealed to him that he held his protruding stomach in both hands while he ran down-street like a land-slide, his mouth agape and his eyes all but popping from his head.

He reached the barrack gate speechless and breathless, just as Ranjoor Singh rode up on Bagh, mud-plastered after an afternoon's work teaching scouts. He clung to the risaldar-major's stirrup, and was dragged ten feet, slobbering and bubbling incoherencies, before the savage charger could be reined in and made to stand.

"What is it, oh, babuji?" laughed Ranjoor Singh. "Are the Moslems out after your temple gods?"

"Aha! Run! Gallop! Bring all the guns!" This in English, all of it. "Blood in the gutter—blood like water—twenty policemen are already dead and your men have done it! Gallop quicklee. Jaldee, jaldee!"

"Go and get twenty more policemen to wipe away the blood!" advised Ranjoor Singh, sitting back in the saddle to get a better look at him, and reining back the impatient Bagh. "I am not a constabell; I am a soldier."

"Aha! Yes. You better hurry. All your men are underneath — what-you-call-it? — bottom dog. You better hurry like slippery! One Afridi is beginning things, and where is one Afridi with a long knife are many more kinds of trouble!"

THE babu was recovering his breath, and with it his yearning to behold a regiment careering through the barrack gate to the rescue. He still clung to the stirrup, and since he would not let go, Ranjoor Singh proceeded to tow him, with a cautious, booted right leg ready to spur Bagh away to the left should the brute commence to kick.

"You are hard-hearted person, and your fate is forever sealed if you refuse to listen!" wailed the babu. "The blood of your men lies in street calling aloud for vengeance!" A university education works wonders for babu vocabulary. "I tell you it is a riot, and most extreme serious affair!"

That was the wrong appeal to make, as the babu himself would have known had he been less excited. In time of riot the place for a Sikh officer would be at the regiment's headquarters, in readiness for the order from a civil magistrate without which interference would cost him his commission. But the babu was beside himself, what with breathlessness and disappointment. He decided it was expedient to strengthen his appeal, and his imagination was still working.

"There will be two regiments of Tommees — drunken Tommees, presentlee. They will take your men to jail. The Tommees are already on the way. Should they get there first your men will be everlastingly disgraced as well as mulcted. You should hurry."

Ranjoor Singh ceased from frowning and looked satisfied. If there were trouble enough in the bazaar to call for the despatch of British soldiers to the scene, then nothing in the world was more certain than that any men of his who happened to be in danger would be rescued with neatness and speed. If there was no trouble yet, there would very likely be some swearing when the soldiers got there. In the meantime he was wet through, both with rain and perspiration. The thought of a bath and dry clothes urged him like the voice of a siren calling; and he had shown the babu all the courtesy his Sikh creed and profession demanded.

So he clucked to Bagh, and the big brute plunged into a canter, just as eager for his sais and gram as his master was for clean dry clothes. For two strides the babu clung to the stirrup, wrenching it free from the risaldar-major's foot; then the horse

grew savage at the unaccustomed extra weight, and lashed out hard behind him, missing the babu twice in quick succession, but filling him full to the stuttering teeth with fear. Ranjoor Singh touched the horse with his right spur, and in a second the babu lay along on his stomach in the mud.

He lay for a minute, believing himself dead. Then he cried aloud, since he knew he must be broken into pieces. Then he felt himself. At last he rose, and after a speechless glance at the back of the risaldar-major, started slowly along the street toward where the "riot" was.

"It is enough," he said in English, since he was a "failed B.A.," "to try the patience of Job's comforter. This militaree business has corrupted even Sikh cavalry until they no longer are dependable.



"Sahib—"

"All right. I know," said Kirby, though he did not know how he knew.

Yes. It is time! It is time indeed that German influence be felt, in order that British yoke may be cast off for good and all. Now I take it a German soldier would have arrested everybodee, and I would have received much kudos in addition to cash reward paid for information. In meantime, it is to be seen whether or not—yes, precisely—a pencil is mightier than a sword, which means that a babu is superior in wit and general attainments."

HE began to run again, at a truly astonishing pace, considering his paunch and all-round ungainliness, getting over the ground faster than many a thin man could have done. As he ran his lips worked, for though he had no breath to spare for speech, his brain was forming words that crowded for expression.

"The Sikhs!" he screamed, as he came within earshot of the milling crowd, through which four small policemen were trying to force a path. "The Sikhs! They ride to the rescue!"

"The Sikhs!" yelled somebody on the edge of the crowd, who had more breath but not enough imagination to ask questions. "The Sikhs are coming! Run!"

"The Sikhs! The Sikhs!"

The crowd took it up. And since it was a crowd, and there was nothing else to do; and since it had had protection but no violence at Sikh hands ever since '57; and since the babu really did look frightened, it shouted that the Sikhs were coming until it believed the news and had made itself thoroughly afraid.

"Run, brothers!" shouted some man in the middle who owned a voice like a bull-buffalo's. And that being a new idea and just as good as any, the whole crowd took to its heels, leaving the four

policemen staring at the body of a dead Sikh, and the fat babu complacently regarding all of them.

Presently a European police officer trotted up on a white pony, examined the body, asked a dozen questions of the four policemen, wrote in his memorandum book, and ordered the body to be taken to the morgue.

"Come here, you!" he called to the babu. So the babu waddled to him, judging his salaam shrewdly so that it suggested deference while leaving no doubt as to the intended insult.

"What do you know about this?"

"A S peaceful citizen in pursuance of daily bread and other perquisites, I claim protection of police! While proceeding on way was thrown down violently by galloping horse whose rider urged same in opposite direction. Observe my deshabille. Regard this mud on my person. I insist on full rigor of the law for which I am taxed inordinately.

"What sort of a horse? Who rode it? How long ago?"

"Am losing all count of time since being overwhelmed. Should say verree recently, however. The horse was ridden by a person who urged it vehemently. It was a brown horse, I think."

"Which way did he go?"

"How should I know? He went away, knocking me over in transit and causing me great distress."

"Was he armed?"

"Two arms. With one he steered the animal. With the other he urged him, thus."

The babu described in pantomime an imaginary human riding for his life, whom not even the adroitest police officer could recognize as Ranjoor Singh, even had he been acquainted with the risaldar-major.

"Had he a weapon of any kind?"

"Not knowing, would prefer to say nothing about that. It was the horse—with the rump of the animal that he hit me, and not with a sword of any kind."

"Well, you had better come with me to the office, and there we'll take down your deposition."

"Am I arrested?"

"No. You're a witness."

"On the contrary, I am prosecutor! I demand as stated formerly full rigor of the law. I demand capture and arrest, together with fine and imprisonment of party assaulting me, failing which I shall address complaint to government!"

"Come along. We'll talk about that at the office."

So the babu was escorted to the stuffy little police office, where he was made to sit on a bench beside ten native witnesses of other crimes; and presently he was called to a desk at which a native clerk presided. There he was made to recite his story again, and since he had had time in which to think, he told a most amazing, disconnected yarn that looked even more untruthful by the time the clerk had written his own version of it on a sheet. To this version the babu was required to swear, and he did so without a blink.

Then there was more delay, while somebody was found who knew him and could certify to his address, and it was nearly evening by the time he was allowed to go.

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It was nearly evening when a messenger arrived at the barracks to report the death of a Sikh trooper by murder in the bazaar. The man's name and regimental number proved him to have been one of D. Squadron's men, and since its commander, Ranjoor Singh, was then in quarters, the news was brought to him at once.

"Killed where?" he demanded; so they told him.

"Exactly when?"

It became evident to Ranjoor Singh that there had been some truth after all in the babu's tale.

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