

Mentally raving at the postponement of his greatness, he picked up the telegram and left. He was met on the steps by the head clerk, who stood against a pillar, his hands behind his back, yawning his *ennui* and waiting for the night.

"The Commander-in-Chief!" he exclaimed in answer to Montagu-Murray's query; "oh, I must apologise! Really thought you had left. Quite slipped my memory! I am instructed to tell you that the Commander-in-Chief is absent in the Mofussil. He much regrets being unable to meet you."

"I am obliged for the information, sir, but I shall feel compelled to lodge a complaint concerning the conduct of officers of the Department, and only hope you will not be dismissed. And the Commander-in-Chief will return——"

"Well, really it's impossible to say at present. His inspections may last any time, you know. But, ah,—yes, perhaps it will be the safer method to drop you a line when he will be at your disposal."

"Horribly annoying, to be sure! And I left the regiment at an hour's notice!"

Clerk laughs uproariously at a man who walks up the drive just like other men.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, sir. You may depend upon hearing at the Commander-in-Chief's earliest convenience."

Montagu-Murray (aside): "The cad! He's beginning to be afraid of losing his billet."

Montagu-Murray was borne away on the wings of his anger. The city was crowded and busy unto the war, and as he passed along Sackville Street, with an eye to nothing in particular, it was none other than Chesney, of the 38th Dogras, who ran bolt into him, and for the sake of politeness declared that he was truly deed at the idea of meeting him there.

"And I'm far worse deed to see you. How the deuce did you get away from the regiment? An appointment too?"

"Yes, as I'm alive! Congratulate me!"

"So I do, old fellow. What luck, eh? You and I together. I suppose you heard that I've been resurrected again at last?"

"Of course! Must tell, you know, must tell in the end!"

"Where do you happen to be off to now?"

"Just came to see you, sole purpose."

"Never! Do you know, my dear fellow, your life's ruined? You have achieved your object too easily; that is presuming you have just come off the train. No man ever lived to be any good as a colonel after becoming a captain to his taste, did he now?"—(Chesney, aside, "Well, now, that's not Monty's solemn old self at all, at all! Blessed if he's not a new man already!")—"Yes, and you really came to see me? Where did you expect to come across me?"

Chesney (aside): "Stanner now! Guess I'll need to keep an eye on my pickets for a few hours!" (Aloud): "At the Council, I was afraid. Hope you haven't been yet, and made any arrangements. Look here, old man, I was appointed to come and rescue you! Will you believe it, you're wanted with the regiment? They are exactly Lieutenant Montagu-Murray short!"

"And yours exactly Lieutenant Chesney short, adjutant, etc. But what if I can't possibly be spared from here! When a fellow's called to higher courts, you know, it's simply a matter of do, or be done. I'm sadly afraid I'll have to miss the fun, Chesney."

Chesney (aside): "Superb white liar, are you not? You can't hide your relief, though, not at all!" (Aloud): "Oh, that will be all right! We have arranged with the Commander-in-Chief to delay the appointment. Colonel wouldn't hear of your being away; couldn't think of it! Fact is, you must have missed our wire at Kalka."

"But how did you manage to get off? Hasn't yours left yet?"

"I expect it has. I got three days' special leave to hunt you up, with a codicil not to return without you. Of course you understand I can't wait for any negotiating. You'll find the way quite clear, no trouble at all, and the appointment will come later."