

## CHAPTER II.

### HEMMING MEETS WITH A STRANGE RECEPTION

HERBERT HEMMING sat alone in his room, while his brother officers sought their pleasure in divers companies. His writing-table was drawn close to the fire. His scarlet mess-jacket made a vivid spot of colour, in the softly illuminated room. He was busily occupied with the proofs of "The Colonel and the Lady," when his man rapped at the door and entered.

"Nothing more," said the captain, without looking up. The soldier saluted, but did not go. Presently his master's attention was awakened by the uneasy creaking of his boots.

"Well, what do you want?"

"Me mother is very ill, sir."

"I'm not a doctor, Malloy."

"I wasn't thinkin' of insultin' you, sir."

Hemming sighed, and laid down his pen.

"I have found you a satisfactory servant," he said, "also a frightful liar."