

HIS GREAT MISTAKE

he winced. He determined not to read it then, to wait until he had recovered himself. He laughed now painfully. It had been better for him—it had, maybe, averted what people were used to term his tragedy—had he read his brother's letter at that moment. For Richard Armour was a sensible man, notwithstanding his peculiarities; and perhaps the most sensible words he ever wrote were in that letter thrust unceremoniously into Frank Armour's pocket.

Armour had received a terrible blow. He read his life backwards. He had no future. The liquor he had drunk had not fevered him, it had not wildly excited him; it merely drew him up to a point where he could put a sudden impulse into practice without flinching. He was bitter against his people; he credited them with more interference than was actual. He felt that happiness had gone out of his life and left him hopeless. As we said, he was a man of quick decisions. He would have made a dashing but reckless soldier; he was not without the elements of the gamester. It is possible that there was in him also a strain of cruelty, undeveloped but radical. Life so far had evolved the best in him; he had been cheery and candid. Now he travelled back into new avenues of his mind and found strange, aboriginal passions, fully adapted to the present