

Captain Hemming Faces a Change 17

"Thank God, I'm not afraid of work," he said, "but may the devil fly away with that cad Penthouse. How can a blood-relation of Molly's be such a sneaking, mealy-mouthed little cur? Now, while I am lying here winged, thanks to my childish generosity and his beastliness, he is skipping around in London, on two months' leave. Herbert Hemming is done with the ways of lambs and idiots." Jumping to his feet, he went to the door and shouted for his man. A few minutes later, with the candles glowing softly on sword and photograph, spur and book-back, he dressed for dinner.

That night the mess found him more talkative than usual. But he left early, for his own quarters. The groups in the anteroom thinned gradually, as the men went about their various concerns, some to their rooms, and some to the town, and one across the square to the colonel's quarters, where the colonel's youngest sister awaited him. This sister was a thorn in the colonel's flesh. She would not let him smoke his pipe in the drawing-room (though he was sure *she* smoked cigarettes there), and he heartily hoped his junior major would marry her. The junior major hoped so too, and, with this hope in his breast, took his departure, leaving Spalding, a subaltern, and Major O'Grady alone by the piano.

O'Grady balanced his smouldering cigarette on