

in them; he knew they would follow him wherever he might lead them.

So many of the different elements of civilian life in England had come together under him, and he had watched their development, had tended their growth, had seen them fuse together in one steady compact whole, and then war had tested them, and they had not failed. Now was coming another of war's tests, and in his heart he knew it would be the supreme one for him and those he led.

Almost bitterly he asked himself the old, old question: "*Cui bono?*" Had his loved platoon been welded together only for this: the little mound—those fateful words: "At all costs?" Surely the sentiments of unselfishness, of playing the game, which these men had learned; surely the cheeriness, the tails-up "good heart" outlook on life which he had preached and practised and instilled into them could have been better utilised than keeping a damned mound "at all costs"? It seemed such utter waste of wonderful material, such ruin of new-planted but thriving grain. . . .

Two boots sticking out of the earth on top of the trench in front of him caught his eyes and held them. Involuntarily he shivered; those boots seemed to possess such a dreadful finality. There was a hole in one of the soles; he wondered if the man had noticed it before such trifles ceased to worry him; he wondered if their late owner had solved the *Cui bono* satisfactorily. . . .

Then he stopped wondering with a mental jerk and shook himself.