

"Why not? Have you ever tried?" inquired the colonel.

Hemming did not answer the question, but waited, with his hands behind his back, and his face toward the fast darkening windows.

"I'm sorry for it," said the older man, at last. "You are a good officer, — forgive my saying so, — and — and the mess swears by you. I hope you have suffered no serious misfortune."

The captain laughed wanly.

"It seems rather serious to me," he replied. "I've come to the end of my little pile."

"The second, I believe," remarked the colonel.

Hemming nodded.

"It beats me," exclaimed his superior, and looked as if an explanation would be welcome.

"You would understand, sir, if you were as big a fool as I have been. Good nature, without common business sense to guide it, gets away with more money than viciousness."

He stared gravely at the reclining colonel. "At last I have learned my lesson," he concluded, "and it is this — put not your trust in cads."

The colonel laughed uneasily, and quitted the room without asking for the loan of the proof-sheets. Hemming sat down in the vacated chair. His face now wore a pleasanter expression.