

RITTER. Do you smoke?

SPINDLER. Semi-occasionally, yes. [*Ritter hands him the cigar and he steps nonchalantly back to his former position, Ritter keeping one eye on him. He examines the cigar curiously, and, being apparently very near-sighted, seems to have considerable difficulty in deciphering the band-inscription.*]

RITTER. You can light *either* end of it.

SPINDLER. [*Very self-conscious*] Yes,—I was just looking at this label here: it's rather keen. [*He puts the cigar in his mouth, and attempts an attitude of careless detachment.*]

RITTER. Have you got a match?

SPINDLER. I don't—[*As he opens his mouth to speak the cigar falls on the floor; and he scrambles after it.*]

TEDDY. [*Laughing incredulously and turning away from Nelly*] Oh, Nelly!

MRS. FELL. Upon my word, dear! Come here till I tell you. [*Teddy returns to the partition and Nelly proceeds with her gossip.*] [43]

SPINDLER. [*Straightening up, and attempting another man-of-the-world attitude*] I don't care to smoke just now, thank you. [*He holds the cigar in his fingers.*]

RITTER. [*As things settle again*] You've been in the army, haven't you?

SPINDLER. [*Turning to Ritter with a suggestion of military erectness*] Yes; I put in the better part of three months down at Upton, in the Personnel.

RITTER. I imagined from your salute you'd been around one of the camps.

SPINDLER. Yes,—I was Third Lieutenant down there—[*Ritter looks at him sharply; then Spindler turns and meets the look.*] Regimental Sergeant Major.

RITTER. Rest.

MRS. FELL. [*Coming away from the partition*] So I'm going to ask him right out the very next time I meet him. [*She comes down to the little table below the piano again. Mr. Hossefrosse comes through the center-door towards Ritter; rubbing his hands, and Teddy moves over towards Mrs. Ritter, who is still officiating at the punch-bowl.*]

TEDDY and HOSSEFROSSE, speaking together.

TEDDY. [*Speaking to Mrs. Fell*] Maybe he doesn't know it himself.

HOSSEFROSSE. [*Addressing Ritter*] Ah, Mr. Ritter! How do you do, sir? [*They shake hands.*] [44]

RITTER. How do you do?

MRS. FELL and HOSSEFROSSE, together.

MRS. FELL. Well, I'm going to find out, whether he does or not.

HOSSEFROSSE. [*To Ritter*] Decided there was no place like home, eh? [*He laughs, with a mirthless effusiveness.*]

RITTER. Are you in the show, too? [*Mrs. Ritter fills out a glass of claret for Teddy.*]

MRS. FELL and HOSSEFROSSE, together.

MRS. FELL. I should say he is in it.

HOSSEFROSSE. We're all in it.