

'It's a hard time for him. I don't believe she's ever out of his mind. Or at least, she wouldn't be, if it weren't for his work. That's the blessed part—for both of them. And now you see—it gives them such a deal to talk about'—her gesture indicated the couple in front. 'It's like two sore surfaces, isn't it, that mustn't touch—you want something between.'

'All the same, William mustn't set his heart——'

'And Hester—dear old thing!—mustn't preach!' said Cicely laughing, and pinching her cousin's arm. 'What's the good of saying that, about a man like William, who knows what he wants? Of course he's set his heart, and will go on setting it. But he'll wait—as long as she likes.'

'It'll be a long time.'

'All right! They're neither of them Methuselahs yet. Heavens!—What are they at now? *Ambrine!*—*she's talking to him.*'

But some deep mingled instinct, at once of sympathy with Nelly and pity for Farrell, made Hester unwilling to discuss the subject any more. George's death was too recent; peace and a happy future too remote. So she turned on Cicely.

'And please, what have you done with Herbert? I was promised a bridegroom.'

'Business!' said Cicely, sighing. 'We had hardly arrived for our week's leave, when the wretched War Office wired him to come back. He went this morning, and I wanted to go too, but—I'm not to racket just now.'