

eyes averted from that centre to which his circling thoughts were winding. He was shirking something; he was not staying out there to brood over the technical clevernesses of Mr. Wells. If you put him in a corner and demanded to know why he was there at all? Well, he was gradually discarding impossibilities, and each discard brought him on to an inner ring, brought him a stage nearer the middle. He could not marry Idina; he could not tell her that he would not marry her; he could not run away and lie in hiding; he could only—Deryk was surprised to find his tongue moistening two rather dry lips—he could do deuced little, but the hand of God might break the engagement, and he might put his fingers on God's wrist, so to say.

It was a great thing to have this strong, detached, Lancing brain! With everything pointing to suicide (he could use the word now; rather enjoyed it, in fact), he could think as collectively and in as orderly and logical a way as ever before. Other people would no doubt be bowled over by the discovery of what they were obscurely contemplating; all that happened with him was that his brain worked, if anything, a trifle faster, a trifle better, a trifle more cogently and coherently. The first thing to consider was how much he wanted to live; then how he *could* take his own life and make the world believe a verdict of death by natural causes, when the same thing was being tried perhaps once a week and never succeeding.

He did not want to die at all. Whenever he thought of it, he was filled with exuberant self-pity—like Vilron in "A Lodging for the Night"—(Why the devil did he keep dragging in these facile literary allusions?) He was so young, he had enjoyed life so much, he still appreciated the esoteric beauties of music, of colour and form so much more fully than anyone he knew. Even if he never created anything, even if he confessed to failure and left his father's wealth unbroken and triumphant, he was a rare critic wasted! Of course from one point of view there was nothing to be said for dying old rather than young; in either event you stopped short just at the moment when you