

hurrying to and fro in the early turmoil of mobilisation; if only Sir Aylmer had put him into a crack regiment to keep him out of mischief for a few years. . . ! Good Heavens! He might have been in Belgium before the week was out, with every likelihood of getting killed. And there was all the difference in the world between breaking an engagement and having it broken by the hand of God. In the social limelight Idina would then be the beautiful young widow with the tragic history—"engaged to Sir Deryk Lancing, the richest bachelor of his time; then he got killed in the war of 1914. Twice a widow, so to say, before she was five and twenty—very sad." But she would not die of the shock; her stamina, her resistance, her will to live would bear her triumphantly through the perils of that imagined chill; probably she would to some extent keep herself alive with the glorious boast that Deryk Lancing had loved her, that he might be called dead, but she knew that in reality he was watching and waiting—

"I had my task to finish,
 "And he had gone home to rest;
 "To rest in the far bright heaven. . . ."

(He could imagine Idina finding grandeur in the songs of Jacques Blumenthal and feeling herself spiritually uplifted by them.) She would not let herself die, because she had his memory to tend. . . Heavens! what make-believe these good women perpetrated when they were afraid to face reality; they would invent a thousand reasons, elaborate a hundred stories to shirk disagreeable truth; he would have his work cut out for him to make Idina believe that he did not care for her enough to marry her. . .

As he said the words to himself he was conscious that his thoughts were moving in an ever diminishing circle; he was not yet prepared to look at the centre where the journey would end; he had timidly stepped aside on to an outer ring when he talked of breaking any kind of news to Idina; that was old, rejected; he could never tell her anything;