

—no, this time she had disagreed too hastily—it was really rather a wolf and lamb relationship. He was fond of her, he hated finding fault with her or seeing the corners of her mouth droop, but his nerves were restless and disordered, everything she did seemed to irritate him, and he spoke to her, the woman he was going to marry, in a tone that he would never dare adopt with, say, Yolande. She would never stand it, for one thing; and quite right, too. Apparently Idina would.

Deryk jumped up and walked to the railings on the north side, looking down almost as if he expected to see a search party coming to meet him.

"I can't! My God, I simply can't!" he cried, as though someone were pleading.

"It will break her heart. Well, it would kill us both if we married. I don't love her! That's the long and short of it."

He flung away and sat down again on his seat of planks, burying his face in his hands and squeezing his palms against his temples.

"I simply can't," he groaned.

2

The moment that he had put his confession into words Deryk felt that he had known it all along, that, when he talked of the old days and such love as no other man had felt for a woman, he really meant that he had not then taken the trouble to analyse as he was now doing; he *could* never have married her, he could not even live with her as he had lived with Lucile Welman, had either of them wanted to. Yet how perfect a wife she must have been to Sidney Dawson, hideous though the human sacrifice had seemed; temperamentally the two had far more in common. If he went ahead with the present marriage. . .

Deryk found himself thinking aloud and now gravely shaking his head. Once his eyes were open, he could never close them again; the engagement had to be broken, and it