

I'm housekeeper enough to know that it isn't fair to bring in extra people on the last of three Bank Holidays running. Do come! Then we'll ring Deryk up later on and find where he really did get to."

They set out for Idina's hotel without further delay. There, as everywhere in London that night, they found an indefinable air of arrested progress; everyone seemed to have been kept in town unexpectedly or summoned back at short notice. From the tables round them rose a babel of amateur strategy and disjointed history—"Take Bismarck. . . . Take what happened over Schleswig-Holstein. . . . The enveloping tactics of Sedan. . . . The Germans are sure to have some surprise up their sleeves. They did in '66 and again in '70—breach-loading versus muzzle-loading, machine guns as against rifles, all that sort of thing. But we may have some surprises too; they may find they've bitten off more than they can chew, in the old phrase. I was talking to a man in the War Office only last week. . . . Our army's by no means what it was before we had our lesson in South Africa. . . ."

When dinner was over Idina telephoned to Deryk at his rooms and at the County Club.

"I don't feel it's any use ringing up the house," she said. "I know he wasn't going to sleep there to-night. We'll wait and try him later at his rooms. I'm afraid you must think me very absurd and cowardly," she apologised with sudden contrition. "I suppose the excitement of the last few days has been rather trying, and this is the form that it takes with me. Now we won't talk about it any more."

They agreed to remain together until the moment when the time limit of the ultimatum to Germany expired. When they found, however, that this involved spending another silent hour in each other's company, the prospect lost much of its charm. Yolande with more fine spontaneity suggested their walking round to the Russian Embassy to see whether any demonstration was being made; they mingled with a grave, almost subdued crowd in Chesham Place and then walked on to Albert Gate. A few knots of idlers