

to inspire and guide. Idina had many charming qualities, but no one would waste breath in defending her against that charge. And, if the positions were reversed, if he were moulding the destiny of his own sons—the case put so often since his father's extraordinary last letter of exhortation (so vague in its direction!) and veiled apology (so lacking in definition!)——

His reflections were interrupted by a bell ringing somewhere inside the house. At first he could not understand it; no bell existed above basement level; he was startled, and none the less so for his late afternoon of solitude. As the ringing continued he recognised the mechanical note of a telephone bell; the private exchange was on the ground floor, but the line was connected with one of the bedrooms. He hurried down, with just enough detachment to notice and smile at the compelling hypnotism which a telephone exerted over modern civilisation; ninety to one it was a wrong number, and, if the call were for him, he did not want to answer it; indeed he had not thought out all that was involved by supplying evidence that he was alive at this particular moment. This required thought and care. But he hurried downstairs, as though he had spent hours trying to get in touch with someone at the other end of the world on business of vital importance.

"Is that Regent 484726? Is Sir Deryk Lancing at home? Sir Deryk Lancing."

Deryk smiled. It was a good thing that Yolande's voice was so distinctive. He tuned his own to a throaty tenor, resonant with subservience.

"This is the Oxford and Cambridge Club, madam. I think you must have been given a wrong number."

He was walking upstairs, when the bell rang again. Obviously it was Yolande once more, but he would take no further risks. It was a nuisance—that telephone; it had broken the thread of his reflections, and they were no ordinary reflections, because—to notice the first and most obvious difference—he was sane, and other people were always a little prepossessed, fantastic. Now he must abandon