

what you are thinking of doing with yourself now you're home."

Deryk stretched out his foot and pulled a small table to the side of his chair. On this he carefully set out the boxes and trinkets which he had been carrying, tossed the lace onto the floor, and got up in search of a cigarette. He knew that the question must come, but he was in no hurry to answer it; and he hated the theatrical setting—return of heir from abroad, *conseil de famille*, the choice of a career, family solicitor in attendance—"a serious moment in your life, my dear boy."

"I wasn't thinking of doing anything in particular," he said at length, throwing his head back and watching through half-closed eyes the wavering spirals of smoke. "I've got my books here and I can work at them. It's too late to go back to Oxford, and I don't know that I could settle down there now after wandering about so much." He looked at his father, a little embarrassed by his silence and intimidated, as always, by these stiff, unsympathetic encounters in which he was ever outnumbered. "I want to start again where I left off two years ago—there's a tremendous lot to be done; I should work here part of the time and part of the time in London, I should have to go abroad a good bit. As I say, there's a tremendous lot to do, and, er——" He hesitated on finding that he was repeating himself, "Well, that was my scheme. It's just a question whether you care to find the money."

Sir Aylmer sat for several moments in a thoughtful silence, stroking his chin between thumb and first finger.

"You've never considered a more—public career?" he asked at length. "Parliament?" Deryk grimaced in disfavour. "The Diplomatic? I don't want you to feel later on that you've buried your talents."

Deryk shrugged his shoulders and sat down on the edge of the club fender.

"Any talents I've got are purely academic," he said. "I don't take the least interest in this House of Commons racket, and I shouldn't be the least good at it. As for the