

While my mind had been thus far away, a grotesque looking old gentleman had fluttered like a bat to the seat between us, and now deposited, with the bitter sang-froid of the unworldly, a dilapidated deer-stalker of pinkish tweed upon the glacial parquet. I thought I knew the type : learned in a macabre way, even distinguished ; one who was rich enough to remain unspotted by convention, and who yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force, gold of course, for the undoing of a materialistic world. Gathering a fungus in the other golden ruin before me, I considered within myself what such an obvious hermit could be doing among the brilliant lights of this notoriously *soigné* place. A dog was patently sorrowing in the distance. The two had their heads close together. The poor brute's howling bothered me, and I was glad when it ceased. You will, Oscar, you will. Whistler's jibe I had always taken personally. Was all my endeavour to be in the future? Would I never do anything in the present? It all seemed so fatuous.

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