

room; the blinds were all down; from without, the villa seemed uninhabited, and the rare passer-by—for rare was he in the quiet lane adjoining but not facing Hampstead Heath—set it down as being to let. It was a whim of the Duke's to keep it empty; when the world bored him, he fled there for solitude; not even the presence of a servant was allowed, lest his meditations should be disturbed. It was long since he had come; but to-night weariness had afflicted him, and, by a sudden change of plan, he had made for his hiding-place in lieu of attending a public meeting, at which he had been advertised to take the chair. The desertion sat lightly on his conscience, and he heaved a sigh of relief as, having turned up the gas, he flung himself into an arm-chair and lit a cigar. The Duke of Belleville was thirty years of age; he was unmarried; he had held the title since he was fifteen; he seemed to himself rather old. He was at this moment yawning. Now, when a man yawns at ten o'clock in the evening, something is wrong with his digestion or his spirits. The Duke had a perfect digestion.

"I should define wealth," murmured the Duke, between his yawns, "as an unlimited command of the sources of *ennui*, rank as a satirical emphasising of human equality, culture as a curtailment of pleasure, knowledge as the death of interest." Yawning again, he rose, drew up the blind, and flung open the window. The summer night was fine and warm. Although there were a couple of dozen other houses scattered here and there about the lane, not a soul was to be seen. The Duke stood for a long while looking out. His cigar burnt low, and he flung it away. Presently he heard a church clock strike eleven. At the same moment he perceived a tall and burly figure approaching from the end of the lane. Its approach was slow and interrupted, for it paused at every house. A moment's further inspection revealed in it the policeman on his beat.

"He's trying the windows and doors," remarked the Duke to himself. Then his eye brightened. "There are possibilities in a door always," he murmured,

and his thoughts flew off to the great doors of history and fiction—the doors that were locked when by all laws human and divine they should have been open, and the even more interesting doors that proved to be open and yielded to pressure when any man would have staked his life on their being bolted, barred and impregnable. "A door has the interest of death," said he. "For how can you know what is on the other side till you have passed through it? Now suppose that fellow found a door open, and passed through it, and turning the rays of his lantern on the darkness within, saw revealed to him—Heavens!" cried the Duke, interrupting himself in great excitement, "is all this to be wasted on a policeman?" and, without a moment's hesitation, he leant out of the window and shouted: "Constable, constable!"—which is, as all the world knows, the politest mode of addressing a policeman.

The policeman, perceiving the Duke and the urgency of the Duke's summons, left his examination of the doors in the lane and ran hastily up to the window of the villa.

"Did you call, sir?" he asked.

"Don't you know me?" enquired the Duke, turning a little, so that the light in the room should fall on his features.

"I beg your Grace's pardon," cried the policeman. "Your Grace gave me a sovereign last Christmas. The Duke of Belleville, isn't it, your Grace?"

"You will know," said the Duke, patiently, "how to pronounce my name when I tell you that it rhymes with 'Devil.' Thus: 'Devvle, Bevvle.'"

"Yes, your Grace. You called me?"

"I did. Do you often find doors open when they ought to be shut?"

"Almost every night, your Grace."

"What do you do?"

"Knock, your Grace."

"Good heavens!" murmured the Duke, "how this man throws away his opportunities." Then he leant forward, and laying his hand on the policeman's shoulder, drew him nearer, and began to speak to him in a low tone.

"I couldn't, your Grace," urged the policeman. "If I was found out I should get the sack."