

secured evidence of his death having taken place abroad. Nothing had been heard of his widow or children. It was on the probability of the existence of the latter, and in the interest of his late client, that my uncle had decided to oppose administration of his assets. A strict search, hitherto, unavailing, though some slight clues had been found, was being made for representatives. Such was the rough sketch sent me. A brief was to follow.

Next for the completion of my plan. I sat down and wrote a long and earnest letter to my uncle, introducing to him the matter on which my heart was set. I assured him that the counsel I named would do consummate justice to his brief, and, in explanation of my renunciation of it, I alluded to the slenderness of my own acquaintance with Chancery practice. By return of post he replied, acceding to my proposition; and at the end of the week I received an intimation that such evidence as was forthcoming was prepared, and that the brief would be forwarded on the following morning.

It was not till I perused this last letter that I realized to what an extent I had unconsciously misled its writer. He appeared to have concluded that his case was to be entrusted to a comparatively eminent light of the Equity bar; and the readiness of his compliance caused me certain misgivings. Just then I heard Coke discoursing in the room above, and, as I had not yet absolutely committed myself, I determined to go up, listen, and afterwards finally decide.

Both judge and counsel, being now accustomed to my presence, merely nodded a welcome to me when I entered and crossed over to my accustomed seat by the window. How supremely unconscious they were of the debate in my mind! I leant my head back, and endeavored to divest myself of prejudice. I would be rigidly impartial, I decided; and then I turned an attentive ear. That sonorous voice—those Attic periods! My doubts vanished into thin air. Surely, surely, I thought, such eloquence will have due effect on the enlightened Vice-Chancellor by whom the case is to be tried. The manner left absolutely nothing to be desired; the matter discussed gave evidence of a thorough mastery of the principles of equity. Suddenly, in the midst of an impassioned peroration, the phrases became involved, and the eye began to wander nervously; then the speaker continued coherently for a moment, again lost the thread of his argument, and suddenly sat down, his face pallid, and his hand pressed to his heart. The watchful eyes of the child had been quicker than mine: in a moment she was at his side. "Oh! Guardy," she whispered, "you are ill!" By the time I had crossed to him he was looking back with a gay smile into her anxious eyes. "Just a passing touch, Fairy; a playful reminder. See, I am well again!"

Later, the child left us to go to bed. "My heart is affected, and I am subject to these attacks," my companion said quietly. He did not wait for comment on my part, but went on speaking. "Sometimes I get a little anxious, for the child's sake. She would be lonely without me"—the words came reflectively—"fearfully lonely. I did hope to elucidate the mystery of her parentage, but the result of my inquiries thus far is meagre. I have been able, however, to make some slight monetary provision for her. My papers are in that drawer," he continued, indicating a bureau at which he was in the habit

of sitting; "and I trouble you with all these details because I want you to act for me in what, I trust, is the remote event of anything happening to me. Would you object to undertake the commission?"

I was moved by his confidence. "No," I said, "I would gladly undertake the commission." He looked satisfied, and thanked me. "The contingency is a very remote one, I believe," he said cheerfully. "You see, there is the prophecy about the brief to be fulfilled."

The next morning I paced my room in a fever of expectation, awaiting the advent of the postman, and listening to the strains of the violin wafted from above. Soon he arrived, delivered my letters, and enabled me to catch a glimpse of the package whose contents I guessed; then he mounted the stairs, and I listened eagerly. The music ceased, and I could hear Coke stride across the room. Then the postman came down. I waited for what appeared to be an eternity, but what really must have been about 10 minutes, in the expectation of being summoned for purposes of congratulation, but no summons came. Then my impatience got the better of me, and I sauntered up, as though by accident, whistling a bar of the music I had been listening to. I tapped at the door, but received no answer; louder, and still no answer; then I turned the handle, and entered.

At the further end of the room sat my friend, robed and bewigged, his elbow resting on the table, his face supported by his hand, and slightly turned. The violin had been carelessly put down on the bureau by his side, and spread out before him lay a mass of papers, together with the brief he had just received. He appeared to be intently perusing them, and did not even look up when I entered. With the object of surprising him I crossed the room with a soft tread, and brought my hand suddenly down upon his shoulder. As I did so a thrill of horror was transmitted through my nerve-fibres, for the figure that I touched was rigid and motionless. I bent forward and peered into the face. It bore the most radiant smile of contentment I had ever seen, but there was no mistaking its meaning; it was life's last indelible imprint.

Later, the papers which lay before the dead man were examined, and they proved to contain the evidence he had named to me of the identity of the child. Taken with the brief, the case was clear beyond the shadow of a doubt. She was the heiress my uncle was in search of; and so it was subsequently established.

It has always seemed to me to be well in keeping with the irony of fate that, at that very moment when his brief arrived, after he had waited for it through twenty years, Demosthenes Coke should have received a retainer for a higher tribunal.

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