

night before, and asked himself, was that Simon Bulkley? But rack his memory as he would, that was a question that he could not answer. His knowledge of Mr. Bulkley's features was by no means close, while he had been so surprised, and truth to tell, so scared by the apparition of the face at the window, that he had only a dim remembrance of it as a whole, and could not recall it in detail, except the one item of the fringe of black, or dark whiskers surrounding the chin, but then every third man in the city almost wore his whiskers like that if he shaved at all, so that did not count, save in the matter of making the affair more perplexing.

Then there was the other mystery, which Elgar had been wanting to question his aunt about. Who was the man whose portrait was in the locket set with emeralds, and who was the lady with the fan?

But with the three little girls round under her feet, Mrs. Townsford was not available for the close questioning to which Elgar longed to subject her, and so he had to swallow his impatience, and wait his opportunity.

Meanwhile the hours were passing on, and still Uncle Bob did not come back. Not that there was anything very astonishing in this, as he was very uncertain and erratic in his comings and goings, so much so that Mrs. Townsford never attempted the preparation of a midday meal; the children could have a piece of food in their hands as they ran about, she and Elgar could satisfy their hunger in the same way, and the plan had at least the advantage of saving work in the matter of dish washing. At night a plentiful hot supper was prepared, and breakfast was usually the remains of this over-night feast.