

birth; records of impossible marriages would be freely advertised for, with tempting suggestions of pecuniary recompense to the lucky discoverer. Research would be stimulated in parish clerks; affidavits would be sworn to with charming recklessness; rival claimants would commit unblushing alternative perjuries on their own account, with frank disregard of common probability. It would rain fees. The estate would dissolve itself bodily by slow degrees in a quagmire of expenses. And all for the benefit of the good attorneys! The family lawyer, in the character of Danaë—for this occasion only, and without prejudice—would hold out his hands to catch the golden shower. A learned profession would no doubt profit in the end to a distinct amount by the late Mr. Massinger's touching disregard of testamentary provision for his unknown relations.

Alas for the prospects of the learned gentlemen! The question of inheritance proved itself in the end far easier and less complex than the family attorney in his professional zeal had at first anticipated. Everything unraveled itself with disgusting simplicity. The estate might almost as well have been unencumbered. The late Mrs. Massinger had left no will, and the property had therefore devolved direct by common law upon her surviving husband. This was awkward. If only now, any grain of doubt had existed in any way as to the fact that the late Mrs. Massinger had predeceased her unfortunate husband, legal acumen might doubtless have suggested innumerable grounds of action for impossible claimants on either side of the two families. But unhappily for the exercise of legal acumen, the case as it stood was all most horribly plain sailing. Hugh Massinger, Esquire, having inherited in due course from his deceased wife, the estate must go in the first place to Hugh Massinger himself, in person. And Hugh Massinger himself having died intestate, it must go in the next place to Hugh Massinger's nearest representative. True, there still remained the agreeable and exciting research for the missing heir-at-law; but the pursuit of hunting up the heir-at-law to a given known indisputable possessor is as nothing in the eyes of a keen sportsman compared with the Homeric joy of battle in-