

Moreover, the piece of cardboard box was soaked with wet, while the morning was brilliantly fine. It had been a fine night too, save for one heavy shower, which came on about half-an-hour after Elgar got home on the previous evening. He might not have remembered this so well, but for the fact of the rain coming in upon him as he lay on the shakedown which served him for a bed, under the shingle roof of his temporary home. He had got so wet from the downpour that his aunt had crawled up the ladder with her best umbrella, and he had gone to sleep under its shelter. But his uncle, who had had a very wakeful night, said that there had been no rain after that time, therefore the cardboard box had been dropped beside the stump within an hour of his leaving the old man, who had been so badly hurt.

It was altogether very puzzling, and just because it was so very mysterious Elgar decided that at present he would say nothing whatever about it, on the principle of the least said, soonest mended.

Elgar was of Scottish extraction on his father's side, which perhaps accounted for the element of caution in his character. He was old beyond his years too, but that was largely owing to all the sorrows and upheavals which had come into his life, and the necessity there was for him to be his aunt's right hand in most things. Bob Townsford, while the very kindest of husbands, and the most indulgent of fathers, was at the same time so very unpractical that it would have gone hard with the family had it not been for the wise endeavours of Mrs. Townsford, backed up by the active exertions of Elgar.

By doubling the sodden ruins of the box over the broken ivory with its painted portrait, Elgar was able