

IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY.

"No," said the lawyer, "I shan't press your claim against that man; you can get some one else to take the case, or you can withdraw it, just as you please."

"There would probably be some money in it, but it would, as you know, come from the sale of the little house the man occupies and calls 'home'; but I don't want to meddle with the matter, anyhow."

"I suppose likely the old fellow begged hard to be let off?"

"Well – yes, he did."

"And you?"

"I didn't speak a word to him."

"Oh, he did all the talking, did he? What did you do?"

"I believe I shed a few tears; he didn't speak a word to me."

"Well, may I respectfully inquire whom he did address in your hearing?"

"Almighty God. But, not for my benefit, in the least. You see" – the lawyer crossed his right foot over his left knee, and began stroking his lower leg up and down, as if to help state his case concisely – "you see, I found the little house easily enough, and knocked on the outer door, which stood ajar, but nobody heard me; so I stepped into the little hall, and saw through the crack of another door just as cosey a sitting room as there ever was."

"There, on a bed, with her silver head way up high on the pillows, was an old lady. I was on the point of knocking, when she said, as

clearly as could be, 'Come, father, now begin; I'm all ready' – and down on his knees by her side went an old, white-haired man, still older than his wife, I should judge; and I couldn't have knocked then. He began to pray; first he reminded God they were still his submissive children, mother and he, and no matter what he saw fit to bring upon them, they shouldn't rebel at his will; of course 'twas going to be very hard for them to go out homeless in their old age, specially with poor mother so sick and helpless, but still they'd seen sadder things than ever that would be. He reminded God, in the next place, how different it might all have been if only one of their boys had been spared them; then his voice kind of broke, and a thin white hand stole from under the coverlet and moved softly over his snowy hair; then he went on to repeat that nothing could be so sharp again as the parting with those three sons – unless mother and he should be separated. But at last he fell to comforting himself with the fact that the dear Lord knew it was through no fault of his own that mother and he were threatened with the loss of their dear little home, which meant beggary and the almshouse, a place they prayed to be delivered from entering if it could be consistent with God's will; and then he fell to quoting a multitude of promises concerning the safety of those who put their trust in the Lord; yes, I should say he begged hard; in fact, it was the most thrilling plea to which I ever listened; and at last he prayed for God's blessing on those who were about to demand justice" – the lawyer stroked his lower limb in silence for a moment or two, then continued, more slowly than ever:

"And – I – believe – I'd rather go to the poorhouse myself, tonight, than to stain my heart and hands with the blood of such a prosecution as that."

"You are afraid to defeat the old man's prayer?" queried the client.

"Bless your soul, man, you couldn't defeat it!" said the lawyer. "It doesn't admit of defeat! He left it all subject to the will of God; but he left no doubt as to his wishes in the matter; claimed that we were told to make known our desires unto God, but of all the pleading I ever

heard, that beat all. You see, I was taught that kind of thing myself in my childhood, and why I was sent to hear that prayer, I'm sure I don't know; but I hand the case over." [R747 : page 8]

"I wish," said the client, twisting uneasily, "you hadn't told me about the old fellow's prayer, because I want the money the place would bring; but I was taught the Bible all straight enough when I was a youngster, and I'd hate to run counter to such a harangue as that you tell me about. I wish you hadn't heard a word of it; and another time I wouldn't listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

The lawyer smiled.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you're wrong again; it *was* intended for my ears, and yours too, and God Almighty intended it. My old mother used to sing about God's moving in a mysterious way, I remember."

"Well, my mother used to sing it too," said the claimant, as he twisted his claim-papers in his fingers. "You can call in the morning, if you like, and tell 'mother and him' the claim has been met."

"In a mysterious way," added the lawyer, smiling.

– *Sel.*

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