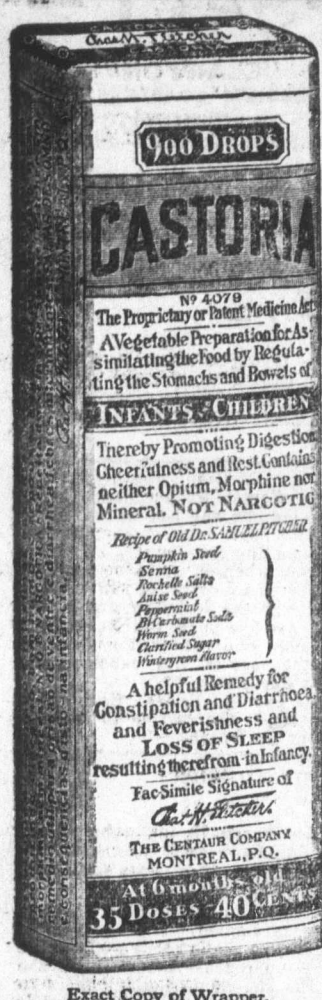




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The Case of Alexander Potts

By ELIZABETH Y. MILLER

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The little Englishman, riding downtown on a cross-seat of a crowded subway express, forgot where he was, and proceeded to pound his knee with a fist expressive of rapture.

"Like a glove!" he exclaimed for the benefit of all who chose to heed. "Like a bloomin' nice glove, too. Who'd 'a' thort it! Who'd 'a' thort it were possible! Not me, not me!"

He paused and gazed reminiscently up at the lurid advertisements which formed a highly interesting and decorative frieze on both sides of the car; then he nodded his head and went on, in a somewhat more subdued tone:

"Ol' man Potts, eh? An' me workin' like hell for 'im, 'erdin' sheep on the Princess Beatrice ranch and countin' them dear ol' Australia days jolly well wasted. . . . H'm! Well, you never can tell wot'll stand you in stead and wot won't."

The excited and pleased young man plunged anew into the newspaper which was the source of his unusual inspiration and read all over again the "Personal" which had claimed his attention and had been the cause of his jubilation.

There was nothing about it to provoke violent emotion in the ordinary citizen. It was dignified simplicity itself:

Information Wanted—Of Alexander Potts, namesake and heir of the late Alexander Potts of Warwick, Australia. Heir is the offspring of Alexander Potts's brother, James Potts, and is believed on good authority to be in the United States. Description—Blond, five feet, five inches tall, erect carriage, faint scar over left eyebrow, and slight cleft in the right eye. Party answer-

ing the description and presenting satisfactory proofs of identification will please apply at the office of Fenwick Brown, attorney at law, 11 1/2 Broadway.

After rereading this item the young man fell into a brown study which completely held him until City Hall station was called, when he rose and stumbled out of the car in the wake of the crowd, still thinking deeply.

It was almost too simple to trace the workings of his ingenious mind, for the double of Alexander Potts, Jr., folded his newspaper carefully, after once more noting the address of Fenwick Brown, attorney at law, and tucked it into his coat-pocket.

Drifting with the crowd, he came to one of the chocolate penny-in-the-slot machines, topped by its alluring bit of glass, and here he stopped and, annoyed by the facetious remarks of passers-by, proceeded to give his face a lengthy and critical examination.

He counted his assets proudly, one by one—the sleek, neatly parted blond hair, coupled with one wavering and one steady pale-blue eye, the cast in the right eye—ah, it was the right eye!—his proudly thrown-out chest—all were as the advertisement said.

As for the rest of it, our young gentleman (whose real name is wholly immaterial) thought he could satisfy Mr. Fenwick Brown. He hadn't herded sheep under old Alexander Potts for nothing. Wholly satisfied with his inspection, he strode out proudly, albeit with a beating heart, through the city hall entrance, across the park toward Broadway.

There was a beatific smile on his face, and his slant eye glistened with a fearful joy as he marched briskly along.

"I must get it straight, now," he was saying to himself. "It's all of fifteen years since I was workin' on the Princess Beatrice. I never heard of no missin' heir in them days. I that the old man 'adn't nobody to leave 'is millions to."

"He never did settle with me for this," he passed his hand over the scar on his forehead. "I got it the day we 'unted the cattle thieves for 'im. I'm poor, so forgive me; it ain't my fault if I looks like 'is missin' relation. It's the doin's of Fyde, that's what it is. So 'elp me, I'm poor; w'y shouldn't I make a grab for 'is pile? 'E'll never need it w'ere 'e's goin'."

In the matter of a few moments the missing heir to the Potts estate stood in the outer office of Fenwick Brown, attorney at law, parleying with an obtuse clerk, who was endeavoring testily to discover his business.

"Yur name, sir?" said the clerk. "It's really impossible for you to see Mr. Brown unless you give your name or some hint of your business."

"I'll 'ave you tyke a look at me," he said, smiling. "Tyke a look and think it over. Wot d'ye guess, eh?"

But the clerk guessed nothing. He was beginning to believe that he had a lunatic to deal with, and was wondering if he could do it alone.

"Oh, I'm not crazy," said the little blond man, commencing to lose some of his good humor. "But it's a poor detective you'd make, sonny. I suppose if John Rockefeller 'imself walked in 'ere you wouldn't know 'im unless he took off 'is wig and signed a check—wot?"

"Your business?" said the clerk stiffly.

"My business, young feller, is with Mr. Brown."

"Mr. Brown is busy, and we don't take criminal cases."

"Well, tyke a look at that—for your impudence!" He thrust his paper under the clerk's nose. "Did you or did you not print it? Is it or is it not bonny fady? Am I or am I not—"

"Merciful Heavens, you are!" exclaimed the lawyer's clerk, turning almost pale with excitement. "You are! What a fool, wait, now, let me see."

The "heir's" good humor was restored in an instant; he stood up, a trifle more erect than usual, while his personal charms were being docketed by the excited young clerk.

"Blond—yes; 'five feet five inches'—well, I should say yes; 'scar over left eyebrow'—it's there, all right; 'cast in right eye'—perfect! Absolutely perfect in every particular!"

"The old man will be crazy. He's had that estate on his hands for the past ten years. Why, that advertisement has appeared in the papers every day for the past ten years. Do you wonder I didn't realize what you meant?"

"Oh, it's all right," said the "heir," grandly, dismissing the clerk with a gracious wave of his hand as he seated himself on the edge of a chair to await the coming of Fenwick Brown.

To himself he muttered bitterly: "Ten years! Gawd, I might 'a' 'ad it ten years ago! That'll teach me a lesson. 'Ereafter I reads me 'Personal' column religiously."

In the meantime, a highly excited clerk had burst into the private office of Fenwick Brown, attorney at law, while that gentleman was deeply engrossed in some intricate case. He looked up, slightly troubled at the in-

trusion, and wrothly mystified at the subordinate's unwonted agitation.

"What's the matter, Geary?" he said. "What's wrong?"

"You'd never guess," began the clerk, wildly anxious to spring his news. "You'd never guess in a million years, so I'm going to tell you."

"Dear me, do, by all means," said Mr. Brown, laying aside his glasses and leaning back in his chair, resigned to the interruption.

"Who do you suppose is 'outside'?" "You said I'd never guess, so you'd better tell me."

"Who've we been advertising for—ten years—eh?" "Great Scott—not—"

"Yes, sirree, as sure as you live." "Not Alexander Potts?"

"As sure as you live, Mr. Brown, that's who it is."

"Are you sure, Geary, you've made no mistake? This is a serious matter, you know. Big estate. Does the description fit?"

"Like a glove!" said the clerk solemnly, using unconsciously the "heir's" own words.

Fenwick Brown rose ponderously from his chair and started for the outer office.

"I must greet my client and congratulate—"

He got no further, for as he pushed through the swinging door to meet the heir to the Potts estate he gave a startled exclamation that was almost a gasp of dismay.

"Why, why—" he said weakly. "I—where— Is this Alexander Potts?"

"It is," said the clerk solemnly. "I see, Mr. Brown, the remarkable resemblance startles you, as it did me. It is remarkable, isn't it?"

"Under the circumstances, I should say it was," said Fenwick Brown when he had sufficiently recovered his breath, to answer. "Well, sir, I suppose you are prepared to give us satisfactory evidence of your relationship to the old gentleman, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I think I can satisfy you or right 'bout uncle," said the "heir" modestly. "Wot'll you be askin' me?"

"H'm!" said Fenwick Brown, frowning importantly. "As a matter of fact, we really know very little about the old gentleman. We depended entirely upon the description to identify the heir—which you must admit is almost sufficient in itself."

The "heir" nodded wisely. Mr. Brown said:

"You fit the description in the paper, as my clerk said, 'like a glove.' I have never in all my life seen anything more remarkable."

"And your name is?" said the lawyer blandly.

"W'y, sir, the pyper! Surely you knows my nyme. It's the syme as his'n, Alexander Potts."

"Remarkable, remarkable! That, I believe, is the most remarkable part of it all. That your name should be the same."

The clerk was puzzled and coughed deprecatingly as he looked at his superior. The "heir" smiled on, not seeing the point, if any there was.

"Yes," went on Mr. Brown, "the whole case is remarkable. You see we've been handling this estate for ten years, and nothing could give us more complete satisfaction than to find the missing heir. It's been the dream of my life to locate that party."

"And now," said the clerk, "you've done it, Mr. Brown."

"Yes, it would seem so," mused the lawyer. "But there's one thing we overlooked. Geary, that advertisement we've been printing will have to be revised."

"Revised? Why—why—"

"It will have to be revised," continued Fenwick Brown stubbornly. "Hereafter, Geary, please see that it says, 'Alexander Potts is a lady; no gentlemen need apply.'"

The outer office-door slammed and the missing "heir" to the Potts estate was down all of three flights of stairs.

No elevators for him. He needed the bracing tonic of the out of doors, and he needed it, quick.

Might Mob Him.

"My landlord has voluntarily reduced my rent."

"There's a man for you!"

"But he doesn't want his name known!"

"What's the matter? Is he afraid he won't be safe among other landlords?"—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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