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## The Chest Drawers.

(Concluded.)

The letter which Caleb, although he read with facility, had much difficulty in making out, was that which Mr. Lisle had struck from the young woman's hand a few weeks before, and proved to be a very affecting appeal from Lucy Stevens, now Lucy Warner, and a widow, with two grown-up children. Her husband had died in insolvent circumstances, and she and her sister Emily, who was still single, were endeavoring to carry on a school at Bristol, which promised to be sufficiently prosperous if the sum of about £150 could be raised, to save the furniture from her deceased husband's creditors. The claim was pressing, for Mr. Warner had been dead nearly a year, and Mr. Lisle being the only relative Mrs. Warner had in the world, she had ventured to entreat his assistance for her mother's sake.

There could be no moral doubt, therefore, that the money, was intended for Mrs. Warner's relief, and early in the morning Mr. Caleb Jennings dressed himself in his Sunday's suit, and with a brief announcement to his landlady that he was about to leave Watley for a day or two, on a visit to a friend, set off for the railway station. He had not proceeded far when a difficulty struck him—the bank-notes were all twenties; and were he to change a twenty-pound note at the station, where he was well known, great would be the tattle and wonderment, if nothing worse, that would ensue. So Caleb tried his credit again, borrowed sufficient for his journey to London, and there changed one of the notes.

He soon reached Bristol, and blessed was the relief which the sum of money he brought afforded Mrs. Warner. She expressed much sorrow for the

with me—dog!—llar!—rascal!—thief!

This was a species of attack which Jennings was at no loss how to meet. He shook the attorney roughly off, and hurled him, in the midst of his vituperation, to the further end of the room.

They then stood glaring at each other in silence, till the attorney, mastering himself as well as he could, essayed another and more rational mode of attaining his purpose—

'Come, come, Jennings,' he said; 'don't be a fool. Let us understand each other. I have just discovered a paper, a memorandum of what you have found in the drawers, and to obtain which you bought them. I don't care for the money—keep it; only give me the papers—documents.'

'Papers—documents!' ejaculated Caleb, in unforgotten surprise.

'Yes—yes; of use to me only. You, I remember, cannot read writing; but they are of great consequence to me—to me only, I tell you.'

'You can't mean Mrs. Warner's letter?'

'No—no; curse the letter! You are playing with a tiger. Keep the money, I tell you; but give up the papers—documents—or I'll transport you.'

'I'll transport you with reviving fury,' Caleb, thoroughly bewildered, could only mechanically ejaculate that he had no papers or documents.

The rage of the attorney when no gain could be extracted from Jennings was frightful. He literally roared with passion, uttered the wildest threats, and then suddenly changing his key, offered the astonished cobbler one—two—three thousand pounds—any sum he chose to name, for the papers—documents.

This scene of alternate violence and cajolery lasted nearly an hour; and then Sowerby rushed from the house as if pursued by the furies, and leaving his auditor in a state of thorough bewilderment and dismay. It occurred to Caleb, as soon as his mind had settled into something like order, that there might be another secret drawer, and the recollection of Mr. Lisle's journey to London recurred suggestively to him. Another long and eager search, however, proved fruitless; and the suspicion was given up, or, more correctly, weakened.

As soon as it was light the next morning, Mr. Sowerby was again with him. He was more guarded now, and was at length convinced that Jennings had no paper or document to give up.

'A very curious affair, upon my word,' remarked Mr. Flint, as soon as Caleb had unfolded himself of the story of his purchases; and 'in my opinion he means explaining by Sowerby's anxiety to fulfill the testator's wishes. He cannot expect to get two hundred pounds out of you; and Mrs. Warner, you say, is equally unable to pay. Very odd indeed. Perhaps if we could get time, something might turn up.'

With this view Flint looked over the papers Caleb had brought, and found the declaration was in favour of a manifest error—the notes never admittedly having been in Sowerby's actual possession. We accordingly demurred to the form of action, and the proceedings were set aside. This, however, proved of no ultimate benefit. Sowerby persevered and a fresh action was instituted against the unhappy shoemaker. So utterly overpowered and disconsolate was poor Caleb, that he determined to give up the drawers which had so worried him, and which he had bought with great care and skill every day and night, and which he had measured, in order to ascertain if there were any false bottoms or backs; and the workman finally pronounced that there was no concealed receptacle in the article.

'I am sure there is,' persisted Flint, whom disappointment as usual rendered but the more obstinate; and so is Sowerby; and he knows too that it is so cunningly contrived as to be undiscoverable, except by a person in

the secret, which he no doubt at first imagined Caleb to be. 'I'll tell you what we'll do. You have the necessary tools with you. Split the confounded chest of drawers into shreds—I'll be answerable for the consequences.'

This was done carefully and methodically, but for some time without result. At length the large drawer once unfastened and he was at the bottom of the chest, where, like all the others, was divided into two compartments, dropped asunder, and discovered a parchment laid flat upon the two leaves, which, when pressed together in the grooves of the drawer, presented precisely the same appearance as the rest. Flint snatched up the parchment, and his eager eye had scarcely rested an instant on the writing, when a shout of triumph burst from him. It was the last will and testament of Ambrose Lisle, dated August 21, 1828—the day of his last hurried visit to London. It revoked the former will, and bequeathed the whole of his property, in equal portions, to his cousins Lucy Warner and Emily Stevens, with succession to their children; but with reservation of one-half to his brother Robert or children, should he be alive, or have left offspring.

Great, it may be supposed, was the jubilation of Caleb Jennings at this discovery; and all Watley, by his agency, was in a marvelously short space of time in a very similar state of excitement. It was very late that night when he reached his bed; and how he got there at all, and what precisely had happened, except in deed, that he had somewhere picked up a splitting headache, was, for some time after he awoke the next morning, very confusedly remembered.

Mr. Flint, by reflection, was by no means so exultant as the worthy shoemaker. The odd mode of packing away a deed of such importance, with no assignable motive for doing so, except the needless awe with which Sowerby was said to have inspired his feeble-spirited client, together with what Caleb had said of the shattered state of the deceased's mind at the interview with Mrs. Warner's

daughter, suggested fears that Sowerby might dispute, and perhaps necessarily, the validity of this last will. My excellent partner, however, determined, as was his wont, to put a bold face on the matter; and first clearly settling in his own mind what he should and what he should not say, waited upon Mr. Sowerby. The news had preceded him, and he was at once surprised and delighted to find that the nervous crest-fallen attorney was quite unaware of the advantages of his position. On condition of not being called to account for the moneys he had received and expended, about £1200, he destroyed the former will in Mr. Flint's presence, and gave up at once all the deceased's papers. From these we learned that Mr. Lisle had written a letter to Mrs. Warner stating what he had done, and where the will would be found, and that only herself and Jennings would know the secret. From infinity of purpose, or from having subsequently determined on a personal

visit upon the fortune bequeathed him by Mr. Lisle.

At last Caleb, driven nearly out of his senses, though still doggedly obstinate, by the harassing perplexities in which he found himself, thought of applying to us.

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Interview, the latter was not posted and Sowerby subsequently discovered it, together with a memorandum of the numbers of the bank notes found by Caleb in the secret drawer—the eccentric gentleman appears to have had quite a mania for such hiding-places—of a writing desk.

The affair was happily terminated: Mrs. Warner, her children and sister, were enriched, and Caleb Jennings was set up in a good way of business in his native place, where he still flourishes. Over the centre of his shop there is a large nondescript sign, surmounted by a golden bowl, which upon a close inspection is found to bear a close resemblance to a huge bureau chest of drawers, all the circumstances connected with which may be heard, for the asking, and in much fuller details than I have given, from the lips of the owner or gentleman, by any lady or gentleman who will take the trouble of a journey to Watley for that purpose.

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