

THE VENDUE AT MRS. PICKETT'S.

Secret of the Old Oak Chest
Turned Misfortune Into Luck.

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"I never reckoned I'd live to see the day when my things would be sold at a vandoo!" sobbed poor old Mrs. Pickett as she sat in her big green rocking chair, holding a corner of her checked gingham apron to her streaming eyes. "I reckon the very cheer I'm sittin' in 'll have to go, and I'll be turned out with nothin' but the clothes on my back."

A tall, slender girl about sixteen years old who had been kneeling by her grandmother's chair vainly trying to comfort the old lady rose and said: "Oh, no, grandmother; I don't think it will be as bad as that. I will see to it that your old chair and grandpa's are not sold. You can save out such things as you care for most, but you know that we shall not need half of the things in the two little rooms that we're going to live in at the village."

"Two little rooms in the village!" cried out the old lady, throwing up both hands, with a fresh burst of tears. "And I've got to come down to two little rooms when I've been used all my life to plenty of room, with my big closets and butry and good dry cellar and nice garden, and all that! Oh, Dotty, what could your Grandpa Pickett have been thinkin' of to be so keerness? Dear me, dear me!"

"He didn't know, grandmother. None of us could know that he'd be taken away as he was," replied the girl, her own eyes filling with tears.

Grandfather Pickett had been killed instantly by a fall from his haymow two months before. He had been a kind and good man, but unwisely eccentric in some respects, since he had always made it a rule to tell no one, not even his wife, of his business affairs.

"Women hain't no head for business. Their capacity lays in other sp'eres," had been one of Grandfather Pickett's sayings. So his wife had never been taken into his confidence, and at the time of his death she knew almost nothing about his private affairs.

Some truths she soon discovered, to her sorrow. One of them came home to her with stunning and cruel force five days after the funeral, when Mr. Hiram Parks, a money lender living in the village, came to tell her, in his cold, businesslike way, that the mortgage he had held for ten years on the Pickett farm had never been paid and that a settlement must now be made. He had, besides, a note for \$500 given him by Grandfather Pickett at the time the latter had built his new barn and added the last twenty acres to his



"NO, MA'AM, NOTHING BUT THE INTEREST." farm. On this note nothing but the interest had been paid.

Poor, dumfounded Mrs. Pickett had not even known of the existence of the notes.

"And my husband never paid you anything on the note nor the mortgage?" she asked Parks.

"No, ma'am; nothing but the interest. That was paid up regular enough. He often said he could pay some on them both if he'd a mind to, but he'd rather wait and pay it all off in a lump. I supposed from that that he'd money in the bank or loaned out so it was bringing in more interest than he was paying me."

But a careful search among Mr. Pickett's papers did not give evidence that any one owed him a dollar, and a visit to the bank at the village proved that he had no money there.

"He never would put money in the bank," said Mrs. Pickett. "That was one of his odd ideas, and he'd never pay for anything in payments. He always wanted to pay it all in a lump. But I always thought that mortgage must be 'bout all paid off, and it can't be that we've lived up all we've got out of the farm in all these years, with us sellin' three and four hundred dollars' wuth of stock at a time. If I'r had only told me more 'bout his affairs! Now I've got to meddle with business, whether I've any head for it or not. Dear me, dear me!"

All her lamentations ended with that pathetic "Dear me!" and a sorrowful shake of her gray head.

Mrs. Pickett and her granddaughter, Dorothy, were left alone. Dorothy was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pickett's only child, who, with his wife, had died when Dorothy was but five years old, and since that time she had been the light and joy of the fine old farmhouse.

"And I've taken such comfort in thinkin' that your gran'pa an' me would leave you so nicely provided for and in a home of your own when we were gone. Dear me, dear me!"

"It doesn't matter about me, grandma," Dorothy said. "I am sorry only on your account. I can teach or sew or work in a store or do something else, and we can be very cozy and comfortable in our two snug little rooms. There will be some money left for you after the note and the mortgage are paid."

It was decided that there should be a public sale or vendue of the effects not needed for the new home to which they were to go. A "vandoo" was usually attended by everybody in the neighborhood, and the occasion was a semiholiday. So there was general interest when the posters appeared announcing that Mahala J. Pickett, executrix of the estate of Ira W. Pickett, would on Oct. 10 offer for sale such and such carefully described articles.

Mrs. Pickett had a sorrowful duty in indicating the things she consented to sell.

"They shan't have my mahog'ny chist of drawers, nor my haircloth sofa, nor my flowered carpet, nor my two big rockin' cheers that my father and mother begun housekeepin' with. And they shan't have—oh, dear, dear! There's nothin' I do want 'em to have!"

Poor old lady! She found that even the simplest and most ordinary of her belongings were dear to her.

"There's that green cupboard with the glass door, Dotty," she said. "I s'pose it'll have to go. We've got the red one, and I s'pose we shan't want two. And there's that old oak chist up in the attic—it might as well go, and I reckon Rachel Day 'll bid it in. She wanted to buy it of me once, thirty years ago. I can't bear to think of her havin' any of my things, and I'll warrant she'll come and bid in the very ones I hate to part with most."

"Perhaps she won't come to the sale at all, grandma," said Dorothy.

"Yes, she will!" replied Mrs. Pickett positively. "I know Rachel Day. She'll be here to glory over my trouble. It'll be twenty years this fall since she and I spoke, and she never come to your grandpa's funeral, and I know from that that we shall never speak ag'in. I'd an idee she'd come then. Such good friends as we used to be—girls together and so intimate that we had our dresses and bonnets just alike! And for twenty years we ain't spoke, though we've met hundreds of times. Dear me, dear me!"

Sweet of face and gentle of manner as Mrs. Pickett was, she was a woman of strong prejudices and great firmness. She never sought a quarrel and never continued one long if forced in to it. She simply and for all the time dismissed her enemies from her friendship and affection.

"When I'm done with anybody," she said, "I'm done with 'em!"

Acting on this unkindly and un-Christianlike principle, she had "dropped" a friend of her girlhood and early womanhood twenty years before the death of her husband.

Her son had quarreled with the only son of her dearest friend, Mrs. Rachel Day. The mothers had unwisely taken up the matter, and not even the common sorrow that came upon them in the deaths of the sons in after years had served to bring them together. Each had waited for the other to speak, and both had kept silence.

Mrs. Day came to the vendue, as Mrs. Pickett had predicted.

Mrs. Pickett sat in the big rocking chair on the little porch and watched the progress of the sale through a mist of tears.

Other friends came and spoke words of cheer and sympathy, but Rachel Day, prosperous and happy, kept aloof. Occasionally she glanced toward her old friend as she sat on the porch, a pathetic figure in her widow's weeds, her gray head bowed and her handkerchief often at her eyes, but if Mrs. Day felt sorry for Mrs. Pickett she did not say so.

"Going, going, gentlemen and ladies! Four and a half has been offered for this solid oak chest, as good as it was the day it was made. Four and a half I'm offered. Who'll make it five? Five, five, five—who says it? Are you all done, ladies and gentle-

men? Third and last call and—sold for four and a half to the lady with the brown silk dress and black lace shawl!"

The lady with the brown silk dress and black lace shawl was Rachel Day. Mrs. Pickett fancied she saw a gleam of triumph in the eyes of the new owner of the chest.

Mrs. Day bought several of the things offered, and Mrs. Pickett added to her sorrow a sting of resentment and injured pride with each purchase Rachel made.

"She does it only to aggravate me," Mrs. Pickett thought. But let her go on if it does her any good, I kin hold spite long as anybody, but I wouldn't show it in such a way as this, if I was Rachel Day."

The vendue came to a close early in the afternoon, and the people departed, taking their new possessions with them. Mrs. Day was the last to go, and when she drove out of the farmyard her wagon was well laden with the things she had purchased.

Mrs. Pickett broke down entirely when she and Dorothy were left alone in the almost empty house. Mr. Parks had given them until next week to complete their arrangements for leaving.

Then he proposed to take possession of the house and farm.

Dorothy found much to do during the rest of the day. The one cow her grandmother had kept had strayed away, and when milking time came Dorothy went in search of her.

It was nearly dark when she returned, driving the cow through the grass of the meadow lot. She had left her grandmother alone and was surprised to hear voices in the kitchen when she returned to the house with her milking pail.

Looking at an open window, she was still more surprised to see in the gathering gloom a woman kneeling by her grandmother's chair, while Mrs. Pickett was shaking her head in a dazed kind of way and saying:

"I don't understand it, Rachel. It seems to me I must be dreamin' and that I'll wake up pretty soon and find it ain't so!"

"But you ain't dreamin', Mahala," Dorothy heard Mrs. Day say, with a



"I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY SENSES."

hysterical and tearful little laugh. "It's all true as gospel. Here I am, kneeling right by you, and there's the money right in your lap."

"And you found it in that old oak chist that I thought had been empty for twenty years?"

"Yes, in that secret place in the lid. Don't you remember it?"

"I do now that you speak of it, Rachel. But I'd forgotten all about it before. It's been so many years since the chist was used."

"Well, I remembered it soon as I saw the chest," replied Mrs. Day, "and when I got home with the things I'd bought today and they'd been carried into the house and I found time to look them over I put my finger right on the spot where the spring was in the chest lid. The little door dropped, and a roll of bills came tumbling down into the chest."

"I was so upset at first, Mahala, that I couldn't believe my senses, and when I'd pinched and shaken myself to prove that I was awake I found it was true and that the cavity in the lid was full of bills—more than enough to pay off the mortgage and almost enough to pay off the note."

"And you brought it right over to me! Oh, Rachel!"

"Of course I did, Mahala. Whatever my other failings are, hateful and holding spite for years, and all that, I'm honest, Mahala, and I wouldn't touch a pin I'd no right to."

"I know you wouldn't Rachel, and I didn't mean to hint that you would. But I'm so glad you brought the money yourself!"

"I did think of sending it," said Mrs. Day, "but as I sat thinking it all over and how glad you'd be to get it in the middle of your trouble I began

to feel sorry for you, Mahala, and the sorrier I got the more ashamed I was of myself, and the chest and everything together called back old times until I just laid my head on the chest and had a good long cry. I got up feeling kinder and tenderer toward you than I've felt for twenty years, though there's been times when I've wanted to make up had enough, but I was afraid you wouldn't."

"I'd been glad to, Rachel."

"For a long time the old ladies sat, forgetting and forgiving the past and renewing a friendship not to be broken in the future."

With the money Grandfather Pickett had secreted so carefully in the old chest and the proceeds of the sale Mrs. Pickett easily made up enough to pay off her husband's indebtedness. Mrs. Day returned the articles she had bought at the sale, and Mrs. Pickett gradually regained possession of her most cherished household treasures.

"I never could bear the thought of havin' a vandoo made of my things," said Mrs. Pickett afterward during one of her weekly visits to her old friend Rachel, "but if I hadn't made a vandoo of 'em it ain't at all likely that money 'd ever been found in my day and you and I never would have made up. So there are 'gains for all our losses and balm for all our pains,' as the poetry book says."

"That's so, Mahala," said Mrs. Day.

All That He Knew About.

He had called upon his son at college. "Did John show you everything of interest there?" his wife inquired when he returned.

"He said he did."

"What did he show you?"

"The gymnasium, the football field, the baseball diamond, the boathouse and the training quarters for the crew."

He Was on to Them.

Magistrate—What brought you here? Prisoner—Two policemen, your honor.

Magistrate—Drunk again, I suppose? Prisoner—Yes, sir, both of them.—Kansas City Journal.

A Chance For Authors.

Though bald, still any rich man might be crowned all hunkydory if he'd employ some one to write a good hair raising story.—Nixon Waterman in New York Tribune.

Essence of Sport.

"How does your husband manage in the winter when the automobile season is over?"

"Fine. He takes up bowling and tries to kill the pin boys."—Puck.

Among the Last.

The hardworking editor—Oh, thankless trade!—A preferred creditor—Is seldom made.—Kansas City Journal.

Of Course.

"Wonder why sparrows chatter so much?"

"Maybe because talk's cheep."—Kansas City Times.

Making Friends.

The truly courteous man doth win esteem. He says, with joyous shout, To heavyweights, "You're growing stout." And to the thin, "You're growing stout."—Minneapolis Journal.

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New Job. SI—These here flyin' machines order come handy on the farm some of these days.

HI—How is that? SI—Oh, jest see how easy it would be fer the wimmin folks ter sail around an' scare the crows.—Chicago News.

Baseball Language. This baseball language puzzles me. I cannot make it out. When is a hit a "bingie," and when is a hit a "doo"?—Detroit Free Press.

Another question we would ask, "Why must a man have skill To saunter out upon the mound And there 'project the pill'?"—Chicago Record-Herald.

His Object. "The trouble with you is that you have no object in life." "Yes, I have." "What is it?" "To be able to attend my wealthy father-in-law's funeral."—Pittsburg Post.

Ingenious. A sweet little boy who went to school was up to all sorts of tricks. He discovered that 9 when upside down would pass for the figure 6.

So when asked his age by a stranger once the cute little youngster said, "I'm 9 when I stand on my feet like this, but 6 when I stand on my head."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Down on the Farm. Cholly Citybred (to farmer pruning apple tree)—What are you doing, my good man, may I ask? Farmer—I'm pruning. Cholly Citybred—But isn't it rather early for prunes?—Kansas City Journal.

What the Little Bird Said. He led the girl of his heart away to a nook in the woodlands deep. "Engagement rings," said this stinging youth, "in price are very steep. I'll get one for two ninety-eight, my dear, and I think that is paying a heap." The girl said naught, but a little bird came and piped out, "Cheep, cheep, cheep!"—Chicago News.

His Job. "Pa, what does the umpire have to do?" "The umpire, my boy, is the man who has to take the blame for all the bad playing when the home team loses."—Detroit Free Press.

Not Negotiable. Wife has eyes like diamonds, Her teeth resemble pearls, Her lips look like rubies red, And golden are her curls, But these visionary riches, It is quite plain to me, Will not pay the butcher or Put sugar in our tea.—Denver News.

Encouragement. The Hobo—Madam, I ain't had nothin' to eat fer three days. The Lady—You're doing fine. I read in the paper of a man that fasted for thirty days. Are you trying for his record?—Cleveland Leader.

A Juvenile Investigation. The small boy listened to the bee And wondered what it hummed with glee. The cry which from his lips was wrung Showed that the bee was murmuring "Stung!"—Washington Star.

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