

# A CHRISTMAS DESK

It Contained a Secret.

By ESTHER VANDEVEER.

When Mabel Drew was sixteen she was too old to receive at Christmas such gifts as toys, dolls and other inexpensive knickknacks. The question came up between her father and mother that year what more substantial article should be provided for her. It was finally decided that an escritoire, which is the French name, I take it, for one of those curved legged, claw footed desks with fancy finish on which ladies write their notes and keep their accounts—that is, when they keep accounts—would be the thing.

Mabel was my cousin and had during my childhood been my playmate. When we were passing into youth, after being away from her for a season and returning, I found that another had stepped into my place. He was twenty-two years of age, while I was but eighteen. His entrance into the field suddenly made me aware of the fact that the brotherly-sisterly condition which had existed, or I had supposed existed, between us was simply a mask for a far different condition on my part. Mabel's new friend being four or five years older than I, patronized me, and as for Mabel, it seemed to me that she regarded me, as before, in a sisterly way.

When that Christmas came of which I have been speaking my parents went abroad, and I spent the holidays at my aunt's. We made a merry Christmas of it, and I have since remembered it as the pleasantest of my life. It was certainly the most important, as will appear from my story.

Mabel's desk was delivered at the back door after dark and was carried to my own bedroom. I took off the crate and it stood forth as pretty a piece of furniture as I ever saw. I admired it immensely and was delighted at the pleasure it would give Mabel when she saw it, and for that matter probably for many years after. I pulled out every sandalwood drawer wondering what secrets they would contain. One of these drawers was fitted with a lock and a tiny brass key. The drawers were inside the desk and only exposed when the front was let down. There was a lock for this also.

After all except myself were in bed my uncle and I carried the desk downstairs and deposited it with the other gifts to be distributed in the morning. It was so light that I could have carried it alone, but so frail that I dare not attempt to do so, fearing I might strike it against something and break it. My uncle wrote on a card, "For Mabel, From Papa and Mamma," and laid it on the desk where it could be plainly seen. But I picked it up, put it in the drawer with the lock, turned the key, put up the front part of the desk and locked it too.

In the morning when we were assembled for the distribution of gifts Mabel caught sight of the desk at once, and her eyes danced with excitement. "Is it mine?" she asked. "Open it and see," said her father. She opened it, looked in every pigeon-hole, pulled out every drawer till she came to the one that was locked and, turning the key, found the card I had placed there. She immediately flung her arms around her father's neck, then her mother's, and I wished she would do the same with me. Had she been a few years younger she would have done so. But that time had passed.

The next day the desk was carried to Mabel's room, and I did not see it again for a long while.

One night a lot of us young folk were dancing. Mabel wore a dress cut low about the throat, and her continued bobbing threw up and down something she wore on a chain suspended around her neck. The article was so small that I could not see what it was at first, but on drawing nearer recognized the little key to the drawer within her desk.

"Why do you wear that key on your neck?" I asked. "Oh, it's the key to a drawer in my desk where I keep my secrets," she replied, with a blush.

"Secrets! What business has a girl to have secrets that must not only be locked, but the key to which she must keep on her own person?"

"Everybody has secrets. Haven't you any of your own?"

"None that are so important that I must keep them locked. What is your secret?"

"Well, I like that. What right have you to my secrets?"

"It seemed to me that I had a right to her secrets, but I didn't care to assert it."

"Oh, never mind," I replied. "I'll find it out in time."

"Oh, you will? How are you going to do that?"

"I'll steal that key and unlock the drawer that contains the secret."

"She involuntarily put her hand on the key to protect it."

"You wouldn't do any such thing. You know very well that such an act would be dishonorable."

"I dare you to give me permission."

"There is always something fascinating in taking a risk. Mabel thought for awhile, then said:

"Suppose I give you the permission, what will you give me if you fail?"

"Your choice between half a dozen

pairs of gloves and ten pounds of candy."

"How long a time do you want?"

"Till next Christmas."

"No force used?"

"None whatever."

"Very well, I'll give you till next Christmas. But you'll lose."

"If I do you'll win."

"I'll choose the gloves, I wear sixes."

"If I lose it won't make any difference. I expect to give you a Christmas present anyway."

"Oh, psshaw! I didn't think of that. You're very cute, aren't you?"

"I flatter myself I'm a match for a girl."

Her response to this was a "face," and the subject was dropped.

"This bargain was made in June, and I had six months in which to get into that drawer, which was kept behind the key on Mabel's person and the door in Mabel's room, where I was not supposed to enter. I had no idea of making a success of it. I had proposed it only for a lark.

Having learned by the stepping in between me and Mabel of another person that I wanted her for myself, I was in constant dread that he or some other fellow would take her away from me. At the same time I shrank from speaking to her of love. I feared to break up the brotherly and sisterly relationship to which I had been accustomed from my earliest recollection.

True, too, Mabel didn't give me the slightest encouragement to make the change. When any man was attentive to her and I showed that I was disgruntled she seemed surprised, looking at me with the expression of one who did not understand my dissatisfaction. If I would say, "Mabel, why do you permit that cad to be dancing attendance upon you?" she would reply: "Why, I think he's very nice. Do you know any reason why I shouldn't?"

"Marry him? Certainly I do. He is not the man for you at all."

Then she would walk away apparently miffed, and there would be no trouble between us till the next fellow came buzzing about her.

Occasionally Mabel would say to me, "Have you purchased my gloves yet?" and I would reply, "No; there is plenty of time for that," whereupon she would tell me what color she preferred, impressing upon me the exact shades and showing me certain articles of dress she wished to be matched. I was rather amused than interested, for I could see that, despite her apparent confidence, she suffered some trepidation for fear I might in some unforeseen way succeed.

A piece of good or bad luck, as the case may be, gave me an advantage. Mabel and I rode horseback together, and one day when we were passing through a wood I jumped my horse over a log that was rather higher than those we had been accustomed to take. I cleared it, and Mabel tried to do so too. She raised her animal too soon, and he came down with his belly on the log. Mabel fell on the other side, and I picked her up.

I noticed that the chain to which her desk key was attached had parted and lay on the ground beside her, but I was too much concerned about her to do more than pick it up, unseen by her, and put it in my pocket.

She insisted that she was not hurt and mounted her horse. Fortunately we were not far from home and had no difficulty in reaching it. She did not miss her chain and key, and I said nothing about them. The chain I returned the next day, but insisted on keeping the key till after Christmas. Mabel declared that it was unfair to take advantage of an accident, but this did not move me.

I determined, now that I had the key, to effect an entrance to Mabel's room when no one was there and possess myself of her secret. But I must use strategy. I was invited to spend Christmas, as the year before, at my aunt's, and on Christmas eve went to the house provided with the glove forfeit and admitted to Mabel that having no hope of winning I had provided them. This threw her completely off her guard.

The next morning I remained in my room till I heard her go downstairs, then slipped into her room, opened the desk and applied the key to the little drawer.

And what did I find there? The surprise of my life. There was a small card photograph of myself taken when I was twelve years old, a tiny china doll I had given her one Christmas when she was but six, a misplaced letter I had written her and several articles of no more intrinsic value than these, but evidences of how dear they were to her. Replacing them, I locked the drawer, closed the desk and went downstairs.

When it came my turn to give my Christmas presents I handed the gloves to Mabel and a ten pound box of candy besides. On opening the box she saw the key to her desk drawer.

"I knew you would not succeed in that matter," she said, and I did not tell her that I had succeeded. But on Christmas night, when the others had gone to bed, I sat with her before an open fire, and after certain skirmishing I told her something else, to which she responded in a manner that was to my heart's content.

To this day she doesn't know that I found her treasures.

Nevertheless the Christmas desk is an object of interest with me. My wife has given it up for a receptacle of household matter, and I have several pigeonholes and drawers in which I keep receipts and other such papers. I never sit down before the desk to write a letter, draw a check or file a receipted bill that I do not think of the Christmas morning when I discovered that which has given me such delight.

**Bravery of a Boy.**  
"One of the bravest acts I witnessed during the whole war," said an officer of the Army of Northern Virginia, was that of a young soldier who was probably not over sixteen. We had thought of him as only a boy, although he went with the regiment on all its movements.

"One day there was a fierce engagement. In the midst of it a lance struck this boy in the breast, and he fell. Our colonel ordered his men to dismount, and as he himself sprang from his horse the boy called out in a weak voice, 'I will hold your horse, colonel!'"

"Stopping in the midst of the storm of bullets to gaze in pity on the white, boyish face, the colonel said, 'But you can't do that, boy—you are dying.'"

"I know I am, colonel," the gallant boy replied. "But I can hold the reins when I am dead!"

"The colonel placed the bridle in the trembling hands and went forward. When the fight was over he hurried back and found the boy lying dead, the bridle reins still wrapped tightly round his limp right hand."—Youth's Companion

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North Platte, Nebraska.  
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**Auction Sale of School Lands**  
Notice is hereby given that on the 22nd day of December, 1914, at one o'clock p. m. at the office of the county treasurer of Lincoln county, the Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings, or his authorized representative will offer for lease at public auction all educational lands within said county upon which forfeiture of contract has been declared as follows:

E $\frac{1}{2}$  and N $\frac{1}{2}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  36, 12, 29, Barker Company.  
E $\frac{1}{2}$  36, 16, 29, R. H. Kirby.  
FRED BECKMAN,  
Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings.  
December 1, 1914.

**Legal Notice.**  
In the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

William Schaepler, plaintiff, vs. James E. Lane, mortgagee named in the mortgage in the petition herein described, the unknown heirs or legatees and devisees of said James E. Lane, deceased; the unknown heirs or legatees and devisees of Josiah Harrington, deceased, as assignee from said James E. Lane of said mortgage and the real estate covered and clouded thereby, to-wit: E $\frac{1}{2}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and E $\frac{1}{2}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$  section 24, township 12, North, range 32 West 6th P. M., defendants.

Each and all of the defendants above named and described, will take notice that William Schaepler, plaintiff herein, on the 18th day of August, 1914 filed his petition in the office of the Clerk of the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, against the defendants hereinbefore in the title named and described, the object and prayer of which are to obtain the decree of said court to quiet in the plaintiff the title to said described real estate to-wit: E $\frac{1}{2}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and E $\frac{1}{2}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$  section 24, township 12, North, range 32 West 6th P. M., against the apparent and unenforceable lien arising by virtue of the mortgage thereon, made by Alton L. Martin to James E. Lane, dated March 10, 1894, recorded March 24, 1894 in book 13, page 473 of the mortgage records of said Lincoln County, which said mortgage has been fully paid and satisfied and due and legal assignment of same was made by said James E. Lane to said Josiah Harrington, now deceased, the last named having executed and delivered good and sufficient release of said mortgage, but both said instruments, to-wit: said assignment of mortgage and release thereof, so as aforesaid duly executed, acknowledged and delivered, have been lost or destroyed without recording and all without fault or laches on behalf of said plaintiff, who prays for said decree without redeeming or offering to redeem therefrom, full satisfaction of the same having been made, and for equitable relief generally.

You, the said defendants, and each of you, are required to answer said petition on or before Monday the 18th day of January, 1915.

Dated December 8, 1914.  
WILLIAM SCHAEPLER, Plaintiff.  
By KING & BIEHLER, his attorneys,  
Osceola, Nebr., DS-4

**Order of Hearing on Final Settlement**  
The State of Nebraska, Lincoln County, ss.

In the Matter of the Estate of William Shreer, Deceased:

To the creditors, heirs, legatees and others interested in the estate of William Shreer:

Take notice, that Lester Walker has filed in the County Court, a report of his doings as administrator of said estate, and it is ordered that the same stand for hearing the 18th day of December, A. D., 1914 before the Court at the hour of 9 o'clock a. m., at which time any person interested may appear and except to and contest the same.

Notice of this proceeding and the hearing thereof is ordered given to all persons interested in said matter by publishing a copy of this order in the North Platte Tribune, a semi-weekly newspaper printed in said County, for 3 consecutive weeks prior to said date of hearing.

Dated November 23, 1914.  
SS-3  
County Judge.  
County Judge.

**Sheriff's Sale.**  
By virtue of an order of sale issued from the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, upon a decree of foreclosure rendered in said Court wherein Mutual Building & Loan Association, a corporation is plaintiff and Charles V. O'Brien et al are defendants, and to me directed, I will on 2 o'clock P. M., at the east front door of the court house in North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, to satisfy said decree, interest and costs, the following described property, to-wit: Lot Six (6) Block One fifty-one (151) Original town of North Platte, Nebraska.

Dated North Platte, Nebraska, November 16th, 1914.  
A. J. SALISBURY,  
Sheriff.

**Geo. B. Dent,**  
Physician and Surgeon.  
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**Order of Hearing on Petition for Appointment of Administrator or Administratrix.**  
The State of Nebraska, Lincoln County, ss.

In the Matter of the Estate of John R. McWilliams, Deceased.

On reading and filing the petition of Elizabeth McWilliams praying that administration of said estate may be granted to herself as administratrix.

Ordered, That December 29, A. D., 1914, at 9 o'clock a. m. is assigned for hearing said petition, when all persons interested in said matter may appear before a County Court to be held in and for said County, and show cause why the prayer of petitioner should not be granted; and that notice of the pendency of said petition and the hearing thereof be given to all persons interested in said matter by publishing a copy of this order in the North Platte Tribune, a semi-weekly newspaper printed in said County, for three successive weeks, prior to said day of hearing.

Dated December 5th, 1914.  
JOHN GRANT,  
County Judge.

**Probate Notice.**  
In the Matter of the Estate of William Landgraf, Deceased.

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, November 25th, 1914.

Notice is hereby given, that the creditors of said deceased will meet the Administrator of said Estate, before the County Judge of Lincoln County, Nebraska, at the County Court Room, a said County, on the 29th day of December, 1914, and on the 29th day of June, 1915, at 9 o'clock a. m. each day, for the purpose of presenting their claims for examination, adjustment and allowance. Six months are allowed for creditors to present their claims, and one year for the Administrator to settle said estate, from the 25th day of November, 1914. A copy of this order to be published in the North Platte Tribune, a legal semi-weekly newspaper of said county for four consecutive weeks prior to December 29, 1914.

Dated December 5th, 1914.  
JOHN GRANT,  
County Judge.

**E. C. HODDER, Attorney.**  
645 Omaha National Bank Building

**Notice to Non-Resident Defendants.**  
The defendants, Arthur Battles, Hannah Battles, Stella A. Dowd, — Dowd, her husband, first and real name unknown, Austin S. Ghrist, John E. Ghrist, John E. Ghrist, Harvey Metz, Frank Wille, R. J. Davis, first and real name unknown, F. J. Whitehead, first and real name unknown, A. J. White, first and real name unknown, L. R. West, first and real name unknown, and Mrs. L. R. West, his wife, first and real name unknown, and each of them are notified that on the 18th day of November, 1914, George E. Warren filed a petition in the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, against said above named defendants, impleaded with others, which are to foreclose certain mortgages executed on the 27th day of April, 1912, by the defendant, Arthur Battles, a corporation, upon the following described property, situated in the southwest one-fourth of the southeast one-fourth, and the northeast one-fourth, and the southwest one-fourth in Section sixteen north, of township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$1090, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914; One mortgage for \$500.00 on the east one-half of section twenty-nine in township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$545.00, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914; One mortgage for \$500.00 on the southeast one-fourth of section twenty-nine in township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$545.00, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914; One mortgage for \$500.00 on the southeast one-fourth of section twenty-nine in township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$545.00, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914.

The plaintiff prays that each and all of the said mortgaged premises be deemed sold to satisfy the amounts due thereon and that each and all of said defendants and all persons claiming by, through or under them or any of them be excluded from and foreclosed of all interest, right, title, lien and equity of redemption in to and upon said premises.

You are required to answer said petition on or before the 26th day of January, 1915.

GEORGE E. WARREN, Plaintiff.  
By E. C. Hodder, His Attorney.  
E. C. HODDER, Attorney.  
645 Omaha National Bank Building

**Notice to Non-Resident Defendants.**  
The defendants, Will Outtrim, Clara C. Outtrim, Frank Wille, husband of Ghrist and John Ghrist, her husband, and each of them are notified that on the 18th day of November, 1914, James A. Pike filed a petition in the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, against said above named defendants, impleaded with others, the object and prayer of which are to foreclose his certain mortgage executed on the 27th day of April, 1912, by the defendant, U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, upon the northwest one-fourth (N. W. 1/4) of Section twenty-nine (29), in township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42 of Mortgage, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$545.00, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914.

The plaintiff prays that said mortgaged premises be deemed sold to satisfy the amount due thereon and that each and all of said defendants and all persons claiming by, through or under them or any of them be excluded from and foreclosed of all interest, right, title, lien and equity of redemption in to and upon said premises.

You are required to answer said petition on or before the 26th day of January, 1915.

ANN V. METCALF, Plaintiff.  
By E. C. Hodder, Her Attorney.  
E. C. HODDER, Attorney.  
645 Omaha National Bank Building

**Notice to Non-Resident Defendants.**  
The defendants, Will Outtrim, Clara C. Outtrim, Frank Wille, husband of Ghrist and John Ghrist, her husband, and each of them are notified that on the 18th day of November, 1914, James A. Pike filed a petition in the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, against said above named defendants, impleaded with others, the object and prayer of which are to foreclose his certain mortgage executed on the 27th day of April, 1912, by the defendant, U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, upon the northwest one-fourth (N. W. 1/4) of Section twenty-nine (29), in township sixteen north, of range thirty-two west of the sixth P. M. in Lincoln County, Nebraska, recorded in Book 42 of Mortgage, Page 307 of the Mortgage Records of Lincoln County, Nebraska, to secure a First Mortgage Coupon note or obligation to said U. S. Live Stock Company, a corporation, dated the 27th day of April, 1912, and plaintiff alleges that there is due upon said note or obligation the sum of \$545.00, with interest thereon at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from the 27th day of October, 1914.

The plaintiff prays that said mortgaged premises be deemed sold to satisfy the amount due thereon and that each and all of said defendants and all persons claiming by, through or under them or any of them be excluded from and foreclosed of all interest, right, title, lien and equity of redemption in to and upon said premises.

You are required to answer said petition on or before the 26th day of January, 1915.

JAMES A. PIKE, Plaintiff.  
By E. C. Hodder, His Attorney.  
E. C. HODDER, Attorney.  
645 Omaha National Bank Building

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The plaintiff prays that said mortgaged premises be deemed sold to satisfy the amount due thereon and that each and all of said defendants and all persons claiming by, through or under them or any of them be excluded from and foreclosed of all interest, right, title, lien and equity of redemption in to and upon said premises.

You are required to answer said petition on or before the 26th day of January, 1915.

JAMES A. PIKE, Plaintiff.  
By E. C. Hodder, His Attorney.  
E. C. HODDER, Attorney.  
645 Omaha National Bank Building

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JAMES A. PIKE, Plaintiff.  
By E. C. Hodder, His Attorney.  
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JAMES A. PIKE, Plaintiff.  
By E