

The Cost of Business Arrogance
by Allan Pinkerton

SOME time in September, 1871, there was presented at the banking house of Henry Clews & Co., in New York City, a draft for the sum of \$55 dollars. In the usual course of business, the draft was stamped thus:

<p><i>ACCEPTED.</i></p> <p>Payable at the Fourth National Bank.</p> <p>HENRY CLEWS & Co.</p>
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Two or three days afterwards, the draft was presented to the Fourth National Bank for payment. The figures had been altered to \$5500, but not so as to attract attention.

The man who presented the check, however, was so nervous that the suspicions of the paying teller were aroused. He detained the man who presented the draft and sent a messenger to the house of Henry Clews & Co., to see if it was good. After some trouble the messenger forced an interview with the junior member of the firm. That young gentleman seized the check, drew it through his jeweled fingers and said:

“Young man, there’s our stamp on that draft right before your eyes. If that stamp was a bear, it would bite you. Tell your paying teller that time is valuable to us, and if we are to be interrupted in our business hours through his stupidity, the Fourth National Bank will have to make some other arrangements so far as Henry Clews & Co. are concerned!”

So saying, he seized a pen, and before the messenger had recovered from his surprise and could tell him of the suspicions of the teller of the Fourth National, he wrote across the face of the check:—

<p><i>Good for \$5500.</i></p> <p>HENRY CLEWS & Co.</p>

This he handed to the young man, again rebuked him for bothering the great firm of Henry Clews & Co., and vanished.

The messenger returned to the bank, and the paying teller indignantly paid the money without more question. The gentleman who altered the figures went on his way rejoicing, and but two days afterwards the firm of Clews & Co. discovered the fraud.

They had lost exactly five thousand four hundred and forty-five dollars for the exhibition of a little arrogance.

Allan Pinkerton, *Criminal Reminiscences and Detective Sketches*. New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1878.

This story was included in the illustrated anthology *Criminal Reminiscences and Detective Sketches*.