

As Edwin unlocked it, and the prodigious door swung with silent smoothness to his pull, he was aware of a very romantic feeling of exploration. He had seen the inside of the safe before; he had even opened the safe, and taken something from it, under his father's orders. But he had never had leisure, nor licence, to inspect its interior. From his boyhood had survived the notion that it must contain many marvels. In spite of himself his attitude was one of awe.

The first thing that met his eye was his father's large, black-bound private cash-book, which constituted the most sacred and mysterious document in the accountancy of the business. Edwin handled, and kept, all the books save that. At the beginning of the previous week he and Stifford had achieved the task of sending out the quarterly accounts, and of one sort or another there were some seven hundred quarterly accounts... But he could form no sure idea of the total dimensions and results of the business, because his father always kept the ultimate castings to himself, and never displayed his private cash-book under any circumstances. By ingenuity and perseverance Edwin might have triumphed over Darius's mania for secrecy; but he did not care to do so; perhaps pride even more than honour caused him to refrain.

A. Bennett