

The Ticket-of-Leave Man

"Sam Pettit, my boy, you're in luck."

An old man with white hair, close cropped, bent over a grimy newspaper; a clay pipe with bowl turned down hung out of his mouth, and a jug of flat beer stood at his elbow.

ESTHER WHITE.—Wanted, information as to the whereabouts of Esther White, daughter of Geoffry Tarrant White, and his wife, Gladys White, formerly Renshaw. A liberal reward will be paid.—Bell and Bull, Solicitors, Old Jewry, E.C.

"And to think that Geoffry Tarrant White and me should come out on our ticket-o'-leave on the same day just a month ago, an' three days after he should die in my arms. What was it he said? 'Pettit, my boy, I'm a-goin'. Promise me,' he says, 'that you'll go to my daughter Esther an' ask her to forgive me.' Lor', fancy asking to be forgiven by your own kid. 'She was a little mite of five when I was took,' he says, so she must be about twenty now. Well, dooty is dooty, an' a promise is a promise, an' I've got Esther White's address, an' Bell and Bull are going to give me a liberal reward for it."

He finished the beer with much gusto, and after carefully brushing a battered silk hat he left his lodgings with a jaunty air born of newly-found freedom.

He made his way to Old Jewry and soon found the offices of Messrs. Bell and Bull, where he demanded to see one of the partners.

"What name, sir?" demanded the clerk, eyeing him suspiciously.

"For a moment he hesitated; then a strange inspiration seized him.

"White—Geoffry Tarrant White."

The mention of the name was sufficient. The clerk disappeared with alacrity, and soon returned to usher Sam Pettit into the presence of Mr. Bell.

"Good morning, sir, good morning," chirped Mr. Pettit, affably.

"Take a seat, please," said Mr. Bell, shortly. "You have come about—"

"This advertisement, sir, for the whereabouts of Esther White, my daughter, sir; an' if a man don't know the whereabouts of his own daughter and ain't concerned in the happiness of his child he—"

"You will understand, Mr. White, that the advertisement refers exclusively to your daughter, and my client has not the slightest wish to have anything to do with you."

"That's all very well, an' very high an' mighty, but I've got to know what the advertisement means and whether any harm is intended to my girl, an' until I do know I keeps her whereabouts to myself."

"Nothing but good is intended for your daughter, I can assure you. Of the misery you have caused other people by your past life I will say nothing. Your own conscience, I hope, will be sufficient. But I trust that the future of your daughter will in some way recompense her for the hard life which, I fear, has been her lot."

"Recompense her—how?"

"When James Renshaw, your late wife's father, died, some three months ago, all his estate passed to Paul Renshaw, a distant relative, now in his thirtieth year. On his death-bed James Renshaw made Paul promise that he would find Esther White and make ample provision for her future."

"An' that's what the advertisement means. My daughter is to be took from me, an' I can starve in the gutter. Look what she says in her last letter to me, written a week afore I came out."

Sam Pettit took a crumpled letter from his pocket and straightened it out.

"Dear Father—there, do you hear that? Dear Father—I understand that you are shortly to be released. I promised mother before she died that I would have a home ready for you to come to. I have kept my word. I enclose the money for your fare, and hope you will lose no time in coming here.—E.W." There! what do you think of that?"

"Poor girl; poor girl!"

"An' do you think I'm going to give up a comfortable home an' be turned out like a dog? No fear; I keep her address to myself."

"And have you seen her since you came out?"

"Well—er—you see—coming to London with a little money—er—well—you know."

"And you have no money left? Well, Mr. White, I will do this. Give me the address and I will hand you ten pounds. That will enable you to go to your daughter. I have no wish to keep you from her; I only wish to impress upon you that her future will be one of comparative affluence, which you must not reckon upon sharing."

"Oh! I know an old ticket-o'-leave man can only count upon being kicked from pillar to post. I'll take the money; and here's the address."

He wrote the address on a sheet of paper and pocketed the money. After carefully polishing his hat on a greasy sleeve, he bade Mr. Bell good morning and departed. Once outside the door, however, he turned round with a chuckle, and placing his thumb to his nose he spread the fingers out.

"Spoofed; sold; done brown. Sam Pettit, you're in luck; and now for

Manchester an' my dear daughter Esther."

Gay Street, Manchester, somewhat belied its name. It was a dreary-looking place enough, and the homes it contained were often drearier still, but it was cheap, and at all events un the case of No. 11, it was clean.

Esther White bent over her sewing but every now and then she raised her head and listened expectantly. A cheerful fire was burning in the grate and the table was prepared for a meal.

At that instant a body lurched against the front door, and the knocker fell with a single thud.

With a look of apprehension upon her face Esther rose and opened the door. A smell of stale whisky entered the house, followed almost immediately by Sam Pettit.

"Well, Esther, my gal, here I am at last. Got tired o' waitin' for me, did yer?"

"I certainly expected you many weeks ago. I asked you to come here as soon as—"

"Say it, my gal, say it. As soon as I came out of quod. Well, here I am, so come an' give us a kiss."

Instinctively she drew back.

"What! afraid of yer old dad; not used to him yet—eh? Well, let it pass an' bring on some grub, an' then I've got news to tell yer."

She placed food before him and sat almost in silence while he ate. She was keeping her promise to her dead mother, but she could not repress a feeling of aversion as she contemplated the man before her.

"Well, yer seem to have grown a pretty, well-set-up sort of girl, Esther, and you're fairly comfortable here. A credit to yer mother an' me. Did yer mother ever mention James Renshaw?"

"James Renshaw was my mother's brother, and lived at Dennytown Cross in Surrey. I understand he died some months ago."

"And Paul Renshaw?"

"I do not know him."

"Well, you jolly soon will, because I expect him here any day, any hour, any minute."

"Here! Why?"

"Because your mother's brother did the right thing at the last minute, and told Paul Renshaw, his heir, to provide for us handsomely—for us, do yer 'ear, for me and you."

"How do you know this?"

"Seen it in the paper; see 'ere, there 'tis—Bell and Bull. I've interviewed 'em, an' they paid me ten pounds on account, an' now I'll go an' have a doss; I'm tired. They may be here to-morrow, an' if they want to take you away from me, eh? Esther, my gal, I'm an old man, an'—"

"Do not fear. I shall keep my promise to my mother."

"Good gal, good gal; always obey your mother."

And Sam Pettit retired to a comfortable bed, chuckling to himself.

To Esther White the next two days passed almost like a nightmare. In her occupation as milliner she had to absent herself from the house for several hours every day, and Sam Pettit filled in his time by getting as intoxicated as his means would permit.

On the third day, however, when Esther arrived home she found her supposed father in conversation with a stranger.

"Ere she is; this is my gal, my dear daughter Esther. Renshaw, my dear, this is Mr. Paul Renshaw, him as advertised for us."

"Pardon me, my advertisement was for Miss White and made no reference to you. I am sorry, Miss White, that I have been so long in tracing you, but we could not find any clue to your whereabouts."

"Why should you wish to, Mr. Renshaw? My father has told me some rambling story, but I cannot understand it."

"I can soon explain it. When your uncle, James Renshaw, was dying, he asked me to seek you out and provide for your future. Now that I have found you I ask you to make arrangements to come to Dennytown Cross and take up your abode there."

"And what of me—what of me?" demanded Sam Pettit.

"I have nothing whatever to do with you, sir; my interest is entirely concerned with Miss White."

"An' what of her promise to her mother to provide me with a home, eh?"

"I am sorry, Mr. Renshaw, but I cannot do as you ask. As my father says, I promised mother to look after him, and I must do it."

And nothing Paul Renshaw could say would move her from her resolution. She would gladly have given up her hard struggle for existence and accepted his proffered friendship, but the memory of her promise made this impossible. Finding that words would not prevail, he accepted the situation.

"Well if you are determined to keep your promise—and believe me I honor you for it—you must bring your father down with you. I shall have a cottage vacant in a few weeks, and meanwhile you will be my guests at Dennytown Manor."

And to Sam Pettit's delight it was arranged that they should go to Dennytown Cross on the following Saturday.

Paul Renshaw did nothing by halves, and when Sam Pettit brought Esther to the manor at the time appointed the ex-convict presented the appearance of an exceedingly well-dressed and highly respectable old gentleman.

Sam Pettit had not been at Dennytown Manor twenty-four hours before he became firmly convinced that Paul Renshaw was rapidly losing his heart to Esther White. "An' you must egg 'em on, Sam, my boy,

an' if Esther once marries Renshaw, you've made a nice downy bed for life."

And in two or three days it became very evident to everybody that Sam Pettit had made no mistake in his surmise. Paul Renshaw was very much in love with his pretty guest, and Esther seemed in no way averse to his attentions.

It sometimes happened that Sam was too unwell to appear at dinner, and upon such occasions he would betake himself to a cosy spot in the garden and indulge in an open-air cure, with a bottle bulging his pocket.

There it was that one day he awoke from a somewhat heavy siesta with the sound of voices in his ears, and he realized that Paul and Esther were standing on the other side of the hedge.

"Listen to me, Esther. There is no affection between you and your father and I do not see how there possibly can be. He is drunk from morning till night, and there is nothing to love in him. It would be far better for him to go away, and so long as he stayed away I would allow him two hundred a year."

"No, Paul; I cannot do it. Depraved and degraded though he may be, he is my father, and I promised my mother—"

"And yet you cannot promise me. All my love is to go for naught. Let him stay here and live in the cottage, but give me the one wish of my life. You say that you love me, and—"

"Yes, Paul, I do love you, but while my father is alive I cannot marry you; it would simply drag you down and embitter our lives. It would be far better if I went away."

"A nice, dootiful daughter, an' no mistake. Refusing ten thousand a year because I'm alive," murmured Sam Pettit, as the voices died away in the distance. "I'll teach her to-night."

On the following day Paul Renshaw went up to London on business, and Pettit found his opportunity.

"Look 'ere, my gal, you ain't playing me fair, an', understand me, I ain't going ter 'ave it."

"What do you mean?" asked Esther.

"What do I mean? Why, this: I heard Paul Renshaw offer to make you his wife, an' you was fool enough to blight my prospects by refusing him, an' I won't 'ave it. Do you hear? After yer promise to yer mother, too. Disgraceful, I call it. An' wantin' to pay me two hundred a year to clear out—no much. I'm going to stay 'ere, an' you've got to marry Paul Renshaw!"

Esther faced him, quiet, but determined.

"Listen to me, please, before you presume to dictate and bully. Until the last few weeks I have known practically nothing about you. During the time you were away my mother seldom mentioned your name, but when she did it was only to recall your good qualities. When she died and I prepared a home for you I hoped to meet a father whom I could respect, if not love. I had been taught to look upon you as one who was more sinned against than sinner. Of my disappointment I shall say nothing, but I want you to understand distinctly that I am not going to drag Paul Renshaw's name in the mire by presenting him with you for a relation."

That same evening Esther found her supposed father in the library. His coat was lying on the floor, and he lay back in his shirt-sleeves sleeping heavily. Full of disgust she picked the coat up with the intention of rousing him, and as she did so some papers fell out of the pocket.

She glanced at them carelessly, but one document arrested her attention. It was a ticket-of-leave made out in the name of Samuel Pettit.

Like a flash the suspicion darted through her brain. Was this man her father?

Stepping behind the chair she bent towards him.

"Samuel Pettit!"

With a hoarse cry the man sprang from his chair and glared about him.

"Yes—yes. Who called me?"

"I did."

"You—you? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are an impostor; you are not my father, but Samuel Pettit, and here is your ticket-of-leave."

"You are making a mistake. I—"

"Oh, it is useless to deny it. I have felt all along that you could be no relation of mine, and here I have proof."

Sam Pettit in his fuddled state felt that the game was up.

"And—and what are you going to do?"

"Hand you over to the police if you are not away from here in half an hour."

The mention of police was quite enough for Sam and he gave in at once.

"I'll go; I've played the game an' lost. I—I can take my few clothes, I suppose."

She nodded, and he left the room, leaving her gazing into space, a prey to conflicting emotions. For some hours she sat almost without moving; then came a commotion in the hall and the old butler burst into the room.

"Oh, miss, master has been robbed. The safe in his room is broken open and the jewel-case has gone."

With a cry of horror she sprang to her feet with the name of Sam Pettit on her lips. Then she re-

membered that no one knew of the imposture.

"My father—where is he?"

"He left for London two hours ago, miss; said he was going to join master. Crooks drove him to the station, miss."

"Send for the police and have a conveyance round. I can catch the 10.30. I must see Mr. Renshaw to-night."

All was bustle and commotion, the servants ran hither and thither, and in a few minutes Esther was on her way to the station. The sole idea in her mind was to find Sam Pettit and make him return the jewels.

Where to look for him she did not know, but she felt that once in London fortune would help her.

She did not seek Paul Renshaw. In the face of this disaster she could not meet him. She took lodgings at a quiet hotel, and on the following day she commenced her search.

For two days her efforts were unavailing, but on the third day, when, weary and heart-sick, she was wending her way to the hotel, she met him face to face.

"Samuel Pettit—at last!"

"Esther!"

Like a hunted hare he looked up and down the street, as if contemplating flight, but the sight of a constable in the vicinity made him change his tactics.

"Yes, Sam Pettit, I have found you at last. No, don't think to escape, or I will give you in charge."

"Then—then—you don't mean harm to me?"

"I want the jewels you stole from Mr. Renshaw; after that I don't care what becomes of you; but the jewels I must have."

"Ah! if I could only get rid of them. Come with me; they are close at hand. I have not had a moment's peace since I took them."

Without fearing danger she joyfully consented, and Sam Pettit led the way down a series of mean streets.

Then stopping before a dismal-looking house he opened the door and bade her enter. He led her to a meanly-furnished room on the first floor. Once inside he banged the door and turned the key in the lock.

"And now, my gal, did you think you could get the better of Sam Pettit? You little innocent. I'm on my way to the Continent to-night, but before I go I must silence you for a few hours."

He threw himself upon her and seized her wrists. She fought with superhuman energy, but was no match for him, and with a loud scream she fell to the floor.

At that moment the front door was burst in with a crash and several men dashed up the stairs. In an instant the second door was forced, and Paul Renshaw, with two detectives, entered the room.

"Esther! Esther! My darling!"

She fell into her lover's arms in a dead faint.

"So, Sam Pettit, we have got you again," said one of the detectives.

"Sam Pettit! I don't understand," said Paul; "this man is Geoffry Tarrant White."

"Not much. Geoffry White died some months ago; this man is Sam Pettit."

Pettit, with the handcuffs on his wrists, resigned himself to his fate, and in a few moments Esther recovered.

"Thank Heaven we were in time, darling. It is fortunate that we were shadowing this man, and traced him to his den."

"The jewels are here, Mr. Renshaw," said one of the men.

"I care nothing for those; my jewel is here. Nay, don't speak just yet, darling; I have heard all. Your father is dead, and there is now no bar to our marriage. Henceforth I shall devote my life to make your days a dream of happiness, leaving the law to deal with this ticket-of-leave man."—London Tit-Bits.

DO NOT MARRY THE GIRL—

Who nags.
Who is lazy.
Who is a flirt.
Who cannot control her temper.
Who is not neat and tidy in her dress.
Who is deceitful, and not true to her friends.
Who fusses, fumes, and sidgets about everything.
Whose highest aspiration has never soared above self.
Who is amiable to suitors and "horrid" to her family.
Whose chief interests in life are dress and amusements.
Who lacks thrift, and has no idea of the value of money.
Who cannot bear to hear anyone but herself praised or admired.
Who never thinks that her mother needs an outing, amusement, or a change.
Who humiliates servants by snapping at them or criticising them before guests.
Who dresses in the height of fashion when going out, but does not care how she looks at home.
Who always comes to the breakfast-table late and cross, in an old wrapper or dressing-jacket, with her hair in curl-papers, and who grumbles and scolds at everything and everybody.
Who puts everything she can get on her back, so that she may make a good appearance, while her mother is obliged to patch and do up for herself old cloaks, gowns, and bonnets.

Mother—That note paper is certainly very quaint, but are you sure it is fashionable? Daughter: Ah, it must be. It's almost impossible to write on it.

WHEN GREAT FOLKS SHOP

SOCIETY THROUGH THE SHOP-MAN'S SPECTACLES.

How the Prominent People of England Are Viewed by Tradesmen.

Tradesmen love dealing with the Upper Ten. The general experience of West-end tradesmen is that the higher in the social scale a customer is, the more considerate and amiable he or she is found to be, says Pearson's Weekly.

The Duke of Argyll is beloved of tradesmen. The King's brother-in-law is the most amiable of men to serve. One tradesman, who deals in large articles of furniture, recalls the Duke purchasing a large wooden article, and positively declining to let one of the assistants carry it to his carriage, lifting it out of the shop himself as though accustomed to the work.

Miss Ellen Terry is as charming of the stage as on, and few know this better than shop assistants. She darts from place to place in a most kitten-like manner, laughing and chatting to the assistants as though in a drawing-room.

Once the sun was shining with all its might through the window, and an assistant pulled down the blind. "Ah!" exclaimed the famous actress, "see how considerate she is for my wrinkles. She knows they are less conspicuous in the shade, so kindly pulls down the blind." Of course Miss Terry was assured that the action was prompted by no such motives, being entirely to protect the bonnets in the window from the powerful

RAY'S OF THE SUN.

Mr. Brodriker is a business-like, outspoken shopper, and woe betide the man who tries to overcharge him. The Indian Secretary, too, is not above a gentle bit of bargaining when there is a possibility of securing a reduction in the price of an article.

Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, though quite young herself, shops with her grown-up step-daughters, and chooses their gowns with the air of a dowager. She is a most amiable customer in every way from the assistants' point of view.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell has for years past been one of the most familiar figures in the West-end shops. In a recent play, in which the critics had not spoken well of her performance, she remarked at one shop that "they were all running her down, but she would make up the part in a night or two," when she predicted a change of opinion. And, warming up to the part, aided by the dressmaker, she promptly more than justified these words.

A shabby old gentleman many years ago went into a West-end shop for a piece of furniture. The assistants tittered as he entered, thinking he was some laborer in his "Sunday best," and, in dealing with him, treated the matter more as a joke than anything else.

On being asked the price of a drawing-room article, he was told £25, the shopman having asked this price at random, supposing that his customer would not be able to pay anything like it.

He was surprised to hear in reply, "Ah! I'll take this. Send it to my address."

"What name, sir?" asked the salesman.

"The Duke of Somerset," was the uncomely reply, which promptly squashed any inclination on the part of the shopman in future to be guided in his civility by the appearance of his customer. The Duke really secured the article at less than its proper price.

Miss Marion Terry is quite different from her sister Miss Ellen Terry. Instead of dispensing amiability to all and sundry, she is very dignified and awe-inspiring in her shop demeanor.

Mrs. George Alexander is quite an artistic shopper, and her taste in selecting articles inspires general admiration. Had fortune been otherwise, she might well have been a fashionable costumier herself. She is credited with the design of all the dresses and rooms at the St. James's Theatre, and certainly chooses her own things with the greatest taste.

Many ladies who at first glance appear to be the most easily pleased turn out to be veritable tartars, and after mentioning that they have only a minute or two to spare, stay an hour deciding on a hat or an article of clothing.

Not so Miss Rhoda Broughton, who once went into a milliner's shop exclaiming, "I am very difficult to bonnet," but it turned out that she was really the reverse, being much more easily satisfied than many far less candid customers.

OUR PUZZLED POET.

Oh, Muscovite and little Jap, You've caught me in an awful trap! For nowadays, in public eye, An eminence you occupy; And fain would I in fluent verse Your points of interest rehearse. And thus bring shokels to my ken; For poets live as other men. In that they eat (when they have cash).

And pay rent, too (though this is rash). But woe is me, I cannot sing! Of you—no, not a single thing!— Because—oh, very shame of shame!— I don't know how to say your names!