

# Who's Tom?

"Any letters, Susan?" asked Mr. Podberry, as he took his seat at the breakfast table.

"Three, sir," replied his housekeeper, placing them before him. "One's from Miss Kitty."

"Kitty!" he snapped, regarding the woman with a frown. "Mrs. Susan Jenkins, when will you learn to call my niece by her baptismal name? Pet names are very well for children, but for a young woman of twenty-two, why—"

The woman, being used to her master's humors, made no reply, but having seen that all his requirements were within his reach quietly withdrew.

Filling his cup from the urn he took up one of the letters, saying, as he tore it open, "From Matilda. What has she to say?"

"My Dear Brother,—Just a hurried note to tell you that I have at last found what you require. He has already filled a similar post, and comes to us with excellent references. Kitty has seen him and thinks him a perfect gem. Umph! Ah! I dare say. I have advanced him the fare to Hurstleigh—what a fool that woman is!—and he will call on you shortly after you receive this letter. Will he? Query." And the letter was cast aside.

"Now, then, Miss Kitty—umph! Kate," as she opened the second, "what have you to say?"

"My Dear, Darling Old Nunky!—Ah! she wants something—I've got a surprise for you. I meant to have kept it until my arrival, but Tom—Now, who the deuce is Tom?—but Tom insists on seeing you and telling you all about it at once. Umph! That's very thoughtful of Tom.

"He intends running down to see you to-morrow, so look out for him, Nunky. To-morrow, why, that's to-day. Why, what the dickens—umph!"

"Be nice to him, for he's the dearest—Oh! is he? That's it, is it?—fellow in the world, and loves me." Bosh! Some young jackanapes I'll be bound. Well, if he doesn't suit me he sha'n't have her—that's flat.

Touching the bell, he folded the letters and placed them carefully in his pocket, and awaited his housekeeper's arrival.

"Jenkins," he said, as she entered, "your young mistress has picked up a sweetheart in London. Some young fool, I suppose."

"I shouldn't wonder, sir."

"Eh?" he snapped. "What do you mean? You shouldn't wonder? I suppose, Mrs. Jenkins, you think that no one but a fool would fall in love with her, eh?"

"No, sir; I think he'd be a fool if he didn't."

"Yes, yes, I know," he said, in a mollified tone. "She's a wheedling little puss. But, Jenkins, he's coming here to-day. Let me see, what time did she say? Now, where on earth are those letters? Eh, what's this?" he exclaimed, picking up a letter that he had hitherto overlooked.

"I don't know this handwriting," he said, tearing it open. "Dear Old Fred—who the dickens is Old Fred? Who's Fred, Jenkins?"

"Lor, sir, I don't know."

"Dear Old Fred, Congratulate me. The pretty Kitty accepted me this afternoon, and by the time you read this I shall be on my way to Hurstleigh to be married. The what? What's that, Jenkins?" he asked, pointing to the line he had been reading.

Jenkins took the letter, and, glancing at it, read,—to be sure the old ogre?

"What does he mean by 'the old ogre'?"

"He means you, sir."

"Jenkins, how dare you?"

"Well, sir—"

"Ogre of an uncle. Wish me luck, old boy. Yours, Tom."

"So, Miss Kate, this is the young gentleman, is it? Calls me an old ogre, the young villain! He's the dearest fellow in the world, is he? Jenkins, if the scamp dares to show his face here I'll—"

"That letter, sir, wasn't meant for your eyes. It's got into the wrong envelop. Ah, young chaps in love do funny things. I know when Jenkins was first courting me he left off oiling his hair, and used to go out into the meadows and talk to the cows because, he said, they reminded him of me. Ah, love's a funny thing!" she added, sighing over the recollection of her own young days.

"Yes; makes fools of people," he said, as he rose to quit the room. "Oh, Jenkins," he added, as he reached the door, "I'm expecting a young fellow down this morning to fill Wilson's place; as soon as he arrives let him come to me in my study."

For close on two hours Mr. Podberry sat among his books, occasionally looking up from the page before him to glance at his watch.

"The fellow's late," he muttered at last, as, throwing the book impatiently aside, he strode towards the hall.

At that moment there came a sharp rat-tat at the door, followed by a man's voice inquiring for Mr. Podberry.

"Yes," he heard Jenkins say, "I'm glad you've come. The master has been expecting you."

Returning to his chair, he awaited the arrival of his visitor. 'Twas but a moment ere Jenkins ushered him in, having taken advantage of the interval to inform him that if he wished to please the master he must on no account contradict him.

"Humor him," she whispered at the door. "He's all right if you humor him."

"Oh! you have come, then?" said Mr. Podberry, eyeing him with satisfaction as he entered the room.

"Turn round and let's look at you. Yes, you seem a likely-looking young fellow. What's your name?"

"My name is Leonard."

"Eh? What? Absurd! Leonard—tut, tut! Why not Alphonso, or Sylvanus, or Cecil?"

"For the simple reason that it is Leonard," replied the young man, smiling. "I am sorry if it does not please you."

"Please me—certainly not—the thing's absurd," with a depreciatory wave of the hand. "I shall call you Jones."

"But, my dear Mr. Pod—"

"Don't be familiar, sir. I am not your dear Mr. Podberry. I am Mr. Podberry only to my friends. To you, sir, I am 'sir.'"

"I really beg your pardon, sir, but—"

"Well, well," said the old man, more amiably, "there is no occasion for any further apology; but remember. And now, Jones—"

"Leonard, sir."

"Jones, I tell you. If you are not content to be Jones, I have nothing more to say to you."

The young fellow looked at Mr. Podberry as though somewhat in doubt as to his sanity, but, with a shrug of the shoulders, replied:—

"Very well, sir; Jones, if you wish it."

"Very well, Jones. Now, then, what are your capabilities?"

"Well, I don't know. I can row a bit, I'm not a bad shot, I play the banjo fairly well, and am reckoned good at a coon song."

"Coon song! Confound you, sir, do you think I am starting a minstrel troupe? I'll have none of your burnt cork foolery here, sir. Can you do anything useful?"

"Well, I hope so."

"You hope so, sir?" cried Podberry with some asperity. "You hope so? The questions is can you? Can you clean boots—brush clothes—? Can you dig?"

"Dig?"

"Yes, dig. Do you know a spade from a rake?"

"Well, I think so. But—"

"Umph! What about bedding?"

"Bedding? Isn't it rather early, sir, to—"

"I should require you to bed out."

"Bed out—where?"

"In the garden, sir. Where else?"

"I don't understand you, sir; but—"

"I don't think you need say any more. Plainly, Jones, I can hold out no hope to you."

"But, my dear sir, you have nothing against me."

"Nothing against you? Why, to speak plainly, you seem to me the greatest idiot under the sun."

"Well, sir, I won't quarrel with your opinion; but—"

"Well, well, if you admit it, there may be some hope for you. And, after all, I shall not tax your abilities to any great extent; it is my niece that you will have to please."

"Exactly, sir. And I assure you Miss Graham is quite satisfied."

"Well, well, if Kate is pleased I have nothing more to say; but before I ratify the engagement I should like to have her opinion on the matter. She returns this evening. As you are here, suppose you remain until she arrives. I'll just mention the matter to Jenkins. Ah! that reminds me—about dinner. I am expecting a friend—can you wait?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Well, that's something in your favor. But," as he rose and inspected the young fellow closely, "I don't like these clothes."

"I'm sorry."

"I couldn't possibly allow my guest to see you in that garb. Why on earth didn't you bring a dress-suit?"

"If I had the faintest idea that—"

"That's the worst of you people; you never have an idea. Oh! Jenkins," as the housekeeper made her appearance; "the very thing—just give this young man one of my old dress-suits."

"Lor, sir, it won't fit him by miles."

"Tut, tut! Jenkins; don't put obstacles in the way. Make it fit. Take a tuck in at the back," and leaving Jenkins and the young man eyeing each other doubtfully he strode into the hall, and donning a broad-brimmed straw hat sauntered off upon his morning stroll.

On his homeward journey he was overtaken by a young cyclist, who, dismounting, inquired, "Am I going right for 'The Beeches'?"

"Yes," replied Podberry; "straight ahead. Whom might you wish to see at 'The Beeches'?"

"The gov'nor, Mr.—um—I've forgotten the old duffer's name. I've got it some where on a paper," he said fumbling in his pocket. "Mr.—Mr. Pottle—"

"Podberry, I suppose?"

"Ah! that's it. I knew it had something to do with berries. Do you know the old boy? They tell me he's a bit cranky to deal with."

"Upon my soul, I never found him so."

"Well, I must get on. I'm a bit late already. I should have come

down by train, but having the bike

"Well, there you are, young man, there is the house. You can see the chimneys among the trees yonder. You have some distance to go yet, for the road winds," said Mr. Podberry, as he struck across the fields in the direction of the house.

Some few minutes later he entered his study in a great state of good-humor.

"So this is Master Tom, is it?" he chuckled, rubbing his hands gleefully. "This is a great joke—a great joke! Won't he be surprised? Ah!—as the bell sounded—there he is! Now, then—"

"Gentleman says he has an appointment with you, sir," said the housekeeper, putting her head in at the door.

"Show him in, Jenkins."

The housekeeper retired, to return accompanied by the caller, who started as he recognized his companion of the road. Somewhat abashed he contrived to stammer out:—

"Good morning, sir. Mr.—er—Pod—"

"Berry! Yes, Master Tom, 'tis I. I told you I knew the old boy. You heard I was a bit cranky, did you? Who gave you that information? So you've come to be heard the old ogre, have you?"

"I beg your pardon, sir; I don't—"

"There, there, sir, don't deny it; and when next you write two letters at once be sure you place them in the right envelopes. I am not going to let your words prejudice me against you, but I do expect you to have the courage to—"

"But, sir—"

"What, sir, do you intend to brazen the matter out? Will you deny that you used those words? Perhaps you'll tell me you are not Tom at all?"

"No, sir, I'm Tom all right, but I don't know how you knew, unless Miss—"

"Why, did you imagine that my little Kitty would keep a thing of that sort from her uncle? No, sir. This is what she wrote to me this morning." And, producing the letter, he read: "Be nice to him, for he's the dearest fellow in the world." Now, sir, what do you say to that?"

"Why," said the young fellow, with a puzzled expression, "of course it's very kind of the young lady to write like that. She promised to put in a good word for me, but—"

"What, aren't you satisfied? Do you want me to betray her confidence and tell you all the other sweet things of you?"

"Blessed if I don't think he is cranky," muttered the young fellow, edging toward the door.

"Well, man, haven't you a word to say?"

"Why—I—er—"

"Tut! man, don't ask me to believe that you are bashful! Hang it, man, you've spoken to my niece, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hang me if I don't think the fellow wants to back out of it. Do you or do you not wish to be engaged?"

"Well," faltered Tom, "I did when I came, sir, but I—I've altered my mind."

"What, sir?" cried Podberry, angrily. "You've altered your mind? You dare to tell me—"

"Mr. Podberry! Oh, I beg pardon!" said an intruder, drawing back from the door.

"Come here, sir. What do you want?"

"Why, merely, sir, to point out that, while I appreciate your kindness I really cannot consent to wear a coat like this."

"What, sir?"

"In spite of your housekeeper's ingenuity it hangs about me like a sack. As for the other things—"

"Confound the fellow!" cried Podberry, flying into a rage. "If I were not the best-tempered man in the world I should kick you both out of the place. But look here, Jones. Unless you desire your engagement to terminate forthwith you will wear those things. As for you, sir, addressing himself to the other, "I'm going to find a horsewhip, and if I don't write an abject apology to the lady or this insult I'll—The threat was lost as he banged the door behind him."

"What an old fire-eater!" said Leonard.

"A reg'lar snap-dragon, ain't he?" said the other. You'll throw up the engagement, won't you?"

"I'll see the old rascal hanged first."

"Well, I shall break off mine. Miss Graham is very nice, but—"

"Miss Graham! What has she to do with you?"

"Why, 'twas by her advice I came. I spoke to her yesterday, and she referred me to the old boy."

"Do you mean to tell me Miss Graham ever gave you the slightest encouragement?"

"Rather. It was all settled as far as she was concerned."

"I'll not believe her guilty of such baseness. You, too, a coarse, vulgar—"

"Here, hold on. I suppose you're jealous at my steppin' into your shoes? P'raps you'll say as she sent you down, next?"

"Undoubtedly I came at her stigation."

"Well, that's funny, seein' that she was so took with me."

"Took with you?" The illiterate brute, muttered Leonard, turning away. Then, after a pause:—

"Oh! you think she was 'took with you, do you? Do you dare to say that Miss Graham ever addressed one word of love to you?"

"Well—not right out—you know what girls are—but you ought to ha-

seen the letter she writ to old Fitzgig. Says she, 'He's the dearest, sweetest boy in the world.'"

"'Tis strange," said Leonard, pacing the room, "very strange. I cannot believe that Kitty—and yet the fellow seems serious enough. Hark you, sir. You say that you offered yourself yesterday to Miss Graham, that she approved your offer, and desired you to visit her guardian?"

"That's the novel in one volume."

"Well, sir, as I came upon a like errand I shall remain until Miss Graham arrives, and if she verifies your words, well—with a shrug—"I suppose I must accept the situation."

"More fool you! It wouldn't suit me at all. You can stay if you like," he said, approaching the door, "but I'm off."

But at this moment, Mr. Podberry burst into the room, followed by his niece and Jenkins.

"Now, sir! Now, sir!" he splattered in his anger; "my niece has arrived in time to hear from your own lips—"

"Tom," cried the young lady, breaking in, "what is this uncle tells me?"

"Kate, is what this fellow—?"

"Jones," cried Podberry, "how dare you interfere? My niece spoke to this gentleman."

"I beg your pardon," said Leonard; "she said 'Tom.'"

"Well, he is Tom."

"Yes, I'm Tom."

"No, I am Tom."

"Yes," explained Kate, "he is Tom."

"Why, Kate," cried Podberry, "are you as mad as the rest? You say he is Tom, yet not an hour ago he told me his name was Leonard."

"Exactly, sir. Tom Leonard, of His Majesty's Guards."

"What? Son of Dick Leonard, my old chum? Why didn't you say so before?"

"You insisted on calling me Jones."

"Tut, tut! And you came here—?"

"As a suitor for the hand of your niece."

"Then why on earth didn't you say so?"

"I thought my letter had made that clear."

"Ah! I see. Well, sir, your letter has no doubt fallen into the hands of the gentleman who should have received this. But there," as he handed him the letter, "the ogre forgives you, but let me advise you to be more careful in future. There, give me your hand, boy. Kitty is yours."

"You forget, sir, this gentleman also holds some promise from your niece."

"From me?"

"Yes; he tells me you accepted him yesterday."

"Accepted him?" cried Kate, in amazement; then, bubbling over with laughter, she added, "So I did. As candidate for the post of gardener and groom."

"And you don't love him?"

"Oh, Tom!"

"Well, dear, he assured me—"

"I beg your pardon, sir; I only told you what the old gentleman read me—"

"Tut, tut!" said Podberry, crossing hastily to him; "you are laboring under a delusion, sir. But there—as he slipped something into his hand—'you seem a likely young fellow; so, on the understanding that you make no more of these stupid blunders, you may consider yourself engaged.'"

"And, I sir?" asked Leonard, with a sly smile.

"Ah!" said the old man, drily; "I must leave you to Kate."—London Tit-Bits.

## GIVE A HELPING HAND.

Cockney Tells of Goodfellowship Which Prevails in Canada.

All the Englishmen who come to Canada are not grumblers. Here is a letter from one of them, which tells his millions of fellow Cockneys that there is a camaraderie, a desire to help one another in this country, which is lacking "at home." It is in a letter to The London Daily Mail:

"I landed in Vancouver last winter as an utter stranger, and I was given a start by Messrs. Dalton & Eveleigh, architects, simply to keep the wolf from my door. When the building season opened Mr. Horrobin (a Manchester man and a contractor in a large way in this town), engaged me as assistant.

"After a time I purchased a lot and sufficient lumber for a house, which I intended building myself, my savings being expended.

"To my great surprise on the Saturday following my purchase, entirely on their own initiative, nine of my chief carpenters found their way out to my place, and working with a system and will the frame was reared, the roof shingled, and the siding fixed before they quitted that night, and on the following two Saturdays six men came along and completed my home for me.

"Among these workers were Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, Canadians and Yankees, and I am being helped in clearing my lot from stumps and stones by a party of Sikhs, who have settled just near me, all giving their services free and unasked.

"What further evidence can be desired to convince one that a welcome awaits well-meaning Britishers in British Columbia?"

"He always was a bad egg, but nobody seemed to notice it while he was rich." "Yes, he was all right until he was broke."

## MEN WHO HATE THE ARMY

HOW THEY SEEK TO GET THEIR DISCHARGE.

Two Soldiers Wreck a Tobaccoist's Shop—Militiamen on a Rampage.

Under the present system it is the easiest thing in the world for a man to join the Army—provided, of course, he possesses the necessary physical requirements—while, on the other hand, it is quite another matter for him to gain his discharge, except by purchase, before the expiration of his term of service, says London Answers.

Rather than remain in the ranks, however, men have been known to go to extremes, and at the risk of ruining their character, to seek relief from military duty by committing offences with the object of being dismissed from the Army.

There is the case of two soldiers who, a few years ago, were included in a draft from a certain regiment, stationed at Plymouth, ordered to India. The night previous to the draft sailing the men got leave, and, going to one of the largest tobaccoist's shops in the town, with the apparent intention of purchasing two pipes, wrecked the premises, in the absence of the assistant.

### A MINIATURE RAID.

One of the men swept a number of valuable glass cases and their contents off the counter, while his comrade played havoc with things in the window, and broke several panes of plate glass.

They made no attempt to escape, but calmly took two chairs and waited the arrival of the police. It was, however, a case of the "biter bit," for the magistrates, recognizing the object of the men, handed them over to their regiment to be dealt with. The result was that they sailed next day for India, and suffered imprisonment on the whole of the voyage out and for some time after they landed.

At a court-martial in a well-known garrison town, a most extraordinary tale was told by two men of a line regiment who had deserted at Gibraltar. They had been arrested two years after the incident, and, in defence, said they went on board a schooner anchored off Gibraltar, at the invitation of one of the crew, and that as soon as they got into the cabin they were attacked and drugged and ultimately landed in England.

They signed no satisfactory reason as to why they were thus used, and the presiding officer took the story with "a grain of salt," and subsequently, the men got a couple of years' imprisonment each.

### COMEDIANS ON PARADE.

Taken as a body, Militiamen may very fairly be called an easy-going and contented set. Still, there are occasions when some consider themselves badly used, and are inclined to become a bit obstinate. The two following incidents, which occurred during a recent embodiment of the Militia, emphasize this fact.

While a man was being tried by court-martial at one of our garrison towns for overturning a table and knocking down the president of a court-martial, a novel scene was being enacted in the square outside. The details of the regiment were assembling for the morning's parade, when the officers discovered, to their unutterable horror and astonishment, that in the ranks were a couple of men wearing their helmets "behind before," and carrying their rifles reversed. Attached to the breast of one was a sergeant's stripes, while a corporal's stripes decorated the breast of the other.

They looked like a couple of comedians in a music-hall, and the absurdity of the occurrence appealed to the spectators, who laughed heartily. The offence was, of course, a serious one, and the two men, who were immediately marched off to the guard-room, had to pay dearly for their folly by a long term of imprisonment.

### TELL-TALE EYES.

Some little time ago the authorities were puzzled over the case of a soldier who confessed to having made a false statement when enlisting. His height, tattoo-marks, and bodily blemishes agreed with the description of a soldier who had deserted from the Army two years previously, and for whom the authorities had looked for in vain.

The soldier was made a prisoner whilst awaiting his trial by court-martial, and when arraigned before the Court he pleaded guilty. The prosecuting officer discovered, a few minutes before the trial ended, that the color of prisoner's eyes did not tally with the description of those of the missing man.

At first the prisoner withstood the severe cross-examination remarkably well, stating that the recruiting officer must have written down the wrong color of his eyes when he first enlisted in the Army.

In the end, however, he confessed that he had never deserted from the Service, but that he wanted to leave it. He admitted having met the man whom he professed to be, and who had actually deserted from the Army a few months previously, and for a few shillings the deserter accompanied him to a place where he had precisely similar tattoo-marks printed on his own body.

He had, however, forgotten to observe the color of the eyes of the man who was trying to assist him "out of the Army," and that oversight lost him his chance.