

## THE "TOFF"

A quarter of a century ago the mining camps of New Mexico offered refuge to any man desirous of sinking his identity, since curiosity was not one of the few vices they did not encourage. To question a new-comer as to his antecedents was not only a breach of etiquette, but a dangerous act in a community where every man carried weapons and resorted to them on the slightest occasion. Unless volunteered, a man's very name remained a secret, he being—for convenience—re-baptized with a nickname, picturesquely inappropriate, as a rule.

"Toff" brought his name with him—"printed all over him," as someone remarked; and certainly his appearance was unique for the locality. Sandy Ridge was twenty miles from the railway, and the intervening stretch of scrub and desert had to be crossed on horseback, so that the sudden advent of a young man, attired in a tweed suit, with immaculate linen, was sufficiently startling even without the portmanteau plastered with labels reminiscent of European travel.

But these items were trifles in comparison with the monocle decorating the stranger's left eye-socket, the effect of which upon the crowd at the Miners' Arms was simply paralyzing. Sentences remained part-spoken, glasses halted half-way to thirsty lips, and a man who was lighting his pipe burned his fingers badly. The stranger appeared quite unconscious of the interest he excited. Addressing the saloon-keeper—known as "Ginger" because his hair was not red—he said coolly:

"Can I—er—have a room here?" The saloon-keeper, a man of few words until roused, when his vocabulary at once became extensive, nodded silently; but a great hulking miner, named Baynes, who had been surveying the visitor with marked disapproval, struck in:

"Say, young feller, air ye goin' to stay long?" The "young feller" turned slowly and regarded the speaker through his monocle with an air of languid curiosity. Baynes would have faced the muzzle of a six-shooter without blinking, but a few moments of this cold, silent scrutiny made him squirm. Then came the drawing reply:

"If I find the place suitable, it is—er—possible I may settle here—with your permission, of course."

A burst of laughter from the red-shirted, brown-throated throng hailed the obvious discomfiture of the questioner. The stranger picked up his bag and followed Ginger through a side door, thus missing Baynes's threat to "take some of the frills out'n him."

"He's a real toff, boys," cried one of the spectators, and the title was forthwith adopted delightedly.

"Reckon he knocks spots off the Dandy for style," said another. "Say, there'll be procedin's when they meet."

The rencontre took place a few hours later, and there were "proceedin's" certainly, though not of the nature expected. Having removed the stains of his journey, "Toff" was standing in the bar watching the scene. The long line of drinkers at the counter, the various couples gambling at the tables set in the open space before it, the strange medley of tongues—for every nation seemed to be represented—combined to form a picture which could not fail to interest anyone upon whom it had not staled.

Presently a burst of laughter from the other end of the room attracted his attention, and he saw that it came from a group of men who had partly surrounded a young girl. She was barely eighteen, with great, dark eyes and a slender figure, the grace of which her shabby clothing could not hide. Just now she was skimming timidly—her olive cheeks stained crimson—from Baynes, whose bloated face was thrust towards her. His unwelcome attentions frightened her as much as they amused the immediate onlooker, and "Toff" caught an appealing look as her gaze met his own.

In three strides he crossed the intervening space, caught the bully by the shoulder, and whirled him out of the girl's path so vigorously that the man lost his balance and went sprawling on the sanded floor.

"You coward, to torment a girl!" he cried, the affection gone from his voice, and an ominous glint in his grey eyes.

In a second the fallen man was on his feet again, a venomous snarl on his lips, and his right hand flung high above his head. Every man present knew the significance of the action, and promptly settled out of the line of fire. The stranger, thus left standing alone, became aware that the poised hand held a heavy Colt's revolver, and suddenly realized that he was facing death. One swift downward drop of the threatening arm and all would be over. His face became a shade paler, his eyes stared tensely, but he did not flinch.

"Keep your arm quite still, Baynes; I have you covered," said a sharp, resolute voice.

The bully's face changed, and he paused in the very act of lowering his weapon. A lightning glance towards the door showed him the gleaming barrel of a Winchester repeating rifle, pointed at his heart. "Take his gun away, one of you," continued the speaker, and when this was done he stepped through the open door, his weapon flung easily across the crook of his left arm, ready for instant use. He was a man of about thirty, of lithe, athletic build, and with a pleasant, sun-stained face. He was carefully groomed, and his apparel was conspicuous for its fine quality. He surveyed the discomfited bully with contemptuous good-humor.

"If you are still hankerin' for blood, I'll take a hand with you myself," he remarked, slowly; and then, as the other did not reply, he added, sarcastically, "Shootin' unarmed strangers appears to be his limit, boys," and turned with a smile to "Toff," hand outstretched. "I like you," he said. "Let's take a walk and get acquainted."

Such a frank proffer of friendship from one who had just saved his life could not be declined, and the pair left the saloon and strolled towards the pine-covered ridge which sheltered the settlement. The stranger's effort to express his gratitude was cut short.

"He's a mean bound, that Baynes, and he'd have fixed you good if I hadn't happened along," the other said, cheerfully. "Can you shoot any?"

"Toff" confessed that his acquaintance with firearms was limited to the slaughter of inoffensive game; he knew nothing of pistol-shooting. His companion's face grew thoughtful. "That's bad," he said. "It's a tough crowd out here. I reckon you'd better make tracks for civilization again or you'll be playin' principal part in a funeral."

The new-comer's under-jaw stiffened. "I'll take my chance," he said. "By the way, I should be glad to know to whom I am—er—indebted."

The languid drawl brought a flicker of amusement into the other's eyes, but he replied, gravely. "Dan Bevis, commonly called the 'Dandy,' a gambler by profession."

"Toff" bowed. "My name is Frank Beverley," he began, and stopped as he saw Dan's smiling face.

"Don't you believe it, my son," replied the gambler. "Your name is 'Toff' from now on in these parts."

"If you better let me go at that."

Beverley laughed, and promised to "let her go" accordingly.

Naturally, the conversation turned on the girl who had so nearly cost Beverley his life, and the gambler told him the little that was known about her. She was called Nita, and was an orphan. Years before her father had been shot in the saloon at Sandy Ridge, and the proprietor's wife—then alive—had adopted the child. Since the death of her benefactress Nita had paid for her protection by doing all the household drudgery for the surly Ginger.

As a miner "Toff" was not a conspicuous success, but he managed to rub along and was surprised to find many of the things he had thought indispensable to life were not really so. But their absence, with the monotonous toil, rough fare, and intense heat, revolted him at times, and he would go off for two or three days, "prospecting" over the Ridge. Nita he saw frequently, and, divining the misery of her existence, had always a kind word for her.

As the months slid by, the eccentricities of dress and manner which had earned him his nickname became modified. His periodical wanderings soon ceased to arouse interest, save that bets were made on the probability of his being "scooped" by hostile Apache Indians, a few of whom were still on the warpath.

He was returning from one of these trips—holidays, as he called them—when he was astonished to see Nita painfully toiling up the trail towards him. Her flushed face, panting bosom, and cry of joy when she saw him told the meeting was no chance one.

"Go back!" she gasped. "Go away, or they will kill you!"

Beverley caught the out-flung hand as she staggered towards him and led her gently to a prostrate pine. She sank down, and in a moment was up again, beseeching him to fly—crying that his life was in danger.

"Why do they want to kill me?" he asked, quietly, and the girl's eyes turned from his, while a vivid blush of shame flamed in her cheeks.

"For stealing," she faltered, and went on to tell him how, soon after his departure—two days before—the saloon-keeper's horse was stolen, and the hoof-prints showed that it had been taken to the plain. The animal was the only shod one in the settlement. "Toff" listened gravely; he knew that the offence was more serious than murder, and that but for the timely warning he would have walked to certain death.

"Thank you, Nita," he said. "You don't believe it, do you?"

The girl shook her head, but her eyes were downcast, or he might have read in them that his guilt would have made no difference to her. The assurance of her faith pleased him curiously, and almost gaily he said, "Well, and what's to be done now?"

"You must hide; come, I will show you," she whispered, eagerly.

He followed obediently back up the trail he had just traversed, until presently she turned and glided beneath the deeper shadow of a pine. He could see no sign of a path, but her lithe, active figure fitted unhesitatingly through the labyrinth of undergrowth until she reached the great odorous bush of flowering shrub, by the side of which trickled a tiny rill. Pulling aside a huge branch of blossom, she showed an opening in the rock.

"I found it long ago, and only Indian Joe knows of it," she explained, proudly. "They won't find you here, and I will bring food until Dandy Dan comes; he will help you."

She was gone before he could thank her, and he was conscious of a strange sense of loneliness. Then suddenly he laughed. That he a scion of a great house, deprived because of a rather heavy crop of wild oats, should be in danger of being hanged as a horse-thief, had a grim humor which appealed to him; it appeared as a kind of retribution upon his family.

That Baynes was at the bottom of the affair he did not doubt. The bully had left the settlement the day before himself, ostensibly to visit Santa Fe. What easier than to hide in the woods until Beverley departed, steal the horse, and lead it to the latter's hut so as to throw suspicion on him. But Beverley knew this mere theory would not be listened to. Dan only might get him a fair hearing, for the gambler's repute for quick and accurate shooting made him respected.

The days passed, however, and Bevis did not put in an appearance. Nita came daily with food, and the captive soon began to watch for her dainty figure eagerly. Sometimes she would prepare a meal for him, spread his blankets afresh, and "tidy up," as he put it, and he found a new pleasure in the grace of her every movement.

But the day came when she did not appear, and the second was rustling of the bushes, and stepped to meet her. To his disappointment, it was Indian Joe who emerged. The captive's eager questions soon elicited the truth, and in his broken English the lad told how Ginger, suspecting something, had questioned the girl, and on her refusal to answer had beaten and locked her up. She had contrived to communicate her secret to Joe, who was her adoring slave. Beverley's mouth grew rigid as he listened, and disregarding the boy's entreaties, he strode off down the trail, pausing only to cut a stout but pliant rod from a bush.

"Toff" faced his captors boldly. He had disdained to question their verdict, and now stood with folded arms in the centre of the saloon, apparently oblivious of the noose about his neck, or of the fact that the other end of the rope, passed over a rafter above, rested in the hands of a man he had just thrashed unmercifully. His eyes were fixed upon Nita, sobbing pitifully in a corner. Her prayers had failed to move the grim tribunal and the Englishman's pride kept him silent.

Already other hands were outstretched to assist the eager executioner, and the miner who had acted as judge was about to give the signal which spelt eternity for the prisoner, when the unusual sound of wheels arrested him. A mule-wagon drew up outside the door, and from it there stepped a grey-haired, dapper little man, attired in a frock-coat and—the natives gasped—a silk hat! But the astonishment of the onlookers was nothing to that of the condemned man.

"Deedes!" he cried. "What on earth are you doing here?" The visitor looked surprised in his turn; this stalwart, bronzed, and manly young fellow was a strong contrast to the languid, dissipated aristocrat he had expected to find, but he knew him, nevertheless.

"I came in search of you, Sir Frank," he replied, quietly, and reading the other's look, he continued: "Yes, your uncle and cousin were both killed in a motor accident, so that the title and estates come to you. It has taken me some time to trace you."

"Sorry to have given you so much trouble, Deedes, especially as it is too late," said Beverley, with a grim smile. "These gentlemen are about to hang me for horse-stealing, you see."

It took the family lawyer some few moments to realize that the whole scene was not an elaborate joke got up for his benefit, but then the outrageousness of it revolted all his legal instincts, and he poured out a flood of forensic eloquence. He was brought to a sudden stop by a bullet, which neatly perforated his immaculate hat.

"Seuse me, pard," said the man who had fired, "but I jest couldn't help it; it's a temptin' Providence to wear that 'ere." The lawyer gave up; he might as well have

spoken to the log-walls as to those stolid miners. Only the man who had nicknamed the prisoner showed interest.

"I said he was a toff," he remarked, with conscious pride. "It seems almost a pity to hang him after all."

"You bet it does; why not wait and hang the right man?" chimed in a familiar voice, as the Dandy stepped into the bar and coolly flung the noose from Beverley's neck. "I don't see my friend Baynes among this noble company," he continued, scornfully. "I guess you'll find him outside, though. I ran up against him in Yellowville, trying to sell Ginger's horse, and as he told a pretty ordinary tale about it I persuaded him to let me see him home."

The gambler's story, and the presence of Baynes tied upon the back of the stolen animal, disposed of all doubt against Beverley, and the whilom judge forthwith tendered an uncoined apology for all present. But "Toff" scarcely waited to hear it; he had seen Nita slip away while the lawyer was making his frantic speech for the defence, and he wanted to find her immediately. Instinctively he made his way to his hiding-place, and there, lying upon his blankets, sobbing his heart out, he found her.

She sprang up as he entered. "I knew Dan would save you," she cried. "I met him on the trail, and told him to hurry. That's why I slipped out." She was fearful lest he might think she had deserted him.

"So you saved me again," he said. "But, Nita, why are you crying?"

She sank down on the blankets again and turned her flushed face from him. "You are going away—back to your own country," she faltered.

Beverley knelt down beside her and took her hands in his. "Little girl," he whispered, and his eyes were very tender, "I shall not go unless you will come with me. Will you, Nita?"

For one instant her tear-laden eyes met his own, and he was answered. "You won't be ashamed of such a poor little wife?" she ventured, presently.

Certainly he did not look ashamed, as, hand in hand, they came down through the pines and back to the saloon. The Dandy, who saw them first, swore softly under his breath, which was his way of expressing emotion. Mr. Deedes expressed his feelings more openly. After having been presented to "the future Lady Beverley," he took his client aside and remonstrated with him on what he termed "quixotic behaviour."

"No doubt some recompense is due to the girl," he began, but got no further.

"Mr. Deedes, will you kindly tell them who I am?" said "Toff," coldly.

"I'm not forgetting who you are, though you appear to be," retorted the lawyer, testily. "I did hope that your—ahem—exile had taught you something."

"It has," said Beverley. "I've learnt that a good man is made, not born, but a good woman is born not made. That is my last word on the subject."

The man of briefs shrugged his shoulders. "You appear to have queer notions in this outlandish place," he said. "Do you know that I want to hang that other fellow?"

"Ah, I must stop that!" Beverley replied, and forthwith consulted Dan as to the best means.

"Offer them a wedding instead; that'll fetch 'em," said the gambler.

It did. Baynes was given half an hour to leave the district. The wedding, which took place a few days later, a minister having been imported for the purpose, was a brilliant success. The Dandy accompanied the happy couple across the desert.

"You'll come to England and see us, Dan?" said Beverley, at parting.

"No," said the other. "Civilization stifles me; I can't breathe in a town."

He smiled as he said it, and Beverley suspected nothing. But Nita, her woman's instinct, quickened by the love in her own heart, knew that there was another reason. Dandy Dan always prided himself upon being a good loser.—London Tit-Bits.

## ABOUT THE HOUSE

### SEASONABLE Dishes.

A new way to serve fresh pineapple to have it look as delicious as it tastes is to cut fruit in slices one-half inch thick with knife and then cut each slice separate with a round doughnut cutter. This will take out center and at the same time cuts nice, round slices. Prepare your pineapple in morning, sugar, put on ice, and serve cold, or one can also stew it till transparent and then serve cold. In canning cut slices same way and put in new tin cans and seal.

Substitute for Meat.—For each person allow one tablespoonful each of these ingredients: Grated cheese finely rolled crackers, milk, and one egg. Have ready individual plates, with a toasted cracker on each. Put a teaspoonful of butter in a hot frying pan, then the cheese, milk and crackers, lastly well beaten eggs. Salt to taste and a dash of red pepper. Cook two minutes, stirring rapidly. This is a cheese dish suitable for a midday lunch or a chafing dish supper. Stale cheese is better than fresh for this. One may keep a supply on hand by grating all the left over scraps and putting it in a tightly corked bottle in a dry place.

Lalla Rookh.—This dessert is of Spanish origin and is extremely palatable. Select a plain mold with a tight fitting cover. Cut in small pieces six ladyfingers, twelve almonds, and half a cupful of raisins; stir all together and put into the mold. Make a custard with a quart of milk, one small cupful of sugar, and four eggs, and as the custard is removed from the fire reserve a large cupful and to the remainder add a small quarter of a cupful of gelatin which has previously been soaked in enough water to cover. Stir the custard well, strain it over the mixture in the mold, and set the whole away in a cold place, where it will settle for four hours. Now add to the remaining custard one cupful of whipped cream; flavor with vanilla extract. When the dessert is needed turn it out on a pretty serving dish, sprinkle the top with finely chopped bananas and strawberries cut into slices. Pour the custard around it. Delicious as well as ornamental.

### COOLING SALADS.

Frozen Tomato Salad.—Peel and chop fine eight ripe, firm tomatoes. Season with a little salt, pepper, and sugar, and three drops of onion juice; turn into a freezer and freeze. Fill a melon mold with this frozen mixture, pack in ice and salt and let it stand for several hours to ripen. Serve on a bed of white celery leaves, garnished with olives, with mounds of thick dressing over it.

Cabbage Salad.—Roll back the outer leaves of a small, heavy cabbage. Cut out the center, leaving the shell entire. Shred the heart leaves thin and soak in ice water. Drain and dry. Add two green peppers, cut in fine strips, and mix with a French dressing, using a half teaspoonful salt, a quarter teaspoonful pepper, one tablespoonful vinegar, and four of oil. Stir until blended; pour on the cabbage and peppers and refill shell.

Lettuce Salad.—Two heads of lettuce, one cucumber, one or two onions as preferred cut up fine; one-half teaspoonful of salt, three teaspoonfuls of vinegar, pepper, and sugar to taste. Then beat one cupful of sour cream and pour over mixture when ready for use. Remember all must be mixed together after the cream has been poured on.

Potato Salad.—Six medium size cold boiled potatoes sliced. Two tablespoonfuls of grated cheese. Put yolks of three hard boiled eggs in stewpan with tablespoonful of butter, teaspoonful of mustard, same of flour, a little salt, mix into a smooth paste; pour over this one-half cupful of vinegar—use part water if vinegar is strong. Mix well together and set over fire, turning constantly. When nearly cold beat in two or three tablespoonfuls of olive oil and one-half cupful of thick cream. Put a layer of potatoes into the dish; sprinkle with a little of the grated cheese; pour over a part of the dressing; repeat until all the potatoes are used, putting dressing on last. Shred whites of eggs and sprinkle on top.

### HOUSEHOLD HELPS.

To Prevent Castors Dropping.—If you are troubled with having your castors drop, as is the case where you use gas, invert your chair, table, or whatever it may be, run melted sealing wax in the hole, insert the castor, and it will be as substantial as ever.

Care of a Broom.—Many housekeepers complain of the short life of the broom, but if the following is observed the broom will last a long time and, what is more, will preserve its fullness and stiffness: When through sweeping dissolve a handful of salt in a basin of water and dip the broom into it, shaking it out several times. Then stand it up, handle down, and when you wish to

use it again you will find it as stiff as a new broom. Never stand your broom up with broom end down if you wish to keep the straws straight.

Hurried Hot Applications.—When hot applications are hastily required fold several thicknesses of cloth the desired size, dampen, and lay on a lamp. This will quickly become hot and another can be heating while the one is being used. No time is lost in heating water, and no hands are burned wringing hot cloths.

Troublesome Insects.—Saturate a soft cloth with coal oil and thoroughly rub outside of screen doors. This is especially good for doors opening on a porch, where flies and mosquitoes congregate. They will never come near if oil is used as directed.

### CLEANING AIDS.

Take Stains from Bottles.—Make a good suds of naphtha and soft water. Let it stand in the vessel fifteen or twenty minutes; all stains will be removed.

To Simplify Laundrying.—Take a bar of any good laundry soap, cut and boil in one gallon of water until all dissolved, then add scant half cupful of kerosene. Let all come to a boil. Then fill a tub two-thirds full of cold water, pour in the mixture, put in all your white wash and let stand over night. In the morning ring out and scald and rinse in the usual way. You will find your wash clean and of snowy whiteness, with little labor.

To Remove white spots from polished wood make a soft paste of salad oil and salt. Apply with soft cloth and rub briskly. White spots of years' standing can be so removed and if the finish is not injured no trace of spot is left—the white stain is out in any case.

Faded Pink Garments.—The most faded and washed out pink garment can be made like new by putting a handful of red crepe paper in the rinsing water. It will be a beautiful peach pink. The same is true with lavender, only use purple crepe paper. It always colors evenly and can be dipped quickly into starch afterwards.

Keeping Silver Bright.—If a liberal sprinkling of baking soda is added to the boiling water in which silver cutlery is immersed, it will come out clean and bright; also use a little soda and alcohol to remove dark or persistent stains on silver. This is better than the mineral compounds, as soda is soluble, and, therefore, requires less work to gain good results.

### VARIOUS BREAD RECIPES.

Batter Bread.—Two cupfuls of meal, one heaping spoonful of lard, a pinch of soda, one teaspoonful of salt. Scald your meal with thin milk, add two eggs beaten until light, and bake in a greased pan forty minutes.

Soft Corn Bread.—Two cupfuls of corn meal, yellow; two tablespoonfuls of butter, one teaspoonful of salt, four cupfuls of boiling water, yolks of six eggs, beaten light; whites of six eggs, beaten to a froth and stirred in last. Bake in buttered dish twenty minutes. This makes a nice dish for the children's luncheon.

Salt-Rising Bread.—This recipe is unfailing: Slice two medium potatoes thin, add to them two tablespoonfuls of corn meal, one teaspoonful of sugar, one-half teaspoonful of salt. Pour over this two cupfuls of boiling water and place in warm place over night. In the morning stir and strain out potatoes, and to one pint of the liquid add one teaspoonful of soda and one-half teaspoonful of salt. Thicken with flour and place in warm water to rise, then proceed as in any salt-rising bread, and the result will be most gratifying.

### THE "PIT."

The Chicago "Pit," is the switchboard of the grain world. There during four hours every day, grain already harvested, grain now growing, grain not yet planted is speculated in by the 1,200 frenzied members of this community.

"Deals" are carried through amid a pandemonium of shouting and gesticulating. If, say, wheat is at 80¢ cents, and an operator desires to dispose of 50,000 bushels for 80½ cents, he raises both hands, palms facing outward, above his head, crying, "Three-quarters!" Each finger exhibited represents 5,000 bushels, and palms extended outward denote an offer to sell; while palms inward denote an offer to buy. When a deal takes place in which the price fluctuates from the previous "trade," a lynx-eyed official, on a high stool at the edge of the "Pit," writes down the latest price on a sheet of paper, and drops it to a telegraphist below. Immediately this price is on the tape, clicking rapidly to all the great cities of America.

### UNAVOIDABLE PLEASURE.

"My daughter is a fine pianist. Have you ever heard her play?" asked the lady from next door, calling.

"Hear her?" exclaimed the other. "Of course we've heard her! You don't think we can keep the windows shut all the time, do you?"