

THE IDEAS OF ETHELBURT JELLYBACK, PRIVATE

XIII. On Taking Jim Mugrums to Dinner and a French Lesson, Too

On my classification card, for occupation I wrote "leader of the younger society set of New York." For salary, crude question that it was, I set down this answer: "I have an independent income."

But, despite these evidences of a superior position in my ante-bellum days, no call has yet come for me to direct important work in camp except the tending of the incinerator. Consequently, I have fallen back on my own devices. One of them, begun in a spirit of altruism, has been to try to improve the mind and manners of Jim Mugrums, that somewhat crude fellow who used to be my corporal until he got reduced because he carried me and my cot out into the street one bitter cold night.

I forgave him. In view of my mission to uplift the uncouth and smudgy-faced fellow, I tried to put aside all personal inconveniences.

"Mugrums," I said the other evening, "I am going to invite you to take dinner with me to-night."

"Go ahead. Invite me. See if I care."

They Start for Dinner.

So I invited him to walk over to the Hostess House, at the edge of camp. I told him that he should make his appearance as neat as it was possible to influence such vague uncertainties.

"Hostess House," I explained, as we walked along, "is a building erected as a meeting place for soldiers and their mothers and sweethearts who come to camp to see them. It is a delightful place; you should enjoy this evening immensely. Wait a minute, Mugrums! Don't forget to wipe the mud off your shoes. Take off your hat, Mugrums. And now your coat. Hang it here. Now follow me."

I led the way into the eating room, with a counter from which you select the food, and many tables and chairs, painted in a delicious blue.

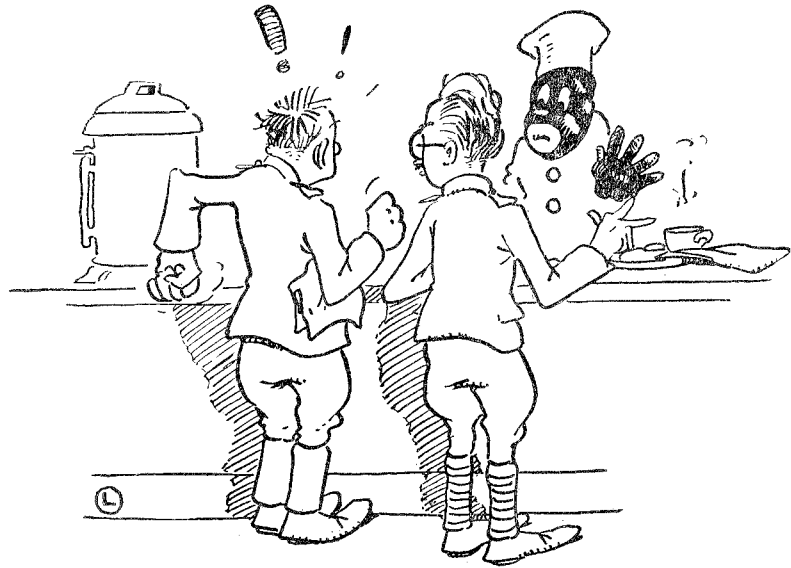
"This is the cafeteria," I explained. "Take one of these trays and follow me to the counter. The negro will hand you whatever food you select. Mugrums, you forgot a napkin. Take one, there!"

Looking a bit bewildered, Mugrums did as I said.

They Order Eatables.

"I will have a bowl of soup and two cheese sandwiches," I told the negro behind the counter.

"Gimme two o' them barrels o' soup," said Mugrums, "and about four o' them there sandwiches what Ethelburt's got his meat-hooks into."



"Yas, suh, boss! Don't strike me. I'se hurryin'."

"Steady, Mugrums. Your language is becoming slipshod again. There are other things to eat besides soup and sandwiches."

"Yes, but I ain't takin' any chances. An' say, Bones, put the rollers under a couple o' pieces of that pie an' slip 'em to me quick. Them is pies, ain't they? Don't go to sleep on post, either. Shake a leg, or I'll bounce this trayful o' eats off'n your dome."

"Yas, suh, boss! Don't strike me, I'se a hurryin'."

"Mugrums," I protested, "where are your manners? This is not a building used to stable mules in. Follow me at once."

He did as I bade, carrying on his tray enough edibles to feed a regiment in barracks.

"Let us sit at this table by the window, near the pretty cretonne curtains."

"You can't eat the curtains."

"And now, Mugrums, while we are dining, I will take the opportunity to give you another French lesson."

"Don't bother on my account."

"No trouble at all, Mugrums. French is spoken in three ways: with the tongue, with the eyes, and with the shoulders."

"I getcha. Right shoulder—French!"

Mugrums and His Soup.

"No, no, Mugrums. Don't interrupt me. And please don't make so much noise with your soup. You are attracting attention. French is spoken in three ways, as I have pointed out. But in this lesson we will only take up the first method: by the tongue. The others are for mademoiselles over seventeen. Remove the spoon from out your coffee cup. It should always recline in the saucer when not in active service."

"Aw, what is this, inspection morning?"

"The word in French that stands for 'I' is 'je.' It is pronounced like 'ju' in jug, only without the 'g.' As in the phrase, the little brown jug."

"They don't use 'em any more, 'cept in Kentucky."

"The word for you is 'vous.' It is pronounced 'voo.' Don't put your knife in your mouth, Mugrums. That isn't being done."

"But I just done it. Fooled you, Ethelburt, that time."

"The word 'to love' in French is 'aimer,' but this is the infinitive form of the verb and is not half so important as the present indicative, first person singular."

"I didn't get none o' that on my tray."

More Food and French.

"In the first person singular of the present indicative, you say 'j'aime' when you want to say 'I love.'"

"How d'ya say: 'I wanta 'nother piece o' pie?'"

"In case you should want to specify the particular thing or person you love, as sometimes happens, you place the word for that person or thing between the pronoun and the verb. Such a sentence would be construed as—Mugrums! you've knocked over the water. How could you be so clumsy?"

"That comes from eatin' at the officers' mess so much. I'll be more careful, Ethelburt."

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WHAT JONES HAD DONE.

Presiding Genius: What is the charge against Private Jones?

Sergeant—If yer plaze, 'e's been drunk, an' 'e's been breakin' things, an' 'e won't obey no orders. In fact, 'e's been behavin' gin'rally as though 'e wuz the bloomin' colonel himself!—Southern Woman's Magazine.

FORCE OF HABIT.

Corp. Levi: Halt! Who goes there?

Voice in the dark—Ordnance officer.

Corp.: Advance and give the discount!—Medical Pickwick.