

# A FOUR O'CLOCK TEA. AN UP-TO-DATE SKIT ON COLONIAL LIFE.



**PERSONS:**

Dolly Deepdimple—The Girl.  
Mrs Van Ripper—The Chaperon.  
Tommie Tackle—The Man.  
And Others.

**SCENE.**

A well-known afternoon tea resort. Time 4.30. The room is crowded, and from the small screened-off table comes a perpetual hum of conversation, punctuated by light laughter and the clink of tea cups. Pretty "lady" waitresses in smart uniforms of purple frocks and white aprons provide afternoon tea, ices and fruit salads. Outside in the street the Italian musicians are playing "Just One Girl."

**ARGUMENT.**

It is like this. Dolly Deepdimple has refused Tommie Tackle at a dance given by Mrs Van Ripper the previous evening. They have all met today as though nothing had happened. Dolly, feeling that Tommie's proposal will keep in cold storage, is very gay. Tommie is pale. Mrs Van Ripper is sweetly sympathetic.

Dolly (to Tommie): Won't you have a biscuit, Mr Tackle? They are very nice.  
Tommie: Thank you, no, Miss Deepdimple.  
Mrs Van Ripper (bowing and smiling at some one across the room): There's Mr Rackette. Was he at my house last night? I didn't see him one.  
Dolly: Yes—dear old Jack! We had a delightful time.  
Tommie: Where, on the stairs or on the verandah?  
Dolly (with dignity): You seem to forget, Mr Tackle. Neither Mr Rackette nor I belong to the Smart Set.  
Tommie: No, that's a fact. You both know too much for that!  
Dolly: Yes, we graduated long ago. Jack's not a bit slow!  
Tommie: Funny girl, Cora Featherby; the other afternoon she said ha—ha—ha—she said—

Dolly: Please spare us any of Miss Featherby's jokes. We must draw the line somewhere.  
Tommie: Never mind, Mrs Van Ripper. I'll tell you some time when we are alone.  
Dolly (her eyes flashing dangerously): Nowadays men think anything that is fast is brilliant.  
Tommie: It's the inevitable reaction. You see there are so many debutantes this year. White tulle and pearls are all very nice in their way, but one must have—  
Dolly: A few spangles!  
Tommie (musing): But Cora is such a bright girl!  
Dolly: I wonder where she ever got that nose? Jack Rackette says it's the noblest Roman he ever saw on a girl! (Dolly's own nose tip tilts pointedly).  
Tommie (looking pensively at Mrs Van Ripper's nose, which is a pure Grecian): Do you know—it's a fact, Mrs Van—you don't see on good nose in twenty!  
Dolly (lightly): Don't despair, Mr Tackle; you can have 'em changed nowadays!  
Mrs Van Ripper: But Cora Featherby really is an interesting modern type. Why, there she is now—(showing and smiling)—and another stunning gown!  
Dolly (bowing coldly): White broadcloth and gold embroidery. Awfully loud!  
Tommie (bowing and smiling effusively): Very striking costume! That hat's a beauty, isn't it? I helped her to pick it out the other morning.  
Dolly: Now there's a girl that doesn't care! I wish I could be like her. She flirts with every man she meets—she—  
Tommie: Yes, I heard her say the other evening that she never let one get away! Ha—ha—ha—!  
Dolly: But simply because—she's—she's "sporty"—as Jack Rackette says—she's called a beauty!  
Mrs Van Ripper: She really isn't good looking even!

Van Ripper when we are such friends?  
Dolly: I suppose she's what you call up-to-date! That stands for everything!  
Tommie: I should never call Miss Featherby up-to-date in that sense. The up-to-date girl is absolutely superficial, insincere, without any heart whatever; and as for her soul, it's so small you can hear it rattle when she walks. (He looks pointedly at Dolly, who sips tea languidly).  
Mrs Van Ripper: Why, Tom! This is so sudden! I thought you liked girls?  
Tommie (with a blasé air): Oh, of course I like girls—as girls. There are lots of nice girls in the world. You are two of the nicest I know. (He bows to Mrs Van Ripper). But you take the usual sort of society girl, who thinks it's great fun to lead a chap on—  
Dolly: Some men accuse you of leading them on if you've let them buy you a few boxes of chocolate creams and let them take you to Pollard's or Bland Holt's once or twice.  
Tommie: They have no depth. They can't talk—except to say unkind things, which they think are funny. But they lack everything that one associates with the true womanly—  
Dolly: Cora Featherby, for instance? Tommie (sternly): Let us leave Miss Featherby's name out of the discussion. I am talking generally. The society girl regards a man's most sacred emotions as—us a joke. She likes to fancy them as slaves chasing after her chariot wheels—  
Dolly: Bikes is more recent, Mr Tackle.  
Mrs Van Ripper: All girls are not like that, you know.  
Tommie: No, you were never like that, Vera—pardon me, but it seems so stupid to call you Mrs

Van Ripper when we are such friends?  
Mrs Van Ripper: Oh, I was an old-fashioned girl!  
Tommie (with feeling): The sort of girl a man never forgets! He may jest with others—stop to play now and then—but there's always one girl he remembers!  
Dolly: Even though she's married?  
Tommie: Oh, you don't understand, little girl. Run away!  
(Mrs Van Ripper has lowered her eyes until they rest in her tea cup. Dolly's have opened very wide over the top of hers. Suddenly she drops her lashes and looks sideways at them both. She seems to experience some slight difficulty in swallowing her tea. In another girl it would be called a gulp.)  
Tommie (musing): What a nice girl you were!  
Mrs Van Ripper: It seems such a long time ago!  
Tommie: Only four years.  
Dolly (who feels forgotten): I beg pardon for interrupting—  
Tommie: Not at all.  
Dolly: I was speaking to Vera. Did you really know each other?  
Mrs Van Ripper: Why, yes; Mr Van and Tom were great chums—you see?  
Tommie: He was my best friend!  
Dolly: Huh—hm—m-h!  
Tommie: But I was careless and Van Ripper carried off the prize; but they allowed me to be usher.  
(Mrs Van Ripper and Tommie laugh and are joined by Dolly, but her laugh is distinctly unhappy.)  
Dolly (with an attempt at lightness): How does it feel to be a buried sorrow?  
Tommie: Oh, everything gets to be a joke when you've had it—even appendicitis! But the first time a man is in love is the only time, after all! A fellow meets a pretty