

**Author:** James Taylor Staton (1816-1875)

**Text type:** Prose

**Date of composition:** 1867

**Editions:** 1867, 1875?

**Source text:**

Staton, James T. *Going for the Census*. Published in *The Brisbane Courier*, Saturday, August 24, 1867. 3.

**e-text:**

**Access and transcription:** August 2011

**Number of words:** 2,197

**Dialect represented:** Lancashire

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**Staton, James Taylor (1816-1875)**

***Going for the Census* (1867)**

Most people are acquainted with the fact, that in the year of grace 1861, the census of the country was taken, but few people are perhaps honored with the acquaintance of old Betty Bigewaddle, for she is a woman that has not travelled much, and never did anything to give her a title to live in history. She is a native of Lostock; and, according to her own account, and that of her neighbors, is the daughter of “Owd Roger-o-Dundrums-o-Yebs-o-Lung Pappleton’s”. Her mother’s maiden name was “Becca-o-Alick-o-Slipperunslur’s”, “Owd Gerlick Kitty was her aunt, and she is cousin to Flyin’ Flopperchops”, of Chew Moor. Her great-grandmother used to make nettle drink and bake oatcakes for sale, and it is held to be a fact in her native village that her grandfather was fined nothing and costs for going to church twice too often in one

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Sundy. Betty lives in a house that stands at least one hundred yards from any other, and the description of her would be incomplete if it was not stated that she had a husband.

Betty was in the house when the man called to deliver the census paper, and she received it as though she had a suspicion that it contained something which would explode if she was not careful how she handled it.

“I shall call again for this paper”, said the man, “on Monday morning, and you must fill in all the necessary particulars”.

“Wot the dule does he meon by th’ necessary partikulurs?” mumbled old Betty to herself when the man had gone out. “We’n no necessary partikulurs ut aw know on. But if we had wot con you whiskert mawment want wi um? Hooa is he, ut he should want oather necessary partikulurs or any other mack o partikulurs ut are in eawr lawful possesshun accordin’ to th’ laigul statues oth rellum? Aw dunnot gawm wot he meons at aw; nor wot it is gradely ut he wants. But, by his looks, aw should say ut it’s not honesty ut’s showed him t’ road heere. At any rate aw’ll see wot eawr John says abeawt it when he comes to his dinner”.

She placed the paper on the top of an antiquated piece of furniture denominated “a chist”, after she had opened it cautiously, and carefully examined it, both upside down, the right way up, and cross-cornered it; but not being able to read, the contents remained to her a mystery.

She was so troubled during the forenoon about the affair that she scarcely knew what she was about. Some idea may be formed of the state of her mind when it was said that she set the pan on the fire at half-past nine o’clock to boil dumplings for the dinner, and forgot to put the articles in till past eleven, when it was too late, and she had to resort to fried bacon and eggs as a substitute.

When Jon came home, he was much disappointed, for he had been thinking about dumplings all forenoon, and licking his lips at the bare idea of what a glorious feast he was going to have.

Awve bin so disturbt i’ my moind, says Betty, by a felly uts bin un left a papper, ut th’ thowts oth dumplins went cleon eawt o my yed till it wur too late to stick um ith pon.

Why, he says, what did th’ felly want?

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Nay, that's where awn banged, she says. He said the ferrups are thoose? says John. Han we sitch tackle anywhere abeawt th' heawse us teaw knows on?

Nay, she says, awm fast amung it; aw con no mooar gawm th' meonin on't than aw con o that latin prescripshun on Squire Greightfowl's gravestone. Le me see, wot it is? Summat loike "hick jacket, Rakes's cat in paste".

Eh aw know not, says John, but it's summat o that mack o lingo. But these necessary partikulurs, wot con they be, aw wonder? Does t' think, by gum, they'll be those owd paysegg clooas ut are ith box upstairs?

Now, he cannot meon thoose, for th' papper isn't hawve big enoof to howd um. Will he meon thoose two sets o fawse curls o thoine, then?

Nay, by th' mons he---never beloike shurely. Aw should as soon think he meont thoose four teeth ut theaw had pood eawt un ut theaw's kept lapt up in an owd cleawt ever sin.

Wot sort uv a looking felly wur he?

Waw, he wur a wizen-faced begger, wi a pair o whiskers big enoof for hond brushes. Awve seen better lookin chaps i'th police honds monny a toime.

He's maybe after some villuny or other, so be on thy guerd when he comes. Aw'll loosd my blunderbush, un put it behaind th' clock; un if he hawses t' do owt rung, whoy, as theawrt a pratty good aimer, blow his whiskers off, un then tak him across the yed wi th' butt eend.

Aw'll mollycrush him, says Betty, if he hawses t' steihl owt or shows any capers ut aw durnt relish. Un as for th' necessary partikulurs, wotever they may be, awst be quite satisfied ut awm dooin rest afore aw pert wi even one on um.

The next day (Sunday) was for the most part spent by this worthy couple in speculating as to what the "necessary particulars" could be; but on retiring for the night, they were neither of them a jot winer than they were when they descended to breakfast in the morning. Monday morning came, and John went off to his work in god time, having first made sure that the blunderbus was properly loaded, and again pressed Betty to "stand no mack o nonsense wotever". About eleven o'clock in the forenoon the stranger again made his appearance, and inquired if the paper was ready for him, and if it contained all the "necessary particulars".

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Come in, says Betty, un let's know railee wot it is ut yoar after. Hooa are yoa?

I'm the enumerator for the district, says the man.

Yoa'r wot? says Betty. Th' renumerator?

Yes, was the reply.

Well, neaw, hoo says, if yoa'd said that at th' fust, yoa'd ha saved my yed fro bein very mitch meighdurt, for neaw aw con partly wot tell wot yoar errand is un hooa's sent yoa.

My appointment, mam, has been quite legal.

No question abeawt it; no question at aw. Un dun yoa know ut it wur but last wick we wur tawkin abeawt th' affair.

What affair? said the man looking a little bewildered.

Why, th' renumeratin affair.

Oh, certainly, aye, I see.

Well, un heaw's aw th' foak getting on?

What folk?

Why, hoo says, Robbut Nixey, un John Picksley, un Peter Potts, un Samuel Shatterpip, un th' owd mon wi th' bandy legs.

My good woman I don't know such people.

Then, yoar not th' renumerator. For it wur Robbut Nixey un John Pickley ut shot th' keaw in a mistake, un ut promised to make us full renumerashun.

Whatever are you talking about, woman?

Wot are yoa tawkin abeawt? If yoar th' remunerator, un hasn't browt wi' yoa th' renumerashun, wot dun yoa want? Wot's thoose necessary partikulurs ut yoa wur tawkin abeawt?

Full instructions are on the paper.

Just yer yoa there. Aw axt yoa wot yoa meant by lappin up th' necessary partikulurs i' this papper, un ypa onswer me by tellin me it has in it full instrucshuns.

Do you know what you are talking about, my good woman?

Awm not a good woman, so durt be blarneyin un flatterin me; but awm better than sitch loike as yoa, who are prowlin abeawt for necessary partikulurs, un winnot give an akeawnt o yoarsel.

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I'm the enumerator, I tell you; engaged in taking the census of Lostock.

Takkin th' senses o Lostock! Waw, the dule forgie yoa for followin sitch an unchristian practice. Takkin the senses o Lostock!

Yes, mam, taking the census of Lostock, and I'm to see put down on this paper all necessary particulars about you and your husband, such as your name, your age, your occupation, and such like.

Waw, but mestur, there's but little sense left i' Lostock for t' tak. At leost, me un my owd mon haven't any to spare. Owd Raiph-o-Shay, they sayn, has the moost sense uv an mon ith teawnskip; so goo to him if yoar short. Hooa's ordert yoa t' caw heere?

We have our authority from Government.

Are they short o sense up i' Lunnun?

You don't understand me at all. You mistake my words, I'm engaed to take the census not you senses.

Yoar noane reet, by gum. What difference is there between sensus un senses? It's nobbut a different way o proneawcisyin it. Ger eawt wi yoa, or aw'll sheriff yoa, wi' th' blunderbush; un that ull tea yoar senses away, if yoa han any.

You mistake my meaning altogether. Every ten years an account is taken of the population; so as to know hot many there are of a sort!

Good un bad, dun yoa meon?

No, mae and female.

Well, we're noather male nor female us aw know on, is'nt me or eawr John.

I mean the sex.

We belong to no seots. We wur booath kestund at th' church un were'n wed there. Rantin Bob wonst wanted t' toice us to jeighn th' Primitives; but we wurnt to be catcht. Bless me, you misunderstand me still. We want the number of men, of women, and of children, ith their ages, and their occupation.

Heaw mun those do ut have no occupashuns?

They must say so.

Well, we're not wuth an occupashuns. We hannot sitch a thing abeawt th' heawse, un never had.

You don't understand the word, mam. It means the work you follow.

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But we follow no werk. Dun you think we'n nowst t' do but goo traipin up un deawn after werk?

Bless me, woman, you won't understand me.

Aw kornt; for yoar nonúnderstondable. Tawk i' gradely Lankishire English, un then aw con gawm you. What is't yoa want? Begin ogen.

I want, for public purposes, to put down on this paper the names, ages, sex, and occupations of every being that slept in this house last night.

Well, aw kornt see wot th' public should be so curious for as to pry into eawr affairs. If everybuddy would moind their own bizness, un their own affairs, they'd never be short uv a job.

Parliament has ordered the census to be taken, for useful public purposes; and every householder is required, under a penalty of five pounds, to furnish the required information.

Wot dun yoa meon by been under a penalty? Is it owt loike been under a numbrell? No, he cried, showing a touch of impatience, I mean that if you refuse to give me the information I ask for, you'll have to pay a fine of five pounds.

Well, hoo says, han yoa an ink bottle un a pen wi yoa?

Yes.

Well, just keawr yoa down then at that table, un aw'll tell yoa owt as aw con, if it's nobbut to get shun on yoa.

The enumerator took his seat at the table, and proceeded to fill up the columns with John's name and her's, their ages, sex, occupation, &c. and then inquired if they had any children or servants.

We han noane livin' wi us, says Betty; but yoa want th' necessary partikulurs, uz yoa cawn um, dunnot yoa, abeawt every been ut slept here last neet?

Exactly, he says.

Well, dip yoar pen i'th ink ogen, says she, un roite deawn Tummas.

He wrote as he was ordered, and then asked for the surname.

Aw durnt know eggzactly, hoo says, but it ull not matter. But stop, aw have it neaw. His second name's Twitcher.

Age.

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Waw, le' me see,---seven yer last birthday.

Sex?

His name's Tummas yoa known.

Oh, aye, well. What relation to head of family.

Noane at aw. He's but a lodger.

What does he do?

He catches meighce.

A rat-catcher you mean?

How, he'll not face a rotton. But he's a dule booath for catchin un werryin meighce.

He gies th' sparrows a benefit too sometoimes.

The man stared at Betty for a second or two, and then a light flashed on to his mind.

Why, it's the cat you mean! he cried.

Well, aw known that, says Betty, did aw say it wurnt? Yoa axt me to gie yoa th' necessary partikulurs abeawt every beein ut slept under this roof last neet, and if eawr Tum-cat's not a beein awve my catechism yet to lern.

I'm wasting time here cried the enumerator, pocketing his inkstand and folding up the paper.

Waw, says Betty, han yoa but fun that eawt just this minnit? It's bin my opinion that two foaks' toime wur being wasted ever sin yoa coom into th' place, un sterted o yoar nomony.

Good morning, he says hurrying out.

Tatts, cried Betty; but theaw met ha left us a cuttin off thy whiskers afore theaw went.