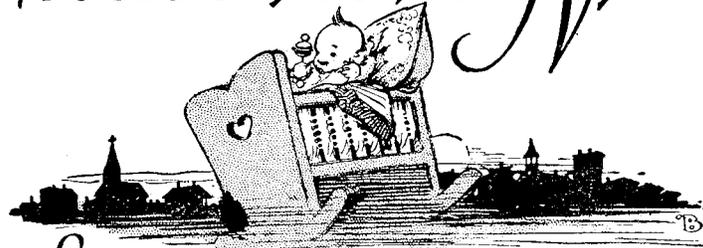


# What's in a Name?



by Junius B. Smith

**E**IDER DOWN was the only name he had. When a mere child, it had become fastened to him by reason of the fact that he was so soft and fluffy. A fond mother may have wished it upon him. If so, let us be charitable, even though young Eider Down strayed away one summer-time and lost himself beyond finding.

He was just a little tot—two years or more of age. He could speak; oh, yes. And he could cry, as a kind old gentleman learned, who picked him up as the little fellow was gouging the tears from his eyes with a pair of very small and very dirty fists. The kind old gentleman, not knowing what to do with him, took him home to his wife, where he met with a royal welcome.

For Eider Down was a cherub—or turned to one when the kind old gentleman's wife used soap and water.

But of himself he could tell no word. His mother was just "mama," his father just "daddy," and himself just "Eider Down." Nor, to give them a bearing as to whence he came or whither he might be returned, could he tell more than this, save that he went to sleep and woke up "losted."

The kind old gentleman called up the police and reported their acquisition of a child, with a request to adopt him if his parents failed to

materialize.

But no one phoned to the police, claiming a child.

Then resort was had to advertising in the papers. Weeks ran on, but no replies.

And then Eider Down became the adopted son of the kind old gentleman and his wife, and, lest his identity be forever lost, they bestowed upon him the name of Eider Down Ellis, and took him to their hearts, for no children of their own had come to grace their union.

The years went on and the mystery remained unsolved. How a child could be picked up on the streets of a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants, and no claim ever made for him, nor trace found of him, was something uncanny. For certain it was that Eider Down's parents had made search. To utterly abandon such a beautiful child was unthinkable.

Perhaps something had happened to the parents, that Eider Down had never been claimed. What was the answer?

Many the time was this question asked by the kind old gentleman and his now aged wife, as they watched the child grow from babyhood to youth and thence to young and virile manhood.

He was a magnificent specimen of manhood, measuring six feet one in his stocking

feet, and weighing one hundred and eighty. He was half-back on a football team; was pitcher on his baseball team at college; he could run like a streak of wind, and had endurance that sometimes seemed almost superhuman. A wonderful development had been his from every standpoint. Learning was a thing he acquired with ease, and there came a time when his education was about complete, so far as schooling in any other school than that of experience was concerned.

But one thing he did not like—his name. He did not object to the Ellis part, the name of his adopted parents.

But *Eider Down!* It was all right for a fluffy baby, but for a grown man—never.

In vain did his adopted parents urge him to retain it, that his identity might some day be made known. For a time he did, but with the increasing humiliation of carrying around such a name, he, on occasion, just used the initials E. D. and let it go at that. From an occasional use the habit grew, until he passed current as E. D. Ellis, which, in college, became contracted to Ed Ellis. Thus the identity of Eider Down became as the history of Atlantis, something lost beyond hope of discovery.

It was a gala day in June. Eider Down was in love. The throes of passion came over his being as an intoxicating wine, and swept all thought of other things from his mind. It was delirious to be thus affected. It happens but once in a lifetime. And Eider Down was in the seventh heaven of delight.

He whispered to his sweetheart, however, the story of his life, for he felt he should keep no secrets from her. She promised not to tell; nor did she.

But certain gentlemen who run the courthouse at Farmingville wormed from Eider Down his name in full—it is a custom, you know to have the records complete.

Yet though he returned to his college town, he had no reason to fear, for who would connect

him, E. D. Ellis—or Ed Ellis commonly called—with a man by the name of Eider Down Ellis, married in another town?

Yet with some trepidation he came onto the field that afternoon to pitch against a rival college. His bride was in the grand stand. Was it nervousness because of her watching, or did some subconscious entity forewarn him that the name he had endured for years and finally shaken would be again attached in these closing hours of his college life?

“Why, Marjorie Davis—or should I call you Mrs. *Ellis* now?” a fair friend greeted the newly made bride, as she sat in a box just back of the home-plate.

And Marjorie blushed, of course, and invited Helen Stuart to take a seat beside her. “You surely don’t mean it has been published in the paper *already?*” she said.

Helen nodded a positive head. “I read it just a few moments before coming to the park. I was surprised—and *delighted*. You sly old thing—you thought you could get married without my knowing it. And what a queer name your husband has; I thought I knew everybody you were friendly with.”

“You know him—it’s Ed—”

“Ed Ellis—out on the field warming up?” Marjorie demanded, her eyes widening slightly. I—oh, excuse me a minute. I’ve got to tell the news to brother.” And without further ado she ran out of the box and down the grand stand a ways to call to a young athlete in blue and gray to come where she could speak to him.

He came—none other than her own dear brother, Joe.

She leaned toward him and whispered excitedly: “Ed Ellis got married to-day; he married Marjorie Davis, and gave his name as Eider Down Ellis, so we wouldn’t know who it was, I guess. And they went to Farmingville, too, but I always read the marriage license section, and there it was in the noon edition of the *Telegram*, telephoned in, most likely, by the

county clerk. You ought to have some fun with him this afternoon, seeing he is opposing you on the mound.”

“Fun! Say, you watch my smoke, sis. Eider Down! What a name to conjure with! I’ll kid the poor boob till he throws the ball over the grand stand. I’ll—oh, mother! Wow!” He let out a yell and doubled up with glee. Until that moment he wasn’t very certain about the outcome of the day’s battle. Perhaps I should say he was just a little afraid of what that outcome would be.

“Oh, I *do* hope you’ll win,” said Helen, turning away and going back to the embarrassed Marjorie, a queer little feeling in her heart that she had done something she ought not to have done.

One watching might have observed Joe Stuart make his way to the captain of his team and engage him earnestly in conversation. A group formed immediately and then the captain walked toward the left-field bleachers and called to a certain individual, whom he likewise engaged in protracted conversation.

Thereafter a quiet reigned over the field, broken at intervals by the crack of bat against ball and ball against glove, as the opposing teams warmed up.

And Eider Down was blissfully ignorant that his secret was out.

The batteries were announced and the game commenced. A string of goose eggs adorned the score-board for seven innings. Yet nothing had happened. Stuart was at bat—a weak sister, so far as hitting was concerned. Yet he came up smiling this time. “Hello, Eider!” he called. “Send me over a fast one.”

“Eider.” Eider Down wondered if he had heard aright. A flush mounted, but he made no reply. Yet he sent over a swift one—which was a ball.

“Too high,” said the batter. “Put more weight on it next time, and not so much Eider Down.”

This time he knew he had heard aright.

“Ball two!” yelled the umpire.

And then from the bleachers, led by the yellmaster of the opposing college, came an improvised cry:

“He thought he was sly when he changed his name.

And tried to dodge from a world of fame;  
But the license clerk knows a thing or two,  
And wants to know all about who’s who.  
Oh. Eider Down! oh. Eider Down!  
You had to get married to gain renown.”

Abruptly the noise ended. Eider Down passed the opposing pitcher and filled the bases by hitting the next man and fumbling an easy bunt by the third, adding to his discomfiture.

The visitors went wild, while steadying calls raised their voice above the din and brought him back a measure of his self-control. He expected to be jerked out of the box as he eyed the approaching form of his superior.

But a pat on the back and an admonition to be steady and let ’em hit it, brought back a measure of his confidence, and the runner on third was nailed at the plate on a fielder’s throw.

The home crowd screamed and frenzy ran rampant as the next batter went out on a caught foul. It looked like Eider Down was going to pull himself together after all, when—

“Rah! Rah! Rah!

Siss boom bah!

Wrapped in a blanket by pa and ma.

They gave him a name that they all loved best,

And clothed him with down from an eider duck’s nest.

They thought he was soft, and we find him so:

Just land on the pill—*let’s go! let’s go!*

“He’s married, oh, folkses, to a lovely bride,  
Who sits in the stand with her eyes so wide,

Afearing her hubby will lose the game.

But what if he does—it is all the same.

Oh. Eider Down—*Eider Down* is his name.”

Now there is a limit to all things, and Eider Down had reached his. It was one thing to sing about him, but quite another to allude to his pretty little wife right up there in the grand stand. He turned and threw the ball into the bleachers and followed, climbing right into the midst of the yellmaster’s college choir.

And the game ended. Eider Down went to the hospital to have a collar-bone set. He pulled a wry face when he had come out of the ether and found Marjorie beside him, holding his uninjured hand. She put her fingers to lips and made him remain quiet.

And then the days lengthened until he was able to go to a neat little bungalow that Marjorie had rented furnished, as against the time when they could go to housekeeping.

For several days after the game ended in a scrimmage, much appeared in the papers concerning the rowdyism of certain amateur athletes and their supporters, who had hectored a man with doubtful cat-calls till he lost restraint and sank to a level with themselves by attacking them. Then the affair died out and by the time Eider Down was able to leave the hospital other matters were temporarily holding the billboards.

Eider Down left his new address at the hospital for the forwarding of any mail that might come to him, and, accompanied by his bride, went “home.”

It was a pretty little bungalow. Left to her own devices, with plenty of money to spend, she selected a thing to her individual liking. Eider Down was too deeply in love to find any fault, had there been any, in the arrangements his young wife had made. They settled down to the new life, sincerely desirous of being undisturbed for the duration of the just

commencing honeymoon. Originally they had intended going on a trip, but his shoulder made that impracticable, for what could a man do with a slowly healing collar-bone wrestling baggage from train to train?

Yet did they think they would be undisturbed, they were mistaken, for barely had they become ensconced in their new quarters than Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, his “adopted parents,” as Eider Down put it, hunted them up.

“Do you know,” said the kind old gentleman, now old indeed, “that we wouldn’t have known anything about this affair if we hadn’t picked up an old paper some days ago? We got right on the train and came, and they gave us your address at the hospital.”

“Well, dad, I didn’t want to worry you and mother. It wasn’t anything serious, really. We were going to send you a telegram as soon as we started on our honeymoon, but I had to pitch that game first, and I didn’t want them kidding me about my marriage.”

“They seem to have done so, just the same,” replied the kind old gentleman.

“And it was all my fault,” said Marjorie. “I told that spiteful Helen Stuart, because she had read the announcement of the license, and she went right straight and told her brother, who was pitching against—against *Eider*.”

There it was. He couldn’t get away from his name, even in the case of his own wife. She had always called him Mr. Ellis until—well, until she had started calling him sweetheart and deary, and such pet names, and face to face with giving him some kind of a monniker, she gave him the one he carried by law. Ed wasn’t his name at all, she thought, but just a corruption of E. D.

“Of course you didn’t think she would go and blab everything she knew,” consoled the kind old gentleman’s wife, who put her arm around the young girl and called her daughter.

“But what I would like to know,” said Eider Down, “is what in thunder my name really is?

All I remember is just going to sleep and waking up—”

“ ‘Lusted,’ ” said the old man. “We have asked ourselves that question, too.”

And then the conversation turned to other things. But not for long. A rap came on the door.

Eider Down opened it, to admit a man of more than ordinary height, wearing rimless spectacles and carrying a lawyer's brief-case in his hand.

“Mr. Eider Down Ellis?” he inquired.

Our hero nodded.

“I'm Barnes, of Hanford and Barnes, lawyers. I've come a thousand miles to see you. One of my boys goes to college here, and wrote me home about your climbing into the bleachers.”

“I suppose you're going to sue me for beating up some of those mournful joshers. Take a seat. Mr. Barnes. But first meet my wife and my parents.”

Introductions completed, the lawyer laid his brief-case on the small reading-table and opened it, drawing therefrom a file of papers. “What marks have you got?” he said; “marks you have carried from childhood.”

“Why, what the deuce has that got to do with my climbing into the bleachers?”

“Oh, I'm not here to sue you, or anything of that kind. It is a serious matter that may involve you or may not, depending on your answers to my questions. But whether or no, it will do you no harm, and I will tell you afterward why I ask.”

“Marks, marks; let me see.”

“Why, I can tell that,” spoke up the old lady. “I took charge of you when you were just a wee boy, lusted, as you said. You have a mole on your right hip and another just under your left shoulder-blade; you had a tiny scar on your left wrist that looked like a knife cut, and your eyes were blue and your hair brown when we found you, I can see you now as you came to me,

when father—that is, my husband—brought you home. I've kept the clothes you wore then.”

“You say he was lost?”

“Oh, quite lost,” chimed in the old man. “He said his name was Eider Down, and that he went to sleep and woke up lusted, and wanted to go back to his mama and daddy.”

The lawyer took something from among his papers, and stepped to the old lady's side. It was a photograph of a very small boy, say two years at most. But the effect it had upon her was instantaneous.

“Why—that's—he—that's Eider Down. You—oh, what does it—mean?”

“It means, madam,” said Lawyer Barnes, “that a search made the wide world over has just culminated in fruition. Eider Down was his name—his pet name. The name he was christened with, however, was John Augustus Williams.”

“And my—my parents—my blood parents—they—are they alive?” queried Eider Down, with a voice that trembled.

“They are—alive. Also you have living some seven brothers and four sisters, ranging from little tots to others older than yourself. This probably explains why you weren't missed for several hours—your mother thought an older sister was caring for you, and a cradle-baby was occupying her own attention.”

Eider Down fell back in his chair with a gasp. “Good Lord! It never dawned on me I might have an army of unknown relatives.”

The facts in the case were simple when collated. As pieced together, in the light of events before and after getting lusted, it appears an uncle had called to see the Williamses. In those days automobiles cost lots of money, made lots of noise, and displayed lots of expensive inelegance. Eider Down, espying the car of his uncle, climbed in at the rear through a doorless body, while playing a game of hide-and-seek. The elder children failed to find him, and he, with a lap-robe pulled up over himself,

forgot the part he was to play and went to sleep.

In due course the wealthy uncle boarded his car, set off down State some sixty miles distant, and despite the very audible wheezing of its one lung the car got there. Eider Down awoke en route, and at first was very scared, no doubt, but if he cried, his voice was drowned in the awful noise of the early make automobile. Innately cautious, he lay in the bottom of the car, lest in getting up he fall out, and after a time rather enjoyed the experience.

The car came to a stop and the uncle jumped out. Eider Down climbed out to join him, ran across the sidewalk to enter a store where the uncle had gone, was almost bowled over by the uncle as he came out, and was left standing on the sidewalk when that individual reentered his

car and drove away. Thus was Eider Down losted, the uncle being totally unaware he had carried the child from home, and no one else suspecting the truth.

The old woman sighed. "I guess we'll have to share you with your own parents," she said.

"Or adopt several more of my numerous brothers and sisters," Eider Down rejoined, "How about it, dad?"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea at that," he replied. "Take that honeymoon trip and we'll all go along and get acquainted," he suggested.

Eider Down turned his eyes to those of his bride. She nodded and smiled. "Perhaps I didn't do such a horrible thing, after all," she said, "when I told that spiteful Helen Stuart about your name."