FACTS ABOUT TEA SERIES—No. 3

Mountain-Grown Teas Best

The tea plant grows best in the pure cool atmosphere of a mountain tea garden. The higher the garden, the finer and more delicious the flavour of the tea. This is partly due to the clear sunshine on a high mountain side, partly to the more invigorating air, partly to the more frequent rainfall and perfect drainage. The largest and roughest leaf grown at an elevation of 7000 feet is much superior in flavour to the tiniest tip grown only 2000 feet above sea-level. All teas used in the "SALADA" blends are grown from 4000 feet to 7,500 feet elevation. The trademark "SALADA" is a guarantee of quality.

"SALADA"

PENNY PLAIN

BY O. DOUGLAS

Shopman—"You may have your choice—penny plain or twopence colored."

Solemn Small Boy—"Penny plain, please. It's better value for the money."

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CHAPTER XXIV.—(Cont'd.)

Mhor merely said, "Oh, and will you be married and have a bridescake? What fun! . . . You might go with Peter and me to the station and see the London trains pass. Jock went yesterday and he says he won't go again for three days. Will you, Jean? Oh, please——"

David, at Oxfort, sent his sister a letter which she put away among her chiefest treasures. Safely in his room, with a pen in his hand, he would write what he was too shy and awkward to say: he could call down blessings on his sister in a letter, when face to face with her he would have been dumb.

Pamela, on hearing the news, rushed down from London to congratulate Jean and her Biddy in person. She was looking what Jean called "fearfully London," and seemed in high spirits.

"Of course I'm in high spirits," she told Jean. "The very nicest thing in the world has come to pass. I didn't think there was a girl living that I could give Biddy to without a grudge till I saw you, and then it seemed much too good to be true that you should fall in love with each other."

"But," said Jean, "how could you want him to marry me, an ordinary girl in a little provincial town?—he could have married anybody."

"Lots of girls would have married Biddy, but I wanted him to have the best, and when I found it for him he had the sense to recognize it. Well, it's all rather like a fairy-tale. And I have Lewis! Jean, you can't think how different life in London seems now—I can enjoy it whole-heartedly, fling myself into it in a way I never could before, not even when I was at my most butterfly stage, because now it isn't my life, it doesn't really matter, I'm only a stranger within the gates. My real life is Lewis, and the thought of the green glen and the little town beside the Tweed."

"You mean," said Jean, "that you can enjoy all the gaieties tremendously because they are only an episode; if it was your life-work making a success of them you would be bored to death."

"Yes. Before I came to Priorsford they were all I had to live for, and I got to hate them. When are you two babes in the wood going to be married? You haven't talked about it yet? Dear me!"

"You see," Jean said, "there's been such a lot to talk about."

"Philanthropic schemes, I suppose?" Jean started guiltily.

"I'm afraid not. I'd forgotten about the money."

"Then I'm sorry I reminded you of it. Let all the schemes alone for a little, Jean. Biddy will help you when the time comes. I see the two of you reforming the world, losing all your money, probably, and ending up at Laverlaw with Lewis and me. I don't want to know what you talked about, my dear, but whatever it was it has done you both good. Biddy looks now as he looked before the War, and you have lost your anxious look, and your curls have got more yellow in them, and your eyes aren't like moss-agates now; they are almost quite golden. You are infinitely prettier than you were, Jean girl. . . . Now, I'm afraid I must fly back to London. Jock and Mhor will chaperone you two excellently, and we'll all meet at Mintern Abbas in the middle of May."

One sunshine day followed another Wilfred the Gazelle and the excellent Stark carried the party on exploring expeditions all over the countryside. In one delicious village they wandered, after lunch at the inn, into the little church which stood embowered among blossoming trees. The old vicar left his garden and offered to show them its beauties, and Jean fell in love with the simplicity and the feeling of homeliness that was about it.

"Biddy," she whispered, "what a delicious church to be married in. You could hardly help being happy ever after if you were married here."

Later in the day, when they were alone, he reminded her of her words.

"Why shouldn't we, Penny-plain? Why shouldn't we? I know you hate a fussy marriage and dread all the letters and presents and meeting crowds of people who are strangers to you. Of course, it's frightfully good of Mrs. Hope to offer to have it at Hopetoun, but that means waiting, and this is the spring-time, the real 'pretty ring-time.' I would rush up to London and get a special licence. I don't know how in the world it's done, but I can find out, and Pam would come, and David, and we'd be married in the little church among the blossoms. Let's say the thirtieth. That gives us four days to arrange things. . . . ."

"Four days," said Jean, "to prepare for one's wedding!"

"But you don't need to prepare. You've got lovely clothes, and we'll go straight to Mintern Abbas, where it doesn't matter what we wear. I tell you what, we'll go to London to-morrow and see lawyers and things—do you realize you haven't even got an engagement ring, you neglected child? And tell Pam—— Mad? Of course, it's mad. It's the way they did in the Golden World. It's Rosalind and Orlando. Be persuaded, Penny-plain."

"Priorsford will be horrified," said Jean. "They aren't used to such indecorous haste, and oh, Biddy, I couldn't be married without Mr. Macdonald."

"I was thinking about that. He certainly has the right to be at your wedding. If I wired to-day do you think they would come? Mrs. Macdonald's such a sportsman, I believe she would hustle the minister and herself off at once."

"I believe she would," said Jean, "and having them would make all the difference. It would be almost like having my own father and mother. . . ."

So it was arranged. They spent a hectic day in London which almost reduced Jean to idiocy, and got back at night to the peace of Stratford. Pamela said she would bring everything that was needed, and would arrive on the evening of the 29th with Lewis and David. The Macdonalds wired that they were coming, and Lord Bidborough interviewed the vicar of the little church among the blossoms and explained everything to him. The vicar was old and wise and tolerant, and he said he would feel honored if the Scots minister would officiate with him. He would, he said, be pleased to arrange things exactly as Jean and her minister wanted them.

By the 29th they had all assembled. Pamela arriving with Leslie Elliot and Mawson and a motor full of pasteboard boxes found Jean just home from a picnic at Broadway, flushed with the sun and glowing with health and happiness.

"Well," said Pamela as she kissed her, "this is a new type of bride. Not the nerve-shattered, milliner-ridden creature with writer's cramp in her hand from thanking people for useless presents! You don't look as if you were worrying at all."

"I'm not," said Jean. "Why should I? There will be nobody there to criticize me. There are no preparations to make, so I needn't fuss. Biddy's right. It's the best way to be married."

"I needn't ask if you are happy, my Jean girl?"

Jean flung her arms round Pamela's neck.

"After having Biddy for my own the next best thing is having you for a sister. I owe you more than I can ever repay."

"Ah, my dear," said Pamela, "the debt is all on my side. You set the solitary in families. . . ."

Mhor here entered, shouting that the car was waiting to take them to the station to meet the Macdonalds, and Jean hurried away.

An hour later the whole party met round the dinner-table. Mhor had been allowed to sit up. Other nights he consumed milk and bread and butter and eggs at 5.30, and went to bed an hour later, leaving Jock to change his clothes and descend to dinner and the play, an arrangement that caused a good deal of friction. But to-night all bitterness was forgotten, and Mhor beamed on every one.

Mrs. Macdonald was in great form. She had come away, she told them, leaving the spring cleaning half done. "All the study chairs in the garden and Agnes rubbing down the walls, and Allan's beating the carpet. . . . In came the telegram, and after I got over the shock—I always expect the worst when I see a telegraph boy—I said to John, "My best dress is not what it was, but I'm going," and John was delighted, partly because he was driven out of his study, and he's never happy in any other room, but most of all because it was Jean. English Church or no English Church he'll help to marry Jean. But," turning to the bride to be, "I can hardly believe it, Jean. It's only ten days since you left Priorsford, and to-morrow you're to be married. I think it was the War that taught us such hurried ways. . . ." She sighed, and then went on briskly: "I went to see Mrs. M'Cosh before I left. She had had your letter, so I didn't need to break the news to her. She was wonderfully calm about it, and said that when people went away to England you might expect to hear anything. She said I was to tell Mhor that the cat was asking for him. And she is getting on with the cleaning. I think she said she had finished the diningroom and two bedrooms and she was expecting to sweep to-day. She said you would like to know that the man had come about the leak in the tank, and it's all right. I saw Bella Bathgate as I was leaving The Rigs. She sent you and Lord Bidborough her kind regards. . . . She has a free way of expressing herself, but I don't think she means to be disrespectful."

"Has she got lodgers just now?" Pamela asked.

"Oh yes, she told me about them. One she dismissed as 'an auldish, impident wumman wi' specs'; and the other as 'terrible genteel.' Both of them 'a sair comedown frae Miss Reston.' Now you are gone you are on a pedestal."

"I wasn't always on a pedestal," said Pamela, "but I shall always have a tenderness for Bella Bathgate and her parlor." She smiled to Lewis Elliot as she said it.

Jean sitting beside Mr. Macdonald, thanked him for coming.

"Happy, Jean?" he asked.

"Utterly happy," said Jean. "So happy that I'm almost afraid. Isn't it odd how one seems to cower down to avoid drawing the attention of the Fates to one's happiness, saying, 'It is naught, it is naught,' in case disaster follows?"

"Don't worry about the Fates, Jean," Mr. Macdonald advised. "Rejoice in your happiness, and God grant that the evil days may never come to you. . . . What, Jock? Am I going to the play? I never went to a play in my life and I'm too old to begin."

"Oh, but Mr. Macdonald," Jean broke in eagerly, "it isn't like a real theatre; it's all Shakespeare, and the place is simply black with clergymen, so you wouldn't feel out of place. You know you taught me first to care for Shakespeare, and I'd love to sit beside you and see a play acted."

Mr. Macdonald shook his head at her.

"Are you tempting your old minister, Jean? I've lived for sixty-five years without seeing a play, and I think I can go on to the end. It's not that it's wrong or that I think myself more virtuous than the rest of the world because I stay away. It's prejudice, if you like, intolerance perhaps, narrowness, bigotry——"

"Well, I think you and Mrs. Macdonald are better to rest this evening after your journey," Pamela said.

"Wouldn't you rather we stayed at home with you?" Jean asked. "We're only going to the play for something to do. We thought Davie would like it."

"It's 'Romeo and Juliet,'" Jock broke in. "A silly love play, but there's a fine scene at the end where they all get killed. If you're sleeping, Mhor, I'll wake you up for that."

"I would like to stay with you," Jean said to Mrs. Macdonald.

"Never in the world. Off you go to the play and John and I will go early to bed and be fresh for to-morrow. When is the wedding?"

"At twelve o'clock in the church at Little St. Mary's," Lord Bidborough told her. "It's about ten miles from Stratford. I'm staying at the inn there to-night and I trust you to see that they are all off to-morrow in good time." He turned to Mr. Macdonald. "It's most extraordinarily kind, sir, of you both to come. I knew Jean would never feel herself properly married if you were not there. And we wondered, Mrs. Macdonald, if you and your husband would add to your kindness by staying on here for a few days with the boys? You would see the country round, and then you would motor down with them and join us at Mintern Abbas for another week. D'you think you can spare the time? Jean would like you to see her in her own house, and I needn't say how honored I would feel."

"Bless me," said Mrs. Macdonald. "That would mean a whole fortnight away from Priorsford. You could arrange about the preaching, John, but what about the spring cleaning? Agnes is a good creature, but I'm never sure that she scrubs behind the shutters; they're the old-fashioned kind and need a lot of cleaning. However," with a deep sigh, "it's very kind of you to ask us, and at our age we won't have many more opportunities of having a holiday together, so perhaps we should seize this one. Dear me, Jean, I don't understand how you can look so bright so near your wedding. I cried and cried at mine. Have you not a qualm?"

Jean shook her head and laughed, and Mr. Macdonald said:

"Off with you all to your play. It's an odd thing to choose to go to to-night—

"'For never was there such a tale of woe
As this of Juliet and her Romeo.'"

Mrs. Macdonald shook her head and sighed.

"I can't help thinking it's a poor preparation for a serious thing like marriage. I often don't feel so depressed at a funeral. There at least you know you've come to the end—nothing more can happen." Then her eyes twinkled and they left her laughing.

(To be continued.

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