FACTS ABOUT TEA SERIES—No. 4

The Two Types of Tea

There are two distinct types of tea, namely Black Tea and Green Tea. Both are made from the same bush and both are equally pure. The difference is in the process of manufacture which gives each a different flavour. Black Tea after it is plucked is withered and partially 'fired' or dried, then allowed to oxidize by being exposed to the air. This gives Black Tea its dark reddish colour when drawn. Green tea is immediately steamed after plucking, which prevents oxidization. There are delicious blends of "SALADA" in both of these types and also a unique blend of Black and Green Tea Mixed. All are sold in four qualities.

"SALADA"

PENNY PLAIN

BY O. DOUGLAS

Shopman—"You may have your choice—penny plain or two-pence colored."

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

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CHAPTER XXV.

Jean awoke early on her wedding morning and lay and thought over the twenty-three years of her life, and wondered what she had done to be so blessed, for, looking back, it seemed one long succession of sunny days. The dark spots seemed so inconsiderable looking back as to be hardly worth thinking about.

Her window faced the east, and the morning sun shone in, promising yet another fine day. Through the wall she could hear Mhor, who always woke early, busy at some game—possibly wigwams with the blankets and sheets — already the chamber-maid had complained of finding the sheets knotted round the bed-posts. He was singing a song to himself as he played. Jean could hear his voice crooning. The sound filled her with an immense tenderness. Little Mhor with his naughtiness and his endearing ways! And beloved Jock with his gruff voice and surprised blue eyes, so tender-hearted, so easily affronted. And David—the dear companion of her childhood, who had shared with her all the pleasures and penalties of life under the iron rule of Great-aunt Alison, who understood as no one else could ever quite understand, not even Biddy . . . But as she thought of Biddy, she sprang out of bed, and, leaning out of the window, she turned her face to Little St. Mary's, where her love was, and where presently she would join him.

Five hours later she would stand with him in the church among the blossoms, and they would be made man and wife, joined together till death did them part. Jean folded her hands on the window-sill. She felt solemn and quiet and very happy. She had not had much time for thinking in the last few days, and she was glad of this quiet hour. It was good on her wedding morning to tell over in her mind, like beads on a rosary, the excellent qualities of her dear love. Could there be another such in the wide world? Pamela was happy with Lewis Elliot, and Lewis was kind and good and in every way delightful, but compared with Richard Plantagenet——. In this pedestrian world her Biddy had something of the old cavalier grace. Also, he had more than a streak of Ariel. Would he be content always to be settled at home? He thought so now, but——. Anyway, she wouldn't try to bind him down to keep him to domesticity, making an eagle into a barndoor fowl; she would go with him where she could go, and where she would be a burden she would send him alone and keep a high heart, till she could welcome him home.

But it was high time that she had her bath and dressed. It would be a morning of dressing, for about 10.30 she would have to dress again for her wedding. The obvious course was to breakfast in bed, but Jean had rejected the idea as "stuffy." To waste the last morning of April in bed with crumbs of toast and a tray was unthinkable, and by 9.30 Jean was at the station giving Mhor an hour with his beloved locomotors.

"You will like to come to Mintern Abbas, won't you, Mhor?" she said.

Mhor considered.

"I would have liked it better," he confessed, "if there had been a railway line quite near. It was silly of whoever built it to put it so far away."

"When Mintern Abbas was built railways hadn't been invented."

"I'm glad I wasn't invented before railways," said Mhor. "I would have been very dull."

"You'll have a pony at Mintern Abbas. Won't that be nice?"

"Yes. Oh! there's the signal down at last. That'll be the express to London. I can hear the roar of it already."

Pamela's idea of a wedding garment for Jean was a soft white cloth coat and skirt, and a close-fitting hat with Mercury wings. Everything was simple, but everything was exquisitely fresh and dainty.

Pamela dressed her, Mrs. Macdonald looking on, and Mawson fluttering about, admiring but incompetent.

"'Something old and something new,
Something borrowed and something blue,'"

Mrs. Macdonald quoted. "Have you got them all, Jean?"

"I think so. I've got a lace handkerchief that was my mother's—that's old. And blue ribbon in my underthings. And I've borrowed Pamela's prayer-book, for I haven't one of my own. And all the rest of me's new."

"And the sun is shining," said Pamela, "so you're fortified against ill-luck."

"I hope so," said Jean gravely. "I must see if Mhor has washed his face this morning. I didn't notice at breakfast, and he's such an odd child, he'll wash every bit of himself and neglect his face. Perhaps you'll remember to look, Mrs. Macdonald, when you are with him here."

Mrs. Macdonald smiled at Jean's maternal tone.

"I've brought up four boys," she said, "so I ought to know something of their ways. It will be like old times to have Jock and Mhor to look after."

Mhor went in the car with Jean and Pamela and Mrs. Macdonald. The others had gone on in Lord Bidborough's car, as Mr. Macdonald wanted to see the vicar before the service. The vicar had asked Jean about the music, saying that the village schoolmistress, who was also the organist, was willing to play. "I don't much like 'The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden,'" Jean told him, "but anything else would be very nice. It is so very kind of her to play."

Mhor mourned all the way to church about Peter being left behind. "There's poor Peter, who is so fond of marriages—he goes to them all in Priorsford—tied up in the yard; and he knows how to behave in a church."

"It's a good deal more than you do," Mrs. Macdonald told him. "You're never still for one moment. I know of at least one person who has had to change his seat because of you. He said he got no good of the sermon watching you bobbing about."

"It's because I don't care about sermons," Mhor replied, and relapsed into dignified silence — a silence sweetened by a large chocolate poked at him by Jean.

They walked through the churchyard, with its quiet sleepers, into the cool church, where David was waiting to give his sister away. Some of the village women, with little girls in clean pinafores clinging to their skirts, came shyly in after them and sat down at the door. Lord Bidborough, waiting for his bride, saw her come through the doorway, winged like Mercury, smiling back at the children following . . . then her eyes met his.

The first thing that Jean became aware of was that Mr. Macdonald was reading her own chapter.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desrt shall rejoice and blossom as the rose . . .

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it: but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein . . .

"No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The schoolmistress had played the wedding march from Lohengrin, and was prepared to play Mendelssohn as the party left the church, but when the service was over Mrs. Macdonald whispered fiercely in Jean's ear, "You can't be married without 'O God of Bethel,'" and ousting the schoolmistress from her place at the organ, she struck the opening notes.

They knew it by heart—Jean and Davie and Jock and Mhor and Lewis Elliot—and they sang it with the unction with which one sings the songs of Zion by Babylon's streams.

"Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide,
Give us each day our daily bread
And raiment fit provide.

O spread Thy covering wings around
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace."

Out in the sunshine, among the blossoms, Jean stood with her husband and was kissed and blessed.

"Jean, Lady Bidborough," said Pamela.

"Gosh, Maggie!" said Jock, "I quite forgot Jean would be Lady Bidborough. What a joke!"

"She doesn't look any different," Mhor complained.

"Surely you don't want her different," Mrs. Macdonald said.

"Not very different,' said Mhor, "but she's pretty small for a Lady—not nearly as tall as Richard Plantagenet."

"As high as my heart," said Lord Bidborough. "The correct height, Mhor."

The vicar lunched with them at the inn. There were no speeches, and no one tried to be funny.

Jock rebuked Jean for eating too much. "It's not manners for a bride to have more than one help."

"It's odd," said Jean, "but the last time I was married the same thing happened. D'you remember, Davie? You were the minister and I was the bride, and I had my pinafore buttoned down the front to look grown up, and Tommy Sprott was the bridegroom. And Great-aunt Alison let us have a cake and some shortbread, and we made strawberry wine ourselves. And at the wedding-feast Tommy Sprott sudenly pointed at me and said, 'Put that girl out; she's eating all the shortbread.' Me—his newmade bride!"

The whole village turned out to see the newly-married couple leave, including the blacksmith and three dogs. It hurt Mhor afresh to see the dogs barking happily while Peter, who would so have enjoyed a fight with them, was spending a boring day in the stable-yard, but Jean comforted him with the thought of Peter's delight at Mintern Abbas.

"Will Richard Plantagenet mind if he chases rabbits?"

"You won't, will you, Biddy?" Jean said.

"Not a bit. If you'll stand between me and the wrath of the keepers, Peter may do any mortal thing he likes."

As they drove away through the golden afternoon, Jean said: "I've always wondered what people talked about when they went away on their wedding journey?"

"They don't talk; they just look into each other's eyes in a sort of ecstasy, saying, 'Is it I? Is it thou?'"

"That would be pretty silly," said Jean. "We shan't do that, anyway."

Her husband laughed.

"You are really very like Jock, my Jean . . . D'you remember what your admired Dr. Johnson said? 'If I had no duties I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman, but she should be one who could understand me and would add something to the conversation.' Wise old man! Tell me, Penny-plain, you're not fretting about leaving the boys? You'll see them again in a few days. Are you dreading having me undiluted?"

"My dear, you don't suppose the boys come first now, do you? I love them as dearly as ever I did, but compared with you—it's so different, absolutely different—I can't explain. I don't love you like people in books, all on fire and saying wonderful things all the time. But to be with you fills me with utter content. I told you that night in Hopetoun that the boys filled my life. And then you went away, and I found that though I had the boys my life and my heart were empty. You are my life, Biddy."

"My blessed child."

About four o'clock they came home.

An upland country of pastures and shallow dales fell quietly to the river levels, and on a low spur that was its last outpost stood Mintern Abbas, a thing half of the hills and half of the broad valleys. At its back, beyond the home-woods, was a remote land of sheep walks and forgotten hamlets; at its feet the young Thames in lazy reaches wound through water-meadows. Down the slopes of old pasture fell cascades of daffodils, and in the fringes of the coppices lay the blue haze of wild hyacinths. The house was so wholly in tune with the landscape that the eye did not at once detect it, for its gables might have been part of wood or hillside. It was of stone, and built in many periods and in many styles, which time had subtly blended so that it seemed a perfect thing without beginning, as long descended as the folds of downs which sheltered it. The austere Tudor front, the Restoration wing, the offices built under Queen Anne, the library added in the days of the Georges, had by some alchemy become one. Peace and long memories were in every line of it, and that air of a home which belongs only to places that have been loved for generations. It breathed ease and comfort, but yet had a tonic vigor in it, for while it stood knee-deep in the green valley its head was fanned by moorland winds.

Jean held her breath as she saw it. It seemed to her the most perfect thing that could be imagined.

She walked in shyly, winged like Mercury, to be greeted respectfully by a row of servants. Jean shook hands with each one, smiling at them with her "doggy" eyes, wishing all the time for Mrs. McCosh, who was not specially respectful, but always homely and humorous.

Tea was ready in a small panelled room with a view of the lawns and the river.

"I asked them to put it here," Lord Bidborough said. "I thought you might like to have this for your own sitting-room. It's just a little like the room at The Rigs."

"Oh, Biddy, it is. I saw it when I came in. May I really have it for my own? It feels as if people had been happy in it. It has a welcoming air. And what a gorgeous tea!" She sat down at the table and pulled off her gloves. "Isn't life frightfully well arranged? Every day is so full of so many different things, and meals are such a comfort. No, I'm not greedy, but what I mean is that it would be just a little 'stawsome' if you had nothing to do but love all the time."

"I'm Scots, partly, but I'm not so Scots as all that. What does 'stawsome' mean exactly?"

"It means," Jean began, and hesitated—"I'm afraid it means—sickening."

Her husband laughed as he sat down beside her.

"I'm willing to believe that you mean to be more complimentary than you sound. I'm very certain you would never let love-making become 'stawsome' . . . There are hot things in that dish—or would you rather have a sandwich? This is the first time we've ever had tea alone, Jean."

"I know. Isn't it heavenly to think that we shall be together now all the rest of our lives? Biddy, I was thinking . . . if—if ever we have a son I should like to call him Peter Reid. Would you mind?"

"My darling!"

"It wouldn't go very well with the Quintins and the Reginalds and all the other names but it would be a sort of thank you to the poor rich man who was so kind to me."

"All the same, I sometimes wish he hadn't left you all that money. I would rather have given you everything myself."

"Like King Cophetua. I've no doubt it was all right for him, but it can't have ben much fun for the beggar maid. No matter how kind and generous a man is, to be dependent on him for every penny can't be nice. It's different, I think, when the man is poor. Then they both work, the man earning, the woman saving and contriving. . . . But what's the good of talking about money? Money only matters when you haven't got any."

"O wise young judge!"

"No, it's really quite a wise statement when you think of it. . Let's go outside. I want to see the river near." She turned while going out at the door and looked with great satisfaction on the room that was to be her own.

"I am glad of this room, Biddy. It has such a kind feeling. The other rooms are lovely, but they are meant for crowds of people. This says tea, and a fire and a book and a friend—the four nicest things in the world."

They walked slowly down to the river.

"Swans!" said Jean, "and a boat!"

"In Shelley's dreams of Heaven there is always a river and a boat—I read that somewhere . . Well, what do you think of Mintern Abbas? Did I overpraise?"

Jean shook her head.

"That wouldn't be easy. It's the most wonderful place . . like a dream. Look at it now in the afternoon light, pale gold, like honey. And the odd thing is it's in the very heart of England, and yet it might almost be Scotland."

"I thought that would appeal to you. Will you learn to love it, do you think?"

"I shan't have to learn. I love it already."

"And feel it home?"

"Yes . . but, Biddy, there's just one thing. I shall love our home with all my heart and be absolutely content here if you promise me one thing—that when I die I'll be taken to Priorsford . . . I know it's nonsense. I know it doesn't matter where the pickle dust that was me lies, but I don't think I could be quite happy if I didn't know that one day I shoud lie within sound of Tweed. . . You're laughing, Biddy."

"My darling, like you I've sometimes wondered what people talked about on their honeymoon, but never in my wildest imaginings did I dream that they talked of where they would like to be buried."

Jean hid an abashed face for a moment against her husband's sleeve; then she looked up at him and laughed.

"It sounds mad—but I mean it," she said.

"It's all the fault of your Great-aunt Alison. Tell me, Jean, girl—no, I'm not laughing—how will this day look from your death-bed?"

Jean looked at the river, then she looked into her husband's eyes, and put both her hands into his.

"Ah, my dear love," she said, softly, "if that day leaves me any remembrance of what I feel to-day, I'll be so glad to have lived that I'll go out of the world cheering."

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A man was almost frantic with toothache. The only other person in the room was his pompous, matter-of-fact aunt.

Presently the man burst out: "Oh, I wish to goodness people were born without teeth!"

"My dear Alfred, they are," said the heartless relative.

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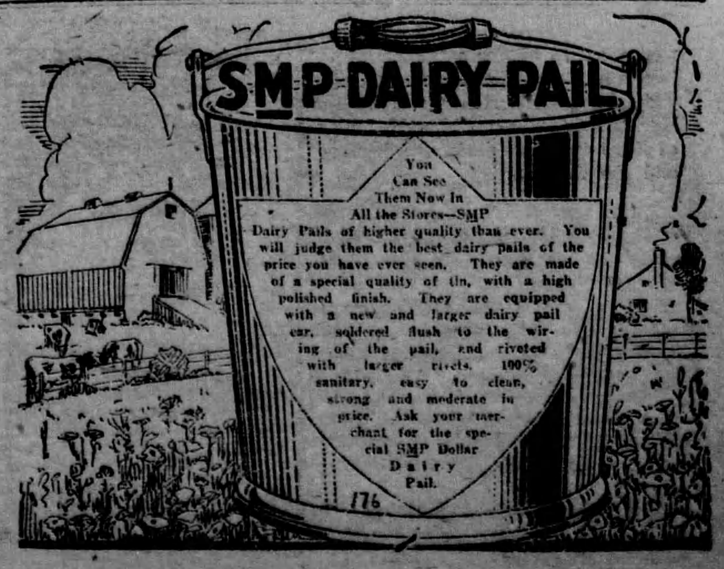
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