Discover For Yourself "SALADA" GREEN TEA

T77

To drink a cup is a revelation. Try it.

BEGIN HERE TO-DAY.

In appreciation of his daring in rescuing her and her companions from highwaymen,

Mme. de Sevenie had invited the man who preferred to be known as Andre Duchemin to dine in her chateau.

Duchemin accepts, despite his desire to avoid all social activities during his leave of absence from the English Secret Service. He was anxious to meet again

Eva de Montalais, the American widow who had been one of those saved by Duchemin from the highwaymen's attack.

En route to the chateau, Duchemin pondered over the arrival in town of a strange motoring party of four men and a woman. He was able to learn only two names:

Phinuit, apparently a secretary, and the chauffeur, Jules.

GO ON WITH THE STORY.

CHAPTER VI.

SCENTING THE LONE WOLF.

Dinner was served in a vast and sombre hall whose darkly paneled walls and high-beamed ceiling bred a multitude of shadows that danced about the table, restlessly advancing and retreating as the candles flickered, failed and flared in the gusty draughts.

Rain in sheets sluiced the windows without rest. Round turrets and gables the wind raved and moaned like a famished wild thing denied its kill.

After dinner Duchemin sat talking with Madame de Montalais over their cigarettes. To smoking, curiously enough, Madame de Sevenie offered no objection.

"Monsieur knew New York?"

"It is my home," said Eve de Montalais softly, looking away.

Her father had been a partner in a great jewelry house, Cottier's, of Paris, London, and New York. (So that explained it! She was wearing the blue diamond again to-night, with other jewels worth, in the judgment of a keen connoiseur, a king's ransom.)

Across the drawing-room Madame de Sevenie sharply interrogated a manservant who had silently presented himself to her attention.

"What is it you want, Jean?"

The servant mumbled his justification: An automobile had broken down on the highroad near the chateau, the chauffeur was unable to move the car or make any repairs in the storm, a gentleman had come to the door to ask . . .

He moved aside, indicating the doorway to the entrance hall, beyond which Mr. Phinuit was to be seen, standing with cap in hand, tiny rivulets running from the folds of his motor-coat and forming pools on the polished flooring.

Mr. Phinuit was desolated to think he might be imposing on madame's good nature, but the night was truly inclement, madame la comtesse was already suffering from the cold, and if one might beg for shelter for her and the gentlemen of the party while one telephoned or sent to Nant for another automobile. . . . .

But monsieur might feel very sure Madame de Sevenie would never forgive herself if the hospitality of the Chateau de Montalais ailed at such a time. She would send servants to the car at once with lights, wraps, umbrellas . . . .

"It is my home."

There was no necessity for that. The remainder of the party had, it seemed, presumed upon her courtesy in anticipation, and was not far from the heels of its ambassador. Even while madame was speaking, Jean was opening the great front doors to those who proved—formal introductions being duly effected by Mr. Phinuit—to be Madame la Comtesse de Lorgnes, monsieur le comte, her husband (this was the well-fed body in tweeds) and Mr. Whitaker Monk, of New York.

These personages were really not at all in a bad way. When Eve de Montalais had carried madame la comtesse off to her own apartment to change her shoes and stockings, the gentlemen trooped to the drawing-room fire, and grew quite cheeful under the combined influence of warmth and wine and biscuits.

Mr. Whitaker Monk might have been any age between thirty-five and fifty-five, so non-committal was that lantern jawed countenance of a droll, with its heavy, black, eloquent eyebrows, its rather small, blue, illegible eyes, its high-bridged nose and prominent nostrils, its wide and thin-lipped mouth, its rather startling pallor.

A chance meeting at Monte Carlo, he said, with his old friends, the Comte et Cometesse de Lorgnes, had resulted in their yielding to his insistence that they tour with him back to Paris by this roundabout way.

"A whim of my age, madame. As a young man I explored this country on a walking tour, inspired by Stevenson. You know, perhaps, his diverting 'Travels with a Donkey'?"

"How strange, then, is coincidence," Madame de Sevenie suggested. "You who made a walking tour of this country so long ago, monsieur, regard there that good Monsieur Duchemin, himself engaged upon just such an undertaking."

"But is there anything more wonderful than the workings of the good God?" madame pursued. "Observe that had it not been for Monsieur Duchemin, we should all, I, my daughter, my granddaughter, even poor Georges d'Aubrac, be lying dead at Montpellier-le-Vieux."

Naturally the strangers require to know about that, and Madame de Sevenie would talk, in fact doted on telling the tale of that great adventure. Duchemin made a face of resignation, and heard himself extolled as a paladin for strength, address and valor.

Now the enigmatic eyes of Monk were boring into him, seeking to search his soul, with a question in their stare which he could not read and, quite likely, would have declined to answer if he could. Also the eyes of Monsieur de Comte de Lorgnes were very round and constant to him. And before Madame de Sevenie was finished, Phinuit strolled in and heard enough to make him subject Duchemin to a not unfriendly, steady and open inspection.

"But Monsieur Monk!" madame la comtesse exclaimed with vivacity: "do you now what I have just discovered? You and Madame de Montalais are compatriots. She is of your New York. You must know each other."

"I have been wondering," Monk admitted, bowing to Eve, "if it were possible I could be misled by a strong resemblance."

Eve turned to him with a look of surprise. "Yes, monsieur?"

"It is many years ago . . . I was in the private office of my friend, Edmund Anstruther, of Cottier's, one afternoon—"

The effort of the memory knitted Eve's brows; but in the end she shook her head. "I am sorry, monsieur. But I am so glad to meet a friend of my father's, monsieur."

"Your father and I entertained one passion in common, one which he was better able than I to gratify, for good diamonds and emeralds. I have often wondered what became of his collection. He had some superb stones."

"I inherited them, monsieur."

The Comtesse de Lorgnes gave a gesture of excitement. "But what a fortunate woman! You truly have those magnificent emeralds, those almost matchless diamonds, of which one has heard—the Anstruther collection?"

"I have them, madame la comtesse," said Eve, with a smiling nod—"yes."

"But, one presumes, in Paris, in some impregnable strong-box."

"No, madame, here."

"But not here, Madame de Montalais!" To this Eve gave another nod and smile. "But are you not afraid—?"

"Of what, madame? That they will be stolen? No."

"But what of criminals from outside, from the great cities, from London and Paris and Berlin?"

"What of the Lone Wolf?" the Comtesse de Lorgnes added. "I have heard that one is once more in France."

Duchemin blinked incredulously at the speaker. "But when did you hear that, madame la comtesse?"

"Quite recently, monsieur."

"I had understood that the monsieur in question had long since retired."

"Only for the duration of the war, monsieur, I am afraid."

"It is true, according to all reports," the Comte de Lorgnes said: "Monsieur Lanyard—that was the name, was it not?"

"If memory serves, monsieur le comte," Duchemin agreed.

"Yes." The count screwed his chubby features into a laughable mask of gravity. "Now one remembers quite well. He passed as a collector of objets d'art, especially of fine paintings, in Paris, for years before the war—this Monsieur Michael Lanyard. Then he disappeared. It was rumored that he was of good service to the allies for a spy, acting independently; and after the armistice, I have heard, he did well for England in the matter of a Bolshevist conspiracy over there. But not long ago, according to my information, Monsieur Lone Wolf resigned from the British Secret Service and returned to France—doubtless to resume his old practices."

"Perhaps not," Duchemin suggested. "Possibly his reformation was genuine and lasting."

The Comtesse de Lorgnes laughed that laugh of light derision which is almost exclusively the laugh of the Parisienne of a certain class. Remarking this, Duchemin eyed her mildly.

"At all events," Phinuit put in promptly, "I know what I would do if I possessed a little fortune in jewels, and learned that a thief of the ability of this Lone Wolf was at large in France: I would charter an armored train to convey the loot to the strongest safe deposit vault in Paris."

"Thereby advertising to the Lone Wolf the exact location of the jewels, monsieur, so that he might at his leisure make his plans perfect to burglarize the vaults?"

"Is that likely?" Phinuit jeered.

Duchemin gave a slight shrug.

"One has heard that the fellow had real ability," he said.

The servant Jean came in, caught the eye of Madame de Sevenie, and announced:

"The chauffeur of Monsieur Monk wishes me to say he has completed repairs on the automobile, and the rain has ceased."

(To be continued.)

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ISSUE No. 14—'27.

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