

Red Rose Tea

"Is Good Tea"

All its flavor and strength is retained in the sealed package.

THE MAN FROM THE WEST

BY E. EVERETT GREEN.
Author of "The Marriage of Marcia," "Lady Elizabeth," "The Juggernaut," etc.

"Well, go on, Mary. I'm sort of beginning to nose a rat; I only want to know more. He kept Henninger off, and he talked rather oddly to you. Can you remember the sort of things he used to say?"

The color flew suddenly up in Mary's face.

"Val, if I tell you, you won't make trouble? You won't take any unfair advantage, or make any claim, because there is no proof, only my word, and it would be not quite right or fair, I only tell you because you are an Acryngton and my Kinsman and friend."

"That's so, Mary; and I'll pass you my word to play no low down game on anybody. You just shove along and tell your tale, and it'll be all right, you'll see."

Cotswold looked at her with a quiet, level glance.

"Shall I go away? I am not a Kinsman, but I like to call myself your friend, and I am very much interested."

Mary's sweet eyes were lifted to his face; her answer was simple and direct.

"There is almost nothing to tell—I feel as though I had given you a wrong impression. It was only that when Uncle Miles seemed more ill and failing, though I did not think he was going to die so soon, he used to take hold of my hand and hold it fast and talk in a rapid whisper that I could not catch. The only words I was quite sure of were 'Search well, Mary, search well,' he would say. I never knew whether he was rambling or not, but he seemed very anxious."

Val wheeled upon her in that sudden way of his; but Cotswold's question came first.

"Did you search the house out after his death?"

"Yes, I went through everything—through every place—he had all sorts of old holes and corners for storing away his papers and letters and valuables. Mr. Henninger and I went through the whole house most carefully. We knocked on the paneled walls—for we both had an idea of some possible hiding-place. I remembered Uncle Miles' injunction, and he seemed very anxious, too."

"Did he ever do any of this seeking on his own account? I mean, when you were not there?" asked Cotswold.

"I cannot be sure as to that," answered Mary; then she looked up into the faces of the men and said: "But I am quite sure of one thing, Mr. Henninger had found another will, he would not have suppressed it. He is very glad to be the owner of Cotswold's estate, but he would never commit a felony to keep the place in his possession."

"What, I reckon that's so," said Val.

"Yes, that's not my sort; but I guess Mary's got hold of the right end of the stick. He's not that kind of low-down skunk, Mr. Henninger, and I have done. Is there any ancient well-sinker living about in these parts?"

The apparent irrelevance of the question brought a smile to her face.

"There's old Gaffer Tompkins," she answered. "He always goes by that name, and he lives in the little cottage at the edge of Mustard Copse. Why in the world—"

But Val gave her no answer; his eyes had caught sight of an advancing figure.

"Here's Hilda scooting along on her cycle," he said. "Now I'll see what sort of a tea a bachelor shanty can conjure up."

CHAPTER XII.

ALLIES.

"Let me make tea, Val! Men never know how; and Mary must on no account be disturbed!" and Hilda cast a rueful glance over her shoulder at the pair just out of the door, who certainly wore the air of being very much engrossed with each other.

Val looked, took in the possible significance of what he saw, and his lips rounded to a low whistle.

"Sets the wind that way?" he asked of the eager-faced girl at his side.

"Ah, that's what I don't know; but I should just love for it to come off. Can't you fancy Mary at Cotswold Chase—just queening it there in her pictureque way? That's what she is—pictureque and medieval—like Cotswold Chase itself. Bosh and I cycled over to see it the day after the other had gone. I should just love to see Mary ruling there, wouldn't you?"

"Well, I'd be considerable content if things should pan out like that for little Mary." And then Val came to a sudden pause, for he realized that Cotswold's present position was a not quite enviable one. Possession was his, but the shadow of uncertainty lay athwart his path; and though he might be falling in love, consciously or unconsciously, with sweet Mary Acryngton, he might very likely hesitate to speak one word to her, and to any woman speak one word to her future heir.

Hilda, intent upon her own thought, went on speaking—her words coming with a rush.

"Oh, Val, I'm so glad they have met again here! I was wondering how ever they were to see another day more! You know what girls are like—the sort who are out on the war-path after husbands! I don't see why you need mind saying, since they are always talking about it themselves. I knew from the first how it would be, when there was a real live lord and a real live lady, and a real live Norma. Of course, it's perfectly ridiculous and preposterous! Anyone can see that with half an eye, except the sort of the darlings themselves! Don't think me a little pig, Val, for talking of my sisters that way; I'm very good friends with them and all that. But I can't help having eyes and ears. I know what they want, because they proclaim it from the house; and I just as much know that if a man like Lord Cotswold would as soon go and marry his housemaid as either of that pair."

Val was looking Hilda well over with an amused scrutiny of glance that made her suddenly laugh.

"And how in thunder do you know all that, when the rest of your family seem in such blissful ignorance of it?"

"Ah! Val, that's what I want to know myself! Sometimes I feel as though I didn't really belong to them at all. And that makes me think I must be a real horror. It's so funny, going to face the fact of my being a part of the family, but I don't know, and I wonder whether at heart I'm not more snobby than they are."

Val, who had been listening with an encouraged Hilda to proceed with this confidence, and now looking each other full in the face, they laughed and laughed.

"We live in a queer world, little girl," said Val, "and we're nothing if not plain-spoken and clear-sighted in this blessed twentieth century of ours. And the younger we are the plainer we see things, and the more inclined we are to call the spade the spade, without adding any qualifying epithets. Those come later, when we're not so almighty sure that we're the only clear-sighted and knowing ones of the show. But I take you there about Cotswold and Mary. You think

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