

# High Quality has distinguished "SALADA" T.E.A.

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## The Countess of Landon.

### CHAPTER I.

"Wait a moment! I don't want to spoil sport. I'll have a bout with you!" and he took off his coat in a leisurely way.

The girl had stood looking from one to the other silently, almost indifferently, observant of all that was going on; but at this point an instantaneous change came over her face, and almost unconsciously her hand clasped the young man's arm.

He looked down at the hand as it lay, brown as a Hindoo's, but small and shapely, on the white shirt-sleeve, and then at her face.

"Hello!" he said, banteringly, and with some surprise, for the face was full of fear and anxiety. For the first time he noted its beauty. "Well," he asked, "what's the matter?"

Her lips quivered, and all unconscious of the admiration in his eyes, she said in a low voice:

"Don't go. He is strong, and—when he's like this. Don't go!"

"It's all right," he replied. "Don't you be afraid; he won't hurt me."

She said no more, but took her hand away swiftly and drew back; but only a few yards.

Having finished his peeling leisurely, the crowd made a lane for him, and he sprang upon the platform. As the two men faced each other, a murmur of admiration and satisfaction rose from the crowd.

They were two splendid specimens of humanity—one huge, muscular as a bull, the other slim, supple as a tiger, and yet with the firm, wiry muscles of the trained athlete. Beside the tremendous bulk of the professional, the young man looked rather spare and slight, and Long Bill eyed him up and down with what was meant for a supercilious stare.

As they stood regarding each other, Uncle Jake limped up to the girl, whose large eyes, dilated, were fixed on the two.

"Who's that?" he asked, sharply. "It's a gentleman, ain't it? Who is he?"

The girl, without removing her gaze, shook her head and drew away from him.

The eyes of the two men suddenly grew sharp and intent; they approached each other, shook hands, stood chest to chest, then got hold, and the struggle began. The crowd, increasing every moment, pressed close to the platform and watched with intense interest. In less than a minute it was seen that the young man who had dared the champion of the district knew the rules of the game, and that Long Bill had not got a "soft thing." They gripped each other, swayed, pressed and jugged, the muscles standing out on their arms like strained steel. One moment it seemed as if the younger man's back must yield or be broken; the next he recovered his strength and was driving his antagonist almost double. Then suddenly, while the victory hung on the balance, the young man was seen to raise his shoulder and move his

leg, and the huge form of Long Bill went down upon the platform with a wave of his hand.

Long Bill rose to his feet, dazed and staggering; then, when he could see distinctly enough to recognize his opponent, he lurched forward with a savage oath.

The young man caught his arms. "No, no," he said. "Enough is as good as a feast. Don't be greedy. Some other day. Keep your temper, man. Here, shake hands!" and he held out a strong but well-formed hand.

But Long Bill had lost his temper beyond retrieval, and would have struck the hand aside if it had not been quickly withdrawn.

"Shame! shame!" shouted the crowd.

"Oh, never mind," said the young man. "He isn't quite himself yet, and he doesn't mean it;" and with a laugh and pleasant nod, he leaped from the platform. He was surrounded instantly by an admiring throng eager to speak with and, if possible, touch the youngster who, though a gentleman, had managed to "down" the champion.

**CHAPTER II.**

"Hold on!" he said, good-humoredly. "Get your breath, man. You've been at it before, and I'm fresh. Hero!" he turned to the crowd—"give him a glass of beer." Two or three stone bottles were swiftly held up; he took one and tossed it to the giant.

"Take a good drink," he said. Long Bill got up and looked round with an air of surprise which provoked a loud burst of laughter from the spectators. It seemed toadden him, and he made a kind of rush at his opponent, but the young man stepped aside and caught his arm.

"Hold on!" he said, good-humoredly. "Get your breath, man. You've been at it before, and I'm fresh. Hero!" he turned to the crowd—"give him a glass of beer." Two or three stone bottles were swiftly held up; he took one and tossed it to the giant.

"All right," he said, "it's my turn now," he said, between his teeth.

"All right," responded the young fellow, pleasantly; and they gripped hard again.

Long Bill went to work, more carefully this time, and it looked as if he meant to crush the life out of his foe and throw him afterward. But the young man kept his ground though his face grew pale and he breathed hard. Once his foot slipped, and a kind of gasp rose from the crowd, breathless with excitement; but he recovered himself instantly and stood as before, firm as a rock.

"Bill's got 'em now," said a voice. The young girl heard it, and a shudder ran through her, and she looked aside; but, as if fascinated, her eyes returned to the combatants, and she watched with heavy bosom and tightly clinched hands.

It looked as if the day must be with the giant—as if it were impossible that the young man could hold out much longer; but presently the more knowing ones of the spectators saw that he was saving himself, and waiting for the critical moment in which to exert his reserve forces.

It came, as all such movements come, and with a sudden gathering together of his muscles, a swift movement of his whole body, as it seemed, he flung the giant, using his own knee as the lever—and literally flung him up and down with what was meant for a supercilious stare.

As they stood regarding each other, Uncle Jake limped up to the girl, whose large eyes, dilated, were fixed on the two.

"Who's that?" he asked, sharply. "It's a gentleman, ain't it? Who is he?"

The girl, without removing her gaze, shook her head and drew away from him.

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"Shame! shame!" shouted the crowd.

"Oh, never mind," said the young man. "He isn't quite himself yet, and he doesn't mean it;" and with a laugh and pleasant nod, he leaped from the platform. He was surrounded instantly by an admiring throng eager to speak with and, if possible, touch the youngster who, though a gentleman, had managed to "down" the champion.

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