

# DAVID KENDALL'S HOLIDAY

How a Girl Made an Unexpected Ending to His Vacation

By MILDRED A. BOTSFORD

THE little town of Guilford, in Kent, is probably the last place that was ever made. At least David Kendall thought so, and for that very reason he selected it on the map as his summer resort while yet the trees were bare and icy blasts raged around his club in St. James' Street. Months ahead he engaged the best room to be had at the White Rabbit, the one and only hostelry Guilford can boast of, with the intention of going there as soon as the first spring days arrived. But unforeseen business transactions kept Mr. Kendall, very impatient and altogether testy, in the city through April, through May, through June; and it was the first of July when he alighted from the railway train at Saybrook and hired a trap to drive over the hills to Guilford.

It was a good hour's ride through country unusually dry, so that when Mr. Kendall reached the village he was a sight to behold. The dust had sifted through his travelling coat on the dark suit beneath. His shoes were literally powdered, and his collar looked dejected. As the trap bowled down the green and drew up before the White Rabbit it must be admitted that the new-comer did not present a very prepossessing appearance.

After paying the driver he sauntered up the box-bordered path and lifted the huge brass knocker, letting it fall with a thud that resounded through the quiet house. Then he waited.

In a few minutes the door was opened, and he stood confronting a good-natured looking woman, short and stout. She manifested considerable surprise at sight of the stranger.

"Good afternoon. You were expecting me, were you not?" he asked.

"I was only expecting a Mr. Kendall from London," she replied, with some hesitation.

Kendall gave vent to a hearty laugh.

"I should not blame you if you had taken me for a stranded motorist or even a disguised house thief! But is my room ready? I am really Mr. Kendall, you know."

"Yes, indeed sir," answered the woman, now at her ease, "come with me." And she led the way upstairs to the best front chamber. When she had closed the door and departed, her guest proceeded to remove the stains of travel, after which he surveyed his surroundings with a critical eye. Everything was immaculate from white bed-spread to ruffled muslin curtains, and Kendall felt he had found the place at last.

"Well, it's about time," he muttered, looking out across the lawn. "I've spent five summers searching for a quiet place where I can rest, and sketch, and do as I please; but wherever I go, I encounter those confounded American tourists. This place, though, is so little and unheard of I feel safe from them here," he congratulated himself.

When Kendall descended the broad hall stairs one would scarcely have recognized in this tall, good-looking, correctly-garbed gentleman the dust-be-smearing traveler who had lately arrived. Ever since the inheritance of a fortune from a bachelor uncle he had been something of a society idol. Fond mammas sought him as a son-in-law, representatives of charitable institutions sought him as a benefactor, scheming speculators sought him as an investor, and it was but natural that with all this bowing and scraping the young man should assume a bored-to-death expression and wear the airs of a conqueror. In winter his occupation was managing his estates, and attending numerous social functions where he dutifully passed tea and cakes to lovely painted ladies in satin gowns. In summer his occupation was escaping from those same painted ladies as well as every other feminine member of society, and following his whims which generally led in the direction of art.

Leisurely now he traversed the veranda and ambled across the lawn. On a grassy knoll he paused and took his first good view of the White Rabbit. It was a typical English inn of weathered shingles topped by a low red-tiled roof. Only here and there, however, were the shingles and tiles visible, for the entire structure was well-nigh covered with a thick mass of ivy and creepers.

Behind the inn stretched rolling meadows and daisy fields in full bloom. On one side extended a strip of woodland beyond which, so Kendall had been told, lay a beautiful sheet of water, and further beyond that ran the old post road to London. It was in reality a delightful spot, he told himself. Comfortable lodgings, quiet sleepy town, picturesque scenery, adjacent lake, and best of all, no women; at least, he had observed none save the landlady and one solitary maid.

"It's the first time," he remarked with evident relief, "that I've ever been in a place half an hour without setting eyes on some demurely coquettish individual who appeared frightened to death at sight of a man, though I knew all along that was what she wanted!"

Kendall waited with inward fear and trembling until the dinner-hour that evening. He was still in terror lest he be surrounded by a swarm of Americans with their ubiquitous guide-books. But as he took his seat at the table he noted with astonishment that there were no other covers laid.

"Well, this is an extraordinary kind of inn," was his mental comment. "One forlorn lodger will have a highly exciting time here, no doubt! I hoped there was some other chap to break the monotony once in a while, but the place is too far from civilization and too plain to be popular, I suppose. What a pity, after the landlady has gone to the trouble of naming

it the White Rabbit, and having a brass knocker, and other alluring bait for Yankee fish. They don't seem to have nipped it yet. "Anyway," he chuckled, "I wager it's good for one season of quiet, undisturbed by your everlasting peaches and cream summer girl."

The following day Kendall's luggage arrived; the next he was busy getting settled in his new quarters; but the third afternoon saw him seated on the ground beneath an old oak, busily occupied with brush and canvas. He was trying to reproduce a bit of woods with a gnarled hemlock in the foreground. But it was dreamy and hot that afternoon. Kendall did not feel like working. He leaned back against the oak, idly toying with the grass and leaves about him.

All at once his fingers touched something hard, something that was not a last year's acorn. The young man, all attention now, sat up and examined the little object. It was a semi-precious stone, evidently a lapis lazuli, and must have been set in a ring.

"I wonder," he mused curiously, "who its owner was, and how long it has been lying buried among the leaves."

Just then a ray from the setting sun flashed in his face, reminding him of his neglected landscape; whereupon the little blue stone was deposited in the depths of its finder's pocket, there to repose unthought of for many a day.

Kendall liked his new surroundings—there was no denying that fact. The long listless days offered plenty of time for sketching delightful bits of scenery, for enjoying a favorite book while stretched at full length on the sward, or for taking long cross-country tramps and "reconnoitring expeditions," as he called them. These last proved his chief amusement.

Early one fine morning when he had sojourned about a week at the inn he set out on a jaunt through fields and over low-browed hills. The glorious air, the dewy fragrance of the grass made him feel like a light-hearted boy once more. He leaped the first hedge that obstructed his path. Then, remembering himself, he turned sheepishly to see if any one was looking. No one was. The coast lay clear ahead and Kendall, plunging both hands in his pockets and pulling his hat down to shade his eyes, tramped on and on, and almost directly into somebody in white.

She had stooped to pick some flowers, but she straightened up as he brushed against her. Instantly Kendall's hat was in his hand.

"I beg your pardon," he said gravely. "Like an idiot I didn't look where I was going."

"Rather unconventional meeting, wasn't it?" she smiled. "But I'll not take advantage of it; you may proceed in your reckless course unmolested, sir." And turning round she began picking flowers again. Evidently she considered the incident closed.

Now, Kendall would really have liked to stop and chat awhile, despite his avowed dislike of the gentler sex, but what could he do? There was nothing left but to bow a polite "Good morning," and continue his promenade.

He had caught a glimpse of two wicked-looking eyes, some dimples, and a huge bouquet of field-daisies the girl carried in her arms. It was just enough to excite his interest. Recalling it later in the solitude of his own room, he thought the picture offered a refreshing contrast to delicate, languishing ladies in the usual setting of white and gold drawing-rooms.

"I suppose she's some dairymaid, though," he concluded, and let the matter drop.

Another long lazy week dragged by, and then Kendall sallied forth in the cool of the evening to post a letter in the village. The way was usually deserted except for an occasional farm-boy returning from the fields; but this time he saw a woman coming down the road some distance ahead. He thought he recognized a certain coil of dark hair, and sure enough—as she approached he beheld the dairymaid of the daisy-field.

She walked slowly, her eyes bent on the letter she was reading, and Kendall passed her unobserved. He noted, however, that she wore a cluster of daisies in her belt.

"So she lives down our way," he commented to himself. "Well, she ought to be home churning butter instead of reading love-letters from the village swains."

For the next few days, Kendall was occupied with business in the city and when he returned the affair of the dairymaid was entirely forgotten. He only knew that the rural freedom and freshness was thrice welcome after the oppressive heat of London. At the time of his arrival clouds hung low and threatening over the Kentish hills, and the young man observed the sky with something akin to glee.

"Just the day for fishing! If there's a solitary trout in that pond he's a 'goner' for sure, this time," he declared in the American slang learned on previous vacations.

The obliging landlady was taken into confidence and soon despatched a small boy to dig worms for bait. Ere long a trampy-looking individual garbed in a raincoat and carrying some baskets slung over one shoulder and a fish-pole balanced on the other emerged from the White Rabbit and disappeared in the woods. A few minutes later a boat pushed off shore and Kendall began operations.

Rowing to a sheltered end of the lake he finally anchored near a tiny strip of land that jutted out thicket-covered, and here casting his line, the prospective fisherman waited. A half-hour passed. Not a bite. Another half-hour passed. Only a dainty nibble; then the inquiring fish took fright and darted away. Kendall was on the point of pulling in his line

to try a more favorable spot when somewhere behind the little peninsula he heard a woman's voice singing softly.

He put down his pole and listened. The only words he could catch now and then sounded like "Boola, boola."

"Whatever can it be?" he queried. "Chinese? Hindu?"

To put the question beyond all doubt he weighed anchor and rowed round the point of land. There to his amazement, seated in a boat and enjoying the same pastime as himself, was the dairymaid.

She was leaning forward intent on the cork which bobbed up and down with the ripples. Hearing the dip of Kendall's oars she looked up to find him scrutinizing her attentively.

"Do you prefer a profile or full view?" she demanded playfully. He was non-committal.

"You look very comfortable as you are." Then with a sportsman's disregard of formalities:

"Had any luck?"

"No, only a nibble or two."

"Neither have I. Was just about to give up, but maybe I'll have better success here." And he re-cast his line.

The girl bent over her pole once more and Kendall forgot his fishing to watch her face. After a long interval of silence he began:

"I hope you didn't mind my intrusion. I heard a voice in this desolate spot, and I wanted to know the owner of that voice if I might have the good fortune. My name is Kendall—David Kendall of London—"

Here she held out a warning hand.

"Sh. He's wondering whether to bite or not!"

There was a very perceptible tug on the cork, and the young woman, quick as a flash, swung the line aloft disclosing a good-sized trout floundering about and flapping water on its captor.

"My word, you must have charmed him, Circe!" cried Kendall with admiration.

The girl caught the fish in her hand.

"It isn't hurt, thank goodness!" she replied; and unfastening the hook from its gills she slipped it into the lake.

"I hate to see them struggle so," she explained.

"It was a fine one, though," deplored Kendall. "It must have been the one that bit on my hook just now."

"Oh, no."

"Why not?"

"The one you NEARLY caught was ever so much larger than this, you know," she bantered.

Kendall laughed.

"Going to try for another?"

She glanced at the clouds.

"No, I think I'll go back now. Look, we're going to have a rousing thunder-storm directly."

They rowed ashore, and as Kendall helped her beach her boat he felt a raindrop on his cheek.

"Come, we must hurry!"

"We must hurry?"

"Yes. Here, take my rubber coat."

"No." She pushed him away laughing nervously.

"I'm going to the—I'm going to run home—alone, and I want you to stay here till I've been gone five minutes."

"Why?"

"Because I ask it."

"Well then, good-bye, Circe," offering his hand.

She would not take it, though she smiled.

"Good-bye, Mr. David Kendall—of London!" she called over her shoulder as she darted from him and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

True to his word, the young man remained standing where she had left him with the rain pelting him in the face, while his watch ticked out five minutes. Then turning up his coat-collar, he strode toward the inn.

"Queer," he reflected, "why she doesn't want me to know where she lives. Oh, well, what's the odds? I may not see her again anyway."

The next fine afternoon Kendall strolled into the garden with apparently no object but to while away the hours. He had been sketching all morning, and wanted a little recreation. Also he wanted a little companionship, though he did not know it.

There must have been some magnetism in the woods which turned his steps that direction, for before he realized it he had reached the waterside. Not unnaturally his thoughts wandered to that previous day and he explored the shore with a secret desire—which he tried to suppress—that the adventure might be repeated. But the spot was quite deserted and Kendall, not being in the mood to enjoy a solitary row, turned back through the woods.

He stopped to listen to the sweet, clear notes of a thrush in the branches above, and another bird lover stopped to listen at the same time. She did not see Kendall until too late to retreat. Her first impulse was to dodge behind some bushes and in doing so she collided with a clump of dead, dry underbrush. The rattling of the twigs made Kendall look around.

"Good-morrow, Lady Circe," he hailed, hastening to assist her extricate herself from the brambles. Without giving her time to reply he continued:

"Why were you hiding from me just now?"

"Perhaps I wasn't."

"I'm afraid you were. You are very unkind. Do you know, I was looking for you?"

"Really now?" with mock gravity. "What a compliment!"

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