

Illustrated
by T. V.
McCarthy



A Paris Incident

First Instalment of a Two-Part Serial

By FREDERICK GORDON HAWES

RAND KENDALL arrived in Paris, and alighted from a crowded train in the Gare d'Orleans. He climbed the stairs from the train shed to the station proper, and stood a moment to study the crowd, milling everywhere like ants, surging about like waves, bubbling and effervescing like water at the foot of some cascade.

There were young girls in chic costumes and smart hats, smiling as women smile when life is bright and promising; old people who trudged along with satisfied, deep, set expressions on their faces, as though age and weakness and dull, ordinary existence were something not to be argued or discussed, but passively endured; and now and then an officer or soldier flashed by in blue or khaki, French, American or British, highly at ease with realities, and quite aware of the honour, the dignity of the cloth, singularly free, too, from that solemn expression, so characteristic of those who formerly partook of the party or banquet, with their mind's eye set constantly on the distant but inevitable panorama of war.

It was a peaceful-looking crowd, not so much in regard to individual appearances or concerted activity as in its atmosphere of relief and repose, and satisfaction that the worst was over; quite different from the crowd that had met Kendall's gaze when he came to Paris on his first furlough nearly four years ago.

A taxicab rolled up to the curb. Kendall mumbled his destination and got into the machine. Over the Pont Royal, past the Comedie Francaise, and it slipped through a labyrinth of streets, across squares and finally whirled up in front of the porte-cochere of the Hotel Francaise.

He registered, passed through a lobby filled with various elements of society, consisting of representatives from every country merged into a lingering group stopping in Paris on sundry different missions.

His room was neatly furnished and comfortable. As he looked more closely at its various details of furnishing, its cream-coated walls, its old mahogany furniture, a candlestick or two on the deserted mantel, and the old-fashioned fireplace a vague inkling of a similar apartment trickled into his consciousness. On his first trip to Paris he had stopped at the Hotel Francaise. Gradually it dawned upon him that he was occupying the same room he had tentanted on a former occasion. And standing in the corner was the little table he had played cards on with Henri Gantier, a young French officer who was sharing his quarters. And there, too, he had written his first letter in French to a young lady, without the aid of a dictionary or book of idioms.

He opened the windows and stepped out on the balcony. Before him Paris stretched beneath the moonlit skies. A narrow street or two, dark masses of buildings, and the shadowy blotches of chimney-pots entered his vision. And scattered here and there his gaze caught traces of monumental pieces of architecture. Cowering under the moon, with its shadows and bizarre light effects, Paris appeals strongly to the imagination. And who would not people its historic scenes of history, romance and intrigue, with the old actors—villains and heroes—conjured up by fancy, who played the greater part of their desperate roles in this city of mystery! Kendall was thinking of the past in a dull mood of melancholy. But there was something, or at least someone else in his thoughts besides Paris.

How his life had grown since he last stood there and viewed the city! And the growth was of depth, and beauty and strength—not of years! Kendall was young four years ago, and now he is wise and grave and old. Old—but his head of dark hair shows not a sign of gray! His eyes—ah, that's another matter.

He possessed light blue eyes, with every trace of having looked on long hours of anguish and sorrow. How many people have looked into those eyes and dreamed of that remote stare that seemed to be

always looking backwards over the barren, shell-torn ground of the past.

Kendall went into war with the first Canadian contingent. His first hours in the trenches were spent in the neighbourhood of Armentaires. Right from the start he had a passion for doing brave stunts—reckless displays of bravado, some of them, but men looked on and wondered and admired. They learned to love him, and said so in terms that left no doubt about how they felt. "Kendall!—We'd go to hell for him!"

And then came Ypres. There is a wood not far from the town of St. Julien in that neighbourhood, and many a hot scrap took place there in the course of the great battle. Kendall fought well in that hole—so well that they made him a captain for it later. Festubert and Gavenny, and then the Royal Flying Corps, that was Kendall's record of service. In the last he won a V.C. and several other decorations. Men have been heard to say that he hung over his old regiment as an air scout whenever the opportunity offered to get trace of them. Many a German attack he broke with his rattling machine gun fire. The men would look up from the trenches and watch the flash of his machine in the sunlight. Admiration welled in their hearts, pressing thought into speech. "Good old scout!" they would mutter; "Good old scout!"

For a long time he stood on the balcony there, and the light of the moon fell on his face, and showed it up, youthful yet lined, and set coldly white like a death mask, and brought out vaguely the worried, troubled look in his eyes, such as shows in the eyes of men who are looking for the last time on a favourite scene of pleasure. Only much more sorrowful was the look in Kendall's eyes, and ever so much deeper.

Many women had admired Rand Kendall at London and Paris. None of them could resist his gallantry when he chose to be gallant. But that was on rare occasions, for he seldom trifled with women's hearts. However, his manner of dealing with women



Splendidly he made love to Fay—after the grand romantic manner.

was decidedly a deferential one, and quite a few of them mistook a developed masculine etiquette for a display of interest, and accepted with delight his polite graces as more familiar attentions.

Handsome men are always dangerous, even when they don't possess a record of glorious achievement, but when bravery and gallantry on blood-sodden fields of death are added to a splendid presence and a pleasing personality the effect in a drawing-room is indescribable, and women wonder and grow dissatisfied with themselves, compliment lavishly and lionize prettily after their own fashion, and then go away quietly and try to forget.

In London there were Peggy Wade, the young actress, who wrote him letters and sent comfort boxes and packages of all kinds; Rene De Vere, daughter of

a high Government official; Jean Andree, a debonaire little secretary, and Dorothy Burton, a little artist's model, who was herself studying art, and who sent him numerous letters, sketches and delightfully pencilled drawings.

"You will soon forget," he told them, "with your ephemeral loves." And he would laugh and say that love such as theirs was a disease—usual with gay butterflies that die after a summer of gladness, moths that fall in love with the light of candles, and strange little wildflowers that bloom during an hour of sunshine and then wither in the shadows. And then he would laughingly chide them for taking an interest in himself. Unable to solve the brilliant mystery of his emotions, they would linger a while, and then gradually go away.

To the women he met in Paris, such as Andree Dusquet, Charlotte Betheau, and a host of others, he was somewhat more frank and outspoken.

"I don't intend to marry," he said. "I haven't met any of you that I like."

"But maybe—"

"No. I am sorry. Never!"

And they too, went away, some of them smiling and loving with the same light-hearted fancy, this dashing Canadian, hoping that at some future date he might relent. And others did not smile. Theirs was the love that lies slightly beneath the surface. Yet most of them in time found solace in other things, and Randall became merely a memory—a delicious bit of retrospection, and his words and his acts were like the phantoms of a dream that had passed away.

NOT so with Fay Berceol! Like Bayard and the knights of old, he had come from battle gallant, romantic, stalwart, brave and handsome, and she happened into his life. Out of the trenches Randall had come and accidentally chanced upon her. Splendidly he made love to Fay by a reed-grown moat and in the shadow of ancient trees—after the grand, romantic manner.

Days of sunshine and love in the little thatched village, with its square-towered church and shining river, its hedges and fields and parks, where their hearts nestled together, and an exquisite, vague unreality wove itself over their very existence, and everything was forgotten except their own sweet selves.

When his furlough was ended, came the parting.

Her dim, regular little face nestled against his breast; her hair a light colour, like straw-coloured early autumn grass, streamed over her shoulders unbound, eyes like the light green of shallow seas—Fay was beautiful, entrancingly beautiful, and innocently unconscious of the immense effect she created.

There might have been a trace of how Randall felt if the expression of his face had been closely studied. At a glance no emotion was apparent.

And Fay, knowing how generous she had given of her love, looked up into his face, and in her eyes was the light of a whole-souled woman—giving, sympathetic and just. Randall kissed her once, and happy in her own way—a quiet, undemonstrative manner—she smiled, and her lids dropped slowly on the watery pools her eyes became.

Even on the stage, actor and actress are thrilled when the touching moment of a big love scene is reached. It is the climax of the audience's desire. And how passionately it is played out!

Out on the shadow-dappled roadway, with the old trees whispering overhead, there were no spectators. But surely the birds must have sung the merrier, and the flowers by the roadway must have bloomed brighter for witnessing the emotions that swept over Randall. Fay had suddenly taken on, in his mind's eye, a wonderful aspect. She was something to be admired, loved, adored, nay, cherished, and he felt towards her as he had never felt towards a woman before. He kissed her, and when their lips met there was a half-smothered whisper:—

"Dear heart! Dear heart!"

Standing on the balcony, dreaming his listless dreams,

he was thinking of a ruined village, a steel-battered moat, where the reeds had grown, now covered with clay, and gaunt spectres of gnarled and broken trees where the leafy old trees had been.

Peace had come! But to some hearts it meant little of calm and repose. For there are things that the heart and the mind can never forget. Rand Kendall had visited the village. True to his promise, he had come back. But the soul of the village was gone, and the sunshine beat in upon the ruins of the things that were! No birds sang, no flowers bloomed, and the fields were scathed and torn, with wild poppies revelling among the ruins, sweeping over the fields in a glorious effulgence of colour that served as a background for the white-gray crosses—and the memories of (Continued on page 44)