

Till Hell Freeze Ovaire

By STEPHEN GAILLARD

Illustrated by Henry Thiede



"SIEU desires that I should tell him the story, yes? Ah, no, no, M'sieu, I am the poor raconteur—the very poor story teller, that is. Besides, M'sieu will pardon me, I am sure—but I have not the time. As M'sieu sees I am in the full regimental—all dressed up," as M'sieu's noble countrymen, the Yankees, say, "and no place to go." Only I have the place to go; indeed yes. My dear friend, the Capitaine Bertrand, he is—

Tell M'sieu how I won the medaille militaire? Ah, it is nothing to tell, nothing—the pit of hell for the half hour, the hospital for the two months, that is all. And my friend, the Capitaine Bertrand, this is his wedding day, as M'sieu may have heard, and I am his best man, which M'sieu doubtless have not heard; therefore M'sieu will surely pardon me that I am in haste; yes?

Who is the Capitaine Bertrand? What! Does M'sieu not know? Ah, I am indeed surprised; I am indeed astonished! As well should M'sieu ask, who is Joffre, who is Nivelle, as who is Bertrand. I had indeed thought there was in France no small child even that had not heard of "Till-Hell-Freeze-Ovaire" Bertrand. What? M'sieu has but just arrived in Paris, and has been but two days in France? Ah, then, I can understand his ignorance, and as M'sieu is an American, and as the Capitaine Bertrand is his countryman, and as there is yet a little time before I must leave for the wedding, I will tell him the story of the Capitaine Bertrand; and with the more pleasure that we hold M'sieu's noble country in the high esteem, we French.

Well, then, as I have already told M'sieu, Jack Bertrand is an American, one of the many of his countrymen who have come to fight for France. How he got into the Chasseurs Alpin I know not; but what I do know is that he won his commission as sous lieutenant for the gallantry in action. It is not long after that I met him. I have known him in Paris before the war, when I was superintendent of the *Telegraph du Nord*; and I am delighted to meet him again, for, M'sieu, to know that insouciant daredevil, Jack Bertrand, it is to love him.

I am on the staff of the general of the division, Armand de Villehardouin, at the time; and after I have embraced the dear Jack Bertrand and tell him the brave fellow he is, I have him to my quarters to dine with me. It is then that I learn that the dear friend is not happy. Can M'sieu believe it, that in spite of his promotion from the ranks for gallantry, in spite that the General Nivelle have embraced him and call him comrade, in spite that his name have appear in the general order, the dear Jack Bertrand is not happy. I am surprised; I am also feel a little hurt that the dear friend he care not for the so grand honor. I ask why it is to him that the honor, the glory, it is as nothing; and he say to me with a sigh: "Ah, Rene, mon ami, I am in love." Then I understand, then I smile, then I laugh, then I say: "Is it possible, mon ami, that the fair one she is cruel? That she is disdain? Ah, I cannot believe it."

But he say: "Oh, she is all right; she is the sweetest girl in France, and she loves me; but her father, he is the devil, proud as Lucifer."

"Ah, la, la! It is the pere," I say, "and if it is not too indiscreet, may I know who the fair one is, mon ami?"

Then the mad fellow he tell me. Ah, M'sieu would never guess to whom it is that the audacious fellow his eyes have uplift; indeed, no. It is to the beautiful Helene, the daughter of the General Armand de Villehardouin—no less. And the

pere—proud as Lucifer is not too much to say of him; no, no. He is the loyal soldier of the republic, he fight like the lion for France, yes; but his family, it is of the grande noblesse since Hugh Capet is Comptes de Paris.

He—the dear Jack Bertrand, that is—have met the beautiful Helene in Paris when he have been on the furlough; and they, the pauvre enfans, have proceed immediate to fall in love—she the only child of the General de Villehardouin, the daughter of a thousand years of the grand noblesse; he the sergeant in the Chasseurs Alpin. Ah, la, la! such folly, such midsummer madness did M'sieu

Well, he leave me after the dinner to go to his post in the first line, and I feel very sad for the dear mad fellow, very sad. And I think what he say, that he will "win the old boy over"—think, M'sieu, the audacious, what you call him, scapegrace, calling the General de Villehardouin the old boy—I think what he say and I think how gallant, how determine he look when he say it, and in the heart I think that maybe he will do it. Have he not already won his way from the rank? Is he not the sous lieutenant for the gallantry?

It is long after, two months, maybe, but I have not forget; no, I think often

grand assault, and our first line it is overwhelm. Not without the desperate fight, no; but our brave polius, they are as the one to ten; the odds they are too much even for them. To our general it seem that our second line, it will go, too; the third, even. I am with him, and his face it set hard, it is gray in the light of the star bombs that the Boches are sending up over the line to light their way. Ah, it is terrible for his pride to be taken thus by surprise.

"Rene, my friend," he say to me as we arrive at the second line, "it is here that we will die." And ah, M'sieu, his face, it is grim as he say it.

It is at that moment that the machine gun, the solitaire machine gun, begin to speak out of the stillness that is so uncannee in that hell that is the battle front. At the first I think it is only some hero that still fight on though death it is certain; and then, M'sieu! Then it suddenly occur to me that there is something, what you call peculiar in the way that machine gun fire; something familiar, something that remind me of the old of the *Telegraph du Nord*. I listen, I reflect, and then, then I understand. It is the message, the telegraph, only the machine gun it is the instrument. I am astound, I am excite, I tremble with the

And the message come back again: "Rene, my friend, it is I, Jack Bertrand. Tell the general we will hold out till the hell it freeze ovaire!"

I laugh, I shed the tear, I am with the joy so overwhelm. It is so like the dear, brave, mad, insouciant Jack Bertrand, this message that he send.

Well, M'sieu, hardly have I the time to tell the general, what the daredevil, Jack Bertrand, he say, when the artillery of the Boches it begin again. It is like the several volcanoes erupting at the same time. They establish the barrage to prevent the counter attack that they think will come; our second line it is like the, what you call, inferno. But upon Troisvilles in particular they hurl the hell fire. For M'sieu will understand that from the Troisvilles what have been our first line it is, what you call, enfile, to the right and to the left; so that if they win not the Troisvilles all their bravery, all their loss—and it will be frightful, as we learn after—it will be as nothing. For when the counter attack shall come there will be the hole made already in the new line they have establish where our first line it have been.

And the counter attack it come. Indeed, yes, M'sieu! Summon by the field telephone, the reserves they pour upon the second line—now the first. In the automobile, in the lorree—the motor truck, in the ambulance they come, anything to get there. They come to the music of our artillery, hurling the three shell for the Boches' two, for all their industry. They come to the music of the guns of the Troisvilles still answering the Boches' fire—"till hell freeze ovaire."

I am with the general when the counter attack it is prepare. His face it is white, and very, very grim; and from time to time he pause to listen—to listen to the artillery of ours and the Boches talking to each other, to listen to the guns of the Troisvilles, still hurling defiance at the foe. Once he say to me: "Rene, did you say it is the Lieutenant Bertrand that send the message?"

"Yes, general."

He smile—the first time that night—a grim smile, and he say:

"It is the gallant soldier, Rene."

That is all, M'sieu, but, ah, it is much when General Armand de Villehardouin say it.

It is half the hour to the dawn when, after the artillery have hurl the last terrific hurricane of death upon the Boches, that the rockets give the signal for our brave polius to go forward. The moon it have risen at midnight, and it is still high in the heaven, and by its light and the light of the star bombs our polius climb out of the trenches. Like lions let loose they go. M'sieu, yet with the order, the sang-froid, the what you call, bulldog determination, that makes the polius the terrible soldier that he is.

I have implore the general that I be permit to go with the unit that will bring rescue to the Troisvilles, and he have say:

"Go, Rene, go; the dear friend, Lieutenant Bertrand, he is worthy the attention at your hands."

And so, although I go to the pit of hell, M'sieu, I go with the laugh on my lips, the joy in my heart.

Ah, it is the grand fait d'armes, M'sieu, that attack. We sweep the Boches from the trenches they have won, we send them back again where they have come from; only there are so many, so pitifully many, that go not back again. Ah, war is the terrible thing, and it sick on the heart in me, to see so many gallant fellows lying dead. I hate not the foe, M'sieu, and, par le Bon Dieu! I think I fight not the worse for it.

It is dawn when we enter Troisvilles, and there I see the dear, mad, glorious Jack Bertrand. His head it is bandage and the blood it have trickle down his cheek, and his arm it is in the sling, but for all that he smile when he see me, and he have say:

"It is good you have come, Rene, my friend, for hell it is almost froze."

And so, M'sieu, today is the dear friend's wedding day, and the general, Armand de Villehardouin, will give the bride away; for it is the beautiful Helene, no other, and I am the groomsmen. Therefore, M'sieu, will pardon me if I take the leave of him, for the automobile it have wait already ten minutes by the watch. Au revoir, M'sieu, but not, I hope, "till hell freeze ovaire."

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"It is good you have come, Rene, my friend, for hell it is almost froze!"

ever hear? It is true that the Sergeant Bertrand—that is, he was then the Sergeant Bertrand—is rich, that he have the car, the automobile, the mansion that he have lease in the Rue de la Victoire; but for all that he is the sergeant in the Chasseurs Alpin, and she is the general's daughter.

"Have the dear friend mention the so grande passion to the pere—the general?" I ask.

"Indeed I have," he reply with the grin.

"And what did the general say?" I ask, hardly able to believe that my ears do not me deceive.

"What he say it is plenty," he reply: "It would fill the book, only the book would not be fit for the print."

"And what will the dear friend do?" I ask him.

"Do?" he say, and his jaw set like the bulldog, "why I will win the old boy over, of course; I will make him like it."

Ah, la, la! I ask M'sieu what could I, the friend, do with the so mad fellow?

of the dear friend and of the beautiful Helene. And then it is one night that it happen.

It is the night such as is sometimes in the winter, very cold, very clear, very still—still as it ever is in the hell that is the battle front—with the frost like the iron and the sky like the dome of blue steel set with diamonds, the stars. The sector held by the division of the General de Villehardouin is in the country of the hill, the mountain; the country where the one small post, the narrow pass, may become the key of the whole line, the Thermopylae of the moment, that is. All the day the artillery of the Boches it have pound the line with the hell fire, but as the sun go down it have cease. So it have been for the many days, and so for the many nights it have cease, and the attack—the grand assault of the infantry, it have not come. So it may be that the General de Villehardouin is too sure that this night also it will be as many other nights.

After sunset it is that it come, the

Then it is that the strange thing happen, the what you call unaccountable thing. There is the pause, the lull. The Boches, they come not on. And for the moment it is quiet, very quiet by the comparison with the uproar that have gone before. Only at the one point of the line—the first line—there is the rattle of the machine gun, the yelling of the Boches. It is far away, for there is here the bend of the line, the salient where is the redoubt of the Troisvilles.

The face of the general it light up as he hear it, and he say:

"Ah, Bon Dieu! the Troisvilles, it hold out. The Chasseurs Alpin are there, and, Pardieu! the few brave men they could hold it against the thousands."

But in a few moments the rattle of the machine guns, it cease, and the yelling of the Boches, it is quiet; so quiet it is that it is what you call uncannee. Then the general's face it grow dark again, and he say:

"Ah, Bon Dieu! the Troisvilles it have also fall."

eagerness; but I listen, M'sieu, I listen with all the ear, with all the brain.

You will doubt, M'sieu; you will not believe, but on the honor of Rene Drouet it is known to all France, the message that the machine gun send, and the message that is return, and the message that came again. It happen all in the very few moment, for the lull in the artillery fire it is very brief.

The message, it is from the Troisvilles; it still hold out; it have repulse the Boches; it appeal for help.

I tell the general, and his face again light up with the joy.

"Can you answer it?" he say.

"Pardieu! yes, with the machine gun in the trench yonder, if there is the time."

"Tell him," he say, "that help is coming. Ask him how long he can hold out."

I spring to the machine gun, pointing into the air I answer him, I send the message of the general, and I ask him: "In the name of the Bon Dieu! who are you?"

Cicily Sees Him Through

By GLADYS NELSON



CICILY rushed through the door marked "private." Her hat was in her hand; her coat half off. A minute later she was at her machine, typing rapidly. Then she stopped as suddenly as she started, looked out the window and waved mechanically to the man across the court.

She groaned to herself.

"Two years of the same nod and smile in the morning; the same ride home in the evening; the same talk of 'when I have perfected my feather-weight engine, dear— Everything the same!'"

"Why the fireworks?" a cool voice asked as the door banged to. "You came through the office so fast that there was an awful draft, and I caught cold."

"Oh, don't bother me," Cicily burst out. "I'm disgusted, discouraged, discontented, and every other 'dis' you can think of rolled up in one."

Jean Kennedy, the Old Man's private secretary, leaned against the high mahogany file case. Cicily looked at her. The neatly waved blond head seemed

twice as neat and twice as blond against the dark red-brown wood. The file case collar made a soft, white frame for the intelligent face, and the blue eyes grew dark and serious as they looked down at the girl.

"What's the matter, little Eva?" she asked softly. "Has some one taken Uncle Tom away from you?" She nodded toward the opposite window.

Cicily shook her head and caught her lower lip between her teeth.

"It isn't that, Jeanie," she murmured tearfully. "It's—er—that—that blame engine he's inventing. It's taken such an age—and it's made"—she paused and lowered her voice—"made him a slacker!"

The blond head bent closer.

"Tell me about it, honey."

"He was drafted, and the authorities exempted him!"

"Why?"

"I don't know!"

"What are you going to do?" the Old Man's secretary asked anxiously.

"Do?" Cicily asked. "Why, see him through, of course. We're engaged, you know."

Jean looked at her closely.

"Do you love him, Cicily?"

The blond head nodded.

"Certainly," she answered stoutly.

There was a second's silence, then Jean said quickly:

"Let me help you!"

Cicily turned and looked at the older girl.

"You mean it?" she murmured incredulously.

The clever blond head came close to the dark brown one.

"Leave it to me."

A week later no one would have known Cicily. The soft brown hair was waved immaculately and piled high above the shadowy gray eyes. There was a new \$60 blue serge suit that looked at least a hundred; a fluffy gray fox scarf that brought out the pink in her cheeks, and a little hat that fairly shouted, "Imported!"

The Big Ben expression was gone from her face, too. And a look of studied indifference added a certain Broadway high-light to her whole make-up.

"You've been great, Cis, dear," Jean told her the seventh day that they had been living together. "The way you have refused his invitations would do credit to a stage celebrity with at least sixty suitors."

Cicily straightened a huge corsage of orchids and lily of the valley.

"If he comes tonight while I'm gone, be nice to him, won't you, Jean?" was all the young girl said as she turned from the glass.

The next morning she forgot to wave.

Jimmy Dale didn't seem to be working. He didn't bend eagerly over the big plan sheet, or turn to fast different parts

of the little engine. He sat glancing through a worn trade magazine, or looking at a neat brown head that was bent intently over a typewriter.

"I don't blame her," he was saying over and over again. "I was a fool to think she cared so much. And Perry Vincent is a regular chap—yes, Perry's there!"

Then he thought of the young fellow, who had been constantly at Cicily's side for the last few days. He had made a wonderful record in France. A hundred and thirty-six German planes in a year, and a commission to teach the American boys to fly after the French fashion! Some record! No wonder she couldn't see anyone else!

And the next day an eager young face was pressed close against the window a number of times. The gray eyes were troubled.

"He's gone, Jean," she said softly.

"He's gone now," she said quietly.

A month passed. There wasn't much pink in the little face above the fluffy gray fox now. And the office across the way was still vacant.

Jean grew worried.

"You love Perry so much, Cicily?"

"Yes," she admitted. "He means everything to me, but I can't marry him—it doesn't seem like the square thing."

Jean looked bewildered.

"The square thing?" she repeated.

The girl nodded.

"With Jimmy heaven knows where—dying of a broken heart."

"Oh!" And the blond head dropped forward a little and hid the face of the Old Man's clever secretary.

The girl went on slowly:

"He's going back to France, Jean—unless I marry him tomorrow!" There was a little sob, and the gray eyes grew tragic. "I can't give him up, but I can't do something that doesn't seem right—can I?"

The phone rang, and Jean answered it.

"For you," she said quietly.

"Jimmy Dale!" she exclaimed.

"Where have you been?"

There was a pause, then she continued breathlessly:

"I can't see you now—Jean and I are dressing for the dinner the Country Club is giving for Perry Vincent. I'll see you tomorrow, though."

"He's back!" she exclaimed as she turned from the phone.

Jean nodded. She didn't seem surprised.

An hour later Cicily and Perry were standing in a shaded corner of the conservatory. Her eyes seemed more shadowy than ever as they looked up at him.

Her pink and silver lace dress made her look like a freshly picked sweet pea. He wore the uniform of a French aviator.

He handed her a little white box. She opened it eagerly.

"My engagement ring, and my wedding ring!" she exclaimed incredulously.

"But, Perry, dear, I can't take either of them."

"Then I will ask to be sent back to France," he said quickly as he thrust them into his pocket and turned away.

"Yes, that is the best way," said Cicily in a small voice of utter woe.

They hadn't noticed the couple across the room until now.

"By Jove, that's Jimmy Dale!" Perry exclaimed.

"And Jean!" Cicily added.

"The government has just accepted his airplane engine," he went on enthusiastically.

"And he is kissing her!" she exclaimed in a surprised way, then she laughed happily and looked at Perry in a way that made him swear that his dreams had been holding out on him.

His arms were around her and a diamond ring was slipped on her left hand before she could speak.

"And you will marry me tomorrow?" he continued impetuously.

She looked up at him.

"You bet I will, Perry, darling," she said softly, then added under her breath as she looked at Jimmy and Jean, "I'd say that Cicily had seen you through!"

Perry looked at her.

"Did you say something, dear?"

She grinned, and the little face came closer and closer. She nodded and murmured in a funny voice:

"Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful world!"

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