



# *La Tendresse*



*Acclaim for the first novel by Ken Strauss MD*

"A book all doctors should read."

Dr William Kettle, Editor, American College of Physicians

"Rarely have I been touched so deeply by fictional characters."

Dr Saul Kaplan, surgeon, Baltimore, USA

"The unnamed contemporary narrator has just bought and begun to renovate a château on the French–Belgian border. He uncovers a diary hidden behind a high chimney wall. The diary was written by an English surgeon whose life, loves, and losses spanned the first half of the 20th century, and whose destiny it was to serve in both world wars. The château was used as a British field hospital where the surgeon worked during the autumn of 1917 and then later became his home and refuge during the interwar period . . .

"Only a minimum suspension of disbelief is required to accept the notion that the diary is also an epistolary record (the surgeon kept carbon copies of important letters tucked into its leaves), a medical analysis of war surgery circa 1915–18, a notebook of children's stories (some by the surgeons, some by others), and a collection of poems (again some by the surgeon, some by others). Without much ceremony, the reader is invited into this oscillating jumble of text to witness the intimate thoughts of a young man who is learning to love women and the reactions of a young surgeon who is struggling to make sense of his trade on the Western Front . . .

"During the time the protagonist comes of age, moves through training, and grapples with his field assignment just before the battle of the Somme, he meets and falls in love with an overlapping succession of four vibrantly rendered women. Their stories intersect with his in moving, albeit predictable ways. The central theme of the novel, that human connection attests to the quality of life lived, courses defiantly through the depicted years of wartime loss . . .

"The years have carried us further away from the events that gave rise to this story but they have not eased their pain or influence. The storyline of one man's anguish pays suitable homage to the enduring disbelief with which we look back on this time and to the myriad ways in which the 1914–45 period has affected our collective memory and explanation. And by tracing the intricately awful ways that men are mown down in battle and people lose people they love, the author ably communicates the cumulatively simple way in which war is hell. In the post September 11 world, that communication could well stand repeating."

From the *BMJ* review by Prof. Jennifer Leaning,  
Harvard School of Public Health

"You are compelled to read on through mounting waves of tension punctuated by shocks of catastrophe . . . *La Tendresse* is a remarkable achievement."

From the Foreword to the novel by Prof. Eugene H. Kaplan MD

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