

"Business Kisses"

By BEATRICE BURTON

Author of "Gloria, The Flapper Wife"

The names in this story are purely fictitious and are not to be taken as referring to any particular person, place or firm.

CHAPTER LIX

Mary Rose stood still, holding the telephone with both hands to steady herself. There was a ringing in her ears like the sound of far-off church bells.

Tom terribly injured—she couldn't believe it! Tom terribly hurt!

Why, it didn't seem more than a minute ago that he had stood right here in this very hallway, and dropped his wet slicker down on the floor of the vestibule! And through the open door that led out into the kitchen she could still see it stretched across the chairs before the stove, where she had hung it to dry. He must have forgotten all about it, and rushed out into the rain, coatless—when she had sent him away.

"What can have happened to him in such a few minutes?" she asked herself, turning and turning the leaves of the telephone book with shaking fingers.

She couldn't seem to think what number she was looking up—

Oh—yes, that was it—the taxicab company!

"Durham 770," she called it, and asked for a cab immediately.

She was still sitting, staring into space with wide dry eyes, when it drove up before the house. She did not even hear it come.

There was a dull and dreadful ache in her breast. For if she had not cared for Tom Fitzroy as a woman loves her sweetheart, she was deeply attached to him in quite another way. All her life he had been a sort of older brother, a pal, a play-fellow to her.

She had adored to be with him, all ways—except when he became sentimental and lover-like. He had given her almost all of the good times she had in her narrow life.

He had taught her to skate years and years ago, and to swim, and to play tennis. She could see him now, in her mind's eye, dashing across a tennis court with the sun in his blue gray eyes and on his crisp red hair.

Impossible to think that a creature so active, so swift, so filled with the joy of being alive should be stretched out, hurt and helpless, on a hospital bed.

The front doorbell rang, rousing Mary Rose.

"I'll be ready in half a minute," she whispered to the taxi driver, and rushed upstairs to get into her wraps.

"Who's downstairs, Mary Rose? I thought I heard some one—or was I dreaming?" her mother's voice came sleepily through the open door of the darkened bedroom across the hall.

"No, you weren't dreaming," Mary Rose came into the room and stood beside her bed. "Tom's been hurt. He's at the hospital and they've sent for me. There's a cab downstairs. 'Goo-by, darling. I'll be right back.'"

"But I don't understand—" she heard her mother say vaguely, as she ran down the stairs. But there was no time to explain further.

Tom might be dying, right now, for all she knew!

"There's been a fine young wreck down here at the corner," the taxi driver said to her as he helped her into the cab.

And, sure enough, when they turned the corner there was a pile of wreckage heaped up against the curb, gleaming in the rain and the unsteady glow from a swinging arc light.

"Looks as if two cars bumped, doesn't it?" the driver called back to her. "Some of these fools shouldn't be trusted with—"

The wind took the rest of the words out of his mouth.

It wasn't until hours afterward that Mary Rose realized that one of those two wrecked and twisted cars was the powerful black roadster that Tom had always insisted by the name of "stink-wheel."

The smell of ether and carbolic acid in the halls of the hospital made Mary Rose a little sick and dizzy as it always did when she went into a hospital.

A dark-haired nurse, all in rustling white, came clicking down the wide, bright hallway on her white heels.

"I'm Miss Sims. I called you up a while ago," she said to Mary Rose, and put her arm around her, as if she saw that the girl was almost ready to faint away. "Dr. Fitzroy says to come right upstairs."

"He's not unconscious, then?" Mary Rose asked, as she stepped into the elevator. "Tom's not unconscious?"

Miss Sims smiled and Mary Rose found herself wondering how anybody could smile who lived in a place

like this where people came with their ill and their agonies. What a dead-end game sport a nurse was, when you stopped to think about it! "When I said 'Dr. Fitzroy,' I meant old Dr. Fitzroy," Miss Sims explained. "He's upstairs with young Dr. Tom. We always call the young one 'Dr. Tom' here at the hospital."

The smile faded from her face, leaving it very grave. "No, Dr. Tom's not unconscious," she went on. "He was for a few minutes while ago. That's how we knew he wanted you. He kept calling for you."

She led Mary Rose down a long corridor and then turned another one. At the end of it was a closed white door with the number "31" painted on it.

"Isn't that a coincidence—that he's in room 31, and that he's just 31 years old?" Miss Sims asked Mary Rose, as she laid her hand against its panels. "So young, too."

She didn't finish the sentence, but Mary Rose knew instantly that Miss Sims knew that Tom was going to die there in that room behind the white door.

She opened it and went in.

He was lying on the high, narrow bed in the middle of the bare hospital room—muffled in bandages like a mummy. Nothing of him was visible except his eyes, his nose and his lips.

Mary Rose had heard the phrase "bloodless lips" before, but it never had meant anything to her until now. For Tom's lips really were bloodless. They were only a shade more gray than his gray face that had been so fresh and ruddy under its freckles an hour ago.

She tiptoed to the side of the bed and looked down at him, dry-eyed. He did not move. He seemed not even to breathe.

The door behind her opened and Tom's father came into the room. He had on a long white linen coat, such as doctors wear when they operate, and above it his keen, fine face looked older than Mary Rose had ever seen it before.

He came straight to her, and together they stood there, looking down at the man on the bed.

"How did this happen?" Mary Rose whispered, and he tried to answer, but couldn't. He turned abruptly away and stood with his back to the room, looking down into the rain-swept street below.

"Automobile," Miss Sims formed the word with her lips, making no sound.

The still figure at the window turned from it, and spoke to them in a low tone. "Here comes his mother—I'll go down for her."

He went out, with Miss Sims after him. In a minute she came back and beckoned Mary Rose into the hall.

"I want to show you something," she said, and drew a little piece of tissue paper from the pocket of her crackling white uniform. "I found it in the pocket of his vest, when they brought him in. He'd like you to have it, I guess. Dr. Fitzroy says you and he were to be married soon."

She laid it in Mary Rose's cold hand—the little circle of diamonds that Tom had bought for her wedding ring—and hurried away down the hall, as if she had suddenly remembered something that she had to do at once.

The slow elevator came up to the third floor and stopped. Mary Rose heard the clang of its closing doors and presently Tom's mother and father came around the corner of the corridor. Mrs. Fitzroy was wrapped in a dark fur coat and the gleam of a silver cloth evening dress showed beneath it. She leaned heavily on Tom's father, as she walked.

"Oh, I can't realize it—I can't realize it," she was saying to him, dazedly. "Is Tom very badly hurt, or just shaken up? Oh, if you only knew what I've been through since they telephoned the news to me at Mabel's house. It broke up the bridge party."

"Suddenly her blue eyes that were so like Tom's eyes, fell on Mary Rose, and for the first time she seemed to realize just how serious Tom's condition was."

"They sent for you, Mary Rose?" she asked. "Or were you with him when the machine was it?"

"We sent for her. He wanted her," Tom's father told her gently. He opened the door of Room 31 and looked in.

"He's waking up. Where's Miss Sims?" he asked, and as if by magic Miss Sims appeared around the corner of the hall.

She and Mrs. Fitzroy went into the room and two minutes later they came out again.

"He's going to die—" Tom's mother began in a normal voice and then without any warning she fainted quietly away. Her husband picked her up and carried her into an empty room across the corridor. As Miss Sims followed him, she turned her neat capped head, and spoke to Mary Rose:

"You go in now. Don't stay more than a minute."

Mary Rose looked at the wedding ring she held for an instant. Then she slipped it over the third finger of her left hand, and went into Tom's room.

He was lying quietly as before, but his eyes were opened just the merest slit, and they followed Mary Rose as she came up to him. Suddenly the tears that she had been holding back for an hour seemed to well up into her eyes and her throat, but she forced them down. She managed to smile—a brave, gallant, little smile.

She held up the ring for him to see. And then she leaned over and gave him the first kiss she had ever

given him of her own free will in all her life.

She kissed the gauze bandages that were strapped around his jaw—kissed him so lightly that he could scarcely feel it. But he did.

The corners of his mouth moved ever so slightly, and she knew that he was smiling.

"I love you," she said. "I love you."

And if Tom guessed that she was lying he made no sign that he did. And let us hope that he believed her, as he lay there, immovable in his bandages.

"Minute's up," Miss Sims spoke from the doorway, and Mary Rose went out to her.

"You—I hate to tell you this—but you know he's not going to live," Miss Sims told her. "You know that, don't you?"

Mary Rose shook her head. "I didn't," she whispered.

"I just thought I'd tell you—Dr. Fitzroy thought I should. You see, we thought you might want to marry him—before he goes."

"I will," said Mary Rose, and she threw up her head and blinked back the smarting tears. "I will."

(To Be Continued)

What was Mary Rose's thoughts at the ceremony? Read tomorrow's installment.

There are 150 kinds of bats. Sugar from corn is now commercially possible. The north pole is far from being the world's coldest spot.

OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

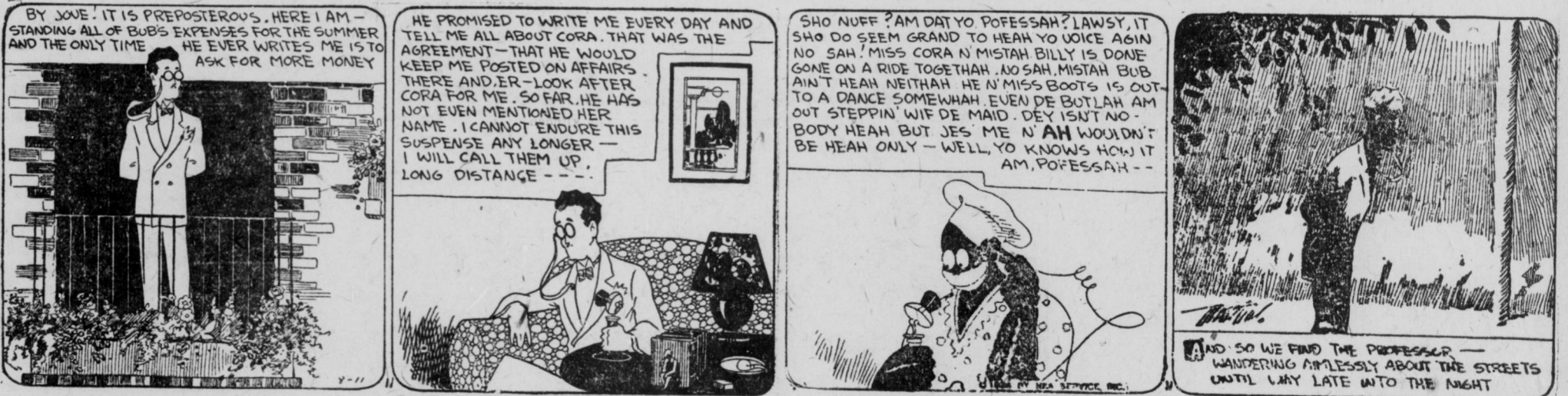


MOMENTS WE'D LIKE TO LIVE OVER—THE MUD SLIDE.

SALESMAN \$AM—By SWAN



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



Bust of Ellen Scripps Wins Prize



S. Cartaino Scarpitta, internationally known sculptor, won a \$500 prize offered by the Fine Arts gallery in San Diego, Cal., with his bust of Miss Ellen Browning Scripps. The bust is considered an unusually good likeness of the well-known California philanthropist. She is a sister of the late E. W. Scripps, newspaper publisher.

MR. FIXIT

Street Railway to Start Repairs on Indiana Ave.

Let Mr. Fixit present your case to city officials. He is the times representative at the city hall. Write him at The Times.

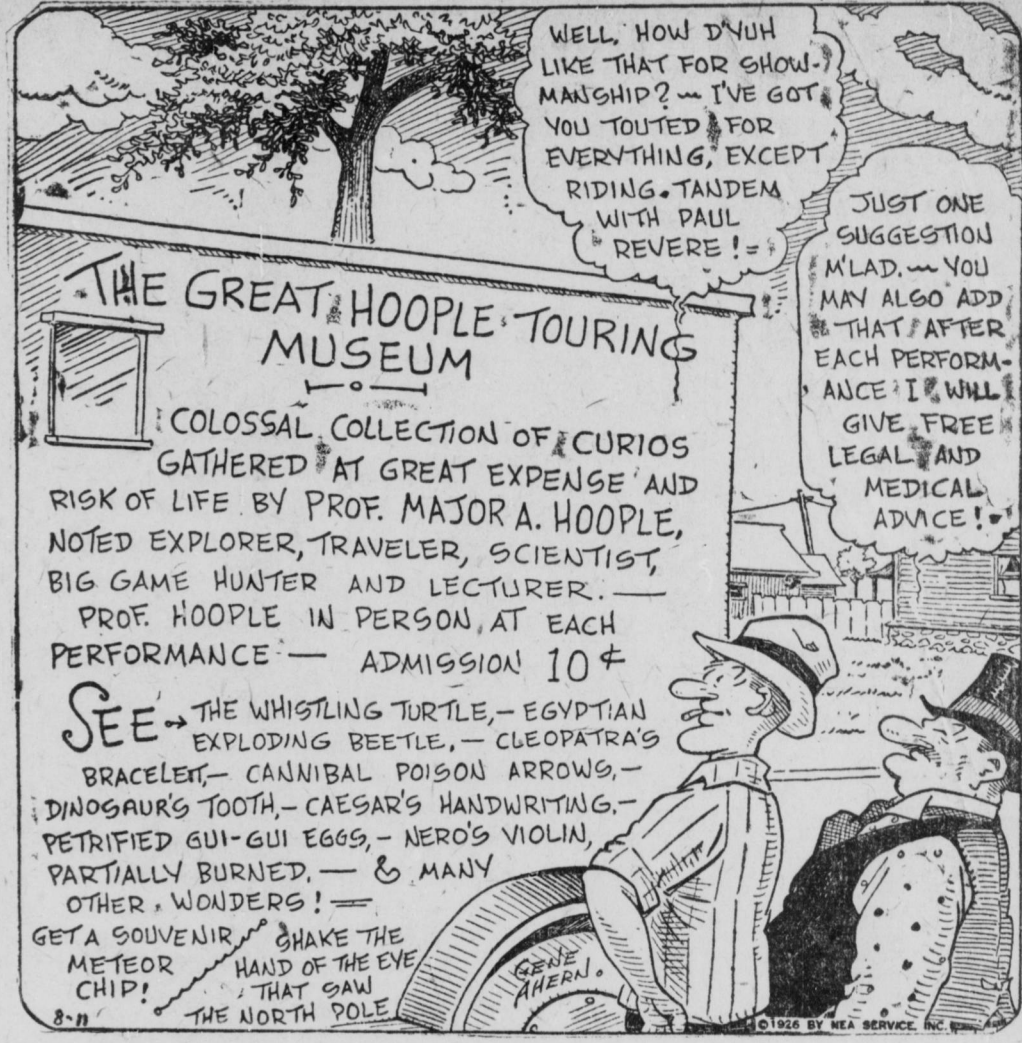
The Indianapolis Street Railway Company will begin repairs at once on Indiana Ave. from Tenth St. to Blake St., Mr. Fixit was advised today.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: Would certainly appreciate any effort on your part to force the street car company to repair the pavement on Indiana Ave. from Tenth to Blake Sts., which they tore up in a number of places about four months ago.

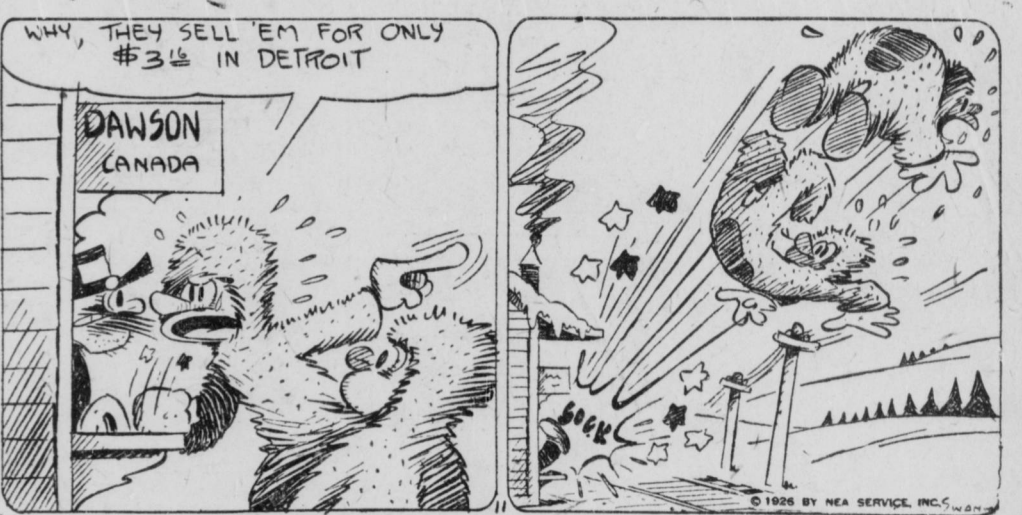
CAR DRIVER. "I called the track department's attention to this complaint and they promised me they will start repairing this track at once; repairs were delayed waiting for the track welders to finish," is the word from J. F. Lynch of the company.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: When the city repaired the holes in the asphalt above Sixteenth St., they failed to fix them in front of 1382 and 1393 N. Pennsylvania St. When the au-

OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



THE GREAT HOOPLE TOURING MUSEUM



THE GREAT HOOPLE TOURING MUSEUM



THE GREAT HOOPLE TOURING MUSEUM



THE GREAT HOOPLE TOURING MUSEUM

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There is only one way to stop skin troubles—pimples, boils, blotches, eczema and eruptions. Stop the cause! It's all in the blood.

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You can take S. S. S. with confidence—millions testify to its merits. An unbroken record of service for over 100 years is a great testimonial to a great medicine.

Remember S. S. S. is made only from fresh roots and herbs.

takes S.S.S.

BURNS and SCALDS Stop the throbbing and smarting at once with a soothing touch of Resinol

HONOR VERGIL

ROME—Vergil, immortal singer of old Rome, is at last to be honored with a monument in his home town. A national subscription, to which the government is adding 100,000 lire, is to defray the cost of a statue in Mantua, Lombardy.

DOG WRECKS CAR LONDON—When his pet dog leaped into his lap, K. B. Harris lost control of his automobile. It ran into a ditch and turned a somersault. The man was unhurt, but the dog suffered serious injuries.

Would You Like to Be Attractive? A beautiful woman is always admired. There are many types of beauty. But no woman can be truly beautiful unless she is healthy. Radiant vitality is always attractive, however plain a woman's features may be.

Many a woman has found her health improved through the use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. This remedy has been taken by women for more than half a century with very satisfactory results.

If Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has helped other women, why shouldn't it help you?—Advertisement.

