

# "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 real.

## CHAPTER LXI

In the sunshine of late afternoon the hospital seemed an almost cheerful place when Mary Rose and her mother came into it.

It was 5 o'clock and the supper trays stood on their wagons in the wide hallways. Nurses flitted here and there in their crackling white and blue uniforms.

One or two of them looked curiously at Mary Rose as she and Mrs. Middleton followed Tom's father up to Room 81. They had all heard the story of the wedding last night, of course, and wanted to see the bride who was soon to be a widow.

The white door of Tom's room stood open and a band of slanting sunlight lay across the bed where he lay. He looked better to Mary Rose than he had last night—and she wondered if he really were dying.

His face was not so gray, his eyes were almost unnaturally bright and the sheet rose and fell with his breathing. Then Mary Rose saw that it was rising and falling much too quickly and unevenly.

And as she bent over him she could hear a queer little grating noise in his chest. She wondered what it could be.

He looked up at her and his lips moved as if he were trying to say something.

"Do you want me to—kiss you?" she asked, her voice breaking. She knew that he did.

"I want to kiss you," she said, and laid her lips for an instant on his that were parted with the effort of his quick and tortured breathing.

"Old boy," she went on, and she knew from the look in his eyes and the way he held his head that he was glad, "old boy, we did get married, after all, didn't we? And I'm glad of it." She put her arms around him. He closed his eyes over the look of happiness that was in them.

The minutes ticked by. Outside the windows that faced the west the sun was setting in a glory of gold and scarlet. Its banners trailed along the horizon like the banners of a great army.

The words of Henry's poem written in a hospital came to Mary Rose as she stood there holding the dying man who loved her. "So be my passing! My task accomplished and the long day done, My wages taken, and in my heart Some late lark singing! Let me be gathered to the quiet west."

The sunset splendid and serene, Death—

Outside the windows the sunset was growing more splendid and serene as it faded. Above it a sickle moon had come out in the pale sky.

And, glancing down at the man on the pillows, Mary Rose saw suddenly that he had stopped breathing. The grating noise in his breast was stilled.

He had been "gathered to the quiet west" as the sunset died.

And from far away across the roofs of the town the first of the Christmas Eve church bells pealed out into the evening air. They seemed to toll in Mary Rose's heart like a dirge.

She laid her hand, with its wedding ring shining on it, against the face of the man on the bed—the man who had loved her all his life.

"So long, old kid!" she said, and she was sure that somewhere, he heard her say it to him.

The week that followed was a slow horror to Mary Rose.

She went to the funeral—and sat through it dry-eyed, wondering why people made so much fuss over the dead body, when the soul that they had loved was gone and far beyond their ken.

But afterward, when she and her mother came back to the little brown house, she broke down completely. She cried and cried and could not stop.

"You see, you cared for Tom a lot more than you knew you did!" Mrs. Middleton told her. She was sorry for Mary Rose, but she was the honest sort of woman who couldn't help speaking her mind when she was moved.

"I'm—not crying—because I didn't know how much I loved him!" Mary Rose sobbed on. "I'm—crying—because I didn't love him as much as he wanted me to!"

Mrs. Middleton shook her head. "You are talking wild," she said. "You are tired out. You come upstairs and get right straight into your bed—and I'll give you some hot milk to make you sleep! Now, come on!"

She half-dragged Mary Rose up the stairs and into her little room.

The next morning she was awakened by the sound of Flossie's voice downstairs and in a few minutes Flossie herself burst into the room. She threw a letter down on the covers of her sister's bed.

"'Not a letter of condolence, I suppose,'" she said. "'If I were you I wouldn't read it—I'll just start you howling again!'"

But Mary Rose had the envelope in her hands. She knew that writing! It was the fine, dashing hand of John Manners.

Without opening the envelope, she deliberately tore it in a dozen places and threw them in the waste basket in the corner. She felt that somehow or other it wasn't quite fair to Tom's memory to read a letter from John Manners.

But for weeks afterward she wondered what he had written to her. "I came over to tell you some news," Flossie said to her suddenly. "Something wonderful!"

Mary Rose looked at her and saw that something rather wonderful had happened to Flossie. Something that had given her face a sweetness and soft wistfulness that it never had before. Something that made her flush and laugh with a kind of nervous, embarrassed happiness under her sister's eyes.

"Yes—it's true," she said. "I'm going to have a baby."

Mary Rose sat up in bed and put both her arms around her, and they clung together—closer in spirit than they ever had been in all their lives. Flossie spoke again in a voice that was muffled by Mary Rose's shoulder: "Sam's so tickled that he could jump over the moon! We've only known about it for a few days!"

"I never expected Flossie Middleton to be like this over the prospect of a baby," Mary Rose confessed to her mother that night, when Flossie and her pathetically proud young husband had taken themselves off home. "I thought she'd raise an awful rumpus if anybody even suggested that she have a baby."

Mrs. Middleton gave a comfortable little laugh. "Oh, nature takes care of these things, always," she said. "The minute a baby is born, you'd be surprised to know what mother-love is born with it in the heart of the woman who brings it into the world! You just wouldn't believe it. I suppose, if I told you that when I was young, was just such a wild young thing as Flossie!"

Looking at her Mary Rose couldn't believe it. It was impossible to think of her mother, with her quiet eyes and plain bands of gray hair, as ever having been young and beautiful and fly-away like Flossie.

"Life takes us all," said Mrs. Middleton. "Just give it time!"

Mary Rose felt as if it had tamed her already. Since Tom's death, she had not been able to think of going out to look for a new job. She couldn't bear to think of facing people again.

And yet she knew she had to do it—and soon, too. For there was not much money in the savings account at the bank. Not much more than a couple of hundred dollars.

"I'll start out next Monday and see what I can land," she made up her mind.

On the afternoon of New Year's day, as Mary Rose stood at the bay window of the little brown house, Mrs. Fitzroy's big black car rolled smoothly down the street and stopped at the curb.

It was Mrs. Fitzroy. "Dear Mary Rose," it read. "The doctor and I wondered if you and your mother will come over to have tea with us. It is very lonely here for us and perhaps you are feeling 'Tom's absence just as keenly as we are on this holiday. It will drive you over. Affectionately yours, 'MRS. VAN NAULT FITZROY.'"

An hour later Mary Rose was sitting in the doctor's study with him while her mother and Mrs. Fitzroy had a cup of coffee over the fire in the warm, rose-scented library of the big, luxurious house.

"The house seems empty without the boy," Dr. Fitzroy said presently, not looking up from the flames that flickered in the grate.

Mary Rose nodded, silently. She noticed how much whiter the hair on the doctor's temples seemed to be than ever before, and how deeply had etched themselves this last week.

For the first time since she had known him, he struck her as being old—and broken.

"How can I go and live with them?" she sobbed. "If I'd loved Tom, as they think I did, I'd feel like a daughter to them. I'd want to be near them! But I didn't love him—I've never loved but one man since I was born! And he—he hates me!"

She had struggled to keep John Manners out of her mind for weeks and weeks. But she couldn't keep him out of her thoughts. His face came between her and whatever she happened to be looking at, a hundred times a day. It was the last thing she saw, against the darkness of her bedroom, just before she closed her eyes in sleep at night.

She knew that she never would forget him as long as she lived.

(To be continued)

Mary Rose learns that the engagement between John Manners and Doris Hining is broken in tomorrow's installment.

1927 LICENSES ARRIVE

First shipments of the 1927 Indiana automobile license plates, which are being manufactured at Anderson, have been received by the State automobile license department and are being distributed among three branch offices. Approximately 800,000 sets of the plates are included in the contract. The plates have a black background with white lettering.

The next morning at breakfast Mary Rose told her mother about it. "If I were you, I'd go and live with them," Mrs. Middleton surprised her by saying, "Flossie is going to need me, anyway, now that she's going to have a baby. And if you lived with the Fitzroys and Sam could move right in here!"

But Mary Rose shook her head.

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## OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



## LARGE HOME OF TINY TOM THUMB IS PUT ON SALE

House Combines Features for Midgets and Grown-ups.

By Times Special  
MIDDLEBORO, Mass., Aug. 13.—The home which Tom Thumb—America's greatest midget—built half a century ago to serve as a memorial to himself after his death, is to be sold.

The mansion, built in the heyday of the dwarf's spectacular career, is of English architecture, modeled after the home of an actress whom he met during one of his tours of Great Britain. It contains eleven rooms, combining midget features with those of ordinary proportions.

Half-hidden by trees and set far back from the street, it is one of the show places of the town.

Though most of the furnishings are of ordinary dimensions, some of the chairs and tables and one of the pianos were constructed especially for the owner and his tiny wife, who was born and reared here. On the walls still hang many pictures, mostly engravings, which Thumb purchased abroad. The stairways of the house are built with steps only about half the normal height.

Following the death of Thumb and his wife the estate was purchased by John Jacques, who has endeavored to maintain to a degree the atmosphere of the place as it was when built. Both he and his wife were friends of Mrs. Thumb.

Should a purchaser appear it is probable that the relics and midget conveniences will be removed from the house and the only remaining monument to the famous little man and his wife will thus lose its identity.

**BOOZE CHEMIST HIRED**

Bootleggers Plan to Take Gasoline Out of Denatured Alcohol.

By United Press  
WASHINGTON, Aug. 13.—Undercover agents of the prohibition unit have discovered that bootleggers have employed expert chemists in an attempt to remove gasoline from denatured alcohol. It was learned at the treasury today.

Because of this disclosure Government chemists were ordered to work on new denaturing formulas for making alcohol absolutely undrinkable, but not deadly in case some hitherto undiscovered method of separating gasoline from alcohol is devised.

## Tree Top Music Causes His Arrest

By United Press  
PORT HURON, Mich., Aug. 13.—Harry Olson, 26, parole breaker, was in custody today, as a result of a patrolman overhearing him play a mouth organ in a six foot square home in a tree top.

In the small shack he had a bed and an unregistered revolver. The treetop bungalow was virtually shielded from view by leaves, and probably would not have been discovered, officers said, except for the telltale strains from the mouth organ.

**SIX DIE OVER WOMAN**

She Betrays Each Lover in Suicide Pact.

By United Press  
BUDAPEST, Aug. 13.—Charged with inciting six different young men to commit suicide, a young Budapest widow has been taken into custody by the local police.

A seventh, instead of yielding to her persuasive argument that "it would be beautiful to take poison and die in the arms of a beautiful woman," broke away from her embraces and rushed to the nearest police station.

The woman's mentality in wishing to have the young men die in her presence promises several weeks of

## a clear SKIN

is one of many rewards of pure blood.

Take S. S. S. to purify your blood—then watch pimples, boils, blackheads and rashes vanish.

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.

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