

"The VANITY CASE"

A Tale of Mystery and Love

By CAROLYN WELLS

(Continued From Page 1)

to have much to do with a club in Harbor Park, even to be president of it."

"Yes, I do," Myra admitted. "Let the Harbor Park people take one of their own men for president. We of the Gardens have no call to mix in with them to that extent. If Perry chooses to go over there to play golf, because the links are better than the Garden links, let him do so. Let him be a member of the club so he can do so. But as to being president—no."

"All right, old thing," said Heath, amiably. "I'll refuse the candidacy, since it bothers you so. We've been married six years, and I never before saw you so hot up. Give me a light, somebody."

He lazily held a cigarette to his lips, while Bunny picked up one of four lighted candles that stood on a refectory table, and held it for his use.

As she put it back, she idly opened a portfolio of sketches that lay on the table. Inside was a card, which said, in elaborate lettering:

"The Work of Perry Heath."

"What's this for?" she said, taking it up and closing the portfolio.

"Oh, that's a work of art in itself," Heath told her. "There was a loan exhibition here last summer, and that was the card that designated my collection of masterpieces. It is such a gem of Spencerian work, I saved it."

The lettering on the card was ornamented with the old-fashioned Spencerian flourishes, and further embellished with the strange bird of unknown species, with which Spencerians were wont to decorate their pen work.

Bunny laughed at it, and gayly stuck it in the corner of the frame of one of Heath's best sketches that hung on the studio wall.

"All right, then, Perry," Myra said, more mildly now. "You'll withdraw your name from the candidates, and give up the idea of the club presidency?"

"Nobility, my darling, could call me a fussy man," sang Heath. "Of course, I will, if your ladyship decrees it. That will leave three names to vote on still. But I doubt if Anderson gets it. Seems to me Pinkie Garrison is a more general favorite."

"Nixy," Inman disagreed. "If not Anderson, then George Morton."

"Well, they're all Park men," Myra argued. "I don't care which of them is elected, if Perry doesn't run."

"I won't, I won't, I won't!" Heath reiterated. "Now, for Heaven's sake, drop that subject. Come on, let's all go to bed. A spot of Scotch, Larry?"

"Sure. This has been an exhausting conference. Gosh, what a watery concoction! You take this, I'll mix my own!"

Inman set back on the table the mild highball Heath had compounded for him, and, his eye lighting on the card in the picture frame, he took down and set it up against the tall glass, so that "The Work of Perry Heath" seemed to refer to the Scotch and soda.

CHAPTER III.

With a smile, Heath appropriated the drink. He cared little for whisky, while Inman was rather too fond of it.

Bunny sidled up to Heath, and begged a sip from his glass, while Myra, now apparently reconciled again to the "vamp," herself accepted a portion of Larry's nightcap.

"The dove of peace once more hovers in our midst," Perry said, as he rescued his glass from the absentminded Bunny. He beamed through his shell-rimmed glasses, with the air of a kindly paterfamilias.

"I believe those convex lenses make your eyes look bigger," said Bunny, looking closely into the said lenses.

"A good thing," remarked Myra. "Perry's eyes are all the better for a bit of magnifying."

"I rather fancy my eyes," Heath said, imperturbably. "Awfully good color, what?"

"No color at all," retorted his wife, promptly. "Just commonplace uneventful eyes. Like your hair. Except that you wear it a bit long, there's no character to it whatever."

"I don't wear it long. It's cut as short as Larry's."

"At the back, yes. But you wear it long on top—so you can shake it back with the gesture of an artist."

"That will do, Myra," said Heath, with unusual daring. "Please let my personal appearance alone, will you?"

"Certainly, Perry. It doesn't interest me at all."

Heath stared at her. What was the matter with Myra tonight? She was all on edge for some reason—was it really because of the election question, or was she upset at his attentions to Bunny Moore?

Bunny felt sure it was the latter, and remarking again her intention to wash her hair, she danced out of the room and up the stairs.

"That child is a picture!" said Heath, with the sole and amiable desire to annoy his wife.

But he didn't succeed, for Myra only said, "Yes, she is," in an abstracted tone that gave the impression of absent-mindedness.

"I'm off for bed, too," Inman declared. "I hope after I leave the room you'll say I'm a picture."

"Indeed we shall," Heath assured him. "There are all sorts of pictures, you know."

"Tep. Good night," Larry said, a little shortly, and swung himself off.

Husband and wife sat silent for several moments, though occasionally glancing at one another.

At last, Myra gave a little sigh, and said, "Blow out the candles, please, they bother my eyes. And put out the lights, too, we may as well go to bed. It's Katie's night out."

Heath slowly blew out the four candles on the table, but delayed turning off the electric switches.

"What ailed you tonight, Myra?" he said, not unkindly, but a trifle accusingly.

"Oh, I don't know," she returned, her pale face showing a slight frown. "We are so hopelessly mismatched, Perry. Aren't we?"

"We sure are. What would you care to do about it?"

"What can we do? If we could be divorced, I'd marry Larry, of course. I can't see you marrying Bunny, though."

"Probably not—though I might do worse."

"You could easily do worse, and probably would. But it's out of the question. We can't have the awful publicity of that sort of thing—and then your secret would come out."

"What?"

"Oh, don't think I don't know all



HITTIN' ON ALL FOUR.

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FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



"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 representing any particular person.

CHAPTER LXVI

One afternoon toward the end of April, Cornelius Tuedeman came into the office two hours later than he usually returned from lunch.

"I've been playing hockey with an old friend of yours," he said, looking down at Mary Rose and showing all of his handsome white teeth in a wide grin.

She raised her head, with its coils of shining brown hair, from her typewriter. "Who was that?" she said.

"Jack Manners," he answered, and then, as she said nothing, he went on:

"He is a friend of yours, isn't he? He said you used to be secretary to him over at Dexter's."

Mary Rose nodded gravely. "Yes—I used to work for him," was all she said.

She wondered if John Manners ever had been a real friend of hers? Would a friend have believed Flossie's absurd lie about herself and

he said at last. "I can remember the way the girls all used to laugh at her for being so jealous of him. She would sulk all evening if he danced twice with anybody but her."

"And then several years ago they got engaged. But for some reason or other the marriage didn't come off. There was some talk about her refusing to marry him at the last minute because she thought he was in love with a red-haired widow he met at college."

Mary Rose felt herself suddenly hot with jealousy of a red-haired widow that she had never heard of before in her life!

"But if he was in love with any red-haired widow, he must have got over it in short order," Cornelius Tuedeman's even voice went on.

"For, first things I knew, he and Miss Hing were going everywhere together again. But I guess the engagement's off for good this time. They tell me that she's rushed off to Europe for two or three years. And I can't say that Manners looked exactly broken-hearted when I was playing handball with him this noon at the Athletic Club."

"How do you mean—'queer'?" she asked. She was wildly curious to know about that broken engagement. She had wondered 10,000 times which one of the pair had broken it—Doris or John.

"Well, they've been running around together for years and years," Tuedeman told her. "He Jack Manners tells me you've been married! May I be very rude and ask you what kind of a widow you are—grass or sod?"

Suddenly Mary Rose didn't like him quite so well as she had. She hated that phrase—"grass or sod?"

"I married Dr. Fitzroy when he was dying," she said coldly, and looking at him she saw that he was watching her narrowly. It came over her, swift as lightning, that this man was in love with her.

He put out his hand and touched the bare third finger of her left hand with one of his. She drew it away. The mere touch of any man in the world was hateful to her—any man but John Manners.

"I notice you don't wear any wedding ring—Mrs. Fitzroy," Tuedeman observed, flushing larkly as he saw her snatch her hand away.

"I don't like Mr. Tuedeman," she told her mother that night when they were doing up the supper dishes. "This was the time of day when they always talked over things."

"Hm! I thought you said he was so awfully nice a while ago," said Mrs. Middleton, as she emptied the gray soapy water out of the dishpan.

There was a little restaurant where Mary Rose always ate her lunch on rainy days.

It was not a good restaurant, nor even a very clean one. But it was only two blocks away from the Morrell Steel Mills and on rainy days it was always crowded to the doors at noon time.

It was this wet April day when Mary Rose Middleton opened its rain-spattered doors and went in. The smell of hot food and steaming clothes and coffee made her a little faint and dizzy as she stood waiting to sit down.

Then a man got up from a table for two, close beside her, and Mary Rose sat down in the empty chair before she saw who was sitting at the other side of the tiny table—John Manners!

Her heart gave a jump and she began to stammer something and get up.

Then, realizing how foolish she must appear to him, she sat down again and picked up the soiled, greasy menu from the soiled, greasy tablecloth.

"How have you been all these long months, Mary Rose?" he asked, when she had ordered soup and coffee in a voice that shook.

"Very well," she answered, with an effort, looking at the steam-covered window beside her. She could feel his gray eyes on her face and she couldn't trust herself to meet them.

But at last, she made herself look at him. "I've been married since I

left the Dexter Company," she said. "Did you know?"

He nodded. "Yes—I wrote to you at the time of your husband's death, Mrs. Fitzroy," he answered, his voice hesitating on the name of Tom's widow.

"I tore your letter up!" said Mary Rose lifting her proud little chin.

The waiter brought her soup in a thick white bowl, and she tried to eat it. But she was hot and trembling all over. Her body, her brain and her heart seemed to be chanting altogether: "I love him! I love him!"

Manners pushed his half-emptied plate back a trifle on the table.

"Vile food they have here," he said savagely and called a waiter for his bill.

"He's going—he's going," thought Mary Rose with a sinking of her heart. "In a minute he'll be gone and then maybe I'll never see him again."

He half-rose from his chair, and then sat down again.

"I wasn't surprised at your marriage to Dr. Fitzroy," he said in a low tone. "Your little sister, Flossie, took pity on me weeks before it happened, and told me about it. She evidently saw how gone I was on you—"

He struck the table a smart blow with his fist.

Mary Rose raised her clear blue eyes to his. "You believe her?" she asked.

"Of course—"

"And you didn't believe me that

night when I told you that you were the only man in the world for me?"

she asked. "When I told you I'd never marry Tom Fitzroy?"

He was silent.

Mary Rose looked at him thoughtfully.

Should she tell him about Flossie's confessed lie?

Should she tell him how she had married Tom Fitzroy—on his death bed? Should she tell him that she never would have married Tom except for the reason that she had married him—to ease his passing?

Then John spoke again before she could make her decision.

"But you did marry Fitzroy," he said. "I guess that proved that what Flossie said was the truth."

"All right! Let him believe it then!" she thought recklessly. "If he wants to take her word against mine, let him take it! I should worry!"

And when she said good-by to him, her smile was as light as her heart was heavy.

(To Be Continued.)

The sun begins to shine again in Mary Rose's life in tomorrow's installment.

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