"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.

REAL THIS FIRST

FLOSSIE and MARY ROSE MIDDLETON are two pretty sisters, the daughters of a widowed mother. They work for the Dexter Automobile Company.

Mary Rose is secretary to the sales manager, JOHN MANNERS, and is in love with him. He is engaged to an heiress, DORIS HINIG. Because of her feeling for him, Mary Rose repeatedly refuses to marry TOM FITZROY, a young doctor.

Flossie, a born vamp, works in the filing department. Mary Rose discovers that she is carrying on a secret flirtation with the president of the company, HILARY DEXTER, although she's engaged to his secretary, SAM JESSUP.

Dexter, a married man, gives her several presents, among them a gold vanity case. When Mary Rose scolds her about letting him make love to her, Flossie declares that Dexter would divorce his wife and marry her, if she'd let him do it!

Manners rouses Doris Hinig's jealousy by taking Mary Rose home to meet his invalid mother, and finally tells her that he loves her. And she makes up her mind that she'd rather be his secretary, even if he marries Doris, than be any other man's wife!

The two sisters quarrel, and to get even with Mary Rose, Flossie tells Manners that she's juts "stinging him along" and is realy in love with Tom Fitzroy.

Mrs. Dexter finds Flossie's vanity case in her husband's car, and mistakes Mary Rose for her when she finds her taking dictation from Dexter. She "bawls out" Mary Rose before the whole office, before Dexter has time to explain that she is not Flossie Middleton, but Flossie's sister. Dexter finally calms his wife down and takes her home. Flossie begs Mary Rose not to let any one know that it was she who left the case in Dexter's car because she's afraid Sam Jessup won't marry her if he finds out that she's been running around with the "Big Boss." So Mary Rose takes the blame. The girls at the office snub her and John Manners who has believed Flossie's story becomes formal and distant. One day Mary Rose has an invitatio nfor dinner from his mother and she shows it to him.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXXIX

John Manners read the little note and handed it back to her.

She waited for him to make some answer, but he didn't say a word—just sat looking at her with gray eyes, as if he were trying to figure her out. The silence in the room fairly thundered.

"Well," Mary Rose ventured at last, "shall I go?"

He raised his dark brows the fraction of an inch. "Why ask me? It's entirely up to you," he said indifferently. "She's asked you to have dinner with her. Suit yourself; go if you want to—don't go if you don't want to."

His tone hinted that it made no difference to him what she did, ever again. Not that it was rude or terse. It was worse. It was coldly polite.

"He's heard about the Dexter business, too!" Mary Rose told herself, with a dreadful sinking of the heart.

And almost without knowing what she was doing she was talking to him about it.

"I got into a dreadful snarl with Mrs. Hilary Dexter this morning," she began breathlessly. "I suppose you've heard about it?"

He shook his head. "No, I hadn't heard about it," he said shortly. "What was it?"

Mary Rose gave a gasp of surprise. If he hadn't heard about this awful Dexter business, what was the matter with him? For it was as plain as a pikestaff that he was angry with her about something—and that he was sulking after the fashion of the Eternal Masculine, when he is displeased.

"Oh, she found a vanity case in his car," she floundered helplessly. "Somehow, she got it into her head that I'd left it there! That I'd been driving with him!"

"And you hadn't?" John Manners asked, looking hard at her.

"Of course not!" Mary Rose answered indignantly. "Anyway, she came down here and accused me of stealing her husband away from her. The door of his office was open and everybody heard her! Miss Minnick and Miss Brown won't speak to me—"

There was something in her face as she talked to him that made him realize with a sudden pang what a little girl she was after all. A hurt, appealing look.

"And you've been so queer and standoffish all day that I thought you'd heard all about it," she went on, twisting her hands nervously.

"No, I hadn't heard it," he said again.

"You wouldn't believe such a thing of me even if you did hear it, would you?" she asked him. She had to know!

Yesterday if she had asked him that, John Manners would have answered "No," instantly. But all day he had been filled with doubts of Mary Rose.

He looked at her, as she stood before him, her soft mouth trembling and her big eyes filled with misery; and more than anything on earth he wanted to cross that room and sweep her into his arms. He started to get out of his chair.

But the memory of what Flossie had told him that very morning in that very room stopped him. Its walls seemed to echo still to the sound of her voice: "—and Mary Rose is just stringing you along. She pretends to like you, but she's just cr-r-razy about Tom Fitzroy. They expect to be married 'most any day now."

It never occurred to John Manners to doubt that lie of Flossie's. For the only woman a man ever doubts is the woman he loves. Jealousy helps him to do that.

But he didn't love Flossie, and so he believed her.

Besides, he could see no reason for her telling him what she had told him except the reason she gave him—that she lived him and hated to see Mary Rose "string him along."

And so he sat still and looked at the girl across the room from him with eyes that might have been carved out of gray stone for all the warmth or friendliness that was in them.

With a little dry sob, Mary Rose turned and went out of the office.

"It's all over," she said, as she dropped into her chair, with her arms hanging lax at her sides. "He's thought it over and he's made up his mind that he's crazy about Doris Hining, after all—and and I'm just the girl who works for him. And he's putting me in my place."

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That night Mary Rose walked home alone, through the chilly October darkness—thinking about John Manners, as she had thought about him for months, whenever she was alone.

She came to the corner of New York St. and paused a moment at the place where she had stood with him two or three nights ago, in the shadow of the lumber piles. The smell of the fresh pine came to her nostrils and brought the sudden memory of his hands on her wrists and his voice telling her that he loved her.

She closed here eyes and took a deep breath of pain. "The worst of it is that I'll always be remembering him," she said, as she went on through the darkness.

Everything reminded her of him. He had stood there under the lilac bush beside the front door, that rainy night last spring and asked her to go out to have dinner with him.

She could see him still, in the little back parlor, as he had stood there one morning last summer when he had come to take her to the Dexter Company picnic.

And after supper, when Flossie sat down at the piano and began to sing the "Bluebird" song that she and John had heard in the movies a few night before, it was too much for her. She rushed upstairs and flung herself acros her bed, crying as if her heart would break.

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The next morning was a milestone in Mary Rose Middleton's life, although she didn't realize it until years afterward.

It marked the beginning of a long vigil. She picked up the morning paper and turned at once to the marriage licenses. Somehow, she felt sure that she would see that John Manners had got one the day before to marry Doris Hinig. With relief she saw that he hadn't.

That cheered her up considerably and on an impulse she wrote a little not to his mother, and told her she'd love to have dinner with her on Wednesday night.

She spent Tuesday evening washing her soft, shining hair and putting it up in French curlers, in sewing new blue frills in the neck of her old black crepe dress.

She could picture herself in those frills that were the color of her eyes, sitting at Mrs. Manners 'table the next night, with John looking at her above the flowers and the candle flames. Perhaps he would walk home with her afterward!

But the next night she found only his mother, waiting to greet her. She has in her wheel chair in the old-fashioned parlor of the big, quiet house, and, held out her frail hands welcome to Mary Rose.

"Johnny couldn't be here tonight," she said regretfully, when they were at the table, and Mrs. Bundle had served the cream-of-mushroom soup. "Little Dorry Hinig, our neighboor across the street, had a dinner party, and he's over there."

"She's the girl Mr. Manners is going to marry, isn't she?" Mary Rose screwed up her courage to ask.

Mr. Manners' mother laid down her soup spoon and leaned toward Mary rose across the pale pink asters that decorated the center of the table.

"I wish I knew," she said, nodding, "They've been engaged, off and on, for six years. Dorry doesn't think Johnny's the marrying type, she says. Dear me, everybody's the marrying type if the right person comes along."

At 9 o'clock when Mary Rose was finishing a long chapter of "Anna Karenine," the door in the hall opened. Her heart seemed to miss a beat as she heard John talking to Mrs. Bundle.

"He's come to carry me back upstairs," his mother said, and raised her voice. "Here I am, Johnny! In the parlor."

He came in and Mary Rose thought she had never seen any one so handsome as John Manners in dinner clothes, with his gray eyes gleaming above the white of his shirt and wing collar.

"Awfully nice of you to come to read to Mother," he said formally to Mary Rose, as he lifted his mother in his arms. "I'll be down in a minute and drive you home."

As soon as he was gone Mary Rose tiptoed softly into the hall and put on her hat and coat. Without a sound she let herself out of the big front door and was halfway down the short street before she glanced back and saw him standing in the light of the lamp above the porch of his house. He was looking up and down the darkened street.

"I fooled you, didn't I?" she said aloud, although he couldn't possibly have heard her. "You thought I came to read to your mother, so I could see you and drive home with you, didn't you? Well, I didn't! And you can go back to your old Doris Hinig and her dinner party! See if I care!"

But, even as she watched him, he turned and went back into his own house.

Two minutes later as she stood at the street corner waiting for a car he drove up beside her. He was hatless and he had no coat over his evening clothes. He jumped out, came to her and took her by the arm.

"Don't be a little idiot," he said angrily. "Get into this car and let me drive you home! You can't be out on the streets alone at night!"

She got in meekly enough, and without another word they drove the long distance to the brown house on New York St. Only when he left her at the door he said, "Good-night," and went.

As she watched his car vanish into the misty darkness the thought came to her that perhaps this party of Doris Hinig's tonight was to announce their engagement.

"But it couldn't be!" she told herself sharply later, as she undressed for bed. "Because if it had been, his mother would have known about it, of course!"

Nevertheless at 6 the next morning when the newsboy threw the paper on the front porch she ran down in her bare feet to get it and look at the marriage licenses! No, there was none for John and his Doris.

He was not at the office all that day, and the hours between 8:30 and 5 seemed like a hundred years to Mary Rose. But 5 o'clock came at last and she locked her desk and went down to the washroom to get ready to go home.

As she put her hand on the knob she heard Miss Minnick mention her name, and for the first time in her life she evesdropped.

"Of course, she knows we know—and that's why she acts so funny," Miss Minnick was saying to Miss Brown and a third stenographer—a little girl named Elsie Daly.

"Well, I never would have thought it of Mary Rose," Miss Brown answered. "I never saw her so much as look at Mr. Dexter, or any other man around the place."

"And she's such a quiet little thing," chimed in Elsie Daly.

Miss Minnick laughed. "'Still waters run deep,'" she quoted. "You just keep your eyes on these quiet girls who look as if they wouldn't hay 'boo' to a goose. They're the worst kind."

"An eavesdropper never hears any god of herself, they say," thought Mary Rose, as she turned the knob, and went in.

The three girls smiled at her in a half-hearted way. Then suddenly Miss Minnick gave a short, harsh giggle. "You know what we were talking about a minute ago?" she asked of Miss Brown and Elsie Daly. "Well, along that same line—if I ever do land a husband, I'm going to be his stenographer! Then I can keep my weather eye on him!"

The two girls laughed and Mary Rose felt her ears begin to burn under the brim of her smart little hat, as she went out of the washroom. She blinked hard to keep back the smarting tears.

"I'm getting awfully sick of the Dexter Company," she told her mother that night. "I'm going to start looking around for a new job."

(To Be Continued)

Dexter tries to get Flossie back on the old footing in tomorrow's installment.

A whole grove of tiny trees, small enough to be held in the hand, has been found in the mountains of British Columbia.

OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN

$ALESMAN $AM—By SWAN

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER

INDICTMENT OF WAR DELIVERED

Fairview Christian Assembly Opens.

Declaring that either war or Christianity must go, Dr. E. E. Violett of Kansas City, Mo., delivered a stirring indictment of war in an address Sunday night at the opening session of the Fairview Christian Assembly at Fairview Park. He spoke on "The Kingdom of God and the American Republic."

Dr. Violett branded war as "the most horrible, hellish monster that ever crawled from the bottomless pit to wrap its slimy arms around humanity." He declared that nations should be held strictly accountable for slaughter as individuals are for murder. He said the time was coming when the men who declared wars would be made to fight them.

"Lloyd George," he said, "summed up the situation when he said, 'Our efforts are vain. Peace can't come by act of assembly. It is now Christianity or nothing. It is now Christ or nobody.' That is the challenge of the present day to Christianity. Even the most superficial student knows that Christianity is the purest religion to man. Therefore, the religious destiny of mankind depends upon America."

PLANE OUTPUT DROPS

Employes of Industry Decrease More Than 8 Per Cent.

By United Press

WASHINGTON, July 19.—The United States aviation industry's production has dropped in value 5 per cent in the last two years and employes of the industry have decreased more than 8 per cent, although the actual number of airplanes produced has increased.

The Commerce Department made this announcement today, listing the following statistics of the industry:

Value of production, 1925, $12,277,000; 1923, $12,945,000.

Production, 1925, 621 airplanes, 78 seaplanes; 1923, 505 airplanes and 82 seaplanes.

Wage earners, 1925, 2,657; 1923, 2,901.

Number of establishments, 1925, 39; 1923, 33.

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