

"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 or firm.

READ THIS FIRST—FLOSSIE and MARY ROSE, MIDDLETON, are daughters of a wealthy family. They work for the Dexter Automobile Company.

Mary Rose is engaged to the salesman, JOHN MANNERS, and is in love with him. He is engaged to DORIS HINTZ, an heiress. Because of her feeling for him, Mary Rose repeatedly refuses to marry him.

Flossie, a first class, does a very poor job of keeping the office files. She sends most of her time flitting about with the president of the company, HILARY DEXTER, although she is engaged to the secretary, JESSE JESUP.

When Mary Rose discovers that Dexter, who is married, has been having an affair with her, she is furious. She tells her mother, MRS. MIDDLETON, who is a very rich woman. Mrs. Middleton tells her to get out of the office and find a job elsewhere.

John Manners likes her and after several weeks when they are each other's only friends, he tells her to get out of the office and find a job elsewhere.

The two sisters quarrel. Flossie's vanity causes her to buy a car, and when she drives it, she mistakes Mary Rose for Flossie and gives her a long lashing before she realizes her mistake. Dexter persuades his wife that he never has so much as looked at another woman and they leave the office together.

Mary Rose tells Flossie who left the office in the car and she tells her to get out of the office and find a job elsewhere. For as Flossie points out, if Sam Jessup finds out that his wife has been going out with Dexter, he'd never marry her. And Mary Rose tells her to get out of the office and find a job elsewhere.

The office has a Halloween masquerade and Mary Rose goes. Instead she goes to John Manners' mother's house. There his mother tells her how jealous Doris Hintz is of her and Tom tells that he just saw Doris and Manners out driving together.

(New York City)

CHAPTER XLIII

"Your mother doesn't seem to care so much for me, does she?" Mary Rose said with a laugh as she and Tom left the house and crossed the moonlit sweep of lawn to his car. He had left its engine running and it panted and heaved like some great dragon, bristling with windshields and dustshields, gleaming with nickel. Its headlights were like enormous eyes.

"How would you like to go for a drive out in the country?" Tom asked, grinning at her affectionately as he stood beside her. "Let's go 'way out where the roads are clear, and see how much speed we can get out of this old stink-wheel!"

"Fair enough!" Mary Rose answered eagerly. She liked Tom best when he was like this—full of fun and adventure. It was only when he made love to her that he got on her nerves.

She leaned back in her seat, wide-eyed as they got under way and looked at him—at his red hair crisped into little waves by the rushing wind and his mouth set with the intensity of his swift and careful driving.

She closed her eyes and presently gave herself up to the joy of speed—the forgetful motion of any kind, smooth, smooth motion of any kind.

"I must be home in an hour," she said once and then lapsed back into silence, grateful to Tom for not saying a word, for not even laying his hand over hers as they rode.

Presently he took a sidewise glance at her and saw that she was sound asleep, her long lashes lying like black shadows on her cheeks. He turned his car and drove her back to New York St.

Not even the jar of stopping awakened her, and Tom looked at the face so near his, so white and fragrant in the moonlight, and bent his head toward the heavy red lips parted with her warm breathing. Then suddenly he straightened up and shook the girl's arm almost roughly.

"Wake up, Rosey!" he said. "We're home."

She opened her eyes and looked at him, dazedly. "Oh, I've been asleep!" she murmured drowsily. "Not very polite of me, I'm afraid—especially on the first ride we've had together since goodness knows when."

It was the last time they were ever to ride together, these two—although neither of them guessed it then.

But years and years afterward whenever Mary Rose Middleton went flying over a country road at night, in another man's car, a lump would come into her throat and tears would sting her eyes, as she remembered this last ride of Tom Fitzroy's and hers.

But she said, "Good night, old timer!" lightly enough to him now, and ran into the house. Long after

she had disappeared, Tom sat there looking at the door that had shut her out of his sight.

Mrs. Middleton sat in the kitchen, darning stockings.

"Oh me, oh my! I never seem to get caught up with my mending," she said to Mary Rose, as the girl came into the room. Her words were doleful enough but her tone was cheerful.

As a matter of fact, she enjoyed mending. For she was one of those domestic women who keep house with the same zest that many another woman places cards or dances or goes out on a shopping spree! An excellent type and one that is fast disappearing from the face of the earth!

"Didn't Flossie look too sweet for words tonight?" Mrs. Middleton spoke again, presently, when Mary Rose had put on a sewing apron and was going through the mending basket. "I declare, Mary Rose, she gets prettier every day she lives. I don't suppose a body would believe it, to look at me now all faded and washed out, but—she's the living image of me when I was her age!"

"I don't doubt it," Mary Rose answered promptly. "I've always known that Flossie got her looks from you."

Mrs. Middleton sighed. "And her ways, too. I was always full of the very old Nick when I was a girl!" she said. "I could have had my pick of any of the men and then I had to take up with your Pa, who never had no penny to rub up against another!" She shook her head impatiently.

"And that's exactly what Flossie's going to do!" she added after a minute or two. "I don't wish anybody any bad luck, but sometimes I almost wish that Wheeler would blow up with Sam Jessup in it!"

Mary Rose laughed, then suddenly sobered. "If only Flossie is half as happy with Sam as you were with your father, she'll be a lucky girl," she told her mother sensibly.

But Mrs. Middleton couldn't see it that way. For one thing she couldn't see what Flossie could find to like in Sam Jessup! If he were the Prince of Wales, she still would dislike him, she said with spirit.

The clock struck eleven.

"Well, I suppose Flossie's the belle of the ball tonight," Mrs. Middleton remarked, looking up at it.

And Flossie was the belle of the ball that night.

There wasn't a girl at the company's Halloween masquerade who could hold a candle to her.

In her pink dress with its rosebud wreaths and her pink silk stockings and gold slippers, she was spring-time and youth and beauty incarnate.

At least she seemed all of that to Hilary Dexter who, dressed like a clown, watched her as she went, fitting from one corner of the room to another like a sunbeam.

She was not only the belle of the ball but the life of the party. She pumped and she sang. She gave an exhibition of the Charleston in a clearing space in the center of the big shipping room where the party was held.

Some one had put "pep" into the party by putting gin in the punch, and the more of it that Flossie drank the more lively she became.

"Come here, Dex, old kid!" she called to the president of the company, as she collected a crowd together for a tug-of-war. And to the shocked surprise of Miss Minnick, Dexter yelled in answer, "Right-o, Flossie!" and came running heavily to her.

"That won't make much of a bit with Mr. Dexter to have her call out like that to him!" Miss Minnick served acidly to Sam Jessup, who's the president of the company and he ought to be treated with respect."

"That's no joke," Sam answered seriously.

But what neither of them knew was that Hilary Dexter was very, very tired of being treated with respect.

No one in the whole world but Flossie Middleton treated him like a pal, and a playfellow. No one else seemed to forget that he was the head of the company that sold the wonderful Dexter Eight, and that he was worth three million dollars, if he was worth a nickel!

Even his wife, his grown children and the men he played golf with treated him with concealed awe.

But Flossie made him forget that he was rich and successful and 45 years old. She danced with him and laughed with him and at him. Sometimes she slapped his face and called him "fish" when he tried to kiss her. So far he had not kissed her. He almost had, that day on the stairs when Mary Rose had seen them together—almost.

But tonight, as he looked at her, Hilary Dexter felt that he couldn't do without Flossie much longer. He wanted to hold her in his arms—all her sweet, warm slowness crushed close to him—her red mouth that was like a red flower bruised by his kisses. She had played with him long enough.

"Let's ditch this shindig," he said in a low tone to her, as they joined hands in an old-fashioned Virginia reel. She nodded and smiled with a flash of her eyes that were like brilliant blue jewels.

Ten minutes later, wrapped in her thin satin cape, she came down to him, where he waited for her in the shadow of the great building.

"Aren't we wicked to sneak away like this?" she whispered, laughing softly in the darkness. "I don't know what Sam will say when he can't find me."

"He'll probably say that it's funny how we've both disappeared," Dexter answered. "And the rest of them will probably think what he says! We should worry!"

Something in his tone made her look uneasily at him. She wondered if he ought to get into the big car and go riding with him alone. True enough, she had gone with him plenty of times before—but he seemed so queer, tonight. Not

himself at all. And she had had too much of that punch. Her head felt light and dizzy.

"Get in," he said harshly, and in she got.

As they left the town the big clock on the tower of the courthouse pointed to midnight.

"Dingbats!" Flossie exclaimed. "I didn't know it was that late, did you? The party'll be breaking up. We'd better go back."

"Nothing doing," the man answered shortly. "By the time we get back they'd all be gone, anyway."

"But Sam—" Flossie wailed.

"Forget Sam!" Dexter interrupted her. He put out one arm and swept her close beside him. Flossie tried to wriggle away, but he held her in a grip of iron. "Forget Sam. You belong to me."

Flossie made a pert little face at him. "Say! How do you get that way?" she asked. "And please take your arm away from my ribs. Don't forget that I'm the same old touch-me-not girl I always was!"

Her tone was flippant, but her heart was beating wildly. For the first time in her life she was afraid of a man. She was mortally afraid of Hilary Dexter.

She decided at last that perhaps her best plan was to say nothing and let him hold her. She even nestled against him, just to prove to herself that she was not afraid. But she was, for all that.

Ten miles out from town was a shady little road that ran along the banks of a creek, and she knew that Dexter was heading for that

THROUGH ADVICE OF NEIGHBOR

Woman Tried Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

"A neighbor advised me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, which she said helped her so much." So I bought a few bottles and tried it out. It sure helped me wonderfully. I felt much better. My work is no longer a dread to me. If I hear of any one who is troubled the way I was, I will gladly recommend the Vegetable Compound to them and I will answer any letters in regard to the same. —Mrs. Bertha Meacham, 310 Center St., Lansing, Mich.

"I had been sickly every since I was fifteen years old. After taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I got so I could do all my housework and I am in good health." —Mrs. Marie K. Williams, Ketchikan, Alaska.

From Michigan to Alaska, from Maine to Oregon and from Connecticut to California, letters are continually being written by grateful women recommending Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

The compound is made from roots and herbs and has been in use fifty years.



Advertisement for Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, detailing its benefits for various ailments and its long history.



SALESMAN SAM—By SWAN



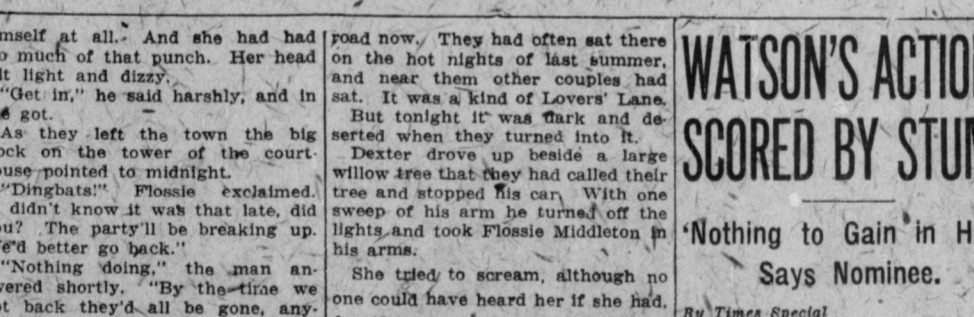
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN



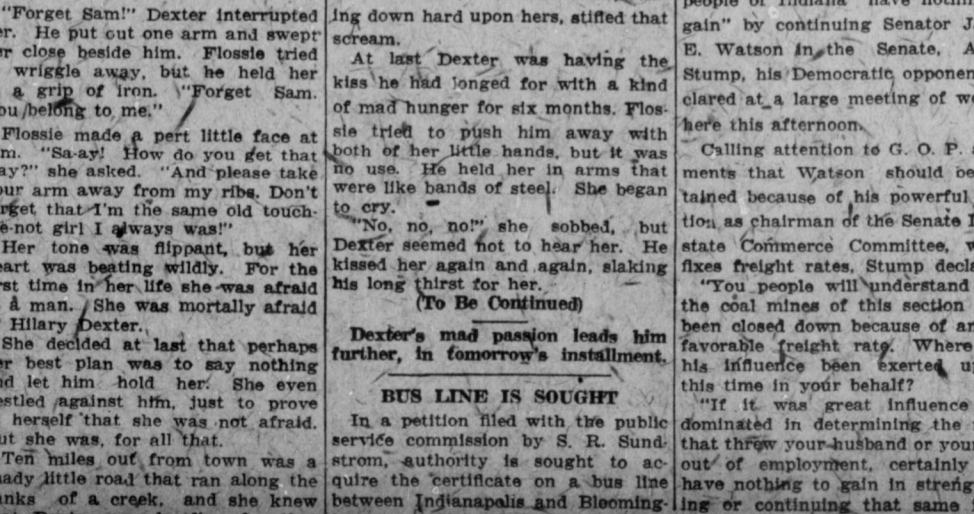
FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



WATSON'S ACTIONS SCORED BY STUMP



SELF-DEFENSE HIS PLEA



THE DETOURISTS



APARTMENT PURCHASED



SHOCK NEARLY FATAL



RESERVES TO EMBARK



FOR Saur Stomach PHILLIPS' Milk of Magnesia

