"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.

READ 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 JOHN MANNERS, the sales manager, and is in love with him. But he's engaged to DORIS HINIG, an heiress. Because of her feeling for him, Mary Rose repeatedly refuses to marry DR. TOM FITZROY.

Flossie, a born vamp, does a very poor job of keeping the office files. Mary Rose discovers that she is carrying on a flirtation with the president of the company, HILARY DEXTER, although she's engaged to marry his secretary, SAM JESSUP. She accepts gifts from Dexter, a married man, and goes joy-riding with him. The girls' mother, MRS. MIDDLETON, can do nothing with her.

John Manners falls in love with Mary Rose, and tells her he'll always care for her, whether or not he marries Doris. The sisters quarrel, and to get even with Mary Rose, Flossie tells Manners that she is "just stringing him along" and really loves Tom Fitzroy, and intends to marry him. Mary Rose wonders at Manners' sudden coldness toward her.

MRS. DEXTER finds Flossie's vanity case in her husband's car. When she comes to the office to tell Dexter she's going to divorce him, she mistakes Mary Rose for Flossie, and loudly accuses her of trying to steal her husband from her. The other stenographers hear the undeserved tongue lashing Mary Rose receives and they snub her. Flossie, the real culprit, begs Mary Rose to take the blame, because if Sam finds out that it was really she who was with Dexter, he'll never marry her. Mary Rose, who prays that Sam will marry Flossie and get her away from Dexter, takes Flossie's blame. Then one night Dexter goes too far in his love making, and Flossie finds out how little respect he has for her. She quits her job and disappears the next day. In the morning, Mary Rose, who has spent a sleepless night, goes to Dexter to ask him if he knows anything about Flossie's disappearance.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Do I know where Flossie is?" Dexter repeated. "Why certainly not, Miss Middleton."

He looked up at her, scowling darkly, and Mary Rose saw that he was telling the truth. But he seemed to her so calm, so careless, about it. Flossie's sudden dropping out of sight was no matter of life or death to him evidently.

"And to think that only a week or so ago he'd hardly let her out of his sight!" Mary Rose said resentfully to herself. It was seldom that she lost her temper, but she lost it completely now.

"I must say that you take it calmly, Mr. Dexter!" she said in a voice that shook. "Especially as it's your fault she's gone—"

"Mine?" he interrupted. "My fault?" He raised his brows, questioningly.

Mary Rose didn't answer for a moment. The sight of him, sitting there, sleek and well dressed and prosperous, in his comfortable chair, enraged her.

While his little love game with Flossie had been at its exciting height, there was nothing he would not do for her! Now, that it was over and she was gone, he was supremely indifferent. Mary Rose quivered all over with righteous fury.

She opened her old leather handbag and took out the special delivery letter he had sent to Flossie yesterday and laid it down on the desk before him.

"Why, you admit yourself in that letter that it's your own fault she's quit her job and you promise to behave yourself if only she'll come back!" she faced him with it.

She watched him while he picked up the letter, looked at it and then slowly tore it to little pieces. He laid them in a white heap on his desk before he spoke again.

"You've read this, you say. And I suppose you've known all along about Flossie and me," he said, his eyes fixed on the pile of white scraps. "Let's see, you even brought the ring I gave her back to me, didn't you?"

Mary Rose nodded. "I wonder what he's driving at now?" she thought.

"Yes, I knew all about it and I did everything I could to stop it, but the one thing I should have done. I didn't tell my mother about it," she said harshly. "I thought that Flossie was clever enough to take care of herself. But no girl's smart enough to take care of herself when some man's after her! Especially when it's the man who holds her job in the palm of his hand! She has to be nice to him or lose it!"

He shook his head. "That isn't true, and you know it," he answered.

Suddenly he stood up and walked across the room toward the windows that faced east. He went on talking to her, with his back turned toward her.

"You say that Flosie wasn't able to take care of herself," he said. "But she was. She knew just what she was doing all of the time and better than anybody! She knew that I was losing my head, but she never lost hers. Not for a single second."

He swung around then, his hands in his pockets, and faced her.

"You're a smart girl, Miss Middleton," he told her. "And if you'll look around this world of business where men and girls meet each other every day you'll notice something—that it isn't always the girl who's the victim of the man. Sometimes the man is the victim of the girl—"

He nodded at her solemnly and Mary Rose saw in a flash that what she had taken for indifference was really grief. He was terribly upset about Flossie and her going away. He sat down heavily at his desk, slouching in his chair. "Where in the devil do you think the darn kid's gone?" he asked dully.

He put out his hand and touched an electric button under the corner of his desk. "Sam doesn't answer," he said. "Just look in the outer office and see if he's down yet. It's after nine."

Mary Rose went to the door and looked for Sam. But he was not in sight.

"As soon as he comes, I'll have him in and ask him about Flossie," Dexter said to Mary Rose, as she opened the hall door to go out. "He ought to know something about her, if anybody does."

Just as she was closing the door, he called her back. "Is Flossie going to marry my secretary?" he asked with a sarcastic smile on his gray face.

"I think so," Mary Rose answered quietly, and he gave her a nod of dismissal. Her last glimpse of him as the door fell to between them showed him sitting as he had been when she went in—staring moodily at the wall opposite his great important looking desk.

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The office was almost empty when Mary Rose went back to it. Miss Minnick was there alone, bent over her desk, apparently lost to the world.

But she straightened suddenly, as if she had swallowed a poker, when she heard what Mary Rose had to say to her.

"Well, Min, here's where you get my job!" was what she said, and even to her own ears, her voice sounded cheerful. It would have taken an expert in expression to know the heartbreak that was behind it.

"Your job!" exploded Miss Minnick, in her thin, grating soprano. "Why, are you leaving?"

"Exactly that," Mary Rose answered, calmly. "I'm going to resign today. Is Mr. Manners down yet?"

"Just came in a minute ago," Miss Minnick answered, with a squeak of excitement. For years she had wanted Mary Rose Middleton's job.

Not only was it the best job in the works for a girl, but far down in her starved old maid's heart, Miss Minnick had a sneaking affection for John Manners. For years she had hated Doris Hinig, and for months she had hated Mary Rose Middleton. She hated anybody that John Manners seemed to care for.

And there was no doubt that he had cared for Mary Rose for a while, at least. Miss Minnick wondered daily what had happened to nip that flowering romance in the bud.

"Probably Mr. Manners found out that she was running around with Mr. Dexter!" was Miss Minnick's final decision.

Before she went into John Manners' office, Mary Rose telephoned her mother to find out if there was any news of Flossie. But there wasn't.

"I'm getting tired of this waiting," Mrs. Middleton's voice came trembling over the wire. "For two pins I'd call up the police. What do I care if the news about her gets into the papers? I want to know where my girl is—" Her voice became thick with sobs.

"Mother—" began Mary Rose, but the loud sobs kept on.

"Mother," she repeated. "Listen to me! Don't do a thing until I get there. I'll be tied up here for about a half hour and then I'll rush home. Now, you just sit down and wait for me. We'll talk it over calmly and decide what to do."

She hung up the receiver and powdered her face in her little vanity mirror before she went into John's office. Even if he did hate her, she didn't like him to see her with black circles of weariness around her eyes.

"Good morning," he greeted her tersely, when she went and laid his letters on his desk.

For the millionth time, I suppose, she noticed how his dark hair swept back from his fine, high forehead, and how firm the line of his lips was. "Even after I don't see him any more I shall be able to see him with my heart," she thought. But there was no flicker of either sorrow or resentment or anything else in her eyes. She had learned to look at him as he looked at her—stonily. And all of the time she was longing to put her arms around him and tell him how much she loved him and that she didn't care about life if she had to go away from him.

Being a woman, and a woman in love, she said the thing that was farthest from her thoughts: "I'm leaving the Dexter Company, Mr. Manners."

A thrill of keen joy swept through her at the look he gave her then. For just an instant she saw, from his face, that what she had said had startled and dismayed him. Then, like shades drawn over a window, the stony look of indifference came down over his face.

"Very well, Miss Middleton," he answered. "When do you leave?"

Her head hurt as if some one had held it very tight and squeezed it.

"I suppose you'd like me to stay long enough to break some one else in to my job, wouldn't you?" she asked.

"I would. But it isn't necessary."

"I will then," she faltered. Now that she had made up her mind to leave the Dexter Company, she hated the thought of going. "I suppose you'll want Miss Minnick, won't you?"

"Miss Minnick will do as well as any one." Nothing could have been more frozen than his voice.

"I'll stay a week longer then—" Mary Rose began, when Miss Minnick herself put her red head in at the door.

"Your mother on the phone, Miss Middleton," she said in her thin, high voice.

Mary Rose picked up her telephone from her desk. "Yes, Mother?" she asked.

Nothing but sobs answered her.

"Mother, I can't understand you—Mary Rose cried. "Please stop crying and talk to me, dear."

Then there came a click in her ear. Mrs. Middleton had hung up.

(To Be Continued)

Mary Rose, her dreams shattered, goes home only to find a sinister telephone message in tomorrow's installment.

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

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Iowa Woman Found Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Always Helpful

"When I was seventeen years old I had to stay at home from school. I finally had to quit school. I was so weak. I suffered for about two years before I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, then I picked up one of your books and read it. I began taking the medicine. Now I am a housekeeper with six children, and I have taken it before each one was born. I cannot tell you all the good I have received from it. When I am not as well as can be I take it. I have been doing this for over thirteen years and it always helps me. I read all of your little books I can get and I tell everyone I know what the Vegetable Compound does for me."—Mrs. Frank Sellers, 510 7th Avenue, Vinton, Iowa.

Many girls in the fourth generation are learning thru their own personal experiences the beneficial effects of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Mothers who took it recommend it to their daughters as a dependable medicine.

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Answers to Your Pile Questions

Do you know why ointments do not give you quick and lasting relief?

Do you know the cause of piles is internal?

That there is a stagnation of blood in the lower bowel?

Do you know that there is a harmless internal remedy discovered by Dr. Leonhardt and know nas HEM-ROID, now sold by Hook's and druggists everywhere, that is guaranteed?

HEM-ROID banishes piles by removing the cause, by freeing blood circulation in the lower bowel. This simple home treatment has an almost unbelievable record for sure, safe and lasting relief to thousands of pile sick sufferers, and saves the needless pain and expense of an operation. Don't delay. Try HEM-ROID today. It will do the same for you.—Advertisement.

Governor Rides a Donkey

Governor George W. P. Hunt of Arizona didn't feel the dignity of his office so keenly but what he was willing to straddle a donkey and head a 49ers' parade at Flagstaff, Ariz. To be sure, he's running for re-election. He has served five terms.

MR. FIXIT

Hole In Street Makes Bicycle Riding Dangerous.

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

Some paved streets are so full of holes that bicycle riding is dangerous, it would appear from a letter Mr. Fixit received today.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: There is a hole in the 1800 block on W. Morris St. that should be fixed immediately. Just last evening a boy going east on Morris St., had an awful fall from a bicycle. If a machine had been following directly behind, the boy would have been injured. It may cause considerable damage if not repaired.

WEST SIDE RESIDENT.

The department of improved streets will make repairs as soon as possible. Early action also is promised by the department on complaints of West Side Citizen, 325 N. Belle Vieu Pl.; J. F. Glass, 719 E. Southern Ave.; Always a Times Reader, 45 S. La Salle St.; B. T. Maguire, 211 E. Fifteenth St.

DEAR MR. FIXIT: There is a tree next door damaging my roof close to the sidewalk. Does the park board take care of those inside the yard? J. M.

If you will provide your name and address to Elbert Moore, chief forester of the park board, whose office is at the city hall, he will investigate at once.

GRAPES APLENTY

CARTHAGE, Mo.—Judging from recent forecast the 1926 grape crop of the Ozark region of Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas will total 1,200 cars, which will net the growers close to $1,000,000. Weather conditions have been ideal for grapes this year. The forecast is for more than double last year's crop.

BOLL WEEVILS HAPPY

WASHINGTON.—Millions of boll weevils are preparing an onslaught on America's cotton. Department of Agriculture experiments show that the infestation of cotton fields will be heavy in the Mississippi Valley region, but light in Texas and the extreme east.

MILLIONS BY ELEVATORS

NEW YORK.More than ten million passengers are carried every night and day on New York's greatest rapid transit system, its thousands of elevators. These run on a 100 per cent grade and carry more people than all the subways, elevated and street car lines, taxicabs and railroads in the city.

BLIND, KILLS MAN

PITTSBURGH, Kan. — Although blind and having only one arm, Roy Atkinson, 21, fought and killed his stepfather. The young man said his stepfather attacked him, because he refused to beg, and that he armed himself with the only available weapon, a window weight. The stepfather had a razor.

HOW SENSIBLE!

MACON, Mo.—When a well-known physician was interviewed on just what people should do when the heat was extreme, he replied, "I'd get in the shade."

Bed-Bugs Killed This Magic Way

Here is the simple and quick way to kill bed-bugs, roaches and fleas: Just pour some of the new chemical discovery—P.D.Q., wherever you find these pests. The moment it touches the insects—they die. Can do no damage to your springs or furniture; won't rot or stain clothing. P.D.Q. is used and recommended by leading hotels, hospitals and railroads as the quickest and safest way of getting rid of pesky insects. Instantly it smothers and kills the living creatures; coats their eggs and stops them from hatching and multiplying. A 35c package of this golden chemical will make a quart of mixture—so deadly it will kill a million bed-bugs. P.D.Q. can also be had in double-strength liquid form—ready for use. Free patent spout enables you to reach hard-to-get-at places with ease. Get P.D.Q. at your druggist's today. Your money back, if the bugs are not gone tomorrow.

Haag, all stores; Hook's, all stores; Goldsmith Bros., all stores.—Advertisement.

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