

Buying Barbara

by Julia Cleft-Addams • Author of "YOU CAN'T MARRY"

SYNOPSIS: Lella Cane learns that Mark Lodely, whom she has loved secretly for years, is cured of his lameness. Barbara Quentin has broken her engagement to Mark's Farrell Armitage, who has devoted much money and time to curing Mark and launching him as an artist, hopes in the end to win Barbara's love. Mark, still in the hospital, is the old arrogant self.

Chapter 45 MARK AS PATIENT

THE house in which Mark Lodely lay strapped immovably into a plaster cast was a little like a hospital as one could expect. Its facade was cheerful and inside it was reasonably quiet.

Mark's room was on the ground floor so that when the weather and his mood permitted he could be wheeled on to a covered porch at the back. Mrs. Lodely visited him daily, Armitage dropped in as seemed necessary, and Kenneth Poole came when he was sent for.

"The sight of me gives him a bad night," Poole had explained solemnly to Armitage. "One of his nurses told me so. It's far better I should keep away and give the dear fellow every chance of recovery."

"Nevertheless, you must be there this afternoon at half-past four. I've asked Lella Cane, too. See she's punctual, will you?"

"Right you are, Guv!"

Armitage entered the building on this foggy day at four o'clock precisely and stood for a moment in the outer hall, taking off his overcoat. The house-doctor, passing on the other side of the glass swinging doors, pulled them open and called a cheery greeting. At his request Armitage followed him into his office.

"How's the patient?" he asked.

"The patient, Mr. Armitage, has reduced two nurses to tears, given me more lip than I've stood from anyone in my life, and thrown a water-jug at his mother. But I understand that's more or less his usual frame of mind."

Armitage grinned.

"He has always had a vicious temper. I'm not an admirer of his character, you know, only of his talent."

"The nurses always report him more cheerful after he has made someone thoroughly wretched," the doctor added. "It's the people whose heart he can't break that depress him so."

Armitage thought it wiser not to reveal that one of these harder-hearted callers was expected punctually at four. He listened attentively while the doctor became lyrical in Sir Robert Philby's praise, and made his way to Mark's room and Mark's inevitable imperfections.

As he entered Mark's room he heard Mark's voice, thin and dry with temper.

"How can you possibly write my letters for me when you misspell every other word? And how do you know I have any to write unless you've been reading my correspondence?"

"That's a downright wicked thing to say, Mark! You know I'd never do such a thing. I have my faults but spyn' and ferretin' is not amongst them. Hello, here's Farrell! Do you—" Mrs. Lodely looked doubtfully from the visitor to the patient—"do you feel like seeing Farrell?"

Mark's head turned on its one flat pillow.

"My dear Judy, if it weren't for Armitage's bounty I shouldn't be here at all. He smiled, the smile that slightly showed his teeth and narrowed his eyes. "The question of whether I want to see you or not, Armitage, doesn't really arise. Does it?"

"Mark! You know, Farrell, it's had a bad night, that's all it is. He doesn't mean half he says."

Armitage sat down by the wheeled couch. His aversion was for the moment more from the mother than from the son. How unpleasant she was in appearance, so slovenly and down at heel! She wore an ill-made grey suit, a brown blouse under it and a tie that matched neither. Her hat looked as though it were too small for her.

"As you see, my mother brings a breath of dear old Kings Mallard into all this luxurious monotony," murmured Mark and not for the first time Armitage uncomfortably contemplated the fact that his thoughts had been read.

"The monotony we can none of us lighten, I'm afraid, Lodely. You must just count the days. Look on them as an investment."

"That's what I'm always tellin' him," burst in Mrs. Lodely. "I don't believe he realizes yet what you've done for him, Farrell, I don't really. After all, it takes a bit of thinkin' about when you've been a cripple all your life, to imagine yourself walkin' easily. Like explainin' sight to a blind man; it can't be done."

Mark had shut his eyes when this torrent began and did not open them as he addressed Armitage.

"I think I should be able to express my gratitude better if I could get some idea of your motive. Not personal liking; I am sure I may still take it that your motive is not personal liking. And not the desire to be a patron-saint. No. It is the old puzzle. I suppose it will never be solved."

"I'm ready to solve it now, as it happens."

Mrs. Lodely gaped from one man to the other in a vague alarm. Mark's eyes flew open. Yes, there was fear in them. Poor devil.

"Some other time!" he suggested, waving a hand. "Unless you feel that you absolutely cannot wait for that gratitude of mine any longer?"

"Now, Mark, you're just rillin' Farrell for no reason whatever. You—"

"It's all right, Mrs. Lodely. I take a lot of riling. And your son is perfectly right in requiring some kind of statement from me. He has asked for it often enough and it's only fair that at last he should have it."

"I don't like statements," Mark's voice rose fretfully. "Really, Armitage, I don't feel up to this police-court atmosphere. Let us say that you deserve my most abject devotion for everything you have done for me, for whatever reason, and let us leave it at that. He smiled, a sick child hugging its grievances. Armitage looked at him with forbearance.

"I'm sorry, but I'm going to make myself clear whether you like it or not. If you genuinely don't wish to listen, you'd better put your fingers in your ears." But Armitage did not turn to Mrs. Lodely, now edging nervously. He went on talking to Mark. "My first confession is no news to your mother and, I suspect, no news to you. I fell in love with Barbara at sight and on the first available occasion I asked her to marry me."

Mark's color came back. Armitage's old suspicion became certainty. Mark had guessed his love for Barbara long ago.

"You tried to take my girl behind my back? How typical! Would you have done that, I wonder, if I had not had a crutch to drag about with me?"

"You can wonder that, if you like," said Armitage equably. "The point is, of course, that if I'd thought she genuinely cared for you and you could have given her some kind of happiness, I should have got out without a word. But I didn't think life with you would be anything but hell for her."

Mark's smile grew. Mrs. Lodely, apparently from embarrassment, laughed loud and long.

"Barbara seemed to admit that it would be hell," went on Armitage, when she was quiet again, "but she insisted that her feeling for you was, if not love, something as great as love and as eternal."

"Well, I must say, you young folks talk things out pretty freely!" Mrs. Lodely got up, knocked a vase of flowers over, and sat down again. "I s'pose it does no harm in a way, but I don't know I'm sure, it quite takes me aback."

"Go on, Armitage."

"My challenge to Barbara was that if she could see you well, successful, popular, financially secure, she would perhaps no longer feel bound to you in the particular way in which she did feel bound."

"Your challenge, did you say?"

"My challenge, yes. I said that I would make you all those things if she, in return, would promise not to marry you for a year."

"But Barbara never—but dear old Babs would never—"

"Shut up, Judy, can't you?"

"The problem of your gratitude need therefore never arise, Lodely. You owe me nothing because what I have done has been done for my own purpose. If I fail, you will still owe me nothing. If I win—"

BIG DELEGATION WILL WITNESS DEDICATION C. P. CHEESE FACTORY

A. C. Hubbard, chairman of the agricultural committee of the Medford chamber of commerce, announced this afternoon that Medford

will be represented at the opening of the new cheese factory in Central Point on Saturday of this week, and urged that Medford business and professional men make a special effort to attend the opening ceremonies, which will be held at the Central Point grange hall at noon, Saturday.

Those expecting to attend from Medford are asked to meet at the chamber of commerce building at 11:45, and to make the journey to Central Point in a caravan.

The Central Point grange will have charge of the dedication ceremonies, with John Anderson presiding. Short addresses, a luncheon, musical entertainment, and a trip through the new establishment, will feature the program.

90-YEAR-OLD INDIAN POLICEMAN BURIED

CASHMERE, Wash., Feb. 2.—(AP)—Cam Sam, 90-year-old policeman of the Wenatchee Indian tribe, was buried today beside the graves of his seven sons, seven daughters and his parents. The aged Indian died yesterday after a long illness.

PORT OF PORTLAND PROBE AGREED ON

SALEM, Feb. 2.—(AP)—Chairman Etee Snedecor of the Multnomah

delegation in the legislature will this afternoon appoint a committee of seven delegation members to sift charges growing out of alleged financial irregularities of the port of Portland and out of which grek petition for receivership.

This committee will report to the delegation next Tuesday. This procedure was voted at a delegation meeting today at which it was held

after debate that an investigation was a proper function of the delegation.

New spring dresses, \$1.95 to \$5.95. New spring shoes, \$1.95 to \$3.95. New hats amazingly low priced. "The Store that saves you money." The Band Box and Shoe Box. Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Betty Feels Neglected!



BOUND TO WIN—Discovered!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Oh Well!!

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



Phoenix Grange Will Celebrate
PHOENIX, Feb. 2.—(Sp.)—Special plans are being made for next meeting of Phoenix grange, Feb. 14. This will be the second birthday anniversary of the Phoenix grange.

Pasco Hotel Has \$25,000 Fire Loss
PASCO, Wash., Feb. 2.—(AP)—Damage amounting to about \$25,000 was caused here yesterday when fire broke out in the Pasco hotel. Twenty guests fled by fire escapes as great clouds of smoke blocked stairways. Insurance partly covered the loss.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation