

# Buying Barbara

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

**SYNOPSIS:** Farrell Armitage tells Mark Lodely that he has launched his career as artist and paid for the operation that will cure his lameness so that Barbara O'Quinn, Mark's former fiancée, could choose fairly between them. Mark's mother desires that Barbara would consent to such an agreement, but Mark orders her to "shut up!"

### Chapter 44

#### "COMIC OPERA PIFFLE"

"It's all very well for Mark to tell me to shut up!" thrust in Mrs. Lodely. "But I don't see why I shouldn't say I never heard anything so fantastic in all my life. And you can't deny that I warned you, Farrell, didn't I? I said Babs has never had a thought apart from Mark, I said. But I daresay you're one of the stubborn sort, you'd rather take a toss at a hedge than go round by a gate."

"One moment, Mrs. Lodely, Mark wants to say something."

"It's hardly worth my saying. But do you happen to know, Armitage, that on the very day of my operation Barbara was begging me, to be thoroughly ungentle, badgering me into marrying her in a few days' time?"

"I know that," Armitage was determined to keep cool. "She thought that I wasn't keeping my part of our compact."

green, deep pool, winking in the light of the fire. "Unfortunately, I'm not in a condition to hawk it for sale. You don't happen to collect emeralds, Armitage?"

"I don't, but I'll buy this one."

"Poor old Armitage!" crooned Mark. "You aren't prevent my being able to afford Barbara a ring."

"Of course I aren't! Any more than you dare prevent my sending her flowers and books—"

"The devil you do!"

"You and I," continued Armitage cheerfully writing "Mark Lodely, Esq." on the blank check—"you and I are now, as a result of my machinations, rivals of equal distinction for a lady's hand. I shall hang about her unashamedly for the agreed time. If she still won't have me, I shall clear out of the country."

"And try and steal a girl from some other poor devil of a cripple!" Mark's sudden rage was upon him. "You know you've pretended to be so cursedly open and unashamed and all that, but you've played a low-down game and you know it. God, if I had strength, I'd give you the damndest hiding!"

"You may have that strength yet. When you have, remember that it was I who bought it back for you."



"Marriage with Barbara would be advantageous to Mark."

"She thought you were deliberately dragging me down to your level," contributed Mark and shook with genuine mirth.

"But now our compact is renewed. The day will come when she will quite definitely choose you or me."

"Babs'll marry Mark! Anything else is out of the question. Of course Babs'll marry Mark!" Mrs. Lodely's face had mottled painfully.

"She may marry neither of us," suggested Mark, still immensely amused. Armitage smiled with equal good humor.

"That, at the moment, seems the most probable. She admits she doesn't care for me. And she sends you this message: that she wants her engagement to you definitely and publicly broken." And Armitage laid upon the table, next to the tumbled vase, the emerald in its platinum web.

There was a dead silence. Mrs. Lodely, from whom immediate clamor might have been expected, sat and gaped. The red patches on her face grew deeper. Mark put out a finger and touched the jewel idly. At last—

"I'd absolutely forgotten I ever gave her the thing," he said just above his breath, and Armitage had the impression that he meant it.

His indifference loosened Mrs. Lodely's tongue.

"If you'll excuse me sayin' so, Farrell, you'd do better not to mix yourself up in this. Of course, feelin' as you do about Barbara, it's natural you should hope she's done with Mark, but believe me, they're had these tiffs before and they always make 'em up again. Don't you, Mark? And as for the emerald, Babs never liked it and I think it's very sensible of her to send it back. If I were you, Mark, I'd sell it and buy her something she'd like better. Why not give her a nice ring? She'll feel more like other engaged girls then."

There was another long silence. "That's really rather a good idea," commented Mark at last. Again he peered at the stone, a

Mark muttered furiously and was silent.

"Remember also that it was through your behavior and not mine that she broke off her engagement to you."

"Comic-opera piffle! She does that kind of thing. Makes me sick, looking coy and pulling at a daisy, she loves me—she loves me not! But I've always told her I won't endure it and I won't endure it now!" His voice rose wildly.

"Though I suppose that, while I'm on my back here, you'll feel free to cook up any lies against me that you think she'll swallow. What is she doing? Where is she? I haven't even an address to write to. You're deliberately keeping her away from me!"

"Headily! Las' week I brought her up from Kings Mallard, where she has wound up her affairs. She is at Miss Raoul's house in St. John's Wood, busy redecorating it. How much did you say you wanted for the emerald?"

"Four hundred and fifty," muttered Mark sulkily; and as Armitage calmly inscribed the amount in words and in figures Mrs. Lodely, who had opened her mouth, shut it again. But the tips of her ears glowed red. The check changed hands and Armitage slipped the emerald back into his pocket; and at once Mrs. Lodely began to talk at the top of her voice, possibly to drown the sound of the transaction.

"It's absurd even to think of Barbara seriously breakin' with Mark," she announced. "Why, they're been devoted to each other since they were children! Mark's father made Babs promise—"

"You and I, Mrs. Lodely, are the last people in the world to prophesy Barbara's actions. I'm anxious to believe the engagement broken because I want to marry her myself. You're anxious to think it at I exist because—"

Armitage paused, then added deliberately, "because you think marriage with Barbara would be financially advantageous to your son."

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Farrell, tomorrow, builds up an amazing situation in Mark's hospital room.

## LINCOLN BANQUET SLATED FEB. 13TH

Members of the Lincoln club met at the Medford hotel Wednesday afternoon and decided to hold the nineteenth annual banquet on Monday evening, Feb. 13th, at 7 p. m. and appointed the different committees to complete arrangements.

A first class banquet will be served for 750 this year by the Medford Hotel, and the dues for the club have been reduced from 500 to 250, making the price for the banquet and dues only \$1, the lowest ever known for this the biggest and best banquet of each year. Tickets will be on sale Friday of this week and the places where they can be obtained will be announced then.

The fancy work committee reported several pairs of pillow cases handed out to be embroidered and one quilt finished. They plan to start more quilts soon.

About 24 members from Eagle Point Grange attended Pomona Grange at Medford last Saturday. They report a pleasant and profitable day.

At the next meeting of Eagle Point Grange, the lecturer announces a very enjoyable program to be presented. Besides several numbers by members, there will be a special feature. The "Medford Gleemen" have promised us several numbers, and will be followed by talks from Medford businessmen.

Everyone is urged to plan to attend on Tuesday evening, February 7.

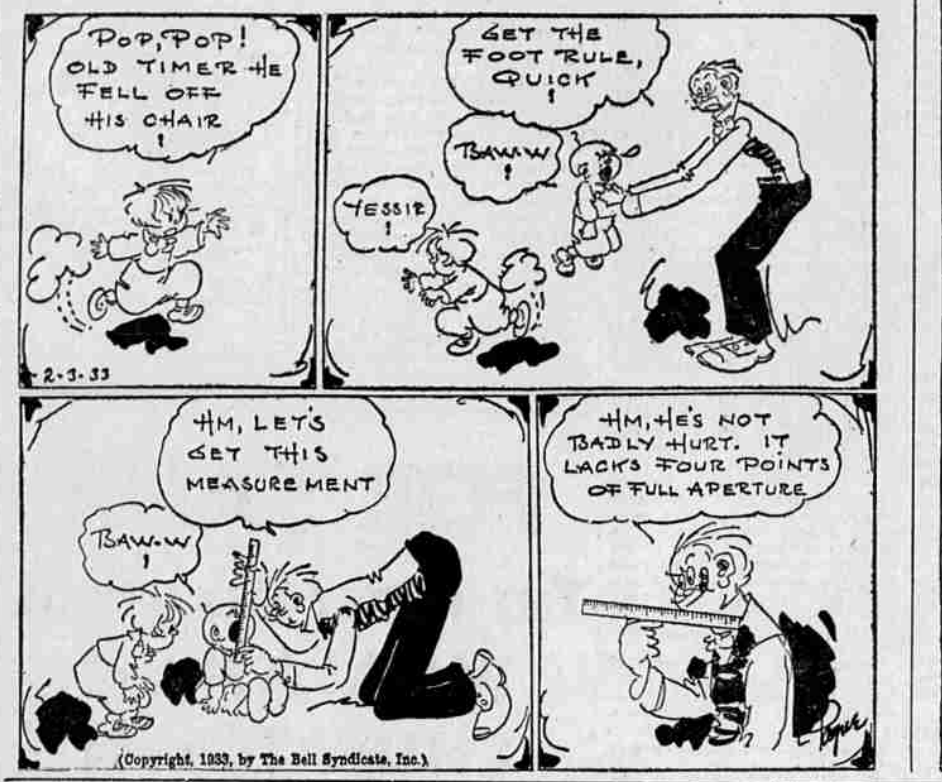
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Several members of the H. E. club braved the snow and ice and met at the home of Mrs. Chas. Humphrey last Wednesday. They report a very pleasant afternoon with the regular business of the month taken care of.

PORTLAND, Ore., Feb. 2.—(AP)—A new definition of technocracy, as presented by John C. Stevens, Portland engineer, in an address before the Portland Rotary club: "Technocracy is just Russian communism with spats."

### SMATTER POP—

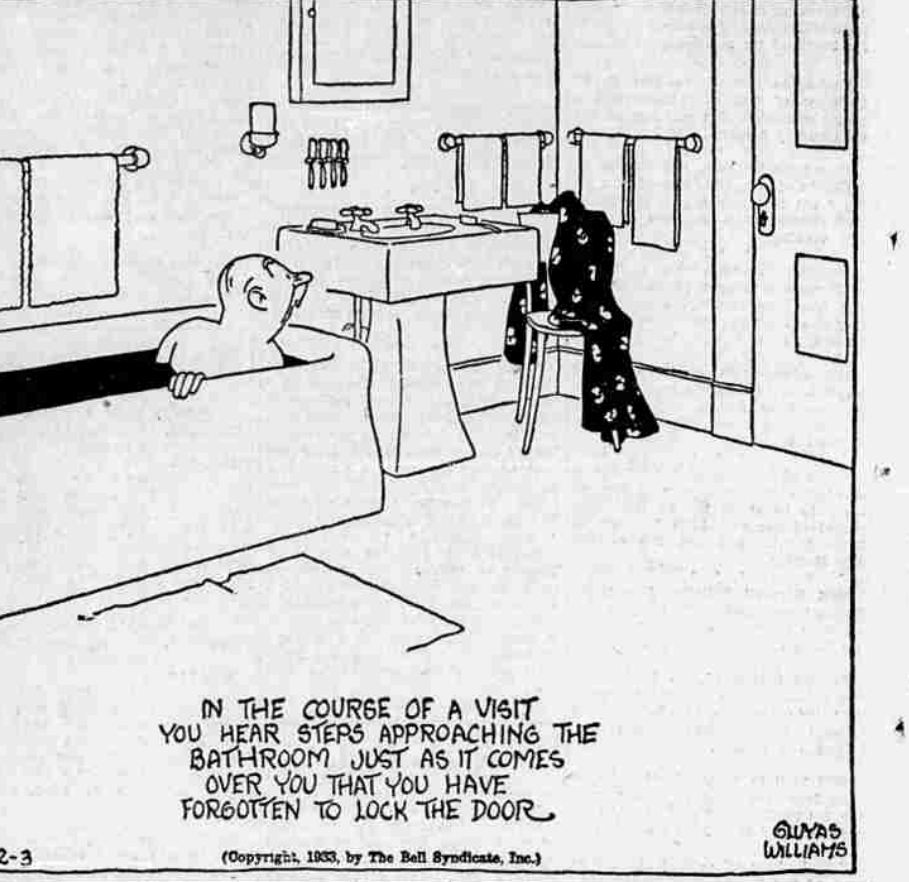
By C. M. PAYNE



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### BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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**COOS BAY OIL WELL SEEPAGE STARTLES**

MARSHFIELD, Ore., Feb. 2.—(AP)—Work on the Coast Oil company's project near Coquille was at a standstill today awaiting arrival of the president, W. E. Morrison, from Los Angeles. Several barrels of crude oil found in the 100-foot casing removed from the bottom of the 1600-foot shaft yesterday, is believed to have been seepage accumulated during the past four months of inactivity.

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