

Buying Barbara

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

SYNOPSIS: Farrell Armitage at last finds the girl of his dreams, Barbara, whom he has made successful and well-to-do. Farrell tells Mark that from now on it is a fair fight between them for the love of Barbara's former fiancée, Barbara Quentin. Mark's mother insists it is ridiculous to imagine Barbara marrying anyone but Mark. Farrell declares she feels so because she believes it to be Mark's financial advantage to marry Barbara.

Chapter 45
THE DRAMA GOES ON

WHAT, my dear Armitage, do you imagine you're talking about now?"

The jibe came from Mark. Armitage took a long look at him and confirmed his original opinion that Mark had never been party to this precious piece of his mother's opportunism.

"Just what I was going to ask—what are you talking about?" Mrs. Lodely had gone rather grey round the mouth; she was clenching at a semblance of composure.

"I'm talking about what is in a sense ancient history—the sale of some shares by Barbara's mother to a certain purchaser a few days before Lionel Quentin's death."

Mrs. Lodely made an unattractive sound, something between a growl and a cough.

"What's behind this, Judy?"

"Nothing. All nonsense. I'm sure I don't know."

"It's quite useless to expect my mother to enlighten me. Armitage. If there's anything you want me to know, you'd better out with it."

"I intend to out with everything. But I'd rather leave details to Poole, who'll be here in a minute. The outline of what he has to say is this. A Kings Mallard firm of whom we have all heard—"

"Quentin, Lodely and Cane?"

"Quentin, Lodely and Cane, crashed. The details of their crash don't matter—"

"Oh, don't they indeed!" snorted Mrs. Lodely with complete and furious irrelevance. "They mattered to you, young man, for if the firm hadn't made good every last penny they'd lost, you'd never have had a farthing of all your father left you! And they mattered to my poor husband and what went and blew out his brains! Walked out into the garden, poor old boy, without a word of goodbye to me; the only person he said anything to was Babs and he said to her—"

"Judy!"

She checked herself, eyeing her son with fear. "You'll either keep quiet or I'll have you put out. Understand?" Mark's eyes were blank with anger. "I'm sure I'm all right! All right, Mark!"

"Go on, Armitage."

There were voices at the door and Poole entered in Lella. Armitage rose, well-pleased by his own management.

"Glad you could come, Lella! We're discussing—er—won't you sit down?"

She gave him her characteristic tilt of the head and walked to the wheeled couch.

"How's the mentality today, Mark? Malignant?"

Mark brushed away her hand.

"Sit down somewhere and keep quiet," he directed. "For the first time Armitage is managing to interest me and I wish he would get on with the yarn. I feel it's going to be a very personal one, full of nasty digs at everybody except me. I burn to hear more."

She started round and looked from Armitage to Poole, who, by chance, was still in front of the door.

"What kind of a tea-party is this, Kenneth?" she demanded. The bloom on her golden skin faded a little.

Poole cast an odd glance at his employer. Never before had there been anything but impersonal loyalty in his eyes but now Armitage, remorseful, read reproach in them. He blamed himself for putting this job on the lad; though how he was to have suspected Poole—Poole, the gay invulnerable—his sworn to himself and gestured his secretary to the fire.

"At least I'm allowed to make a dash for the door," murmured Lella. She put her hand round her shoulders again and though she felt cold, called, and turned her usual mockery upon Mrs. Lodely. "I rather believe you and I are going to sink or swim together, Judy," she confided. "Probably sink."

"Anything I've done was because it seemed right at the time," affirmed Mrs. Lodely, twisting an already crumpled handkerchief between her fingers. "And, anyway, what Barbara's affairs have got to do with you, Farrell, I don't know."

"Right," admitted Farrell. "Barbara knows nothing about it, as yet."

"Anything I did—"

"Quite so!" said Armitage. "The point is that something you said to me not so very long ago and something Lella said to me at South-the-Water made me curious as to the reason why, after the firm of Quentin, Lodely and Cane went under, the personal fortune of Sir James Cane should have increased. I've looked into the matter."

"There's no point in my explaining how we came by those facts," Armitage tapped a slip of paper and wished Lella had not sat down between Mrs. Lodely's chair and Mark's couch. She made him feel more of a showman than ever. "Once one knows the kind of thing to look for, it's generally easy to find. There are very few ways, really, in which a professional man can suddenly fag his capital."

"Very few ways in which he'd need anyone like Judy to help him," added Mark with infinite malice.

"I never helped him!" exploded Mrs. Lodely. "What I did is nothing to what he did! If Lella didn't mind my sayin' so, her father's a—"

Armitage began to speak quickly. His main desire to get most of it said before Mrs. Lodely gave tongue once more.

"Both Mr. Quentin and Mr. Lodely appear to have thrown every penny they could muster into the resources of the firm. Mrs. Quentin even tried to sell a parcel of shares which she had herself bought for very little and, one imagines, as an act of charity. These shares represented a nominal holding of fifty thousand pounds in a company which is now, by chance, one of my own. Nominal," he repeated as Mrs. Lodely opened her mouth.

"Actually, in the time of the firm's need, Mrs. Quentin could not get even fifty pounds for them. And yet after the dissolution of the firm and only a week before her husband's death, she did find a buyer for them. They changed hands for five hundred pounds and became the property of Sir James, then Mr. Cane. I should say here that they were shares in a gold-mining venture."

Poole lit a cigarette. The scrape of the match drew Mark's head round upon his pillow.

"Smoke gives me a headache, Poole."

Poole did not put out his cigarette. He appeared not to hear Mark.

"A month later it became known that a gold-seam had been opened up in the mine and the shares jumped to par. Sir James' profit after he had sold the shares again, and incidentally re-capitalized his other interests, was a not inconsiderable one. The question occurred to us, had he been given inside information?"

Mrs. Lodely thumped the table and the vase which she had already knocked over now rolled to the floor.

"Forty-five thousand and five hundred pounds," she declared hoarsely. "Common fraud, it was, if Lella don't mind my sayin' so. And some of it would have come to Mark!"

"Why?" asked Mark coldly.

"Because Mrs. Quentin would have let us have some of it! With all her odd ways, she'd never have left me and Mark to nearly starve if she'd got fifty thousand pounds in the bank! That's what I've said from the first, it's just a matter of common justice. I said Mark and Babs marryin' because what's hers'll be his."

"And as soon as ever those two were married and nicely settled I was goin' to see Cane myself and make him put matters straight."

She glared at Farrell. "Why you couldn't have left well alone, I don't know. No one asked you to interfere."

"How did you know, exactly, Mrs. Lodely?" asked Farrell quietly.

"Sylvia Quentin told me about the shares, and sellin' 'em and all, after her husband died. And I saw there was a gold boom and told her, and she asked Cane, and he admitted it, and said he'd taken a chance, and it'd come off. But I remembered him stickin' a telegram in his pocket in a hurry one day he'd come to call on poor Lionel Quentin, and I thought 'I bet that wire gave him the tip.'"

"You didn't tell anybody, I take it," said Farrell.

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The tangled tragedy, tomorrow, rises to a new climax.

FORUM WILL HEAR WONDERLANDERS TUESDAY EVENING

February forum meeting of the Medford Chamber of Commerce will be held in connection with the Rotary club meeting Tuesday at the Hotel Medford, according to information released last night by A. P. Johnson, chairman of the forum committee. Speakers will include representatives of the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association.

E. B. Hall of Klamath Falls, president of the association and will cover in his address the work being done by the Wonderland group in the promotion of tourist travel in and through the region covered by the organization, extending from Mt. Lassen Volcanic national park on the south to Crater Lake national park on the north.

Tom L. Stanley, general manager, will also speak.

Six counties in northern California and three southern counties of Oregon—Jackson, Klamath and Lake—are included in the organization setup and an effective method for distribution and publication of tourist literature was worked out last year.

It is expected that visitors at the Tuesday meeting will include not only the speakers mentioned, but also other business men from Klamath Falls and Redding, who are interested in the promotion of tourist travel. Tom Cunniff, field secretary for the Wonderland association, who spent some time in Medford during the latter part of 1932, will be included in the group.

The forum will convene at 12:10 and will adjourn at 1:15. A cordial invitation is extended to all business men to attend the meeting, which promises to be a most interesting one, was the statement made by Mr. Johnson.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4.—(AP)—President Hoover today named John C. Jensen of Nebraska to be a member of the radio commission, and at the same time reappointed Eugene Sykes of Mississippi to continue as a radio commissioner.

PORTLAND, Ore., Feb. 4.—(AP)—Captain Wayne Gurdane of the state police, who in February, 1931, as a Umatilla county deputy sheriff aided in the arrest of two men wanted for murder in Georgia, left last night for Rome, Ga., to appear as a witness in their trial.

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S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—In Southern Skies

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Alarm

By EDWIN ALGER



SNAPSHOTS OF A MAN GETTING DRESSED

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



THE NEBBS—And Then What?

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



RURAL RESIDENTS IN HURRY TO GAIN VOTE

There were 48 new registrations, the majority from rural districts. Ten attended they reside in Medford proper, and five on Medford rural routes. Two reside in the Ashland district on star routes. Nine registered from Rogue River, five from Trail, two from Eagle Point, three from Phoenix, two from Talent, one from Prospect, one from Beagle and three from Central Point.

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