

Buying Barbara

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

Chapter 48. THE SOLUTION

THERE was a long silence. The vicar's stick leaned idle against his knee. Barbara began to wonder whether the old man had gone to sleep. When he moved, however, and eyed her from under the wide shadow of his hat, she saw that he was very much awake.

"What's in the back of your head, my dear Barbara, is that, in the end, the only reason Farrell has not been able to buy you is that he has too much money?"

She frowned.

"Well, in a way. Yes. Perhaps. Yes, I suppose his strength is, fundamentally, money."

"Then I have a piece of directly heaven-sent news for you. Most of the Armitage fortune went in the Motrie crash last week. Farrell isn't penniless, but he will have to fight his way up the ladder again, and as he was born quite halfway up, to start with he is going to find climbing a very humiliating and bitter thing."

There was another long silence. Then—

"What did you say about Farrell?" stammered Barbara.

"Oh, nonsense; you heard me perfectly," returned the vicar. "Get up and run along and find him; your brain will begin to work once you are moving. I left him right at the top of the house packing up a case of little fancy-dress dolls. A wedding present, I gathered, for you and Mark."

"You swear this isn't pity, Barbara?"

"It isn't pity."

"Because I'm no Mark. I don't want support. I never will let you carry me along with your own career. I'm down now, but I'll be up again. I'll give you pearls yet, and I shall loathe it if you can afford them before I can. I suppose it's pride, but I'm not used to poverty—"

"You gave me a year to learn that I should be happier married to you than to Mark. Now the year is up, and I've come to tell you you were right. I want to marry you. Do you will want me? Or not?"

"Do you love me, Barbara? As I love you?"

"I love you—in my own fashion. I can't love otherwise. Isn't it enough?"

In this empty room nothing seemed to register as real and actual, except, for some reason, Farrell's hands. "His—very hands hurt just now." Yes, his hands were the hands of a man easily hurt. Whereas Mark's hands were strong and greedy and clever, these were trained only to physical combat or to social ease. They looked helpless, now, fumbling with a tiny silk-clad doll.

"No, better get it clear," said Barbara, as though the old vicar were at Farrell's elbow. "Perhaps my kind of love isn't enough for you. I can't pretend, you see, to be other than I am. Farrell, that first night when we found Lella's portrait in the Toxeter house you said that when Mark was well and rich and enjoying life I should be free to choose. Spirit-free. That's come true. But you said I'd choose you. That didn't come true until now that you may have need of me."

"Then it is pity?"

"What if it is? If I can't love you until I can help you, why should you be hurt by that? You say you fell in love with me at first sight, but I think you loved your own idea of what you were to make me. I am not like that, I can't be hung with pearls at the end of your battles. I must be in the battle, too. And I think that if all that is pity you will just have to endure it as I shall have to endure your pride and your stupid little sorenesses."

"But perhaps," added Barbara, suddenly all gaily because of the surrender in his empty hands, "you would like a year in which to come to see that I am right?"

At six o'clock punctually Lella ceased to be the best-dressed girl at Malavia's and, stepping westwards, became rapidly more and more outmoded. Bond Street saw her in definitely last year's garb, and when

a car drew up beside her as she waited to cross Piccadilly and a voice spoke her name she wondered only which it was of the De Capo dragon-flies that hovered for a moment to tease her and then be gone.

"Get in, please, Lella!"

It was Mark. As she got in she reflected that she had not seen him for months. She sank back upon the pale cushions of his car and, pushing her hat further from her face, passed her hands over her face in an effort to rub away some of her fatigue.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mark, instantly querulous. "You aren't going to cry, are you? If you are, get out again, that's all! Crying women look like hens."

"I'm moved, but not to tears," Lella assured him. "I sent my congratulations by Barbara, Mark. Did you get them?"

"Are you talking about this?" He thrust a crumpled paper at her. "This morning's paper? D'you know I've only just read it?"

Lella eyed him over the top of her powder-puff.

"Well, another time ask them to wake and call you earlier, call you earlier, mother dear."

He hung the paper to the floor.

"You stupid fool! I was with Paty last night at the De Capo, and we went wandering off into the country afterwards, I forgot why. Only came back to St. John's Wood an hour ago. I've been trying to get hold of Barbara."

"You sound as though you weren't pleased that she has chosen you, after all."

"Chosen?" Mark was livid. "Of all the blessing, sickening insolence, whistling me up in front of all my friends like that!"

"Are you trying to tell me that you didn't send that announcement to the papers?"

"I certainly didn't!"

"But you've been hanging round her ever since your cure, you've been trying to cut out Farrell Armitage, you've been— Don't you want to marry Barbara?"

"Yes, I do. At least I suppose I do. In a way. But when I choose. Not when she chooses."

"Barbara didn't send that announcement, Mark. She thought it was your doing."

Mark gasped. For a moment he looked like his mother.

"She was angry about it," continued Lella slowly. "So angry that she went off early this morning and definitely promised to marry Farrell."

"That's a lie!"

"No. It isn't. And, anyway, you won't help any by hurting my wrist. She phoned the senior partner at Jacques Malavia's and asked him to tell me. Apparently she and Farrell are going to join Kenneth Poole in South Africa. . . Oh, Mark!"

Mark had let her wrist go and was huddling into his corner of the car. His shoulders trembled.

"Oh, Mark, don't! Are you crying, Mark?" Sight and sound became fluid for Lella, merging into her desperate hope. "Don't care so much, Markie; marry me instead, we'll have lots of fun yet. You won't find me boring, you know."

"Get out!" ordered Mark thickly.

He swung open the door, but he did not order his chauffeur to stop. Lella, her eyebrows very arched, waited. Mark shut the door sulkily.

"All right!" he grumbled. "We'll get married, then, and before they do. That'll be something. Did you know Armitage has gone broke? He told me yesterday. Do you imagine he sent the announcement?"

"No, I don't."

"Who, then?"

She shook her head. Paty? Judy? No. No. Her chaotic mind rejected both of them. Mr. Frere? Just possibly, Mr. Frere?

Then Mark, too, was saying something about Mr. Frere.

"—told me I ought to marry you, not Barbara. So that naturally I decided I'd be damned if I did. But probably we shan't have enough money to stay married long. It's a pity you threw away that emerald. I might have sold it back to Barbara."

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REDS FIND RUSSIA MISMANAGED TOO

PORTLAND, Ore., Feb. 9.—(AP)—Ranting reds and belligerent Bolsheviks who praise Russia to the disadvantage of this government, may find a moral in a statement issued today by B. P. Bonham, district immigration director.

Theodore Sauso, another employee of Toveri, is in a Russian prison cell because he, too, declared the country was not being run to suit him.

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BUILDING & LOAN FIRMS ALL SOLID

PORTLAND, Feb. 9.—(AP)—If a bill before the legislature becomes a law, the Union, Prudential and Federal Savings Loan Associations of Portland may be returned to their shareholders, James W. Mott, state

CHILLY WEATHER ROUTS TOURISTS

SALEM, Feb. 9.—(AP)—The January registration report of the non-resident division of the secretary of state's office showed that the greater part of transient travel in Oregon last month was drifting south to warmer areas.

In spite of the unusual cold and wintry conditions in the northwest, tourist permits were issued to 1,555 visiting motorists last month. Nearly two-thirds of the total registrations were from northwestern localities. The state of Washington supplied 818 visiting cars.

THE FAMILY ALBUM—THE MESSAGE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Lucky Tackle!



BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Great Idea



THE NEBBB—What Do You Think Of That?



BRINGING UP FATHER



DRUNKEN CHARGE Brings \$10 Fine

John T. Adams of California was fined \$10 in city court Wednesday when he appeared on a charge of drunkenness. Willis Turpin, who also appeared before Judge A. D. Curry on an intoxication charge today, was asked to return Friday for his sentence.

BOLIVIANS ASSEMBLE FOR RENEWED ATTACK

ASUNCION, Paraguay, Feb. 9.—(AP)—The newspaper Diario today said it had learned that General Hans Kundt, directing Bolivian forces against Paraguay in the Gran Chaco struggle, is assembling a new Bolivian army of 18,000 men to re-attack Port Mankwa (Ayala).

PIERCES TO ATTEND INAUGURATION RITES

PORTLAND, Feb. 9.—(AP)—Walter M. Pierce, democratic congressman-elect from the eastern Oregon district, said here today he and Mrs. Pierce will leave for Washington, D. C., Feb. 19 to attend the inauguration of President Roosevelt.

Before the expected special session of congress shortly thereafter Pierce plans to attend a meeting of the democratic national committee of which he is the Oregon member.

As congressman, he said, he aspires to a place on the house committee on agriculture.

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