

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

CHAPTER I-A
HER eyes blurred. Barrett saw her lips tremble. "But what is it that's set you to thinking about all this?" he asked, leaning toward her.

"Well, partly it's seeing so much of Dick's family and finding out how they feel about things. The Radnors are so truthful it's almost a trial to dine with them. The other day Dick found a new servant had lied and—be dismissed her!"

"He didn't love her," Barrett pointed out, smiling a little. "No, but could he love anyone who lied?" Marcia questioned.

"My dear!" Barrett leaned forward to lay a hand upon her. "I'm so happy for you!" She smiled and for a moment the smile dispelled the somberness that could so easily eclipse her dark Spanish beauty. Her hand turned beneath his to grip his fingers.

"Thanks, Barry. Sweet of you. But what I wanted to say—Dick's—my child—must not be threatened!"

"How?" he asked, perplexed. "I don't follow you."

"Well, Mr. Dexter brought the boy to town the other day," she stated.

"But I don't see—"
"He brought him to see me. He presented himself—and the child—in the most assured manner. Dwight was away, thank heaven! A new maid whom I dismissed immediately let him in. Mr. Dexter said he thought I would want to see my brother's ward. There was something in the way he said it. Barry—"

"I'll attend to that," Barrett promised angrily. "What happened?"

"Well, he said your check for his salary had been delayed and that he needed the money."

"He lied. Did you give him anything?"

"Yes. All I had at the moment. I think a little over \$200—"

"That was very foolish, dear," Barrett commented levelly. He stared, frowning, at a rug at his feet.

"I was in terror for fear he'd stay until Dick came. There's a strong family resemblance about the boy. He looks so much like you, Barrett. He's going to be tall and lean and strong and he has the same square chin. Anyone seeing him would notice it. He couldn't fall to. I want you to—get him out of the country—"

"She leaned toward her half-brother. "Barry—you'll help me!" she asked. She added, weakly, "There's no one else to whom I can turn. No one else!"

Barrett rose to his feet to pace the room. He was aware of Higgins entering, carrying a shaker and tall-stemmed glass on a tray, of Higgins mending the fire and tip-toeing away. Marcia, a small, smouldering, dark beauty, sargled back in the chair she made seem large. She sipped her cocktail, set it down on a nearby table, and the click of glass meeting mahogany was loud in the heavy stillness.

At last Barrett spoke. "I can't promise you anything," he said almost harshly. "I'll have to see what is best for the boy."

"Barry, you're not going to be unreasonable about this?" she asked plaintively.

He smiled a little mirthlessly. Anyone who dared to oppose Marcia was invariably "unreasonable." But, poor child, that was not her fault. She had been pampered, petted, indulged absurdly, and that fact had made her tragical.

"I must do what I feel to be fair to the boy," Barrett repeated, "and I'll start by firing Dexter," he ended grimly.

"If people see him and hear he's your adopted son they'll think he's—more than adopted," Marcia pointed out. "He looks—so like you now!"

"I know that," Barrett agreed. "I've always known it. We have strong characteristics as a family. But I'm not worrying about that. Marcia, I want to be certain to do the thing that is best for you, for him, for everyone."

"Oh!" she murmured miserably. For a second she closed her eyes. Opening them, she glanced at a small, jeweled watch that ticked against her wrist. She rose quickly and Barrett rose. "I must be off," she said in almost her natural way. "We've a dinner engagement. And, dear, when are you coming to see us? Not that I quite know when we're free, but I'll look it up and let you know. Will you come to dinner?"

"Of course."
"We haven't time now to settle anything but I know you'll come to my viewpoint. You'll realize it's the only one."

"Well see. I'm only trying to be fair!"
"You won't be fair to me if you keep me in terror!" she contested hotly.

"I think we'd better not discuss it now, dear," he said firmly. She raised her slender shoulders. Her chin went high. Without a word she turned toward the hall.

FRONING, he followed her unhappily. He saw her pick up a pair of gloves from the table, watched her pull them on with two sharp tugs. He hoped Marcia wasn't going to leave him angry.

She raised her heavy eyelids for a moment to give him an insolent, chill glance. Then she melted, clinging to him sobbing and laughing. "I am a beast, Barry! But—you must help me!"

"I do want to help you, dear," he

assured her. He patted her shoulder reassuringly.

"Will you," (she mopped her dark eyes) "come and have a long talk with me—soon!"

"Whenever you have a free moment, telephone and I'll come running!" he promised.

"Barry, you are so sweet!" she broke out and, to his embarrassment, kissed his big, tanned hand. He held her milk coat a moment later. "I worry, too, Barry," she was saying, "because the boy looks so much like you. People who hear that he's your ward will think—you know—that he is your son, hidden to save—shame—"

Marcia's back was toward him. Barrett realized she was hoping by repeating this suggestion to frighten him into exiling her son, small Gerald Moore. She should have known him better than that!

"As I said before, Marcia," he pointed out slowly, "I realized that possibility when I adopted him. As a family we are a rather pronounced type. But my own peace and comfort would never let me hide him."

"Oh, well—!" she fung out petulantly. He followed her down the steps, tucking a sleek rug around her knees as the chauffeur waited instructions. Standing at the open door Barrett felt the heat reaching toward him from the car in which the orchids trembled in their silver vase.

Vanity case, mirror, cushions, foot rest, cigarette, lighter—all were within the car and the windows were firmly closed to keep out any chill. Barrett thought, "Unnatural and wrong. Makes too much softness, too much shielding—just as I have—"

Marcia interrupted his thoughts. "Dick is longing to meet you. You will come soon?" she asked. "Any evening you name."

"She glanced idly across the street, turned quickly to the chauffeur. "Jensen!" she said crisply, "please step across the street to ask Miss Stafford if I may drive her home—"

BARRETT felt his heart rise. Coming down the steps of the house opposite was the girl he had seen before. The girl who had been "little Elinor Stafford" and an ugly duckling. She was beautiful now, he saw, as she crossed the windy street, followed by the stiffly deferential Jensen.

"I'll wager you don't remember me!" he said as she neared the curb.

"Oh, but I do!" the girl contradicted shyly yet with a flash that he did not understand. The grip of her small hand was strong and honest. Her deep violet eyes met his levelly. Barrett felt suddenly within himself a glow of an almost forgotten warmth.

"It was so kind of you, Mrs. Radnor, to offer—" the girl began.

Marcia cut her short. "Hop in, child!" she said. "I'm late now. I meet Dick down town every day to ride home with him. Isn't that incurably romantic?"

"I think it's nice," said Elinor. Barrett laughed; a laugh prompted by pleasure. It was exactly as he would like her to think. "Nice."

"Aunt Ella wants to see you, Mr. Colvin," said Elinor Stafford.

"I'll get to see her very soon," he replied, "but you used to call me 'Barry' and I resent the change. A man should hang around to keep the home fires burning."

She smiled at him. Marcia, consulting her small watch again, murmured something about having to hurry on. The door of the car was closed, a moment later the motor purred and Barrett watched them disappear.

Elinor Stafford, he decided, was the sort of youngster one needed to meet on a day when the air was weighted by chill mist and one's temples were growing gray. She was so different from Marcia with her genius for finding tight corners and for dragging everyone near her into those corners too. Poor passionate, impulsive, blind and selfish Marcia! Well, this time he would think first of the boy who deserved first thought. After all, he and Marcia, though comparatively young, had not the years ahead of them that the child had. Marcia's child, his ward, Gerald Moore.

The house seemed strangely empty as he returned to it, rather dismal and, in spite of a comfortable temperature, a little cold.

For some reason he did not clearly understand a vision of Elinor Stafford's face remained before him. He wondered when he would see her again.

(To Be Continued)

ALGOMA
Miss Thula Barrett, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Britton Barrett, and Homer Lemmon of Klamath Falls were united in marriage on Saturday, July 1. The young couple will make their home in Klamath Falls, where Mr. Lemmon is employed at the Ewanna Box factory.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Gray motored to Salem over the holidays. Mrs. Ruek Lewis and Irene Conger went to Roseburg Saturday and returned with a new car.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Chrisman and Mrs. Hinkleman escaped with minor injuries Sunday when the Chrisman car turned over on The Dalles-California highway near the Ketsdever home. A blowout caused the accident.

From July 14 to 17, 1911, 88.15 inches of rain fell at Eagle in the Philippines Islands; more than 45 inches fell on one day.

The area of Alaska is nearly equal to that of Texas, California, Montana, Maryland and Delaware.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams

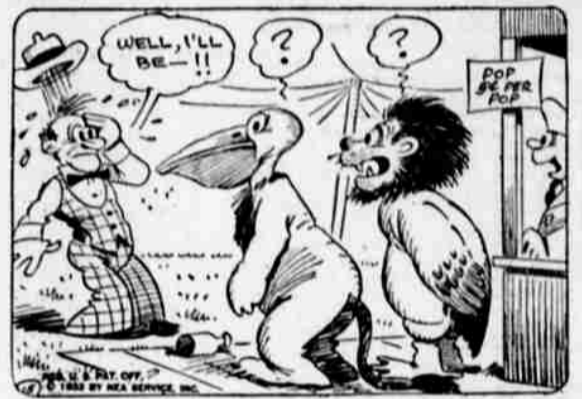
OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



SALESMAN SAM

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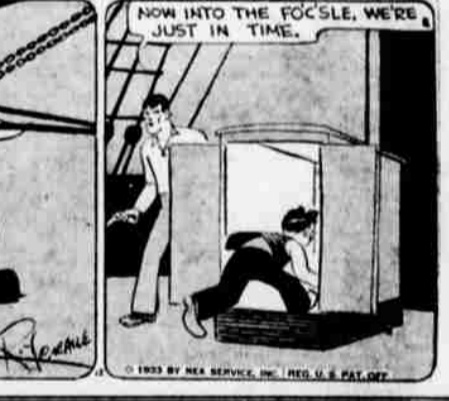
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

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WASH TUBBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan



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