

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY
 BARRETT COLVIN, 25, returns to New York after four years' absence. He is rich and has made a name for himself as an architect. The first to greet him is his half-sister, MARCIA RADNOR, younger, slender and spoiled. Marcia is happily married now. Years before Barrett sheltered her when a youthful flirtation ended disastrously. Marcia had a son whom Barrett adopted. She is worried because the boy's father has threatened her with blackmail and declares her husband will never forgive her if he learns the truth. Barrett agrees to deal with the matter. HAROLD DEXTER.

As Marcia is leaving she sees ELINOR STAFFORD across the street and offers to drive her home. Elinor, 20, has been cutting on her wealthy aunt MISS ELLA SEXTON. All Miss SEXTON's relatives (with the exception of Elinor) are eagerly awaiting her death, hoping to inherit a share of the SEXTON fortune.

Marcia and Elinor depart. The girl, instead of going home, goes to visit her cousin, PHILIP TOWN, and leaves him. Philip has been discovered by his aunt. Elinor is the only one of the family who remains friendly with him.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
 CHAPTER IV

TWO days later Barrett Colvin, in Connecticut, stepped into his low roadster. His ward, who at nine years was beginning to stretch to the famed Colvin height, stood near by, looking at Barrett wistfully. "I do wish you could stay longer!" he said. Then, with an effort, he forced a smile, adding, "It was nice of you to come. I'm glad you came!"

Barrett leaped from the car to take the boy's hand. "I'm coming back!" he promised. "And we're going to have some good times!"

He was tremendously attracted to Gerald who was clever without being too serious, who was, in short, the reassuringly normal, healthy-minded fabric for a man. Gerald would turn out well, Barrett knew. If he had his chance, and the visit had strengthened the intensity of Barrett's vow to give Gerald that chance.

"It was fine of you to come, Mr. Barry, and to send me all those cards when you were away. I'd pretty nearly forgotten what you looked like. You see it was a long time ago that you went away."

"That's true," Barrett agreed, contritely.

"Are you going to stay here a while now?" the boy asked. He tried, without success, to make his question casual.

"I will, I promise, Gerald, until it's easy for you to let me go—"

"Gee whiz, I don't see how you can ever go then!" Jerry commented, smiling.

"We all freckle that way," Barrett thought. He tightened his hand on the boy's.

Youngster! Deserving of everything square and good! Odd how it made you feel to see family traits intensify. . . rather melted a heart and made you humble made you want to make up for the things you hadn't had, to be certain there would be no gaps in the unfolding life.

"I wish I could take you back with me, Jerry," said Barrett without knowing that he had meant to say it.

"Gee whiz, wouldn't that be great!" Gerald answered. His eyes brightened.

"I will—some day!" Barrett stated, and his chin squared. "And I keep my word," he thought, looking down on Jerry. "I wonder whether you know that?"

MRS. COOK, in whose house Gerald made his home, appeared at the doorway. "You'll catch cold without your hat, Gerald!" she called sharply. Gerald's face changed; Barrett frowned, pulling on his thick gloves. He was not at all satisfied about the situation. Gerald had admitted that he would like a new tutor, that he had not "exactly liked" Mr. Dexter. Playing checkers with Barrett he had said, "This is fine. I like to play checkers but, you see, nobody ever has time to play with me."

Rolling toward New York Barrett wondered perplexedly where he was to find the new, right home for Gerald, a home ruled by some comfortably, portly who would know that a small boy's needs are not entirely answered by a full dinner plate and who would see to it that he was fed in all ways.

Marcia had been a criminal—and so had Barrett himself. But he had felt that his success might be made by a trip to the Gobi, and in that belief time had proved him right. He hated rich men's idle sons; he could not be one. Archeology was not his hobby but his work and a work to which he devoted his entire energy. It was absurd, he realized, to reproach himself with the fact that he had not stayed at home to play nursemaid to his sister's child. Yet he had known his sister, and his compunction persisted.

Marcia had promised that through old Anna, a maid who knew of the affair, she would watch over the boy. So far as Barrett could discover Annie had not made even one trip to Mrs. Cooke's farm house. He felt increasing resentment, reminding himself that he was a fool to have placed the slightest trust in any of Marcia's easy promises. If he reproached her (as he would not, kept by common sense from making futile motions) Marcia would probably murmur, "But I thought, Barry—I really thought Annie had gone. I told her to go—I'm certain, dear!" And this murmur made, she would be done with the matter. Barrett shook his head. There was no understanding how anyone could shake responsibility as Marcia did.

THE boy was appealing too. Engagingly unspelled, obviously a truth-teller and softened so easily by kindness. It was all too evident that kindnesses were not common for him.

"Damn!" said Barrett, half-aloud but feelingly. He could not remember being more ashamed and irritated. Shamed at having had part in an arrangement so patently unsatisfactory and irritated by Marcia's running true, as she always did, to her selfish type.

Civilization? The devil with it! Allowing such tangles to be hidden, making them things to hide! Barrett was weary of lies, evasions, unfairness to those who could not declare their rights. He mused unhappily for some time on these and other dark facts. Then the feeling of the open quieted him a little, a feeling that is never found by those who must have company and "something going on."

The sting of the first hard frost was in the air. A few neglected pumpkins, puckered and shrunken by the bitter night, gleamed between the shocks of corn. Wind rattled eerily through these, making, beside the purr of motor, the only other sound in the stillness.

Ahead in a hollow which was severed by the twisting, silvered macadam road was a wood where modest oaks, clinging tenaciously to summer garb, made brown patches in the gray of blended boughs and tree trunks. Yes, it was good to be alive and to have a go at the old world in spite of everything, Barrett decided. Suddenly again he saw Elinor Stafford's young face raised to his. The vision disconcerted him. He had never had the least use for "old fools hovering around spring flowers"—men with thinned locks, thick waist lines and shortened breath who danced attendance on pretty young girls.

It was true that he was not in that class physically. He had kept remarkably fit. A man can not wield a pick under a desert sun without some return in hardness! Still he was 35 years old and Elinor Stafford could not be more than 20 at the most, he decided—perhaps for the fiftieth time.

He tried to visualize her as she had looked four years ago but the new vision covered and dimmed the old. He remembered suddenly that Elinor's mother had been called at that time the most beautiful woman in New York and that everyone, with her and her daughter, had wondered at the daughter's lack of grace, of arresting loveliness or languid, wistful appeal.

When Barrett reached home he found Higgins waiting with several messages. Mrs. Radnor had telephoned and asked Mr. Barrett to telephone her between six and seven. A young gentleman named Dexter had called. He had not been willing to explain his mission to Higgins but had promised to call another time. Barrett's square chin became dangerously set.

Higgins waited. Quite obviously he had something else to say. "Well!" Barrett prompted a little shortly. He had been put out by Dexter's darling to call. The matter was closed; he had dismissed Dexter.

"Miss Ella SEXTON sent you a note at noon, sir," Higgins said. "I went over to tell her you were gone from town and she sent back word through Craven that she would like you to read her note as soon as you returned."

(To Be Continued)

According to a bulletin, 94 per cent of recorded earthquakes occur in two narrow, clearly defined belts—one called the Mediterranean, with 53 per cent, and the other the Circum-Pacific with 41 per cent; the rest of the world has only 6 per cent, widely distributed.

The Jimson weed gets its name from a corruption of "James-town"; the hungry Virginia colonists once dined on a mess of Jimson weed greens and were lucky to escape with their lives, since the plant is poisonous.

The grizzly bear is called "the King of the Rockies," yet it will step aside to let a skunk pass along the trail.

A box car was once held on a siding at Tacoma, Wash., while a robin hatched a nest of eggs on the air dump.

Colds, diphtheria, measles and scarlet fever, in the order named, are the four most common diseases.

Flapper Fanny Says

Girls who wear stripes attract attention all along the line.

OUT OUR WAY



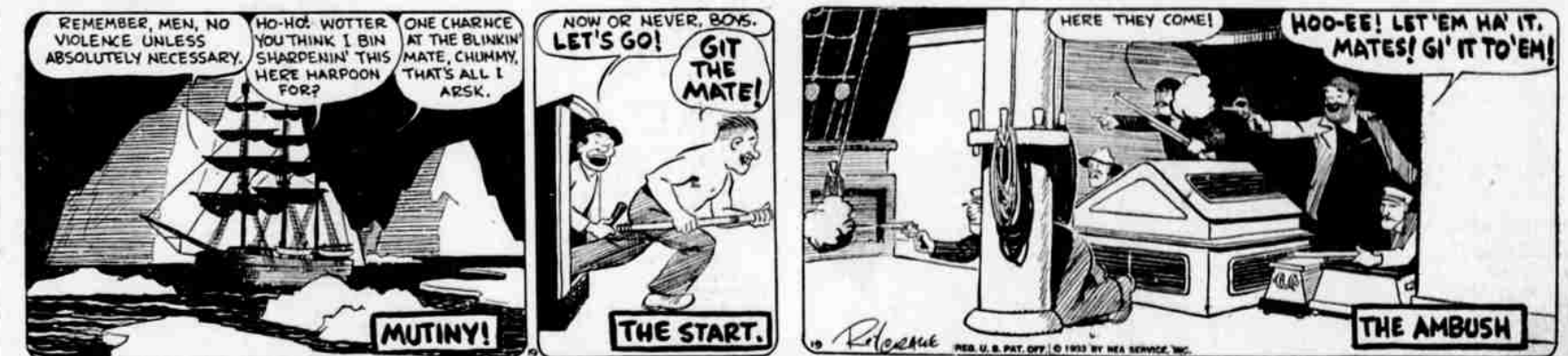
SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

