

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

BARRETT COLVIN, back in New York after four years, had himself most attractively. He was 20-year-old ELINOR STAFFORD Barrett in 25, wealthy and had made a name for himself as an archeologist. Elinor's mother, LIDA STAFFORD, is beautiful and because she wants attention for herself, has always forced her daughter to wear unbecomingly elaborate and heavy fashions. Lida schemes constantly to keep in the good graces of her husband's wealthy aunt, MISS ELLA SEXTON, in order to inherit a share of the Sexton fortune.

Barrett's half-sister, MARCIA RADNOR, tells him she is terrified for fear her husband will learn of an unfortunate episode in her past. Years before, Barrett abandoned Marcia when a youthful attraction ended disastrously. Marcia had a son whom Barrett adopted. The boy is nine years old now and his tutor, HAROLD DEXTER, has threatened Marcia with blackmail. She declares that if her husband learns the truth he will never forgive her.

Barrett goes to visit nine-year-old GERALD, his ward. He decides to discharge the tutor and find a new home for the boy. When he reaches home he finds a note from Elinor.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER V

"Ah! That is exactly the point, Barrett. I want you to know them and tell me all you know!" He was outraged; he flushed darkly. For a moment he could not speak. Then, remembering that she was old, he said carefully, "Miss Ella, I cannot spy on them. I wouldn't do that—why, I couldn't do that if I were uncertain where to leave my own money!"

"You misunderstand me!" "Sorry," he murmured. "I thought—"

"I will explain. I merely want you to drop in to meet them occasionally, to tell me how you like them."

He laughed a little uneasily and leaned forward, arms on knees. He shook his head, smiling at her. "Too large a responsibility," he assured her.

Then he saw that she was angry. "I am not accustomed to having people refuse my orders, Barrett."

"I know, dear," he admitted unapologetically.

"The 'dear' melted her. 'Ah, Barrett,' she quavered. 'I'm old, so old I sometimes fear they come to see me only because of what I have. I do not want my money, which might do so much good, to be lost in idle pleasures. Lida with her frocks—Bessie throwing away good food—Bentwell drinking! I am so distracted! I had thought of leaving Doctor Bold a tidy sum for his work among the poor but not now. Not now! I have found him to be unworthy, Barrett. He is using candles on the altar!'"

Barrett's lips were set. He wanted to laugh and yet it wasn't funny.

"Aunt Ella," said Barrett, "I'd like to help you but I really can't see how I can."

Barrett took the note and read it. "Lord!" he muttered complainingly. Higgins looked his sympathy—head on one side, lips drooping—and the picture he made restored Barrett's good nature.

"Summons to Miss Sexton's for tea," he said, smiling. "No getting out of it, I suppose. You know what to lay out for me." He paused, then asked, "Is Miss Smythe still with Miss Ella?"

"Yes, Mr. Barrett."

When he was a boy, Barrett recalled, Miss Smythe had been Miss Ella Sexton's secretary and he had always half-dreaded her. A cold, bloodless creature. Of Miss Ella he was really fond. She was a snob but likeable in spite of it.

Half an hour later he was being ushered into the old-fashioned, high-ceilinged parlor.

"How delightful!" Miss Ella exclaimed. "Come in, Barrett. And to the butler, 'That will be all, Craven. Tea as usual.'"

Barrett crossed the room to bend above Miss Ella's hand. She had acquired a cane since he left. "I am growing old, Barrett," Miss Ella said, her voice faintly unsteady, "and as one ages one fears slipping from the world. It is not things I have done that trouble me but those I have not done!"

"My Lord!" thought Barrett. "Miss Ella's human after all!"

"Not unkindly things," she hastened to add. "But—there was a young man, Barrett. I don't mind saying it now. Your father—"

"My dear!" he murmured, touched.

"You're like him!" she confided and then turned to wipe her eyes. Almost immediately her mood changed. "After tea," she said crisply, "I have an affair of business to discuss with you, Barrett."

HE wondered uncomfortably what this could be. The last thing he wanted was to have anyone think he wished to be "remembered" in the long-talked-of Sexton will. He was about to put a question when Craven entered with the tea tray. Old Spode and silver. A pound cake. As a boy Barrett had always been delighted to take two pieces. Miss Ella had remembered his fondness, doubtless would expect him to have two pieces today. He writhed at the thought.

The butler brought his cup and saucer and was dismissed. Miss Ella asked about Barrett's travels and he made brief, polite answers. That done, she turned to her concern.

"As you know, Barrett," she began, "my fortune is quite a considerable one."

"Yes, Miss Ella." He would have given \$20 for a cigaret but dared not risk it.

"And you also know my large family connection."

"Yes," he agreed again.

She was diverted a second. He had not had his second piece of pound cake! How thoughtless of her! Miss Ella smiled, cajoling him, for to her he was a boy. He took the second piece with as much enthusiasm as he could muster.

Then she began the story—an old one he knew well. Miss Ella wanted to leave her fortune where it would do good. She was fond of her niece, Bessie, who had married Jim Thrope but she had heard—through Lida Stafford—that Bessie was wasteful. Besides that, James Thrope lacked ambition. On the other hand, her nephew, Bentwell Stafford, was "an addict to alcohol" while Lida, his wife, "encouraged young men!" This was said with a tight closing of lips, a shake of the head.

Soon, Barrett realized, she would speak of her grand-nephew, Philip Sexton, to whom she had given a home.

It came. "I had suspicions of Philip," she began.

Barrett leaned forward and she halted. "I hope you'll forgive this," he said. "It's frightfully impertinent of me, I know, but remember—one finds that for which one is looking."

"I did not make his forgery of my check by looking for it!" Miss Ella stated stiffly.

"No," Barrett admitted. He sat back. She hesitated a moment and he knew the crisis of her talk to be near.

"Which do you think to be the most deserving of my trust, Barrett?" Miss Ella asked.

"I don't know any of your relatives at all, Miss Ella. They're all acquaintances."

SHE was staring at her frail old hands which looked like parchment stretched on knobby ivory.

"Will you come when I ask you to tea?" she questioned. She would assemble them and Barrett's face would tell the truth for him. Had she not known from it long ago about Marcia's affair with the ridley master? She had only to read Barrett's troubled eyes and say to Marcia, "I saw you riding in the park—" to be sure of the whole disgraceful story. And Barrett's father, who had been her young suitor, dying at the very time in the house across the street; dying without knowing how matters lay and leaving his money as he would not have left it, had he known the facts. Life was a cruel maze and full of tricks. Miss Ella was determined that she would not be tricked. She would not be duped by those to whom she left her money as Barrett's father had been.

"Why, of course," Barrett replied to her question about coming to tea. "You know I'll come."

"That is all I ask, Barrett."

"Very well," he said, standing up. The audience had come to an end and he was dismissed.

"Then I shall welcome you to my home soon, Barrett."

"I hope so," he answered. His desire to please her—lonely, uncertain old soul—was sincere.

As Craven opened the street door for him Barrett saw a motor car stopping. Lida Stafford, Miss Ella's niece by marriage, was in the car. Barrett, seeing her, felt that she still deserved the fame for beauty that had been hers years before.

"Ah, Barrett Colvin!" she called prettily. She came forward, stripping off a glove and held out her hand. Barrett took it, bowing.

She was arrestingly lovely in a soft pink-and-white way. A bit too calendar-picture for Barrett, yet easy to look upon. Her beauty was quite different from that of her daughter, Elinor, yet it was of Elinor he longed to ask.

Lida said quickly, "You've been to see Aunt Ella, haven't you? How sweet of you! How is she today?"

"She seemed very well to me."

"I'm glad. I get so anxious about her." Lida went on. "I hope that some day you'll come to see—me? I don't suppose it sounds very alluring but I'm so interested in all you've been doing!"

"May I drop in some day when your daughter too is at home?" Barrett asked. "I met her the other day."

She flushed a little and leathed herself for going so. Lida's expression did not change but her thoughts did. Barrett Colvin—interested in Elinor? She wasn't going to have that for a moment. No, indeed—and she knew how to put a stop to it!

(To Be Continued)

California Brewers Use Wooden Boxes

Acme beer, produced by the California Brewing association of San Francisco, is the latest addition to the ranks of wooden box users, according to a received by R. C. Woodruff of the Klamath territory for Acme beer. This should mean an important addition to the wood box market, Mr. Woodruff thinks.

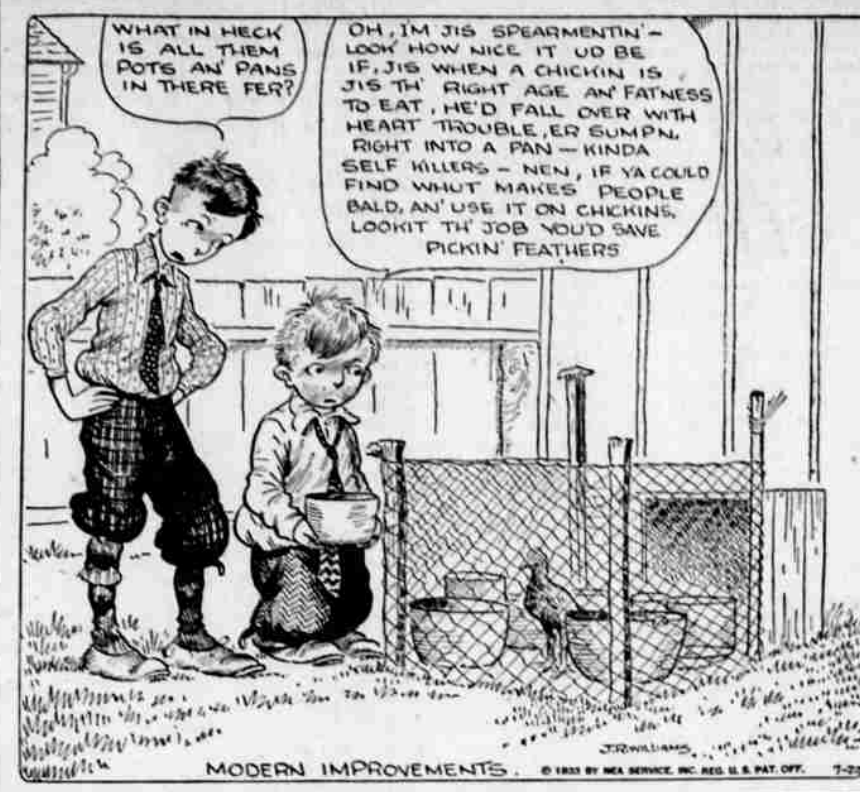
The California Brewing association, Mr. Woodruff is advised, is increasing its capacity heavily in an effort to supply mounting demands for its wares.

Former White House housekeeper, in magazine article, reveals President Hoover's extreme fondness for an old flannel shirt in which he played medicine ball. Perhaps he was motivated by the number of people who lost their shirts when the 1929 boom collapsed.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



SALESMAN SAM

By Small



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



WASH TUBBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan

