

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

BARRETT COLVIN, back to New York after years abroad, falls in love with Miss Stafford, ELINOR STAFFORD. Barrett is 25, wealthy, and has made a name for himself as an archeologist. Years before he shielded his half-sister, MARCIA, when a youthful romance ended disastrously. Marcia had a son whom Barrett adopted. She is constantly in fear that her husband will learn of the affair.

LIDA STAFFORD, Elinor's beautiful and unscrupulous mother, is carrying on a flirtation with VANCE CARTER. Lida schemes constantly to keep in the good graces of Miss Ella Sexton, her husband's aunt, in order to inherit a share of the Sexton fortune.

When she learns Barrett is about to propose to Elinor she deliberately breaks up the romance. The girl is heart-broken when she does not hear from him. One day they meet at her aunt's home. Barrett offers Lida a cigarette and she refuses, declaring she does not smoke. Rebellious at her mother's hypocrisy, Elinor takes a cigarette, thereby offending Miss Sexton who once more reviews her will.

A few days later she dies, leaving practically her entire fortune to Barrett. He does not want it and yet can not turn it over to the rightful inheritors.

Vance Carter asks Lida to keep her promise about divorcing her husband. She refuses and Vance leaves. After detaching herself from the situation Barrett returns and Barrett, hearing the news, goes to ask BESSIE THROPE, Elinor's aunt, what she can do to help.

CHAPTER XX

BESSIE said honestly, "You can do anything for Lida Stafford; nothing for Elinor."

Barrett Colvin looked up quickly. "You mean—Miss Stafford has pride?"

"An immense amount. I don't know where she got it nor all the lovely qualities she has, though I always liked Bentwell when he was a boy." She turned her head to hide the hot tears.

"Would Miss Stafford recent my offering her mother help?"

"I think it would kill her!"

She heard him mutter, "God—I!"

Bessie disapproved of blasphemy but she understood his need for it.

"I've got to get around this damnable will," Barrett said. "I want you to let me put your boys through college. You will, won't you?" For the first time he saw the room and read the need that was apparent everywhere. He must manage to help them somehow!

"I don't know, Mr. Colvin. I'd have to talk with Jim, my husband. We don't take help very easily. We aren't—just that kind," she answered uncertainly.

"But this isn't help, Mrs. Thrope. It isn't my money. It belongs to you and the Staffords!"

She shook her head. "Aunt Ella was in her right mind," she reminded gently. His colorless face stiffened. He was doomed to a fierce battle with pride, he saw. Perhaps his arguments would do no more than strengthen the pride he saw before him in a frayed wash house dress that had cost \$2. If the battle were futile he would be haunted by the shabbiness of that room; by the chair that he could not sit on because the springs were broken; worse—by three boys who must go to work before they should have stopped their schooling.

"Mrs. Thrope," he confessed, "this whole thing makes me miserable."

"I've no doubt of that, Mr. Colvin," she agreed in her kind way. "But you couldn't help it and it's done and over!"

"But," he protested, "one can right a wrong—when it's as simple as this one!"

"I don't know about that, Mr. Colvin," she said slowly, uncertainly.

HE rose. "You're going to think I over," he urged, "and the needs of your boys."

Bessie rose too, a little stiffly. It always "took it out of her knees" to clean the refrigerator, a household god before which she must kneel.

"I never forget the needs of my boys," she answered. "But you see, Mr. Colvin—it's difficult to explain—it's this way. I feel that the boys' biggest need will be answered by their knowing that we made our own way in the world, that even if we failed we didn't beg. I've seen too much of what taking can do to people—and it isn't a pretty thing to see. It makes lying and cheating and all the things that are so much worse than not having things."

She was thinking of Lida Stafford. Barrett, looking on her, felt humbled.

"You're a fine mother," he said. She brushed his tribute aside with an embarrassed, "Oh, no!" Because he saw that she had been deeply touched by his words as well as embarrassed by them he asked quickly if there was any news about Bentwell Stafford. How had he passed the night?

The night had been a bad one, Bessie told him. There could be no encouragement for a few days, if indeed there could be then.

"If he goes," she ended, "we're

going to ask Elinor to live with us."

Again he saw, and felt, the room. Again his heart chilled. He could not imagine Elinor happy in that house, so shabby, dark and depressing!

"The poor child isn't fitted to do a thing except teach music," Bessie went on. He hadn't known Elinor played. "She tries," he heard Bessie say, "so hard to be useful and the results are pathetic. She wipes and wipes my dishes and they weep on the shelves when she's done with them, bless her!"

ELINOR had a strong ally, he realized. He thought, "If you weren't so good yourself you'd know her better."

"Well," he said wearily, "I'll be on my way. The trip had been useless. 'If there's anything I can do you'll let me know'."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Colvin. If there's a thing we can ask of you I promise I'll let you know."

"I'd appreciate it, Mrs. Thrope. Sometimes you proud people don't know how much you hold from others with your pride!"

"I know, Mr. Colvin," she admitted, "but the one thing the poor child clings to is self-respect. If that should go we'd have—nothing."

He went down the cement steps, covered for the winter with slats of wood. Bessie stood smiling at the door until Hutton had closed the motor door after Barrett. Barrett waved at her. "God bless you!" he reflected. "You're right, but it makes things worse for me!"

Hutton chose the bridge over which Barrett had once ridden with Elinor. Riding across its span again Barrett thought bitterly of his happiness that day.

The look of Bessie's parlor haunted him, as he looked dully on the gray stretch of water chilled by floating patches of slush-ice. The look of that room had told Barrett too much of Bessie Thrope's needs, her husband's needs, the boys' needs. It was a clear and depressing chart.

SUDDENLY, as they reached the other side of the bridge, his eyes became a slit. He saw the way out. The one way out! He had been leaning back in the seat. Now he was suddenly erect and tense. He lighted a cigarette with nervous fingers, staring ahead with concentrated gaze that took in nothing before him.

The thing had to be planned. He must think it through carefully, then go after it. Yes, it was the one way out!

Bessie Thrope evidently cared deeply for her niece. She was not the sort of woman who would think to decorate herself by parading a family affection that was false. And with enough loving, taking was possible. Pride could be surmounted.

He could reach them all through Elinor, who had been cheated by an old lady's caprice and his unhappy place in Miss Sexton's affections.

The car had halted before his door and he stepped from it briskly. "Wait," he instructed the chauffeur. He ran up the steps and into the house, picked up the library telephone without removing his heavy coat.

He gave a number and heard the answering voice. He said, "This is Barrett Colvin speaking. I wish to talk to Miss Elinor Stafford. Please ask her to speak with me. Tell her the matter is extremely urgent."

There was a pause that seemed years. Barrett waited restlessly. Then Elinor's voice, a trifle unsteady, came over the wire.

(To Be Continued)

The distinction of owning and operating the largest system of municipal railways in the world belongs to Detroit, Mich.

An American woman does not lose her citizenship upon her marriage to a foreigner, under a law passed September 22, 1922.

Flapper Fanny Says



GLADYS RAIVER

OUT OUR WAY



OUR BOARDING HOUSE



SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

