

Two Husbands Wanted

by Hazel Deyo Batchelor



SYNOPSIS

Polly Long, a little mannequin, falls in love with Ralph Halliday, a married man. Ralph is in love with his own wife, Lola, but they have drifted apart. John Blake is also in love with Lola, but Ralph's family have succeeded in preventing the marriage. John and Polly become friendly and Polly is happy enough until her mother dies. She then moves into a cheap apartment with Annette, who is also a mannequin, and makes good in the chorus of a musical comedy. Lola falls from an airplane and injures her spine, and Ralph turns all his attentions to his wife. Annette is scarcely the right companion for Polly and John suggests that they marry and try to make each other happy. He rushes her into it. In the meantime Lola improves, and she and Ralph seem to come closer together. John is called out of town and Polly gets a chance to play second lead in a new play called "Peacock Feathers." John returns with good news of his own, which he does not get a chance to tell her. He discovers that night "hat he loves her and yet he allows her to go to Washington for the opening of the play.

INSTALLMENT FORTY-NINE "THE OPENING NIGHT."

There was one strange incident that marred the opening of "Peacock Feathers" in Washington. For a moment there was a ripple of excitement in the audience, and then, because the acting was carried on as though the incident were a part of the play, nothing more was thought of it until later.

The audience was fashioned, exclusive—the house was packed. The stage was set for a drawing room and the situation, one between two women and a man, was tense.

Polly was one of the women. Booked on the program as Diana Carruthers, she wore a white velvet evening dress, and carried a peacock feather fan. The other woman, who played the leading part, was unimportant beside this girl who seemed to hold the center of the stage.

Polly played the part of the wife. She looked like a child against the more mature woman who, in the play, had stolen Polly's husband from her. Evelyn Masters was speaking lines that she knew only too well how to handle. She was in back and her gold hair was bound close against her head. She was a great favorite and she knew it. The situation was hers.

"You are his wife," Evelyn was saying in dulcet tones, "you are his wife, but what does that matter when he loves only me?" He loved me when he married you and he loves me now. Ask him—he will tell you—the truth!"

Triumph rang in her tones and Polly, slim and girlish, shrank before her. For a moment the man did not

matter. The battle was between the two women—the wife, and the woman he had loved before his marriage.

"Do you think that you can hold him against me?" Evelyn went on passionately, her tones round and golden in the tense silence. "Be honest with yourself, if you can!"

The stage was lighted by wall brackets and lamps, but there were tall wax candles burning on each end of the piano. Polly was standing close to one of these candles and as she raised her arm suddenly her fan of peacock feathers caught fire. It was a dramatic moment, and one not expected. Out beyond the footlights the author almost had a convulsion. It was an accident of course—but how prophetic if they could retain the scene! Not that they could. It meant a fan for each performance, and such an outlay of expense was ridiculous. The management would never stand for it.

Polly saw that the fan had caught fire and was at first frightened. Then for some reason that she could never afterward explain, she lost all her fear. Instead of dropping the fan, she turned it slightly. It was all ablaze now, but she was holding it away from herself toward Evelyn Masters, and when she finally dropped the charred remains to the floor and began to speak, she added words that the author had not written into her lines.

They were just a few lines of her own but they were simple and sincere and the embers of the fan on the rug between the two women were so prophetic that it was easy for Polly to swing into her own lines.

"I am honest—I know he loves you —"

Out beyond the footlights the author collapsed into his seat when he heard his own words spoken. But what a situation! And the girl had carried it off so easily, not only that but she had made a dramatic conquest of what might have been a fiasco. If it hadn't been for her presence of mind the scene might have had ridiculous if not tragic consequences.

The curtain dropped on the second act to deafening applause from the audience. It rose again and the three characters on the stage bowed and smiled. Then Polly walked out to her dressing room which was soon crowded. The author came back and congratulated her. Miss Masters was lavish with praise—last but not least there appeared Royal Hamilton. And the others, knowing that Royal Hamilton was responsible for the girl's appearance in the part, left them together.

"Polly, you were wonderful."

"Nonsense."

"You were, every one's talking. You stole the second act from Evelyn Masters, and how you did it I don't know."

"I couldn't do it again—"

"Of course not; it's too dangerous. You might have been seriously injured.

But what I don't understand is how you happened to have presence of mind to make up some lines of your own."

Polly shivered a little. What had she said? Something about Peacock Feathers and bad luck. She couldn't exactly remember, the words were all jumbled in her thoughts now. She had been frightened, too; she was frightened now, and she began to tremble.

Royal drew a flask from his pocket and pored a small drink into a glass. Polly shook her head, but he insisted. "You mustn't argue with me now. I know what's best for you. It will brace you up for the next act. You don't want to spoil the play just after you virtually made the second act."

The raw liquor forced its way down Polly's throat and she choked and swallowed.

Royal waited. "Better?" He asked after a minute.

She smiled up at him.

"Yes, thank you." And she was better. She felt as if she could repeat the scene at once and do it ever so much better than she had. Polly was not used to the effect of alcohol, and the drink, small as it was, had sent the blood rushing through her veins. She felt warm, excited, happy, gay.

"We'll have supper afterward," Royal said as he left her. "They're expecting a lot from you."

"I'm all right," Polly said gayly, but as Royal closed the door and she turned to the mirror she shuddered. One of the peacock feathers had caught in the shoulder strap of her dress. Her fingers trembled as she pulled it out and threw it on the floor.

Tomorrow—Lola and the Dress.

The Man—What's the difference between an old maid and a bachelor girl?

The Maid—Only about three years.

Had a Severe Cold Coughed Incessantly

Mrs. C. Fehrman, Selkirk, Ont., writes:—"Last winter I suffered from a very severe cold. I coughed incessantly which irritated the glands and caused sore throat.

"I tried several medicines without any luck, but one day I picked up your almanac and read about

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Minister of Public Works Speaks in Budget Debate

Replied Effectively to Opposition Criticism of His Department—Some Comparisons Made With the Old Administration — Says Government Has Kept House and Lived Within Its Income.

Hon. D. A. Stewart, who delivered the closing speech in the budget debate in the Legislature on Friday, was in good form and had no difficulty in wiping up the floor with opposition critics of the government. He spoke with his old time vigor and was the means of injecting a lot of pep into the debate. While he spoke for less than half an hour but got over a lot of ground and quickly silenced opposition speakers who attempted to interrupt him. The Minister's speech was followed with great interest.

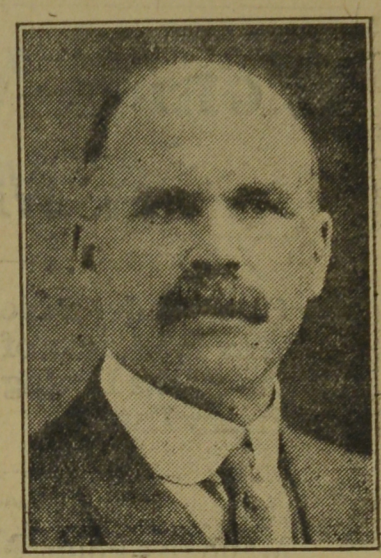
Following is the official report:—

HON. MR. STEWART extended his congratulations to the mover and seconder, and also to the hon. Provincial Secretary Treasurer on his budget. Regarding the hon. member who had just taken his seat he would like to point out that a few years ago nearly the whole Executive Council was located in the county of Gloucester. They had the Premier and Minister of Public Works, and also the Attorney General, and when they lost the Attorney General they imported another from Moncton to take his place. Now that Gloucester was no longer in control of affairs, his hon. friend (Doucet) appeared to be ill at ease. He (Stewart) knew of nothing more vicious than a Liberal robbed of office, and his hon. friend had certainly displayed viciousness in the course of his speech. It was very unfair to him to say that the county of Gloucester did not receive its proper share of public money. He had figures in his possession which showed that in 1925 the sum of \$43,900 had been expended on the roads of Gloucester, while in the same year the county of York had received only \$27,000. In the county of Restigouche, which had increased in population in ten years, more rapidly than any other county of the province, there had been expended \$27,014 and part of that had been charged to the Campbellton and St. Leonard highway, which was to serve three counties.

not the lowest. Some action was necessary when the engineer reported to him that a contract could not be completed for the amount of the tender. He knew of one case where his predecessor had awarded the contract and the price was \$14,000 in excess of the lowest tender. He knew of one case where an estimate of \$42,000 by the engineer a contract had been let for \$28,000 and it had cost the province \$55,000 to complete the work. That had been done under the old administration and he could not say the wrong course had been pursued, yet his hon. friends opposite were now criticizing him because he had not always accepted the lowest tender. It had been said that the engineers of the Department were incompetent because they did not always correctly estimate the cost of a piece of work. The facts did not bear out any such contention. With reference to road contracts awarded by his department, the estimates of the engineers came very close to the actual cost of the work. For instance, contract No. 1 was estimated at \$37,562 and it cost \$36,231 when completed. Contract No. 2 had been estimated at \$36,550 and had cost \$37,864, while Contract No. 8 was estimated at \$20,283 and it cost \$20,000.

Engineer's Competent.

While it had been claimed that the engineers of his department were not competent, he would point out that a number of them had been in the employ of the old administration. If any hon. members opposite had any charges to make against the engineers of his department they should make the same from their places in the House and not resort to insinuation. If charges were made he could promise them that there would be a thorough investigation. Only the other day he had heard an hon. member opposite throw out an insinuation against a member of the Provincial Police force. If the hon. mem-



HON. D. A. STEWART
Minister of Public Works.

ber believed what he said to be true he should have placed the matter in the hands of the Hon. Attorney General or the Commissioner of the force.

MR. LORDON—The Hon. Premier assured me that he had nothing to do with the force.

Faith in Engineers.

HON. MR. STEWART said that the engineers of his department were quite competent to perform their duties, and he had every faith in them. Not long ago he had a man tell him that there was not a straight engineer in the department. He had asked that man to either put his statement in writing or repeat it in the presence of a witness. He did not want to have it in the department an engineer who was incompetent.

MR. LYSART said that the Opposition were not to blame for what people said about the engineers.

HON. MR. STEWART—I am neither an engineer or a lawyer but I do not propose to let either of them put anything over on me.

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