Tom Masson's Wit and Humor

THE WOMAN OF HIS CHOICE

From "A Corner in Women, and Other Follies," by Tom Masson. Copyright, 1903, by Moffat, Yard & Co., New York.

WHITTLER let himself in mechanically with his latchkey, hung up his hat and coat in the closet under the stairs and walked soberly up to the second floor. He remembered afterward that he was wondering at this particular moment just what there would be for dinner and just how much he would enjoy it. On the landing in the hall above he was confronted by a tall young woman, very trim and very stylish. It took only one glance to see that she was pretty. "Who are you?" asked Whittler.

"I'm your wife."

"My wife! Why, I never saw you before." Whittler began to wonder whether he was alive or not.

"Oh, yes, you have seen me before. It's all right. Come in here and sit down and we'll talk it over. You had your pick out of all the other women you saw, and you chose me."

"Did I? When?"

"Yesterday morning. Don't you remember? I'm the girl in the car."

Whittler passed his hand across his brow. He had seen her before. Yes, he remembered it all.

"So you are," he ejaculated. "Of course I remember you. But how in the world did you come to be my wife?"

"Because you wanted me to. Do you recall what you were thinking of when I got in? Be honest now."

"Why, yes. I was thinking of—of—my last wife."

"Exactly. You'd had some trouble with her, hadn't you? Just before you left home—words. And you were reflecting she wasn't much good anyway."

"So I was. How do you know?"

"Oh, I'm a mind reader. Well, you were kind of sore about your wife. Don't you know you were? You thought sadly that she was getting passee. She hadn't been up to the mark, and then suddenly, while you were thinking how disappointed you were in her, you happened to look up across the car, and you saw me."

"So I did. I remember it perfectly. Let me go on. I saw how pretty you were, how beautifully gowned you were, and I said to myself, 'By Jove, there's a girl I wish I had for a wife!' Didn't I?"

"You did. And here I am."

"But I don't understand how the thing is done."

"Don't bother about that. It was done by a syndicate for the renewing of wives by discontented husbands. It's the latest thing. The idea is to promote the happiness of all mankind."

"But where's my other wife?"

"Oh, she's all right! You see, she was getting along in years anyway, so the syndicate turned her over to a rich old duffer who cared for little else than a good housekeeper. She has a good home. Don't worry about her. Think of me."

Whittler gasped. "Well," he exclaimed, "this is certainly sublime. I suppose I must accommodate myself to the change. By the way, how's dinner?"

His new wife smiled. "Let's go down and see. Can you cook?"

"Well, I suppose so. Why do you ask?"

"Well, you see, when I came the servants all left."

"What! Why, they've been with me for a long time."

"I know it. But I had some words with them, and one thing led to another, and I told them to get out. No impudence for me."

"Perhaps if you had been careful of them—used a little tact, for example—they might have stayed."

"Possibly. But that's not my way. Come, now, get to work. Fix this fire and skirmish around and cook something for dinner."

"My dear girl," he exclaimed, "I'm not used to this sort of thing. I'm a hard-working business man. You're a woman and should look after these matters. You cook, and I'll wait."

"Not one bit of it! I'm not that sort of a wife. I'm not a cooking wife. I'm attractive and bright and young. You selected me, didn't you? When you said you wished you had me for a wife you didn't require a list of things I could do."

"Certainly not; but, my dear girl, one takes certain things for granted."

"Well, you are a soft one!" she exclaimed. "Here you agree that you are disappointed in the wife you have, and, just think, out of all the women in the whole town that you see you pick me to take her place, and now that you've got me you are not satisfied. If that isn't like a man!"

"But," replied Whittler, "this is all so sudden. If I only had time to think it over. Perhaps we could have arranged for a preliminary trial"—

She stopped him short.

"A preliminary trial!" she exclaimed. "And what, pray, do you think of me? Here I am, an attractive, stylish young girl, with loads of admirers, obliged to be tied down to an old baldheaded codger like you!"

"I'm not baldheaded!"

"Well, you're *almost*, and you'll be entirely before I get through with you. I say, what do you think of me? I suppose about all you expect from me is to run after servants, make beds, mend your clothes and be a household drudge instead of going to matinees and balls and parties. Well, I'll fool you. I'll have all the fun I want, and you'll pay for it."

"Am I dreaming or not?" he groaned.

His new wife caught him by the few remaining hairs of his head. He was actually beginning to hate her cordially.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "you are dreaming. And the best of it is that you can't wake up."

"But I must wake up."

"Nonsense! Haven't you selected me for a life partner? And aren't you obliged to stick by me? I just guess you are!"

She poked him in the stomach.

"But I shall die if I don't have something to eat. I feel a terrible gnawing."

"No; you won't die. I'll keep you alive."

"If you touch me I'll holler."

Whittler tried in vain to halloo and was just about to give it up when he felt some one shaking him violently.

He opened his eyes. His own dear wife looked at him sympathetically. "There!" she said. "That's what one of those club dinners has done for you. Was it awful?"

Whittler put his arms around her in the very ecstasy of bliss.

"Darling," he murmured, "it was the worst nightmare I ever had—but—I deserved it!"

Tillman Recalls a Critical Time In North Carolina.

Says Mr Tillman:

"The great danger to any Southern State with a large negro population lies in the possibility of a split among the white people. Take the case of North Carolina. The experience of that State is the most vivid and forceful argument for disfranchisement of the ignorant negro that could be advanced. Her white people split and through a fusion of one element with the negroes, who were already led by the white Republicans, negro domination was fastened upon North Carolina, and it led to armed revolution with in three years.

As long as the negro is left with the power to vote he is a constant menace to white supremacy. The white people are liable to split at any time, as they have done in the past, and when they do decide on one side or the other, is sure to vote the negroes in order to gain the mastery over the other side. The temptation is too strong to resist, especially if there be any bitter feeling accompanying the division of the whites.

"Who knows but that the white people will divide over the great railroad questions now agitating the country. How can any man assume to say they will always stand together on the questions affecting the State government?

"HANDLING HOT FIRE."

"Georgia has had an object lesson that ought to last her for all time to come in the intense bitterness and strife which permeated the entire State during the Populistic excitement of '94 and '96. The fight in Augusta was so disgraceful in controlling the election through negro votes and repeating that Mr Black refused to hold the commission of Congressman because of the taint that was on it.

"It is none of my business, but those in Georgia who are scheming and advocating the policy of dividing the people again by keeping the Populists out of the Democratic primaries are handling fire of the hottest kind, and the negro will be warmed into life and mobilzed as a part of the political machinery just as sure as fate unless something is done now, while there is peace and harmony, to destroy, as far as practicable, the danger."—Senator Tillman in Atlanta Journal.

To Keep the Hands White.

If you would have white hands keep the circulation stimulated by rubbing the back of one by the palm of the other. Do this several times a day.

Fun With a Candle.

Grown people as well as children will get a great deal of pleasure out of the following tricks:

1. Put a nail in the end of a candle, and set it in a glass of water. The nail will hold the candle steady and it will burn until nothing remains, always rising above the surface of the water by reason of the decrease in weight.

2. Take a small picture cut from a paper or book, and wrap it lightly round a candle. Light a match or another candle, and hold the flame near until it becomes transparent. Unrap the picture and every one will be surprised to find it printed on the candle.

3. Put a candle unlighted into a basin full of water. Let several try to take it out with their mouths, not touching the candle with their hands. Every one will fail. Then you put your face in the water, and when your mouth is near the end of the candle, draw in a deep breath, and the suction of the water will draw the candle into your mouth.

4. Allow some drops from a lighted candle turned upside down to fall into a basin of cold water. The grease will form flowers. String these on the end of a wire add green leaves made from paper, and a very interesting plant will be the result.

5. Heat a piece of wire and stick it through the middle of a candle. Make a wick at both ends. Balance the candle on two tumblers. Light the wicks, and the dropping of the candle grease will make the candle seesaw, getting faster and faster as it grows hotter. This is a very pretty experiment and will cause a great deal of amusement to old and young alike.—Exchange.

Claude Dockery is to succeed his uncle, Henry Dockery, as marshal of the Eastern district of North Carolina.