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## A Congratulation

### And What Came of It

By F. A. MITCHEL

"Well, Bob, what is it?"  
He who was called Bob—Robert Morrow was his real name—was walking to and fro on the floor of his room. He had sent for his bosom friend, Martin Bangs, to come to see him, having something especial to communicate. Without pausing in his walk Morrow said:

"I'm engaged to be married."

"You announce it as if you were going to be hanged."

"Well, I don't know!"

"Don't know what?"

"Whether I've done a very big thing or a very little one."

"Oh, I suppose you've done right if you don't mind?"

"Don't mind what?"

"Staying at home nights, losing all your old friends, being interfered with every time you drink a cocktail or smoke a cigar, having to be friendly with all your wife's relatives?"

"Mart, another word of that and I'll brain you!"

"Oh, well, if you wish me to give you taffy I'll do it."

"What do you know about married life? You've never been married."

"I don't wish to be. One thing I know. I never had an intimate friend who married but I lost him. Don't you know that the first a woman does with her husband is to prejudice him against any old crony he may have an especial fancy for?"

"What does she do that for?"

"Jealousy."

An expression of terror came upon Morrow's face. "Oh, heavens!" he exclaimed. "Why did I do it?"

"Did she rope you in?"

"Rope me in? No. I did it all myself. Why, only yesterday when she



"GOOD GRACIOUS! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

sent for me to give me my answer I swore to myself if it was 'No' I would commit suicide."

"Well?"

"And after the surprise had passed and I got to thinking it all over I couldn't understand how I had been so insane as to tie myself up in a knot that—I got thinking of just what you just said—the awful change in my affairs, interferences, wife's relations, and all that. O Lord, what a fool I've made of myself!"

"Sorry for you, Bob, but I don't see how I can help you. It wouldn't do for me to advise you anyway. You have passed from my influence to hers. Anything I'd say to you you'd pour into her ear, and she'd prejudice you against me all the quicker and all the stronger."

"How can I get out of it?"

"You can't."

"I can shoot myself—accidentally."

"That's what you were going to do if she refused you."

"So I was. I wonder if I'll ever feel that way again."

"Yes, you will."

"When?"

"The next time you see her."

"Will it?"

"Yes; she'll approach you with a smile, both hands extended to take both of yours, put up her lips to be kissed, and you'll be limp as a wet rag."

"This was the first thing Bob's chum said to him that did not elicit a reply. The picture seemed to turn him as a changed wind will veer a weathercock."

"Well, I suppose I must make the best of it. One thing I think you might do to make it easier for me."

"What's that?"

"Get married yourself."

"Well, I like that! Did you ever read the fable of the fox that had his tail cut off in a trap? He told the other foxes they'd better have their tails cut off too. Not any for me. I don't propose to cut off my cigars, cocktails and other pleasures of life to be tied down to a woman who will place a barrier between me and all?"

"Get out of here! You'll drive me insane with your chatter."

"Well, goodby, old man. It's sad to recall our pleasant friendship and think that it is ended. It is better to break it all off at once. Fortunately I'm off on a long trip, and by the time I return you'll have been swung off. Goodby, Bob, as the poet says:

"We've been long together, Through pleasant and through stormy weather."

"It's hard to part when friends are dear; Perhaps 'twill cause a sigh, a tear, 'When I see you again!'"

Mr. Bangs' voice, which had been growing tremulous while repeating the lines, gave out altogether, and with a silent pressure of hands the chums parted.

Mr. Bangs, I have sent for you at Bob's suggestion—indeed, his request. Our honeymoon had scarcely passed before he was called away on business. He told me that you would return soon after his departure and he could rely on you to help me out of my loneliness during his absence."

"I shall be very happy, I assure you," replied Mr. Bangs, belying his words by his expression.

"Bob knows perfectly well that he can trust me, and, as for you, he says you have no use for any woman except to pass time. I shall expect you to be devoted to me."

The only one of these statements that was spoken with apparent sincerity was the last. It doesn't matter what persons say to each other; it's how they say it. Mr. Bangs made a short call, during which he said a number of things, all of which were untrue. At any rate, they were intended to be untrue.

An attractive woman doesn't need to deceive a man as to her intention to conquer him. He wishes to be conquered. Indeed, he can't be conquered fast enough to satisfy his impatience. Martin Bangs had no occasion to fear matrimony with a married woman, but the idea of a possibility of his getting mixed in an affair with his friend's wife was horrible to him. During the period that he was engaged in preventing Mrs. Bangs from being lonely he made several attempts to get out of her clutches. On one occasion he left her rooming house and he would not return to her room another moment or ever return to her again, and in less than half an hour he was ringing the doorbell furiously.

What made the matter worse was that Mrs. Morrow did not appear to feel the slightest compunction at what she was doing with Mr. Bangs, or have any fear that she should come to prefer him to her husband. She would lower her eyes before his gaze then look up and laugh at him. In fact, she was teasing him. And all the while she would persist in referring to Bob Morrow as the best man, the finest man, the loveliest man in the world, and any woman who preferred any other man to him couldn't have any taste.

One evening when they were together she announced that Bob had written that he would be at home in a few days. Bangs looked as if she had read him his death warrant.

"You don't seem joyful," she remarked.

"No I don't. I don't see how a man can feel joyful situated as I am."

"How are you situated?"

"In the first place, my feelings toward the man I love most in the world are that I'd like to kill him."

"How awfully horrid!"

"In the second place, I feel that he would be justified in killing me."

"Good, gracious! What have you done?"

"Nothing. It is what I wish to do."

"And what do you wish to do?"

"Run away with his wife."

"You naughty man! That being the case, I think you had better not come here any more till after Bob's return."

"I think I'd better never come."

"It's very silly of you to want another man's wife when there are so many nice girls in the world. But I thought you didn't wish to be married."

"I wouldn't in my senses."

"Just think of what you would have to give up."

No reply.

"The cocktails."

"Oh, Bob told you all that, did he?"

"And the wife's relations."

"I knew he was not to be trusted from the moment he got engaged."

"Then you would have to give up your old friends; your wife would be jealous of them."

"What a sieve a man becomes as soon as he is married!"

"I wouldn't do it if I were you."

"I'm not likely to. I can't marry my best friend's wife, and I don't wish to

marry any one else."

"Mr. Bangs!"

"What?"

"You men are humbugs!"

"I know it."

"You don't know what you want."

"We certainly don't want a sweet-heart till we know we can't get her."

"Bob turned out to be a selve, true enough. He was no sooner engaged than he repeated to his fiancée word for word the congratulations you offered him."

"The greater fool I."

"I was present when he did it."

"Of course you were! How could you have been somewhere else?"

"I'm not Mrs. Morrow."

"Not Mrs. Morrow!"

"I'm Mrs. Morrow's sister. Nell and I just thought we'd punish you for your opinions of women."

"For heaven's sake! Are you married or single?"

"Single."

"Thank God!"

When Morrow came home there were criminations and recriminations between the two men, but there was no bitterness to them.

"You gave me away," said Mart.

"So would the fox have given the other foxes away if by doing so he could have got them to cut off their tails."

"I'm in heaven!"

"Thanks to me, who betrayed you."

\$100 Reward, \$100.

The readers of this paper will be pleased to learn that there is at least one dreaded disease that science has been able to cure in all its stages, and that is Catarrh. Hall's Catarrh Cure is the only positive cure now known to the medical fraternity. Catarrh being a constitutional disease, requires a constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system, thereby destroying the foundation of the disease, and giving the patient strength by building up the constitution and assisting nature in doing its work. The proprietors have so much faith in its curative powers that they offer One Hundred Dollars for any case that it fails to cure. Send for list of testimonials.

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The Kinder Fata.

She—It was dreadful. He rocked the boat and she was drowned. He—Lucky girl! She might have escaped and married the idiot.—Boston Transcript.

Conscience warns us as a friend before punishing us as a judge.—Stanislaus.

Homemade Soap Compound.

The following soap compound is given by a reader who says she has found it most excellent: Slice very thin two cakes of ordinary brown soap; add just enough boiling water to cover it and while melting beat the shavings to a pulp. Add half a cupful of gasoline. Beat the mixture again and it is ready for use. This compound acts much like the naphtha soaps on the market. Clothes washed with it do not require boiling and its use will not injure the hands. It ought to be unnecessary to remind housekeepers that the gasoline must not be mixed with the lathered soap when there is a fire in the room.

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Because of its remarkable cleansing, antiseptic, germicidal, soothing and healing influence, Rexall Eczema Ointment has a very pronounced value in the treatment of skin diseases, especially where the form of ailment is of the chronic, aggravating sort. We highly recommend it for the dry scaly form or the weeping type, where there is a constant flow of ill-smelling excretion.

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