

# When a Man Marries

By  
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART  
Author of *The Circular Staircase*,  
*The Man in the Lower Ten*, etc.

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Needles and pins.  
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When a man marries  
His trouble begins.

## CHAPTER I.

**At Least I Meant Well.**  
When the dreadful thing occurred that night, every one turned on me. The injustice of it hurt me most. They said I got up the dinner, that I asked them to give up other engagements and come, that I pre-arranged kinds of things. If they could come, and then when they did come, and got in the papers, and every one but ourselves—laughed himself black in the face, they turned on me! I, who suffered ten times to their one! I had never, never, forgot what Dallas Brown said to me, standing with a coal shovel over his hand and—well, perhaps it would be better to tell it in the order it happened.

I went to the Circular Staircase, Jimmy Wilson, and a company was seated on a foot-square piece of yellow paper and a Japanese brazier, and it emanated and mixed up scarcely ten respectable members of society and a policeman. Evidently, it developed a part of Dallas and a box of soap, which sounds incongruous, doesn't it?

It was a great misfortune to be stout, especially for a man. Jim was round and looked shorter than he really was, and as all the lines of his face, or what should have been lines, were dimpled and puffed, he was about as flexible and full of expression as a puzzle in a tight cover. The anger he set the funnier he looked, and when he was raring, and his neck swelled up over his collar and got red, he was entrancing. And everybody liked him, and borrowed money from him, and laughed at his pictures that was one in the Marquand gallery in London. Wilson, as people had the habit, and snatched his cigarette holder, and tried to steal his cap. The whole story hung on the Jap.

The trouble was, I think, that no one took Jim seriously. His ambition in life was to be taken seriously, but people steadily refused to. His art was a huge joke—except to himself. If he asked people to dinner, every one expected a party. He was, more or less, a Knickerbocker, punctuated at the wedge, and condoned it the wildest prank of Jimmy's career, although Jim himself seemed to take it awfully hard.

We had all known them both for years. I went to Farnsworth, with Bella, and Anne Brown was her matron of honor when she married Jim. My first winter out, Jim had paid me a lot of attention. He painted my portrait in oils, and had a studio to exhibit it in, was very interested, but it did not look like me, so I stayed from the exhibition! It dictated to me. He said he was not a photographe, "but that anyhow the rest of my features called for the nose he had given me, and that all the Greuze women have long necks. I have not."

After I had refused Jim twice, he met Bella at a camp in the Adirondacks and when he came back he came to me, so that I would be sorry to let him, and he blundered over the telling for 20 minutes. Of course, no woman likes to lose a lover, no matter what she may say about it, but Jim had been getting on my nerves for some time, and I was much calmer than he expected me to be.

"If you mean," I said finally in desperation, "that you and Bella are—aren't you? Why don't you say so, Jim? I think you will find that I stand it wonderfully."

He brightened perceptibly.

"I didn't know how you would take it, Kit," he said, "and I hope we will always be bully friends. You are absolutely sure you don't care a whoop for me?"

"Absolutely," I replied, and we shook hands. He began about Bella, it was very tiresome.

Bella is a nice girl, but I had roomed with her at school, and I was under no illusions.

When Jim raved about Bella and her "bangs" and Bella and her guitar, I had painful moments when I recalled Bella learning for ward, "you're not well. You can't go to see you, life passing away, if you are too good for him," I had batted an eye. "And I shook him solemnly across the tea-table gristle, and wished him happiness—which was sincere enough—but hopeless and said we had only been playing a game, but that it was time to stop playing. Jim kissed my hand, and it was really very touching.

We had been the best of friends ever since. Two days before the wedding he came around from his tour, and we had a little talk, but not to me. He would read one and say, "Here's a checkerjack, Kit," and pass it to me. And after I had read it, he would lay it on the fire, and Jim would say, "I am not worthy of her, Kit. I wonder if I can make her happy?" Or, "Did you know that the Duke of Belford proposed to her in London last winter?"

Of course, one has to take the woman's word about a thing like that, but the "duke" of Belford had been about as old as Maude Richard all that winter.

You can see that the burning of the letters, which was meant to be remissly sentimental, a sort of how-silly-we-were-it's-all-over-now, occasion, became actually a two hours' agony of Bella. And just when I was "bofed" to death, the Mercer girl dropped in and heard Jim begin to read one commencing "dearest Kit." And the next day after the rehearsal dinner, they told Bella:

There was very nearly no wedding at all. Bella could not get me in a frenzy the next morning and threw Jim and his two hundred odd pounds in my face, and although I explained it all over and over, she never quite forgave me. That was what made it so hard later—the situation would have been bad enough without that complication.

They went abroad on their wedding journey, and stayed several months. And when Jim came back he was fat, but not even a bit. Every body said it. Bella had a gaudy garment fitted up in a corner of the studio, but he would not let her. He smoked a pipe and painted all day, and drank beer, and would eat starches or whatever it is that is fattening. But he adored Bella, and he was madly jealous of her. At dinners he used to glare at the man who took her in, although he did not make him thin. Bella was ailing, too, and by the time they had dined a year, people shifted their chairs together, and dropped their voices when they were mentioned.

## CHAPTER II.

**The Way It Began.**  
It makes me angry every time I think how I tried to make that dinner a success. I carried a dinner, and I took the Mercer girls along, and I had a very nice time, but I forgot that I got up the dinner, that I telephoned around for them. They asked me why I couldn't cook—when not one of them knew one side of a range from the other. And for Anne Brown to talk, the way she did—saying I had always been crazy about Jim, and that she believed I had not made him thin. Bella was a sheer shilly. Yes, there was a faint smile. The fatuous butler started it all, and Aunt Bella carried it along.

## CHAPTER III.

**Well, on the anniversary of the day**  
Bella left him, oh, yes, she left him finally. She was intense enough about some things, and she said I got on her nerves to have everybody chuckle when they asked for her husband. When they asked, "Hello, Bella! How's Bub?" Still banting! And Bella's Bubbies! Well, on the anniversary of the day

she left him, he, too, had the same idea, and tried to steal his cap. The whole story hung on the Jap.

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"See here, Jim," I said, leaning forward, "you're not well. You can't go to see you, life passing away, if you are too good for him," I had batted an eye.

"You may have all that, but they're not like you, you're not good for me," he said.

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"You're not going to do either," I said with firmness. "You are going right home to unpack those new draperies that Harry Bayless sent you

from Shanghai, and you are going to order dinner for eight—that will be two tables of bridge. And you are not going to be a burden to me."

He was not seemly enthusiastic, but he rose and picked up his hat, and stood looking at me when I sat on an old horse-hair covered sofa.

"I wish to thunder I had married you!" he said savagely. "You're the finest girl I know, Kit, without exception, and you are going to throw your self away on Jack Manning, or Max or some other!"

"Nothing of the sort," I said coldly, "and the fact that you didn't know me is the only privilege of having my friends. Anyhow, I don't like you when you speak like that."

Jim took me to the door and stopped there to sigh.

"I haven't been well," he said, heavily. "Don't eat, don't sleep, won't you think I'd lose flesh?" Kit—he lowered his voice solemnly—"I have gained two pounds!"

I said he didn't look it, which appeared to comfort him somewhat, and he turned to kiss me on the cheek when I told him Bella was.

He said, "I'm a sure you're

the best girl in Europe, and that he had heard she was going to marry Reggie Wolfe. Then he sighed again, muttered something about ordering the funeral baked meats to be prepared and left me.

That was my entire share in the affair.

I was the victim, both of pitiful

circumstances and of their plot, when the latter time they once let me forget that I got up the dinner, that I telephoned around for them. They asked me why I couldn't cook—when not one of them knew one side of a range from the other. And for Anne Brown to talk, the way she did—saying I had always been crazy about Jim, and that she believed I had known all along that his aunt was coming—for Anne to talk like that did not make him thin. Bella was a sheer shilly. Yes, there was a faint smile. The fatuous butler started it all, and Aunt Bella carried it along.

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