

**THE MARRIED MAN
A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS**

By

D. H. Lawrence

***Free*editorial** 

CHARACTERS:

DR GEORGE GRAINGER

WILLIAM BRENTNALL

MRS PLUM

JACK MAGNEER

ANNIE CALLADINE, ADA CALLADINE, EMILY CALLADINE, Sisters

SALLY MAGNEER, Jack's sister

MR MAGNEER, father of Jack and Sally

ELSA SMITH, Brentnall's fiancée

GLADYS

TOM, husband of Gladys

ETHEL, Grainger's wife

ACT I

A bedroom shared by GRAINGER and BRENTNALL in the cottage of MRS PLUM. Both men are dressing. GRAINGER goes to the door and calls to MRS PLUM.

GRAINGER: Bring me some collars up.

BRENTNALL: And what are you going to do?

GRAINGER: God knows.

BRENTNALL: How much money have you got?

GRAINGER: Four damn quid.

BRENTNALL: Hm!--You're well off, considering. But what *do* you think of doing?

GRAINGER: I don't know.

BRENTNALL: Where do you think of going Saturday?

GRAINGER: Hell.

BRENTNALL: Too expensive, my boy--four quid won't carry you there.

GRAINGER: Oh chuck it, Billy.

BRENTNALL: What the Hanover's the good of chucking it? You're not a blooming cock robin, to take no thought for the morrow.

Enter MRS PLUM with the collars.

MRS PLUM: Gee, I'm sorry I forgot 'em, Dr Grainger. I'm ever so sorry.

GRAINGER: Don't fret yourself about that, Mrs Plum. You're all right, you are.

MRS PLUM: Gee, but I can't get it out of my head, that there what you've just told me.

GRAINGER: You want to sneeze hard, Mrs Plum. That'll shift it.

MRS PLUM (*laughing*): Hee-hee--hark you there now. And have you got rid

of it off your mind, Dr Grainger?

GRAINGER: My head's as clear as a bell o' brass, Mrs Plum. Nothing ails me.

MRS PLUM: My word, it doesn't. My word, but you're looking well, you're a sight better than when you come. Isn't he, Mr Brentnall?

BRENTNALL: He's too healthy for anything, Mrs Plum--he's so healthy, he'd walk slap into a brick wall, and never know he'd hurt himself.

MRS PLUM: Gee--I don't know. But that there as you told me, Dr Grainger--

GRAINGER: Here, you go and see if that's Jack Magneer, and if it is, let him come up.

MRS PLUM: You're a caution, you are that, Dr Grainger.

Exit MRS PLUM.

BRENTNALL: The girl is gone on you, the kid is yours. You are a married man, and you mean to abide by your family?

GRAINGER: What the devil else is there to do?

BRENTNALL: Very well. Have you bothered about another job?

GRAINGER: No--I did when I was in Wolverhampton. Look what a fiendish business it is, offering yourself and being refused like a dog.

BRENTNALL: So you've taken no steps.

GRAINGER: No.

BRENTNALL: And you've absolutely no idea what you're going to do on Saturday, when you've finished here?

GRAINGER: No.

BRENTNALL: And yet you mean to stick by your wife and kid?

GRAINGER: What else can I do?

BRENTNALL: Well, you're a beauty! You're just skulking, like a frightened rabbit.

GRAINGER: Am I, begad?

BRENTNALL: Are you fond of the kid?

GRAINGER: I shouldn't like anything to happen to it.

BRENTNALL: Neither should I. But the feelings of your breast towards it--?

GRAINGER: Well, I'm a lot *fonder* of that youngster at my digs in Wolverhampton--you know--

BRENTNALL: Then you feel no paternal emotion?

GRAINGER: No. Don't talk rot.

BRENTNALL: How often have you been over to see your wife?

GRAINGER: Once.

BRENTNALL: Once since you were married?

GRAINGER: Yes.

BRENTNALL: And that when the baby was first born?

GRAINGER: Yes.

BRENTNALL: And you're living--which, a recluse, or a gay bachelor?

GRAINGER: You can imagine me a recluse.

BRENTNALL: You're a blossom, Georgie, you're a jewel of a muddler.

GRAINGER: How could I help it! I was careful enough with the girl--I never thought, to tell you the truth, that--here's Jack!

BRENTNALL: That what?

GRAINGER: Shut up. Jack's a fine fellow.

BRENTNALL: Needs to be, to match you.

GRAINGER: Now Bill Brentnall, none of your sark.

JACK'S VOICE: How long are you going to be?

GRAINGER: How-do Jack! Shan't be a sec. Come up.

Enter JACK MAGNEER--aged 33--very big, a farmer, something of a gentleman, wears leggings and breeches, and a black bow tie.

JACK: Seem to be donning yourselves up--how are you?

GRAINGER: Mr Magneer--Mr Brentnall: Jack--Billy.

JACK: Yis, quite so. How are you, Billy?

BRENTNALL: I'm very well. You're Miss Magneer's brother?

GRAINGER: Sally's.

JACK: Yis, I am, and what of it?

BRENTNALL: Oh--only you are lucky.

GRAINGER *whistles gaily.*

JACK: What you whistling for, George lad? Aren't I lucky?

GRAINGER: I wish Sally was *my* sister, Jack.

JACK: Yis, you do, an' so do I, George lad--then me an' you'd be brothers.--
Oh, my good God, are you going to be all night titivating yourselves up?

GRAINGER: Jack's in a hurry.

JACK: No I'm not, but damn it all--

GRAINGER: Alright Jacko, alright. I know she's a very nice girl--

BRENTNALL: Where are you taking me?

GRAINGER: To see some real fine girls.

JACK: Not so much fine girls, Billy--some damn *nice* girls, *nice* girls, mind you.

GRAINGER: Quite right, Jacko. (*Seriously.*) No, but they are, Billy, real nice girls. Three sisters, orphans.

JACK: An' the oldest of them will happen to be Mrs Grainger--eh, what?

GRAINGER: Liar!

JACK: You see Billy, it's like this. I'm glad you've come, because it levels us up. I believe you're a nice chap. Don't you take me wrong. I mean you're not one of these damn sods as can see nowt in a girl but--you know.

BRENTNALL: Yes.

GRAINGER: Yes, Billy knows. Most moral young man.

JACK: Fooling apart, George, aren't they nice girls?

GRAINGER: *Really* nice girls, they are.

JACK: But you see, there's three of 'em--an' we've never been but two of us--

d'you twig?

BRENTNALL: I twig.

JACK: But no fooling, mind you.

BRENTNALL: Thanks for your caution, Mr Magneer.

JACK: Oh no, no. Nothing of the sort: only they *are* nice girls--you see what I mean--oh no, Billy--

GRAINGER: And three of 'em.

BRENTNALL: And the odd one falls to me. Thanks, I was born to oblige.

JACK: Now Billy, no. I want you t'have a good time. You see what I mean. I'm willing to step aside. You're here only for a bit--I'm always here. So I want you--

GRAINGER: "I want all of you t'have a good time."

JACK: Yis, I do. I do that, George.

GRAINGER: That's always Jacko's cry--"I want you t'have it your own road. I'm willing any road. I want you t'have a good time." Self-effacing chap is Jack.

BRENTNALL: Do I put on a dinner jacket?

GRAINGER: Good God, no--have you brought one?

BRENTNALL: Well--I might have to dine at some people's down towards Ashbourne.

CURTAIN

ACT II

A long, low dining-room--table laid for supper--bowls of crimson and white flowers, a large lamp--an old-fashioned room, furnished with taste.

The oldest MISS CALLADINE--aged 32, tall, slim, pale, dressed in black, wearing Parma violets, looks ladylike, but rather yearning. She walks about restlessly. Enter DR GRAINGER.

ANNIE: Aren't you late?

GRAINGER: A little--waiting for my friend. He's gone round to "The George" with Jack--some arrangement about farm stock. (*He takes both her hands, which she offers him yearningly, and, after glancing round, kisses her hastily, as if unwillingly.*) Where's Emily?

ANNIE: Emily and Ada are both entertaining Mrs Wesson in the drawing-room. I hope they'll get rid of her before Jack comes. I'm afraid we are being talked about. I'm afraid I'm not doing my duty by the girls.

GRAINGER: What do you mean?

ANNIE: You are here so often.

GRAINGER: I'm going away directly, so you'll be safe after Saturday.

ANNIE: Really going away on Saturday--really--really. (*Puts her hands on his shoulders.*)

GRAINGER: That's right.

ANNIE: Then people will talk more than ever. I shall be considered loose: and what's to become of the girls--

GRAINGER: *You* considered loose--oh Cæsar!

ANNIE: Where are you going?

GRAINGER: Don't know.

ANNIE: Why won't you tell me?

GRAINGER: Because I don't know. I am waiting for a letter--it will come tomorrow. Either I shall be going to Scotland, or down to London--one or the other, but I don't know which.

ANNIE: Scotland or London!

GRAINGER: I hope it's London.

ANNIE: Why do you?

GRAINGER: Well--more life, for one thing.

ANNIE: And is it "life" you want? That sort of life?

GRAINGER: Not that sort, exactly--but--oh, by the way, I told you I was bringing my friend--

ANNIE: Mr Brentnall--yes.

GRAINGER: Well, don't be surprised if I seem rather different tonight, will you? Billy's very circumspect, *very* circumspect--nice, mind you, but *good*.

ANNIE: I see.

GRAINGER: You'll like him though.

ANNIE (*bitingly*): In spite of his goodness.

GRAINGER: Yes, I know you like "life" better than "goodness"--don't you now?

He puts his hand under her chin.

ANNIE (*drawing away*): You seem to know a great deal about me.

GRAINGER: I know what you want.

ANNIE: What?

GRAINGER (*glancing round to see if he is safe--taking her in his arms, pressing her close, kissing her. She submits because she can scarcely help herself--there is a sound of feet and voices--he hastily releases her*): That!

ANNIE (*struggling with herself*): Indeed no, Dr Grainger.

GRAINGER: That's the ticket--keep it up, Annie.

Enter EMILY and ADA CALLADINE--EMILY, aged 27, quiet, self-possessed, dressed all in black--ADA, aged 23--rather plump, handsome, charmingly young and wicked-looking--dressed in black and purple, with a crimson flower.

ANNIE: Has Mrs Wesson gone?

ADA: Not before she heard a man's voice--I told her you were engaged.

GRAINGER: You what?

ADA (*bursting with laughter*): I told her Annie was engaged.

ANNIE (*severely*): With a caller, you mean, Ada?

GRAINGER: Oh, I see.

ADA: Yes--oh yes--oh how *funny*!

GRAINGER: Not funny at all--Jack's doing some business round at "The George", Emily.

EMILY: Is he?

GRAINGER (*discomfited*): I think I'll go and hurry them up.

ADA: Do!

ANNIE: You think it is quite safe to bring your *good* friend here?

GRAINGER: Oh, quite safe, Annie--don't be alarmed. Ta-ta!

Exit GRAINGER. *He is heard running down the stairs.*

ANNIE: I don't think Dr Grainger improves on acquaintance.

ADA: *We've* never got any further with him, so *we* can't say.

EMILY: Why do you think so, Annie?

ANNIE (*rather haughtily*): You would not guess what he said to me.

ADA: I think you've given him rather a long rope.

ANNIE (*with dignity*): If I have, he's hit me across the face with it.

EMILY: What did he say, Annie?

ANNIE: He is bringing a friend--a school and college friend--in a bank in London now--rather genteel, I believe. Well, Dr Grainger said to me this evening: "You know my friend is *very* circumspect, *very* circumspect, so you won't be surprised if my behaviour is rather different this evening."

ADA: Oh indeed!

EMILY: You should have kept him more in his place, Annie.

ANNIE: I should, but I thought he was a gentleman. I don't know *how* we're going to receive them this evening.

EMILY: We need simply take no notice of him, and be just polite.

ANNIE: But we don't know what he may have told his friend about us.

EMILY: I never cared for him.

ADA: Oh, what ripping fun!

ANNIE: Ada, be careful what you do and say.

ADA: It's not I who've put my foot in it. It is you if anyone.

ANNIE: I have been too free, perhaps; but you cannot say I have put my foot in it. I wish I had never admitted Dr Grainger at all--but he came with Jack--

EMILY: We shall go through alright with it. Simply despise Dr Grainger.

ANNIE: He is despicable.

ADA: He is here.

ANNIE: Emily, will you go downstairs and receive them? ADA, you stay here.

Exit EMILY--*voices downstairs.*

ADA: They are all three here--I must go also.

Exit ADA.

ANNIE CALLADINE *straightens her hair before the mirror, rubs out her wrinkles, puts her flowers nicely, and seats herself with much composure. Enter GRAINGER and BRENTNALL, followed by ADA CALLADINE.*

GRAINGER (*stiffly*): Miss Annie Calladine--Mr Brentnall.

BRENTNALL: What a nice smell of flowers.

ANNIE: It is the mezereon that Mr Magneer brought.

BRENTNALL: Did Mr Magneer bring flowers? I shouldn't have thought the idea could occur to him.

ANNIE: He always brings flowers from the *garden*. It would never occur to him to buy them for us.

BRENTNALL: I see--how nice of him.

GRAINGER: All country fellows cart handfuls of flowers that they've got out of their own gardens, to their girls.

ANNIE: Nevertheless, Mr Magneer does it nicely.

Enter MAGNEER and EMILY.

JACK: Now we seem as if we're going to be alright. What do you say, George?

GRAINGER: I say the same.

ANNIE: Do take a seat, all of you. Jack, you love the couch--

JACK: It's a very nice couch, this is. (*Sits down.*)

BRENTNALL: I should think it would be the easiest thing in life to write a poem about a couch. I wonder if the woman was giving Cowper a gentle hint--

ADA (*shrieking with laughter*): Yes--yes--yes!

BRENTNALL: I never see a couch but my heart moves to poetry. The very buttons must be full of echoes--

JACK (*bending his ear*): Can't hear 'em, Billy.

BRENTNALL: Will none of you tune his ear?

ADA: Yes--yes!

EMILY (*seating herself quietly beside JACK*): What is it you are listening for, Jack?

JACK (*awkwardly*): I've no idea.

ANNIE: Where will you sit, Mr Brentnall? Do choose a comfortable chair.

BRENTNALL (*seating himself beside her*): Thanks very much.

JACK: Nay--nay--nay, Billy.

BRENTNALL (*rising suddenly*): Er--there's a broken spring in that chair, Miss Calladine. (*He crosses the hearth.*)

ANNIE: I'm so sorry--have a cushion--do!

BRENTNALL: Will you allow me to sit here?

ADA: Let me give you some supper.

GRAINGER: Shall I administer the drinks?

GRAINGER *gives the women burgundy, the men whisky and soda.* ADA CALLADINE *hands round food.* GRAINGER *seats himself reluctantly beside ANNIE CALLADINE--*ADA CALLADINE *takes a low chair next to BRENTNALL.*

JACK: Now we are alright--at least I hope so.

BRENTNALL (*to ADA*): You are quite alright?

ADA (*laughing*): As far as I know.

BRENTNALL (*to EMILY*): I can see you are perfectly at home. (*EMILY bows quietly, with a smile.*) And you, Miss Calladine?

ANNIE: Thank you!

BRENTNALL: Gentlemen--the ladies!

GRAINGER (*ironically*): God bless 'em.

JACK: Amen! (*They drink.*)

ADA: Ladies--the gentlemen!

ANNIE: God help them.

EMILY: Amen! (*They drink.*)

BRENTNALL: Wherein must the Lord help us, Miss Calladine?

ANNIE: To run away, Mr Brentnall.

EMILY: Annie!

ADA: To come to the scratch, you mean.

BRENTNALL: Ha! Gentlemen--to marriage!

JACK: I don't think!

ANNIE: What is *your* comment, Dr Grainger?

GRAINGER: Mine!

BRENTNALL: Dr Grainger is a confirmed misogynist.

GRAINGER: Shut up, you fool.

ANNIE: Oh--we've not heard so before.

JACK: D'you mean George doesn't believe in marriage? Nay, you're wrong there. When th' time comes--

ANNIE: When *does* the time come for a man to marry, Jack?

JACK: When he can't help it, I s'd think. (*Silence.*)

BRENTNALL: You're very quiet, George.

GRAINGER: Don't you be a fool.

ANNIE: Your humour is not very complimentary this evening, Dr Grainger.

JACK: There's perhaps too many of us in th' room, eh?

ANNIE: Not too many for me, Jack.

ADA (*bursting into laughter*): Do be complimentary, somebody, if only to cheer us up.

JACK (*putting his arm round EMILY'S waist*): Yis, I will.

BRENTNALL (*putting his arm round ADA'S neck*): May I kiss you, Ada?

ADA (*laughing*): How (*laughs*)--how awfully nice (*laughs heartily*) of you. (*BRENTNALL kisses her.*)

JACK: Oh my God, now we're coming on. *(He kisses EMILY furtively.)*

BRENTNALL: Mind your own business.

Seizes a newspaper, and screens it before him and ADA--they put their heads together.

JACK: I call that comin' on--eh what?

BRENTNALL *(to ADA--behind the newspaper)*: Well, I'll be damned!

ANNIE *(loudly and sarcastically)*: Do you like the flavour, Mr Brentnall?

BRENTNALL *(from behind the paper)*: Excellent! *(Sotto voce.)* You are awfully jolly.

JACK *(bouncing with surprise)*: Well strike me lucky!

BRENTNALL *(throwing him another newspaper)*: Here you are then!

JACK: Good God! *(He spreads the paper before him and EMILY.)*

GRAINGER: You damn fool, Billy Brentnall.

BRENTNALL: Dog in the manger. *(Softly to ADA.)* Do you think I'm a fool? No, you like me.

JACK *(from behind his paper)*: How're you going on, Billy?

BRENTNALL: Fine. How're you going on, George?

The four peep over their newspapers at GRAINGER and ANNIE.

BRENTNALL: Temperature down at freezing point over there?

GRAINGER: I'll have it out of you for this, William.

ANNIE: Why, what has Mr Brentnall done amiss, Dr Grainger?

BRENTNALL *(from behind his paper)*: Oh, it's not I. It's George's sins finding him out. Be sure your sins will find you out.

ADA *(softly)*: You're not a bit what I thought you would be.

BRENTNALL *(softly)*: Worse or better?

ADA *(laughing)*: Oh--better.

BRENTNALL: What did you think I should be?

ADA: Circumspect.

GRAINGER *sends a cushion smashing through their paper.*

JACK: What the devil's up, George?

ANNIE: Oh, it annoys him to see other people enjoying themselves when he can't.

BRENTNALL *(spreading the paper for screen)*: The nail on the head, Miss--may I say Annie?

ANNIE: Yes, Mr Brentnall.

BRENTNALL: I wish I were two men, Annie.

GRAINGER *sends the cushion again smashing through the newspaper.*

JACK: God help thee George, do settle down.

BRENTNALL *(spreading the paper again)*: It's high time he did--settle down, Georgie--it's good advice.

ADA *(softly)*: What makes him so cross to-night?

BRENTNALL *(softly)*: Don't know--unless he's shy.

ADA (*bursting with laughter*): Shy!

BRENTNALL: Why, isn't he?

ADA: You should see the way he carries on--

BRENTNALL: With you?

ADA: Annie.

The cushion crashes through the paper.

JACK: Damn thee George, take Annie downstairs a minute, if tha can't bide still.

GRAINGER: That fool there--!

BRENTNALL (*restoring the fragments of paper--softly--to ADA*): You know there's a secret about Dr Grainger.

ADA: Oh! (*Laughs.*) Do tell me.

GRAINGER: Billy Brentnall!

BRENTNALL: I hear you calling me.

ADA: Do tell me the secret.

BRENTNALL: Kiss me then. (*They kiss--she laughs.*) You are awfully jolly. (*Kisses her under the ear.*)

ADA (*shaking with laughter*): Don't, don't, oh don't!

BRENTNALL: Does my moustache tickle you? Sorry.

JACK: Nation seize me, did ever you hear?

GRAINGER: Such a fool? I'll bet you never did.

ADA: Tell me that secret.

BRENTNALL: George has got another girl.

ADA: Who? Where?

GRAINGER: Oh, cheese it, Billy.

BRENTNALL: Sally Magneer.

GRAINGER: Damn you.

ADA: No!

BRENTNALL: Fact! She told me herself.

JACK: What's that, George?

GRAINGER (*to BRENTNALL*): Liar!

BRENTNALL: It's the truth--mine's pistols.

JACK: You're a devil, George, you're a devil.

GRAINGER (*bitterly*): I am that!

EMILY: And what is Mr Brentnall?

JACK (*shaking his head*): Nay, I'm not going to say. (*He rises heavily, draws EMILY after him, and goes out of the room.*)

BRENTNALL (*rising*): Well, this newspaper's no more good.

ADA: There's a fire in the drawing-room--and real screens there.

BRENTNALL: And Jack *does* occupy *himself*. Right you are.

GRAINGER: Chuck it, Billy.

BRENTNALL: What?

GRAINGER: None o' that.

BRENTNALL: Well, I'll go to--

GRAINGER: I've no doubt.

ANNIE: Dr Grainger is afraid of being left alone: he must have someone to protect him.

BRENTNALL: What from?

ANNIE: Presumably from me. (*To GRAINGER.*) Will you go down with Ada to the drawing-room? Ada, do you mind?

ADA: Not at all. (*Exit ADA.*)

GRAINGER (*bitterly*): Very nice of you, Annie, very nice of you. (*Exit GRAINGER.*)

BRENTNALL *and* ANNIE *seat themselves.*

ANNIE: What do you think of all this, Mr Brentnall?

BRENTNALL: Why, it's a mere lark. Jack is really courting Emily, and Ada is sheer mischief, and I'm quite decent, really.

ANNIE: Are you really?

BRENTNALL: Judge from your own instinct.

ANNIE: I think you are--and is Dr Grainger?

BRENTNALL: What do you think?

ANNIE: There is something not nice about him.

BRENTNALL: Has he been courting you?

ANNIE (*drawing herself up*): Well--!

BRENTNALL: You see, it's a pity--

ANNIE: What is a pity?

BRENTNALL: Why--shall I say just what I think--?

ANNIE: I want you to.

BRENTNALL: Well then--it's a pity that girls like you--you are over thirty?

ANNIE: Yes.

BRENTNALL: It's a pity that so many of the best women let their youth slip by, because they don't find a man good enough--and then, when dissatisfaction becomes a torture--later on--you are dissatisfied with life, you *do* lack something big.

ANNIE: Yes.

BRENTNALL: When it comes to that stage, the want of a man is a torture to you. And since the common men make the advances--

ANNIE: Yes!

BRENTNALL (*putting his arm round her and kissing her*): You are either driven to a kind of degradation, or you go nearly, slightly mad from want--

ANNIE: Yes!

BRENTNALL (*kissing her*): If you want love from men like Grainger, take it for what it's worth--because we're made so that either we must have love, or starve and go slightly mad.

ANNIE: But I don't want that kind of love.

BRENTNALL: But do be honest with yourself. Don't cause a split between your conscious self and your unconscious--that is insanity. You *do* want love, almost any sort. Make up your mind what you'll accept, or what you won't, but keep your ideal intact. Whatever men you take, keep the idea of man intact: let your soul wait whether your body does or not. But don't drag the first down to the second. Do you understand?

ANNIE: I could love you.

BRENTNALL: But I am going away in a day or two, and most probably shall not be here again--and I am engaged. You see, so many women are too good for the men, that for every decent man, there are thirty decent women. And you decent women go and waste and wither away. Do think it out square, and make the best of it. Virginity and all that is no good to you.

ANNIE: And what would you advise?

BRENTNALL: Know men, and have men, if you must. But keep your soul virgin, wait and believe in the *good* man you may never have.

ANNIE: It is not very--what made Dr Grainger so queer to-night?

BRENTNALL: Because he's married.

ANNIE: I *felt* it--to whom?

BRENTNALL: A girl in Wolverhampton--married last January, a son in March, now it's June.

ANNIE: Oh, the liar!--And what sort of girl?

BRENTNALL: Decent, I believe.

ANNIE: Does she love him?

BRENTNALL: Yes.

ANNIE: The brute--the--

BRENTNALL: He doesn't love her, you see--

ANNIE: It makes it no better--and she doesn't know how he's--

BRENTNALL: Of course not.

ANNIE: I wonder if I know her--what's her name?

BRENTNALL: Marson--her people are tailors in Broad Street.

ANNIE: No, I don't know her!--But to think--

BRENTNALL: Don't be too ready to blame.

ANNIE: You men are all alike.

BRENTNALL: Not true--who is coming?

ANNIE: I don't know.

Enter SALLY MAGNEER--a very big, strapping farmer's daughter, evidently moderately well off.

SALLY: Good evening--Jack here?

ANNIE: Good evening. Yes, I believe he's in the drawing-room with Dr Grainger.

SALLY: That's how you arrange it, is it? (*To BRENTNALL.*) Nice, isn't it?

BRENTNALL: Very nice.

SALLY: Who else is in the drawing-room?

ANNIE: My sisters. I believe they're having some music.

SALLY: They don't make much noise over it, anyway. Can I go and see?

ANNIE: Certainly.

BRENTNALL *opens the door for her, and whistles quickly a private call--repeats it.* GRAINGER'S *whistle is heard in answer.*

SALLY: Alright, I won't drop in on you too sudden. (*Exit SALLY.*)

ANNIE: What impertinence!

BRENTNALL (*laughing*): She's made a dead set at Grainger. If he weren't married, she'd get him.

ANNIE: How disgusting!

BRENTNALL: Maybe--but a woman who determines soon enough to get married, succeeds. Delay is fatal--and marriage is beastly, on most occasions.

ANNIE: I will go to the drawing-room. Will you excuse me? (*Exit ANNIE.*)

BRENTNALL *pours himself a drink.* *Enter GRAINGER.*)

GRAINGER: What the hell have you been up to?

BRENTNALL: What the hell have you been up to?

GRAINGER: What have you been stuffing into Annie?

BRENTNALL: What have you been stuffing into Ada?

GRAINGER: Nothing, you devil.

BRENTNALL: Nothing, you devil.

GRAINGER: What's Sally after?

BRENTNALL: You.

GRAINGER: She ought to be shot.

BRENTNALL: So ought you.

Enter JACK.

JACK: What the hell's up to-night?

BRENTNALL: My tail, and George's dander, and your--but what's Miss Magneer after?

JACK: That's what I want to know. You know George here, he's a devil. He's been on wi' some little game with our Sally.

GRAINGER: You sweet liar, Jack.

JACK: Now George, what is it?

GRAINGER: Nothing, Jack. Sally's taken a fancy to me, an' gives me no chance. Can't you see for yourself?

JACK: I can, George--an' tha shanner be pestered.

GRAINGER: There's Charlie Greenhalgh won't speak to me now--thinks I'm running him off. *I've* no desire to run Charlie off.

JACK: Sally's as good as you, George.

GRAINGER: Maybe, and a thousand times better. But that doesn't say as I want to marry her.

JACK: No, George, no, that is so, lad.

Enter SALLY and the other ladies.

SALLY: How would you arrange six folks in three chairs--?

GRAINGER: Couldn't do it.

SALLY: I don't think! What's your opinion, Ada?

ADA: Why am I asked for my opinion? I've never sat in a chair with Dr Grainger.

SALLY: Where have you sat then?

ADA: I may have sat on his knee while he sat in the chair.

SALLY: Here, young man, explain yourself.

GRAINGER: Well, I'll be damned!

BRENTNALL: Sooner or later.

JACK: Now look here, our Sally, we're havin' none o' this. Charlie Greenhalgh is your man; you stick to him, and leave other young fellows alone.

SALLY: Oh you *are* good, Jack! And what about the girl you took to Blackpool?

JACK: Say no more, Sally, now say no more.

SALLY: No, I won't. Do you want me to drive you up to Selson, because th' cart's at the door?

JACK: No, we'll walk up.

GRAINGER: I dunno, Jack. It's getting late, and I believe Billy's tired. He's a convalescent, you know.

JACK: Never thought of it, lad. Sorry--sorry.

They bid good night. Exeunt SALLY and GRAINGER, EMILY,

JACK, and ADA.

ANNIE: Isn't he a thing!

BRENTNALL: He's not bad--*do* be honest.

ANNIE: Oh *but!*

BRENTNALL: Remember what I say--don't starve yourself, and don't degrade the idea of men.

ANNIE: And shall I never see you again?

BRENTNALL: If I can, I will come again.

ANNIE: Good-bye.

He kisses her rather sorrowfully, and departs. ANNIE CALLADINE closes the door--drinks the last drain from his glass--weeps--dries her eyes as the girls come upstairs. There is a calling of good-bye from outside.

ADA: What's amiss?

ANNIE: Plenty.

EMILY: What?

ANNIE: Dr Grainger is only married and got a child.

ADA and EMILY: No--where--is his wife living?

ANNIE: His wife is at her home, in Wolverhampton--Broad Street.

ADA: I'll write to her--I will--I will.

ANNIE: No, Ada--no.

ADA: I will--I will--I will: "Dear Mrs George Grainger, come and look after your husband. He is running the rig out here, and if you don't come quick--" *She has flung her writing case on to the table, and sits down to write. Vain cries of "Ada," "Ada," from ANNIE CALLADINE.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

The kitchen at MAGNEER'S farm, SALLY MAGNEER, EMILY CALLADINE, ADA CALLADINE. MR MAGNEER, farmer, not fat, but well looking: grey hair, black moustache; at present rather maudlin. JACK MAGNEER, still in riding breeches and leggings. GRAINGER and BRENTNALL, both in tennis flannels. JACK and EMILY sit together on a large old couch, GRAINGER next to them. SALLY is in a chair, looking as if any moment she would take wing. BRENTNALL is flirting with ADA CALLADINE.

MR MAGNEER: An' so you really goin' ter leave us, Dr Grainger.

GRAINGER: That is so, Mr Magneer.

MR MAGNEER: An' when might you be goin'?

GRAINGER: Saturday.

MR MAGNEER: To-morrow! My word, that's sharp. Well, I know *one* as'll be sorry you goin'.

SALLY: Shut up, Father. (*She giggles, and twists her handkerchief to GRAINGER.*) We s'll be seeing you again, though?

GRAINGER: Well, I really can't say--I'm going to London.

SALLY: London! Whatever are you going there for?

BRENTNALL: Set up a wife and family.

SALLY: What, all at once?--Give us a chance.

BRENTNALL: Not a ghost of a chance, Sally.

ADA CALLADINE *laughs uncontrollably.*

GRAINGER: Got a joke over there?

ADA (*laughing*): Yes--yes--yes!

SALLY (*jumping up*): Just look at your glass! (*Takes GRAINGER'S tumbler and proceeds to mix him rum.*) Why ever didn't you speak?

MR MAGNEER: Yes, you must shout up when you're emp'y.

SALLY (*to GRAINGER*): Like it sweet?

GRAINGER (*ironically*): Not too much.

SALLY (*taking the glass and standing in front of him*): How's this for you?

GRAINGER (*sipping*): Quite alright, thank you, Sally.

MR MAGNEER (*laughing*): "Quite alright," hark ye! It's "quite alright." (*He gives a great wink at BRENTNALL. SALLY begins to giggle.*)

GRAINGER (*lugubriously*): Sally's got 'em again.

JACK: Sit you down, Sally, an' don't look so long o' th' leg.

SALLY *giggles half hysterically, and sinks beside GRAINGER, who edges away. She leans towards him--laughs uncontrollably.*

MR MAGNEER: Now we're comin' on. What yer doin' at 'er, Doctor?

GRAINGER: Begad, I'm doing nothing, Mr Magneer. I dunno what's got her.

MR MAGNEER (*laughs*): He dunno, doesn't know what's got her. (*To BRENTNALL.*) We don't, do we?

BRENTNALL: Not a bit.

GRAINGER: I'll have a drop more water. (*Rises and goes to table.*)

MR MAGNEER: Come Sally, my lass, come.

SALLY *dries her eyes, still giggles, rises. GRAINGER hastily takes an odd chair at the table. She stands beside him.*

JACK: Are ter goin' ter sit thysen down, Sally?

SALLY: Am I hurtin' *you* by standin'?

JACK: Yis, you are.

BRENTNALL: Fill me up, Sally, there's a dear. (*SALLY takes his glass.*)

MR MAGNEER: Sally Magneer, there's a dear.

GRAINGER: Isn't Charlie coming?

SALLY: No, did you want him?

GRAINGER: No--but I thought *you* did.

SALLY (*beginning to giggle*): Did you? You happen thought wrong.

BRENTNALL: Poor Charlie.

SALLY: What do you know about him?

BRENTNALL: Now Sally! It's best to be on with the new love before you're off with the old.

SALLY (*giggling*): I don't know what you mean.

JACK: Art thou going to sit down?

SALLY: Yes. (*Retires discomfited to the couch.*)

BRENTNALL (*rising*): I'll get a light.

GRAINGER: Matches?

BRENTNALL (*going to fire*): Never mind. (*Lights his cigarette with a spill.*)

ADA (*laughing*): Good-bye, Billy.

BRENTNALL (*blowing her kisses*): Farewell, farewell. (*Sinks on the couch beside SALLY.*)

SALLY: What have you come for?

BRENTNALL: Won't you have me, Sally?

SALLY: I don't know.

GRAINGER (*shuffling the cards*): A hand of crib, Mr Magneer?

MR MAGNEER: I don't mind if I do. Fill up.

BRENTNALL (*taking SALLY'S hand*): Hurt your finger?

SALLY: My thumb.

BRENTNALL: Shame! What did you do?

SALLY: Chopped it.

BRENTNALL: How rotten. Is it getting better?

MR MAGNEER: There's a bit o' proud flesh in it.

GRAINGER: Your crib, Mr Magneer.

SALLY (*unwinding the bandage*): Yes, it's going on alright now.

BRENTNALL (*examining it closely*): Yes, that's healing right enough, but a nasty gash! What did Charlie say to it?

SALLY: Charlie!

BRENTNALL: Yes, Charlie. He's your fellow, isn't he?

SALLY: I don't know so much about that.

BRENTNALL: I heard you were as good as engaged.

SALLY: Oh, did you--who's been telling you?

BRENTNALL: Mrs Plum.

SALLY: She knows so much, you see.

BRENTNALL: Let me wrap it up for you. (*Bandages her thumb.*) But isn't it right?

SALLY: Not as *I* know of.

BRENTNALL: Oh, I'm sorry.

SALLY: Who are you sorry for?

BRENTNALL: Charlie, of course, poor devil.

SALLY: You needn't be sorry for him. Take your sorrow where your love lies.

BRENTNALL: Then I s'll have to be sorry for you, Sally.

SALLY: I *don't* think.

BRENTNALL (*putting his arm round her waist*): I'm sorry you've got a bad finger, Sally.

SALLY (*beginning to giggle*): Are you?

BRENTNALL: You don't mind that I'm not Dr Grainger, do you, Sally?

SALLY: What do you mean?

BRENTNALL: You'd as leave have me as Dr Grainger?

SALLY: Yes, if you like.

BRENTNALL (*kissing her*): That's right. (*She giggles.*)

MR MAGNEER: Whey! Whey--up! Sally, thou scawdrag!

SALLY (*giggling hysterically*): What am I a scawdrag for?

MR MAGNEER: Hark ye, hark ye! Jack, art takin' notice over there?

JACK: Billy's alright, Dad.

MR MAGNEER: Billy? By gosh! Billy!

GRAINGER: Turn, Mr Magneer.

ADA (*pegging*): Two for his knobs.

BRENTNALL: You'd as leave have me as Dr Grainger? (*Kisses her under the ear.*)

SALLY (*with suppressed shrieks*): Oh, oh, don't tickle!

GRAINGER (*turning around--with contempt*): She'll never stop, Billy, she's got gigglemania.

MR MAGNEER: Giggolo--what? That's a good 'un!

BRENTNALL: Yes, she will stop--take me seriously, Sally, do!
(*Squeezes her--SALLY giggles wildly. Her head rolls.*)

MR MAGNEER: Hark at that--take him seriously!

SALLY (*exhausted*): Don't! Don't! Oh don't!

BRENTNALL: Sally, my dear, you are too discouraging for anything. Sit with me nicely.

SALLY: Oh! (*Lays her head on his shoulder.*)

BRENTNALL: Now we're coming on. (*Kisses her.*) You've not chipped with Charlie, have you?

SALLY: What d'you want to know for?

BRENTNALL: Sally, my darling.

MR MAGNEER: Gosh, it's come to "darling"--"darling Sally"!

BRENTNALL: You haven't, have you?

SALLY: No.

BRENTNALL: Why hasn't he come to-night?

SALLY: Because he wasn't asked.

BRENTNALL: Has he cooled off lately?

SALLY: I don't care whether he has or not.

BRENTNALL: Neither do I. (*Kisses her under the ear. She squeals.*)

JACK: God love you, Sally!

ADA: Don't play cribbage any more, Mr Magneer. Do play the comb-band.

MR MAGNEER (*throwing away his cards*): No, I won't play any more. Fill up an' let's have a dance.

ADA: Yes, yes, yes!
The men drink--SALLY and GRAINGER push aside the table.

GRAINGER: Comb-band, Mr Magneer?

MR MAGNEER (*wrapping the comb in tissue paper*): That's the very item.
(*He staggers slightly--all the men are affected by drink.*)

SALLY (*to GRAINGER*): You're going to have one with me?

GRAINGER (*awkwardly*): Er--I'd promised Ada.

ADA: That doesn't matter. Mr Brentnall will dance with me.

MR MAGNEER (*sounding the comb*): Now then, are you ready? Sally's the belle of the ball, and you, Doctor, it's your party--so lead off.

GRAINGER: Polka--plain polka.

BRENTNALL: We shan't have breath to speak a word.

SALLY: Oh my goodness!

The comb-band buzzes away--they start to dance in a prancing fashion.

SALLY: You're not going to leave me?

GRAINGER: I s'll have to.

SALLY: But you can't.

GRAINGER: Why not?

SALLY: You can't leave me now.

GRAINGER: But I've got to go to London--

JACK: Do you reckon you're really fond of me?

EMILY: I know I am--I don't reckon.

JACK: Not so very good--

EMILY: Why not?

JACK: Do you reckon you've been nice to me all this while?

EMILY: All what while?

JACK: While I've been coming to see you.

EMILY: And have you been very nice to me, Jack?

JACK: Well, haven't I?

EMILY: No, Jack, you haven't.

JACK: What do you mean?

ADA: I posted her the letter yesterday.

BRENTNALL: Why, did you know the address?

ADA: Yes, you told Annie.

BRENTNALL: Did I? Oh Lord, you little imp.

ADA: It's our turn now.

BRENTNALL: Whose turn?

ADA: The women's.

BRENTNALL: Don't be a vixen--

GRAINGER: Well, you won't say anything, will you? You see how I'm fixed.

SALLY: I don't know.

GRAINGER: I'll see you to-morrow--keep it back till then.

SALLY: You'll see me to-morrow?

GRAINGER: Yes--

JACK: You think I ought to get engaged to you?

EMILY: Or else you ought never to have come as you have--you had the option.

JACK: I dunna want to get married, somehow, Emily.

EMILY: Is that final, Jack?

JACK: What do *you* say?

EMILY: You leave me nothing to say.

JACK: Good God, Emily, I'm not a brute.

EMILY: I've heard you say so often, Jack. But you don't think it's been very happy for me--our--our friendship?

JACK: Good God, Emily--have I been--?

EMILY: Afraid of me, Jack. It's rather humiliating.

JACK: You can have me if you like--I'm not good enough--

EMILY: You know I consider you good enough.

JACK: Yis--I know you do.

EMILY: Men lack honour nowadays.

JACK: Good God!

They dance--SALLY suddenly drops exhausted on a couch--

GRAINGER moves to the other side of the room. JACK MAGNEER flings off his coat.

JACK: By the Lord, it's hot work! Take your coat off, George.

GRAINGER and BRETNALL take off their coats.

MR MAGNEER: My word, you went well. Have a drink.

SALLY: Is th' door open? Set the back door open, Jack.

He goes out and returns.

BRETNALL: Have the next with me, Sally.

SALLY: I will if you like.

ADA: What shall it be?

BRETNALL: Waltz Valeta.

GRAINGER: Try a tune, Mr Magneer.

MR MAGNEER, having repapered his comb, tries a tune. GRAINGER instructs him. They start off, SALLY with BRETNALL, GRAINGER with ADA CALLADINE.

BRETNALL: Why would you rather dance with Dr Grainger?

SALLY: I wouldn't.

BRETNALL: Yes, you would. Don't forget the two shuffle steps--one--two!

SALLY: I've never done that before.

BRETNALL: Something I've taught you then. But why would you rather dance with Grainger?

SALLY: I *wouldn't*.

BRETNALL: You *would*.

SALLY: I *wouldn't*.

BRETNALL: You *would*. You're in love with him.

SALLY: Me! That I never am!

BRETNALL: You are!

SALLY: Well, I never did!

BRETNALL: And you're a fool to be in love with him.

SALLY: Why?

BRETNALL: For the best of all reasons.

SALLY: What's that?

BRETNALL: Because he's married.

SALLY: He's not!

BRETNALL: He is--and has got a son.

SALLY: Where?

BRENTNALL: In Wolverhampton, where he came from.

SALLY: Oh, let's sit down.

BRENTNALL: No, you must dance with me. Don't you like to dance with me? It's too bad, Sally.

SALLY: I'm getting dizzy.

BRENTNALL: You can't, not in Valeta. Besides, we'll walk the waltz steps.
(He puts his arm around her.)

SALLY: It's not right about Dr Grainger, is it?

A LADY in motor cloak and wrap appears in the doorway. The men, slightly tipsy, bend talking to their partners, who are engrossed. No one notices the newcomer.

BRENTNALL: It is, on my honour. You believe me, Sally?

She looks him earnestly in the face, as they dance the forward step. When they come together for the waltz, he kisses her.

You believe me?

SALLY *(almost in tears)*: Yes.

BRENTNALL: It is true. Poor Sally. *(Kisses her again. They begin to laugh.)*

JACK: Alright, I niver looked at it in that light.

EMILY: I know you didn't.

JACK: We'll count as we're engaged from now, then?

EMILY: What will your father say?

JACK: He'll be just fussy.

EMILY: I want him to know--I am so fond of him.

ADA: Oh!

GRAINGER: What?

They break apart. JACK and BRENTNALL keep on dancing, the latter kissing SALLY. GRAINGER goes unsteadily to the doorway.

THE LADY: I called to see Mr Brentnall--but don't disturb him, he looks so happy.

GRAINGER: Does--does he know you?

THE LADY: A little. *(She laughs.)*

GRAINGER: Billy! Billy!

BRENTNALL *(looking up)*: What now? *(Sees the lady.)* No!

He leaves SALLY--she sways, he catches her again, takes her to a seat, draws his fingers across her cheek caressingly, and goes to the doorway, reeling slightly.

Quite giddy, don't you know! Space is so small.

THE LADY: Not much room for you to spread out, was there?

BRENTNALL: Was I hugging Sally?

THE LADY: Sally! How lovely, how perfectly lovely!

BRENTNALL: Did I kiss her?

THE LADY: "Did I kiss her?" No, no, you poor dear, you didn't kiss her.

BRENTNALL: You mean I am drunk.

THE LADY: Are you drunk? No!

BRENTNALL: I am slightly tipsy, more with dancing than drink. Shall I come away?

THE LADY: Shall he come away--oh, you dear! Why should I decide for you?

BRENTNALL: Are you cross?

THE LADY: Not in the least. Go and kiss Sally if you will.

BRENTNALL: Poor Sally--I don't want to kiss her now.

THE LADY: How perfectly lovely! Do introduce me.

BRENTNALL: Mr Magneer, Sally Magneer, Emily Calladine, Ada Calladine, Jack Magneer, Dr Grainger--all of you, Elsa Smith.

ELSA: How awfully nice! Can I come in?

MR MAGNEER (*springing up and bowing tipsily*): Make yourself at 'ome, you're very welcome, Miss, you're very welcome.

ELSA: Thank you so much! I should love to dance. I've got two friends in the motor car. May I fetch them?

MR MAGNEER: Anybody you like, they're *all* welcome here, and there's plenty to drink for all.

ELSA: So nice!

Exit ELSA.

GRAINGER: Who the devil--

BRENTNALL: My betrothed, my fiancée, my girl.

CHORUS OF WOMEN: You don't mean it!

SALLY: Well! Men--!

ADA: *Men?*

EMILY: *Men!*

MR MAGNEER: Ooh--you're done this time, Billy!

GRAINGER: Well, you devil, Billy Brentnall!

JACK: It's a corker, Billy, it's a winder.

EMILY: Are *you* any better, Jack?

JACK (*fiercely*): Look here, Dad. I'm engaged to Emily here, fair and square.

MR MAGNEER: Come here, Em'ler my ducky, come hither. (EMILY goes very reluctantly. He kisses her.) I like thee, Em'ler, I like thee. (*Kisses her again.*)

JACK: Cheese it, Dad.

MR MAGNEER: It's a winder, it is an' all.--An' aren't *you* goin' to be engaged an' all, Dr Grainger?

GRAINGER: Not this time.

MR MAGNEER: Hm! 'Appen you are engaged!

GRAINGER: No, I'm not.

MR MAGNEER: Come then, come then, come then.

Re-enter ELSA SMITH, *with a lady and gentleman.*

ELSA: All of you--Gladys and Tom. Gladys--That's Will--

MR MAGNEER: Ay, ay, Billy! Billy! (*It amuses him highly.*)

BRENTNALL (*bowing*): I was to come to dinner to-night, I clean forgot. Don't be angry.

TOM: Cheek, if no more.

ELSA: Oh, you don't know Will, you don't.

MR MAGNEER: An you don't know Billy, Miss, it strikes me. (*Laughter*)

BRENTNALL: Leave me alone--I say, Elsa, Jack (*pointing*) has just got engaged to Emily.

ELSA: How perfectly charming. I love it all so much.

BRENTNALL: What?

ELSA: You--this.

BRENTNALL: Take your cloak off.

Helps her. She is a handsome woman, large, blonde, about 30--dressed for dinner. Tom and Gladys disrobe--they are in dinner dress also.

TOM (*cynically*): I suppose these are adventures.

GLADYS: Don't be a fool, Tom.

ELSA: This is fun.

BRENTNALL: Will you dance with me, Elsa?

ELSA: No, I won't.

BRENTNALL: Angry with me?

ELSA: No. I can dance with you any day.

GRAINGER: May I have the pleasure?

ELSA: No--forgive me (*very kindly*)--but I do want to dance with Jack. (*To EMILY.*) May I?

EMILY: Certainly. (*JACK pulls a face.*)

ELSA: He doesn't want me--but I won't let him off--no.

JACK: I'm shy, as a matter of fact.

ELSA: How lovely!

MR MAGNEER (*to GLADYS*): Now Miss, you choose.

GLADYS: Will, you must dance with me.

BRENTNALL (*going to her side*): You are shy.

MR MAGNEER: Now Ada, your turn to pick.

ADA *looks wickedly at TOM--he bows.*

TOM: Thank you.

ADA: Are you shy? (*She laughs wickedly.*)

MR MAGNEER: Now for Dr Grainger. (*He holds his fists to EMILY.*) Which of 'em? (*EMILY touches the right fist.*) Wrong! (*Showing a coin in his left.*)

Sally gets him.

SALLY: Sally doesn't.

GRAINGER: Come on, Sally.

MR MAGNEER: Now then, what is it?

BRENTNALL: Waltz.

The comb begins to buzz--the partners set off dancing--MR MAGNEER breaks the time--they laugh--he beckons EMILY, holds the comb in one hand, her with the other, and dances prancingly, buzzing breathlessly.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

The bedroom in the cottage, same as Act I. It is nine o'clock in the morning. GRAINGER and BRENTNALL are in bed.

GRAINGER: Billy! *(No answer.)* You mean to say you're at it yet? *(No answer.)* Well, I'll be damned; you're a better sleeper even than a liar. *(No answer.)* Oh strike! *(Shies a pillow at BRENTNALL.)*

BRENTNALL: What the--!

GRAINGER: I should say so.

BRENTNALL: Dog in the manger! Go to sleep. I loathe the small hours. Oh-h! *(Yawns.)*

GRAINGER: Small hours, begad! It's past nine o'clock.

BRENTNALL *(half asleep)*: Early, frostily early.

GRAINGER: You mean to say--! *(He shies the bolster, viciously.)*

BRENTNALL: Don't, George! *(Sleeps.)*

GRAINGER: Devil! *(Shies slippers, one after the other.)*

BRENTNALL *(sitting up suddenly--furious)*: Go to blazes! *(Lies down again.)*

GRAINGER: If you go to sleep again, Billy B., I'll empty the water bottle over you--I will.

BRENTNALL: *I'm* not asleep.

GRAINGER: Billy!

BRENTNALL: What?

GRAINGER: Did you square Sally?

BRENTNALL: Eh?

GRAINGER: No, look here, Billy--

BRENTNALL *(stretching his arms)*: Georgie, you ought to be dead.

GRAINGER: I've no doubt. Billy Brentnall!

BRENTNALL: What?

GRAINGER: Did you square Sally?

BRENTNALL: Sally--Sally--Sally--

GRAINGER: Chuck it, fool.

BRENTNALL: I don't know.

GRAINGER: What d'you mean?

BRENTNALL: I told her you were a married man with a family, and begad, you look it--

GRAINGER: That's not the point.

BRENTNALL: I apologize. I say to Sally: "He's a married man." Sally says to me: "He's not." I say: "He is." Sally says: "I'm dizzy." I say: "You might well be."

GRAINGER: Chuck it, do chuck it.

BRENTNALL: It's the solemn fact. And our confab ended there.

GRAINGER: It did!

BRENTNALL: It did.

GRAINGER: Hm!

BRENTNALL: You're going to London to my rooms, aren't you?

GRAINGER: You say so.

BRENTNALL: Very well then--there's an end of Sally.

GRAINGER: I'm not so sure.

BRENTNALL: Why?

GRAINGER: She said she was coming round here.

BRENTNALL: When?

GRAINGER: This morning.

BRENTNALL: Then don't get up till this afternoon, and then belt for the station.

GRAINGER: I've not settled up at the Surgery.

BRENTNALL: Thou bungler--has Sally really got a case against you?

GRAINGER: She's got a case against *some* man or other, and she'd prefer it to be me.

BRENTNALL: But she must see *you're* quite a cold egg. And has Charlie Greenhalgh really cried off?

GRAINGER: No--at least--poor old Charlie's in a bit of a mess.

BRENTNALL: How?

GRAINGER: He was secretary to the football club--and he falsified the balance sheet, and failed to produce about fifteen quid.

BRENTNALL: *He's* not in a very rosy condition for marriage. However, old Magneer's not short of money?

GRAINGER: He isn't, begad!

BRENTNALL: Alright--let him work the oracle. Sally's no fool--and she'll be just as well, married to Charlie. You say his farm is going to the dogs. Alright, she'll shoo the dogs off.

GRAINGER: Very nice.

BRENTNALL: I think so.

GRAINGER: Who's that?

BRENTNALL: Dunno--get under the bed-clothes.

Sound of footsteps--enter JACK MAGNEER.

JACK: Letting the day get well aired?

BRENTNALL: I don't believe in running risks through the chill, damp air of early morning.

JACK: I s'd think you don't.

BRENTNALL: Take a seat.

JACK: So you're going to-day, George?

GRAINGER: I am, Jack--and sorry to leave you.

JACK: What's this our Sally's been telling me?

GRAINGER: Couldn't say, Jack.

JACK: As you're married--

BRENTNALL: And got a kid, quite right.

JACK: *Is it, George?*

GRAINGER: I believe so.

JACK: Hm! (*A pause.*)

BRENTNALL: Well, Jack, say he has your sympathy.

JACK: Yis--yis--he has. But I'm not so sure--

BRENTNALL: Eh Jack, it's a hole we might any of us slip into.

JACK: Seemingly. But why didn't you tell me, George?

BRENTNALL: Don't, Jack. Don't you see, I could give the whole of that recitation. "We've been good friends, George, and you'd no need to keep me in the dark like that. It's a false position for me, as well as for you, etc., etc." That's what you want to say?

JACK: Yis--and besides--

BRENTNALL: Well, look here, Jack, you might have done it yourself. George was let in down at Wolverhampton--kicked out of the town because he owned up and married the girl--hadn't either a penny or a job--girl has a good home. Would *you* have wanted to tell the whole story to these prating fools round here?

JACK: No, I can't say as I should. But then--

BRENTNALL: Then what?

JACK: There's our Sally, and there's Annie--

BRENTNALL: What about 'em?

JACK: He's courted 'em both--they're both up to the eyes in love with him--

BRENTNALL: Not Annie. On the quiet, she's rather gone on *me*. I showed George up in his true light to her.

GRAINGER: Rotter--rotter!

BRENTNALL: And I stepped into the limelight, and the trick was done.

JACK: You're a devil, Billy.--But look here, George, our Sally--

GRAINGER: Yes--

JACK: She's--she's gone a long way--

BRENTNALL (*quietly*): How do you mean, Jack?

JACK: Well, she's given up Charlie Greenhalgh--

BRENTNALL: Not quite. And you know, Jack, she really loves Charlie, at the bottom. There's something fascinating about George.

GRAINGER: Damn your eyes, shut up, Billy.

BRENTNALL: There's something fascinating about George. He can't help it. The women melt like wax before him. They're all over him. It's not his beauty, it's his manliness. He can't help it.

GRAINGER: I s'll smash you, Billy Brentnall, if you don't shut up.

JACK: Yis, there's something in it, George.

BRENTNALL: There *is*, Jack. Well, he can't help himself, so you've got to help him. It's no good hitting him when he's down.

JACK: *I'm* not hitting him.

BRENTNALL: And what you've got to do, you've got to get Charlie Greenhalgh and your Sally together again.

JACK: Me!--It's nowt to do with me.

BRENTNALL: Yes, it has. Charlie's not been up to your place lately, has he?

JACK: No.

BRENTNALL: And do you know why?

JACK: Yis.

BRENTNALL: It's not so much because of George. Have you heard he's fifteen quid out with the football club.

JACK: I've heard a whisper.

BRENTNALL: Well, you help him, Jack, for Sally's sake. She loves him, Jack, she does. And if she married him quick, she'll pull him through, for she seems to have a business head on her, and a farming head.

JACK: She has that.

BRENTNALL: Well, you'll do what you can for poor old Charlie, won't you?

JACK: I will, Billy. And what time are you going?

BRENTNALL: 2.50 train.

JACK: Well--me and you's been good pals, George. I must say I'd ha' done anything for you--

GRAINGER: I know you would, Jack.

JACK: Yis, an' I would--an' I would.

BRENTNALL: I'm going up to Blythe Hall against Ashbourne for a day or two, Jack. Shall you come up for tennis?

JACK: I hardly think so--we s'll be busy just now.

BRENTNALL: Sunday afternoon--yes you will.

JACK: Good-bye, Billy.

BRENTNALL: Au revoir, Jack.

JACK: Well--good-bye, George--lad. We've not done amiss while you've been here. I s'll miss thee.

GRAINGER: You've been alright to me, Jack.

JACK: Yis--I try to do what I can for folks.

Exit JACK.

BRENTNALL: The atmosphere clears, George.

GRAINGER: Oh damn you, shut up.

BRENTNALL: "Oh, what a sin is base ingratitude!"

GRAINGER: What did you tell Annie about me?

BRENTNALL: I said you were quite manly, and couldn't help yourself; all the virtues of good nature and so on, but a bit of a libidinous goat.

GRAINGER: Thank you--very nice of you.

BRENTNALL: Add to this that you won't face a situation, but always funk it, and you understand why Annie suddenly transferred her affections to me. For I showed myself, by contrast, a paragon of all virtues.

GRAINGER: You would.

BRENTNALL: I did.

GRAINGER: I shan't go to London to your rooms.

BRENTNALL: Now George, my dear chap----

GRAINGER: I shall not, Billy.

BRENTNALL: Then where will you go?

GRAINGER: Hell!

BRENTNALL: My dear, dear fellow, you've neither the cash nor the ability.

GRAINGER: Well, you're a--

BRENTNALL: Shall we get up?

GRAINGER: I will, whether you will or not. (*Sits on the side of the bed whistling "On the Banks of Allan Water". Footsteps on the stairs--enter GRAINGER'S wife, ETHEL--rather thin, with a light costume.*)

ETHEL: George! (*She goes forward and kisses him, not noticing BRENTNALL.*) George! (*Sinks her head on his shoulder.*) George!

GRAINGER: Ethel--well I'm blessed! (*Kisses her.*)

ETHEL (*drawing away*): I had to come.

GRAINGER: Yes.

ETHEL: Are you angry?

GRAINGER: Me angry! What should I be angry for?

ETHEL: I thought you might be.

GRAINGER: What made you come?

ETHEL: I heard you were going away--and your letters seemed so constrained. Are you--?

GRAINGER: What?

ETHEL: Going away?

GRAINGER: I s'll have to--this job's done.

ETHEL: You never told me.

GRAINGER: What was the good?

ETHEL: Where are you going?

GRAINGER: Dunno--I don't know in the least.

ETHEL: Oh George, you must come home. Mother says you must.

GRAINGER: Hm!

ETHEL: Won't you?

GRAINGER: I'd rather not.

ETHEL: What will you do, then?

GRAINGER: I may--I shall probably get a job in London.

ETHEL: Oh George, don't, don't go to London.

GRAINGER: What else can I do?

ETHEL: Come home to Mother with me.

GRAINGER: I'll be damned if I will.

ETHEL: No, you never will do anything I ask you.

GRAINGER: I shan't do that.

ETHEL: Don't you want to be with me?

GRAINGER: If I want ever so badly, I can't, with no money.

ETHEL: Then how are you going to live alone, with no money?

GRAINGER: I can manage for myself.

ETHEL: I know what you want, you want to run away. It is mean, mean of you.

GRAINGER: What's the good of my coming to *your* place, there, where they kicked me out?

ETHEL: And what if you've nowhere else to go? And what are you going to do in London?

GRAINGER: Look for a job.

ETHEL: And what when you've got one?

GRAINGER: Save up to get some things together.

ETHEL: How much have you saved here?

GRAINGER: Not a fat lot--but I *have* saved.

ETHEL: How much?

GRAINGER: Some--at any rate.

ETHEL: Have you been miserable? I know you like plenty of life. Has it made you miserable to be tied up?

GRAINGER: Not miserable--but it's been a bit of a devil.

ETHEL: We ought to live together.

GRAINGER: On what?

ETHEL: On what we can get.

GRAINGER: No, thank you.

ETHEL: We might as well not be married. I believe you hate me for having married you. Do you--do you?

GRAINGER: Now Ethel, drop it. Don't get excited. You know I don't feel anything of the sort.

ETHEL (*weeping*): But you don't love me.

GRAINGER (*tenderly*): Why, I do, Ethel, I do.

ETHEL: I love you, George, I love you.

GRAINGER: Poor old Ethel--and I love you. And whoever says I don't, is a liar.

ETHEL: You've been true to me, George?

GRAINGER: What do you mean?

ETHEL: Have you been true to me?

BRENTNALL: No, he hasn't.

GRAINGER (*fiercely*): Now Billy!

BRENTNALL: I am your husband's old friend, Brentnall, and *your* friend, Mrs Grainger. (*Gets out of bed, shakes hands with ETHEL.*)

ETHEL: I didn't know you were there.

BRENTNALL: Never mind. (*Puts on a dressing-gown.*)

ETHEL: Do you say George hasn't been true to me?

BRENTNALL: I do. Do you really love him?

ETHEL: He is my husband.

BRENTNALL: You do love him, I can see. Then, look here, *keep* him. You can do it, I should think. *Keep* him. And you, George, be decent.

GRAINGER: Be decent yourself.

BRENTNALL: I am. (*Lights a cigarette.*) You don't mind if I smoke?

ETHEL: No. George, oh George! It's not true what he says, is it?

GRAINGER: No!

ETHEL (*weeping*): I couldn't bear it. (*Embracing him.*) I couldn't bear it.

BRENTNALL (*aside*): That's the ticket.

GRAINGER: Never mind, little girl--never mind.

ETHEL: You won't leave me again?

BRENTNALL (*aside*): Good shot!

GRAINGER: What can I do?

ETHEL: I've got seventy pounds, George, I've got seventy pounds.

GRAINGER: I don't want *your money*, Ethel.

ETHEL: You don't mind making a fool of me, and neglecting me, but you won't have my money.

GRAINGER: Now Ethel--

ETHEL (*flashing*): Isn't it so?

GRAINGER: No, Ethel.

ETHEL: Then we'll live together on seventy pounds, till you get a job?

GRAINGER: But you see--

ETHEL (*turning, flashing, to BRENTNALL*): *Has* he been living straight--*do* they know here he's married?

BRENTNALL: I've told a few of them.

ETHEL (*turning slowly to GRAINGER*): Now then--

GRAINGER: You can do what the hell you like.

ETHEL: Then I shall live with you, from this minute onwards.

BRENTNALL: Knocked out, George!

GRAINGER: Curse you, Brentnall.

BRENTNALL: You are a rotter, my dear fellow.

ETHEL (*weeping*): There's baby crying.

Exit ETHEL, *weeping*. BRENTNALL *smokes a cigarette*--GRAINGER *fumes*.

BRENTNALL (*throwing him a dressing-gown*): You'd better clothe yourself--you'll feel stronger.

GRAINGER (*getting into the dressing-gown*): What d'you reckon you're up to?

BRENTNALL: *Don't* be a fool, George, *don't* be a swine. *If* you're going to clear out, stand up and say so honourably! Say you'll not abide by your marriage. You *can* do that, with decency.

GRAINGER: How the devil can I?

BRENTNALL: *Will* you?

GRAINGER: No, damn it, how can I? I'm not a--

BRENTNALL: Very well then, you won't clear out, you won't renounce your marriage. Very well then, go and live with the girl, and be decent. Have a cigarette! (GRAINGER *takes a cigarette*.)

GRAINGER: It's a cursed rotten hole--

BRENTNALL: Then for the Lord's sake, make it as comfortable as possible, if you're going to stop in it.

GRAINGER: Hark!

BRENTNALL: Sally!

GRAINGER: It is, begad!

ETHEL *appears*.

ETHEL: There's a woman enquiring for you.

GRAINGER: What for--what does she want?

ETHEL: She wants you.

GRAINGER: Hm! Is it Sally? She's been running after me ever since I've been here, bless her.

BRENTNALL: Let's have her up. (*Calling*.) Do come upstairs, Miss Magneer. It's quite decent.

GRAINGER: It's a bit thick, Billy.

Enter SALLY.

BRENTNALL (*to* SALLY): Excuse our appearance, won't you? How do you do? (*Shakes hands*.)

SALLY: How do you do?

BRENTNALL: Have you been introduced to Mrs Grainger? Mrs Doctor Grainger--Miss Magneer.

SALLY: I've been given to understand this is Mrs Doctor Grainger--and that the baby downstairs--

BRENTNALL: Is Master Jimmy Grainger. Quite so.

SALLY: I think it *is* quite so. It's happened quite so, but it's not quite the thing.

BRENTNALL: Don't let us quarrel, Sally. Don't be quarrelling with us the last half-hour we shall be here.

SALLY: Perhaps not. But what was he masquerading round as not married for, if he had a wife and a child?

ETHEL: You see, Miss Magneer, the fact that Dr Grainger chose to keep his marriage a secret wouldn't have hurt *you*, unless you'd rushed in to be hurt.

SALLY: Yes--meaning to say as I ran after him. (*To GRAINGER.*) Eh?

GRAINGER: Well--what else can you call it, Sally?

SALLY: And who wanted me to walk down the fields with him, the first time he saw me?

GRAINGER: I must say I think you wanted me quite as much, if not more, than I wanted you, Sally.

SALLY: Oh, did I?

ETHEL: I have no doubt of it.

SALLY: And did every single girl you met want you then, Dr Grainger?

GRAINGER: I never said so nor meant so.

SALLY: The one downstairs, for instance.

GRAINGER: Who d'you mean?

SALLY: Annie Calladine.

GRAINGER: What's she doing here?

ETHEL: She met me at the station. I left her holding baby.

SALLY: Let *her* come up, and say *her* share. No, you daren't and you know it.

GRAINGER: Daren't I? I say, Annie--Annie!

ANNIE'S VOICE: Yes!

GRAINGER: Would you mind coming upstairs a minute?

SALLY: Now you s'll hear *her* side, as well.

Enter ANNIE.

BRENTNALL: You will excuse us--we were not expecting callers.

ANNIE: How do you do?

GRAINGER: Annie, Sally wants you to say everything you can against me, in Ethel's hearing.

ANNIE: I don't wish to say everything I can against you, Dr Grainger. But I do wish to say this, that you are a danger to every unmarried girl, when you go about as you *have* gone, here. And Mrs Grainger had better look after you very closely, if she means to keep you.

GRAINGER: Thank you, Annie, very nice.

ANNIE: Almost as nice as you have been to me.

GRAINGER: I'm not aware that I've done you much damage.

ANNIE: If you haven't, it's not your fault.

ETHEL *flings herself suddenly on the bed, weeping wildly.*

SALLY: I'm thankful I'm not his wife.

ANNIE: And I am more than thankful.

BRENTNALL: Don't cry, Mrs Grainger. George is alright, really.

ANNIE (*fiercely*): He is *not*, Mr Brentnall.

SALLY: Neither is he.

BRENTNALL: Nay, don't cry, Mrs Grainger.

ELSA SMITH'S VOICE, *calling in a jolly singsong*: "*Knabe, Knabe, wo bist du?*"

BRENTNALL: *Gott sei dank, du bist gekommen. Komm hinauf.*

ELSA SMITH'S VOICE: *Ja!* (*Runs upstairs--enter, chattering in German.*)
Oh!

BRENTNALL (*shaking hands*): Frightful muddle! Miss Annie Calladine--Mrs Grainger's awfully cut up because George has been flirting round.

ELSA: With you, Miss Magneer--and Miss Calladine?

SALLY: Not to mention the rest.

ELSA: Oh--oh! I'm sorry. But don't cry, Mrs Grainger, please. He's not a villain if he makes love to the other girls, surely. Perhaps it's not *nice*. But it was under trying circumstances.

BRENTNALL: That's what I say.

ELSA: Yes, yes. You're just as bad yourself. *I know you.*

BRENTNALL: Nay Elsa, I'm not the same.

ELSA: Oh, oh--now *don't* try to duck your head in the whitewash pail with me, no. I won't have it. Don't cry, Mrs Grainger, don't cry. He loves you, I'm sure he does, even if he makes love to the others. (*To GRAINGER.*) Don't you? (*No reply.*) Now you are sulking just like a great baby. And then that's your *little* baby downstairs? Ah, the dear! (*Sobbing from ETHEL.*) Never mind, never mind, cry out your cry, then let me talk to you.

BRENTNALL: Come by motor-car?

ELSA: Yes, Will Hobson drove me.

BRENTNALL: Ha!

ELSA: I like him, so you needn't say "Ha!"

BRENTNALL: Ha!

ELSA (*laughing--putting her hand on his shoulder*): Not had breakfast, and smoking, and talking to ladies. Aren't you ashamed, sir?

BRENTNALL: I've nothing to be ashamed of.

ELSA (*laughing*): No, no; hear him. (*Kisses him.*) You are a dear, but a dreadful liar.

BRENTNALL: Nay, I'll be damned--I beg your pardon.

ELSA: No, you *never* use bad language, do you?

BRENTNALL: Not in the presence of ladies.

ELSA: Well, now listen, I prefer to have you as you are with *men*. If you swear when you are with men, I prefer you to swear when you are with me. Will you promise me you will?

BRENTNALL: It wouldn't be a hard promise to keep.

ELSA: Promise me you won't have one philosophy when you are with men, in your smoke-room, and another when you are with me, in the drawing-room. Promise me you will be faithful to your philosophy that you have with other men, even before me, always.

BRENTNALL: Ha! Not so easy.

ELSA: Promise me. I want the real you, not your fiction.

BRENTNALL: I promise to do my best.

ELSA: Yes, and I trust you, you are so decent.

BRENTNALL: Nay, Elsa--

ELSA: Yes you are. Oh I see your faults, I do. But you are decent. (*To ETHEL, who has stopped crying, but who still lies on the bed.*) Don't be *too* cross with Dr Grainger, will you, Mrs Grainger? It's not *very* dreadful. Perhaps Miss Magneer loved him a little--

SALLY: That I never did--

ELSA (*laughing*): Yes, you did. And (*to ANNIE*) you were inclined to love him?

ANNIE: That is the worst part of it.

ELSA: Well, I, who am a woman, when I see other women who are sweet or handsome or charming, I look at them and think: "Well, how can a man help loving them, to some extent? Even if he loves *me*, if I am not there, how can he help loving them?"

ANNIE: But not a married man.

ELSA: I think a man ought to be fair. He ought to offer his love for just what it is--the love of a man married to another woman--and so on. And, if there is any strain, he ought to tell his wife--"I love this other woman."

SALLY: It's worse than Mormons.

BRENTNALL: But better than subterfuge, bestiality, or starvation and sterility.

ELSA: Yes, yes. If only men were decent enough.

BRENTNALL: And women.

ELSA: Yes. Don't fret, Mrs Grainger. By loving these two women, Dr Grainger has not lost any of his love for you. I would stay with him.

SALLY: He certainly never loved me--except for what he could get.

ELSA: Ha-ha! (*Very quaint and very earnest.*) That is rather dreadful. But yes, he must have loved you--something in you.

SALLY: It *was* something.

ELSA: Yes, I see what you mean--but I don't think you're quite right. No, it's *not quite* so brutal.

BRENTNALL: Shall I walk across to you after lunch?

ELSA: Yes, do that.

ANNIE: I think I will go. Good-bye, Dr Grainger. (*Shakes hands.*) Good-bye,

Sally. Good-bye, Mr Brentnall.

BRENTNALL: Good-bye, Annie. Remember what I told you, and decide for the best. *Don't be afraid. (Kisses her.)*

ELSA: Yes. I think, with a little love, we can help each other so much.

ANNIE *(to ELSA)*: Good-bye. *(Crossing and putting her arms round ETHEL.)* He isn't bad, dear. You must bring out the best in him. The baby is a *dear*. And you'll write to me.

Exit ANNIE.

SALLY: Well, good-bye all. And if I were your wife, Dr Grainger, I'd keep the bit between your teeth.

ELSA: No, no. No one should be driven like a horse between the shafts. Each should live his own life; you are there to *help* your husband, not to drive him.

SALLY: And to watch he doesn't help himself too often. Well, goodbye. Shall we be seeing you again, Mr Brentnall?

BRENTNALL: Next week.

SALLY: Right--*do* come. Good-bye.

Exit SALLY.

ELSA *(crossing to ETHEL)*: Good-bye. Don't make sorrow and trouble in the world; try to make happiness. I think Satan is in hard judgment, even more than is sin. Try to exonerate.

ETHEL: It's such a shock.

ELSA *(kissing her)*: Ah yes, it is cruel. But don't let your own suffering blind you, try not to. Good-bye. *(Kisses her.)* Good-bye, Dr Grainger. *(Shakes hands.)*

BRENTNALL: I will see you downstairs--by the way, Grainger and Mrs Grainger are going to stay in my rooms.

ELSA: How perfectly delightful! Then I shall see you in London. How lovely! Good-bye.

BRENTNALL: I suppose I'm respectable enough to see you downstairs.

Exeunt ELSA and BRENTNALL. GRAINGER and his wife sit silent a while. They are afraid of each other.

GRAINGER: Will you go to London to Billy's rooms?

ETHEL: Does he want us to?

GRAINGER: I suppose so.

Silence.

GRAINGER: Will you?

ETHEL: Do you want me to?

GRAINGER: You please yourself. I'm not coming to Wolverhampton.

ETHEL *(trying not to cry)*: Well, we'll go to London.

GRAINGER: It's a damned mess.

ETHEL *(crying)*: You'd better do just as you like, then, and I'll go home.

GRAINGER: I didn't mean that.

ETHEL (*crying*): I'll go home.

GRAINGER: Don't begin again, Ethel.

ETHEL: You hate the thought of being married to me. So you can be free of me.

GRAINGER: And what about the baby? Don't talk rot, Ethel. (*Puts his arm round her.*)

ETHEL: You don't care for that, either.

GRAINGER: Don't I--you don't know. They all make me look as black as I can--

ETHEL: Well, I don't know.

GRAINGER: Yes they do--and they always have done. I never have had anybody to stick up for me. (*Weeps a few tears.*) I've had a rotten time, a rotten time.

ETHEL: And so have I.

GRAINGER: You don't know what it is to be a man.

ETHEL: I know what it is to be your wife.

GRAINGER: Are you going to sling it in my teeth for ever?

ETHEL: No, I'm not. But what did you marry me for? (*Cries.*)

GRAINGER (*embracing her*): You're the only girl I could have married, Ethel. I've been a rotter to you, I have.

ETHEL: Never mind, we *shall* get on together, we shall. Mind, somebody is coming.

A knock--enter MRS PLUM with the baby.

MRS PLUM: He wants you, the precious little lad, he does. Oh Dr Grainger, let me see you hold him! (*Gives the baby to GRAINGER.*)

Enter BRETNALL.

BRETNALL: That's the way, George.

GRAINGER: Shut up, fool.

CURTAIN

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