

**JOHN  
BUCKSTONE**

SINGLE LIFE

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Single Life / A Comedy, in Three Acts:*

# Содержание

АСТ I	4
АСТ II	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

# John Baldwin Buckstone

## Single Life / A

### Comedy, in Three Acts

#### ACT I

SCENE I. —*An apartment at MR. NIGGLE'S. A sideboard, with cupboard, on the U.E.R. Window, with curtains, on the F.E.L. A round table, L., chairs, &c.*

**MISS SNARE** *discovered seated at table, L., looking over the books, &c*

*Miss Sna. (Reading.)* “The Young Man’s best Companion” – a very excellent book for youth; but at Mr. Niggle’s age, he ought to possess *his* best companion in a devoted and amiable wife; heigho! What a treasure *I* should be to any man that could properly understand me. (*Takes up another book.*) “The Epistles of Abelard and Heloise.” I am pleased to see this book on his table, it proves that he possesses a taste for sentiment of the highest order, and can admire devotedness and passion under the most trying circumstances. “The Newgate Calender.” Bless the

man, what can induce him to have such a book as this in his house; surely he can have no sympathy with housebreakers and assassins? I must look to this: should I ever be the mistress here, some of these volumes must be removed – this furniture too – very well for a bachelor; but when he is married, a change must be made. And those curtains, how slovenly they are put up. Ah, any one can discover the want of a presiding female hand in a bachelor's house – where is the neatness, the order, and the good taste that prevails in all the arrangements, where the master of the house is a married man. If ever I am Mrs. Niggle, down shall come those curtains, away shall go that sideboard, off shall go those chairs, and as for this table – let me look at its legs —(*Lifts up the cover and examines the legs of it.*)

*[DAMPER peeps in, F.E.L.]*

*Dam.* Hollo! hollo!

*Miss Sna.* Oh! how you frightened me.

*Dam.* It's a very suspicious thing when an old maid examines a bachelor's furniture.

*Miss Sna.* Good morning, Mr. Damper, I was merely observing Mr. Niggle's table legs.

*Dam.* (L.) Ah! when an old maid finds herself on her own last legs, 'tis time she should observe those of other people.

*Miss Sna.* (L.) What a censorious man you are, Mr. Damper, you rail at our sex as if you considered it man's natural enemy, instead of his best friend. Is it possible that you have never loved a woman in all your life?

*Dam.* I love a woman! Ugh! I look upon you all as the first great cause of every evil.

*Miss Sna.* For, like most first great causes, you don't understand us.

*Dam.* If I don't, I have no wish to acquire any such useless knowledge. May I ask what you want at my friend Niggle's, so early in the morning: some conspiracy, I'll be bound. I won't allow it, Miss Snare; if you think to inveigle him into matrimony, you'll find yourself mistaken; he shall never marry, if I can prevent him making such a ninny of himself.

*Miss Sna.* It is entirely through your interference, I have been told, that he is in a state of celibacy; and, though the poor gentleman is now fifty-five, yet ever since he arrived at years of discretion, he has been sighing and pining for a wife.

*Dam.* He would have been a ruined man long ago, but for me; five times have I saved him from the matrimonial precipice.

*Miss Sna.* How did you save him?

*Dam.* How? I have discovered his intention to marry, and knowing how nervous he is upon the subject, I have always interfered in time, told him in strong language the evils he was bringing upon his head, brought instances of married misery so plainly before his eyes, that I have frightened him out of his wits; and one morning, eight years ago, he was actually dressed and on his way to church to unite himself to some designing woman, when I luckily met him, and dragged him back again by the collar.

*Miss Sna.* And he had to pay five hundred pounds damages, in an action for breach of promise.

*Dam.* But he purchased independence and happiness with the money. I have been his best friend through life; didn't I go out with him when he was challenged by a young lady's brother, twenty years ago, because I made him relinquish his attentions to her? And though he has been shot at and caned, and has paid damages in two actions for breach of promise, yet by meeting those small evils, he has escaped that far greater one — *a wife*; and every morning when he rises a free man, I know he invokes a blessing on my head. (*Sits at table, L.*)

*Miss Sna.* (*Aside.*) Oh, you monster, you ought to be poisoned. (*Sits R.*)

[*NIGGLE opens folding doors at back, and looks at them.*]

*Nig.* Why the deuce don't they go away? What do they want here? Confound them!

[*Disappears.*]

*Dam.* Where is Niggle? I wish most particularly to see him. Has he shown himself yet?

*Miss Sna.* I have been waiting for him this half hour, to solicit his vote for a beadle.

*Dam.* A beadle! To persuade him to call on the parish clerk, more likely. It wont do, Miss Snare, you don't catch him in *your* net. (*Aside.*) Surely it can't be this dangerous woman that he is going to make a fool of himself with. She sha'n't have him —

nobody shall have him.

[*NIGGLE* peeps from doors, again.]

*Nig.* I wish they'd go.

*Dam.* (*Seeing him.*) Hollo! there you are; come here, sir, and let me examine you.

*Nig.* (*Advancing, C.*) David, I will no longer allow this continued intrusion on my privacy; and, Miss Snare, I do not wish to offend, but really your continued calls upon *me*, at all hours, are somewhat indecorous. The neighbours begin to talk, and I must check them. What may you want this morning?

*Miss Sna.* I am sure, sir, I was not aware that my friendly visits could cause anybody to talk, or at least be annoying to you; however, I shall not intrude again – you know why I called yesterday.

*Nig.* To give me a pincushion, made by yourself, in the form of a heart.

*Dam.* A dead set at you, John, clear as daylight – a dead set at you. Oh! miss, I'm ashamed of you.

*Miss Sna.* For what, sir? He complained, a few days since, that he was without a pincushion, and could never recollect to purchase one; and where was the harm, sir, in my supplying such a trifling want: I shall not be so attentive *again*, be assured. As for my call this morning, it was on parish business – a motive of charity; but since my little acts of friendship are so sternly checked, of course those of charity must suffer at the same time. And I did hope to have your company to tea, to-morrow.

*Nig.* Well, well, I know and appreciate your motives; but you always contrive to call when I'm occupied, when I don't want to be disturbed – and *this* morning, I particularly wish to be quite alone. (*Double knock without.*) Another call! Dear, dear, that is the worst of being a bachelor; everybody walks into his house whenever they please – no announcement, no ceremony, in they bounce with – “How are you? how do? only *me.*” And sit themselves down, and take up this, and throw down that. Oh, I wish I had the courage to take a wife. (*Looking at his watch.*) How the time is getting on – quarter past nine – we were to have been at church at ten, the latest. (MISS KITTY SKYLARK *heard without, running a cadence.*) Oh, dear! it's that abominable singing lady; what the deuce brings her here? Her conversation is so interspersed with singing, that she's a complete human burletta – I shall never get rid of her. How shall I escape out of the house.

**MISS KITTY SKYLARK *enters,***  
**F.E.L., *with a roll of music in her hand***

*Miss Sky.* Oh, good morning, good people – didn't expect to find any one here so early. I've got it for you, Mr. Niggle.

*Nig.* Got what?

*Miss Sky.* The song that you were trying to sing the other evening, “The Bay of Biscay,” you know you first got out of tune, then you broke down altogether. I have bought the correct copy for you, and, if you'll allow me, I'll teach it you. (*Sings.*) “As we

lay, all that day, in the bay – ” that’s where you went astray, in the high note – “In the bay – ” You must practice it twenty times a day – “Of Biscay, O!”

*Nig.* You’re very kind, indeed, miss; but this morning, I’ve no time to practice high notes. (*Aside.*) I must turn them all out by force.

*Miss Sky.* Well, well, any other day then. I’ve a charming song for you, Mr. Damper, just suited to your deep bass. (*Sings.*) “While the wolf with nightly prow” – An excellent song for you – you hate us women, you know; and, as the savage wolf howls at the sweet and silvery moon, so do you rail at us radiant creatures. Ah! good morning, Miss Snare, I’ve not forgotten you either; I’ve picked up an old ditty that will be the very thing for you. (*Sings.*) “Nobody coming to marry me, nobody coming to woo – wo – o – o – o – woo – o – ”

*Miss Sna.* Insulting creature! (*Regards her with every expression of contempt.*)

[*MISS SKYLARK points out the notes on paper to NIGGLE, who is fidgetting to get away.*

*Dam.* (*Aside.*) Poor Niggle’s in a hopeful way; one woman wants to teach him to sing “The Bay of Biscay,” and another is continually calling on him with pincushions. I must keep my eye upon him.

*Nig.* (*Aside.*) Another ten minutes gone. What shall I do? (*Looks at his watch.*)

*Miss Sky.* Oh, what do you think, while I was in the music-

shop this morning, I heard such scandal; it seems to be all over the town. I never was so shocked in all my life – and of a lady, too, that we always considered so very correct in her conduct.

*Miss Sna.* Do you allude to Miss Coy?

*Miss Sky.* I do.

*Dam.* What, have *you* heard? so have I.

*Nig.* (*Looking anxiously from one to another.*) What? what?

*Miss Sky.* I cant repeat it, especially as she's an acquaintance; were it a stranger, I should not hesitate; but to retail anything against one's *friends*, is so ungenerous.

*Dam.* Come here. Was it that she —(*Whispers.*)

*Miss Sky.* Yes. Could you have believed it?

*Dam.* Oh, woman, woman, just like you.

*Miss Sna.* I think I can guess the nature of the report – quite a full-grown young man, I hear.

*Dam.* Quite full-grown – five-and-twenty.

*Miss Sna.* Shocking! shocking!

*Miss Sky.* Dreadful!

*Dam.* Horrible!

*Nig.* What is it? Am I to be the only person in ignorance of anything derogatory to the reputation of Miss Coy?

*Miss Sky.* The fact is, Mr. Niggle, we don't wish to wound your feelings. Oh, you sly man, do you think your attentions to Miss Coy, have passed unnoticed. Gallanting her home from parties, running of errands for her, sitting on a post opposite to her window of an evening, when the weather has been mild

enough, taking walks, and taking tea, and playing at double dummy by moonlight. Oh, shocking! shocking! (*Sings.*) “Can love be controlled by advice? Will Cupid his mother obey.”

*Nig.* Pray don't be musical at such a moment, miss, pray, don't. *One* shakes her head and cries “shocking,” another ejaculates “dreadful,” while *Damper* sums up all by a growl of “horrible,” and giving a violent hint of *Miss Coy* and some full grown young man. Now, what is it? Not that I particularly wish to know; because curiosity is a foible that I detest. Not that it at all concerns me, the least in the world – the least in the world. What is it?

*Miss Sky.* Don't tell him.

*Dam.* You're not going to make a fool of yourself in that quarter, are you? Think how many times I have saved you from perdition! Tell me if you are: I am your friend you know, and I'll never forsake you.

*Miss Sky.* Nay, Mr. *Damper*, if his fancy *is* fixed there, why should he not gratify it? *Miss Coy* is still a handsome woman, past the summer of her existence, certainly; but what I call a fine autumnal maiden.

*Nig.* So she is; and if I *do* possess a preference for any female, I certainly admire one at that season of life: when her charms are in the richest state of perfection. None of your just budding April misses for me; who, after all, may turn out to be very indifferent blossoms.

*Dam.* Ah! your autumnal maiden is so near a neighbour of your wintery one, that when you have folded the full blown

blossom to your heart, you will find to your dismay, that all its leaves are falling at your feet; but I understand your rhapsody – you have betrayed yourself, and now I ask you a plain question – are you going to be married?

*Nig.* To make a plain reply, what is it to you? (*Knocking without.*) Another call, what shall I do? How the time is getting on – my only chance is to drop out of the window into the road.

### **MR. NARCISSUS BOSS, *without*, F.E.L**

*Boss.* Mr. Niggle at home? Oh, very well. [*Enters.*] Good morning to you, Niggle. Ah! Damper, *you* here. (*Crosses to C.*) Ladies, your most obedient, I dropped in to see my friend. Mr. Niggle, the strangest bit of gossip you ever heard – while I was at my tailor's, suggesting an alteration in my arm-holes – clumsy fellow has made me thirty coats and can't fit me yet.

*Dam.* Never mind your tailor – what of the gossip?

*Boss.* I don't think I'm justified in publicly retailing it; but my operative assured me on his honor as a man, that he had heard it, and as I know our friend Niggle is interested in the party scandalized, I thought it but friendly to call and drop him a *hint* of what I have heard.

*Miss Sky.* (*Crossing to him and whispering.*) Of Miss Coy?

*Boss.* Yes, what have *you* heard?

*Miss Sky.* I have indeed.

*Miss Sna.* Relating to the party you alluded to, Miss Skylark?

*Miss Sky.* The very same!

*Dam.* Come, come, speak out; what is the use of mystery? You allude to Miss Coy?

*Boss.* I do.

*Nig.* Well, well, what is it? If it is so very horrible, what is it? Eh? eh? eh? (*To each of them; they all shake their heads and sigh.*) Oh, well, well, if you don't choose to tell me, keep the matter to yourself; why call here dropping your hints? Why should I concern *myself* about that lady, or what may be said of her? hey? eh? Ah, indeed, why? As for you, Mr. David, listen to me: it was all very well and very kind of you to concern yourself about me when I was young and thoughtless; but now I am at an age to judge for myself, your interference in my affairs is very officious; and, in future, sir, I shall do as I like, marry if I like, drown myself if I like, and if I *do* the latter thing, sir, I shall consider it an act of impertinence if you jump into *any* pond, in *any* place, and *under* any circumstances, after me. There, sir.

*[Exit at the back, in a violent passion.]*

*Miss Sky.* His indignation is very suspicious.

*Miss Sna.* Very indeed!

*Dam.* He certainly is about to marry that woman.

*Boss.* I should regret it exceedingly if he were.

*Miss Sna.* We ought really to tell him what we have heard, and break off the match.

*Miss Sky.* Let us first be assured that one is about to be made. Search the room, perhaps we may discover something that may

confirm our suspicions. Miss Snare, you examine his books, and the drawers of his table; Boss peep about in the corners; Damper, go up stairs and cross-examine him; I'll rummage the sideboard. (*Opens sideboard cupboard.*) Oh! what's here?

*All.* What?

*Miss Sky.* Oho! a wedding-cake and cards. (*Takes out cake and cards.*)

*Dam.* A wedding-cake!

*Miss Sna.* And cards too!

*Miss Sky.* (*Holding them out and singing.*)

“A bridal wreath we weave for thee,  
Of every flower the fairest.”

*Dam.* (*Taking them from her.*) Connubial cards linked together by little bits of silver cord. (*Reading.*) “Mr. John Niggle, Mrs. John Niggle.”

*Miss Sky.* (*Placing cake on sideboard and taking a packet of cards from the cupboard.*) Here they are, dozens upon dozens of them; the lady's card the largest, as a broad hint that she means to be paramount.

*Miss Sna.* Can it be? Is it a fact? (*Taking a pair of cards.*) It is, indeed, true; and if he is not already married, he will be so very soon. I couldn't have thought it, after – after — (*Bursts into tears.*)

*Miss Sky.* Miss Snare, what's the matter?

*Boss.* It seems as if she had set her heart upon the gentleman

herself.

*Dam.* Hum! I am very happy to know that you, at least, are not the woman to whom he intends sacrificing himself; but I'll discover the party, and if it should be Miss Coy, I'll shoot him out of hand, rather than see him so duped. He sha'n't marry I'm resolved. (*Going out at the back and calling.*) Niggle, Niggle, you fool, where are you?

*[Exit.*

*Miss Sky.* Miss Snare, Miss Snare, pray don't take the matter so much to heart.

*Miss Sna.* Well, I hope he'll be happy – I'm sure he will – such an excellent temper – such taste in all matters.

*[BOSS comes down C.*

*Boss.* Except in dress. His coats seem to have been cut out with a knife and fork.

*Miss Sna.* In elegance of costume, Mr. Boss, you completely bear away the palm.

*Boss.* My taste in the matter, is, I flatter myself, perfect – indeed with me it is a *furor*.

*Miss Sky.* Oh, sir, I am afraid you admire yourself too much, to bestow a thought of regard on one of us poor women.

*Boss.* I shall never marry till I discover perfection.

*Miss Sky.* You will find grey hairs hanging over your temples, before you obtain that object of your search.

*Boss.* (C.) Then I'll die a bachelor!

*Miss Sky.* (C.) And, like the swan, sing your own elegy.

*Miss Sna.* (L.) A young man of Mr. Boss's figure, must in time strike those who would think it little trouble to conquer the faults of habit and nature, and make herself as near, what *he* may consider to be perfection, as possible.

*Boss.* Why, yes, my figure I think is perfect – breadth of shoulders, smallness of waist, curve of back, flow of hip, and tolerable height, are the *materiel* that go *towards* forming a *good* figure, and which *materiel*, I flatter myself, I possess. (*Crosses to L.*)

*Miss Sna.* (*Ogling him.*) In an eminent degree.

*Miss Sky.* Oho! The old maid having been defeated in one matrimonial attack, is about to commence another.

*Boss.* (*Aside.*) I'll be hanged, but Miss Snare is a woman of taste.

[*DAMPER and NIGGLE heard without, C.D.*]

*Nig.* I will not allow such a liberty: let me go, sir, let me go.

*Dam.* Not without me.

### ***Enter NIGGLE and DAMPER, C.D***

*Dam.* It's all true, he is going to be married; the lady is now waiting for him in a bye lane, in a post-chaise. One comfort, 'tis now ten minutes past his appointed time.

*Nig.* I shall lose my temper. I will not be interfered with any

longer – lies and slander I defy. I have lived fifty-five years in the world, longing since boyhood for the delights of matrimony; never before has my resolution been so fixed as it is now, and married I will be, in spite of the world. I will not be shut out from the cordialities of life.

*Dam.* You shall not make a fool of yourself.

*Nig.* I will. I will not trifle any longer with happiness now it is within my grasp. Let me go, sir, or I'll knock you down. Let me go.

*[Breaks from him and runs off, F.E.L.; DAMPER buttoning up his coat.]*

*Dam.* He sha'n't escape, I'll follow him if it's to Africa.

*[Exit F.E.L.]*

*Miss Sky.* Ha! ha! ha! the hunt is up – there they run – there *(Looks from window.)* they run. Now Niggle, now Damper. Look at the heart stirring-chase, *(Singing.)*

“With a heigho! chevy;  
Hark! forward, hark! forward, tantivy.  
With a heigho! chevy;  
Hark! forward, hark! forward, tantivy.  
Hark! forward, hark! forward,  
Hark! forward, &c.  
Yoicks!  
Arise the burthen of my song;  
This day a stag must die!”

*[Exit, F.E.L.]*

*Miss Sna.* What a strange turn in affairs, and what a singular lady is that Miss Skylark.

*Boss.* How does she get on with her bashful beau, Pinkey?

*Miss Sna.* Nothing decided yet, she tells me. He still continues writing the most glowing letters that ever were penned. I am to see a few of them shortly; but when the poor fellow is in her presence, he can scarcely utter a word, and though he has written nearly fifty most passionate billets, he has never once verbally alluded to the state of his feelings.

*Boss.* (L.) And whenever they meet, of course the lady looks for a declaration.

*Miss Sna.* And of course he can't find courage to utter a word.

*Boss.* How distressing! I am passing your door, Miss Snare, will you take my arm?

*Miss Sna.* You are very kind!

*Boss.* (L.) Beautiful color this cloth, is it not? (*Shewing the sleeve of his coat.*)

*Miss Sna.* Beautiful!

*Boss.* And the pattern of my waistcoat.

*Miss Sna.* Exquisite!

*Boss.* May I ask you if you admire me collectively.

*Miss Sna.* Oh, that I do, from the extreme point of your boot, to the loftiest summit of your hair.

*Boss.* 'Pon my life she's a desirable woman!

*[They are going off L.; they meet MISS SKYLARK, who is re-entering.]*

*Miss Sky.* Stop, stop; as I was going out at the door, who should I meet but Mr. Pinkey; on seeing me he stammered, blushed, and said that he was going to call on you, Miss Snare. I informed him that you were here, and now he is stumbling up stairs to speak to you. Come in, Mr. Pinkey, the lady that you wish to see is here.

**MR. PETER PINKEY *enters*, F.E.L**

*Miss Sna.* Good morning, Mr. Pinkey.

*Pin.* Good morning, ma'am.

*Miss Sna.* You wish to see me?

*Pin.* I have merely called to say that I have received your note, and I shall do myself the pleasure of taking tea with you to-morrow, at eight o'clock precisely.

*Miss Sky.* Alone, with Miss Skylark.

*Pin.* Oh, Lord, no; I hope not.

*Miss Sna.* 'Tis a general invitation to all our friends. You will find a card at your house, Miss Skylark. Perhaps Mr. P. will escort you.

*Pin.* I'll do anything to make myself agreeable. I'll call for you. Shall I? (*To MISS SKYLARK.*)

*Miss Sna.* If you please.

*Pin.* I will.

*Miss Sna.* Do!

*Pin.* I will!

*Miss Sna.* (To BOSS.) We'll leave them together; he may overcome his bashfulness when he gets used to being alone with his object. He is fond of her, no doubt – true love is never very loquacious.

*Boss.* Can't say, never having known the passion!

*Miss Sna.* Ah, you will know it some day.

*Boss.* What are the symptoms? Explain as we go along, that I may be aware of my malady when I am attacked. (*Crosses to L.*)

*Miss Sna.* For me to attempt to explain, would be to confess that I have experienced the emotion myself.

*Boss.* You have.

*Miss Sna.* No!

*Boss.* You Circe, you have.

*Miss Sna.* No, I declare.

*Boss.* Well then, you may —

*Miss Sna.* If I am much in your society, there is no knowing what I may experience.

[*Exeunt F.E.L.*]

**MISS SKYLARK** *seated, R., looking after them; sings*

“Is there a heart that never loved,  
Or felt soft woman's sigh!”

*Pin.* Beautiful!

*Miss Sky.* Eh?

*Pin.* Oh, nothing. Dear me, I am quite alone with her – I wish I could say something confounded clever. I'll be hanged if I don't try. Hem! (*Quickly.*) How are you to-day, miss?

*Miss Sky.* (*Imitating him.*) Very well! how are you?

*Pin.* Very well, all but a slight pain in my side.

*Miss Sky.* Indeed!

*Pin.* Yes. I'll be hanged if I can say another word. What *can* I talk about? What *do* people talk about? I have worn out the weather, and she has no particular relations to ask about. There is her grandmother, to be sure – I see no harm in asking after *her*. One must *say* something, *miss*?

*Miss Sky.* (R.) Yes.

*Pin.* How's your grandmother?

*Miss Sky.* Very well indeed for her age!

*Pin.* How old is she?

*Miss Sky.* Seventy-two – I've told you so twenty times.

*Pin.* Dear me, then I must have asked that question twenty times. *Now* what more can I say, I wonder? Is there anything in the room I can talk about? (*Looks about.*) Nice place this, isn't it?

*Miss Sky.* Very!

*Pin.* So airy?

*Miss Sky.* Very!

*Pin.* I've soon finished *that* subject. I wish she'd say something

– I can't find conversation for *one*, much more two!

*Miss Sky. (Singing.)* “Oh, bear me to some distant shore or solitary cell.”

*Pin.* You are partial to singing, ar'n't you?

*Miss Sky.* Very. Do *you* sing?

*Pin.* I never tried but once.

*Miss Sky.* Indeed!

*Pin.* It was at a party.

*Miss Sky.* Indeed!

*Pin.* Yes, I could hardly get through the first verse of my song. In fact, I didn't get through it.

*Miss Sky.* What prevented you?

*Pin.* When I began, everybody looked at me so hard, that I felt so confused that I jumped up, rushed out of the house, and ran all the way home. And – and when I looked in the glass there, I found I had come away with the footman's laced hat on my head!

*Miss Sky.* Singular!

*Pin.* Yes. (*Aside.*) Well I think I have talked more to her this morning than ever I did before – I know I only want encouragement. Oh! when shall I be able to touch upon the tender topic – I never shall get heart to venture – it's odd she never alludes to my letters. I suppose she receives them. I've written another to her, asking for the state of her feelings – I'll be my own postman, then I shall be sure she has it. (*Slowly takes a letter from waistcoat pocket.*) I'll throw it in her lap, and run out of the house!

*[Throws it in her lap, jumps up, and is running off, when DAMPER'S voice is heard without. Huzza! Victory! victory!]*

### ***Enter with NIGGLE***

*Dam.* Ha! ha! I've saved you, you villain! Miss Kitty, once more I've saved him.

*Nig.* Who could have thought it?

*Dam.* That designing woman, Miss Coy, was at the appointed place waiting for her victim sure enough. There was the chaise too; but what do you think? there was also the full-grown young man in earnest conversation with her. When we appeared, he tried to avoid us. We demanded who he was – she refused to explain. One word led to another – I told her all I had heard of her. She flew into a rage, showered her abuse upon me, whilst I dragged away my friend.

*[Loud knocking; NIGGLE runs to window.]*

*Nig.* She's at the door, chaise and all. What's to be done?

*Dam.* She sha'n't come in – let her knock. There is no doubt of the truth of the report. That young man is her son; and this infatuated old fellow was going to join his fate with such a character! Hav'n't I saved you from perdition?

*Nig.* You have, indeed! My lot in life is clearly developed – I never am to be married. What am I to do with the cards?

*Dam.* Burn them.

*Nig.* What with the cake?

*Dam.* Eat it – we'll all eat it.

*Nig.* So we will – so we will.

*Dam.* Sit down all of you, and be comfortable. (*Hands the cake.*) Take a bit, Miss Kitty – Pinkey, bless your bashfulness, 'tis *your* best friend – it will prevent you ever making a fool of *yourself*. Niggle, eat in peace and thankfulness; for I have once more saved you from the abyss of matrimony. (*Loud knocking, without.*) Ha! ha! you can't come in. Go away, woman! go away! Finish the cake, and let the artful creature knock till she's tired! Go away!

*[Loud knocking continued. They sit eating the cake —NIGGLE throws all the wedding cards into the air, as the act drop descends.*

**END OF ACT I**

## ACT II

SCENE I. —*Interior of a neat cottage, door and window in flat; table on the R., a china flower-stand on it. MISS MARIA MACAW discovered, hemming a handkerchief; she takes a note from the table and reads.*

*Miss Mac. (Reading.)* “Miss Snare will be happy to have the pleasure of Miss Macaw’s company to tea this evening; of course Miss Macaw’s niece is included in the invitation.” I am sure I have no inclination to go, but Jessy insists upon it, she is so anxious to make an acquaintance with any one, that I’m sure if the gardener were to ask her to dine with him, she would accept the invite. I hope there will no men there, the brutes. One of the chief things that has reconciled me to this country life, is the very few male creatures that I have met with here. Ah, if I had my will, the sex should be exterminated! Well, niece?

***Enter MISS JESSY MEADOWS,  
F.E.L., with a bouquet in her hand***

*Miss Mea.* Ah, my dear aunt, at your needle as usual. I have been gathering flowers in our little garden – there. (*She places the bouquet in the flower-glass on the table.*) Are they not beautiful? I love flowers – I have a passion for them.

*Miss Mac.* You should not use such ardent expressions. It is very unseemly in a young lady to talk of having a passion for anything, whether animate or inanimate. If you begin with flowers, you may end with the same enthusiasm in behalf of a human object; and if that object were to be a man, I should tremble for the result!

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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