

**GALSWORTHY
JOHN**

THE FUGITIVE

John Galsworthy
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The Fugitive: A Play in Four Acts:

Содержание

PERSONS OF THE PLAY	4
АКТ I	6
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	29

John Galsworthy

The Fugitive: A Play in Four Acts

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GEORGE DEDMOND, a civilian

CLARE, his wife

GENERAL SIR CHARLES DEDMOND, K.C.B., his father.

LADY DEDMOND, his mother

REGINALD HUNTINGDON, Clare's brother

EDWARD FULLARTON, her friend

DOROTHY FULLARTON, her friend

PAYNTER, a manservant

BURNEY, a maid

TWISDEN, a solicitor

HAYWOOD, a tobacconist

MALISE, a writer

MRS. MILER, his caretaker

THE PORTER at his lodgings

A BOY messenger

ARNAUD, a waiter at "The Gascony"

MR. VARLEY, manager of "The Gascony"

TWO LADIES WITH LARGE HATS, A LADY AND
GENTLEMAN, A LANGUID LORD,
HIS COMPANION, A YOUNG MAN, A BLOND
GENTLEMAN, A DARK GENTLEMAN.

ACT I. George Dedmond's Flat. Evening.

ACT II. The rooms of Malise. Morning.

ACT III. SCENE I. The rooms of Malice. Late afternoon.

SCENE II. The rooms of Malise. Early Afternoon.

ACT IV. A small supper room at "The Gascony."

Between Acts I and II three nights elapse.

Between Acts II and Act III, Scene I, three months.

Between Act III, Scene I, and Act III, Scene II, three months.

Between Act III, Scene II, and Act IV, six months.

"With a hey-ho chivy Hark forrard, hark forrard, tantivy!"

ACT I

The SCENE is the pretty drawing-room of a flat. There are two doors, one open into the hall, the other shut and curtained. Through a large bay window, the curtains of which are not yet drawn, the towers of Westminster can be seen darkening in a summer sunset; a grand piano stands across one corner. The man-servant PAYNTER, clean-shaven and discreet, is arranging two tables for Bridge. BURNEY, the maid, a girl with one of those flowery Botticellian faces only met with in England, comes in through the curtained door, which she leaves open, disclosing the glimpse of a white wall. PAYNTER looks up at her; she shakes her head, with an expression of concern.

PAYNTER. Where's she gone?

BURNEY. Just walks about, I fancy.

PAYNTER. She and the Governor don't hit it! One of these days she'll flit – you'll see. I like her – she's a lady; but these thoroughbred 'uns – it's their skin and their mouths. They'll go till they drop if they like the job, and if they don't, it's nothing but jib – jib – jib. How was it down there before she married him?

BURNEY. Oh! Quiet, of course.

PAYNTER. Country homes – I know 'em. What's her father, the old Rector, like?

BURNEY. Oh! very steady old man. The mother dead long

before I took the place.

PAYNTER. Not a penny, I suppose?

BURNEY. [Shaking her head] No; and seven of them.

PAYNTER. [At sound of the hall door] The Governor!

BURNEY withdraws through the curtained door. GEORGE DEDMOND enters from the hall. He is in evening dress, opera hat, and overcoat; his face is broad, comely, glossily shaved, but with neat moustaches. His eyes, clear, small, and blue-grey, have little speculation. His hair is well brushed.

GEORGE. [Handing PAYNTER his coat and hat] Look here, Paynter! When I send up from the Club for my dress things, always put in a black waistcoat as well.

PAYNTER. I asked the mistress, sir.

GEORGE. In future – see?

PAYNTER. Yes, sir. [Signing towards the window] Shall I leave the sunset, sir?

But GEORGE has crossed to the curtained door; he opens it and says: "Clare!" Receiving no answer, he goes in. PAYNTER switches up the electric light. His face, turned towards the curtained door, is apprehensive.

GEORGE. [Re-entering] Where's Mrs. Dedmond?

PAYNTER. I hardly know, sir.

GEORGE. Dined in?

PAYNTER. She had a mere nothing at seven, sir.

GEORGE. Has she gone out, since?

PAYNTER. Yes, sir – that is, yes. The – er – mistress was not dressed at all. A little matter of fresh air, I think; sir.

GEORGE. What time did my mother say they'd be here for Bridge?

PAYNTER. Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond were coming at half-past nine; and Captain Huntingdon, too – Mr. and Mrs. Fullarton might be a bit late, sir.

GEORGE. It's that now. Your mistress said nothing?

PAYNTER. Not to me, sir.

GEORGE. Send Burney.

PAYNTER. Very good, sir. [He withdraws.]

GEORGE stares gloomily at the card tables. BURNEY comes in front the hall.

GEORGE. Did your mistress say anything before she went out?

BURNEY. Yes, sir.

GEORGE. Well?

BURNEY. I don't think she meant it, sir.

GEORGE. I don't want to know what you don't think, I want the fact.

BURNEY. Yes, sir. The mistress said: "I hope it'll be a pleasant evening, Burney!"

GEORGE. Oh! – Thanks.

BURNEY. I've put out the mistress's things, sir.

GEORGE. Ah!

BURNEY. Thank you, sir. [She withdraws.]

GEORGE. Damn!

He again goes to the curtained door, and passes through. PAYNTER, coming in from the hall, announces: "General Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond." SIR CHARLES is an upright, well-groomed, grey-moustached, red-faced man of sixty-seven, with a keen eye for molehills, and none at all for mountains. LADY DEDMOND has a firm, thin face, full of capability and decision, not without kindness; and faintly weathered, as if she had faced many situations in many parts of the world. She is fifty five. PAYNTER withdraws.

SIR CHARLES. Hullo! Where are they? H'm!

As he speaks, GEORGE re-enters.

LADY DEDMOND. [Kissing her son] Well, George. Where's Clare?

GEORGE. Afraid she's late.

LADY DEDMOND. Are we early?

GEORGE. As a matter of fact, she's not in.

LADY DEDMOND. Oh?

SIR CHARLES. H'm! Not – not had a rumpus?

GEORGE. Not particularly. [With the first real sign of feeling] What I can't stand is being made a fool of before other people. Ordinary friction one can put up with. But that —

SIR CHARLES. Gone out on purpose? What!

LADY DEDMOND. What was the trouble?

GEORGE. I told her this morning you were coming in to Bridge. Appears she'd asked that fellow Malise, for music.

LADY DEDMOND. Without letting you know?

GEORGE. I believe she did tell me.

LADY DEDMOND. But surely —

GEORGE. I don't want to discuss it. There's never anything in particular. We're all anyhow, as you know.

LADY DEDMOND. I see. [She looks shrewdly at her son] My dear, I should be rather careful about him, I think.

SIR CHARLES. Who's that?

LADY DEDMOND. That Mr. Malise.

SIR CHARLES. Oh! That chap!

GEORGE. Clare isn't that sort.

LADY DEDMOND. I know. But she catches up notions very easily. I think it's a great pity you ever came across him.

SIR CHARLES. Where did you pick him up?

GEORGE. Italy – this Spring – some place or other where they couldn't speak English.

SIR CHARLES. Um! That's the worst of travellin'.

LADY DEDMOND. I think you ought to have dropped him. These literary people – [Quietly] From exchanging ideas to something else, isn't very far, George.

SIR CHARLES. We'll make him play Bridge. Do him good, if he's that sort of fellow.

LADY DEDMOND. Is anyone else coming?

GEORGE. Reggie Huntingdon, and the Fullartons.

LADY DEDMOND. [Softly] You know, my dear boy, I've been meaning to speak to you for a long time. It is such a pity

you and Clare – What is it?

GEORGE. God knows! I try, and I believe she does.

SIR CHARLES. It's distressin' – for us, you know, my dear fellow – distressin'.

LADY DEDMOND. I know it's been going on for a long time.

GEORGE. Oh! leave it alone, mother.

LADY DEDMOND. But, George, I'm afraid this man has brought it to a point – put ideas into her head.

GEORGE. You can't dislike him more than I do. But there's nothing one can object to.

LADY DEDMOND. Could Reggie Huntingdon do anything, now he's home? Brothers sometimes —

GEORGE. I can't bear my affairs being messed about —

LADY DEDMOND. Well! it would be better for you and Clare to be supposed to be out together, than for her to be out alone. Go quietly into the dining-room and wait for her.

SIR CHARLES. Good! Leave your mother to make up something. She'll do it!

LADY DEDMOND. That may be he. Quick!

[A bell sounds.] GEORGE goes out into the hall, leaving the door open in his haste. LADY DEDMOND, following, calls "Paynter!" PAYNTER enters.

LADY DEDMOND. Don't say anything about your master and mistress being out. I'll explain.

PAYNTER. The master, my lady?

LADY DEDMOND. Yes, I know. But you needn't say so. Do

you understand?

PAYNTER. [In polite dudgeon] Just so, my lady.

[He goes out.]

SIR CHARLES. By Jove! That fellow smells a rat!

LADY DEDMOND. Be careful, Charles!

SIR CHARLES. I should think so.

LADY DEDMOND. I shall simply say they're dining out, and that we're not to wait Bridge for them.

SIR CHARLES. [Listening] He's having a palaver with that man of George's.

PAYNTER, reappearing, announces: "Captain Huntingdon." SIR CHARLES and LADY DEDMOND turn to him with relief.

LADY DEDMOND. Ah! It's you, Reginald!

HUNTINGDON. [A tall, fair soldier, of thirty] How d'you do? How are you, sir? What's the matter with their man?

SHE CHARLES. What!

HUNTINGDON. I was going into the dining-room to get rid of my cigar; and he said: "Not in there, sir. The master's there, but my instructions are to the effect that he's not."

SHE CHARLES. I knew that fellow —

LADY DEDMOND. The fact is, Reginald, Clare's out, and George is waiting for her. It's so important people shouldn't —

HUNTINGDON. Rather!

They draw together, as people do, discussing the

misfortunes of members of their families.

LADY DEDMOND. It's getting serious, Reginald. I don't know what's to become of them. You don't think the Rector – you don't think your father would speak to Clare?

HUNTINGDON. Afraid the Governor's hardly well enough. He takes anything of that sort to heart so – especially Clare.

SIR CHARLES. Can't you put in a word yourself?

HUNTINGDON. Don't know where the mischief lies.

SIR CHARLES. I'm sure George doesn't gallop her on the road. Very steady-goin' fellow, old George.

HUNTINGDON. Oh, yes; George is all right, sir.

LADY DEDMOND. They ought to have had children.

HUNTINGDON. Expect they're pretty glad now they haven't. I really don't know what to say, ma'am.

SIR CHARLES. Saving your presence, you know, Reginald, I've often noticed parsons' daughters grow up queer. Get too much morality and rice puddin'.

LADY DEDMOND. [With a clear look] Charles!

SIR CHARLES. What was she like when you were kids?

HUNTINGDON. Oh, all right. Could be rather a little devil, of course, when her monkey was up.

SIR CHARLES. I'm fond of her. Nothing she wants that she hasn't got, is there?

HUNTINGDON. Never heard her say so.

SIR CHARLES. [Dimly] I don't know whether old George is a bit too matter of fact for her. H'm?

[A short silence.]

LADY DEDMOND. There's a Mr. Malise coming here to-night. I forget if you know him.

HUNTINGDON. Yes. Rather a thorough-bred mongrel.

LADY DEDMOND. He's literary. [With hesitation] You – you don't think he – puts – er – ideas into her head?

HUNTINGDON. I asked Greyman, the novelist, about him; seems he's a bit of an Ishmaelite, even among those fellows. Can't see Clare —

LADY DEDMOND. No. Only, the great thing is that she shouldn't be encouraged. Listen! – It is her-coming in. I can hear their voices. Gone to her room. What a blessing that man isn't here yet! [The door bell rings] Tt! There he is, I expect.

SIR CHARLES. What are we goin' to say?

HUNTINGDON. Say they're dining out, and we're not to wait Bridge for them.

SIR CHARLES. Good!

The door is opened, and PAYNTER announces "Mr. Kenneth Malise." MALISE enters. He is a tall man, about thirty-five, with a strongly marked, dark, irregular, ironic face, and eyes which seem to have needles in their pupils. His thick hair is rather untidy, and his dress clothes not too new.

LADY DEDMOND. How do you do? My son and daughter-in-law are so very sorry. They'll be here directly.

[MALISE bows with a queer, curly smile.]

SIR CHARLES. [Shaking hands] How d'you do, sir?

HUNTINGDON. We've met, I think.

He gives MALISE that peculiar smiling stare, which seems to warn the person bowed to of the sort of person he is. MALISE'S eyes sparkle.

LADY DEDMOND. Clare will be so grieved. One of those invitations

MALISE. On the spur of the moment.

SIR CHARLES. You play Bridge, sir?

MALISE. Afraid not!

SIR CHARLES. Don't mean that? Then we shall have to wait for 'em.

LADY DEDMOND. I forget, Mr. Malise – you write, don't you?

MALISE. Such is my weakness.

LADY DEDMOND. Delightful profession.

SIR CHARLES. Doesn't tie you! What!

MALISE. Only by the head.

SIR CHARLES. I'm always thinkin' of writin' my experiences.

MALISE. Indeed!

[There is the sound of a door banged.]

SIR CHARLES. [Hastily] You smoke, Mr. MALISE?

MALISE. Too much.

SIR CHARLES. Ah! Must smoke when you think a lot.

MALISE. Or think when you smoke a lot.

SIR CHARLES. [Genially] Don't know that I find that.

LADY DEDMOND. [With her clear look at him] Charles!

The door is opened. CLARE DEDMOND in a cream-coloured evening frock comes in from the hall, followed by GEORGE. She is rather pale, of middle height, with a beautiful figure, wavy brown hair, full, smiling lips, and large grey mesmeric eyes, one of those women all vibration, iced over with a trained stoicism of voice and manner.

LADY DEDMOND. Well, my dear!

SIR CHARLES. Ah! George. Good dinner?

GEORGE. [Giving his hand to MALISE] How are you?
Clare! Mr. MALISE!

CLARE. [Smiling-in a clear voice with the faintest possible lisp] Yes, we met on the door-mat. [Pause.]

SIR CHARLES. Deuce you did! [An awkward pause.]

LADY DEDMOND. [Acidly] Mr. Malise doesn't play Bridge, it appears. Afraid we shall be rather in the way of music.

SIR CHARLES. What! Aren't we goin' to get a game?
[PAYNTER has entered with a tray.]

GEORGE. Paynter! Take that table into the dining room.

PAYNTER. [Putting down the tray on a table behind the door]
Yes, sir.

MALISE. Let me give you a hand.

PAYNTER and MALISE carry one of the Bridge tables

out, GEORGE making a half-hearted attempt to relieve MALISE.

SIR CHARLES. Very fine sunset!

Quite softly CLARE begins to laugh. All look at her first with surprise, then with offence, then almost with horror. GEORGE is about to go up to her, but HUNTINGDON heads him off.

HUNTINGDON. Bring the tray along, old man.

GEORGE takes up the tray, stops to look at CLARE, then allows HUNTINGDON to shepherd him out.

LADY DEDMOND. [Without looking at CLARE] Well, if we're going to play, Charles? [She jerks his sleeve.]

SIR CHARLES. What? [He marches out.]

LADY DEDMOND. [Meeting MALISE in the doorway] Now you will be able to have your music.

[She follows the GENERAL out] [CLARE stands perfectly still, with her eyes closed.]

MALISE. Delicious!

CLARE. [In her level, clipped voice] Perfectly beastly of me! I'm so sorry. I simply can't help running amok to-night.

MALISE. Never apologize for being fey. It's much too rare.

CLARE. On the door-mat! And they'd whitewashed me so beautifully! Poor dears! I wonder if I ought – [She looks towards the door.]

MALISE. Don't spoil it!

CLARE. I'd been walking up and down the Embankment for about three hours. One does get desperate sometimes.

MALISE. Thank God for that!

CLARE. Only makes it worse afterwards. It seems so frightful to them, too.

MALISE. [Softly and suddenly, but with a difficulty in finding the right words] Blessed be the respectable! May they dream of – me! And blessed be all men of the world! May they perish of a surfeit of – good form!

CLARE. I like that. Oh, won't there be a row! [With a faint movement of her shoulders] And the usual reconciliation.

MALISE. Mrs. Dedmond, there's a whole world outside yours. Why don't you spread your wings?

CLARE. My dear father's a saint, and he's getting old and frail; and I've got a sister engaged; and three little sisters to whom I'm supposed to set a good example. Then, I've no money, and I can't do anything for a living, except serve in a shop. I shouldn't be free, either; so what's the good? Besides, I oughtn't to have married if I wasn't going to be happy. You see, I'm not a bit misunderstood or ill-treated. It's only —

MALISE. Prison. Break out!

CLARE. [Turning to the window] Did you see the sunset? That white cloud trying to fly up?

[She holds up her bare arms, with a motion of flight.]

MALISE. [Admiring her] Ah-h-h! [Then, as she drops her arms suddenly] Play me something.

CLARE. [Going to the piano] I'm awfully grateful to you. You don't make me feel just an attractive female. I wanted somebody like that. [Letting her hands rest on the notes] All the same, I'm glad not to be ugly.

MALISE. Thank God for beauty!

PAYNTER. [Opening the door] Mr. and Mrs. Fullarton.

MALISE. Who are they?

CLARE. [Rising] She's my chief pal. He was in the Navy.

She goes forward. MRS. FULLERTON is a rather tall woman, with dark hair and a quick eye. He, one of those clean-shaven naval men of good presence who have retired from the sea, but not from their susceptibility.

MRS. FULLARTON. [Kissing CLARE, and taking in both MALISE and her husband's look at CLARE] We've only come for a minute.

CLARE. They're playing Bridge in the dining-room. Mr. Malise doesn't play. Mr. Malise – Mrs. Fullarton, Mr. Fullarton.

[They greet.]

FULLARTON. Most awfully jolly dress, Mrs. Dedmond.

MRS. FULLARTON. Yes, lovely, Clare. [FULLARTON abases eyes which mechanically readjust themselves] We can't stay for Bridge, my dear; I just wanted to see you a minute, that's all. [Seeing HUNTINGDON coming in she speaks in a low voice to her husband] Edward, I want to speak to Clare. How d'you do, Captain Huntingdon?

MALISE. I'll say good-night.

He shakes hands with CLARE, bows to MRS. FULLARTON, and makes his way out. HUNTINGDON and FULLERTON foregather in the doorway.

MRS. FULLARTON. How are things, Clare? [CLARE just moves her shoulders] Have you done what I suggested? Your room?

CLARE. No.

MRS. FULLARTON. Why not?

CLARE. I don't want to torture him. If I strike – I'll go clean. I expect I shall strike.

MRS. FULLARTON. My dear! You'll have the whole world against you.

CLARE. Even you won't back me, Dolly?

MRS. FULLARTON. Of course I'll back you, all that's possible, but I can't invent things.

CLARE. You wouldn't let me come to you for a bit, till I could find my feet?

MRS. FULLARTON, taken aback, cannot refrain from her glance at FULLARTON automatically gazing at CLARE while he talks with HUNTINGDON.

MRS. FULLARTON. Of course – the only thing is that —

CLARE. [With a faint smile] It's all right, Dolly. I'm not coming.

MRS. FULLARTON. Oh! don't do anything desperate, Clare

– you are so desperate sometimes. You ought to make terms – not tracks.

CLARE. Haggie? [She shakes her head] What have I got to make terms with? What he still wants is just what I hate giving.

MRS. FULLARTON. But, Clare —

CLARE. No, Dolly; even you don't understand. All day and every day – just as far apart as we can be – and still – Jolly, isn't it? If you've got a soul at all.

MRS. FULLARTON. It's awful, really.

CLARE. I suppose there are lots of women who feel as I do, and go on with it; only, you see, I happen to have something in me that – comes to an end. Can't endure beyond a certain time, ever.

She has taken a flower from her dress, and suddenly tears it to bits. It is the only sign of emotion she has given.

MRS. FULLARTON. [Watching] Look here, my child; this won't do. You must get a rest. Can't Reggie take you with him to India for a bit?

CLARE. [Shaking her head] Reggie lives on his pay.

MRS. FULLARTON. [With one of her quick looks] That was Mr. Malise, then?

FULLARTON. [Coming towards them] I say, Mrs. Dedmond, you wouldn't sing me that little song you sang the other night, [He hums] "If I might be the falling bee and kiss thee all the day"? Remember?

MRS. FULLARTON. "The falling dew," Edward. We simply must go, Clare. Good-night. [She kisses her.]

FULLARTON. [Taking half-cover between his wife and CLARE] It suits you down to the ground-that dress.

CLARE. Good-night.

HUNTINGDON sees them out. Left alone CLARE clenches her hands, moves swiftly across to the window, and stands looking out.

HUNTINGDON. [Returning] Look here, Clare!

CLARE. Well, Reggie?

HUNTINGDON. This is working up for a mess, old girl. You can't do this kind of thing with impunity. No man'll put up with it. If you've got anything against George, better tell me. [CLARE shakes her head] You ought to know I should stick by you. What is it? Come?

CLARE. Get married, and find out after a year that she's the wrong person; so wrong that you can't exchange a single real thought; that your blood runs cold when she kisses you – then you'll know.

HUNTINGDON. My dear old girl, I don't want to be a brute; but it's a bit difficult to believe in that, except in novels.

CLARE. Yes, incredible, when you haven't tried.

HUNTINGDON. I mean, you – you chose him yourself. No one forced you to marry him.

CLARE. It does seem monstrous, doesn't it?

HUNTINGDON. My dear child, do give us a reason.

CLARE. Look! [She points out at the night and the darkening towers] If George saw that for the first time he'd just say, "Ah,

Westminster! Clock Tower! Can you see the time by it?" As if one cared where or what it was – beautiful like that! Apply that to every – every – everything.

HUNTINGDON. [Staring] George may be a bit prosaic. But, my dear old girl, if that's all —

CLARE. It's not all – it's nothing. I can't explain, Reggie – it's not reason, at all; it's – it's like being underground in a damp cell; it's like knowing you'll never get out. Nothing coming – never anything coming again-never anything.

HUNTINGDON. [Moved and puzzled] My dear old thing; you mustn't get into fantods like this. If it's like that, don't think about it.

CLARE. When every day and every night! – Oh! I know it's my fault for having married him, but that doesn't help.

HUNTINGDON. Look here! It's not as if George wasn't quite a decent chap. And it's no use blinking things; you are absolutely dependent on him. At home they've got every bit as much as they can do to keep going.

CLARE. I know.

HUNTINGDON. And you've got to think of the girls. Any trouble would be very beastly for them. And the poor old Governor would feel it awfully.

CLARE. If I didn't know all that, Reggie, I should have gone home long ago.

HUNTINGDON. Well, what's to be done? If my pay would run to it – but it simply won't.

CLARE. Thanks, old boy, of course not.

HUNTINGDON. Can't you try to see George's side of it a bit?

CLARE. I do. Oh! don't let's talk about it.

HUNTINGDON. Well, my child, there's just one thing you won't go sailing near the wind, will you? I mean, there are fellows always on the lookout.

CLARE. "That chap, Malise, you'd better avoid him!" Why?

HUNTINGDON. Well! I don't know him. He may be all right, but he's not our sort. And you're too pretty to go on the tack of the New Woman and that kind of thing – haven't been brought up to it.

CLARE. British home-made summer goods, light and attractive – don't wear long. [At the sound of voices in the hall] They seem 'to be going, Reggie.

[HUNTINGDON looks at her, vexed, unhappy.]

HUNTINGDON. Don't head for trouble, old girl. Take a pull. Bless you! Good-night.

CLARE kisses him, and when he has gone turns away from the door, holding herself in, refusing to give rein to some outburst of emotion. Suddenly she sits down at the untouched Bridge table, leaning her bare elbows on it and her chin on her hands, quite calm. GEORGE is coming in. PAYNTER follows him.

CLARE. Nothing more wanted, thank you, Paynter. You can go home, and the maids can go to bed.

PAYNTER. We are much obliged, ma'am.

CLARE. I ran over a dog, and had to get it seen to.

PAYNTER. Naturally, ma'am!

CLARE. Good-night.

PAYNTER. I couldn't get you a little anything, ma'am?

CLARE. No, thank you.

PAYNTER. No, ma'am. Good-night, ma'am.

[He withdraws.]

GEORGE. You needn't have gone out of your way to tell a lie that wouldn't deceive a guinea-pig. [Going up to her] Pleased with yourself to-night? [CLARE shakes her head] Before that fellow MALISE; as if our own people weren't enough!

CLARE. Is it worth while to rag me? I know I've behaved badly, but I couldn't help it, really!

GEORGE. Couldn't help behaving like a shop-girl? My God! You were brought up as well as I was.

CLARE. Alas!

GEORGE. To let everybody see that we don't get on – there's only one word for it – Disgusting!

CLARE. I know.

GEORGE. Then why do you do it? I've always kept my end up. Why in heaven's name do you behave in this crazy way?

CLARE. I'm sorry.

GEORGE. [With intense feeling] You like making a fool of me!

CLARE. No – Really! Only – I must break out sometimes.

GEORGE. There are things one does not do.

CLARE. I came in because I was sorry.

GEORGE. And at once began to do it again! It seems to me you delight in rows.

CLARE. You'd miss your – reconciliations.

GEORGE. For God's sake, Clare, drop cynicism!

CLARE. And truth?

GEORGE. You are my wife, I suppose.

CLARE. And they twain shall be one – spirit.

GEORGE. Don't talk wild nonsense!

[There is silence.]

CLARE. [Softly] I don't give satisfaction. Please give me notice!

GEORGE. Pish!

CLARE. Five years, and four of them like this! I'm sure we've served our time. Don't you really think we might get on better together – if I went away?

GEORGE. I've told you I won't stand a separation for no real reason, and have your name bandied about all over London. I have some primitive sense of honour.

CLARE. You mean your name, don't you?

GEORGE. Look here. Did that fellow Malise put all this into your head?

CLARE. No; my own evil nature.

GEORGE. I wish the deuce we'd never met him. Comes of picking up people you know nothing of. I distrust him – and his looks – and his infernal satiric way. He can't even 'dress decently.

He's not – good form.

CLARE. [With a touch of rapture] Ah-h!

GEORGE. Why do you let him come? What d'you find interesting in him?

CLARE. A mind.

GEORGE. Deuced funny one! To have a mind – as you call it – it's not necessary to talk about Art and Literature.

CLARE. We don't.

GEORGE. Then what do you talk about – your minds? [CLARE looks at him] Will you answer a straight question? Is he falling in love with you?

CLARE. You had better ask him.

GEORGE. I tell you plainly, as a man of the world, I don't believe in the guide, philosopher and friend business.

CLARE. Thank you.

A silence. CLARE suddenly clasps her hands behind her head.

CLARE. Let me go! You'd be much happier with any other woman.

GEORGE. Clare!

CLARE. I believe – I'm sure I could earn my living. Quite serious.

GEORGE. Are you mad?

CLARE. It has been done.

GEORGE. It will never be done by you – understand that!

CLARE. It really is time we parted. I'd go clean out of your

life. I don't want your support unless I'm giving you something for your money.

GEORGE. Once for all, I don't mean to allow you to make fools of us both.

CLARE. But if we are already! Look at us. We go on, and on. We're a spectacle!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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