
ACT ONE

~~SCENE: *The scene is the sitting-room of Algy's flat in Half Moon Street. The room is tastefully and somewhat artistically furnished. An archway U R leads to the outer hall. Upstage of this arch is a bell cord. In the L wall, a door leads to the other rooms in the flat. There is a fireplace U C with the usual accessories. At C stage is a round table with comfortable chairs on either side of it. A small sofa or love-seat is R C, at a slight angle toward C stage. Upstage of the door L is a serving table. At D L stage is an over-stuffed lounging chair with a small stand left of it. There is a writing desk D R with a chair in front of it and a wastebasket at the downstage end. Rugs, several good paintings and the usual bric-a-brac, including a few trophies, complete the setting.*~~

~~AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *Just before the curtain rises, piano music is heard off L. When the curtain rises, LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table C. After a few moments the piano-playing stops and ALGY saunters in L.*~~

Start

ALGY [*crossing L C*]. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?
LANE [*not pausing in his work*]. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGY [*sbrugging*]. I'm sorry for that. [*Comes left of table.*]
Have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE [*crossing to table U L, returning to table C with plate of sandwiches*]. Yes, sir.

ALGY [*taking one or two off plate, crossing to sofa, sitting*].
Oh, by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreham and Mr. Worthing were

dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed. [*Nibbles on sandwich.*]

LANE [*arranging plate of sandwiches on table*]. Yes, sir—eight bottles and a pint.

ALGY. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? [*Glances over at LANE.*]
I ask merely for information.

LANE. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households, the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGY. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE [*gravely*]. I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. [*Crosses to table U L for another plate of sandwiches, which he places on table C.*] I have had very little experience of it myself, up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and the young person.

ALGY [*rising, moving D L, still nibbling*]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE. No, sir. [*Crosses U C, brings small bowl of flowers from mantel and places it on table C.*] It is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGY. Very natural, I am sure. [*Bell rings off U R.*] The bell, Lane.

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Goes out U R.*] Stop

ALGY [*sitting D L, continuing to nibble sandwiches*]. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of their moral responsibility.

[*LANE enters U R and pauses upstage of entrance.*]

LANE [*announcing*]. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[*JACK enters U R and comes down in front of the sofa. LANE goes out U R.*]