

Page 38 The Importance of Being Earnest Act II

CECILY. A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors from table R C and starts U R C.*]

ALGY [*following her*]. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY. Why? [*Cuts flower from one of potted plants.*]

ALGY. Because you are like a pink rose, Cousin Cecily.

CECILY. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGY. Then Miss Prism is a very short-sighted old lady.

[*CECILY offers him rose and puts it in his buttonhole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare. [*Crosses R. ALGY follows.*]

ALGY. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY. Oh, I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I wouldn't know what to talk to him about. [*Goes quickly out R with ALGY.*]

[*MISS PRISM comes in L with CHASUBLE.*]

Start MISS PRISM [*coming C, as CHASUBLE follows*]. Where is Cecily? You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never! [*Crosses R C and neatly arranges books CECILY has thrown on table.*]

CHASUBLE. The precept, as well as the practice, of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray. [*Moves back of table R C and sits right of it, her hands on table.*]

CHASUBLE [*crossing, sitting upstage of table R C*]. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

Act II    The Importance of Being Earnest    Page 39

CHASUBLE. And often, I've been told, not even to her. [*Puts his hand over hers on table.*]

MISS PRISM. But where is Cecily? [*Rises agitatedly and moves R, looking off.*]

CHASUBLE [*rising, moving L C*]. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.    Stop

~~[As MISS PRISM moves R C again, JACK enters R. He is dressed entirely in black and walks with mock solemnity. As he comes R C, he takes out a long white handkerchief and dabs at his eyes.]~~

MISS PRISM [*concerned*]. Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE. Mr. Worthing.

MISS PRISM [*shaking his hand, which goes limp when she drops it*]. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*mock tragedy in his voice*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. [*Moves C, speaking to CHASUBLE.*] Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well.

CHASUBLE. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity.

JACK. My brother! [*Dabs at eyes*]

MISS PRISM. More shameful debts and extravagancies?

CHASUBLE. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*shaking his head*]. Dead! [*Puts handkerchief to his eyes again.*]

CHASUBLE. Your brother Ernest, dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

MISS PRISM. What a lesson for him. [*Sits left of table R C.*] I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE [*crossing, patting JACK's shoulder*]. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolences. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK [*dabbing at eyes*]. Poor Ernest. He had many faults, but it is a sad blow. [*Blows nose loudly in handkerchief*]

CHASUBLE. Very sad, indeed. Were you with him at the end?