

JACK / ALGERNON

JACK - I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON - We have.

JACK - I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON - The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK - What fools!

ALGERNON - By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK - My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON - The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to some one else, if she is plain.

JACK - Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON - What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK - Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON - Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK - You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON - Of course it isn't!

JACK - Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest was carried off suddenly, in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGERNON - But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK - Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON - I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK - I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.