

The Importance of Being Earnest

Algy - Jack Side

ALGY: Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendoline refused you?

JACK: Oh, as far as Gwendoline is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a gorgon. You don't think there is any chance of Gwendoline becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGY: All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK: Is that clever?

ALGY: It is perfectly phrased and quite as true as any observation in civilized life need be.

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.

ALGY: We have.

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

ALGY: The fools? Oh, about the clever people, of course. By the way, did you tell Gwendoline 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.

ALGY: The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK: Oh, that's nonsense.

ALGY: 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?

ALGY: 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?

ALGY: Of course it isn't.

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

ALGY: But I thought you said that - Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest?

JACK: Oh, that's all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl at all. She has a capital appetite, and goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGY: I should like to see Cecily.

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

ALGY: Have you told Gwendoline that you have an excessively pretty young ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK: Oh, one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendoline are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like, that half an hour after they have met they will be calling each other sister.

ALGY: Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at the Carlton, we really must go and dress. I'm hungry.

JACK: I never knew you when you weren't.