

# Quotations for The Importance of Being Earnest.

## ACT 2

Miss Prism: "As a man sows so let him reap" p273

"Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips" Chasuble p274

"You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand - a womanthrope, never!" Prism to Chasuble p 276

"Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted" Prism to Chasuble p277

## Gwendolen:

"My first impressions of people are never wrong" p286

"Mamma... has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted" p286

"I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade" p289

"I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far" p 695

"...a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady"  
Algernon about ~~the~~ Gwendolen p 292

### Eating / Food

"When one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals" Cecily to Algernon p 276.

"Sugar is not fashionable any more... Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays" Gwendolen p 289

"When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me" Algernon p 293

## Love / Romance

"Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly" Algernon p 283

"I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her"  
Jack p 292

"I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest" Cecily to Algernon p 283

## Witticisms / Truisms

"No married man is ever attractive except to his wife"  
Miss Prism to Chasuble p 277

"Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life" Algernon to Jack p 292

"Science is always making wonderful improvements in things"  
Algernon to Jack p 294.

## Stage Directions

"Enter Algernon, very gay and debonair" p274

"He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves" p277.

"The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe" p289.

"The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July" p272

## Morality

"... then you have been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner... pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time" Cecily to 'Ernest' (Algernon) p275

"What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it" Mrs Prism about Ernest's 'death' p277

"On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure" p288  
Gwendolen to Cecily.

## Religion

"My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion"  
Dr. Chasuble p278

Algernon: "...but I have not been christened for years."

Jack: "Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing."  
p294

Dr. 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" p276

## Culture

"The chapter on the fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational" Miss Prism p274

"In Paris! (Shakes his head) I fear that hardly points to  
any very serious state of mind at the least" Dr. Chasuble

p 278

Andrew

## Importance of Being Earnest : Act 3

### GWENDOLEN

Gwendolen: "But we will not be the first to speak."

Cecily: "Certainly not."

Gwendolen: "Mr Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply." (Wilde 295) line 75-78)

- This shows Gwendolen's artificiality, as without even a pause she contradicts her own orders based only on how she wants to be seen.

"In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing." (Wilde 295, line 28-29)

- Shows Gwendolen's vanity and desire to impress. Also highlights similarity with her mother, Lady Bracknell.

Jack: "It is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly he that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?"

Gwendolen: "I can. For I feel that you are sure to change." (Wilde 301) - Characterizes Gwendolen as someone who aesthetically values deception over the simple truth. Also shows again her certainty in her own judgements and predictions.

### MISS PRISM

"In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I can never forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette and the baby in the hand-bag." (Wilde 304, lines 350-357)

- Forgetful characterization. However, her swift admission does show her guilt while the manuscript suggests a different side of her.

"The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years." (Wilde 294, lines 350-357) ←

- Trivial nature, failure to understand the consequences of her actions. Like many characters, trivializes the serious while ignoring the proverbial "elephant in the room". (Wilde 305, lines 388-390)

### WITTICISMS / TRUISMS

Gwendolen: "Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us." (Wilde 296, lines 67-68)

- The absurdity of the statement in context highlights its falseness, parodying the traditional criticism.

Lady Bracknell: "Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old." (Wilde 297, lines 74-75)

- Highlights Lady Bracknell's interfering and know-it-all personality. as she speaks with authority but is ~~just~~ wrong, a subversion of a proper criticism.

Lady Bracknell: "The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life." (Wilde 306, line 447-448)

- Indicates how a darker soul lies behind the happy societal facade. Also the contradictory and empty nature of criticisms.

### CULTURE

(stage direction) "... some dreadful popular air from a British Opera"

- Possibly explains Wilde's own feelings but more likely a comment on high society's disdain for "popular" culture.



~~You~~ ~~does~~ Lady Bracknell: "Poor pretty child! your dress is sadly simple and your hair almost as Nature might have left it."  
(Wilde 299, lines 766-767)

- Shows the cultural preference for artificiality and overdressing (re: Algernon) as opposed to natural, "honest" beauty.

Lady Bracknell: "... the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality." (Wilde 303, lines 339-340)

- Satirizes one form of the comic as well as insinuating the more serious and sentimental plays as opposed to his comedy.

## MORALITY

Jack: "... I don't approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being unscrupulous." (Wilde 300, line 276-277)

- Shows the hypocrisy in the upper class morally judging each other, as well as Jack's ~~own~~ faultless view of himself.

Algernon: "Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities." (Wilde 298, lines 785-786)

- Shows a new seriousness and commitment in Algernon but his focus on "prettiest" suggests he is not entirely selfless in love.

Gwendolen: "True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake one cannot surrender." (Wilde 296; lines 43-44)

- Demonstrates the flexibility of morals and the lack of

emotional importance placed on them. Instead, names are much more important.

## LOVE / ROMANCE

Jack: "Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to." (Wilde 302, lines 287-287)

- suggests a subversion of traditional Victorian norms.

Alceonably suggests true love can be achieved.

Lady Bracknell: "... I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage..." (Wilde 300, lines 205-206)

- A very depressive view of marriage as to be without love or romantic processes. Suggests a mutual exclusivity of love and marriage not supported by the protagonists.

Lady Bracknell: "... who is that young <sup>person</sup> ~~woman~~ whose hand my nephew Alceon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?"

- This bewilderment both shows her ignorance and lack of understanding of love but also her own ~~own~~ self-belief.

## RELIGION

Lady Bracknell: "(Christenings) at their age?" (Wilde 307, line 294) The idea is grotesque and "irreligious!" (Wilde 307, line 294-295)

- This way of interpreting religion to own ends, shows how religion is a convenience and variety, not a core belief system.

Dr Chasuble: "They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refused in four of my unpublished sermons." (Wilde 302, lines 306-305)

- Lack of innuendo suggests matter is in fact unimportant (e.g. food). Unread sermons hints at fanaticism and ignorance of religion from upper classes.

### STAGE DIRECTIONS

"Lady Bracknell (grimly)", "Jack (in a tearful voice)--- (uneasily)" (Wilde 298)

- Expertly sees the tone, giving a facade of politeness while understanding true subtext

"Lady Bracknell (glares at Jack for a few moments. Then bows, with a pained smile to Cecily)" (Wilde 299)

- Shows understanding Lady Bracknell has for everyone <sup>but</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>she</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> first instance of kindness she shows only through action

### FOOD AND EATING

Jack: "Under an assumed name he drank... an entire port & bottle of my Pomeroy-Jones, Brut, '89... succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every muff single muffin." (Wilde 300, lines 223-229)

- Shows how food is serious business which goes along with innuendo. Also, Algernon uses food to emotionally fulfil himself.