

- 8 whatsoever. Proprio, veramente.
 9 hard-and-fast. Rigida.
 10 happens to be. Si dà il caso che sia.
 11 Tunbridge Wells. Tranquilla cittadina nel sud-est dell'Inghilterra.
 12 make out. Capire.
 13 earnest. Onesta, sincera.
 14 cards. Biglietti da visita.
 15 B. 4, The Albany. Un esclusivo gruppo di appartamenti per uomini soli vicino a Piccadilly Circus.
 16 old boy. Vecchio mio.
 17 have ... out. Confessare l'intera storia; farti togliere qualcosa (un dente).
 18 false impression. Falsa impressione; impronta (in odontoiatria).
 19 Bunburyist. Persona fittizia.
 20 pray. Spera di.



- LANE** Stage directions provide information about the setting and the characters' movements
- Ordinary characters set in everyday situations in an amusing way
- Deliberate misunderstandings: the protagonist is Ernest in the city, and Jack in the country
- Paradoxes
- Puns
- Witty dialogue

- JACK Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever⁸ to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.
- ALGERNON Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast⁹ rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.
- JACK I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.
- ALGERNON Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know any one of that name.
- JACK Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be¹⁰ my aunt.
- ALGERNON Your aunt!
- JACK Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells¹¹. Just give it back to me, Algy.
- ALGERNON [*retreating to back of sofa*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] 'From little Cecily with her fondest love.'
- JACK [*moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows ALGERNON round the room.*]
- ALGERNON Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.' There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out¹². Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.
- JACK It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.
- ALGERNON You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest¹³ looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards¹⁴. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] 'Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany¹⁵.' I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]
- JACK Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.
- ALGERNON Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy¹⁶, you had much better have the thing out¹⁷ at once.
- JACK My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression¹⁸.
- ALGERNON Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist¹⁹; and I am quite sure of it now.
- JACK Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?
- ALGERNON I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.
- JACK Well, produce my cigarette case first.
- ALGERNON Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray²⁰ make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]