[*Enter* LANE]

LANE Mr Ernest Worthing!

[*Exit*]

[*Enter* JACK]

ALGERNON How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings *you* to town?

JACK Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere. [*Putting hand on* ALGERNON'S *shoulder*] Eating as usual, I see, Algy.

ALGERNON [*stiffly*] I believe it *is* customary to take some *slight* refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*sitting down*] Oh! in the country.

ALGERNON What on earth do you *do* there?

JACK [*pulling off his gloves*] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*airily*] Oh! neighbours, neighbours!

ALGERNON Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

JACK Perfectly horrid. Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich*] Shropshire is your county, Ernest, isn't it?

JACK [*going over to table*] Eh? . . . Shropshire? . . . Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK How perfectly delightful!

ALGERNON Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK May I ask why?

ALGERNON My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON I thought you had come up for pleasure. . . . I call that business.

JACK How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so peculiarly constituted.

ALGERNON Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven . . . please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it*]

JACK Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGERNON That is quite a different matter. She is my Aunt.