CECILY I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY [*smiling*] But I see dear Dr Chasuble coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM [*rising and advancing*] Dr Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter* CANON CHASUBLE]

DR CHASUBLE And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr Chasuble.

MISS PRISM Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed, I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

DR CHASUBLE I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY Oh, I am afraid I am terribly inattentive.

DR CHASUBLE That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares*] I spoke metaphorically . . . metaphorically. [*Walks across stage*] My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

DR CHASUBLE Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM Egeria? My name is Laetitia, Doctor.

DR CHASUBLE [*bowing*] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

MISS PRISM I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. It might do my headache good.

DR CHASUBLE With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational for a young girl. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

DR CHASUBLE Reading Political Economy, Cecily? It is wonderful how girls are educated nowadays. I suppose you know all about the relations between Capital and Labour?

CECILY I am afraid I am not learned at all. All I know is about the relations between Capital and Idleness—and that is merely from observation. So I don't suppose it is true.

MISS PRISM Cecily, that sounds like Socialism! And I suppose you know where Socialism leads to?

CECILY Oh, yes! That leads to Rational Dress, Miss Prism. And I suppose that when a woman is dressed rationally, she is treated rationally. She certainly deserves to be.