**LADY BRACKNELL SIDE**

**Lady Bracknell.**  [Pencil and note-book in hand.]  I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires.  Do you smoke?

**Jack.**  Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

**Lady Bracknell.**  I am glad to hear it.  A man should always have an occupation of some kind.  There are far too many idle men in London as it is.  How old are you?

**Jack.**  Twenty-nine.

**Lady Bracknell.**  A very good age to be married at.  I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing.  Which do you know?

**Jack.**  [After some hesitation.]  I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.**  I am pleased to hear it.  I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance.  What is your income?

**Jack.**  Between seven and eight thousand a year.

**Lady Bracknell.**  [Makes a note in her book.]  In land, or in investments?

**Jack.**  In investments, chiefly.

**Lady Bracknell.**  That is satisfactory.  What between the duties expected of one during one’s lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one’s death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure.  It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up.  That’s all that can be said about land.

**Jack.**  I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don’t depend on that for my real income.  In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

**Lady Bracknell.**  A country house!  How many bedrooms?  Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards.  You have a town house, I hope?  A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

**Jack.**  Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

**Lady Bracknell.**  Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character.  What number in Belgrave Square?

**Jack.**  149.

**Lady Bracknell.**  [Shaking her head.]  The unfashionable side.  I thought there was something.  However, that could easily be altered.

**Jack.**  Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

**Lady Bracknell.**  [Sternly.]  Both, if necessary, I presume.  Are your parents living?

**Jack.**  I have lost both my parents.

**Lady Bracknell.**  To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.  Who was your father?

**Jack.**  I am afraid I really don’t know.  The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents.  It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don’t actually know who I am by birth.  I was . . . well, I was found.

**Lady Bracknell.**  Found!

**Jack.**  The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time.  Worthing is a place in Sussex.  It is a seaside resort.

**Lady Bracknell.**  Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

**Jack.**  [Gravely.]  In a hand-bag.

**Lady Bracknell.**  A hand-bag? Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me.  To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution.  And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to?