**LANE SIDE**

Morning-room in Algernon’s flat in Half-Moon Street.  The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished.  The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[**Lane** is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, **Algernon** enters.]

**Algernon.**  Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

**Lane.**  I didn’t think it polite to listen, sir.

**Algernon.**  I’m sorry for that, for your sake.  I don’t play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression.  As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte.  I keep science for Life.

**Lane.**  Yes, sir.

**Algernon.**  And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

**Lane.**  Yes, sir.  [Hands them on a salver.]

**Algernon.**  [Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.]  Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

**Lane.**  Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

**Algernon.**  Why is it that at a bachelor’s establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne?  I ask merely for information.

**Lane.**  I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir.  I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

**Algernon.**  Good heavens!  Is marriage so demoralising as that?

**Lane.**  I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir.  I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present.  I have only been married once.  That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

**Algernon.**  [Languidly*.*]  I don’t know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

**Lane.**  No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject.  I never think of it myself.

**Algernon.**  Very natural, I am sure.  That will do, Lane, thank you.

**Lane.**  Thank you, sir.  [**Lane** goes out.]