

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME - LADY WINDERMERE'S AUDITION PIECE

LADY WINDERMERE: Arthur, what do you think of this dreadful news?

ARTHUR: Good evening, Auntie. You mean about the Dean?

LADY WINDERMERE: Yes, of course I mean about the Dean. What other news is there?

ARTHUR: It's sad, of course, Auntie . . .

LADY WINDERMERE: Sad! It's catastrophic. His poor wife is absolutely shattered.

ARTHUR: I expect uncle is a bit, too.

LADY WINDERMERE: Arthur, how can you speak like that? Have you no heart?

ARTHUR: I'm sorry, Auntie.

LADY WINDERMERE: It was all the fault of that wretched little clock - I know it. And Robert would have it put in the library where he writes his sermons. And then - only a few hours later - his life was over. All the good he has laboured to do in Paddington forgotten.

ARTHUR: (jauntily) Oh, I wouldn't say that, Auntie. I know I, for one, will always be jolly grateful to him. Do you think half mourning will be enough or ought it to be full?

LADY WINDERMERE: Must you be so facetious, Arthur?

ARTHUR: Well, after all, he was my uncle.

LADY WINDERMERE: Even though Robert may in future be lost to us, there is no need to speak of him as if he were dead.

ARTHUR: Is he only very ill, then?

LADY WINDERMERE: He says he is well, but I should certainly call it an illness. Imagining everyone in England wants to hear him preach because somebody sends him a wretched little clock.

ARTHUR: Won't you tell us exactly what happened, Auntie?

LADY WINDERMERE: But I thought you knew.

ARTHUR: Yes, but our accounts seem to differ.

LADY WINDERMERE: Just as you please. It all began yesterday morning, when a clock arrived for him from an anonymous donor.

ARTHUR: Yes, I know about that.

LADY WINDERMERE: There was a little figure of a woman on the top, so Robert instantly jumped to the conclusion that it was intended to represent the figure of Liberty and that the donor must be someone who had heard his sermon "Is License Liberty?" He had it placed immediately in his study, and while he was writing his sermon there was a whirring sound from the clock. It struck twelve very slowly, then a little puff of smoke came out of the pedestal, and the figure of Liberty fell flat on her face and broke her nose in the fender.

ARTHUR: Is that all? I mean, wasn't there an explosion?

LADY WINDERMERE: Only from your uncle. He instantly drew the absurd analogy that liberty in this country is about to be dethroned, and announced his intention of leaving the Deanery and preaching the horrors of democracy in every corner of England. I would like to murder whoever sent that clock.

ARTHUR: So would I !

LADY WINDERMERE: If you should see him before he goes, do have a word with him, Arthur, won't you?

ARTHUR: Yes, of course.

LADY WINDERMERE: Thank you, dear. Now, Sybil has given me an errand. (She takes a cutting of silk from her bag) She wants to know if this silk will match the bedroom curtains. May I go and see?

ARTHUR: Yes, do whatever you like, Auntie.

LADY WINDERMERE: I won't come in again, dear boy, so I'll say good-bye now. And do go and see your poor aunt.