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After the Ball

A Concert Version

by Noël Coward

Based on Oscar Wilde's
Lady Windermere's Fan

Edited from the original version
and with additional material by
Barry Day

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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(NAME OF PRODUCER)

Presents

After the Ball

By
Noël Coward

Based on Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windermere's Fan"

Edited from the original version and with additional material by
Barry Day

First performed at the Covent Garden Festival
on May 27th, 1999 at the Peacock Theatre, London

Duchess of Berwick	<i>Penelope Keith</i>
Mrs. Erlynne	<i>Marie McLaughlin</i>
Lady Windermere	<i>Linda Kitchen</i>
Lord Windermere	<i>Eric Roberts</i>
Lord Darlington	<i>Karl Daymond</i>
Mr. Hopper	<i>George Dvorsky</i>

Directed by *Paul Curran*

BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by *John McGlinn*

* * * * *

First performed in the United States at the Chicago Humanities
Festival on November 13th, 1999 at the Auditorium Theatre

Duchess of Berwick	<i>Penelope Keith</i>
Mrs. Erlynne	<i>Lillian Watson</i>
Lady Windermere	<i>Madeline Bender</i>
Lord Windermere	<i>Kurt Ollmann</i>
Lord Darlington	<i>Karl Daymond</i>
Mr. Hopper	<i>George Dvorsky</i>

Directed by *Paul Curran*

Orchestra conducted by *John McGlinn*

* * * * *

Subsequently presented by the New York Library
for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center
at the U.S. Custom House on April 21st 2001

Duchess of Berwick	<i>Irene Worth</i>
Mrs. Erlynne	<i>Ellen Lang</i>
Lady Windermere	<i>Constance Green</i>
Lord Windermere	<i>Bob Diamond</i>
Lord Darlington	<i>Richard Holmes</i>
Mr. Hopper	<i>Irwin Reese</i>

Directed by *Bob Diamond*

Accompanist *Bob Rogers*

A NOTE ON THE PRODUCTION

In his first night speech after the opening of *Lady Windermere's Fan* (February 20th 1892) Oscar Wilde congratulated the audience — “Your appreciation has been most intelligent. I congratulate you on the great success of your performance, which persuades me that you think almost as highly of the play as I do myself.”

In July 1953 Noël Coward wrote in his *Diary* — “I have decided to turn *Lady Windermere's Fan* into a musical . . . It really is up my musical alley.” By the following October — “The music is pouring out and I can scarcely go to the piano without a melody creeping from my fingers, usually in keys that I am not used to and can't play in; it is most extraordinary and never ceases to surprise me.”

As the music continued to take him over, he found that what he was composing was less of a musical and more of an opera — and that was to cause the subsequent problems.

His leading lady — Mary Ellis as Mrs. Erlynne — no longer possessed the vocal range for the part and her two key arias had to be cut, necessitating major changes to the construction of the piece. “Seven minutes of my best music and most charming lyrics sacrificed,” Coward lamented.

After the Ball opened at London's Globe Theatre on June 10th 1954 and ran for 188 performances. To the end of his life he fretted that the public had never seen the show he had written.

The present version restores those and other cuts and is as close to his original intended version as can be determined from his archival notes. The only changes are those necessitated by the requirements of a concert version lacking scene changes and one that was also to be broadcast on radio.

To solve the problem I took another leaf from Noël's book. When recording *Conversation Piece* with Lily Pons for LP, he used a linking narration in rhymed couplets. I have taken the liberty of using one of the characters, the Duchess of Berwick as a ‘Chorus’ as well as a character. From time to time she steps out of the action to comment on people and events. I hope The Master would approve. I have experienced no celestial finger wagging to date . . .

BARRY DAY

THE CHARACTERS

DUCHESS OF BERWICK

LADY WINDERMERE

LORD WINDERMERE

LORD DARLINGTON

LADY AGATHA

(The Duchess's Daughter)

MR. HOPPER

MR. DUMBY

MR. CECIL GRAHAM

LORD AUGUSTUS

LADY JEDBURGH

LADY STUTFIELD

LADY PLYMDALE

PARKER

(The Butler)

SONGS

Act I

Oh, What a Century It's Been (*Chorus*)
I Knew That You Would Be My Love (*Lord and Lady Windermere*)
Mr. Hopper's Chanty (*Mr. Hopper*)
Sweet Day (*Lady Windermere*)
Stay on the Side of the Angels (*Lord Darlington*)
Sweet Day – Reprise (*Lady Windermere*)
Oh, What a Century – Reprise (*Chorus*)
Crème de la Crème (*Mr. Dumby, Mr. Graham and Two Ladies*)
May I Have the Pleasure? (*Mr. Hopper*)
Mrs. Erlynne's Entrance: Good Evening, Lady Windermere
(*Mrs. Erlynne*)
Light Is the Heart (*Mrs. Erlynne*)
I Offer You My Heart – plus Reprise (*Lord Darlington and
Lady Windermere*)
Sweet Day – Reprise (*Lady Windermere*)
Mrs. Erlynne's Aria: What Can It Mean? (*Mrs. Erlynne*)

Act II

Lady Windermere's Aria: I Feel So Terribly Alone
(*Lady Windermere*)
Go, I Beg You, Go (*Mrs. Erlynne and Lady Windermere*)
London at Night (*Mens' Sextette: Lord Windermere, Lord Darlington,
Lord Augustus, Mr. Dumby, Mr. Graham and Mr. Hopper*)
Letter Song (*Lord Darlington*)
Why Is It the Woman Who Pays? (*Ladies' Trio: Lady Stutfield,
Lady Plymdale and Lady Jedburgh*)
Clear, Bright Morning (*Lady Windermere*)
All My Life Ago (*Mrs. Erlynne*)
Oh, What a Season / Oh, What a Century – Reprise (*Chorus*)
Something on a Tray (*Quartette: Duchess of Berwick, Lady Stutfield,
Lady Plymdale and Lady Jedburgh*)
Faraway Land (*Mr. Hopper*)
Farewell Song (*Lord Augustus*)
May I Have the Pleasure? – Reprise (*Mr. Hopper*)
I Knew That You Would Be My Love – Reprise (*Lord Windermere*)
Sweet Day – Reprise (*Lady Windermere*)
Light Is the Heart – Reprise (*Mrs. Erlynne*)

DEDICATED TO GRAHAM PAYN

(The original Mr. Hopper)

ACT I

Scene 1

(*THE DUCHESS OF BERWICK bustles on — rather like a superannuated Nanny. She addresses the audience as though they were her slightly dim charges but she'll soon whip them into shape. Like most nannies — or indeed, Duchesses — it never occurs to her to stop for an answer.*)

DUCHESS. How wonderful you all could come and join our small *soirée*!

If you're like me, you've so much on. Well, what I always say —

The Season's always welcome but it does go rather flat.
The *people* one rubs shoulders with . . . But don't start me on that!
Now, let me introduce myself. I'm really *ordinaire*,
A simple little Duchess — but that's neither here nor there —
The family name is Berwick and the title's *rather* old.
Up north somewhere. I never go — the weather's far too cold!
Enough of me. Now let us meet the folk who'll play our fable.
Crème de la Crème. Fleur de la fleur. But *you'll* decide the label.
I'll play the Grecian Chorus. (*Weren't the Greeks such clever folk?*)

You see —

It often needs *explaining* when the English make a joke.
And every now and then you must excuse me if I do
Step back into my character to speak a line or two.
Now, are we all quite clear on that? Oh, good — it's such a bore
To watch you scrabbling round to find your programmes on the floor.
The year is 1892 in Queen Victoria's reign
So please take note. I probably shan't mention it again.
My role today is to convey the essence of each scene,
To tell you who said what and — more important — what they *mean*.

Dear Oscar Wilde gave us our roles
And Mr. Coward our voices,
Which — when you come to think of it
Were two quite decent choices.

The lady in the tale we tell has beauty quite ethereal,
 The fact she acts naively is — quite frankly — immaterial
 Our heroine won't come to sin. You'll see no lewd behaviour.
 For everyone behaves the way we *all* do in Belgravia.

Before we meet the Windermeres and others in their story —
 A word about this Land of ours, replete with Hope and Glory . . .

OH, WHAT A CENTURY IT'S BEEN

*(Lady Plymdale, Lady Stutfield, Lady Jedburgh,
 Mr. Dumby, Mr. Cecil Graham and Lord Augustus)*

ALL.

OH, WHAT A CENTURY IT'S BEEN
 FROM GEORGE THE THIRD TO QUEEN VICTORIA

JEDBURGH.

WE'VE NEVER HAD TO SING "SIC TRANSIT GLORIA"

ALL.

OH, WHAT A CENTURY IT'S BEEN.

JEDBURGH.

UNHAPPY FOREIGNERS WITH JEALOUS EYES
 CAN ONLY GAZE AT US IN AWED SURPRISE
 FOR HOW, INDEED —

DUMBY.

AH, HOW, INDEED

ALL.

COULD ANY LESSER, LOWER BREED
 BE EVEN VAGUELY GUARANTEED
 TO UNDERSTAND

DUMBY.

THIS TOMB OF KINGS, THIS EARTH, THIS DEAR, DEAR LAND
 THIS RACE SO CERTAIN OF ITS QUALITY
 AND SO CONVINCED OF ITS INNATE SUPERIORITY.

ALL.

OH, WHAT A CENTURY IT'S BEEN

PLYMDALE.

NONE CAN DENY THE UPWARD TREND OF IT
 AND THOUGH WE'VE VERY NEARLY REACHED THE END

OF IT,
WHAT INNOVATIONS WE HAVE SEEN;

ALL.

BRITISH TRANSFORMATION SCENE.
WE'VE SEEN THE BIRTH OF QUEEN VICTORIA
AND THE DEATH OF WILLIAM PITT
AND THEN WE WON THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO
WHICH GAVE OUR ISLAND STORY A
CERTAIN LIFT, YOU MUST ADMIT
AND IF YOU DON'T –
WE DO.
WE'VE SEEN THE NATIONAL GALLERY OPEN,
AND THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BURN,
THE INTRODUCTION OF INCOME TAX,
WHICH GAVE US QUITE A TURN!
WE'VE SEEN THE LATE PRINCE CONSORT ON THE MAGIC
LANTERN SCREEN,
WHAT A HAPPY AND GLORIOUS,
MOST MERITORIOUS CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN!

WE'VE READ "THE DAISY CHAIN" AND "ROMANY RYE"
AND PASSIONATELY CLUNG
TO WALTER SCOTT AND EMILY BRONTE, TOO.
WE'RE RATHER CROSS THAT SO MANY BUY
THE WORKS OF CHARLOTTE YONGE
BUT NONE THE LESS – THEY DO!
WE SIMPLY WORSHIP CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
AND WE'RE MAD ABOUT TENNYSON'S "MAUD"
WE LOVE TO BE UP AN APPLE TREE
WITH MRS. HUMPHREY WARD.
FROM WILLIAM BLAKE TO KIPLING
WITH THE BROWNING'S IN BETWEEN,
WHAT AN UNSUPERSEDABLE,
WONDERFULLY READABLE CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN!

WHAT AN UNSUPERSEDABLE,
WONDERFULLY READABLE,
DRINKABLE, FEEDABLE,
THIS HAPPY BREEDABLE,
FOLLOW MY LEADABLE,
OH, YES INDEED — ABLE CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN.

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

Hyde Park is now our venue, not too far from Rotten Row —

A name not inappropriate for some that come and go
We hastily exempt, of course, this quite delightful pair
For are those not the Windermers enjoying God's good air?

(Enter LORD and LADY WINDERMERE.)

LADY W. Oh, Arthur, I find the park the most romantic place.

LORD W. Are tonight's arrangements quite complete and all the invitations sent?

LADY W. I have asked all the people I intend to ask; one more invitation and my dance card becomes a crush.

LORD W. That we must try and avoid. But there is one more invitation I would like you to send, someone I would particularly like you to ask.

LADY W. You mean Mr. Hopper, that nice Australian? Oh, yes, I have remembered to ask Mr. Hopper — the Duchess of Berwick was most insistent. Mr. Hopper shall come to my dance, and I shall wear my pearls, and it shall be the most charming dance that has ever been given. Oh, Arthur, I am so fortunate to have such a delightful birthday!

LORD W. It shall be the happiest day you have ever known. After two whole years of married life, I love you more than ever.

I KNEW THAT YOU WOULD BE MY LOVE

(Lord Windermere and Lady Windermere)

LORD W.

SUMMER SINGS ITS SONGS TO ME
THE LARK POURS RAPTURE FROM THE SKIES
AND ALL THE WORLD BELONGS TO ME
AS MORE AND MORE I REALISE
THAT LOVE WAS NEVER BLIND TO ME
HE SHOT HIS ARROW STRAIGHT AND TRUE
DESTINY WAS KIND TO ME
AND LED MY HEART TO YOU.

I KNEW THAT YOU WOULD BE MY LOVE
SO LONG, SO LONG AGO
BEFORE WE MET
THE MOMENT WAS SET
AND THE TIME DREW NEAR,
YEAR BY YEAR
I DREAMED THE SAME ENCHANTED DREAM
THAT YOU WERE DREAMING TOO,
I HAD NO DOUBT OF IT,

NEITHER HAD YOU
DEEP IN OUR HEARTS WE KNEW.

LADY W.

IN ALL THE EARLY YEARS I WANDERED THROUGH,
EACH STEP I TOOK WAS LEADING ME TO YOU
AND THEN, AND THEN, AND THEN
THERE CAME THE MOMENT WHEN
I FOUND MY VISION HAD COME TRUE.

I KNEW THAT YOU WOULD BE MY LOVE
SO LONG, SO LONG AGO.
BEFORE WE MET
THE MOMENT WAS SET,
AND THE TIME DREW NEAR,
YEAR BY YEAR.
I DREAMED THE SAME ENCHANTED DREAM
THAT YOU WERE DREAMING TOO.
I HAD NO DOUBT OF IT,
NEITHER HAD YOU,
DEEP IN OUR HEARTS WE KNEW
WE BOTH WERE DREAMING, TOO.

BOTH.

I HAD NO DOUBT OF IT,
NEITHER HAD YOU,
DEEP IN OUR HEARTS WE KNEW.

(Exit LORD and LADY WINDERMERE.

Enter MR. HOPPER followed by MR. DUMBY and MR. GRAHAM.)

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

Now, from the far antipodes, please welcome Mr. Hopper, —
His lack of British breeding *could* cause him to come a cropper
But luckily he has at hand to counsel and to guide him
The Messrs. Graham and Dumby — they're the ones who walk beside him.

MR. D. How do you do, Mr. Hopper? You have the air of someone who has lost something.

MR. H. No, Mr. Dumby, I am in the Park to take the air, that is all.

Mr. G. Fresh air should only be taken in the very smallest quantities — it is dangerous to exceed the stated dose. You are not in Australia now, you know, Mr. Hopper.

MR. D. I wish *I* were in Australia. I see Society there as infinitely gay and amusing. But, of course, I find their neckties quite, quite

shocking.

MR. H. My country has developed very rapidly, Mr. Dumby, our neckties will soon catch up with us.

MR. G. When that happens, we will all emigrate together and start new lives.

MR. D. I wonder why people always want to start new lives when they go to Australia?

MR. H. They are usually the people who have led a double life in London.

MR. G. You have been brought up to speak the truth, Mr. Hopper, and that can be a serious disadvantage in London.

MR. D. Perhaps you see too much of Agatha Carlisle. She has only just come out, and pure young girls can have a most unsettling influence on a young man

MR. G. Especially the Berwick girls; they all gobbled up young men in next to no time. Except for the eldest, of course. She was out for so long, she had to go back in again.

MR. H. I cannot believe that Lady Agatha could ever be a bad influence — she really only cares for Natural History.

MR. D. A most unsuitable subject for a young girl. Nature is seldom natural.

MR. H. Do you and Mr. Graham always mean what you say?

MR. G. I think *I* do. At least, I say whatever comes into my head with complete conviction, so it amounts to the same thing.

MR. H. I am learning so much from you and Mr. Dumby. You have taught me a great deal about things that were never even mentioned at school.

MR. D. It is far better to have a good tailor than to have a good education, as long as one comes from a good family in the first place, which I presume you do?

MR. G. What is Society like in Australia, Mr. Hopper? Who is on top down under?

MR. H. The people with brains, Mr. Graham

MR. D. What about the people with money?

MR. H. Money and brains go together in Australia — quite the opposite to England, Mr. Dumby.

MR. G. Do you come from an old Australian family, Mr. Hopper?

MR. HOPPER'S CHANTY

(Mr. Hopper, Mr. Dumby and Mr. Cecil Graham)

MR. H.

MY GRANDPA LANDED FROM A CONVICT SHIP
ON THE BEACH OF BOTANY BAY

OTHERS.

HAUL AWAY!
HOW PECULIAR PEOPLE ARE.
FANCY LANDING GRANDPAPA
ON THE BEACH OF BOTANY BAY.

MR. H.

HE DIDN'T STRIKE OIL AND HE DIDN'T STRIKE GOLD,
BUT HE LIVED TO BE VERY, VERY VERY, VERY OLD
IN A RATHER DISGUSTING WAY.

MR. G.

WHAT A CURIOUS THING TO SAY!

MR. H.

MY GRANDMA'S MEETING WITH THIS GAY YOUNG RIP
WAS ACHIEVED ON THE VERY FIRST DAY.

OTHERS.

HAUL AWAY!
HAVING TRAVELLED ALL THAT FAR,
FANCY MEETING GRANDMAMA
ON A BEACH ON THE VERY FIRST DAY!

MR. H.

SHE HAPPENED TO BE, WHEN HE LANDED THERE,
A-COMBING HER FUZZY-WUZZY, BLUE-BLACK HAIR,
AND HE SPRANG AT HER STRAIGHT AWAY.

MR. D.

STEADY, OLD MAN, FAIR PLAY!

MR. H.

THEY LAY ON THE SAND OF THAT ALIEN LAND
WHERE THE WALLABIES GAILY FRISK,
AND PLIGHTED THEIR TROTH IN A WAY THAT WAS BOTH
EFFECTIVE AND FAIRLY BRISK.

MR. G.

HE RAN AN APPALLING RISK!

MR. H.

AND THE NET RESULT OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR
YOU CAN PERFECTLY PLAINLY SEE
BY MY COLOURED SKIN AND MY KINKY HAIR
THAT I'M HALF ABORIGINEE.

MR. D.

WHAT A SOCIALLY REGRETTABLE,
UN-DEBRETTABLE
MADDENING THING TO BE!

MR. H.

IT'S A SOLEMN THOUGHT FOR A SON AND HEIR
TO KNOW WHO HIS FORBEARS REALLY WERE
AND WHETHER OR NOT YOU KNOW OR CARE,
BEFORE MY DAD WAS A MILLIONAIRE
WE LIVED . . .

OTHERS.

WHERE?

MR. H.

IN OUR FAMILY TREE!

OTHERS.

HAUL AWAY! HAUL AWAY!
MY GOODNESS GRACIOUS ME!

MR. H.

I CAN SEE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS NOW,
SWINGING ABOUT FROM BOUGH TO BOUGH
ON THE VERY, VERY TOP . . .

OTHERS.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, STOP!

MR. H.

THE VERY, VERY TOP . . .

OTHERS.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, STOP!

MR. H.

THE VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY
TOP OF OUR FAMILY TREE!

(Exit.)

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

Dumbfounded, Mr. Dumby — followed close by Mr. Graham —
Retires to ponder tales of strange antipodean mayhem,
But notice Mr. Hopper as he hugs himself with glee —
Could he have told a tale as tall as that fabled family tree?

(*Reenter LORD and LADY WINDERMERE.*)

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

The Windermers return and something's wrong without a doubt,
Something he's keeping to himself he's not too sure about.

LORD W. I don't like leaving you alone, but I must, just for a little while, it is most important.

LADY W. What have you to do that is so tremendously important?

LORD W. Aha! That is a secret.

LADY W. Tell me what it is — please tell me.

LORD W. You must not imagine, just because it is your birthday, that I am going to let you have your own way over everything. You are pampered enough as it is.

LADY W. If you are not back in a quarter of an hour, I shall run away, and you will have to search all London for me.

LORD W. I should trace you without the slightest difficulty.

LADY W. How?

LORD W. By asking the nearest policeman if he had seen a mad lady in a very becoming hat rushing like the wind. And now, no more nonsense. Sit down like a good girl and wait for me. It is a wife's duty to wait for her husband indefinitely.

LADY W. What arrogance!

LORD W. If anyone should speak to you, repel him with the utmost scorn.

LADY W. I cannot repel the Duchess with the utmost scorn. I arranged to meet her here. You heard me make the arrangement.

LORD W. That was yesterday, she may easily forget.

LADY W. The Duchess never forgets anything. In any case Wilkinson is over there with the carriage. Wilkinson shall be my chaperone and my guardian angel. It is such a lovely day. I want to enjoy every moment of it.

SWEET DAY

(*Lady Windermere*)

LADY W.

SWEET DAY, REMAIN FOR ME

CLEAR IN MY MEMORY.

WHEN MY HEART'S CHILLED BY THE SNOWS OF

DECEMBER,

LET ME REMEMBER, LET ME REMEMBER.

SWEET DAY, THAT SEEMS TO BE

MADE UP OF DREAMS FOR ME,
BUT WHEN THEY'RE FADED AWAY,
LET ME REMEMBER TODAY

LORD W. Now I must go.

LADY W. Is it a nice surprise? Your silly old secret?

LORD W. My lips are sealed — *au revoir*.

(Exit LORD WINDERMERE.)

LADY W.

NO MELANCHOLY DREAM,
NO SHADOW ON MY HEART,
NO TRANSITORY GLEAM OF DANGER IN THE SKY;
WHY SHOULD SUCH HAPPINESS FILL ME TODAY?
WHY MUST LOVELINESS FADE AWAY?
WHY MUST THESE MAGIC MOMENTS FLY,
JUST AS THE LEAVES OF SUMMER FALL AND DIE?

NO MELANCHOLY DREAM,
NO SHADOW ON MY HEART,
EXCEPTING THAT I KNOW PERFECTION CANNOT STAY.
THIS HAS NOT BEEN IN VAIN,
THIS I WILL NOT BETRAY,
WHEN SUMMER COMES AGAIN,
I SHALL REMEMBER . . .

SWEET DAY, REMAIN FOR ME
CLEAR IN MY MEMORY.
WHEN MY HEART'S CHILLED BY THE SNOWS OF
DECEMBER
LET ME REMEMBER, LET ME REMEMBER,
SWEET DAY THAT SEEMS TO BE
MADE UP OF DREAMS FOR ME.
BUT WHEN THEY'RE FADED AWAY,
LET ME REMEMBER TODAY.

DUCHESS (CHORUS).

No story worth the name can start so sweet and end as sweetly,
Unless along the way someone behaves quite indiscreetly.
Each Eden has its serpent, sent to try the lady's honour
Our snake is called Lord Darlington, who now is close upon her . . .

(Enter LORD DARLINGTON.)

LORD D. How do you do, Lady Windermere?

LADY W. How do you do, Lord Darlington? I think I will not shake hands with you — you annoyed me last night at the Foreign Office.

LORD D. I am quite miserable. You must tell me what I did.

LADY W. You paid me the most elaborate compliments the whole evening.

LORD D. Nowadays we are so hard up that the only pleasant things to pay *are* compliments.

LADY W. Why does a man think he is pleasing a woman by telling her a whole heap of things he doesn't mean?

LORD D. But I *do* mean them, Lady Windermere.

LADY W. I hope not. I should be sorry to quarrel with you, Lord Darlington. You are better than most men, but you pretend to be worse.

LORD D. We all have our little vanities.

LADY W. Don't you want the world to take you seriously, then, Lord Darlington?

LORD D. Who are the people the world takes seriously? All the dull people one can think of, from the Bishops down to the bores. But I should like *you* to take me seriously, Lady Windermere, you more than anyone else in life.

LADY W. Why — why me?

LORD D. Because I think we might be great friends, and you may want a friend some day.

LADY W. I think we are very good friends already, Lord Darlington, and we can always remain so, as long as you don't spoil it by saying extravagant, silly things to me. My mother died when I was a child and my Aunt Julia brought me up. She was stern to me, but she taught me what the world is forgetting — the difference that there is between what is right and what is wrong.

LORD D. You allow no compromise?

LADY W. None.

LORD D. Do you think then — of course I am only putting an imaginary instance — do you think that in the case of a young married couple, say about two years married, if the husband suddenly becomes the intimate friend of a woman of — well, more than doubtful character — is always calling upon her, lunching with her, and probably paying her bills — do you think that the wife should not console herself?

LADY W. Because the husband is vile — should the wife be vile also?

LORD D. Vileness is a terrible word, Lady Windermere.

LADY W. Vileness is a terrible thing, Lord Darlington.

LORD D. I am afraid that good people do a great deal of harm in

the world, by making badness of such extraordinary importance. It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious. I take the side of the charming, and you, Lady Windermere, cannot help belonging to them.

LADY W. I am sorry to say that I enjoy listening to your advice, Lord Darlington. Of course, I would never dream of taking it.

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

(Lord Darlington)

LORD D.

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS
KEEP ALL YOUR ILLUSIONS ENSHRINED
BUT LADY WINDERMERE,
DEAR LADY WINDERMERE,
DO NOT FORGET TO BE KIND.

THE LILIES AND LANGOURS OF VIRTUE,
THOUGH RATHER OPPRESSIVELY 'NICE',
AS SWINBURNE IMPLIED,
CAN BE ELBOWED ASIDE
BY THE ROSES AND RAPTURES OF VICE.

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS,
BUT IN THE STERN LIFE THAT YOU LIVE,
LADY WINDERMERE,
DEAR LADY WINDERMERE,
DO NOT FORGET TO FORGIVE.

THOSE OTHER LESS FORTUNATE MORTALS
WHO FIND, TO THEIR INFINITE PAIN,
THAT LOVE WHEN UNJUST
IS MORE CRUEL THAN LUST.
(FORGIVE ME FOR QUOTING AGAIN.)

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS,
SECURE AND REMOTE AND APART
BUT LADY WINDERMERE,
DEAR LADY WINDERMERE,
KEEP A COMPASSIONATE HEART.

LADY W. I am afraid you are going to annoy me again.

LORD D. What a fascinating Puritan you are.

LADY W. The adjective was unnecessary, Lord Darlington.

LORD D. I can resist everything except temptation.

LADY W. You have the modern affectation of weakness.

LORD D. It is *only* an affectation, Lady Windermere.

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

Sincerely insincere, a fount of gossip she calls fact,
The Lady we're about to meet is not known for her tact.
Her words are sugar-coated but they leave an after-taste —
A bit like jewels that glitter, though they turn out to be paste.
She really sounds appalling. Why, whoever can she be?
You don't suppose this cankered rose could possibly be — *me?*

(SHE steps into her role as the DUCHESS OF BERWICK and is joined by LADY AGATHA CARLISLE. They move arm in arm to meet the others.)

BERWICK. Margaret, dear, I am delighted to see you. You remember Agatha, don't you? How do you do, Lord Darlington? I won't let you know my daughter, you are far too wicked.

LORD D. Don't say that, Duchess. Why, there are lots of people who say I have never done a wicked thing in my life. Of course, they only say it behind my back.

BERWICK. Isn't he dreadful?

LADY W. Lord Darlington is trivial

LORD D. Ah, don't say that, Lady Windermere.

LADY W. Why do you talk so trivially about life, then?

LORD D. Because I think life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about.

BERWICK. What *does* he mean? Do, as a concession to my poor wits, just explain to me what you really mean.

LORD D. I think I had better not, Duchess. Nowadays to be intelligible is to be found out. Goodbye. And now, Lady Windermere, goodbye. I may come tonight, mayn't I? Do let me come.

LADY W. Certainly. But you are not to say foolish, insincere things to people.

LORD D. Ah, you are beginning to reform me. It is a dangerous thing to reform anyone, Lady Windermere. Goodbye.

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS – Reprise

(Lord Darlington)

LORD D.

STAY ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS,
SECURE AND REMOTE AND APART

BUT LADY WINDERMERE,
DEAR LADY WINDERMERE,
KEEP A COMPASSIONATE HEART.

(Exit LORD DARLINGTON.)

BERWICK. What a charming, wicked creature. But then all the Irish are like that. Instinct has taught them wickedness, but the English have taught them charm. I like him so much, but I'm quite delighted he's gone. How sweet you're looking. Where do you get your gowns? And now I must tell you how very sorry I am for you, dear Margaret. Agatha, darling!

AGATHA. Yes, Mama?

BERWICK. Why don't you go and look at that most unusual bush over there?

AGATHA. Yes, Mama.

BERWICK. Dear girl. So fond of Natural History. But, Margaret, I really *am* sorry for you.

(SHE now steps out of her role and reverts to being the CHORUS.)

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

When a Duchess says she's "sorry" — that's the time when one should worry.

The likelihood is what you hear will leave you in a flurry
Lord Windermere — the Duchess says is known to see a lady
Whose mysterious past is — so they say — more than a little shady.

(SHE reverts to being the DUCHESS OF BERWICK.)

BERWICK. This Mrs. Erlynne creature. I really don't know what Windermere can be thinking of? I'm told she is quite fascinating. Well, such women have to be, don't they? But when he has someone like you at home ... But, you know, these things pass. They soon lose interest and send our men back to us — almost as good as new. Then we pack them off to Aix or Bad Homburg or somewhere for a cure and the circle is complete. Oh, my dear, we've all been through it ...

LADY W. It is very good of you, Duchess, to tell me all this. But I cannot believe that my husband is untrue to me.

BERWICK. Pretty child! I was like that once ... Margaret, dear, you're not going to cry?

LADY W. You needn't be afraid, Duchess. I never cry.

BERWICK. That's quite right, dear. Crying is the refuge of plain women and the ruin of pretty ones. Agatha, darling, you have looked

at the sunset quite long enough.

AGATHA. Yes, Mama.

(BERWICK and AGATHA exit.)

SWEET DAY – Reprise

(Lady Windermere)

LADY W.

THIS MELANCHOLY DREAM,
THIS SHADOW ON MY HEART,
THIS BITTER DISILLUSION THAT HAS BLOWN AWAY
ALL THAT I HELD SO TRUE,
LOVE THAT WAS HERE TO STAY,
ALL I BELIEVED I KNEW,
HAS NOW BETRAYED ME.

SWEET DAY, HOW BRIEF YOU WERE,
SWEET DAY, WHAT GRIEF YOU BEAR,
NEVER AGAIN CAN I SAY
LET ME REMEMBER TODAY.

(Lights fade.)

OH, WHAT A CENTURY – QUARTETTE

(Singers as before)

CHORUS.

WE'VE PRAISED THE WORKS OF FREDERICK LEIGHTON
AND HURLED
ABUSE AT HOLMAN HUNT,
FOR HE INVITES PRE-RAPHAELITES TO TEA.
AND IF THEY HUNG "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"
COMPLETELY BACK TO FRONT,
WE SHOULDN'T EVEN SEE.
WE ONLY CARE TO GO SHOOTIN' AND HUNTIN'
ON CHESTNUTS AND FILLIES AND ROANS,
WE'RE SICK TO DEATH OF WATTS-DUNTON
AND WE'D LIKE TO BURN BURNE-JONES.
WE MUCH PREFER THE PICTURES IN A WEEKLY MAGAZINE.
WHAT A ROYAL ACADEMY
TOO ALMA-TADEMY

PRACTICAL, MYSTICAL
OVER-ARTISTICAL
HIGHLY PICTORIAL
ALBERT MEMORIAL
CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN.

WE'VE MADE THE MOST EXHAUSTING SCRUTINY
OF THE CAUSE OF ENGLAND'S MIGHT,
CONVINCED THAT EVERY BRITISHER'S BORN TO BOSS.
WE THOUGHT THE INDIAN MUTINY
WAS EXTREMELY IMPOLITE -
IT MADE US FEEL QUITE CROSS.
WE THEN EMBARKED ON A WAR IN CRIMEA
WITH EGOS A LITTLE ENLARGED
AND CHEERED THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE,
NO MATTER WHY THEY CHARGED
AND THEN THOSE SWINE IN CHINA MADE A MOST
DISGUSTING SCENE
WHAT AN UNECONOMICAL,
TRAGICAL, COMICAL
CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN.

WHAT A QUITE IRRESISTIBLE,
OLIVER TWISTABLE,
WOMAN IN WHITE-ABLE,
WUTHERING HEIGHTABLE,
MILL ON THE FLOSSIBLE,
FRANKLY IMPOSSIBLE
CENTURY THIS HAS BEEN

(Fade.)

Scene 2

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

Once safely home at Carlton House milady wastes no time
And soon finds proof quite positive of an errant husband's crime.
A cheque book speaks as loudly as a Vicar saying grace
The pages turn. Each entry tells a tale that she must face . . .

LADY W. *(Turning the pages of a cheque book.)* Mrs. Erlynne -
£600. Mrs. Erlynne - £700. Mrs. Erlynne - £400. Then it's true. How

horrible!

(*LORD WINDERMERE enters. She hides the cheque book behind her back.*)

LORD W. Now, my love — now for the secret.

LADY W. Secret?

LORD W. The surprise secret. Close your eyes. What is the matter?

LADY W. Nothing. Nothing at all.

LORD W. My darling, your present.

(*He places the fan-case in her lap.*)

LADY W. What is it?

LORD W. Open the case.

LADY W. Oh . . . a fan.

LORD W. Do you like it?

LADY W. Yes ... yes, it's lovely

LORD W. Look, it has your name on it.

LADY W. Yes, it has my name on it. Thank you, Arthur, it ... it's a charming surprise.

LORD W. By the way, darling, there is someone else whom I would most particularly like you to invite this evening. She only arrived in London recently; a most interesting woman.

LADY W. What is her name?

LORD W. Mrs. Erlynne.

LADY W. Then it is true.

LORD W. What do you mean?

LADY W. Someone was kind enough to tell me of your daily visits to Curzon Street, your mad infatuation, and I see from your cheque book the monstrous sums of money you squander on this infamous woman. (*She produces cheque book.*) You think it is wrong that you are found out, do you?

LORD W. I think it is wrong that a wife should spy on her husband.

LADY W. I did not spy on you. I never knew of this woman's existence 'til an hour ago.

LORD W. Stop, Margaret. Don't talk like that of Mrs. Erlynne.

LADY W. Who is this woman, then? Why do you take a house for her? Is there a Mr. Erlynne?

LORD W. Her husband died many years ago. She is alone in the world. Margaret, you could save her; she wants you to help her.

LADY W. Me?

LORD W. Yes, you.

LADY W. How impertinent of her.

LORD W. Margaret, I still ask you to send Mrs. Erlynne an invitation for our party tonight. She will make no further effort to know you. Won't you help a woman who is trying to get back?

LADY W. No, Arthur. You fancy because I have no father or mother that I am alone in the world, and that you can treat me as you choose. You are wrong. I have friends, many friends.

LORD W. Margaret, you are talking foolishly, recklessly. I won't argue with you, but I insist upon your asking Mrs. Erlynne tonight.

LADY W. I shall do nothing of the kind.

LORD W. You refuse?

LADY W. Absolutely.

LORD W. Ah, Margaret, do this for my sake; it is her last chance.

LADY W. What has that to do with me?

LORD W. How hard good women are.

LADY W. How weak bad men are.

LORD W. *Please* send her a card.

LADY W. Nothing in the whole world would induce me.

LORD W. Then *I* will.

LADY W. You are going to invite this woman?

LORD W. Yes.

LADY W. Arthur, if Mrs. Erlynne comes to my house I shall insult her.

LORD W. If you did such a thing, there's not a woman in London who wouldn't pity you.

LADY W. There is not a good woman in London who would not applaud me. You have given me this fan; if that woman crosses my threshold I shall strike her across the face with it.

LORD W. Margaret, you couldn't do such a thing.

LADY W. You don't know me.

LORD W. You will ruin us!

LADY W. *Us!* From this moment my life is separate from yours. But if you wish to avoid a public scandal you will not invite this woman to my house. I forbid you to.

LORD W. Have you taken leave of your senses, Margaret? You are behaving like a spoiled child. I have, as I said, a particular reason for asking you to receive Mrs. Erlynne.

LADY W. Then I shall do exactly as I have said. You leave me no choice.

(She exits.)

LORD W. *(Calling after her.)* Margaret! Margaret! *(A pause.)* What shall I do? I cannot tell her who this woman really is. The

shame would kill her.

(LORD WINDERMERE exits.

CHORUS enters and sings.)

CRÈME DE LA CRÈME

*(Lady Plymdale, Lady Stutfield, Lady Jedburgh,
Mr. Dumby, Mr. Cecil Graham and Lord Augustus)*

CHORUS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
PILLARS OF LONDON SOCIETY
NEVER IN DOUBT THAT OUR BLOOD IS IMPECCABLY BLUE
ANY SUMMERY AFTERNOON
IN THE MONTHS OF JULY OR JUNE
FROM THE BRIDGE ON THE SERPENTINE TO ROTTEN ROW,
BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS WE GO –
SO
ARISTOCRATIC'LLY FREE FROM FINANCIAL ANXIETY
BLANDLY AWARE WE BELONG TO THE PRIVILEGED FEW
THOUGH THE SOCIALISTS FUME AND FIGHT,
TO OUR HOUSES WE DON'T INVITE
ANYBODY WHO DARES TO CLAIM
THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME
ISN'T QUITE, QUITE RIGHT!

NATURAL LAWS
KINDLY PROVIDE FOR US
AND SET ASIDE FOR US
ALL THE TOP DRAWERS.
SUCH METAPHORS,
THOUGH THEY ARE FICTION,
UPHOLD OUR CONVICTION
THAT, BORN TO APPLAUSE,
TRUE TO THE OLD ROUTINE,
SEV'RAL GOLD SPOONS WERE SEEN
CLENCHED IN OUR JAWS,
WHICH WAS BECAUSE
NATURE SELECTED US,
PERFECTED US,
EXPECTED US — TO BE
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
BORN TO ETERNAL PROSPERITY,
FIRMLY CONVINCED OUR POSITION IS REALLY UNIQUE

WE BELIEVE IN THE STATUS QUO,
 BECAUSE DEEP IN OUR HEARTS WE KNOW
 THAT THOUGH SOCIAL REFORMERS TRY TO QUEER OUR
 PITCH,
 GOD'S ON THE SIDE OF THE RICH,
 WHICH
 LEADS US TO MENTION WITH MORE THAN A TOUCH OF
 ASPERITY
 HEAVEN CAN WAIT IF IT'S ONLY CONCERNED WITH THE
 MEEK.
 IF THE ANGELS ARE REALLY BRIGHT,
 AND DECIDE ON A PLEBISCITE,
 THEY'LL DISCOVER THAT, PRAISE OR BLAME,
 THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME
 HAS BEEN QUITE — QUITE — RIGHT!

(Exit.)

Scene 3

(All the COMPANY join them on stage, except MR. HOPPER and MRS. ERLYNNE. Indistinguishable chatter.)

LADY WINDERMERE greets the last of them and it is clear she has been receiving her guests as they enter.)

DUCHESS/CHORUS.

The fateful evening's here. Now watch as *tout le monde* will pay
 Their usual verbal pleasantries — rarely meaning what they say.

MR. D. Good evening, Lady Jedburgh, I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

LADY J. I suppose so, Mr. Dumby. It's been a delightful season, hasn't it?

MR. D. Quite delightful! Good evening, Duchess. I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

BERWICK. I suppose so, Mr. Dumby. It has been a very dull season, hasn't it?

MR. D. Dreadfully dull! Dreadfully dull!

LADY S. Good evening, Mr. Dumby. I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

MR. D. What an interesting question! I hadn't thought of that.

PARKER. Mr. Hopper.

(Enter MR. HOPPER.)

MR. H. How do you do, Lady Windermere? How do you do, Duchess? (*Bows to LADY AGATHA.*)

BERWICK. Dear Mr. Hopper, how nice of you to come so early. We all know how you are run after in London.

MR. H. Capital place, London! They are not nearly so exclusive in London as they are in Sydney.

BERWICK. Do you know, Mr. Hopper, dear Agatha and I are so much interested in Australia. It is a very *young* country, isn't it?

MR. H. Wasn't it made at the same time as the others, Duchess?

BERWICK. How clever you are, Mr. Hopper. You have a cleverness quite your own. Now, I mustn't keep you.

MR. H. But I should like to dance with Lady Agatha, Duchess.

BERWICK. Well, I *hope* she has a dance left. Have you a dance left, Agatha?

LADY A. Yes, mamma.

BERWICK. The *next* one?

LADY A. Yes, mamma.

MR. H. May I have the pleasure?

(*LADY AGATHA bows.*)

BERWICK. Mind you take great care of my little chatterbox, Mr. Hopper.

(*MR. HOPPER and the DUCHESS sing . . .*)

MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE

(*Mr. Hopper and Duchess of Berwick*)

MR. H.

MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF A DANCE, LADY AGATHA?

ARE YOU FREE BY ANY CHANCE, LADY AGATHA

TO OBLIGE ME WITH A — ONE, TWO, THREE, ONE, TWO

THREE,

ONE, TWO, THREE-FOLD MIRACLE, MAGICAL, LYRICAL,

WALTZ, LADY AGATHA?

I MAY HAVE FAULTS, LADY AGATHA,

BUT I CAN DANCE ALL NIGHT AND NEVER TIRE,

EVERY NOTE OF MUSIC SETS MY HEART ON FIRE

TO GO, LADY AGATHA,

PLEASE DON'T SAY NO.

BERWICK.

REALLY, MR. HOPPER
THIS IS REALLY MOST IMPROPER.
YOU MUST LEARN TO BE MORE DISCREET.
FRANKLY, MR. HOPPER
YOU WILL COME A SOCIAL CROPPER
IF YOU TRY TO SWEEP DEBUTANTES OFF THEIR FEET.

MR. H.

I CAN'T LOOK AT OTHER DEBUTANTES, LADY AGATHA,
YOU'RE THE HEART OF MY ROMANCE, LADY AGATHA.
FOR TO ME YOU'RE MORE THAN — ONE TWO THREE, ONE
TWO THREE,
ONE TWO THREE TIMES PRETTIER, LOVELIER, WITTIER,
SO, LADY AGATHA,
COME WEAL, COME WOE, LADY AGATHA,
LET'S LET THE MUSIC OF THE VIOLINS
HOLD US BOTH TOGETHER TILL THE DAWN BEGINS
TO GLOW, LADY AGATHA,
PLEASE DON'T SAY NO.

BERWICK.

REALLY, MR. HOPPER,
THIS IS REALLY MOST IMPROPER.
YOUR COLONIAL WAYS ARE QUAIN'T.
FRANKLY, MR. HOPPER,
YOU WILL COME A SOCIAL CROPPER
IF YOU CANNOT LEARN, CANDIDLY, SELF-RESTRAINT

MR. H.

NONETHELESS I BEG YOU FOR A DANCE, LADY AGATHA,
I AM TRULY IN A TRANCE, LADY AGATHA,
PLEASE DON'T SAY NO.

(LADY AGATHA and MR. HOPPER dance and then pass into the ballroom. DUCHESS OF BERWICK follows.)

LORD AUGUSTUS. *(Coming up to LORD WINDERMERE.)* I want to speak to you particularly, Windermere. Who is Mrs. Erlynne? Where does she come from?

LORD W. Mrs. Erlynne? My dear Augustus, I never knew of her existence till six months ago.

LORD A. You have seen a good deal of her since then.

LORD W. *(Coldly.)* No explanations are necessary about my friendship with Mrs. Erlynne.

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