Act 2 Notes

Reputations: Starts and ends with conversation on reputations.

LC does not care about who someone is as a person but solely their reputation: “It has taught me that a person who has once been guilty of a dishonest and dishonourable action may be guilty of it a second time, and should be shunned.” (Line 736)

Marriage:

* At the start, RC justifying why he “couldn’t tell [his] wife. (Line 9 page 190)

“Why do you place us on monstrous pedestals?” (Line 817 page 211) and “I would have lost the love of the one woman in the world I worship” creating this idealistic image of what they want each other to be.

* Last speech: he is contradicting himself as he is blaming women for putting men on “high pedestals” and “women think that they are making ideals of men” (line 827) saying that women expect too much – an ideal husband that gave him no choice but to lie.
* (line 610) Lady Markby – “But modern women understand everything, I am told”
* Mrs Cheveley – “except their husbands. That is the one thing the modern woman never understands.”
* Society affects relationships – Sir Robert Chiltern is a political man with a reputation to think about which also causes him to prevent any scandal between him and his wife. Society/ political seriousness that causes him to be so serious with his wife.

Femininity

Mabel enters “in the most ravishing frock” (page 200) – changes the mood. To Gertrude Mabel says “pray be as trivial as you can” and Lord Goring mocking Gertrude about bonnets and being sexist (pg 197).

Politics: reasons why keeping his secret is so important

* Political and personal life blended into one. (Page 205-6). Cheveley: “I have never read a Blue Book. I prefer books… in yellow covers (French novels)” (Line 641)
* Markby: “Really, this horrid House of Commons quite ruins our husbands for us.”

Tone: Start is serious with Robert and Goring but as soon as Lady Chiltern enters in a “walking dress”, the tension is kind of released, and when Mabel enters in a “ravishing frock”, the women talks about trivial, unimportant things when compared to Robert and Goring’s conversation. Then it becomes very intense at the end when the ladies are talking. 🡪 Tone is changing constantly – emotional changes in Robert’s mind.

With a surprise: “Lord Goring, you are talking quite seriously. I don’t think I ever heard you talk seriously before.” 🡪 it is not a woman thing to be serious.

Allusions

* Markby🡪 LC🡪 Mabel (evolution of attitudes towards marriage)

Mabel: “Well, Tommy has proposed to me again” – marriage lost its significance.

Epigrams

* “Women have a wonderful instinct about things. They can discover everything except the obvious” – LC pg 190
* “Wonderful woman, Lady Markby, isn’t she? Talks more and says less than anybody I ever met” – Cheveley pg 208.

 Melodramatic Speeches

* Sir Robert pg 192-3, 211 (he put himself on a “pedestal” but blaming women for it)
* Mabel pg 201
* LC pg 210 (“a thing, pure, noble, honest, without stain” – inhumane)

Symbols

* **Mabel’s frock** represents women unable to be serious.
* The **blue** (government’s report) and **yellow book** (romance/emotional) – show different interests (politics/serious and romance/emotional).