

OSCAR WILDE

**THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING EARNEST**



OSCAR WILDE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST Plays

ENGLISH

SELECTED PLAYS

Комментарии и словарь

Е. Г. Тугоonen

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО

КАРО

Санкт-Петербург

УДК 372.8
ББК 81.2 Англ-93
У 12

Уайльд О.

У 12 Как важно быть серьезным. Пьесы: Книга для чтения на английском языке. — СПб.: КАРО, 2012. — 192 с. — (Серия «Selected Plays»).

ISBN 978-5-9925-0776-8.

Оскар Уайльд (1854–1900) — английский писатель, досконально изучивший все подводные камни семейной жизни.

В двух самых известных своих пьесах («Веер леди Уиндермир» и «Как важно быть серьезным») он предоставляет читателю право самому ответить на животрепещущие вопросы: следует ли безоговорочно доверять своей второй половине? Надо ли идеализировать спутника жизни или лучше принимать его со всеми недостатками? Прощать за ошибки, совершенные в прошлом, или безжалостно осуждать, сокрушая то, что строилось годами?

Красивый язык, парадоксальные, но и логичные высказывания, мягкий юмор, запутанность положений заставят читателя вновь и вновь обращаться к этой книге, а комментарии и словарь помогут ему в полной мере оценить прелесть и афористичность языка.

В книге приводится неадаптированный текст на языке оригинала с комментариями и словарем.

УДК 372.8
ББК 81.2 Англ-93

ISBN 978-5-9925-0776-8

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Lady Windermere's Fan

A PLAY ABOUT A GOOD WOMAN



THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

LORD WINDERMERE
LORD DARLINGTON
LORD AUGUSTUS LORTON
MR. DUMBY
MR. CECIL GRAHAM
MR. HOPPER
PARKER, BUTLER
LADY WINDERMERE
THE DUCHESS OF BERWICK
LADY AGATHA CARLISLE
LADY PLYMDALE
LADY STUTFIELD
LADY JEDBURGH
MRS. COWPER-COWPER
MRS. ERLYNNE
ROSALIE, Maid

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. Morning-room in Lord Windermere's house
ACT II. Drawing-room in Lord Windermere's house
ACT III. Lord Darlington's rooms
ACT IV. Same as Act I
TIME: The Present
PLACE: London

The action of the play takes place within twenty-four hours, beginning on a Tuesday afternoon at five o'clock, and ending the next day at 1.30 p.m.

ACT ONE

SCENE

Morning-room of Lord Windermere's house in Carlton House Terrace. Doors C. and R. Bureau with books and papers R. Sofa with small tea-table L. Window opening on to terrace L. Table R. Lady Windermere is at table R., arranging roses in a blue bowl.

Enter PARKER.

PARKER. Is your ladyship at home this afternoon?

LADY WINDERMERE. Yes — who has called?

PARKER. Lord Darlington, my lady.

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Hesitates for a moment.*] Show him up — and I'm at home to any one who calls.

PARKER. Yes, my lady.

Exit C.

LADY WINDERMERE. It's best for me to see him before to-night. I'm glad he's come.

Enter PARKER C.

PARKER. Lord Darlington.

Enter LORD DARLINGTON C.

Exit PARKER.

LORD DARLINGTON. How do you do, Lady Windermere?

LADY WINDERMERE. How do you do, Lord Darlington?
No, I can't shake hands with you. My hands are all wet

with these roses. Aren't they lovely? They came up from Selby this morning.

LORD DARLINGTON. They are quite perfect. [*Sees a fan lying on the table.*] And what a wonderful fan! May I look at it?

LADY WINDERMERE. Do. Pretty, isn't it! It's got my name on it, and everything. I have only just seen it myself. It's my husband's birthday present to me. You know to-day is my birthday?

LORD DARLINGTON. No?¹ Is it really?

LADY WINDERMERE. Yes, I'm of age to-day². Quite an important day in my life, isn't it? That is why I am giving this party to-night. Do sit down. [*Still arranging flowers.*]

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Sitting down.*] I wish I had known it was your birthday, Lady Windermere. I would have covered the whole street in front of your house with flowers for you to walk on. They are made for you. [*A short pause.*]

LADY WINDERMERE. Lord Darlington, you annoyed me last night at the Foreign Office. I am afraid you are going to annoy me again.

LORD DARLINGTON. I, Lady Windermere?

Enter Parker and Footman C., with tray and tea things.

LADY WINDERMERE. Put it there, Parker. That will do. [*Wipes her hands with her pocket-handkerchief, goes to tea-table, and sits down.*] Won't you come over, Lord Darlington?

Exit PARKER C.

¹ No? — (зд.) Да что вы!

² I'm of age to-day. — (разг.) сегодня мне исполняется 21 год

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Takes chair and goes across L.C.*] I am quite miserable, Lady Windermere. You must tell me what I did. [*Sits down at table L.*]

LADY WINDERMERE. Well, you kept paying me elaborate compliments the whole evening.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Smiling.*] Ah, nowadays we are all of us so hard up, that the only pleasant things to pay are compliments. They're the only things we can pay.

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Shaking her head.*] No, I am talking very seriously. You mustn't laugh, I am quite serious. I don't like compliments, and I don't see why a man should think he is pleasing a woman enormously when he says to her a whole heap of things that he doesn't mean.

LORD DARLINGTON. Ah, but I did mean them. [*Takes tea which she offers him.*]

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Gravely.*] I hope not. I should be sorry to have to quarrel with you, Lord Darlington. I like you very much, you know that. But I shouldn't like you at all if I thought you were what most other men are. Believe me, you are better than most other men, and I sometimes think you pretend to be worse.

LORD DARLINGTON. We all have our little vanities, Lady Windermere.

LADY WINDERMERE. Why do you make that your special one?¹ [*Still seated at table L.*]

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Still seated L.C.*] Oh, nowadays so many conceited people go about Society pretending to be good, that I think it shows rather a sweet and modest

¹ Why do you make that your special one? — (зд.) Почему вы считаете это своим достоинством?

disposition to pretend to be bad. Besides, there is this to be said. If you pretend to be good, the world takes you very seriously. If you pretend to be bad, it doesn't. Such is the astounding stupidity of optimism.

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

LORD DARLINGTON. No, not the world. Who are the people the world takes seriously? All the dull people one can think of, from the Bishops down to the bores. I should like you to take me very seriously, Lady Windermere, you more than any one else in life.

LADY WINDERMERE. Why — why me?

LORD DARLINGTON. [*After a slight hesitation.*] Because I think we might be great friends. Let us be great friends. You may want a friend some day.

LADY WINDERMERE. Why do you say that?

LORD DARLINGTON. Oh! — we all want friends at times.

LADY WINDERMERE. I think we're very good friends already, Lord Darlington. We can always remain so as long as you don't —

LORD DARLINGTON. Don't what?

LADY WINDERMERE. Don't spoil it by saying extravagant silly things to me. You think I am a Puritan, I suppose? Well, I have something of the Puritan in me. I was brought up like that. I am glad of it. My mother died when I was a mere child. I lived always with Lady Julia, my father's elder sister, you know. 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. She allowed of no compromise. I allow of none.

LORD DARLINGTON. My dear Lady Windermere!

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Leaning back on the sofa.*] You look on me as being behind the age. — Well, I am! I should be sorry to be on the same level as an age like this.

LORD DARLINGTON. You think the age very bad?

LADY WINDERMERE. Yes. Nowadays people seem to look on life as a speculation. It is not a speculation. It is a sacrament. Its ideal is Love. Its purification is sacrifice.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Smiling.*] Oh, anything is better than being sacrificed!

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Leaning forward.*] Don't say that.

LORD DARLINGTON. I do say it. I feel it — I know it.

Enter PARKER C.

PARKER. The men want to know if they are to put the carpets on the terrace for to-night, my lady?

LADY WINDERMERE. You don't think it will rain, Lord Darlington, do you?

LORD DARLINGTON. I won't hear of its raining on your birthday!

LADY WINDERMERE. Tell them to do it at once, Parker.

Exit PARKER C.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Still seated.*] 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 WINDERMERE. [*Frowning.*] Console herself?

LORD DARLINGTON. Yes, I think she should — I think she has the right.

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

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

LADY WINDERMERE. It is a terrible thing, Lord Darlington.

LORD DARLINGTON. Do you know I am afraid that good people do a great deal of harm in this world. Certainly the greatest harm they do is that they make 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, can't help belonging to them.

LADY WINDERMERE. Now, Lord Darlington. [*Rising and crossing R., front of him.*] Don't stir¹, I am merely going to finish my flowers. [*Goes to table R.C.*]

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Rising and moving chair.*] And I must say I think you are very hard on modern life, Lady Windermere. Of course there is much against it, I admit. Most women, for instance, nowadays, are rather mercenary.

LADY WINDERMERE. Don't talk about such people.

LORD DARLINGTON. Well then, setting aside mercenary people, who, of course, are dreadful, do you think seriously that women who have committed what the world calls a fault should never be forgiven?

¹ Don't stir — (зд.) Не надо, не вставайте

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Standing at table.*] I think they should never be forgiven.

LORD DARLINGTON. And men? Do you think that there should be the same laws for men as there are for women?

LADY WINDERMERE. Certainly!

LORD DARLINGTON. I think life too complex a thing to be settled by these hard and fast rules.

LADY WINDERMERE. If we had 'these hard and fast rules,' we should find life much more simple.

LORD DARLINGTON. You allow of no exceptions?

LADY WINDERMERE. None!

LORD DARLINGTON. Ah, what a fascinating Puritan you are, Lady Windermere!

LADY WINDERMERE. The adjective was unnecessary, Lord Darlington.

LORD DARLINGTON. I couldn't help it. I can resist everything except temptation.

LADY WINDERMERE. You have the modern affectation of weakness.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Looking at her.*] It's only an affectation, Lady Windermere.

Enter PARKER C.

PARKER. The Duchess of Berwick and Lady Agatha Carlisle.

Enter the DUCHESS OF BERWICK and LADY AGATHA CARLISLE C.

Exit PARKER C.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. [*Coming down C., and shaking hands.*] Dear Margaret, I am so pleased to see you. You

remember Agatha, don't you? [*Crossing L.C.*] How do you do, Lord Darlington? I won't let you know my daughter, you are far too wicked.

LORD DARLINGTON. Don't say that, Duchess. As a wicked man I am a complete failure. Why, there are lots of people who say I have never really done anything wrong in the whole course of my life. Of course they only say it behind my back.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Isn't he dreadful? Agatha, this is Lord Darlington. Mind you don't believe a word he says. [*LORD DARLINGTON crosses R.C.*] No, no tea, thank you, dear. [*Crosses and sits on sofa.*] We have just had tea at Lady Markby's. Such bad tea, too. It was quite undrinkable. I wasn't at all surprised. Her own son-in-law supplies it. Agatha is looking forward so much to your ball to-night, dear Margaret.

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Seated L.C.*] Oh, you mustn't think it is going to be a ball, Duchess. It is only a dance in honour of my birthday. A small and early.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Standing L.C.*] Very small, very early, and very select, Duchess.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. [*On sofa L.*] Of course it's going to be select. But we know that, dear Margaret, about your house. It is really one of the few houses in London where I can take Agatha, and where I feel perfectly secure about dear Berwick. I don't know what society is coming to¹. The most dreadful people seem to go everywhere. They certainly come to my parties — the men get quite furious if one doesn't ask them. Really, some one should make a stand against it.

¹ what society is coming to — (разг.) куда катится общество

LADY WINDERMERE. I will, Duchess. I will have no one in my house about whom there is any scandal.

LORD DARLINGTON. [R.C.] Oh, don't say that, Lady Windermere. I should never be admitted! [*Sitting.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh, men don't matter. With women it is different. We're good. Some of us are, at least. But we are positively getting elbowed into the corner. Our husbands would really forget our existence if we didn't nag at them from time to time, just to remind them that we have a perfect legal right to do so.

LORD DARLINGTON. It's a curious thing, Duchess, about the game of marriage — a game, by the way, that is going out of fashion — the wives hold all the honours, and invariably lose the odd trick¹.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. The odd trick? Is that the husband, Lord Darlington?

LORD DARLINGTON. It would be rather a good name for the modern husband.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Dear Lord Darlington, how thoroughly depraved you are!

LADY WINDERMERE. Lord Darlington is trivial.

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

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

LORD DARLINGTON. Because I think that life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it.
[*Moves up C.*]

¹ lose the odd trick — (разг.) теряют выигрышную карту (проигрывают)

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

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Coming down back of table.*] I think I had better not, Duchess. Nowadays to be intelligible is to be found out. Good-bye! [*Shakes hands with DUCHESS.*] And now — [*goes up stage*] Lady Windermere, good-bye. I may come to-night, mayn't I? Do let me come.

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Standing up stage with LORD DARLINGTON.*] Yes, certainly. But you are not to say foolish, insincere things to people.

LORD DARLINGTON. [*Smiling.*] Ah! you are beginning to reform me. It is a dangerous thing to reform any one, Lady Windermere. [*Bows, and exit C.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. [*Who has risen, goes C.*] What a charming, wicked creature! I like him so much. 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 sorry I am for you, dear Margaret. [*Crosses to sofa and sits with LADY WINDERMERE.*] Agatha, darling!

LADY AGATHA. Yes, mamma. [*Rises.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Will you go and look over the photograph album that I see there?

LADY AGATHA. Yes, mamma. [*Goes to table up L.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Dear girl! She is so fond of photographs of Switzerland. Such a pure taste, I think. But I really am so sorry for you, Margaret.

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Smiling.*] Why, Duchess?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh, on account of that horrid woman. She dresses so well, too, which makes it much worse, sets such a dreadful example. Augustus — you

know my disreputable brother — such a trial to us all — well, Augustus is completely infatuated about her. It is quite scandalous, for she is absolutely inadmissible into society. Many a woman has a past, but I am told that she has at least a dozen, and that they all fit.

LADY WINDERMERE. Whom are you talking about, Duchess?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. About Mrs. Erlynne.

LADY WINDERMERE. Mrs. Erlynne? I never heard of her, Duchess. And what has she to do with me?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. My poor child! Agatha, darling!

LADY AGATHA. Yes, mamma.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Will you go out on the terrace and look at the sunset?

LADY AGATHA. Yes, mamma. [*Exit through window L.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Sweet girl! So devoted to sunsets! Shows such refinement of feeling, does it not? After all, there is nothing like Nature, is there?

LADY WINDERMERE. But what is it, Duchess? Why do you talk to me about this person?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Don't you really know? I assure you we're all so distressed about it. Only last night at dear Lady Jansen's every one was saying how extraordinary it was that, of all men in London, Windermere should behave in such a way.

LADY WINDERMERE. My husband — what has he got to do with any woman of that kind?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Ah, what indeed, dear? That is the point. He goes to see her continually, and stops for hours at a time, and while he is there she is not at home

to any one. Not that many ladies call on her, dear, but she has a great many disreputable men friends — my own brother particularly, as I told you — and that is what makes it so dreadful about Windermere. We looked upon him as being such a model husband, but I am afraid there is no doubt about it. My dear nieces — you know the Saville girls, don't you? — such nice domestic creatures — plain, dreadfully plain, but so good — well, they're always at the window doing fancy work, and making ugly things for the poor, which I think so useful of them in these dreadful socialistic days, and this terrible woman has taken a house in Curzon Street, right opposite them — such a respectable street, too! I don't know what we're coming to! And they tell me that Windermere goes there four and five times a week — they see him. They can't help it — and although they never talk scandal¹, they — well, of course — they remark on it to every one. And the worst of it all is that I have been told that this woman has got a great deal of money out of somebody, for it seems that she came to London six months ago without anything at all to speak of, and now she has this charming house in Mayfair, drives her ponies in the Park every afternoon and all — well, all — since she has known poor dear Windermere.

LADY WINDERMERE. Oh, I can't believe it!

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. But it's quite true, my dear.

The whole of London knows it. That is why I felt it

¹ they never talk scandal — (разг.) они никогда не разносят сплетни

was better to come and talk to you, and advise you to take Windermere away at once to Homburg or to Aix, where he'll have something to amuse him, and where you can watch him all day long. I assure you, my dear, that on several occasions after I was first married, I had to pretend to be very ill, and was obliged to drink the most unpleasant mineral waters, merely to get Berwick out of town. He was so extremely susceptible. Though I am bound to say he never gave away any large sums of money to anybody. He is far too high-principled for that!

LADY WINDERMERE. [*Interrupting.*] Duchess, Duchess, it's impossible! [*Rising and crossing stage to C.*] We are only married two years. Our child is but six months old. [*Sits in chair R. of L. table.*]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Ah, the dear pretty baby! How is the little darling? Is it a boy or a girl? I hope a girl — Ah, no, I remember it's a boy! I'm so sorry. Boys are so wicked. My boy is excessively immoral. You wouldn't believe at what hours he comes home. And he's only left Oxford a few months — I really don't know what they teach them there.

LADY WINDERMERE. Are all men bad?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh, all of them, my dear, all of them, without any exception. And they never grow any better. Men become old, but they never become good.

LADY WINDERMERE. Windermere and I married for love.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Yes, we begin like that. It was only Berwick's brutal and incessant threats of suicide that made me accept him at all, and before the year was

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КАК ВАЖНО БЫТЬ СЕРЬЕЗНЫМ

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Иллюстрация на обложке *О. В. Маркиной*

Издательство «КАРО», ЛР № 065644

195027, Санкт-Петербург, Свердловская наб., д. 60, (812) 570-54-97

Гигиенический сертификат

№ 78.01.07.953.П.324 от 10.02.2012

Подписано в печать 03.07.2012. Формат 70 x 100 ¹/₃₂. Бумага газетная.

Печать офсетная. Усл. печ. л. 7,7. Тираж 1500 экз. Заказ № 07.02

Отпечатано в типографии «КАРО»