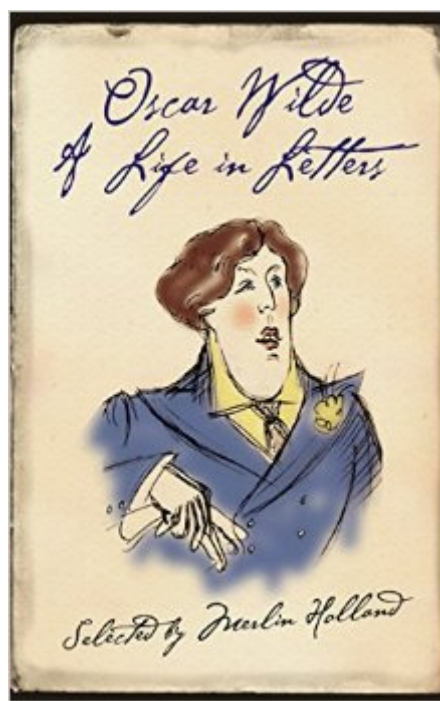


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Oscar Wilde: A Life In Letters



Synopsis

Wilde the writer is known to us from his plays and prose fiction, but apparently it was in his conversation that his genius reached its summit. His talk is lost and his autobiography was never written, but his letters reveal him at his spontaneous, sparkling best. Wilde the writer is known to us from his plays and prose fiction, yet it was in his conversation that his genius reached its summit. His talk is lost, his autobiography was never written, but his letters reveal him at his spontaneous, sparkling best. Of all nineteenth-century letter writers Oscar Wilde is, predictably, one of the most brilliant. Wonderfully fluent in style, the letters bear that most familiar of Wildean hallmarks â “ the lightest of touches for the most serious of subjects. He comments openly on his life and his work from the early years of undergraduate friendship, through his year-long lecture tour in America as a striving young 'Professor of Aesthetics', to the short period of fame and success in the early 1890s, when he corresponded with many leading political, literary and artistic figures of the time. Disgrace and imprisonment followed, but even in adversity his humour does not desert him. In this beautifully produced volume Merlin Holland has brought together his most revealing letters with an illuminating commentary. Together they form the closest thing we shall ever have to Wilde's own memoir.

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Customer Reviews

I picked this book up in a used book store for [money] more than when it was purchased new in 1960. The pages literally crumbled as I turned them, but I couldn't put the book down. I was enthralled with the life of Oscar Wilde. Now, this biography isn't one written years after the subject's death from scraps of information. No. This is written by a very close friend of Wilde's, Frank Harris. In being written by someone of such closeness, it lends credence to the harsh words the author had to say of Wilde. Harris calls him lazy and slothly. Of course, Wilde caused quite a sensation in his time. He was imprisoned under other pretenses, but mainly because he was a homosexual in a time period when this was not acceptable. Oscar was one who did not care what others thought of him. He was determined to live a life of pleasure and to make money doing things that he liked: writing and speaking. However, he did a great deal of leaching off of others. There's no denying Wilde's genius. I have yet to read any of his works except for a short essay entitled "The Soul of Man Under Socialism." To me, the thoughts seemed profound. But Harris says that Oscar never said or wrote anything original; he merely took other people's thoughts, meshed them together, and said them in a more profound way. This is a biography that reads like a fine story. Harris is a great writer and has more first-hand knowledge of his subject than any other biographer that I've read. I'd recommend this book to others without reservation.

"The best life of Oscar Wilde", said George Bernard Shaw after reading this book. I cannot but agree with him utterly. No unnecessary data is wasted, no long reflexions bore us. It's just an Oscar's very close friend telling us with great elegance and delicacy the story of one he has admired and loved so much, but without fear of saying the truth. *Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*. Of course, the reader has to know Mr Harris is the true "lead actor" in the story he's telling us, always supporting the Truth and the Right. But one can easily forgive him for that in reward for the great moments in Oscar's life he's saved from oblivion and darkness. A wonderful work of art itself, this biography must be read by every admirer of that Prince of Charm Oscar Wilde was. X. Careaga

This happens to be a very nice edition of carefully selected poetry collection by Oscar Wilde, the end-of-the-19th-century Romantic English poet and playwright. I was specifically looking for "The Sphinx", a not-easy-to-find poem at all - and the "Selected Poems" had it. Before I went ahead and placed my order I had actually asked the seller if the collection had it and the kind lady went to the trouble of going through the table of contents to let me know it was there all right. - A very nice edition for a most reasonable price. Quite rewarding! Whole-heartedly and gratefully

recommended!Roman.

One cannot improve upon the remarks fore-mentioned of George Bernard Shaw's. Long before public figures of no talent were thrust upon us, literate minds instead of marketeers gathered around the chosen few as johnny-come-latelys and would rarely disappoint. This is a thrilling,gripping read.Style,tact and endless grace in words for a tragic,painful public artist run throughout this personal account.Much can be gained from savoring this moment in time if one aspires celebrity and fame and wants to avoid its dizzying pitfalls.

I believe this is a fine biography of Oscar Wilde. The author was a personal friend of Oscar and his manner of writing is quite above the tabloids. I much enjoyed his mixed review of Oscar Wilde. Though he seems to have a genuine affection for his friend, Frank does not hesitate to point out the flaws in Mr. Wilde's character. To me it makes the book far more credible.He does not pour forth flattering praise and make excuses for the playwright, but then again he ultimately defends Oscar Wilde when he foolishly took on the Marquis of Queensbury in that challenge to his relationship with Douglas.The writing style is guarded and modest but you get the gist of what was going on, in spite of the Victorian modesty.The quality of this particular paperback was low,(it is over 50 years old),but this is the form in which I found it.

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