



The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde: The First Uncensored Transcript of The Trial of Oscar Wilde vs. John Douglas (Marquess of Queensberry), 1895

Merlin Holland

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London's Central Criminal Court Sessions Papers for April 1895 were blunt, declaring that "the details of this case are unfit for publication." The case was Oscar Wilde's first trial, a libel action brought against the Marquess of Queensberry for publicly calling him a homosexual. What unfolded in the court was one of Victorian London's most infamous scandals: the great, doomed love affair between Wilde and Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas, the Marquess's son. When it became public, it cost Wilde everything.

Merlin Holland, Wilde's grandson and a noted researcher and archivist, has discovered the original transcript of the trial that led to his grandfather's tragedy. Here for the first time is the true, uncensored record, free of the distortions and censorship of previous accounts.

On 18 February 1895, Bosie's father delivered a note to the Albemarle Club addressed to "Oscar Wilde posing as a sodomite [sic]." With Bosie's encouragement, Wilde decided to sue the Marquess for libel. As soon as the trial opened, London's literary darling was at the center of the greatest scandal of his time.

Wilde's fall from grace was swift: having lost this case, he was in turn prosecuted and later imprisoned. Bankrupted, he fled to Paris never to see his family again. Within five years he was dead, his health never having recovered from the years in Reading gaol.

This remarkable book reveals Wilde on trial for his life, though he did not know it -- his confidence ebbing under the relentless cross-questioning, the wit for which he was so celebrated gradually deserting him under the remorseless scrutiny. The tragic climax falls when Wilde is betrayed by his own cleverness, unconsciously playing into the prosecutor's hands. With that his cause is lost.



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