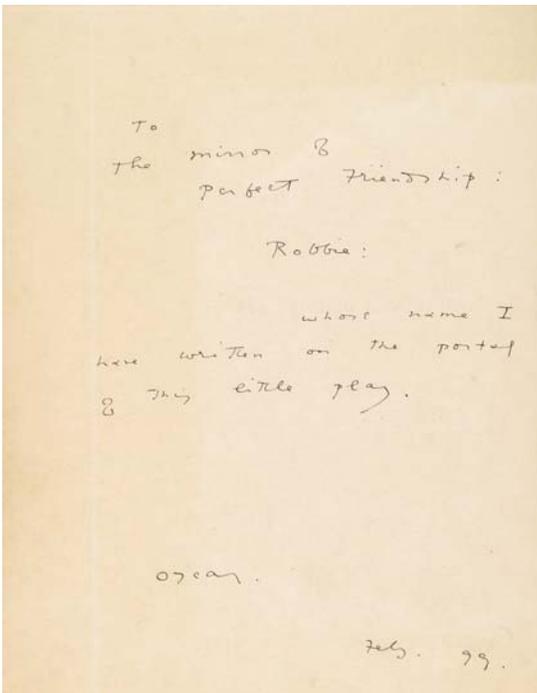


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The Importance Of Being Earnest Dedicated By Oscar Wilde To His Friend And Lover Robbie Ross



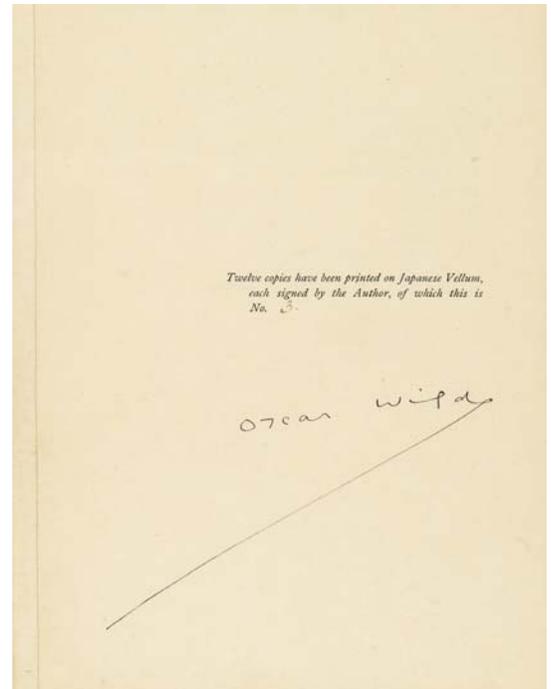
On 20 April 2012 Sotheby's will offer A First Edition Japanese Vellum copy of Oscar Wilde's greatest work, **The Importance of Being Earnest A Trivial Comedy for Serious People** in the sale of The Library of Jaques Levy. Mr. Levy acquired the piece in 1946 and it has remained in his collection since. The book carries an estimate of \$80/120,000. This copy of *The Importance Of Being Earnest* was given to Robert Ross, a profoundly important figure in Wilde's personal and professional life first as a lover, then as a close friend, ardent supporter and finally literary executor. On the half-title page the author dedicated this copy to his companion: "*To the Mirror of Perfect Friendship: Robbie: whose name I have written on the portal of this little play.*"

Oscar. Feb '99" (pictured left). The piece goes on view at Sotheby's New York on Saturday 14 April.

Wilde and Ross, a Canadian from a wealthy family, met in Oxford in 1886, they soon developed a close bond with Ross moving into Wilde's Tite Street home the following year. Both men later acknowledged that their first gay sexual experience was with each other. While Wilde and Ross were not lovers for long, they formed a lasting and intense friendship that saw the Canadian act as an emotional and financial bulwark throughout Wilde's life.

Ross demonstrated his devotion to Wilde throughout his various difficulties and troubles. It was Ross that broke into Wilde's flat upon hearing of the author's arrest for 'indecent acts' to rescue potentially incriminating papers before the police arrived. At the trial, it was Ross who managed to get a space on Wilde's route to the witness stand so his friend could see he was not alone in court. And it was Ross who Wilde's increasingly stunned and bewildered wife Constance would contact when her husband disappeared.

In addition to his friendship Robbie Ross also helped to raise funds and manage financial affairs for Wilde. He organized an auction of the author's house and contents so he could avoid bankruptcy and later ensured Wilde received what funds he was due while exiled in France. After Wilde died Ross became his literary executor securing the rights of the plays for his sons and editing the first collected works in 1908.



In addition to the distinguished provenance this copy of *The Importance Of Being Earnest* is a true rarity. Only 12 Japanese Vellum copies were made of which only six are known and only one of which has appeared at auction in the past 30 years.

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