Contents

Preface ix

The Text of The Importance of Being Earnest 1
Excised Portions of the Play 61

Backgrounds
Karl Beckson • London in the 1890s 71
Joseph Donohue • Wilde and the Idea of a Theatre 78
Regenia Gagnier • Creating the Audience 85

Criticism
REVIEWS AND REACTIONS
William Archer • On The Importance of Being Earnest 97
H. F. • On The Importance of Being Earnest 99
George Bernard Shaw • On The Importance of Being Earnest 99
H. G. Wells • On The Importance of Being Earnest 101

ESSAYS IN CRITICISM
E. H. Mikhail • The Four-Act Version of The Importance of Being Earnest 102
Eva Thienpont • From Faltering Arrow to Pistol Shot: The Importance of Being Earnest 106
Camille A. Paglia • Oscar Wilde and the English Epicene 116
Christopher Craft • Alias Bunbury: Desire and Termination in The Importance of Being Earnest 136
Michael Patrick Gillespie • From Beau Brummell to Lady Bracknell: Re-viewing the Dandy in The Importance of Being Earnest 166
Peter Raby • The Genesis of the Play 183
Richard Haslam • Oscar Wilde and the Imagination of the Celt 195

Oscar Wilde: A Chronology 203
Selected Bibliography 207