



An Ideal Husband (New Mermaids)

Oscar Wilde, Russell Jackson

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'I always pass on good advice. It is the only thing to do with it. It is never of any use to one's self.'

An Ideal Husband is a comic drama of political and personal deceit. Sir Robert Chiltern is the 'ideal husband' of the play's title, a brilliant young politician, whose eloquence and high principles have set him on the path to high office. His wife, Lady Chiltern, shares his ideals and is a great society beauty. They have the 'ideal' social and political partnership, but Sir Robert has a secret: in order to finance his entry into politics, he once sold confidential information to a sinister international profiteer. Threatened with the revelation of this secret by the glamorous adventuress Mrs Cheveley, Sir Robert turns to his best friend Lord Goring for advice - and thanks to the wit and resourcefulness of this wit and dandy, he has every prospect of being rescued from the revelations that would destroy his social and political career. Wilde's play was first performed in January 1895, the year of his own disgrace and imprisonment.

This student edition contains a fully annotated version of the playtext. The introduction includes an account of Wilde's life and a detailed analysis of *An Ideal Husband* as well as of its stage history.

Russell Jackson is Allardyce Nicoll Professor of Drama at the University of Birmingham. He has published widely on theatre history, including Shakespearean performance, and especially Shakespeare in the cinema. His books include *Shakespeare Films in the Making*, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* and *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage* (with Jonathan Bate).

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