

OSCAR WILDE'S DISGRACE

A Mother, Wife, and Two Children
Must Share His Shame.

POVERTY AT CADOGAN HOUSE

A Mother's Desperate Struggle to
Keep Up Appearances
and Educate Her
Sons.

Aside from the depravity that it has been necessary to make public in the downfall of Oscar Wilde, people who met him here, and accepted his letters of introduction as an accredited English gentleman, are curious to know something of his family, his mother, his wife, his children, and almost everybody else upon whom he has brought absolute ruin.

Every Irishman is interested in Oscar Wilde because he is a born Irishman. His mother, who is now a tottering old lady in her seventies, was one of the earliest advocates of the home-rule cause. So long as she was able to write she wielded a trenchant pen. In this way she managed to earn enough money to educate her two sons, who were the idols of her heart. Oscar was the elder.

No woman in London society for the last decade has commanded more respect than Lady Wilde. The best people in the most exclusive social set used to go to see her despite the almost intolerable mannerisms of the sons to whom she was a most devoted mother.

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin about thirty years ago. His father was a skilled surgeon-dentist, frequently called upon by the Queen for professional services. But somehow or other he never seemed to accumulate any money. He was a man of letters, a skilled statistician, and a man whose experiments in dentistry are still an authority in his profession; but he seemed to lack thrift. Oscar Wilde was the first one in the family to develop it, and the success he has achieved as a playwright and man of letters is mainly due to the devotion of his mother. She deprived herself of necessities in order that he might be liberally educated.

In a primitive school at Enniskillen, Ireland, Oscar Wilde was sent to get the rudiments of an education. He soon outgrew the school, and was sent to Trinity College, Dublin. Here, again, he distinguished himself with such marked success that he was sent to Oxford. He won prize after prize. This was ten years before he came to America as the apostle of a new "cult." and attained the celebrity that brought in the almighty dollar. Whatever personal humiliation the caricature in "Patience" involved, it put money in Oscar Wilde's pocket, and placed the entire family in a position of personal independence that it had never known before.

Almost every man and woman who has figured in London society for the last thirty years knew and respected Lady Wilde. Prominent people were only too glad to attend her receptions in the home that, by courtesy, was called Cadogan House. It is located in the most fashionable part of London, and despite pecuniary reverses Lady Wilde has always managed to retain possession of it.

At one time the family was so poor that the blinds were kept closed in broad daylight in order to conceal the shabbiness of the furniture. By a skillful arrangement of draperies Lady Wilde always managed to make a creditable appearance by candlelight. In those days Oscar used to appear before his mother's guests arrayed in a curious garment of white cloth calculated to display his fine figure to its best advantage. He had only begun to evolve the singular ideas that soon made him world-famous as an apostle of the "lily" culture. His mother and all her friends encouraged it, but assuredly without any dream that it would lead to the disgrace that has been the talk of London and almost every other part of the civilized world within the last few days.

Oscar Wilde never hesitated to say that it was his American "experience" and the plump bank account that he was able to take home after delivering more than 200 lectures here that taught him that it "paid" to be a crank with a "fad" that people were interested in. He said that once at a public dinner. With all his peculiarities, he was a shrewd business man, with a sharp eye to pecuniary results. He made money much faster than he expected, and it is only just to say that he was quite unselfish in sharing his prosperity with other members of his family who had not been so fortunate.

A wife and two children must also share the shame brought upon Oscar Wilde by the exposures of the last few days. About eleven years ago he married the daughter of Horace Lloyd, a conspicuous member of the English bar, who had been honored with the title of Queen's Counsel. Since her marriage Mrs. Oscar Wilde has been a notable member of London society, an enthusiastic "first nighter" at the theatres, with a belief in her husband's ability as a novelist and playwright that amounted almost to idolatry. She has two children, Cyril, who was born in 1885, and Vivian, who was born about a year later.

Americans who have had occasion to visit London know Oscar Wilde's mother, his wife, and children very well. It is the effect that his disgrace will have upon them that excites sympathy here just now.