

Royalty free

Oscar Wilde

NB Some edits (/) have been made to make this flow as a monologue, rather than a dialogue.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

Act 2

You silly boy! (/)Why, we have been engaged for the last three months (/) it will be exactly three months on Thursday. Ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him, after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest (/) on the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear. You've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters.

[Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.]

You need hardly remind me (/that you never wrote, Ernest). I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener. (/) I couldn't possibly (/let you read them) . They would make you far too conceited.

[Replaces box.]

The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little. (/Our engagement was broken off on) the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like.

[Shows diary.]

'To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming.' It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out. I don't think I could break it off again, now that I have actually met you.