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In this book, Anthony Jenkins examines seven Victorian playwrights who, despite their own ideals and prejudices and the theatre's conservatism, tried to come to terms with such momentous subjects as womanliness, honour, and money. The opening chapter sets a frame of reference that briefly describes the social transformation of theatre during the century and the increasing respectability of actors and playhouses. Subsequent chapters deal with the drama of Edward Bulwer, Tom Robertson, W.S. Gilbert, H.A. Jones, Arthur Pinero, Oscar Wilde, and Bernard Shaw. The plays are examined within the social and political context of the Reform Bills, the Revolution of 1848, the Great Exhibition, royal patronage, censorship and copyright, and, above all, the 'Woman Question'. Jenkins combines politics and theatrical history with literary criticism to shed provocative light on the struggle to relate the London theatre to the realities of Victorian England.

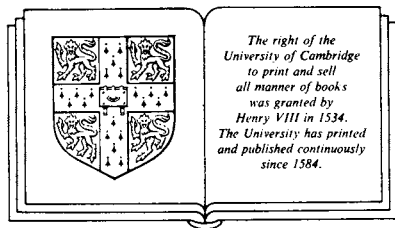
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For
ROGER and AILSA BISHOP
and
MARION

I think that generosity is the essence of friendship
Wilde

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Victoria, B.C.