

**THE COMING OF
GABRIELLE;
A COMEDY**

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The coming of Gabrielle; a comedy by George Moore

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GEORGE MOORE

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GABRIELLE

A COMEDY

By

GEORGE MOORE

LONDON

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BY GEORGE MOORE

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THE
COMING OF GABRIELLE

*This edition consists of 1000 copies
numbered and signed.*

This is No. 271.....

George Moore



P R E F A C E



SELF-LOVE, man's guardian angel, is averse from such sincerity as might lead us to attribute our failures to some broken thread or tangle in the mind's woof, directing our attention instead to the justice with which Nature frames her tallies, each special strength being balanced by a like weakness, and calling us to admire this marvellous accountancy, for which the French have a ready-made phrase, "*Le défaut de ses qualités.*"

Now one day whilst self-love was spinning specious theories that would lay bare my failure to write plays that pleased me, the friend walking at my side said, interrupting my subtleties: "All you say may be true, but you haven't given the seriousness to the writing of plays that you have to your narratives." His words pierced my conscience, and I said: "*The Strike at*
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Arlingford was written for no more inspiring reason than that Mr G. R. Sims told a journalist that he would contribute £100 to the Independent Theatre if I wrote a play in three acts. *The Bending of the Bough* was needed to secure an annual performance at the Irish Literary Theatre, the play we had counted on not being considered worthy of production. The writing of *Diarmuid and Grania* was undertaken for the pleasure of collaborating with Mr W. B. Yeats. The play founded on *Esther Waters* would not have been undertaken if a French friend had not come to tell me that a French actress wished to play the part. The first three acts are as good as the novel is, the two last were but tacked together while the play was rehearsed. Now I come to consider it, I can see that what you say is right : I have never put my back, as the phrase goes, into a play."

So did I answer my friend, and later in the evening, when he had left me, the memory of another play, *Elizabeth Cooper*, intruded itself ; and on reviewing its chequered story (enough matter for a volume) I could not deny to myself that my own weaknesses, carnal and cerebral, were the true reason of my failure to write a play on a theme that
should

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should have inspired some pretty writing. "I gave it," I said, "to the Stage Society for production, though not half satisfied, and afterwards to a French friend for translation in a vain hope that—— But why think it all out again?" cried I, the pen dropping from my hand, for the melancholy story is far too long for telling here, and it is enough to say that my scatter-brained attempts to write plays ended in another folly, to staying in Paris on my way back from Moab to rewrite the poor little comedy in such French as I could call to mind, and nearly an act was achieved in the jargon; but my friend's tenancy ended before the new act could be put into rehearsal, and I returned to England broken-hearted, looking upon *Elizabeth Cooper* as part of the litter that every author leaves behind, my misery of conscience continuing till an actress of great talent, Miss Auriol Lee, came to tell me that she was going to America and would like to produce *Elizabeth Cooper* there, the part of *Gabrielle* having always appealed to her. "Reproduce *Elizabeth Cooper*? Not for ten thousand pounds," I answered her, and began to ask her why I should wish to see a play acted, published, read, spoken of, that didn't

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correspond to the play I had in mind. "There is a plot and some dialogue, but nothing of me," I added pathetically, to which she replied, "A stitch here and a patch there." "A new play is needed," I said, and next morning the old temptation came upon me to write a play that would be like me, and in three weeks *Elizabeth Cooper* presented me with *The Coming of Gabrielle*.

As all artists, or nearly all, have known the pain of thinking one thing and writing another, for such is our fate, my fellows will apprehend the joy it was to me to watch the emergence of *Gabrielle*, recognising at every moment that the new work was of the same kindred as the pieces that inform the volume entitled *Memoirs of My Dead Life*—a volume that gave me so much pleasure to revise this year for a fine American edition that I added two new pieces and foretold in the preface that if any twentieth-century literature lingered on into the twenty-first century this volume would as likely as not be among the last stragglers—a prophetic utterance that should not lay me open to an accusation of vanity, my object not being to coerce but to remind my readers that a writer can do no more than to maintain a standard that he
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