

# **IMPRESSIONS AND OPINIONS**

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Impressions and opinions by George Moore

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**GEORGE MOORE**

**IMPRESSIONS  
AND OPINIONS**



Uniform with this volume,  
Spring Days, by George Moore.  
Price 6/-

# IMPRESSIONS AND OPINIONS

BY

GEORGE MOORE

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## PREFACE

### I

A PUBLISHER will not bring out a new edition without a preface, and we find prefaces difficult to write. Three weeks were spent on the preface to *Spring Days*, for a long screed had been contemplated containing many new and ingenious theories of literature; but as these did not seem to prepare the reader's mind for the book he was going to read, an anecdote was substituted, and a hundred newspapers related that the author had bought up and pilfered as many copies of the original edition as he could, and had thrown them into the Thames. We have nothing so picturesque to tell in the present preface, but merely that the author was sinking in a flood of public disfavour caused by *Spring Days*, and the book that followed *Spring Days* (its name we fear to pronounce), when *Impressions and Opinions*, like a big Newfoundland dog, dived after him and brought him to shore. And all that we have to tell of the further career of this book is that it seems to have retained the admiration it first inspired, and to have made some friends in the last twenty years. Those who read us and do not possess this book seem anxious to possess it, and those who do possess the book will not part with it except at extravagant



prices. We have heard of three pounds ten shillings being asked for a copy, and when it became necessary to procure one for the preparation of this edition, we were asked fifty shillings. It would have been distasteful to us to spend so much money on our own writings. The story got about, and the book was brought to us one morning in a basket. Our butcher's son had been collecting our writings for some years, and had slipped it in with the beef; and looking at the copy which had come to us in so unexpected a way, we see that we may attribute to David Nutt the great store set upon the first edition of *Impressions and Opinions*. A book's first life, it is true, depends upon its contents, but two or three years after publication the pagination, the print, the paper, the cover, and the shape of the book begin to attract, and year by year they attract more and more until the book attains the glory of a Chinese vase in which there is nothing but a little dust.

We should have liked to reproduce the original edition of *Impressions and Opinions*, but the time comes when an author begins to look round the corner after a uniform edition of his works. The form in which *Spring Days* was published was chosen with that intention, and it was therefore an obligation that *Impressions and Opinions* should be uniform with *Spring Days*. A slight mistake was made in the pagination of *Spring Days*, but that will be rectified when the book is printed again, and as soon as that is done the two books will not too painfully disfigure the shelves of an old mahogany bookcase. In their new form they may be laid upon a satinwood table,

while the reader dozes or lies back to consider whether he prefers our earlier to our later style; both books are strictly in our first manner, and the reader will not be deceived by the fact that a short article on Zola has been replaced by a longer article; we have dared this alteration because the longer article seemed to us a more energetic affirmation of our early style than the rejected article. It was written while *Impressions and Opinions* was being written, and may be taken as an example of a style which many critics prefer to our later and more polished style. Among these critics is Mr T. D. O'Bolger of Pennsylvania University who, while in England, did us the great compliment of enquiring out a copy of *Impressions and Opinions*, and when he had obtained one, of writing to us his appreciations, remarking that *Impressions and Opinions* was a much better book than *Memoirs of my Dead Life*. There was no page in this latter book, he said, that could compare with any page of *Impressions and Opinions* unless, perhaps, the opening pages of *Ninon's Table D'hôte*. Mr O'Bolger's literary perceptions are remarkable, for the opening pages of *Ninon's Table D'hôte* were printed *verbatim* from an earlier version of the story. But Mr O'Bolger's preference for the early manner is not so individual. It seems to us to be part of the literary humour of the present time, which is always to sneer at artistic accomplishment, and to praise the rude and rough manifestations of untutored genius. In the taste of the present day Assyrian sculpture is better than Egyptian, and Phidias is looked upon as being no better than Turgueneff. Balzac has had his day

of favour, but is giving way to the more uncultivated imaginations of Dostoevsky. Even grammar is out of fashion; peasant speech yields a richer flavour; and as we would win by hook or by crook some of the popularity of our great contemporaries, we have not corrected any mistakes, but tried to see them as beauty spots.

## II

Three weeks ago it had seemed to us that all the beauty spots might be accepted without demur, but on looking into the book again the article entitled "Art for the Villa," seemed to us such a ravelled skein that we could not do else than strive to knit it together; and as this proved to be a task beyond our skill a new article has been substituted entitled, "Une Rencontre au Salon," written, we admit it, in our later style. We might have parodied ourselves, put on paint, and powder, and patches; but Mr O'Bolger would be the first to detect such artifices, and we should have found ourselves for ever out of his favour.

G. M.