

**A MERE ACCIDENT.
VIZZETELLY'S ONE-
VOLUME NOVELS**

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A mere accident. Vizzetelly's One-Volume Novels by George Moore

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BY

GEORGE MOORE,

AUTHOR OF "A HUNTER'S WIFE," "A MODERN LOVER," "A DRAMA IN DUBLIN," ETC.



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BRENTANOS : NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, AND CHICAGO.

1887.

(The Right of Translation is reserved.)

TO

My friends at Buckingham.

—o—

NEARLY twenty years have gone since first we met, dear friends ; time has but strengthened our early affections, so for love token, for sign of the years, I bring you this book—these views of your beautiful house and hills where I have spent so many happy days, these last perhaps the happiest of all.

G. M.



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CHAPTER I.

THREE hundred yards of smooth, broad, white road leading from Henfield, a small town in Sussex. The grasses are lush, and the hedges are tall and luxuriant. Restless boys scramble to and fro, quiet nursemaids loiter, and a vagrant has sat down to rest though the bank is dripping with autumn rain.

How fair a prospect of southern England! Land of exquisite homeliness and order; land of town that is country, of country that is town; land of a hundred classes all deftly interwoven and all waxing to one class—England. Land encrowned with the gifts of peaceful days—days that live in thy face and the faces of thy children.

See it. The outlying villas with their porches and laurels, the red tiled farm houses, and the brown barns, clustering beneath the wings of beautiful trees—elm trees; see the flat plots of ground of the market gardens, with figures bending over baskets of roots; see the factory chimney; there are trees and gables everywhere; see the end of the terrace, the gleam of glass, the flower vase, the fitting white of the tennis players; see the long fields with the long team ploughing, see the parish church, see the embowering woods, see the squire's house, see everything and love it, for everything here is England.

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Three hundred yards of smooth, broad, white road, leading from Henfield, a small town in Sussex. It disappears in the woods which lean across the fields towards the downs. The great bluff heights can be seen, and at the point where the roads cross, where the tall trunks are listed with golden light, stands a large wooden gate and a small box-

like lodge. A lonely place in a densely-populated county. The gatekeeper is blind, and his flute sounds doleful and strange, and the leaves are falling.

The private road is short and stony. Apparently space was found for it with difficulty, and it got wedged between an enormous holly hedge and a stiff wooden paling. But overhead the great branches fight upwards through a tortuous growth to the sky, and, as you advance, Thornby Place continues to puzzle you with its medley of curious and contradictory aspects. For as the second gate, which is in iron, is approached, your thoughts of rural things are rudely scattered by sight of what seems a London mews. Reason with yourself. This very urban feature is occasioned by the high brick wall which runs parallel with the stables, and this, as you pass round to the front of the house, is hidden in the clothing foliage of a line of ever-green oaks; continuing along the lawn, the trees bend about the house—a wash of Naples-yellow,