

**THE BENDING OF THE  
BOUGH: A COMEDY  
IN FIVE ACTS**

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The Bending of the Bough: A Comedy in Five Acts by George Moore

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(0.)

The Bending of the Bough.  
A Comedy in Five Acts.  
By George Moore.

London  
T. Fisher Unwin  
Paternoster Square  
1900

## LIST OF CHARACTERS



JOSEPH TENCH, *the Mayor.*

JASPER DEAN,

DANIEL LAWRENCE,

THOMAS FERGUSON,

VALENTINE FOLEY,

RALF KIRWAN,

JAMES POLLOCK,

MICHAEL LEECH,

*Aldermen of the Corporation.*

JOHN CLORAN, *the Town Clerk.*

MACNEB, *Caretaker of the Town Hall.*

GEORGE HARDMAN, *Lord Mayor of Southhaven.*

MISS MILLICENT FELL, *his Niece, engaged to marry ALDERMAN DEAN.*

MISS CAROLINE DEAN,

MISS ARABELLA DEAN,

*Maiden Aunts of ALDERMAN DEAN.*

MRS. POLLOCK, *Wife and First Cousin of ALDERMAN POLLOCK, Sister of ALDERMAN LEECH, and Cousin of the DEANS.*

MRS. LEECH, *Wife and First Cousin of ALDERMAN LEECH, Sister of ALDERMAN POLLOCK, and also Cousin of the DEANS.*

A PARLOURMAID *at ALDERMAN DEAN'S House.*

A WAITER *at the Hotel.*

*Several Town Councillors, People, &c.*





## PREFACE

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FOR some time the necessity of explaining the intentions of the Irish Literary Theatre has been pressing upon us. So I take advantage of the publication of my play, "The Bending of the Bough," to explain why Mr. Martyn, Mr. Yeats, and myself prefer to have our plays produced in Dublin rather than in London. It must seem singular to many that we should choose to produce plays in Dublin, where there are few people and very little money, rather than in London, where the audience is unlimited and the purse too, which is always forthcoming when amusements are for sale. Well, it is because we believe London to be too large, too old, and too wealthy to permit of any new artistic movement, and this belief rests upon knowledge of the art history of the world, and some experience of London theatrical conditions. And the essence of our experience of London theatrical conditions is our appreciation of the importance of the fact that whereas Ibsen and Maeterlinck, the great dramatic poets of modern time, have failed completely on the London stage, the ordinary dramatic writer, by the aid of scenery, dresses, and a little dialogue, provides an entertainment which pleases

every one. The consistent failure—a failure extending now over ten years—of him whom we regard as the greatest dramatic writer since Shakespeare and of all writers whose work rises above the commonplace, signifies to us that London has ceased to be a place where the work of a poet is appreciated on the stage. We have therefore turned our backs upon London as men turn their backs on a place which has ceased to interest them. But we did not decide on our homeward journey without having considered the reformation of London. After some doubts, some hesitation, it suddenly came upon us that it was impossible. It was suddenly borne in upon us that England had produced her dramatic literature (since Shakespeare only two plays have outlived a generation); England seems to us to have reached the age of manhood, an age at which a nation ceases to produce art, for art belongs to the youth of a nation as empire belongs to its manhood, if it attains to manhood.

In the middle of the century we enjoyed a pleasant St. Martin summer, but though leaves retain their summer green a long while, we read in the August leaf the sered September leaf, and in the September leaf the October leaf, listless and red and yellow. And now in artistic England the pallor of centuries shines in the inactive autumn air. The thrush is silent, the nightingale has flown, and the robin sits on the coral hedge piping his little roundelay. Nothing can revive the season; it will never come again; art knows no sweet returning. Empire, like autumn, is splendid, but silent woods are sad, and in our eagerness for the song of the thrush and the black-

bird we fain would detect an accent of their music in the scream of the jay and the cry of the swallow. It were better to delight a moment in the little candour of the robin, and to admire the coral hedge as the gift of the irreparable year. England can say with pride: "England has produced a full measure of music, poetry, painting, and drama; she has completed her spiritual and is now fashioning her material destiny; nations like individuals have two destinies, and who shall deny that the building of an empire is not as important as the singing of a song? England has sung enough; no songs are like her songs, and now she is engaged on the work of her middle age."

But for some reason, so deep in the heart that we cannot define it, the glory of empire does not compensate for the loss of the song and the bust; without them the crown is incomplete and its glory the pallor of ashes.

We become aware of this as we cross Trafalgar Square, whence can be seen on either side the towers of Westminster and the domes of the National Gallery. Looking from one to the other it seems to us strange that no one in a hundred years will be concerned to know how any one of the men who sit deliberating the fate of a continent lived and died: whether he lived married or single, whether his life was a happy or a sorry one, whether he died in exile or in Carlton House Terrace, and that we should be so deeply concerned to know something of the lives of men who drew a few heads, brushed in a few skies and trees, or sang a few songs? Why should we be so eager to know why Shelley left his first wife, why Sir Joshua never married, and be so little curious