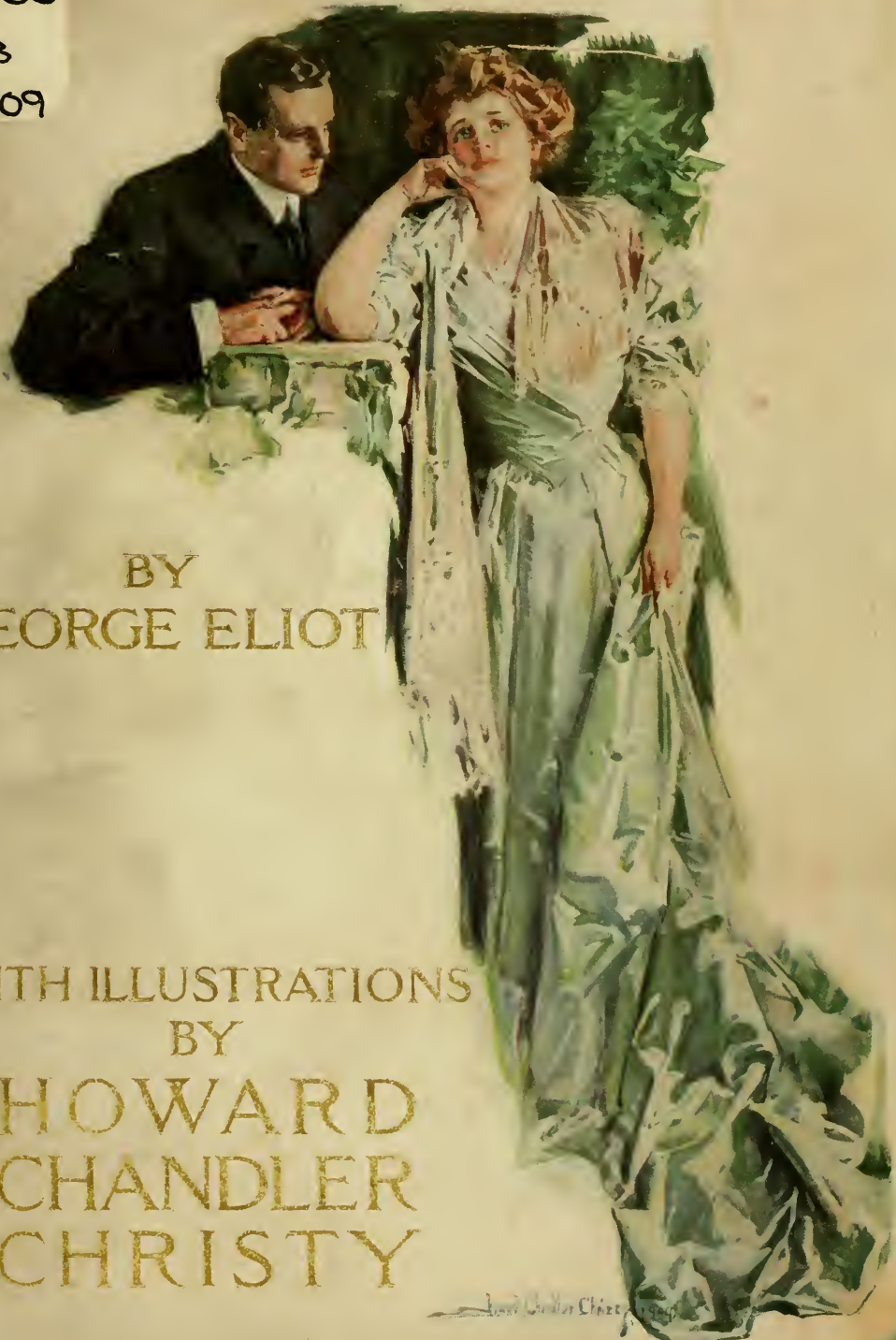


TWO LOVERS

PR
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1909



BY
GEORGE ELIOT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
HOWARD
CHANDLER
CHRISTY

Howard Chandler Christy



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Book T8

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GEORGE
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TWO LOVERS



Hood Chandler Christy 1909

O budding time!
O love's blest prime!

TWO LOVERS

By

George Eliot

With Illustrations in Color

By

Howard Chandler Christy



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Moffat, Yard and Company

1909

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To
NATALIE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

So vast looms George Eliot's fame as a novelist that it will surprise most readers of this exquisite Poem of Life and Love to find her its author. The surprise is natural and justified. "As if a strong, delightful water that we only knew as a river," writes Matthew Browne in the *Contemporary Review*, "appeared in the character of a fountain; as if one whom we had wondered at as a good walker or inexhaustible pedestrian began to dance; as if Mr. Bright, in the middle of a public meeting, were to oblige the company with a song, — no, no, not like that exactly, but like something quite new, — is the appearance of George Eliot in the character of a poet."

That she herself appreciated this is

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

shown abundantly in her correspondence. In one of her innumerable letters to Mrs. Bray she wrote, referring to her poetry: — “I expect a good deal of disgust to be felt toward me in many quarters in doing what was not looked for from me.”

But it was a feeling far different from disgust that this beautiful poem inspired on its appearance in 1866. It was written in the early prime of her life and her career. She had produced “Adam Bede,” “The Mill on the Floss,” “Silas Marner,” “Romola” and “Felix Holt,” and had yet to write “Middlemarch” and “Deronda.” She was forty-seven years old and had well tasted of the great success of which she was soon to drink so deeply. She had attained some fame and financial inde-

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

pendence. She was glorying in the possession of one of the profoundest loves in literature. At this time, this pause, as it were, before her entry into her greater celebrity, she wrote the few poems she has left us. Of these, "Two Lovers" makes the surest appeal to the universal human heart.

The year 1866 was one of great spiritual stress with George Eliot. Its early months were occupied with the completion of "Felix Holt," which she finished on May 31st "in a fever of excitement after days and nights of trembling and palpitation," only to fall into a complete reaction from which she did not strongly recover until the year neared its close. Mr. Lewes's health meantime was precarious,

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

and they were compelled to seek change on the Continent. "As soon as one has found the key of life," she wrote Madame Bodichon, "it opes the gates of death." Youth has not learned the *art* of living and we go on bungling till our experience can only serve us for a very brief space."

It was during this year that she wrote the poem that Mr. Christy has here illustrated so beautifully and appreciatively.

Even to those that know George Eliot as a poet the "Two Lovers" is not familiar; and the publishers, therefore, believe that the author's many readers will welcome this new and attractive presentation of the charming poem.

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TWO LOVERS

TWO LOVERS

Two lovers by a moss-grown
spring:
They leaned soft cheeks to-
gether there,
Mingled the dark and sunny
hair,
And heard the wooing thrushes
sing.

O budding time!
O love's blest prime!

“Mingled the dark and sunny hair,
And heard the wooing thrushes sing.”



Frederick Charles Chubb, 1897

TWO LOVERS

Two wedded from the portal
stept:

The bells made happy
carollings,

The air was soft as fanning
wings,

White petals on the pathway
slept.

O pure-eyed bride!

O tender pride!

“Two wedded from the portal stept:
The bells made happy carollings.”



TWO LOVERS

Two faces o'er a cradle
bent:

Two hands above the head
were locked;

These pressed each other
while they rocked,

Those watched a life that love
had sent.

O solemn hour!

O hidden power!

“Two faces o’er a cradle bent:
Two hands above the head were locked.”



Howard Chandler Christy. 1904.

TWO LOVERS

Two parents by the evening
fire:

The red light fell about
their knees

On heads that rose by slow
degrees

Like buds upon the lily
spire.

O patient life!

O tender strife!

“Two parents by the evening fire:
The red light fell about their knees.”



TWO LOVERS

The two still sat together
there,
The red light shone about
their knees;
But all the heads by slow
degrees
Had gone and left that lonely
pair.

O voyage fast!
O vanished past!



“But all the heads by slow degrees
Had gone and left that lonely pair.”



Edward Thomas, 1912

TWO LOVERS


The red light shone upon the
floor
And made the space be-
tween them wide;
They drew their chairs up
side by side,
Their pale cheeks joined, and
said, "Once more!"

O memories!
O past that is!

“They drew their chairs up side by side,
Their pale cheeks joined, and said ‘once more!’”



— Howard Chandler Christy, 1899



O memories!
O past that is!

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TWO
LOVERS

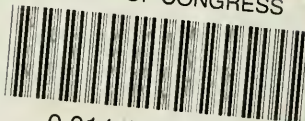
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