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**A TRIBUTE TO GABRIEL WOOLF ON HIS 'JUBILEE' -
JUNE 1994
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGE ELIOT FELLOWSHIP,
JONATHAN OUVRY**

June 1994 saw the 25th anniversary of Gabriel Woolf's involvement with the George Eliot Fellowship, working with and for the Fellowship in its efforts to promote interest in George Eliot's life and works. We are very fortunate that George Eliot is, and always has been an important element in Gabriel's professional life as an actor and reader, for the partnership has been a particularly happy one.

It was very propitious that Gabriel was reading on BBC Radio his highly acclaimed adaptation of *Middlemarch* in an unprecedented 50 episodes just as we were seeking someone to open an exhibition marking the 150th anniversary of George Eliot's birth. We were to discover how fortunate almost at once; we had made our first contact with a man who had been commissioned to present a radio portrait of George Eliot for the BBC and one whose devotion to and understanding of the novelist was to enrich our own work for a quarter of a century.

Since 1969 Gabriel has presented an annual programme of readings in Warwickshire. At first to small audiences for a single performance but, year by year, his following grew - as did the Fellowship. At this annual event many people are introduced to George Eliot and, having had the delight of such an introduction from a master of the art of the spoken word, they go on to read the novels for themselves. In this way, readership grows and so does the membership of the Fellowship. And it is not only in Warwickshire that George Eliot's writing gets this sensitive airing, for, over many years, Gabriel has taken her to festivals all over the world.

George Eliot is most fortunate in her champion. The Fellowship owes him a great debt of gratitude - one which we hope we are still owing when his Silver Jubilee becomes a Golden one in another twenty-five years!

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