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Message of Greeting From The Fellowship President

Jonathan G. Ouvry

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Ouvry, Jonathan G., "Message of Greeting From The Fellowship President" (1993). *The George Eliot Review*. 201.

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**MESSAGE OF GREETING FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP PRESIDENT,
JONATHAN G. OUVRY**

I write my annual greeting to members of the George Eliot Fellowship surrounded by inspiring objects. To my right not one, but two bronzes, John Letts's bust of George Eliot and his statue miniature, the latter next to a beautifully bound 1863 Tauchnitz copy of *Romola* Vol I (what happened to Vol II I wonder?) inscribed 'Blanche Southwood Lewes from her mother Florence, April 1892'. I first read *Romola* when on holiday, but unfortunately not in Florence, and found it hard to understand why it has acquired the reputation of being George Eliot's most difficult novel.

Hanging nearby is a picture painted by Octavia Hill, sister of 'her mother' referred to in the inscription quoted above. A pupil of Ruskin, Octavia Hill is best known in this context as a copyist, but her picture of an old cobbler who 'delighted her by his cheerful faith in the certain triumph of good over evil' is an original work, tending towards sentimentality, but a fine reminder of Octavia Hill's work among the poorest housed of the London working class.

It would be nice to think that in the coming year there will be more good than evil in the world. For members of the Fellowship there will certainly be good things in prospect.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan G. Ouvry". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.