

SILAS MARNER

George Eliot



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SILAS MARNER

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George Eliot



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Introduction

A child ... brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts.'

—William Wordsworth

George Eliot included this quote from a famous English poet on the page before her story *Silas Marner* begins. She wanted to make people conscious of the importance of children. Eliot thought that a child could cure an unhappy person. She believed that a child's nature acted like medicine. In *Silas Marner*, Eliot shows how a little girl, Eppie, cures a lonely, sad man who had no hope.

It is the early 1800s. Silas Marner, a weaver, lives alone in his cottage in a small village. He doesn't like to talk to his neighbours. So the village folk are suspicious of him. They do not know him well. But Silas has suffered horribly. He has had painful experiences. He does not trust anyone any more. He is only interested in his work, making cloth.

Then, one night, a little girl mysteriously appears in his home. Silas is very surprised. He decides to adopt the little stranger. He brings her up as his own daughter. Silas names the little girl Eppie. Eppie becomes a bridge between Silas and his neighbours. He learns to trust others, and love, again. Together, Silas and Eppie have great hopes for the future. But a shameful secret from the past threatens their happiness. They will each have to make a courageous decision.

Silas Marner is a story about a simple man and his loving daughter. However, it is also a story about a way of life that was changing. In England, in the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was changing how people lived. Machines and factories became very

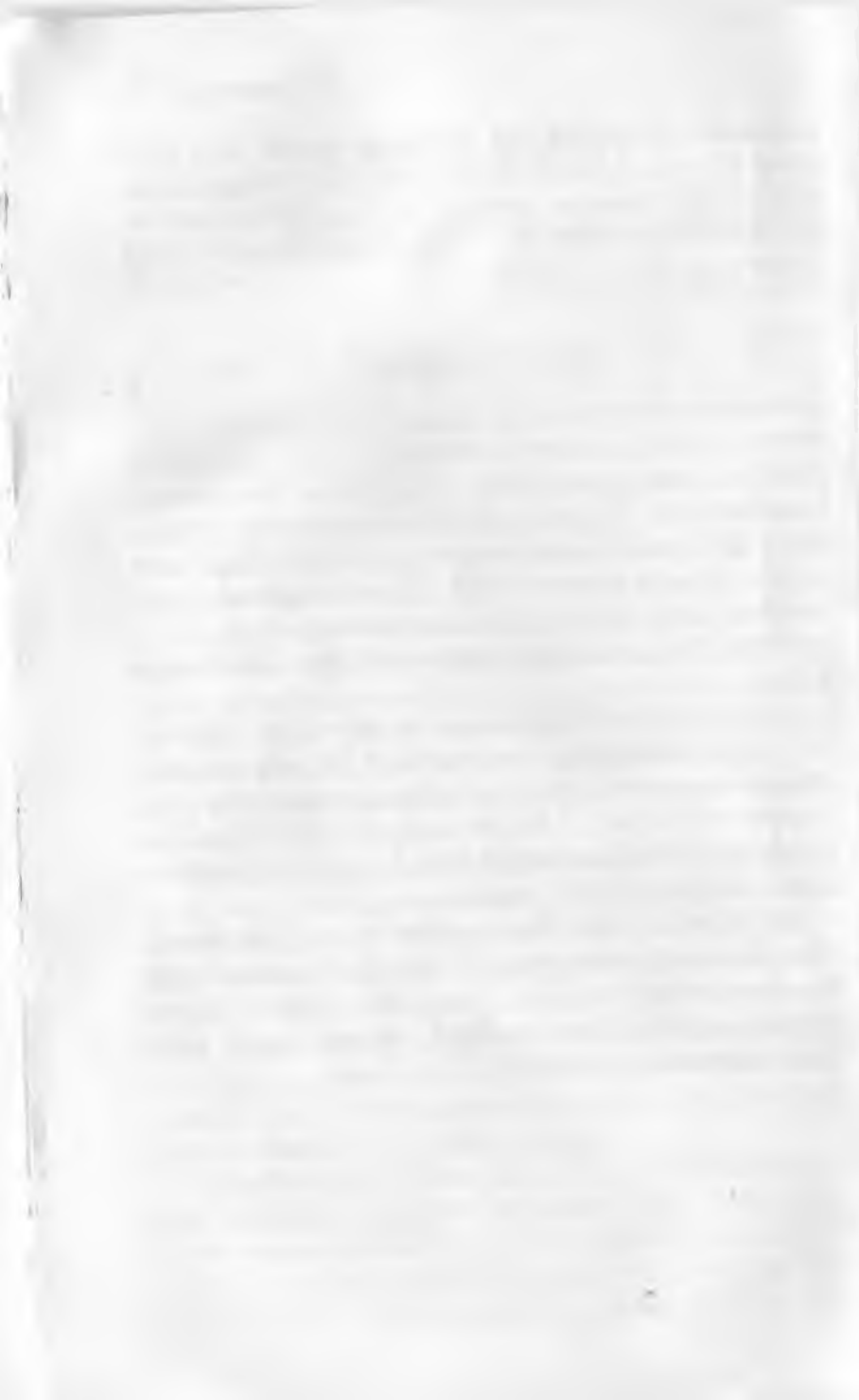
important. Machines did the work people had once done in their cottages. People left their villages to go work in big factories. George Eliot wanted her readers to remember how life was when families and neighbours were important.

About George Eliot

George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Anne Evans. Evans was born in 1819 in Warwickshire, England. Her childhood was spent in the countryside. Evans was a thoughtful girl. When she grew up, she decided to write about important topics. However, in Victorian times, people thought women could not write serious books. So Mary Anne Evans used a man's name, George Eliot, to write. She wrote clever stories with serious ideas in them.

Evans wrote of England as it once was, and showed how it was changing. She looked at the way the past affects the present. Evans wanted people to see how important the past is. Her most famous books include *The Mill on the Floss*, available in Level 2 of this series, *Silas Marner* and *Middlemarch*.

By the end of her life, everyone knew that George Eliot was really Mary Anne Evans. But it was all right by then. Evans's clever books had helped change people's minds. They realized women could write about serious ideas after all.



1

Silas Moves to Raveloe

The weaver of Raveloe

Long ago, in the days before factories, people made Lthread from plants or from sheep's wool. This thread had to be made into cloth. In those days you could sometimes see, deep in the country, small, pale men who, beside the healthy, red-faced country people, looked like visitors from another world. Whenever one of these men appeared, bent under the weight of his heavy bag, the farm dogs looked at him suspiciously. Even the farmers shared this suspicion, although they knew that the bag only held cloth or thread, and that the man was only a travelling weaver.

A weaver in those days was someone who wove cloth at home on a big weaving loom and went from place to place collecting his thread and delivering his finished cloth. While the country people all agreed that weavers were very clever people, in their minds they also connected them with the Devil.

In those days country folk were always suspicious of anything they did not understand. No one knew where these weavers lived, or where they came from.



In a village where everyone knew everyone else, that was quite enough reason for suspicion. The village folk hardly ever left their own homes; and so they found the idea of a travelling workman difficult to understand. Most of all, the weaver's cleverness worried them. Cleverness of any kind was cause for suspicion. Honest people, the country folk felt, were not too clever.

10 In the early 1800s a weaver named Silas Marner came to live in a small stone cottage just outside the village of Raveloe. The cottage was not far from the edge of an old stone pit. Long ago, workmen had dug building stone out of this deep hole, but now it was deserted and full of water.

15 The village boys often heard the strange sound of Silas Marner's loom. It drew them to the little stone cottage. They often looked in, half afraid, through the weaver's window. Usually Silas was too busy to notice them. Sometimes, however, when he looked up from his loom, he saw the boys watching him. He did not like wasting valuable weaving time in sending them away, but he disliked unwelcome visitors even more. So he got up from his loom and opened the door.

25 One look from the weaver was enough to send the boys running away in fear. Perhaps they had heard their mothers talking about the weaver's magic powers. He could, they said, make sick people well, if he chose. Perhaps, too, they had heard their fathers whisper that the weaver had the Devil on his side. These folk did not find it easy to believe in a God of love and goodness, but they found it quite easy to believe in darker, crueller powers. Perhaps this was because, in real life, they had more experience of hunger, pain, and need than of happiness.

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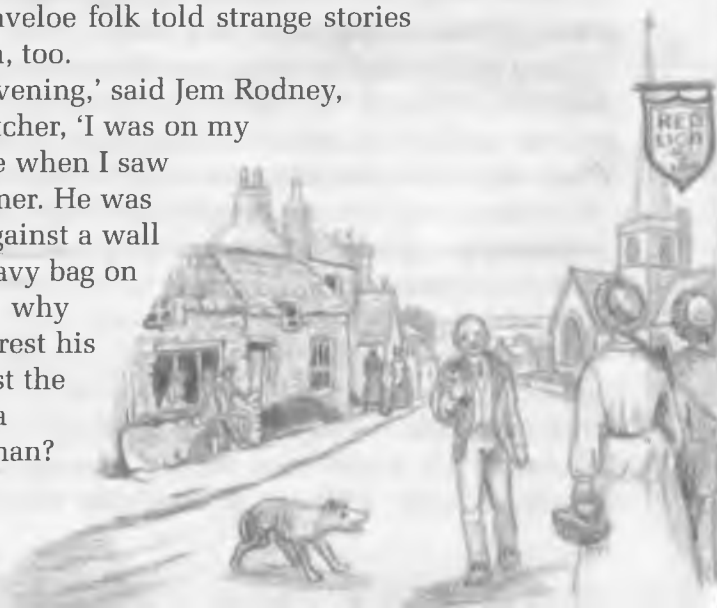
A stranger

Raveloe was a big, important-looking village. Near its centre was a fine old church with a large churchyard where the Raveloe people had been buried for hundreds of years. There were some big farmhouses. England was at war with France, and food prices were high. Because of this, farmers were rich and important men, and gave work to many people.

Silas Marner had come to Raveloe fifteen years before. He was then a pale young man with big, short-sighted brown eyes; but to the village folk everything about him seemed strange. He made his living by weaving, instead of farming like everyone else. Also, he was not a local man — he came from somewhere ‘up north’. His way of life was strange too. He never invited anyone into his cottage. He never walked into the village for a drink at the Red Lion Inn. He never spoke to anyone, except about his work or to buy things that he needed. It was clear, too, that he was not interested in the young girls of the village.

The Raveloe folk told strange stories about him, too.

‘One evening,’ said Jem Rodney, the rat catcher, ‘I was on my way home when I saw Silas Marner. He was leaning against a wall with a heavy bag on his back... why didn’t he rest his bag against the wall like a sensible man?’



Well, he was staring into space, and his eyes were like a dead man's. I spoke to him, and shook him, but he was as still and cold as a stone. Then, just when I was sure that he was dead, he suddenly came to life again.
5 He looked at me and said "Goodnight" and walked away.'

'Perhaps he was ill,' said an old farm worker.

'No, no,' said Mr Macey, the church clerk, who was a man of some education. 'I have heard that people are
10 like that when they have special powers.'

'He cured poor Sally Oates, didn't he?' said the horse doctor. 'Doctor Kimble couldn't do anything for her; but Master Marner made her sleep like a baby, and cured her when the doctor's care failed.'

15 Everyone decided to be polite to Master Marner. 'For if he can cure people,' said the horse doctor, 'he can certainly hurt them too.'

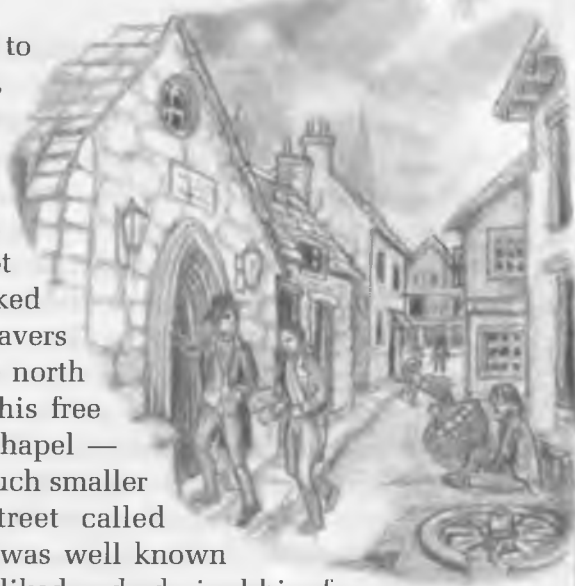
This fear of the weaver's powers kept him safe. People were afraid to annoy him. But he was useful too.
20 Silas Marner's clever hands made him very welcome in Raveloe. Perhaps he looked strange, and behaved strangely too, but he wove good cloth.

And so the years went by; and after fifteen years, the Raveloe folk said exactly the same things about the
25 weaver as they had when he first came to the village. They said them less often, but they believed them just as strongly as before. There was one new story, however. Everyone believed that the weaver had a lot of money hidden away somewhere.

Silas's early days

Although the village people's ideas about him remained the same, Silas Marner had changed, deep inside himself. This often happens when a kind,

loving person has to live a lonely life, away from friends and family. Before he came to Raveloe, Silas Marner was never lonely and not often alone. He worked with many other weavers in a big town in the north of England, and in his free time he went to a chapel — like a church, but much smaller — in a narrow street called Lantern Yard. Silas was well known there, and everyone liked and admired him for his strong beliefs and his pure and innocent life.



One day, at a prayer meeting, Silas became mysteriously still. This lasted for an hour, and many people thought he was dead. Nobody in the chapel thought there might be a medical reason for this strange fit. These people were quite sure that God had chosen Silas for some special purpose.

‘What did you see, Silas?’ they asked when he became conscious again. Silas said nothing. A less honest man might invent something. But Silas was both honest and sensible, although he was very conscious that something mysterious had happened.

Silas’s mother had taught him something about wild plants and their powers; some plants, she said, could cure sick people. Silas had learnt all he could, but after he joined the chapel he felt doubtful about using his knowledge. He now believed that the plants were no use without prayer. Indeed, he was sure that prayer by itself could do wonderful things.

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Silas, William and Sarah

He had one great friend in the little chapel. William Dane was a little older than Silas. The other members of the chapel liked William too, although they agreed
5 that he was not always kind to weaker, less intelligent people. They also agreed that he was sometimes a little too pleased with himself. To Silas, however, William was perfect. The young weaver was a simple young
10 man and rather shy; he was quiet and unsure of himself with people that he did not know well. He admired William because William was never shy, and because he was so sure about himself, his beliefs and the world in general. Silas hoped, shyly, that there was a life for
15 him after death. William was sure that for William Dane at least, God had planned something very special indeed.

Then Silas Marner met a young woman who was a member of the same chapel. Her name was Sarah, and she and Silas became very close, although his old
20 friendship with William continued as before. Sarah worked as a servant in a big house. Silas asked her to marry him; and Sarah accepted. They planned to marry as soon as they had saved enough money. It was a great delight to Silas that Sarah did not mind William joining
25 them on their walks together.

It was at this time that Silas had his strange fit. While most people believed this fit was a sign from God, William Dane disagreed. 'To me,' he said, 'this fit is more like the work of the Devil. Make sure,' he told
30 his friend, 'that you have no secrets hidden deep in your heart.'

Silas did not feel angry, but his friend's doubts about him hurt him deeply. Soon, however, he began to feel anxious about Sarah's behaviour towards him.

One moment she seemed warm and loving; the next, her eyes were full of doubt and dislike. Silas asked her whether she still wanted to marry him, but everyone in their chapel knew about them, and Sarah could not easily break her promise without a lot of difficult questions. 5

At this time, one of the old men became very ill. He had no children of his own, so the younger members of the chapel took it in turns to look after him. Silas and William often sat with him at night. Silas stayed until two o'clock in the morning, then William took his place. This continued for some time, and the old man seemed to be getting better. But one night Silas noticed that the old man's breathing had stopped. The candle was burning low. Silas held it close to the old man's face; the flame did not move. The old man was dead. 10 15

Under suspicion

'Have I been asleep?' wondered Silas. It was four o'clock in the morning. Where was William? Silas went to look for help. Soon several friends from the chapel had gathered in the old man's house. The priest was among them. Silas went home; but he wished he could see William, and he wished he knew why his friend had not arrived at the usual time. 20

At six o'clock, William arrived at Silas's house. The priest was with him. 25

'Silas Marner,' said the priest, 'we have come to call you to the chapel, to appear before the people.'

'But why?' asked Silas, puzzled.

'You will know soon enough,' was the only reply. 30

Nothing more was said until Silas stood in chapel. Everyone was staring at him with unfriendly eyes.

The priest took out a small knife and showed it to Silas.

'Is this your knife?'

'Yes,' replied Silas, still puzzled.

5 'Do you know where you left it?' asked the priest.

'I did not realise I had lost it,' said Silas.

'Tell the truth now,' said the priest.

Silas could not believe what he heard. He was silent.

10

Accused!

15

'This knife,' said the priest, 'was found in the desk beside the old man's bed, in the place where he always kept the bag with the money for the chapel. The money was still there last night; I saw it myself. When I looked there this morning, the money had disappeared — and that knife was there.'

'Someone has stolen the money,' continued the priest, 'and if the thief is not the owner of this knife, who else can he be?'

20

For some time Silas was too shaken, hurt and shocked to answer. Then finally he spoke. 'I am not a thief. God will prove it to you. I do not know how my knife got there, and I never touched the money. Go to my home and look for the money. Search everywhere; I have nothing to hide. You will find nothing there except three pounds of my own money that I have saved up. William Dane knows all about that money.'

25

30

The priest said, 'The proof against you is heavy. The old man's money was taken last night. Nobody was here except you. William tells me that he was suddenly taken ill, which prevented him from going to take your place by the bedside at the usual time.'

You yourself said that by four o'clock he had still not arrived. And you yourself must admit that you were asleep when you should have been awake.'

'I must have fallen asleep,' said Silas... 'Or perhaps I had another fit like the one that I had during the prayer meeting. If I did, then it would be quite easy for a thief to come in without my knowledge. But please, search my home!'



They searched; and William Dane found the little moneybag empty beside Silas's bedroom cupboard. 'My friend,' said William sadly, 'admit your guilt.' Silas just looked at him with big, sad eyes.

15

'William,' he said, 'In the nine years that we have been friends, have I ever lied to you, or to anyone else? God can prove that I am no thief!'

Silas stared at his false friend. Suddenly a thought came into his mind, and he shook all over. In a low voice he said, still staring at William, 'I remember now. That knife wasn't in my pocket at all.'

20

'I don't know what you mean,' said William. The other members wondered where the knife was, if it was not in his pocket. But Silas refused to explain any more. His belief in people had been cruelly shaken, but his belief in God was as strong as ever.

25

The test

The members of the little chapel did not even consider calling the police. They trusted God to judge Silas's guilt — or his innocence. They always drew lots, and they believed that God spoke to them in this way.

30

And so, while the others prayed to God to guide them, William Dane prepared the lots: the white and black balls in the small cloth bag. If the accused drew out a white ball, he was innocent; a black ball proved that he
5 was guilty.

Everyone stared as Silas, with his eyes closed, reached into the bag — and drew out a black ball.

‘My son,’ said the priest, ‘Tell the truth now, and ask God to forgive you.’ Silas looked sadly at William Dane.
10 ‘The last time I had my knife,’ he said in a low, shaking voice, ‘was when I cut something for you. I don’t remember putting it back in my pocket. You stole that money, and you made everyone blame me. You may, however, still live a long and happy life, because there
15 is no God of love and truth to punish you, but only a God of hate and lies.’

‘A God of hate and lies?’ repeated William.

‘Yes — how can He be a loving God if he allows an innocent man to be punished for another man’s crime?’

20 The others listened, wide-eyed; but William Dane said quietly, ‘Is this you, Silas — or is it the Devil speaking through you? Silas, I will pray for you.’

Silas left the little chapel with pain in his heart. His belief in both God and men had been terribly shaken.
25 He was too shocked and hurt to see Sarah and tell her his side of the story. He sat down at his loom. He hoped that hard work would help him to forget his pain. Before many hours had passed, the priest came with a message from Sarah, saying that she no longer wanted
30 to marry him. Silas listened in silence; then he turned away and returned to his work.

A month later, Sarah was married to William Dane, and the members of the chapel learned that Silas Marner had left the town.

2

Living for Money

Silas in Raveloe

For Silas, Raveloe was a different world. He had been accustomed to the old town with its narrow streets and the wide open country around it. Raveloe lay in a valley surrounded by woods. The trees grew so thickly that to Silas they seemed to shut out the sky. He rose in the morning stillness and looked out at the rain-wet branches. Everything seemed strange and difficult to understand. The chapel had been the centre of his life and thoughts and to him it was the kingdom of God on earth.

Here in Raveloe the apple trees were heavy with fruit that nobody troubled to pick. On Sundays the large stone church stood half-empty in its wide churchyard, while men talked in doorways instead of joining in the prayers. The red-faced farmers rode along the grassy lanes and drank in the Red Lion. Men ate and drank greedily after their day's work, while their women seemed to be collecting enough cloth to last them for the rest of their lives.



Nobody here could wake Silas Marner's heart either to pain or to pleasure; nobody could make him sad or happy. Only his work had any importance for him. He worked and worked. He never wondered
 5 why he worked until late at night to finish Mrs Osgood's tablecloths earlier than she expected. At the time, he did not even think about the money that he was earning. He seemed to weave his many-coloured thread without conscious thought, as some insects
 10 work: automatically, like a machine. Working in this way can become a purpose in itself. Silas hated thinking about the past. Nothing in the present required his love or friendship, for he was among strangers. The future was dark, and God seemed to
 15 have forgotten him.

A handful of gold

At last Mrs Osgood's tablecloths were finished, and Silas was paid in gold. He had never earned so much before. He had always worked for a master, who paid him weekly, and he had given a large share of his weekly wages to the chapel in Lantern Yard. Now, for the first time, Silas held five golden guineas in his hand. What did these gold coins mean to Silas? Well, they gave him pleasure. They shone brightly. They felt heavy and comforting in his hand. He did not spend them, but he often took them out and looked at them. The guineas became another part of his life,

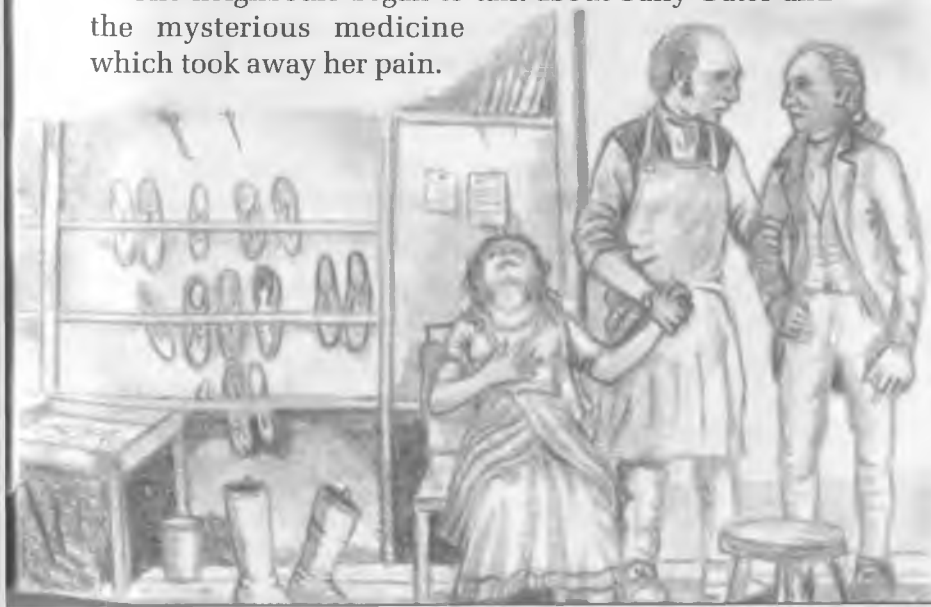


like weaving and eating and sleeping. They were completely separate from his old life of believing, loving and caring which he had left behind.

About this time, something happened which brought Silas closer to his neighbours. One day he took a pair of shoes to the shoemaker to be mended. He found the shoemaker's wife in great pain from a diseased heart. Her side hurt all the time, and she had difficulty in breathing. Silas's own mother had suffered in the same way and he was filled with pity for the sick woman. He remembered a simple medicine made from wild plants which had helped his mother. So Silas promised to bring poor Sally Oates something to make her feel better.

In this simple act of kindness, Silas actually felt for the first time since he had come to Raveloe. He felt that something in his past life was useful in his present one. Did this feeling, perhaps, help him to escape from the busy, automatic way in which he was living and working? Sadly, it did not.

The neighbours began to talk about Sally Oates and the mysterious medicine which took away her pain.



They expected the village doctor's medicines to have this effect — sometimes, at least. But when a stranger from 'somewhere up north' cured someone with a bottle of brown water, clearly something very strange was happening. Magic! And if the stranger knew how to make Sally breathe easily again, he must know many other things too.

Now many people came to Silas's door, and they all came holding money in their hands. Silas's knowledge could earn him a lot of money, but he was too honest to make money from other people's pain. One after the other the visitors were sent away. Then their hope turned to fear. Although Silas assured them that he knew no magic, nobody believed him. Now anyone who became ill or had an accident blamed Silas for it. And so Silas's moment of pity for Sally Oates did not bring him friendship; it made him lonelier than ever.

Little by little, however, Silas's pile of guineas grew bigger. Silas used less and less money for his daily needs. All he cared about now was keeping his body strong enough to work sixteen hours a day, with as little food as possible. His gold had become the most important thing in his whole life.

25 **The hidden treasure**

A man alone in prison may mark a line on the wall each day. Little by little, this simple act can become the most important thing in his lonely life. It was like that with Silas's guineas. Every guinea that he earned made him greedy for more. In his strange new world, far away from everything he had ever known and loved, his guineas had become something real, something that gave him pleasure.

Every coin was like an old friend; he touched them, he stroked them, he counted them... but only at night, after his work was finished.

The floor of the cottage was made of bricks, with sand on top. He took up some bricks underneath his loom. Here he made a hole for his leather bag of guineas and silver coins. He carefully covered the bricks with sand whenever he put his treasure back. He did not do this because he was afraid of thieves. Many village folk kept a bag of money hidden behind the fireplace or under the bed, and few of them ever lost anything. How could a thief spend stolen money in Raveloe, without anyone noticing? The thief would have to run away; and that, to the Raveloe folk, was as dark and dangerous a journey as a trip to the moon.



So, year after year, Silas Marner lived his lonely, busy life while his guineas filled first one bag, then two. His life became harder and narrower, until weaving and eating and money were his only thoughts. He became thin and bent, and he looked out at the world with his big brown eyes like a man who is searching, searching for something very small. He was yellow and dry, like an autumn leaf; and, although he was not yet forty years old, the children always called him 'old Master Marner'.

3

Godfrey and Dunsey

The squire and his sons

The most important man in Raveloe was Squire Cass. He lived in a big red house with fine stone steps in front, opposite the church. There were other farmers in Raveloe, but Squire Cass was a landowner, who owned farms that other men looked after. Life was hard for some people, but not for the farmers or land owners. They lived very comfortably indeed.

The squire's wife had died long ago. That perhaps explained why the food and drink at the Red House were plentiful rather than good. Perhaps it also explained why Squire Cass spent more time in the Red Lion Inn than by his own fireside. It also, perhaps, explained why his sons behaved so badly.

The village people did not dislike their squire, but they sometimes wondered about his sons. They all shook their heads about the way the second son behaved. His name was Dunstan, but most people called him Dunsey. He drank too much, and lost far too much of his father's money in games of cards. Dunsey Cass was an unpleasant young man who seemed to enjoy his drinks more if other people were thirsty. The village folk did not expect much from young Master Dunsey, and they did not much care what happened to him. They all felt, however, that it would be a great pity if open-faced, pleasant young Godfrey Cass became more like his brother. Godfrey was the older brother, and the Red House and all the land around it would be his one day.

Sadly, Godfrey had been behaving badly recently. 'If he continues like this,' the neighbours said, 'he will lose Miss Nancy.' Miss Nancy Lammeter and Master Godfrey Cass had been 'walking out' together for several years, and everyone hoped that one day the two young people would marry. But Nancy had been looking shyly at Godfrey recently. She had heard about his late-night parties and his long, unexplained absences from home. Also, Godfrey had lost both his healthy colour and his open, untroubled look.

The brothers argue

Everyone in Raveloe agreed that Nancy would make a fine wife for Godfrey. They were sure she would take good care of the Red House, too. The Lammeters were rich farmers, but they never wasted anything.

'But unless Master Godfrey changes his habits,' the neighbours said, 'he can say goodbye to Miss Nancy, and that will be a great pity for everyone.'

One late November afternoon, Godfrey Cass was standing in the big sitting room at the Red House with his back to the fire. The grey light fell on the walls of the rooms with their guns and whips and animal heads, for the Casses were great hunters. Godfrey looked sad and worried. He seemed to be listening and waiting for somebody. Presently the sound of heavy footsteps was heard across the large, empty entrance hall.

The door opened, and a heavy-looking young man appeared. He was dressed in riding clothes, and he held a whip in his hand. His face was red from wine and rich food. This was Dunsey Cass. When Godfrey saw him, his face took on a look of pure hate.

‘Well, Godfrey, what do you want?’ said Dunsey. ‘I have to come when you send for me — after all, you’re the eldest son!’

‘Just listen to me,’ said Godfrey angrily. He had been
 5 drinking too. ‘I must give Father that rent money from old Fowler’s farm. If I don’t, I’ll have to tell him that I gave the money to you instead. Father thinks Fowler hasn’t paid yet, and he’s threatening to call the police, so the truth will come out soon. Father’s short of
 10 money, so he won’t listen to any excuses; and you know what he said he’d do to you if he found you helping yourself to his money again. So you’d better get the money — quickly!’

‘Oh!’ said Dunsey, moving closer to his brother in
 15 a threatening way. ‘Why don’t you get the money yourself, and save me the trouble? You very kindly gave it to me in the first place. You can pay it back for me too, like a good and loving brother! If you don’t...’

A hundred pounds

20 Godfrey bit his lip, while his hands closed and unclosed at his sides. ‘Don’t come near me with that look on your face, or I’ll knock you down!’ he said.



'You can't threaten me like that!' said Dunsey; but he moved back a little, all the same. 'You know what a loving brother I am. I could make Father turn you out of the house. I could tell him that his favourite son is secretly married to that nice young Molly Farren. Oh, I could move into your place most comfortably. But I won't do it; I'm much too kind for that ... You'll do anything for me, won't you, brother? You'll get that money for me — because you know what I can do if you don't get it!'

'But it's a hundred pounds!' said Godfrey. 'How can I get a hundred pounds? I haven't any money of my own. And if you start trying to take my place, I can tell a few stories about you, too. Father will chase us both away, and then where will you be?'

'With you, brother! That would be a pleasure — we enjoy our quarrels so much ... But I really would prefer to stay at home here with you, and I know you'd prefer it too. So you'll manage to get that money somehow.'

'I tell you, I have no money, and no chance of getting any!' cried Godfrey.

'Borrow from old Kimble.' Doctor Kimble was their uncle.

'He won't lend me any more, and I'm ashamed to ask him.'

'Then sell your horse.' Godfrey had a fine black horse called Wildfire.

'Who will buy him? I need the money at once.'

'Well, all you need to do is to take Wildfire hunting tomorrow. Mr Bryce admires him. I've seen him staring at Wildfire for a long time. He's sure to offer you a good price.'

'I can't go hunting, I'm going to the Osgoods' birthday dance in the evening and I mustn't be late.'

'Oh!' said Dunsey with an ugly look, 'and Miss Nancy will be there.'

'Keep quiet about Miss Nancy,' said Godfrey.

5 'Why?' demanded Dunsey. 'If Molly dies, there's always sweet Miss Nancy. She won't mind being your second wife — if she doesn't know anything about it! And of course, I can keep a secret!'

10 'Don't push me too far!' said Godfrey. His face was purple with anger. 'Why don't I tell Father everything myself? He's got to know sooner or later. Molly is threatening to come and tell him anyway. So don't think that I'm going to go on forever, paying you to keep quiet. You take all my money, until I haven't enough to buy her silence. Well, I don't care any
15 more. I can tell Father myself, and you can go to the Devil.'

Selling Wildfire

Dunsey realized that he had pushed his elder brother too far. If Godfrey put his mind to it, he could do his
20 brother a lot of damage. Dunsey hid his fear, however. 'Do whatever you like,' he said carelessly.

Godfrey stood there, staring uneasily at the floor. He was a big, strong young man with plenty of courage in a fight or in the hunting field; but when it
25 came to making decisions, he was a coward. In his anger with Dunsey, he had almost decided to tell his father everything. Then he thought of the unpleasant things which would certainly happen if he told his father. Squire Cass would certainly send him away.
30 And what could the penniless son of a country squire do? He could not work, and he could not beg. The thought of running away into the cold, dark world frightened him. Suddenly the thought of selling

Wildfire did not seem so terrible. He did not want his brother to know this, however, so he decided to continue quarrelling. But Dunsey knew his brother too well, and he was waiting for his moment.

'It's just like you,' shouted Godfrey angrily, 'to talk 5
about selling Wildfire. That horse is the only thing I can
call my own. He's the best horse I've ever had. Have
you no shame? No, I don't think you have. If you had,
you'd be ashamed to see Father selling our horses one
by one, while the whole village notices, and laughs 10
about it ... I believe you'd sell yourself, if you could get
a good price!'

'I'm good at getting a good price,' said Dunsey
comfortably. 'If you let me take Wildfire hunting
tomorrow, I'll get you a wonderful price for him.' 15

'You — ride my Wildfire! Never!'

'Well, it's your decision. You're the one who must
pay Fowler's hundred pounds. You received the money
from him, and you told Father that Fowler hadn't paid.
If you don't want to pay the money back, it doesn't 20
matter to me. I just wondered if I could help you by
selling your horse for you.'

Godfrey wished he could tear the whip out of his
brother's hand and beat him with it. It was not fear of a
fight that held him back, but another, stronger fear 25
which was fed by feelings even stronger than his anger.
He said, 'Well, will you really sell the horse, then?
You'll deliver him to Bryce, and give me the money? If
you don't, it's the end for both of us.'

'Yes, of course,' said Dunsey. 'I knew you'd agree in 30
the end. I'm sure I'll get 120 for Wildfire from old
Bryce.'

'But what if it rains tomorrow?' Godfrey demanded.

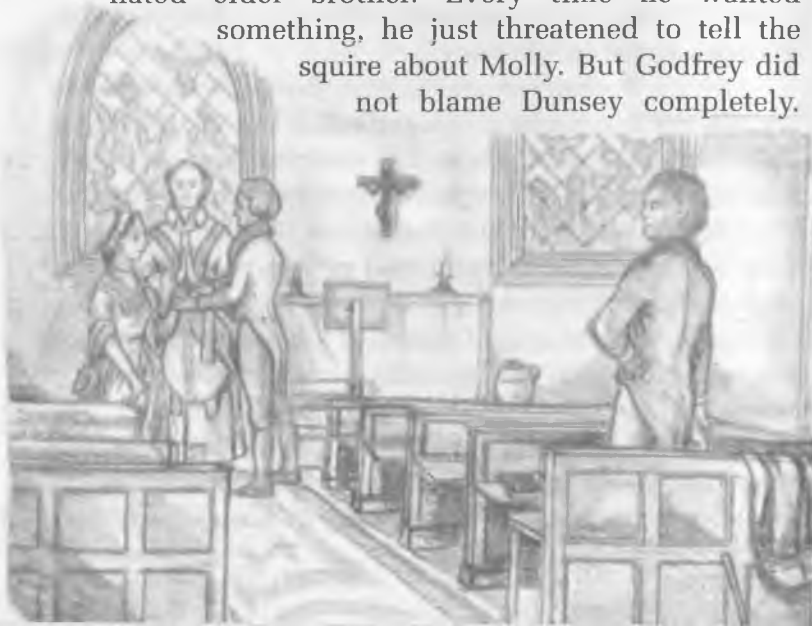
'It won't rain. I'm always lucky with the weather. If
you try to go, it probably will rain! You have all the 35

beauty, brother, and I have all the luck. Together we make a great team — you'll never manage without me!

Godfrey's problems

5 Dunsey banged the door behind him and left Godfrey alone with his problems. Godfrey was always worried now. Even hunting, card playing or the pleasures of Miss Nancy Lammeter's company could not make him forget his problems.

10 He was only twenty-five. In a moment of weakness or pity, he had entered into a secret marriage which was destroying his life. It was not a pleasant story. Godfrey had known for a long time that, by marrying Molly Farren, he had fallen into a trap which Dunsey had
15 made for him. Now he was caught in that trap, like a helpless animal, and he could not get out. Dunsey had seen this marriage as a way of getting money from his hated elder brother. Every time he wanted something, he just threatened to tell the squire about Molly. But Godfrey did not blame Dunsey completely.



'I was blind and foolish,' he said to himself. 'It was my own fault.'

For four years his mind had been full of Nancy Lammeter. She was exactly what he wanted in a wife. Godfrey was a gentle, home-loving young man, and he knew that Nancy could make the Red House warm and welcoming. Mrs Cass had died when the boys were very young, and Godfrey missed his mother's gentle touch. He felt a need for order and comfort which drew him to the Lammeter house, and the sunshine of Miss Nancy's smile. But, although he loved and wanted her, his love was not enough to save him from a foolish action which would shut him out of the world of the Lammeters forever.

The present was bad enough; but if his ugly, guilty secret became known, his future would be worse. Godfrey knew deep in his heart that one day he would have to tell his father the truth. On that day, Godfrey knew, he would lose his father's love and respect — and, more important, he would lose Miss Nancy forever.

'But if I can keep my secret just a little longer,' Godfrey said to himself, 'I can go on seeing Nancy.' Sometimes he found the need to see her so great, he could think of nothing else. That was one of his reasons for agreeing to let Dunsey ride Wildfire to the hunt. He did not want to miss the party that evening, because he knew that Nancy would be there. There was another reason too, however. The hunt was near Batherley, and Batherley was the market town where his secret wife lived. The thought of her was becoming more hateful to him every day. Guilt can fill the kindest heart with hate; and his secret guilt was changing kind, friendly Godfrey Cass into a very unhappy man.

4

Dunsey Gets the Money

Dunsey rides to Batherley

Early next morning Dunsey set off on Godfrey's horse towards the hunt at Batherley. On his way there he passed the old stone pit and the cottage that stood beside it. Long ago, the cottage had belonged to
5 a stonecutter who worked in the pit; but for fifteen years Silas Marner had lived there. The pit was deserted and almost full of dark, dirty red-brown water. The cottage looked deserted too. Then Dunsey
10 heard the sound of Silas's loom.

'Ah!' thought Dunsey. 'So the old fool is at work already.' He had heard stories about the weaver. Some people said that he had a lot of money hidden away somewhere.



'Why have I never thought of this before?' said Dunsey to himself as a thought struck him. 'Perhaps I can threaten the old man, or even better, persuade him — talk nicely to him to make him tell me where the money is? Then there'll be plenty for Godfrey — and me too.' The idea seemed so clever, and so pleasant, that Dunsey almost turned the horse towards home again. He knew that Godfrey would be glad to listen to any plan which would help him to keep his favourite horse.

Then he decided to keep the information to himself. He did not want to give Godfrey the pleasure of keeping his horse — he wanted his brother to suffer. He, Dunsey, could have the pleasure of selling Godfrey's horse, as well as the pleasure of persuading Godfrey to make the weaver lend his money. So Dunsey rode on towards the hunt.

He was lucky, as usual; Mr Bryce was there. 'Hello,' said Bryce. 'Why are you riding your brother's horse today?'

'Oh, Godfrey owed me a little something,' said Dunsey carelessly, 'so he gave me Wildfire. He's mine now. Isn't he looking well?'

After a long discussion and a lot of arguing, Bryce agreed to pay 120 pounds for Wildfire. 'I'll pay you when you deliver him safely to my house,' said Bryce.

The accident

Dunsey wondered what to do. Should he give up his day's hunting? He could go at once to Batherley and wait there for Bryce to come home. Then he could deliver Wildfire and borrow a horse to carry him home with the money. But his desire for a ride was encouraged by his confidence in his good luck, and also



by a drink of strong French
brandy from the silver bottle in
his pocket. And so Dunsey set off with the other
members of the hunt, on the finest horse that he had
5 ever ridden.

Wildfire jumped over the fences, walls and streams
like a bird. They were doing very well until Dunsey
dropped his whip on the ground. He had to get down
to pick it up, and so he fell behind the other members
10 of the hunt. Dunsey hurried to catch up with the
others — and carelessly he rode through some sharp
branches. One stuck like a sword in the horse's side.
Dunsey himself was unhurt, but poor Wildfire turned
over onto his side and breathed his last.

15 Dunsey got to his feet and saw that Wildfire was
dead. He looked around and realised that nobody had
seen the accident. He drank some brandy from his
silver bottle. There was a thick wood on his right. He
could walk through it to Batherley, without any
20 danger of meeting other riders who might ask difficult
questions. At first he thought of borrowing a horse in
Batherley and riding home to Raveloe at once.

He was not too worried about taking the bad news to Godfrey, because he would be able to suggest the idea of borrowing the weaver's money. Dunsey knew that he could persuade his elder brother to do anything.

5

A dark walk home

As he looked around him, Dunsey realized that he was not very much farther from home than he was from Batherley. When a young gentleman like Mr Dunsey Cass has to walk instead of ride, a whip in his hand is a great comfort to him. Dunsey had taken Godfrey's whip without asking. Of course when Dunsey held it, nobody could see 'Godfrey Cass' on the gold handle. They could only see that it was a very fine whip. Dunsey swung it as he walked. All the same, he was glad that it was getting dark. He was afraid that he might meet someone he knew. But he reached the grassy lane just outside Raveloe without meeting anyone at all. 'Lucky as usual!' he said to himself.

10

15

But now the gathering darkness was a problem, for it hid the bad places in the road. In fact, it hid everything, and he had to feel his way along with Godfrey's whip, like a blind man with a stick. Rain began to fall, and the dust of the road turned to mud. Dunsey wondered where he was. 'I must be getting near to the stone pit,' he thought. Sure enough, a moment later he saw a gleam of light coming from the old stone cottage.

20

25

All through his long walk, Dunsey had thought about that cottage, and the money which everyone said was hidden there. Now he turned in the direction of the light.

30

The deserted cottage

With the handle of the whip, Dunsey carefully felt the ground in front of him. At last he arrived safely at the door and knocked loudly. He rather enjoyed the idea
5 of frightening the old man with this sudden noise. There was no reply, however. All was silent and still. 'Has the weaver gone to bed?' said Dunsey to himself. 'If he has, why has he left a light in his living room?' He knocked again, louder than before. Then, without
10 waiting for a reply, he tried the door handle. To his surprise, the door opened. He found himself in front of a bright fire which lit up every corner of the room and showed him that Silas Marner was not at home.

The bright fire was warm and inviting. There was
15 something else, too, that looked inviting. It was a piece of beef cooking slowly over the fire. But where was the weaver, at this time and in such unpleasant weather? 'Perhaps the old fool went out to get some wood for the fire, and fell into the pit,' thought
20 Dunsey. 'Well, if he has fallen in the pit, he has surely drowned by now — and then who will get his money? Who will know where it is hidden? And, if he is dead, who will know if somebody takes it away?'

25 The thought of that money filled Dunsey's mind. He forgot that the weaver might still be alive after all. He began to search for the money. He was not a clever young man, but there were not many hiding places in the weaver's small cottage. He did not need to be
30 intelligent to find the money.

First he went towards the bed. Many country folk hid their money under the bed. But on his way there, Dunsey's eyes travelled excitedly over the floor. In the bright gleam of the fire he could see the bricks on

the floor under their thin covering of sand. One place, only one, was not completely covered; and in the sand beside it Dunsey could see the marks of fingers. Somebody had taken an unusual amount of time and trouble to spread the sand over that place near the big loom.

A thief in the night

Dunsey rushed to the place where the finger marks were; he knelt down and brushed the sand away from the bricks with his whip. He pushed the thin end of the whip between the bricks, and found the two leather bags. They were so heavy that Dunsey realised they must be full of coins. He felt around inside the hole, to make sure there were no more bags inside it. Then he quickly put back the bricks and spread the sand over them again. Hardly more than five minutes had passed since Dunsey entered the cottage, but to him it seemed like hours. Suddenly he thought, 'What if the weaver is alive after all? What if he comes back and finds me here?' He got to his feet with the heavy leather bags in his hands. 'I know what I'll do,' he said to himself. 'I'll go out into the darkness and then I'll decide what to do with the bags.' He carefully closed the door behind him, to shut in the stream of golden light. A few steps were enough to carry him away into the darkness again. It was difficult to walk with a whip and two heavy leather bags. 'Only a few more steps,' he told himself, 'and I shall be out of danger.' So he stepped forward confidently into the darkness.

5

The Stolen Money

Silas comes home

When Dunsey Cass left the weaver's cottage, Silas Marner was not more than a hundred steps away from it. The weaver was coming slowly home from the village with a lantern in his hand. His legs were tired, but he was thinking with pleasure about his supper. Firstly, it was a good, hot supper; and secondly, it had cost him nothing. The piece of beef was a present from Miss Priscilla Lammeter, to thank him for his good work on her tablecloths and sheets. Silas never bought beef, but he liked it, and now he was looking forward to his supper very much indeed. Supper was his favourite meal of the day, because it was after supper that he took out the golden guineas which warmed his heart.

But this evening, after he had put the beef by the fire to cook, Silas had suddenly remembered that he needed some thread for his next day's work. 'Shall I wait until morning?' he wondered. He hated to lose valuable weaving time, however; and so, after he had made sure that his beef was safe, he set out with his lamp towards the village. He did not bother to lock the door. No thief was likely to find his way to the deserted stone pit on a night like this. After all, nobody had ever visited Silas at night before; why should anyone start now?

He returned from his trip, glad to be home again, and opened his door. To his short-sighted eyes, everything looked exactly as he had left it, except that

the fire seemed even more welcoming than before, and his beef smelt wonderful. As he walked about, putting things away, he covered Dunsey's footmarks on the sand with the marks of his own feet. Then he moved his beef nearer the fire and sat down to warm himself.

5

As soon as he was warm again, Silas began to think about getting his guineas out. 'It will be a pleasure,' he thought, 'to see them on the table while I have my supper.'

The gold has gone!

10

He rose and put his lantern on the floor near the loom. He brushed the sand away and took out the bricks. At the sight of the empty hole, his heart gave a violent jump. At first he could not believe that the gold was not there. With shaking hands he felt all around inside the hole. Then he held the lantern inside the hole and examined every corner.

15



As he did so, he shook more and more violently. Then he dropped his lantern and held his poor, aching, burning head in his hands. 'Have I put my guineas somewhere else,' he wondered, 'and forgotten about it?'

When he had searched everywhere, Silas knelt down again and felt once more inside the empty hole. Shaking like a leaf, he got up and searched the room again. His gold had disappeared.

Again he put his shaking hands to his head, and gave a wild, terrible scream of fear and hopelessness. For some moments he stood as still as stone; then he turned and, with uncertain steps, made his way to the loom. He sat down and began to weave; that, at least, was real.

Now that all his hopes had gone, the idea of a thief came into his mind. He welcomed the idea. A thief could perhaps be caught and made to give back the gold. The thought brought Silas new hope. He left his loom and went to the door. As he opened it, the rain blew in upon him. No footmarks could be seen on a night like this. There was no way of knowing who had come, and when. Silas closed the door again and sat down to think. 'I was here all day,' he said to himself. 'I only went out to fetch that thread from the village. So the thief must have come while I was away. Who could it be?'

He searched his memory for anything suspicious that his neighbours had said or done recently. There was Jem Rodney, the rat catcher, who often shot birds on other people's land. More than once he had met Silas on his journeys across the fields, and he used to make jokes about the weaver's money. Silas persuaded himself that Jem was the thief. He did not want to punish Jem; he only wanted to get his guineas

back. Without his gold, Silas was lost. He had to catch the thief and get back his guineas.

Silas looks for help

The weaver's ideas of the law were not very clear, but he felt that he had to do something. He felt that the important people of the village — the squire, the doctor, the priest, the policeman — would catch Jem Rodney and make him return the money. With new hope, Silas rushed out into the wind and rain again. 5

He soon saw the welcoming lights of the Red Lion Inn. He had never been inside the inn before. The Red Lion seemed to him to be the place where the chief men of Raveloe went. They, he thought, were the men who could help him to get back his guineas. He opened the door and entered the brightly lit public bar on the right. 10 15

Silas did not know this, but the bar on the right was where the ordinary customers were in the habit of gathering in the evenings. Here they met to enjoy a drink and a talk after their work. The private bar on the left was reserved for the more important customers. It was here that Squire Cass spent many of his evenings. The private bar was dark and deserted tonight, however. The chief men of the village were all at Mrs Osgood's birthday dance; and, because of this, there were more customers than usual in the public bar. Some of them were people who usually used the private bar, but this evening they were quite happy to enjoy their brandy among the simpler men who drank beer. 20 25 30

The weaver stood there in the doorway, too shocked and unhappy to speak, while everyone in the

room stared at him in surprise. At last the landlord of the inn put down the bottle that he was opening and spoke to Silas.

5 'Well, Master Marner,' he said, 'What's your trouble?'

'My money,' said Silas in a low, shaking voice. 'My money's been stolen. I want the policeman — and Squire Cass. They must help me to get my money back.'

10 'Here, Jem Rodney,' said the landlord. 'Give Master Marner a seat. He's not well — and he's as wet as a drowned rat.'

15 'Jem Rodney!' cried Silas, staring at the rat catcher, 'Did you steal my money? If you did, please give it back to me now, and we'll say no more about it. If you give it back to me, I'll give you — I'll give you a guinea for yourself.'

20 The rat catcher stared at him in surprise and anger. 'Don't you accuse me of stealing your money!' he shouted. 'I'll throw this beer in your face if you talk to me like that!'

An offer of help

25 'Come now, Master Marner,' said the landlord kindly. He came out from behind the bar and took the weaver by the shoulder. 'Sit down and dry yourself by the fire, and tell us all about it.'

'Yes, yes,' said several voices. 'Make him sit down.'

The landlord made Silas take off his wet coat. Then he made him sit down on a chair.

30 'Now, Master Marner,' said the landlord, 'what's all this about your money? Speak out.'

'He'd better not accuse me of taking it,' said Jem Rodney angrily. 'What would I do with all those guineas?'



How could I spend
them without anyone
finding out? It would be easier
to steal Squire Cass's best coat and wear it in church on
a Sunday.'

5

'Quiet, Jem! Let's listen to what Master Marner has
to say,' ordered the landlord. And there, in the warm,
comfortable bar, Silas told his story. 'There was no sign
of anybody,' he finished. 'The bricks were still there,
and there were no footmarks in the sand. I just don't
understand it.'

10

The whole business seemed a deep mystery to the
men. How did the thief know that Silas Marner would
be out of his house at that moment? Some of the village
people felt that the Devil himself must have had
something to do with this crime.

15

'It wasn't Jem Rodney,' said the landlord. 'You
mustn't suspect poor Jem. Perhaps he's stolen a bird or
two in his time, but he's been here in the bar all
evening.'

20

'That's right,' said Mr Macey, the village clerk. 'He can't be the guilty man, so don't accuse him of stealing your money.'

Those words brought back unhappy memories for
5 Silas. He remembered how he had once been accused of a crime of which he was innocent. He began to understand how Jem must feel, and he was sorry. 'I was wrong, Jem,' he said. 'I had no right to suspect you ... Only —' and he raised his hands again to his
10 aching head '— where have my guineas gone?'

'They've gone to the Devil, I'm sure of that,' said Mr Macey. 'The priest always says that the love of money is the beginning of many bad things in this world.'

15 'Bah! Nonsense!' the horse doctor, who did not believe in the Devil, disagreed. 'Let's talk like sensible people. How much money was there, Master Marner, and what did you keep it in?'

20 'Two hundred guineas, the last time I counted them,' said Silas. He sat back weakly in his seat. 'They were in two strong leather bags.'

'Well, they wouldn't be too heavy to carry,' said the horse doctor. 'Let me tell you what I think happened, Master Marner. Someone came past your door while
25 you were out, and found the door open. They came in and helped themselves to your money. You say there were no footmarks — well, Master Marner, I don't want to seem rude, but you're very short-sighted. You don't see anything unless it's right under your nose.
30 I'm sure that I could see footmarks, even if you couldn't. I think that you and I ought to go and tell the policeman. He'll know what to do.'

And so, with two other village men, Silas Marner and the horse doctor set out towards the policeman's
35 house.

6

Godfrey's Excuses

A mystery

When Godfrey Cass returned from Mrs Osgood's dance at midnight, he was not very surprised to learn that Dunsey had not come home. 'Perhaps,' he said to himself, 'he did not manage to sell the horse after all, and is waiting for another chance to do so.' Then, of course, there was the weather. It was quite possible that, instead of walking home to Raveloe in the wind and rain, Dunsey had decided to spend the night in the inn at Batherley. 'He doesn't care about me!' Godfrey thought bitterly. But he had other things to occupy his mind. His thoughts were full of Nancy Lammeter. And so he soon forgot about Dunsey's absence. 5 10

The next morning the whole village was excited about the loss of Silas's money. It was the chief subject of discussion. Who could the thief be? Soon, however, Godfrey lost interest in the crime. He was becoming anxious about Dunsey and Wildfire. After all, they had been away for twenty-four hours, and Wildfire was a valuable horse. He got on Dunsey's horse and rode towards Batherley. 'What if Dunsey sold Wildfire, then ran away with my money?' he thought. 'That would be just like him.' 15 20

On his way to Batherley he met Mr Bryce. 25

'Well, Mr Godfrey, what do you think of that brother of yours?'

'What do you mean?' asked Godfrey, puzzled.

'Why — hasn't he come home yet?' asked Bryce.

'Home? No, he hasn't. I haven't seen him since yesterday morning. What's happened? Be quick. What has he done with my horse?'

5 'Only killed him!' said Bryce. 'They found poor Wildfire, but there was no sign of your brother. Hasn't he been home since then?'

'No,' said Godfrey bitterly, 'and he'd better stay away, after this. What a fool I've been!'

10 Godfrey said goodbye to Mr Bryce and turned the horse's head towards home. He felt that events were catching up with him. The storm was gathering and soon it would break.

Godfrey is anxious

15 Godfrey rode along slowly. 'There's no escape now,' he said to himself. 'I shall have to tell Father the whole story. If I don't, Dunsey is sure to come back and tell Father, just to get me into trouble, too.'

20 For the rest of the day Godfrey was determined to tell his father everything. Like an actor he tried to go over the scene in his mind and decide, word for word, what to say.

25 The old squire was a difficult man when he was angry. He made decisions in anger, and then he refused to change his mind after his anger had cooled down. Often, he failed to notice that things were wrong until they pressed too hard upon him. Then the friendly, good-natured squire became a hard, unreasonable and even violent man. Still, Godfrey hoped that his father would be as ashamed as he was of his unsuitable marriage. Then, perhaps, he would want to hide it, 30 instead of sending his eldest son away and telling everyone in the village about what had happened.

Godfrey remained just as determined until nearly midnight. He went to sleep thinking that he had made up his mind; but when he woke again in the still morning, he no longer felt determined. He thought with shame about Nancy Lammeter. 'Why, after all,' he thought, 'should I cut myself off from her before I really have to? ... I was wrong yesterday,' he thought. 'I was so angry with Dunsey that I wanted to be free of him forever. But perhaps I ought to try to soften Father's anger against him, and let things stay as they are. If Dunsey doesn't come home for a few more days, perhaps I shall think of something.'

The squire's anger

Godfrey had breakfast earlier than usual, but he stayed in the dining room waiting for his father. Everyone took breakfast at different times at the Red House, and the squire was always the last.

At last he came in and saw his son. 'What! Haven't you had your breakfast yet?' he said.

'I've had breakfast, sir,' said Godfrey. 'I was waiting to speak to you.'

'Well,' said the squire, sitting down heavily and cutting a large piece of beef for his dog, 'order my beer. Then tell me what's on your mind.'

Godfrey waited until the servant had brought the beer and the door was closed again, before he spoke. During that time the squire's dog ate enough beef to make a poor man's Sunday dinner.

'I've had some bad luck with Wildfire,' Godfrey began. 'It happened the day before yesterday.'

'Don't come asking me for money,' said the squire after he had drunk some of his beer. 'I'm as poor as a

church mouse just now. That man Fowler still owes me a hundred pounds. He's just taking advantage of me because his farm's so far away from here; he thinks I'll forget him.'

5 Godfrey spoke again. 'Wildfire's dead. But I'm not asking you to buy me another horse. I was only anxious because I couldn't pay you back, as I was planning to. You see, Dunsey took Wildfire to the hunt
10 two days ago, to sell him for me. Mr Bryce agreed to pay 120 pounds for him; but Dunsey rode Wildfire in the hunt, and killed him. If that hadn't happened, I'd have had a hundred pounds for you this morning.'

The squire put down his knife and fork and stared at Godfrey in surprise. Neither of his sons had ever
15 offered him money before, and he could not think of any reason why Godfrey should do so now.

'The truth is, sir — I'm very sorry — it was my fault,' continued Godfrey. 'Fowler did pay that hundred pounds.'



He paid it to me when I visited his farm last month. Dunsey begged me for the money, and I let him have it, because I hoped to be able to pay you back before now.'

The squire was purple with anger. 'You let Dunsey have my money? I won't allow it! I'll turn you both out of the house! Why did you let Dunsey have my money? Answer me now!' 5

'Dunsey begged me for the money, sir, and like a fool I let him have it. But I meant to pay you back, sir, even if he didn't. That's the whole story. I never had any of the money; and I wanted to sell my horse to pay you back.' 10

'Where's Dunsey now? Go and fetch him. He can tell me himself what he's done with my money!' 15

'Dunsey hasn't come home, sir.'

'What! Did he break his own neck then?' The squire sounded disappointed that Dunsey had escaped his anger in this way.

'They found the dead horse, but there was no sign of him. I expect we shall see him again sometime, but I don't know where he is.' 20

Dunsey was out of his reach, so the squire began threatening Godfrey again. 'And why did you let him have my money?' he shouted. 25

'Well, I don't know,' said Godfrey weakly. He was no good at telling lies.

'You don't know?' roared the squire. 'I know. You've done something wrong, and you've been paying Dunsey to keep quiet!' 30

'Go and marry Nancy!'

Godfrey's heart jumped violently. His father's guess was uncomfortably close to the truth. He tried to hide his

anxiety, however. 'Well, sir, it was just a young man's quarrel. If poor Wildfire hadn't been killed, you'd never have known.'

5 'Young men's quarrels — bah! It's time you grew up, both of you. I've been too good to you, that's my trouble. But that will stop!'

10 Godfrey was silent. He was not sure that the squire had been good to him. He felt that his father had given him money, but not love, time or care. The squire, meanwhile, finished his bread and beef and took another long drink of beer. Then he turned his chair away from the table and began to speak again.

15 'At one time you seemed to be thinking of getting married; and if you're still thinking of marriage, I won't stand in your way. Godfrey, you were always a poor, weak boy, and no good at making a decision and sticking to it. Nancy is determined enough for both of you. Come now, she hasn't refused you yet, has she?'

20 'No, sir, she hasn't,' said Godfrey. He felt hot and uncomfortable. 'I — I haven't actually asked her to marry me yet.'

25 'What — haven't you got the courage to ask her? Do you still want her? That's the most important thing.'

'There's no other woman that I want to marry,' answered Godfrey carefully.

30 'Well then — let me make the offer for you, if you haven't the courage to ask her yourself. I'm sure Lammeter will be glad to see his daughter marry into my family.'

35 'Please, sir, don't say anything just now,' said Godfrey anxiously. 'I don't think she's very pleased with me at the moment, and I'd like to speak to her myself. A man must manage these things for himself.'

'Well, manage it then, and try to live a better life. That's what a man must do when he thinks of marrying.'

'I really don't want to marry anyone, sir, just at the moment,' said Godfrey. 'So please, sir, don't say 5 anything.'

'I shall do what I choose,' said the squire. 'I am the master here, and you had better remember that! Now go and tell the servants to get my horse ready; and go and sell Dunsey's horse, and bring me the money. And if 10 you know where he's hiding — I expect you do — you can tell him to save himself the trouble of coming home. I'm tired of paying for his stupid behaviour!'

Godfrey left the room. He did not know whether to be glad that the meeting was over, or anxious because 15 he had not told his father the whole truth. A new anxiety now added itself to his old ones. What if his father said something to Mr Lammeter after all? Godfrey began, as usual, to hope for a piece of good luck to save him from any unpleasantness. What could 20 he do except hope?

Christmas Hope and Kindness

Kind neighbours

The weeks went by, and there was no word of the thief. Slowly the excitement died down. Dunsey Cass's absence did not surprise anyone. Nobody thought of connecting Dunsey's disappearance with the loss of Silas Marner's money. And by this time, most people were much too busy getting ready for Christmas to think very clearly.

Silas himself felt lost and helpless. For many years his gold was the chief purpose in his narrow, cold, grey life. And now it was gone, and his life was empty. The loom was there, and the thread, and the cloth that grew under his hand; but his bright treasure had gone from the hole under his feet. He could no longer look forward to counting it after his day's work was done. The thought of the money that he could earn only reminded him of the money that he had lost. As he sat weaving, Silas gave a low cry from time to time, like a man in pain, as he thought of the empty



evening that lay ahead of him; and all through the evening, as he sat in his lonely room, he held his head in his hands and cried softly to himself.

And yet he was not quite alone in his troubles. Since the loss of his guineas, his neighbours had come closer. They no longer feared him now. Instead, they pitied the poor, lonely man. They came visiting with food and kind advice. Most agreed that he would, in the end, be happier without his money. Silas was glad of their gifts, but he did not find their advice helpful. There were a lot of kind thoughts in Raveloe, but they did not always find the right words to help the person in need.

Mrs Winthrop, the wheel maker's wife, was able to help Silas more than most people. She was a hard-working woman, who rose at four every morning. This meant that her work was finished by midday, and so she was always looking for more work. Whenever there was illness or death in Raveloe, people always sent for Dolly Winthrop. It was natural for this good-natured woman to feel sorry for Silas.

One Sunday afternoon she took her son Aaron and set out towards the weaver's cottage with some cakes for Silas. Aaron was seven years old. His cheeks were like round red apples, and his eyes were wide with fear, for he had never been close to the weaver before. His fear increased when, as they came nearer, they heard the sound of the loom.



Dolly and Silas

‘Just as I thought,’ said Dolly Winthrop sadly. ‘He’s working — on a Sunday.’ They had to knock loudly before Silas heard them. But when he came to the door, he did not seem to mind the unexpected visitors. They came in and Dolly sat down. She removed the white cloth which covered the cakes and said, ‘I was baking yesterday, Master Marner, and I thought you might like some of my cakes. I hope you will accept them.’ She held out the basket of cakes to Silas. He thanked her kindly and looked closely at the cakes with his big, short-sighted eyes. All this time, little Aaron was watching shyly from behind his mother’s chair.

‘Thank you — thank you kindly,’ said Silas; but he could not imagine that the cakes, or even Dolly’s kindness, could possibly do him any good.

Looking at Silas with gentle pity, Dolly said, ‘Didn’t you hear the church bells this morning, Master Marner? I expect you forgot it was Sunday.’

‘Yes, I heard the bells,’ said Silas. To him, however, bells meant nothing. There had been no bells in Lantern Yard.

‘Oh!’ said Dolly, ‘but what a pity to work on a Sunday. It’s God’s own day of rest, after all. Why don’t you come to church on Christmas Day and see the green branches and the candles, and hear the singing and join in the prayers? It would do you good.’

Dolly did not usually talk at such length. She said all this in the same gentle voice that she used to persuade a sick man to take his medicine.

‘I know nothing of church,’ said Silas.

‘Well!’ said Dolly in surprise. Then she remembered that the weaver had come from up north. ‘Perhaps

they had no churches where you came from?' she said kindly.

'Oh yes,' said Silas. 'There were churches, lots of them; it was a big town. But I went to chapel.'

Dolly was very puzzled by this new word, but she was rather afraid of asking what 'chapel' meant, in case a chapel was something bad.

'Well, Master Marner, if you've never been to church before, perhaps it will do you even more good if you start now. I feel much better and stronger when I've been to church. And then, if trouble comes along, I feel that I'll be all right, because I've put myself in the hands of God.'

By now little Aaron was accustomed to the weaver, and he came out from behind his mother's chair. Silas offered him a cake, and Aaron, after hesitating for a moment, accepted it.

'No, no, Aaron,' said Dolly, 'you mustn't eat all Master Marner's cakes.' She took him on her knee. 'It must do the poor man good,' she said to herself, 'to see my fine, healthy child.' But Silas saw Aaron's face as a circle with two dark holes in it.

'Aaron's got a voice like a singing bird,' continued Dolly. 'His father's taught him a song for Christmas. Come, Aaron, sing your song for Master Marner.'

Aaron was shy at first. He hid his face against his mother's shoulder. 'Come now,' said Dolly gently. 'Stand up when I tell you.' Aaron stood up and began to sing in a clear, high voice.

*'I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.'*

‘There,’ said Dolly proudly. ‘That’s Christmas music. And you can imagine what it’s like in church, Master Marner, with the candles and the music and all the voices. It makes me forget all the troubles and anxieties of this world ... The boy has a pretty voice, hasn’t he, Master Marner?’

‘Yes,’ said Silas. ‘Very pretty.’ The Christmas song had meant nothing to him. It was not like the songs in his chapel. But he wanted to show Dolly that he was glad she had come, so he offered Aaron another cake.

‘Oh no, thank you, Master Marner,’ said Dolly. ‘We must go home now. Goodbye, Master Marner; and remember that if ever you feel ill and can’t look after yourself, I’ll gladly come and clean your house for you, and cook you a bit of dinner. But please — stop working on Sundays. The money you earn then will do you no good. Forgive me, Master Marner, but I must tell you this. Say goodbye, Aaron.’

Silas said, ‘Goodbye,’ and thanked her kindly; but he was still glad when she had gone and left him alone with his weaving and his sadness. Her simple words brought him no comfort, because the things that she talked about were outside his experience.

Christmas in Raveloe

And so, even after all Dolly’s kind thoughts, Silas Marner spent Christmas Day alone in his cottage by the old stone pit. The beef for his Christmas dinner was a gift from a friendly neighbour, but he ate it without pleasure. No amount of pity could soften Silas’s pain. Snow fell outside, while the weaver sat with his head in his hands, alone with his sadness and loss. But in Raveloe the Christmas bells rang and inside the church there was a beautiful scene of happy, red-cheeked faces

among green branches and bright candles. And then the happy people went home. They had been to church; now, they felt, they were free to enjoy Christmas in their own way.

At Squire Cass's family party that day, nobody mentioned Dunsey. Nobody missed him, or was anxious about his long absence. This party, however, was only a small one. The big event of the winter was always the New Year dance at the Red House. The Casses had always had a New Year dance, and everyone came from miles around to join in the fun. Godfrey Cass was looking forward to this dance with a wild, mad hope which almost closed his ears to the whispering of his old enemy, Anxiety. 5 10

'Dunsey will come home soon,' said Anxiety, 'and then there will be trouble.' 15

'Perhaps he won't come home until after New Year,' said Hope, 'and then Godfrey will be able to sit beside Nancy, and dance with her, and even get a kind word from her.' 20

'But Molly is shouting for money,' said Anxiety, 'and how will you get it?'

'Well, something will happen before then,' said Hope, 'and anyway, Godfrey will see Nancy.'

'Yes, and what if Godfrey's father decides to ask Mr Lammeter for Nancy's hand in marriage? Then Godfrey will have to refuse, and explain why. What then?' asked Anxiety. 25

'Be quiet, and stop worrying me. Godfrey will see Nancy soon. Let him have his moment of pleasure!' said Hope. 30

Indeed, Godfrey could imagine Nancy's hand in his; but not even the Christmas food and drink and noisy talk could keep Anxiety quiet.

New Year at the Red House

Miss Nancy comes to the Red House

Not every woman can look pretty sitting on a horse behind her father, but Miss Nancy Lammeter looked truly beautiful. She held onto her tall, straight
5 father and looked down with wide, anxious eyes at the snowy ground below. Her dark clothes made her cheeks seem pinker than ever. They became even pinker and her eyes more anxious when she arrived at the door of the Red House and saw Mr Godfrey Cass waiting.

The squire came out to greet her too. He lifted her down from the horse himself.

The house was full of happy voices as Nancy entered. Mrs Kimble greeted her. 'How are you, my dear?' she said, kissing Nancy's cheek. Mrs Kimble had acted as hostess at all the Red House parties since the squire's wife died. She was the squire's sister and she was married

to the village doctor.

'Your box is in the blue bedroom with Miss Priscilla's,' she said. In the blue bedroom,



Miss Nancy found several other ladies busily putting their best clothes on. An old lady with a white cap on came to greet Nancy. She was Mrs Osgood, and she was Nancy's aunt. 'I hope you are well, niece,' she said. 5

'Quite well, thank you, aunt,' said Nancy, kissing her cheek. They were very fond of each other.

Dressing for the dance

At last Nancy was dressed. She stood looking perfect in her silvery silk dress, with pearls around her neck and in her pretty ears. Only her hands were not the hands of a fine lady. They showed signs of baking, butter making and cheese pressing. They were the hands of a hard-working farmer's daughter; but Nancy was not ashamed about that. 10 15

Then Miss Priscilla Lammeter burst into the room. She was five years older than Nancy, and not at all pretty; but she had a kind heart. She dressed quickly and without care. 'Come on, Nancy,' she said, 'come and greet your future husband!' 20

'I shall never marry,' said Nancy coldly.

'Don't be silly!' smiled Priscilla. 'You were born to be married. One unmarried lady in the family is enough — and that's me.' 25

Sitting down for dinner

The sisters entered the big dining room where the important members of the village were standing talking. Nancy looked around at the old room with its high ceiling and fine woodwork. One day, she knew, she could be 'the squire's lady', if she wanted. She had only to say one word. As she looked around her, 30



she became more and more determined not to marry Godfrey Cass. 'I have heard so much about his wild behaviour,' she said to herself. She hid her
5 thoughts, but she blushed very red as she accepted the seat between Godfrey Cass and the priest.

The priest noticed her red cheeks. 'Ah, Miss Nancy,' he said, 'if anyone tells me this is a cold winter, I shall tell them that I saw roses at New Year, shan't I,
10 Godfrey?'

Godfrey did not answer, and avoided looking at Nancy; but the squire had been drinking, and he felt it was his duty to be noisy and friendly.

'Yes,' he said to old Mr Lammeter. 'If I was thirty
15 years younger, I'd enjoy those sweet red roses!'

The others heard, and smiled a little. Just then the sound of music came from the great hall.

'That's Solomon Macey with his fiddle,' said the squire, 'playing my favourite tune. Let him in.'

20

Godfrey and Nancy

Old Solomon came into the room with his fiddle under his chin. He was a small, thin old man with bright blue eyes, red cheeks and silvery hair. He bowed politely to the squire. 'Long life to you, sir, and
25 a Happy New Year to everyone.' He began to play a happy dance tune as he led the way into the great hall.



under the green kissing-branch with its candles and red ribbons, where several village folks were waiting to watch the fun.

‘Hey, Mr Macey,’ said Ben Winthrop, ‘look at young Godfrey Cass with Miss Nancy. What a lovely girl! They make a fine couple.’ 5

‘Young Godfrey’s a fool,’ said Mr Macey. ‘He let his brother Dunsey kill that beautiful horse ... and as for him and Miss Nancy; well, why doesn’t he stop hesitating, and ask her to marry him?’ 10

‘Perhaps he did, and perhaps she said no,’ said Ben Winthrop. ‘Well, if she refused him then, I think she’ll change her mind soon. See how happy they look! Now he’s taking her to sit down — that’s always a good sign.’

But their reason for leaving the dance floor was not a happy one. The squire had stood on Nancy’s dress and torn it. Nancy had to sit down and wait for Priscilla to come with her needle and thread and help her. Godfrey led her to the sitting room next door. 15

‘I’m sorry to trouble you,’ said Nancy coldly. ‘I’ll wait here by myself, and you can go back to your dancing.’ 20

‘Very well,’ said Godfrey. ‘I’ll leave you here until your sister arrives.’ That was exactly what Nancy wanted: so why did she feel hurt? They entered the sitting room and she sat down. 25

'I'm sorry to spoil your fun,' she said.

'Sorry? But why? I've been dancing with you!'

'Oh, you gentlemen have so many pleasures that one dance can mean nothing to you.'

5 'That isn't true, Nancy, and you know it. One dance with you means more to me than all the pleasures in the world!'

Just then Priscilla arrived to examine the dress.

'I suppose I must go now,' said Godfrey.

10 'Go or stay — it's all the same to me,' said Nancy, looking at the dress and trying her best to keep cool.

'Then I'll stay,' said Godfrey. He was determined to forget his anxieties for tonight, and be happy.

Mother and child

15 So Godfrey Cass watched Priscilla mending Nancy's torn dress. He enjoyed every moment in her sweet presence. But all this time, Molly Farren was walking along the snowy road with Godfrey's child in her arms. For weeks she had been planning this moment.
20 Once, in a fit of anger, Godfrey had said, 'I'd rather die than let anyone know about you!' Tonight, she knew, there was a big party at the Red House. 'I'll go there,' said Molly to herself, 'with my child, who looks so like her daddy, and I'll tell the old squire
25 everything!'

The snow fell thickly, hiding the path, and Molly was lost. She was cold and tired; and she reached for the black bottle in her pocket. Slower and slower she walked. She held her child automatically as the
30 brandy and the cold froze her mind. She wanted to lie down and sleep, and forget everything. The snow looked soft and inviting; and so, with her child in her arms, she sank down on the ground under a small tree

and fell asleep; and the child slept beside her. At last her cold fingers let go of the small body. The child's blue eyes opened wide.

'Mummy,' said the little voice; but Mummy could not hear. The child saw a gleam of light in front of her. She turned towards it, and walked through the snow on her fat little legs, straight up to Silas Marner's open door. She went right up to the fireplace with its bright fire, and sat down beside it, smiling at the dancing flames. But the heat made her sleepy, and soon the blue eyes closed, and she slept.

The little stranger

Where was Silas Marner all this time? He was at home, but he had not seen the child. He had got into the habit of opening his door and looking out from time to time. Perhaps he hoped for news of his stolen guineas. Tonight he stood looking towards the deserted stone pit — and one of his old fits came upon him. He stood there that New Year's night, as still as stone, with wide, blind eyes.

When he was conscious again, he closed the door. He felt cold and weak; and he turned towards the fire — and his short-sighted eyes saw something golden on the floor in front of the fire. Gold! For a moment he thought that he had seen his own stolen guineas. His heart jumped violently. Then he reached out his hand; and instead of hard coins, his fingers touched soft, warm hair. He knelt down to examine this mystery — and found a sleeping child.

When Silas was a little boy, he had a baby sister. For a year he carried her about in his arms; then she died. Was this his dead sister? Had she come to life again? For a moment he thought he was dreaming.

He got to his feet again, and put some more wood on the fire. The flames burned high, and lit up the little figure of the child in her old, torn clothes. She was certainly very like his dead sister. Silas sank helplessly in his chair. His mind was full of memories of Lantern Yard. The memories were painful to him, and yet he had a strange feeling that this child was in some way a message for him from that far-off life. For the child's presence by his fireside was so mysterious that he could not imagine any natural cause for it.

Then the child woke with a little cry. Automatically Silas took her on his knee. The child held tightly to him; and almost unconsciously the weaver spoke to her in soft, gentle, half-forgotten words.

He had made bread and milk for his supper. He picked up a spoon and fed her; and she opened her mouth like a baby bird. When the bowl was empty, the child began to pull at her old, broken boots, which seemed to hurt her. Silas removed them, and the child at once began to play with her toes. But the wet boots at last suggested something to Silas. He opened the door again and looked out. He could just see the marks of the little feet in the snow — and a dark shape a little way along the path. And there Silas found a body, half-covered with snow.

The weaver's news

Meanwhile, at the Red House, the New Year party continued. Suddenly the door opened and Silas Marner came in, carrying a child. Godfrey's heart jumped. He had not seen his child for months, but he knew her at once. He fought to control himself.

'I want the doctor,' said Silas. 'There's a woman lying near the stone pit ... I think she's dead.'



It was the possibility of the woman still being alive that, for one moment, made Godfrey afraid. That, for a kind man like Godfrey, was a terrible thought, but all his future happiness 5 depended on it.

‘Who is the child?’ Nancy asked Godfrey.

‘I don’t know,’ lied Godfrey, hating himself.

‘Leave the dear child here, Master Marner,’ said kind Mrs Kimble. One of the servants will look after it.’ 10

But Silas refused to let her go. ‘No, no — she came to me, and I want to keep her,’ he said anxiously.

Then Doctor Kimble hurried into the great hall. ‘Godfrey,’ he ordered, ‘Fetch my boots, please — and will somebody please bring Dolly Winthrop.’ 15

The child began to cry now, and to call for her mother. But she still held on to Silas. She seemed to trust him. Now Godfrey came back with the doctor’s boots. ‘I’ll go and fetch Mrs Winthrop,’ he said. Without listening to the others, he rushed out of the house in his thin dancing 20 shoes.

Soon Godfrey and Dolly were on their way to the weaver’s cottage. As they walked, Godfrey prayed. His whole future depended on this moment.

Bringing Up the Child

Godfrey's secret is safe

When they reached the cottage, Silas and the doctor had already carried the woman inside. Dolly hurried in, but Godfrey walked up and down outside, worrying and praying. At last the doctor came out. 'You were a fool to wait, Godfrey. She's dead anyway — has been dead for hours.'

'What — what sort of a woman was she?' asked Godfrey. His cheeks were red and hot.

10 'A young woman with long black hair. A beggar, I think — but she is wearing a wedding ring. They'll take the body away tomorrow. Come on, let's go back to the party.'

15 'I want to look at her,' said Godfrey. 'I think I saw someone like that yesterday. You go on — I'll catch you up.'

He took only one look at the dead face, but he remembered it for the rest of his life. Then he turned towards his child, who was sitting happily on the weaver's knee. She was perfectly quiet and happy now. Her bright blue eyes stared at him without recognition. She could not tell anyone his secret. This thought gave Godfrey a moment of sadness, then a deep sense of relief. He was safe. The child looked at him for a moment, then her blue eyes turned away from him, and her little hands pulled lovingly at Silas's cheek.

'What will you do with the child?' Godfrey asked.

'Do with her? I'll keep her, of course!' replied Silas.

'Her mother's dead and there's no sign of her father. We're both alone in the world. Of course I'll keep her.'

'Poor little thing!' said Godfrey. He took a guinea out of his pocket. 'Please buy her some clothes.' Then he hurried after Doctor Kimble. 5

'It wasn't the same woman,' he said.

Doctor Kimble looked down at Godfrey's wet feet. 'You young fool, Godfrey; you've still got your dancing shoes on!' 10

Godfrey's heart danced. His wife was dead, and his secret was dead with her. Only Dunsey knew — and he could buy Dunsey's silence. He was free! He could ask Nancy Lammeter to marry him! 'As for the child,' he thought, 'I will find a way of helping her...' 15

Lessons for Silas

They buried poor Molly in Raveloe churchyard. Nobody missed her, and nobody cried for her.

All of Raveloe talked about Silas Marner's decision to keep the beggar's child. Most people thought it was a very strange thing to do. Silas turned naturally to Dolly Winthrop for advice. He showed her Godfrey's guinea, and asked about clothes for the child, but Dolly just laughed. 20

'Eh, Master Marner, I've still got our Aaron's baby clothes. It's foolish to buy anything except a pair of little shoes, for the dear child will grow like grass in May.' 25

The same day she brought the baby clothes, all freshly washed and mended. She took off the dirty, torn clothes, and bathed the child by the fireside. The little one came out of the soap and water clean and shining and beautiful. She sat on Dolly's knee, playing 30

with her toes and laughing, while Dolly dried her bright hair.

‘What a pretty little thing,’ said Dolly. ‘God led her to you, Master Marner. Your door was open, and the child came in across the snow, like a hungry bird.’

‘Yes,’ said Silas thoughtfully. ‘It really is all very mysterious. My money’s gone — I don’t know where — and this child came to me, from I don’t know where.’

‘Ah,’ said Molly gently, ‘It’s like night and morning, and sun and rain. We can suffer and worry, but we can’t change the great mysteries of life. I think you are right to keep her, Master Marner, for I believe God sent her to you. I’ll help you to take care of her.’

‘Thank you kindly,’ said Silas. ‘But,’ he added uncomfortably, ‘I want to do things for her myself too. I want her to know me, and love me. I want to learn to be her father!’

‘Of course you do, and I’ll teach you. Now I’ll show you how to dress her. Here — this little shirt comes first...’

Silas watched closely with his big, short-sighted eyes. The child put out her little hands to him.

‘Look, she loves you already. She wants to go on your knee,’ said Dolly. ‘You dress her.’

Mysterious, wonderful feelings filled Silas’s heart as he took the child in his arms. He could not put the feelings into words. But he felt that he had lost his gold, and that the child had come to him instead. He dressed her, while she kicked and laughed.

Eppie

‘Well done,’ said Dolly when the child was dressed. ‘But what will you do while you’re weaving, Master

Marner? The dear child won't sit still all the time, you know. You'll have to watch her every minute of the day, and keep her out of danger.'

'I'll just have to do my best. Perhaps I can tie her to the loom with a long string.'

'Well perhaps that will be all right. And I'll bring you Aaron's little chair, and some of his toys. Eh, I love my four boys, but I've always wanted a little daughter. I'll enjoy teaching this little one to cook and make and mend.'

'But she'll be my little one, I will be both mother and father to her,' said Silas anxiously.

'Of course,' agreed Dolly. 'But you must take her to church, Master Marner, and teach her about God. Why — I don't suppose she's even been christened!'

'Christened — what's that?' asked Silas.

'Oh dear, Master Marner,' said Dolly sadly. 'Didn't they christen children where you came from? When you christen a child, you take it to church, and you give it a name, and you pray to God to take care of it.'

'Well,' said Silas slowly, 'I want to do the best for my child. And if they christen children here in Raveloe, then I will do as you say.'

'What will you call the dear child?'

'My mother's name was Hephzibah. My little sister was called Hephzibah, after her.'

'That's a difficult name for a little girl!'

'We called my little sister Eppie,' said Silas.

'That's much easier! Well, I'll go now, and I'll ask the priest about the christening. But I will come tomorrow, and help you, and I'll do the child's washing too. And you must let me bring Aaron sometimes. He can show her his toys, and his little dog.'

Eppie's early years

The next week, Eppie Marner was christened in Raveloe church. Silas put on his best clothes and appeared in Raveloe church for the first time. The priest said loudly, 'I name this child Hephzibah,' and Silas sang and prayed with his neighbours. It seemed very different from Lantern Yard; but Dolly had said the child must be christened, and that was good enough for him.



As the weeks and months went by, little Eppie brought Silas Marner closer to his neighbours. He had always counted his other treasure at night, behind closed doors, away from sunlight, and birdsong, and human voices. But Eppie was always reaching out to life, and love, and sunshine, and everyone loved her for it.

Spring came, and the sunshine became warmer and stronger. Silas often left his loom and went out with Eppie to pick flowers and listen to the birds. Eppie was always happy, and Silas's lonely heart shared her happiness.

‘Daddy,’ said Eppie as she brought him a flower. Then she danced away to pick another. As he watched her playing, Silas turned away from his sad memories and found pleasure in his child’s happy little world.

5

It hurt him to punish Eppie. Also, he was anxious. ‘What if she stops loving me?’ he thought. But Eppie soon became adventurous. Dolly was right. The child did not sit still; Silas had to watch her every minute, to keep her out of danger. At first he tied her to the loom with a long piece of cloth. For a time Eppie played happily enough. Then one day Silas left a sharp knife within her reach. While the weaver was busy at his loom, Eppie took the knife and quietly cut the cloth. Then she ran out of the open door into the bright spring sunshine.

10

15

Some minutes later, Silas looked up from his weaving and reached out for his knife. It had disappeared, and so had Eppie! He searched the cottage with cold fear in his heart; then he ran outside to look for her.

20

The coal hole

At last he found her. She had taken off her shoes, and was sailing them like little boats on a small pool of dirty water. A surprised red cow was watching her.

25

‘You must always punish Eppie for bad behaviour,’ Dolly had told him. But Silas was so glad to see his child again that he just picked her up and kissed her. He did not remember Dolly’s words until he had carried her home.

30

‘Eh, Master Marner,’ Dolly said later, ‘I always hated hitting Aaron when he was naughty. But you must punish children when they do wrong. And so I used to

shut him in the coal hole. He hated that — he was afraid of the dark, and one minute was enough to teach him a lesson.'

So Silas tried to teach Eppie a lesson too. 'Naughty Eppie,' he said. 'You mustn't run away like that. You've been a bad girl, and now you must go in the coal hole.'

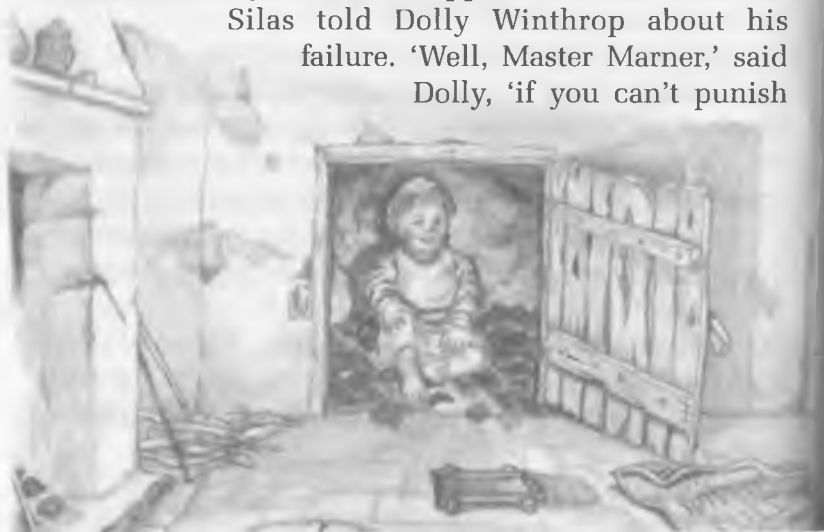
A coal hole is a small, dark cupboard used for storing coal. Shaking like a leaf, he put her in, and held the door shut. For a moment there was silence; then a little voice said, 'Open up!'

He let her out, saying, 'Now be good, Eppie; if you are naughty again, it's the coal hole for you!'

Silas's loom stood silent for a long time, while he washed Eppie and changed her clothes. He hoped, however, that the punishment would save him time in the future. 'Surely,' he said to himself, 'Eppie will be good for the rest of the morning. I shan't need to tie her up again; she's learnt her lesson.' Then he looked up from his weaving, and saw her looking out at him from the coal hole. Her face and hands were black, and she was laughing at him.

'Look, Daddy!' she said. 'Eppie's in the coal hole!'

Silas told Dolly Winthrop about his failure. 'Well, Master Marner,' said Dolly, 'if you can't punish



her — and I don't blame you for that — you must just keep her out of danger. Then she can't hurt herself.'

A father's love

And so little Eppie was brought up without fear or pain. She went with him when he travelled from house to house, collecting and delivering his work. Eppie was a great favourite everywhere and, because of her, Silas himself found a friendlier welcome than ever before. Eppie was a bridge between him and the whole world. Silas cared for Eppie as a gardener cares for a precious plant, and he guarded her just as carefully. He no longer cared about money for itself. Eppie gave him something to live for; a sense of purpose. He looked beyond his money, in hope and happiness.

One person watched carefully as Eppie grew like a flower in the weaver's lonely cottage. Godfrey Cass did not dare to do anything too openly. He was glad that Eppie was safe and well, but of course he had other things to think about. He knew what he wanted, and he was determined to get it. Dunsey had not come home, and people had stopped asking difficult questions. Godfrey no longer saw the shadow of his brother across his path to happiness. Nothing stood between him and his dearest wishes. He rode out to visit Miss Nancy almost every day. His future seemed to stretch out in front of him like a beautiful, golden country. He closed his eyes, and saw himself and Nancy sitting by the fireside with children playing at their feet ... And that other child, beside that other fire, he did not forget her. 'One day,' he said to himself, 'I'll do my duty as a father.'

10

Sixteen Years Later

Outside the church

It is a bright autumn Sunday. It is sixteen years since Silas Marner found his new treasure by his fireside. The bells of Raveloe church are ringing for the end of morning prayers.

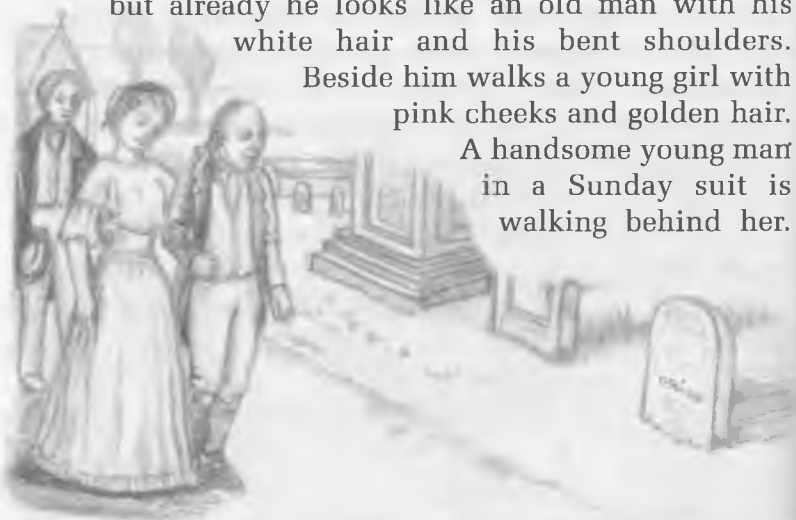
A tall, fair man of forty makes his way down the wide path across the churchyard. Time has been kind to Godfrey Cass. At his side walks his wife, Nancy. Godfrey thinks she is the loveliest woman in the whole world; and perhaps he is right.

Mr and Mrs Cass stop to wait for the tall, straight old man and his daughter in her simple, sensible clothes. Priscilla Lammeter and her father still live happily together. The four of them turn left and walk down a narrower path which leads to a small gate opposite the Red House.

Now here comes Silas Marner. He is only fifty-five, but already he looks like an old man with his white hair and his bent shoulders.

Beside him walks a young girl with pink cheeks and golden hair.

A handsome young man in a Sunday suit is walking behind her.



Does she know he is there? Is she just pretending not to notice him? She is talking quietly to her father.

‘I wish we had a little garden, Father,’ said Eppie. ‘But it would mean a lot of digging for you; I don’t think you could do it, Father.’ 5

The young man behind them spoke suddenly. ‘I’ll dig it for you, Master Marner. It’ll be no trouble for me. I can do it in my free time. I’ll bring you some earth and plants from Mr Cass’s garden — I’m sure he’ll let me do that.’ 10

‘Eh, Aaron, I didn’t see you there!’ said the weaver. ‘Thank you kindly, my boy. With your help, we’ll soon have a garden for Eppie.’

‘But you won’t let Father do any heavy digging, will you, Aaron?’ asked Eppie anxiously. 15

‘I certainly won’t.’ Aaron turned back to the village, while Silas and Eppie went along the lonely path which led to their home, and continued their discussion about a garden. 20

The cottage by the stone pit

As they opened the door of the house, a friendly brown and white dog danced up to greet them. A black and white cat and her kittens looked out at them from under the loom. The room was bright and pretty with furniture from the Red House. It was right and proper, the village folk felt, for the young squire to be kind to the motherless child, and to the lonely man who had given her a home. 25

Now Silas sat down and watched Eppie as she put a clean cloth on the table and put their Sunday pie down upon it. He ate slowly, enjoying her beauty and freshness. She ate slowly too, sharing every mouthful 30

with her animals. But at last she looked at the clock. 'Oh, Daddy, it's time for you to go out into the sunshine and have your smoke. I'll join you when I've washed the dishes.'

5

Silas remembers

10

15

Silas had recently started smoking. He did not enjoy it, and he often wondered why his neighbours seemed to like it so much. But smoking was a Raveloe custom, like christening, and Silas was determined to learn. As he smoked, he thought about the past sixteen years. He thought about his old beliefs and his new experiences, and the two of them began to come together, and to have some meaning for him. He thought too about his conversations with Dolly Winthrop. 'Eh, Master Marner,' she said after he told her his sad story, 'there is so much wickedness and sorrow in the world. We can only believe in God and hope for the best.'

20

'You're right, Mrs Winthrop,' said Silas. 'But there's goodness in the world too, and hope. For the child was sent to me in my time of trouble.'

The stone pit is dry

25

30

Now that Eppie was grown-up, Silas often talked to her about the past, too. Eppie knew from the very beginning that her mother had died in the snow, and that Silas had found her. Later he showed her her mother's wedding ring. He kept it carefully in a little box shaped like a shoe. When Eppie was old enough, he gave her the box, and she often opened it and looked at the shining gold ring inside. Eppie never thought about her real father. After all, she had Silas.

But from her knowledge of Mrs Winthrop, she realized that mothers were very precious people. Again and again she begged Silas to tell her about her mother. The little tree under which Silas had found her was still there. It was always bright with yellow flowers every spring. And this afternoon, when Eppie came out to join Silas in the sunshine, she looked at the tree again. 5

'Father,' said Eppie, 'when we have our garden, we'll have a tree like that, and we'll plant spring flowers under it.' 10

'Yes, child,' agreed Silas. 'It'll look lovely. But we must have a wall, to stop the farm animals from walking all over your pretty flowers.'

'I know, Daddy,' said Eppie. 'There are lots of loose stones over there.' She danced towards the old stone pit; then she cried out in surprise. 'Oh, Father — look! Come and see the stone pit. The water has gone down since yesterday.' 15

'You're right, child,' said Silas, coming to her side. 'Mr Cass has bought those fields, and he is pumping all the water out. He was talking to me about it a few days ago. "Marner," he said, "I shan't be surprised if the old stone pit is as dry as a bone after all these years." And you see, he was right.' 20 25

Talk of weddings

'Father,' said Eppie gently after a time, 'If I get married, ought I to have my mother's wedding ring?'

'Why, Eppie, have you been thinking of getting married?' 30

'Only since last week, when Aaron Winthrop mentioned it, Father. He is twenty-three, and he has a good job as a gardener at the Red House.'

‘And who does he want to marry?’ asked Silas with a smile.

‘Me, of course, Daddy,’ said Eppie, laughing and kissing his cheek.

5 ‘And will you accept him?’

‘Yes — one day. I don’t know when. Aaron says that everybody gets married at some time in their lives. But I told him that wasn’t true. After all, you’ve never been married.’

10 ‘No, child,’ said Silas. ‘I was all alone in the world until God sent you to me.’

‘But you’ll never be alone again, Father,’ said Eppie. ‘That’s what Aaron said; “I will never take you away from Master Marner.” Aaron wants us all to live together. He says he’ll be a good son to you.’

15 ‘Eh, my dear child,’ said Silas. ‘You’re too young to marry just yet. But we’ll ask Mrs Winthrop what she thinks. She will know what is best for you both.’

‘Then would you like me to get married, Father?’
20 Eppie’s voice shook a little.

‘I won’t say no, Eppie,’ said Silas. ‘But we’ll ask Mrs Winthrop, all the same.’

A childless couple

25 While Silas and Eppie were talking together, Nancy and her sister Priscilla were walking around the pleasant gardens of the Red House.

‘I’m glad Godfrey has bought those fields near the stone pit and has started keeping cows,’ said Priscilla. ‘You’ll enjoy making the butter and cheese. It’ll give you something to do.’

30 ‘It may help me, Prissy,’ said Nancy, ‘but it won’t help Godfrey. He still wants a child more than anything else in the world.’

‘Men!’ said Priscilla. ‘Nobody can have everything in this world!’

‘Don’t blame Godfrey,’ said Nancy. ‘It’s natural for him to feel disappointed. He loves children so much.’

She thought about her fifteen years of married life. In the Red House was a drawer full of baby clothes. None of them had been worn, except one little dress, in which she and Godfrey buried their dead baby. Nancy never visited that drawer now. ‘I realise that God doesn’t want me to have children,’ she thought. ‘But was I right to refuse to adopt a child?’

After the Lammeters left, Godfrey and Nancy were talking.

‘I’m just going for a walk by the stone pit,’ said Godfrey, ‘I want to see how the pumping is going.’

‘You’ll be home by teatime, dear?’

‘Oh, yes.’

Nancy did not often join her husband on his Sunday walks. She preferred to be alone with her books, her prayers and her secret thoughts.

‘Why didn’t I let him adopt a child?’ she thought again. ‘He asked me six years ago, and again two years later; and I refused.’

‘I don’t like the idea,’ Nancy had told him.

‘But why? Marner the weaver adopted little Eppie, and she has done very well with him.’

‘Dear Godfrey, he did not go looking for her; she arrived one dark night. We must just accept what God has decided for us.’

Godfrey could not accept it. He knew he had a daughter; but he did not feel able to tell Nancy. ‘The shock would kill her,’ he thought. ‘Perhaps,’ he said to himself, ‘my childlessness is a punishment for my bad behaviour. Well, if it is, I must suffer in silence.’

11

Raveloe's Secrets Are Discovered

Terrible news

Nancy looked up as Godfrey came into the room.

'Nancy,' he began, 'I've just had a terrible shock. I'm afraid to tell you —'

5 'It's not Father and Priscilla?' breathed Nancy.

'No, no — it's my brother Dunstan — Dunsey, who disappeared all those years ago. We've found him!... The stone pit is dry now; and Dunsey is there at the bottom, between two great stones. We found his watch, and my
10 whip with the gold handle. He borrowed it, the day he took Wildfire...' Godfrey stopped. His voice was shaking.

'Do you think he killed himself?' asked Nancy.

'No. He fell into the water and drowned.' Then he blushed, and added, 'Dunsey stole Silas Marner's
15 money. It was in the pit beside him.'

Nancy wanted to take him in her arms and comfort him; but she had a feeling that her husband had something else to say.

'Nancy,' he said, 'in God's good time all our secrets
20 are found out. I've lived with a terrible secret all these years, Nancy, and I can't keep it any longer.' Nancy's eyes were wide with fear. 'When I married you,' continued Godfrey, 'I had a secret. That woman that Silas Marner found in the snow —'

25 'Eppie's mother?'

'Yes. She was my wife. Eppie is my child. Dunsey made me marry that woman — and God knows, I suffered for it.'

Still Nancy was silent. Then at last she spoke, and there was no anger in her voice, only sorrow. 'Godfrey, why did you not tell me all this before?'

At that moment Godfrey Cass realised how wrong he had been about his wife, all these years.

'Dear Godfrey,' she continued, 'why didn't you tell me the truth at the beginning?' Her eyes filled with tears.

'You would never have married me, Nancy,' said Godfrey.

'I can't say now what I would or wouldn't have done, Godfrey, but I can tell you one thing. I'd never have married anybody else. And it wasn't worth keeping your guilty secret all these years — not even to marry me.' There was a sad smile on her face as she said this.

'Nancy, can you ever forgive me?' said Godfrey.

'You did nothing to hurt me, Godfrey, and you've been very good to me all these years. It's Eppie that you hurt — and I don't think you can put that right now.'

'We can adopt her now!' said Godfrey excitedly. 'I don't care if everybody knows the truth at last. I'll be open and honest for the rest of my life.'

'It'll be different now that she's grown-up,' said Nancy. 'But it's your duty to take care of her, and I will help you. And I'll pray to God to ask Him to make her love me.'

'Then let's go to Silas Marner's tonight.'

Visitors at the cottage

That evening, Silas and Eppie were sitting quietly together. Silas felt very tired after all the excitement, but he could not rest. On the table lay his long-lost

guineas. Eppie sat beside him, holding his hands in hers; and he was telling her how she had come to him, long ago.

5 'I lost my gold,' he was saying, 'and then you came to me; and I forgot about my gold, for I felt the need for your looks, and your voice, and the touch of your little fingers, far more than the need for gold. Eppie, you never knew how precious you were to me.'

10 'I know now, Father; and I know that you saved my life, that night.'

15 'Eh, child, you saved mine! No, no — that money was bad for me. It was taken away from me just in time. And now, you see, it has come back, just when you need it for your future. It is wonderful — life is wonderful ... The gold means nothing to me now. I wonder if it could ever mean anything to me again. Perhaps if I lost you —'

20 Just then there was a knock at the door. Eppie ran to answer the door, and blushed as she saw Mr and Mrs Godfrey Cass. She held the door wide for them.

'I'm afraid it's a little late for a visit,' said Nancy. Eppie showed the visitors to their seats, then went to stand beside Silas.

25 'Well, Marner,' said Godfrey, 'I'm glad to see you with your money again, after all these years. It was one of my family who stole it from you, and I feel very sorry about that. And I feel I owe you something too —'

30 'Sir,' said Silas shyly, 'I have a lot to thank you for. I had stopped thinking about the gold, and in any case that was not your fault.'

35 'I don't see it like that, Marner. I hope you will let me do what I think is right, both for you and for me. I know you don't want much; you've been a hard-working man all your life.'

‘That’s true, sir,’ said Silas thoughtfully. ‘Indeed, at one time my work was all I had, when everything else was gone.’

‘Ah, yes, but it’s time you had a rest. Let me give you something to help you in your old age.’ 5

‘We have everything we need, thank you, sir,’ said Silas.

‘Except a garden, Father!’ burst out Eppie; then she blushed and was silent again.

‘So you love gardens, do you, my dear?’ said Nancy gently. She hoped that a change of subject would somehow help her husband, who was looking so uncomfortable. 10

‘Marner,’ said Godfrey, ‘You’ve been good to Eppie. I know you want her to be happy. How would you like her to come to us at the Red House? We can give her a wonderful life there.’ 15

Silas was uncomfortable. ‘I don’t know what you mean, sir,’ he said.

‘Mrs Cass and I have no children,’ continued Godfrey. ‘We have nobody to love, nobody to have our money after we die. We’d like to adopt Eppie, and teach her to be a lady. And I’m sure she’ll always love you, and remember you, and come to see you often.’ 20

Godfrey was not good at putting his feelings into words; and he realised that the words he was using now were hurting the weaver deeply. Eppie was conscious of this. She put her arm around Silas to comfort him. She was just going to lean forward to speak to him when the weaver himself spoke. ‘Eppie, my child, speak. I won’t stand in your way. Thank Mr and Mrs Cass.’ 25

Eppie took a step forward. Her cheeks were red, but not from shyness now. ‘Thank you, madam, thank 30 35

you, sir,' she said, 'but I can't leave my father. And I don't want to be a lady; I don't want to lose all my old friends.' She moved back to Silas again and put her arms around his neck.

5 The whole truth

There were tears in Nancy's eyes, tears for Eppie and for her husband too. Godfrey felt hurt. For years he had kept his secret. Now he had decided to do what he believed was right; and Silas Marner was standing in his way. He spoke again, and now there was a touch of anger in his voice. 'I have a right to have Eppie,' he said. 'Eppie is my child. Her mother was my wife.

Eppie is my daughter. It is my duty to take care of her.'



Eppie went white. But Silas felt a new strength, now that he knew that Eppie did not want to leave him. 'Then why,' he cried, 'did you not tell me that sixteen years ago, before I began to love her? Why have you come to take

her now, when it's like tearing my heart out of my body? God sent me Eppie because you turned your back on her. In God's eyes she is mine, and you have no right to her. When a man turns a treasure away from his door, it belongs to those who take it in.' 5

'Marner, I know I was wrong, and I have suffered for it,' said Godfrey.

'I'm glad to hear it, sir,' said Silas with growing excitement. 'But that doesn't change anything. You can come here and say "I'm her father", but that can't 10 change the feelings that Eppie and I have for each other. She's called me "Father" ever since she could say the word.'

'Please be reasonable,' said Godfrey. 'We're not going to take her away from you. You'll see each other often; 15 and she'll always feel the same towards you.'

'Feel the same?' cried Silas. 'How can she feel the same then as she feels now? We share our food and our drink and our thoughts, every day of our lives. 20 Feel the same? What foolishness! You'd cut us in two!'

'It is wrong of you, Marner,' said Godfrey, 'to stand in the way of Eppie's happiness. I am truly sorry to hurt you, after all you've done for her, and after all I've left undone. But I feel I must do my duty towards my 25 daughter.'

Eppie looked from her old, dear father to this new, strange father who had put the wedding ring on her mother's finger so long ago. She felt more determined than ever to stay with Silas. Meanwhile, Silas was wondering if Godfrey was right after all. Was he, Silas, 30 trying to stand in Eppie's way? For a long time he was silent. Then he said, 'I'll say no more. Speak to the child. Let her decide for herself.'

Nancy was sure Godfrey was right. She knew it was hard for the weaver to choose, but she believed that the 35

child must go to her true father. So, when she heard the weaver's words, she was sure the fight was won. 'Surely,' she thought, 'the child will make the right decision now.'

5 Now Godfrey turned to his daughter. 'Eppie, my dear,' he said, 'we shall always want you to love Master Marner, who has been so good to you. We want to help you to make him comfortable in his old age. But we hope that you will learn to love us too. I know I have
10 failed in my duty towards you all these years; but now I want to be a real father to you, and my dear wife will be the best mother in the world to you.'

'My dear,' said Nancy gently, 'with you for our daughter, our happiness will be complete.'

15 **Eppie's decision**

Eppie held Silas's hand tightly. 'Thank you, sir. Thank you, madam. You're very kind, and I'm grateful. But I can never leave my dear father. We've been together every day since he took me in out of the snow. He says
20 he had nobody in the world until I came to him. What will he do if I leave him now? I don't want to be a fine lady. I like simple people and simple food and simple ways. And —' She smiled through her tears, 'I've promised to marry a working man, and he's promised to
25 live with Father and help me to take care of him.'

Godfrey stared at her with burning eyes. 'I tried,' he said to himself, 'and I failed.' Aloud he said to Nancy, 'Let's go.' He rushed blindly out of the door, leaving Nancy to say the polite goodbyes.

12

The Happiest People in the World

Nancy and Godfrey

Nancy and Godfrey walked home in silence. When they entered their sitting room, Godfrey threw himself into his chair. Nancy put down her hat and coat and stood near him. She did not want to leave him, even for a minute. And yet she was afraid to say anything to him, in case it hurt him. At last Godfrey turned his head towards her. Their eyes met in a look of perfect love and understanding. He put his hand in hers, and drew her towards him. 'There — that's all over,' he said. 5 10

She bent to kiss him. 'Yes,' she replied, 'I'm afraid we must give up the idea of adopting Eppie. We can't make her live with us if she doesn't want to; and we can't change the past.' 15

'No,' said Godfrey. There was new determination in his voice. 'It's too late now. Marner was right about the man who turned a treasure away from his door. That treasure belongs to him now. Well, at one time I wanted to be childless, Nancy; and now I must be childless, against my wishes.' 20

Nancy was silent for a moment. 'Then you won't tell anyone that Eppie is your daughter?' she said at last. 'I'm glad — I don't want to worry Father and Priscilla.' 25

'You're right, my dear. I won't tell anyone. But I shall write it down, and people will read it after my death. I don't want anyone to find out the truth by accident, as we found out about Dunsey. And now I

must help Eppie to be happy in the life that she has chosen. I must find out who she is marrying.'

5 'I have an idea,' said Nancy, 'that it is Aaron Winthrop. I have seen them talking together on the way home from church. I think they are very fond of each other.'

10 'Well,' said Godfrey, 'he is a good, hard-working young man.' He sat deep in thought once more. Then he looked sadly up at Nancy. 'She's a very pretty, nice girl, isn't she, Nancy?' he said.

'Yes, dear; and her eyes and hair are just like yours. I'm surprised that I didn't notice them before.'

15 'I think she started to dislike me when she heard that I was her father,' said Godfrey. 'She thinks I was cruel to her mother as well as to her. Well, I can't change that. It is part of my punishment. I've behaved badly in the past, and I must suffer for it now.' Nancy was silent. She was sad for him, but in her heart she knew he was right. 'But I've still got you, Nancy,'
20 continued Godfrey. 'I was restless and anxious; I wanted things that I could never have. And I was wrong, dear. With a wife like you, how could I want anything more?'

25 'And you're all I want, Godfrey. I don't mind being childless, if you can accept it.' He held her close.

Lantern Yard

The next morning Silas said to Eppie, 'There's a journey that I've wanted to make for a long time. And now that I have my money again, I can do it. We'll set out
30 tomorrow.'

'Where, Daddy?' said Eppie in great surprise.

'To the north — to the town where I was born. I want to go back to Lantern Yard. I want to see the

priest, and tell him that I never stole that money. I want to tell him about our church in Raveloe too.'

Eppie was very excited at the thought of seeing a new place. Also, she was looking forward to telling Aaron Winthrop about it. Aaron knew much more than she did about most things; it would be fun to have this little advantage over him.

Dolly was anxious at first about the dangers of such a long journey, but she was pleased that Silas was going to visit his old home after so many years, and prove his innocence. 'You'll feel easier in your mind, Master Marner,' she said. 'You're right to go. But please take care!'

So, four days later, Silas and Eppie arrived in the great town which Silas had left thirty years before. Everything had changed greatly. At first Silas was not even sure it was the same town. They searched and searched for Lantern Yard. Eppie felt unhappy among the noise and traffic and the strange faces. But at last Silas came to a street that he knew.

'Oh, what a dark, ugly place!' cried Eppie. 'I'm glad you don't live here. Is Lantern Yard in this street?'

'My precious child,' said Silas with a smile, 'Lantern Yard isn't a big, wide street like this one ... The shops are all different. But I know where I must turn to get there.'

'Oh, Father, the houses are all so close together!' cried Eppie. 'How can people breathe here? How pretty our own cottage will seem when we get home.'

'It looks strange to me now, child — and it smells strange, too. I had forgotten the smell — or perhaps I never noticed it when I lived here.'

Here and there a dirty, yellow-white face looked out from a dark doorway. Eppie held her father's hand tightly. At last they reached Lantern Yard.

Look,' said Silas in surprise, 'there are people coming out of Lantern Yard — but it isn't Sunday.' They

came closer. Instead of a chapel, they found a factory. 'It's gone, child,' said Silas. 'This is

Lantern Yard, but my little chapel's gone. They've pulled it down, and built this factory in its place.'

'Come into this little shop and sit down, Father,' said Eppie gently. 'Perhaps the people in the shop can tell us about the chapel.'

20 But they could not. 'The factory was here when I came ten years ago,' said the shopkeeper. 'I'm sorry.'

25 Sadly the two travellers returned home. 'My old home's gone,' Silas told Dolly, 'Raveloe is my home now. And I shall never know if they found out the truth about the old man's money. It's all a mystery to me, Mrs Winthrop, and I fear it will always be a mystery.'

30 'Yes, Master Marner,' said Dolly. There were grey hairs under her cap, but her gentle, serious face was unchanged. 'Perhaps God wants it that way. His ways often seem strange to us, but He knows best, and we must trust in Him, and accept His wishes.'

35 'You're right,' said Silas. 'Since God brought me the child, I have always believed in Him. Now my child says she will never leave me; and I will love and trust God until I die.'



A wedding day

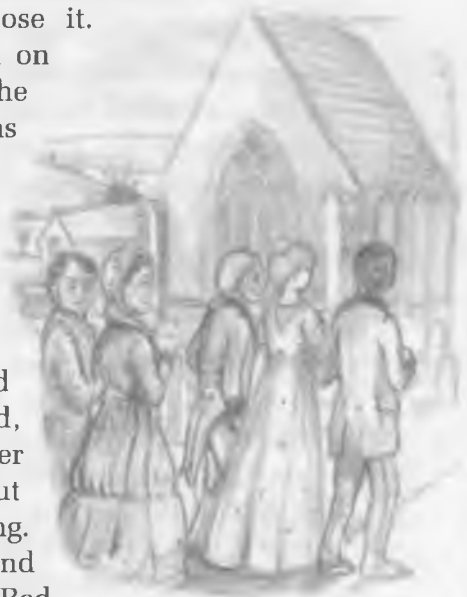
June was the favourite month for weddings in Raveloe. At that time the gardens are bright with flowers. The cows need most of their milk for their young, so people are less busy than usual with butter and cheese making. The weather is warm and the bride and bridegroom — the young couple — and their families can wear their lightest summer clothes. 5

Happily the sun shone more warmly than usual on Eppie's wedding day, for her dress was a very light one. It was a present from Mrs Godfrey Cass, although Eppie herself chose it. She walked with one hand on her bridegroom's arm and the other in Silas's hand. She was a beautiful bride. 10

'Remember, Father,' said Eppie before they went to church, 'You aren't giving me away to Aaron; you're adopting him as a son.'

Dolly Winthrop walked behind with her husband, Ben. There were no other guests at the wedding. But several people were watching. Miss Priscilla Lammeter and her father drove up to the Red House just in time to see the pretty sight. They had come to keep Nancy company; Godfrey was away on business. The village folk were sorry about that. 30

'It's a pity Mr Cass had to go away,' said Ben Winthrop. 'He'll miss the wedding feast at the Red Lion.'



It was kind of him to arrange it — and now he'll miss all the fun!

'What a pity Nancy didn't adopt a child,' said Priscilla to her father. 'I like young people around me.'

5 'Yes, my dear,' said old Mr Lammeter. 'We all feel like that as we get older.'

Nancy came out now to greet her father and sister. The bride and bridegroom had now passed on, out of sight of the Red House.

10

The wedding feast

Dolly Winthrop was the first to realize that old Mr Macey would expect them to stop and speak to him. He was too old to go to the wedding feast, but he was sitting outside his cottage, waiting for the wedding group to pass. So they all shook hands with the old man, while he wished long life and happiness to the bride and bridegroom.

15

In the inn yard the village folk were already gathering for the feast. They were an hour early; but the village folk liked to look forward to their pleasures. They had plenty of time to talk about Silas Marner's strange story. They all agreed that the weaver deserved his good fortune. Ben Winthrop joined them, while the other members of the wedding group went back to the cottage by the stone pit for a short rest before the party.

20

25

Eppie had a big garden now. The flowers shone like many-coloured butterflies as the four happy people came down the path.

30

'Oh, Father!' cried Eppie, 'What a lovely home we have! I think we must be the happiest people in the world!'

Questions and Activities

1 Silas Moves to Raveloe

Which of these sentences are true? Correct the wrong ones.

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 After fifteen years in Raveloe, Silas Marner no longer seemed a mysterious stranger to the village people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Silas Marner's mother had taught him how to use wild plants to cure sick people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 William Dane and Silas Marner were very good friends, until William told lies about Silas. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Silas and William took it in turns to sit with an old man who was dying. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 When Silas was falsely accused of stealing, Sarah decided to stay with him. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2 Living for Money

Circle the right words to say what happened.

- 1 Silas started work **late/early** in the morning and continued until **late/early** in the evening.
- 2 Silas finished Mrs Osgood's tablecloths **earlier/later** than expected.
- 3 Mrs Osgood paid Silas five **golden/silver** guineas.
- 4 The shoemaker's wife was in great pain from a bad **back/heart**.

- 5 For Silas, counting his money gave him **pleasure/pain**.
- 6 Silas hid his gold under the **sand/floor** in his cottage.

3 Godfrey and Dunsey

Match the person to the right description.

- | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| 1 Molly Farren | • | • | a Godfrey Cass's favourite horse |
| 2 Godfrey Cass | • | • | b a landowner, and father of two grown-up sons |
| 3 Wildfire | • | • | c a poor woman, Godfrey Cass's secret wife |
| 4 Dunsey Cass | • | • | d a pleasant but rather weak young man |
| 5 Nancy Lammeter | • | • | e Squire Cass's wicked son |
| 6 Squire Cass | • | • | f the daughter of a rich farmer |

4 Dunsey Gets the Money

Put these sentences in the right order. The first one has been done for you.

- 1 Dunsey set off on Godfrey's horse towards Batherley.

- 2 Later, Dunsey saw a gleam of light coming from Silas Marner's cottage. ☐
- 3 He found the two leather bags of money, and made his escape. ☐
- 4 Mr Bryce agreed to pay 120 pounds for Wildfire, if Dunsey would deliver him safely to his house. ☐
- 5 He knocked at the door and, without waiting for a reply, entered. ☐
- 6 Dunsey set off with the other members of the hunt. ☐
- 7 A branch stuck into Wildfire's side and he breathed his last. ☐

5 The Stolen Money

Match the right answers with the right questions.

- 1 Why did Silas leave his cottage so late at night? ☐
 - 2 Why did Silas put his hands to his head and scream? ☐
 - 3 Why did Silas suspect Jem Rodney? ☐
 - 4 Where did Silas go to look for help? ☐
 - 5 Where did Silas and the horse doctor go together? ☐
- a He went to the Red Lion.
 - b They went to the policeman's house.
 - c Jem Rodney had made jokes about the weaver's money.
 - d He needed some thread for his work.
 - e His gold had disappeared.

6 Godfrey's Excuses

Put the letters of these words in the right order to say what this part of the story is about. The first one has been done for you.

Godfrey remained (1) ^{determined} **timerdeend** to tell his father everything, until nearly midnight. But the next morning he decided to try to (2) **fesnot** his father's anger against Dunsey, and let things stay as they were. When Godfrey said that he intended to sell Wild Fire and give his father the money, the squire stared at him in surprise. Neither of his sons had ever (3) **feedrof** him money before. Godfrey told the squire he had given Dunsey Fowler's rent money. The squire guessed that Godfrey had done (4) **gihmotsen** wrong and was paying Dunsey to keep quiet. The squire declared that he had been too good to his sons. However, Godfrey felt his father had given him money , but not (5) **velo**, (6) **miet** or (7) **acre**.

7 Christmas Hope and Kindness

The underlined sentences are all in the wrong paragraph. Which paragraph should they go in?

- 1 For many years Silas' gold was the chief purpose in his narrow, cold, grey life. But in Raveloe the

christmas bells rang and inside the church there was a beautiful scene of happy, red-cheeked faces among green branches and bright candles. And yet he was not alone in his troubles. ☐

2 Silas told Dolly that he went to chapel, where he came from. The thought of the money that he could earn only reminded him of the money he had lost. Dolly told Silas that she felt much better and stronger after she had been to church. ☐

3 Silas spent Christmas alone in his cottage by the old stone pit. Dolly was rather puzzled by this new word but she was rather afraid of asking what 'chapel' meant, in case chapel was something bad. Godfrey was looking forward to the New Year's dance with a wild, mad hope. ☐

8 New Year at the Red House

Who said these words? Choose the names from the box. You can use some names more than once.

the squire	the priest	Molly Farren
Priscilla	Ben Winthrop	Nancy Mr Macey

- 1 'I shall never marry.'
- 2 'One unmarried lady is enough in any family.'
- 3 'I saw roses at New Year.'
- 4 'If I was thirty years younger, I'd enjoy those sweet red roses!'

- 5 'They make a fine couple.'
- 6 'Young Godfrey's a fool.'
- 7 'I'll go there with my child, who looks so like her daddy, and I'll tell the old squire everything!'

9 Bringing Up the Child

Which of these sentences are true? Correct the wrong ones.

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 The doctor examined the woman outside, in the snow. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 The child recognised Godfrey and held out her arms to him. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Godfrey gave Silas a guinea to buy some clothes for the child. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 The doctor took the child back to the Red House. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Dolly said that she would give Silas some of Aaron's clothes for the baby. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Dolly dressed the baby herself. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Silas didn't know what christened meant. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 Silas was a cruel father. He brought Eppie up with fear and pain. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10 Sixteen Years Later

Match the right answers with the right questions.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 What did Eppie ask for? | • | • a A cat and a dog. |
| 2 What animals lived with Silas and Eppie? | • | • b He had recently started smoking. |
| 3 How old was Aaron, and what was his job? | • | • c She asked for a garden. |
| 4 What new habit had Silas recently started? | • | • d He was twenty-three, and he was a gardener. |

11 Raveloe's Secrets Are Discovered

Who said these words? Choose the names from the box. You can use some names more than once.

Silas Marner
Eppie

Nancy Cass

Godfrey Cass

- 1 'Nancy, can you ever forgive me?'
- 2 'You never knew how precious you were to me.'
- 3 'Eppie, my child, speak. I won't stand in your way.'

- 4 'I don't want to be a lady; I don't want to lose all my old friends.'
- 5 'Marner, I know I was wrong and I have suffered for it.'
- 6 'My dear, with you for our daughter, our happiness will be complete.'

12 The Happiest People in the World

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box.

but when since or as

- 1 'I think she started to dislike me _____ she heard that I was her father.'
- 2 'I had forgotten the smell, _____ perhaps I never noticed it when I lived here.'
- 3 '_____ God brought me the child, I have always believed in Him.'
- 4 'I don't want anyone to find out by accident, _____ we found out about Dunsey.'
- 5 She felt sad for him _____ in her heart she knew he was right.

Book Report

Now write a book report to display in the library or your classroom. These questions will help you.

Title

Type What type of story is your book?

- Adventure
- Classic
- Crime
- Detective story
- Fairy tale
- Horror and suspense
- Mystery
- Play
- Romance
- Science fiction and fantasy
- Short story
- Others

Characters

Who are the main characters in the book?

Main characters

Describe the main characters.

What do they look like?

What are they like?

Story

What is the story about?

Remember not to give the ending away!

My comments

What did you think of the story?

Did you enjoy it?

Would you recommend this book to your classmates?

to live in their village. He works hard to earn gold, but this seems to be all he cares about.

Then, one winter, everything changes. Silas's gold is stolen, and Squire Cass's younger son disappears. Then a stranger dies in the snow and a golden-haired girl appears in Silas's cottage.

Silas adopts the baby girl, and his life is changed for ever. But what will happen when, years later, Godfrey Cass comes to tell Silas a dark secret from the past?

George Eliot, whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, wrote famous stories about English people living in the country in the time of Queen Victoria, over a hundred years ago. *Silas Marner* is one of Eliot's best-loved stories.

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