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"SILAS MARNER"

~~By George Eliot~~

Silas Marner belonged to the narrow religious sect that lived in the quaint English hamlet of Lantern Yard. He was a weaver and engaged to marry Sarah, who was also loved by Silas' best friend, William Dane. In Lantern Yard's narrow belief, sickness was the will of God that should be undisturbed by man's ministering. Silas could not hold such a belief, and was censured therefor.

Silas was subject to strange spells of suspended consciousness, lasting sometimes for hours. During such a spell, while Silas watched at the bedside of a dying man, William carried out a daring plan to discredit Silas and win Sarah. He stole the sick man's money and hid it in Silas's room. This resulted in Sarah turning from Silas, and in ex-communication from the church.

His trust in man and God shaken, Silas went to Raveloe, a village far from Lantern Yard, where no one knew his story. He lived frugally, contracted the eccentric habits which belong to a state of loneliness, and became a miser, wanting only the companionship of his shining gold pieces.

One day Silas found Sally Oates, the cobbler's wife, suffering from heart trouble. He gathered foxglove, which gave her relief. Many then came to his door seeking cures, but he knew none, and turned them away.

Squire Cass, the greatest man in Raveloe and its biggest land owner, had two sons, Godfrey and Dunstan. Godfrey, the elder, collected some rent money and loaned it to Dunstan, who used his knowledge of Godfrey's secret marriage to drunken Molly Farren to extort money from Godfrey. The time came when Godfrey must repay

the money, or suffer disgrace. Dunstan could not pay, so Godfrey let him sell his pet horse, Wildfire. After that meeting, Dunstan was never seen again by Godfrey.

During his fifteen years in Raveloe, Silas's money had accumulated. When it was stolen he was grief-stricken and lonelier than ever. Then, on New Year's eve, Molly Farren, making her way through the snow to take her baby to its father, died at Marner's door from an overdose of drugs.

Silas ran to Squire Cass's house, where the doctor was attending a New Year's eve party. Godfrey accompanied them and kept silent when he recognized the dead woman as his wife. He was at last free to wed Nancy Lammeter. Silas, a lone thing, pleaded to be allowed to keep the babe, a lone thing, and so she became Eppie and he her daddy Marner. And as she grew, his life grew brighter and happier.

Sixteen years passed and Eppie was a beautiful young lady, loved by her lifelong playmate, Aaron Winthrop, a good, steadygoing lad. And then strange things came to light. The deserted stone-pit was drained, and there was found the skeleton of Dunstan Cass, missing all thoseyears. Also Marner's gold.

With the disclosure of Dunstan's crime, Godfrey cleared his conscience by acknowledging Eppie as his daughter and wanting to take care of her. The choice was left to her and she chose to remain in her humble station with daddy Marner, and to become the wife of Aaron.

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