



英 語
簡 易 讀 物

George Eliot

Silas Marner

(adapted)

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英語簡易讀物

SILAS MARNER

by George Eliot

織工馬南傳

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(简写本)

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內容簡介

George Eliot (1819 — 1880) 是英國十九世紀中葉的女小說家。George Eliot 是她的筆名，原名是 Mary Ann Evans。她出身英國中部農村家庭，刻苦好學，尤喜研究哲學及社會問題。著有 Adam Bede (1859), The Mill on the Floss (1860), Silas Marner (1861), Romola (1863), Middlemarch (1871—2) 等小說。她的著作特點在於能真實地描寫英國社會，深刻分析書中人物的心理狀態，且常在小說中探討社會、宗教及道德等問題。

Silas Marner (職工馬南傳) 的內容是這樣的。

十九世紀上葉英國工業革命接近完成，機器紡織工業大大發展，大批手工業紡織工受到排擠而破產，Silas Marner 即是當時被迫離開城市而到鄉下生活的的一個手工業職工。他在英國南部農村一個村庄定居後，過着孤寂的生活。他多年刻苦勞動，積累了一些黃金，不料一天夜里全部被人偷走了。從此他感到萬分悲痛和失望。

在一個雪夜，一個嬰兒突然走進他的屋子來。他出門去看，發現嬰兒的母親凍死在屋旁道路上。原來這個婦女是當地一個地主的長子在城內秘密結婚的妻子，她在被遺棄後來鄉下找丈夫，凍死在途中的。地主的長子卑鄙地不敢認領他的妻子和女兒，因為他正在追求另一個女人，怕事情揭穿了得不到這個女人的歡心。而 Marner 則異常疼愛這個孩兒，將其收為養女，終將其撫養成人；女兒也非常愛 Marner，父女二人，相依為命。

不久，Marner 多年前失去的黃金在他屋旁溝渠中發現了。原來黃金是地主的放蕩的次子偷去的，他在偷走後於黑夜中掉在水溝中淹死了。

Marner 的女兒長大後，聰明美麗，十分可愛。這時地主長子使用威脅利誘手段，想從 Marner 手中奪回她，但她不為利誘，不僅不承認她的生父，不願離開 Marner，且責以大義，使得地主長子狼狽而歸。

Silas Marner 除描寫當時受機器工業排擠的手工業紡織工人的遭遇外，還刻劃了英國鄉村地主階級的腐朽、虛偽與無恥，故事逼真，可使讀者了解當時英國農村情況。

本書是簡寫本，根據蘇聯國家教育書籍出版局出版的簡寫本排印。書後附加較詳盡的註釋和詞彙表，宜於作為大學英語專業二年級及相當程度的自修英語者的閱讀材料。

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SILAS MARNER¹

Chapter I

At the beginning of the nineteenth century hundreds of highly-skilled weavers² all over England had to leave their homes in the towns because of the rapid growth³ of textile mills.^{4 5} They went to districts, far away from the highroads or deep in the hills,⁶ where the peasants supplied them with work.⁷ Some of them settled down,⁸ while others wandered from place to place. The peasants were always more or less⁹ suspicious of¹⁰ them, because, in those days, any form of art or skill was suspicious. Moreover, the simple uneducated peasants, who knew nothing outside their own village and the work in the field, were afraid of these newcomers whose home and origin were unknown to them.¹¹ That is why most of the weavers who settled in the villages lived there lonely and friendless to the end of their days.¹² Even the dogs barked fiercely at them when they passed some cottage or farmhouse, for they were generally pale and thin and looked a different race of men¹³ from the physically strong peasants.

Silas Marner who settled in the village of Raveloe,¹⁴ was one of the hundreds of such linen-weavers who left the towns at that time and went to look for work in the country.¹⁵

He lived and worked in a stone cottage not far from the village. His cottage stood near a stone-pit which nobody had worked for many years.¹⁶ The deep holes or pits were always full of water now, even in summer. So the place where the cottage stood was called the Stone-pits.

Silas Marner lived there alone, working at his loom¹⁷ from morning till night even on Sundays when the villagers were at church.¹⁸ He left his cottage only when he needed a new supply of linen thread, or when he went with the finished cloth to some farm-house or cottage to receive his payment.¹⁹

Silas had no friends in the village and he never invited anybody to his cottage. Nor did he go to drink a pint of ale²⁰ at the Rainbow²¹ or²² drop in at a neighbour's house to have a friendly talk. As time went on,²³ the villagers became accustomed to²⁴ meet the weaver on the road, to greet him and pass on.²⁵ Nobody stopped to talk with this tall bent man with a heavy bag on his back. He had large brown short-sighted eyes.²⁶ He saw a thing clearly only when he held it very near. It may be that he did not always recognize the people whom he met in the lane. They were afraid of him because, they said, his eyes were strange and unearthly when he turned to look at them.

But the villagers were afraid of Silas Marner for more reasons than this.²⁷ The mere fact that he was a skilled

weaver and lived alone at the Stone-pits made them suspicious of him. Besides, Silas did not go to church,²⁸ which also counted against him in the eyes of the villagers.²⁹ But most important of all was the fact that Marner was subject to fits of abstraction which came on him from time to time.³⁰ He had suffered from this strange illness³¹ since childhood.

In the first or second year of his life in Raveloe, Jem Rodney,³² the hunter, saw the weaver overcome by one of these fits³³ in the road. Jem was going home one evening when he saw Marner standing motionless near a stile with a heavy bag on his back. He thought the weaver had stopped to rest; but then, why did he not put the bag on the stile? When Jem went up to him he saw that Marner's eyes were like a dead man's eyes, looking vacantly at nothing. Jem spoke to him and shook him, but the weaver seemed to hear and feel nothing. His hands held the bag as if³⁴ they were made of iron. "The weaver's dead,"³⁵ thought Jem, but at that moment Silas woke up, said "Good night," and walked off.

All this made the uneducated peasants believe that there was something supernatural about Marner. His strange conduct in the road was discussed by everybody in the village and it was explained in many different ways. Some people thought that he was half-crazy, while others said it might be an illness that suddenly

came over him.³⁶ However the general opinion³⁷ was that he had learnt witchcraft and that his soul left his body during the fits and went to consult the devil.³⁸ They even believed that he had the power to hurt people and animals, if he wanted to. The result was that they talked with him as little as possible³⁹ and avoided him whenever they could.

Silas's strange conduct might have caused the villagers to drive him away long ago;⁴⁰ but there was no other weaver in or near the village at that time; besides, the cloth he wove was excellent and the measure was never short, and these good qualities⁴¹ of the weaver counterbalanced their suspicions of him. So he always got lots of weaving to do from the farmers' wives and sometimes from the poor cottagers too. He had discovered long ago that work helped him to forget his loneliness, so he worked more and more.

He began to save the gold that he got for his work and spend only the silver. He hid the gold in a hole in the floor under the loom. Year by year his gold pieces grew in number.⁴² As time went on he began to love his money more and more, until there was only one purpose in his work—to get more gold pieces, and only one pleasure in his life—to touch them and count them when the day's work was done.

As the years went on, everybody in and around Raveloe knew that he had a lot of money hidden away

somewhere, since he spent very much less than he got and continued to live like a poor man. Nobody knew anything more about him: where he came from or how he had lived before coming to the Stone-pits. And these long years of monotonous work made Silas himself almost forget his former life in the town; at least⁴³ he had stopped thinking about it long ago.

So things went on⁴⁴ for fifteen years. Then suddenly there came a great change over his life, and his history became closely connected with the life of his neighbours

Chapter II

The greatest man in Raveloe was Squire Cass,¹ who lived in a large house, known as the Red House, nearly opposite the church. He was the only one among the small land-owners of the district who had tenants and was regarded by them as a lord. During the years of the Napoleonic Wars² many small land-owners like Squire Cass became very rich.³ They ate and drank freely and invited their friends and neighbours to visit them. The roads in the country were bad and travelling was difficult in those days. So the visits lasted for days and weeks, as a short stay was not worth the risk of coming through the mud and water.

For some years there had been no mistress at the Red House, for Squire Cass's wife was dead. He had four sons, two of whom were grown up.⁴ The eldest son,

Godfrey⁶, who was to get all the land after his father's death, was a fine, open-faced, good-natured young man, but everybody knew that he was too much under the influence of⁶ his younger brother, Dunstan,⁷ who was a hopeless drunkard.⁸ Raveloe was not a place where public opinion was over-strict, but it was thought a weakness in the Squire that he kept both his grown-up sons at home in idleness.⁹ The neighbours said it did not matter what became of Dunstan,¹⁰ whom nobody liked, but they would be sorry if Godfrey took the same road with his brother, as he had seemed to be doing during the last two or three years. If he went on that way, he would lose the respect of Miss Nancy Lammeter,¹¹ the daughter of another rich farmer in Raveloe.

Dunstan spent all his own money as well as¹² his brother's on drink and stayed away from home for days and weeks at a time.¹³ The brothers often went together to the town of Batherley,¹⁴ some twenty or thirty miles away, where they met other rich young men who had nothing to do but spend their fathers' money. Godfrey soon got tired of such a life, but not until he had thoughtlessly followed his brother's advice¹⁵ and secretly married Molly Farren,¹⁶ a girl he did not love.

When he understood that he had made a mistake, it was too late. Molly was poor and uneducated, while he was a rich man's son, and his father expected him to marry a rich man's daughter. He soon deserted his

wife and only gave small sums of money¹⁷ to her and her child when he happened to be in Batherley. He had married her because he had been sorry for her, but later he began to hate her. Being a man with a weak character,¹⁸ he did not think of the wrong he had done to the poor girl, he thought only of himself. It may have been for this reason that she began to drink. She hated him now and wanted to revenge herself on him.¹⁹

Godfrey understood too late that it had been his brother's clever plan to put him into such a position. Dunstan had a terrible power over him now. He could force Godfrey to give him money at any time, for he only had to say: "If you don't give me some money, I'll tell father about your marriage."

So far²⁰ nobody in Raveloe had heard of the marriage. Squire Cass would have driven Godfrey from home if he had known about it. According to public opinion the Squire's eldest son was sowing his wild oats,²¹ but if he didn't turn over a new leaf²² soon, he would have to say good-bye to Miss Nancy.²³ Everybody saw that she had not been so friendly towards him since the year he had spent so much of his time in Batherley, not coming home for weeks sometimes. The more Godfrey thought about Nancy, the more he wanted to undo the past.²⁴ He was both sorry and angry. He was sorry that now he could never ask Nancy to marry him, although he loved her, and angry with his brother for having spoilt his life.²⁵

It seemed to him that all hope of a better future was lost to him. Sooner or later²⁶ his father would find out about the marriage and then he would have to leave his home and friends forever. As he had never worked or learnt any trade, he would starve if his father's support were taken away from him.

Chapter III

One November afternoon in the fifteenth year of Silas Marner's life in Raveloe, Godfrey Cass was standing in the best room of his father's house with his back to the fire, his hands in his pockets and a serious expression on his face.¹ He seemed to be waiting and listening for somebody to come, and soon the sound of a heavy step was heard in the large empty front hall.

The door opened, and a dark heavy-looking young man entered. It was Godfrey's younger brother Dunstan or Dunsey, as everybody called him. It was clear that he had been drinking, for his face was red, and Godfrey looked at him with hate.

Godfrey had many reasons for hating his brother. This afternoon he wanted to make Dunstan pay back a certain sum of money—no less than a hundred pounds—which he had given him about a month ago. The money had not been Godfrey's own. It was the year's rent from one of the tenants, Fowler,² which Godfrey was to have handed over to the Squire. But when Dunstan

heard that Godfrey had the money, he took it from him as a loan, promising to pay it back soon. Not knowing that the tenant had already paid the rent to Godfrey, the Squire was planning to send for it³ that week. Godfrey wanted to get the money back from Dunstan before his father should find out the truth.

"Well, Master Godfrey,⁴ what do you want?" said Dunsey as he came in. "You are older and richer than I am, so of course I was obliged to come when you sent for me."⁵

"This is what I want," said Godfrey, "if you are not too drunk to listen. I must either hand over that tenant's rent to the Squire, or tell him I gave it to you. He's going to send for the rent, and then it will all be out⁶ whether I tell him or not. Only this morning he said that Fowler must pay the rent this week. The Squire's short of money⁷ just now, and you know what will happen if he finds out that you've taken his money again and spent it."

"Oh!" said Dunsey, coming nearer to his brother and looking in his face. "Why don't you get the money yourself? Since you were kind enough to hand it over to me, you'll not refuse to pay it back for me. It was your brotherly love that made you do it, you know."

"Don't come near me or I'll knock you down!"⁸ said Godfrey angrily.

"But you won't tell him that I took it, will you?"

said Dunsey, turning away. "Oh, no, you won't, because I might tell the Squire how his eldest son married that nice young woman Molly Farren in Batherley, and was very unhappy because he couldn't live with his drunken wife. Then I'd soon step into your shoes and be as comfortable as could be.⁹ But you see I don't do it. I'm so kind, you see. You'll do anything for me. You'll get the hundred pounds and give them to the Squire. I know you will."

"How can I get the money?" said Godfrey. "I haven't got a shilling in my pocket. And it's a lie that you'd step into my place. If you begin telling stories,¹⁰ I'll tell on you.¹¹ Your fate won't be better than mine. If the Squire sends me away, he'll do the same with you. Bob's my father's favourite,¹² you know that very well. He'll be glad to get rid of you.¹³"

"It would be very pleasant to go in your company,"¹⁴ said Dunsey ironically. "You're such a good-looking brother and I shouldn't know what to do without you. But you prefer that we should stay at home together, I know you do. So you'll manage to get that little sum of money, and I'll say good-bye, though I'm sorry to go."

Dunstan was turning to go, but Godfrey held him by the arm¹⁵ and said angrily, "I tell you I have no money. I can get no money."

"Borrow some," said Dunsey.

"I tell you I can't. Nobody will lend me any more," said Godfrey.

“Well, then,” said Dunsey, “sell your horse.”

“Yes, that’s easy to say. I must have the money at once,” said Godfrey.

“Well, you’ll only have to ride him to the hunt¹⁶ tomorrow morning. There’ll be some young men there who’ll gladly buy him,” advised Dunstan.

“May be there will be,” said Godfrey, “but I’m going to Mrs. Osgood’s¹⁷ birthday dance¹⁸ tomorrow.”

“Oh!” said Dunsey, turning his head on one side and speaking in a high voice, “and sweet Miss Nancy’s coming and you’ll dance with her and get into favour once more¹⁹ and promise never to do anything bad again.”

“Hold your tongue about Miss Nancy,²⁰ you fool,” said Godfrey.

“What for?”²¹ cried Dunsey. “You’ve a very good chance to get friendly with Miss Nancy again,²² for, if Molly should drink too much and die, Miss Nancy will be your second wife, if she doesn’t know the truth. And you’ve got a good-natured brother who’ll keep your secret for you because you’ve been so very kind to him,” he said with irony in his voice and hatred in his eyes.

“I’ll tell you what it is,” said Godfrey after a pause, his face turning pale with anger, “my patience is nearly at an end.²³ I think I’ll tell my father everything myself. I shall get you off my back²⁴ even if I get nothing else. And after all²⁵ he’ll know everything some time. She’s been threatening to come herself²⁶ and