

This marvellous woman began life among the ranks of the people. Her true name, as everyone knows, was Mary Ann Evans. She was born at South Farm, in Colton parish, Warwickshire, England, November 22, 1819. The first twenty years of her life, except what time she was at school, were spent at Griff House, an old-fashioned, commodious and substantial dwelling, pleasantly surrounded by lawns and gardens. Her father, Robt. Evans, was originally a carpenter, afterward became a forester, and still later rose to the position of land agent. He was a man of strong personality, and was so respected and trusted by his employers and all who knew him, that his name became a synonym for trust-worthiness throughout the county. Different sides of his character have been sketched in the delineation of Caleb Garth, Adam Bede, Mr. Hackit, and Stradivarius. His second wife, George Eliot's mother, is said to have been faithfully portrayed in Mrs. Hackit, whose strongly marked character, industrious housewifery, and sharp, ready, epigrammatic speech were drawn from the life. Undoubtedly she also furnished some of the materials used in the creation of the famous character of Mrs. Poyser. Marian Evans inherited some of her strongest traits directly from her parents, drawing her intellectual capacity and painstaking conscientiousness from her father, and her pointed wit, keen sense of humor, and faculty of minute observation from her mother.

The sonnets, "Brother and Sister," are autobiographical and give us some idea of George Eliot's childhood, which is also in many features described in the story of Maggie Tulliver in "The Mill on the Floss." She spent five years in a girl's school at Nuneaton, and three years in the Misses Franklin's boarding-school at Coventry, receiving careful training, for which she always afterwards expressed the highest appreciation. The recollections of school-mates give us the impression that she was a shy, plain, clever girl, with few of the attributes of girlhood, and so cold and reserved that she made few friends. At the age of fifteen she left school and pursued her studies at home. Her mother died the next year, and when, soon after, her brother and her older sister married and left home, Marian became for some years mistress of her father's house, making butter and cheese and attending to many household duties. Nevertheless