

# The Mill on the Floss

BY GEORGE ELIOT

(28. Instalment.)

Tom, in his turn, wished to make the balance dip in his favour. This hunchback must not suppose that his acquaintance with fighting stories put him on a par with an actual fighting hero, like Tom Tulliver. Philip winced under this allusion to his unfitness for active sports, and he answered almost peevishly—

"I can't bear fishing. I think people look like fools sitting watching a line hour after hour—or else throwing and catching, and catching nothing."

"Ah, but you wouldn't say they looked like fools when they landed a big pike, I can tell you," said Tom, who had never caught anything that was "big" in his life, but whose imagination was on the stretch with indignant zeal for the honour of sport. Wakem's son, it was plain, had his disagreeable points, and must be kept in due check. Happily for the harmony of this first interview, they were now called to dinner, and Philip was not allowed to develop further his unsonorous views on the subject of fishing. But Tom said to himself, that was just what he should have expected from a hunchback.

## CHAPTER IV. "The Young Idea."

The alternations of feeling in that first dialogue between Tom and Philip continued to mark their intercourse even after many weeks of schoolboy intimacy. Tom never quite lost the feeling that Philip, being the son of a "rascal," was his natural enemy, never thoroughly overcame his repulsion to Philip's deformity; he was a boy who adhered tenaciously to impressions once received: as with all minds in which mere perception predominates over thought, and emotion, the external remained to him rigidly what it was in the first instance. But then, it was impossible not to like Philip's company when he was in a good humour; he could help one so well in one's Latin exercises, which Tom regarded as a kind of puzzle that could only be found out by a lucky chance; and he could tell such wonderful fighting stories about Hal of the Wynd, for example, and other heroes who were special favorites with Tom, because they laid about them with heavy strokes. He had small opinion of Saladin, whose scimitar could cut a cushion in two in an instant: who wanted to cut cushions? That was a stupid story, and he didn't care to hear it again. But when Robert Bruce, on the black pony, rose in his stirrups, and lifting his good battle-axe, cracked at once the helmet and the skull of the too hasty knight at Bannockburn, then Tom felt all the exaltation of sympathy, and if he had a cocoa-nut at hand, he would have cracked it at once with the poker. Philip in his happier moods indulged Tom to the top of his bent, heightening the crash and bang and fury of every fight with all the artillery of epithets and similes at his command. But he was not always in a good humour or happy mood. The slight spurt of peevish susceptibility which had escaped him in their first interview, was a symptom of a perpetually recurring mental ailment—half of it nervous irritability, half of it the heart-bitterness produced by the sense of his deformity. In these fits of susceptibility every glance seemed to him to be charged either with offensive pity or with ill-repressed disgust—at very least it was an indifferent glance, and Philip felt indifference as a child of the South feels the chill air of a Northern spring. Poor Tom's blundering patronage when they were out of doors together would sometimes make him turn upon the well-meaning lad quite savagely; and his eyes, usually sad and quiet, would flash with anything but

playful lightning. No wonder Tom retained his suspicious of the hunchback.

But Philip's self-taught skill in drawing was another link between them; for Tom found, to his disgust, that his new drawing-master gave him no dogs and donkeys to draw, but brooks and rustic bridges and ruins, all with a general softness of black-lead surface, indicating, that nature, if anything, was rather satiny; and as Tom's feeling for the picturesque in landscape was at present quite latent, it is not surprising that Mr. Goodrich's productions seemed to him an uninteresting form of art. Mr. Tulliver, having a vague intention that Tom should be put to some business which included the drawing out of plans and maps, had complained to Mr. Riley, when he saw him at Mudport, that Tom seemed to be learning nothing of that sort; whereupon that obliging adviser had suggested that Tom should have drawing-lessons. Mr. Tulliver must not mind paying extra for drawing; let Tom be a good draughtsman, and he would be able to turn his pencil to any purpose. So it was ordered that Tom should have drawing-lessons; and whom should Mr. Stelling have selected as a master if not Mr. Goodrich, who was considered quite at the head of his profession within a circuit of twelve miles round King's Lorton? By which means Tom learned to make an extremely fine point to his pencil, and to represent landscape with a "broad generality," which, doubtless from a narrow tendency in his mind to details, he thought extremely dull.

All this, you remember, happened in those dark ages when there were no schools of design—before schoolmasters were invariably men of scrupulous integrity, and before the clergy were all men of enlarged minds and varied culture. In those less favoured days, it is no fable that there were other clergymen besides Mr. Stelling who had narrow intellects and large wants, and whose income, by a logical confusion to which Fortune, being a female as well as blindfold, is peculiarly liable, was proportioned not to their wants but to their intellect—with which income has clearly no inherent relation. The problem these gentlemen had to solve was to readjust the proportion between their wants and their income; and since wants are not easily starved to death, the simpler method appeared to be—to raise their income. There was but one way of doing this; any of those low callings in which men are obliged to do good work at a low price were forbidden to clergymen: was it their fault if their only resource was to turn out very poor work at a high price? Besides, how should Mr. Stelling be expected to know that education was a delicate and difficult business! any more than an animal endowed with a power of boring a hole through a rock should be expected to have wide views of excavation. Mr. Stelling's faculties had been early trained to boring in a straight line, and he had no faculty to spare. But among Tom's contemporaries, whose fathers cast their sons on clerical instruction to find them ignorant after many days, there were many far less lucky than Tom Tulliver. Education was almost entirely a matter of luck—usually of ill-luck—in those distant days. The state of mind in which you take a billiard cue or a dice-box in your hand is one of sober certainty compared with that of old-fashioned fathers, like Mr. Tulliver, when they selected a school or a tutor for their sons. Excellent men, who had been forced all their lives to spell on an impromptu-phonetic system, and having carried on a successful business in spite of this disadvantage, had acquired money enough to give their sons a better start in life than they had had themselves, must necessarily take their chance as to the conscience and the competence of the schoolmaster whose circular fell in their way, and appeared to promise so much more than they would ever have thought of asking for, including the return of linen, fork, and spoon. It was happy for them if some ambitious draper of their acquaintance had not brought up his son to the Church, and if that young gentleman, at the age of four-and-twenty, had not closed his college dissipations by an imprudent marriage; otherwise, these innocent fathers, desirous of doing the best for their offspring, could only escape the draper's snare by happening to be on the foundation of a grammar-school as yet unvisited by commissioners, where two or three boys could have, all to themselves, the advantages of a large and lofty building, together with a headmaster, toothless, dim-eyed,

and deaf, whose erudite indistinctness and inattention were engrossed by them at the rate of three hundred pounds a head—a ripe scholar, doubtless, when first appointed; but all ripeness beneath the sun has a further stage less esteemed in the market.

Tom Tulliver, then, compared with many other British youths of his time, who have since had to scramble through life with some fragments of more or less relevant knowledge, and a great deal of strictly relevant ignorance, was not so very unlucky. Mr. Stelling was a broad-chested, healthy man, with the bearing of a gentleman, a conviction that a growing boy required a sufficiency of beef, and a certain hearty kindness in him that made him like to see Tom looking well and enjoying his dinner; not a man of refined conscience, or with any deep sense of the infinite issues belonging to everyday duties; not quite competent to his high offices; but incompetent gentlemen must live, and without private fortune it is difficult to see how they could all live genteely if they had nothing to do with education or government. Besides, it was the fault of Tom's mental constitution that his faculties could not be nourished on the sort of knowledge Mr. Stelling had to communicate. A boy born with a deficient power of apprehending signs and abstractions must suffer the penalty of his congenital deficiency, just as if he had been born with one leg shorter than the other. A method of education sanctioned by the long practice of our venerable ancestors was not to give way before the exceptional dulness of a boy who was merely living at the time then present. And Mr. Stelling was convinced that a boy so stupid at signs and abstractions must be stupid at everything else, even if that reverend gentleman could have taught him everything else. It was the practice of our venerable ancestors to apply that ingenious instrument the thumb-screw, and to tighten and tighten it in order to elicit non-existent facts; they had a fixed opinion to begin with, that the facts were existent, and what had they to do but to tighten the thumb-screw. In like manner, Mr. Stelling had a fixed opinion that all boys with any capacity could learn what it was the only regular thing to teach: if they were slow, the thumb-screw must be tightened—the exercises must be insisted on with increased severity, and a page of Virgil be awarded as a penalty, to encourage and stimulate a too languid inclination to Latin verse.

The thumb-screw was a little relaxed, however, during this second half-year. Philip was so advanced in his studies, and so apt, that Mr. Stelling could obtain credit by his facility, which required little help, much more easily than by the troublesome process of overcoming Tom's dulness. Gentlemen with broad chests and ambitious intentions do sometimes disappoint their friends by failing to carry the world before them. Perhaps it is, that high achievements demand some other unusual qualifications besides an unusual desire for high prizes; perhaps it is that these stalwart gentlemen are rather indolent, their *divinitur partem aurore* being obstructed from soaring by a too hearty appetite. Some reason or other there was why Mr. Stelling deferred the execution of many spirited projects—why he did not begin the editing of his Greek play, or any other work of scholarship, in his leisure hours, but, after turning the key of his private study with much resolution, sat down to one to Theodore Hook's paevels. Tom was gradually allowed to shuffle through his lessons with less rigour, and having Philip to help him, he was able

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Who plants a flower may live To see its beauty grow, The lily whiten on its stalk, The rambler rose to blow.

Who sows the seed may find The field of harvest fair, The song of reapers ringing clear, When all the sheaves are there.

But time will fell the tree, The rose will fade and die, The harvest time will pass away, As does the song and sigh.

But who so plants in love, The word of hope and trust, Shall find it still alive with God— It is not made of dust.

It cannot fade nor change, — Though worlds may scattered be, For love alone has high repose In immortality.

## For Our Little Ones

TALES OF THE FRIENDLY FOREST.

By David Cory.

Part II.

Let me see. The old stage coach in which Billy Bunny was taking a drive was overturned just as I finished last night's story, but it's all right tonight. Yes, siree. It's back on its four wheels again. And the billy goat team is prancing along, for this morning Robbie Redbreast flew into my bedroom window just as I was tying the alarm clock to see why it didn't go off and wake me up, and told me that he saw it, the stage coach, you know, rolling along on its four wheels just as good as ever, and that the old dog driver had told him that Billy Bunny had gotten out at Carrot and Lettuce streets, where his Uncle Lucky Lefthand lived.

And after he told me this the little robin flew away. And now I'll tell you some more about the little rabbit.

Well, as soon as he hopped out of the old stage coach he looked around to see if Uncle Lucky was in the front yard, but he wasn't. Neither was the old gentleman rabbit in the hammock on the front porch. So Billy Bunny hopped

around to the garage to find him. But the dear old gentleman rabbit wasn't there, either.

"Now where do you suppose Uncle Lucky is?" and the little rabbit looked inside the tool chest and behind the wheelbarrow and under the gasoline barrel. And just then, all of a sudden, a big black snake glided into the garage.

And then Billy Bunny was glad he couldn't find his Uncle Lucky, for if he couldn't find him that dreadful black snake couldn't either.

"Oh, please don't hurt," said the little rabbit, for he couldn't get out of the garage, you know, for the snake was standing right in the middle of the doorway.

"Oh, no, I won't hurt you. I'll just give you a nice big squeeze," said the crawly bad snake, and he glided toward the little rabbit.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, I'm a goner now," and Billy Bunny hopped first to one side and then to the other, but that dreadful snake crawled after him. And pretty soon he got closer and gave him a hiss.

And just as that dreadful snake was going to coil himself all around that poor little bunny what do you suppose happened? You'd never guess, so I'll tell you right away. The big kind Policeman Dog ran in and with his club hit that snake a tremendous whack, and after that the snake said he thought he'd go home. And he did, and then the Policeman Dog began to sing:

Rub-a-dub, dub, just look at my club, And my uniform of blue. Whenever I pass with my buttons of brass They give a cheer or two. I'm a good watchdog, a Policeman Dog, Looking out after you.

## SHEEP SALES CANCELLED

The sales of sheep and swine at Saskatoon and Regina, which were postponed on account of the epidemic of influenza, have now been cancelled, according to Prof. A. M. Shaw, secretary of the live stock associations.

Entries for the sale were catalogued and catalogues have been distributed, although copies may still be had by parties who are looking for pure bred sheep and swine. The contributors to the sale have in the majority of cases given the Provincial Live Stock Commissioner lists of animals for sale and the prices at which they are held. Would-be purchasers are, therefore, in a position to make their purchases of animals either direct from the breeders or through the Live Stock Commissioner, who will arrange for shipping of animals as they see sold.

The necessity for cancelling the sales is much regretted, but this arrangement will give both breeders and purchasers of sheep a good and satisfactory service. Inquiries may be made of Prof. A. M. Shaw, Parliament Buildings, Regina.

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