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Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
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Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whittman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
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# **What's Mine's Mine –Volume 1**

George MacDonald

# Imprint

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## WHAT'S MINE'S MINE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### HOW COME THEY THERE?

The room was handsomely furnished, but such as I would quarrel with none for calling common, for it certainly was uninteresting. Not a thing in it had to do with genuine individual choice, but merely with the fashion and custom of the class to which its occupiers belonged. It was a dining-room, of good size, appointed with all the things a dining-room "ought" to have, mostly new, and entirely expensive—mirrored sideboard in oak; heavy chairs, just the dozen, in fawn-coloured morocco seats and backs—the dining-room, in short, of a London-house inhabited by rich middle-class people. A big fire blazed in the low round-backed grate, whose flashes were reflected in the steel fender and the ugly fire-irons that were never used. A snowy cloth of linen, finer than ordinary, for there was pride in the housekeeping, covered the large dining-table, and a company, evidently a family, was eating its breakfast. But how come these people THERE?

For, supposing my reader one of the company, let him rise from the well-appointed table—its silver, bright as the complex motions of butler's elbows can make it; its china, ornate though not elegant; its ham, huge, and neither too fat nor too lean; its game-pie, with nothing to be desired in composition, or in flavour natural or artificial;—let him rise from these and go to the left of the two windows, for there are two opposite each other, the room having been enlarged by being built out: if he be such a one as I would have for a

reader, might I choose—a reader whose heart, not merely his eye, mirrors what he sees—one who not merely beholds the outward shows of things, but catches a glimpse of the soul that looks out of them, whose garment and revelation they are;—if he be such, I say, he will stand, for more than a moment, speechless with something akin to that which made the morning stars sing together.

He finds himself gazing far over western seas, while yet the sun is in the east. They lie clear and cold, pale and cold, broken with islands scattering thinner to the horizon, which is jagged here and there with yet another. The ocean looks a wild, yet peaceful mingling of lake and land. Some of the islands are green from shore to shore, of low yet broken surface; others are mere rocks, with a bold front to the sea, one or two of them strange both in form and character. Over the pale blue sea hangs the pale blue sky, flecked with a few cold white clouds that look as if they disowned the earth they had got so high—though none the less her children, and doomed to descend again to her bosom. A keen little wind is out, crisping the surface of the sea in patches—a pretty large crisping to be seen from that height, for the window looks over hill above hill to the sea. Life, quiet yet eager, is all about; the solitude itself is alive, content to be a solitude because it is alive. Its life needs nothing from beyond—is independent even of the few sails of fishing boats that here and there with their red brown break the blue of the water.

If my reader, gently obedient to my thaumaturgy, will now turn and cross to the other window, let him as he does so beware of casting a glance on his right towards the place he has left at the table, for the room will now look to him tenfold commonplace, so that he too will be inclined to ask, "How come these and their belongings HERE—just HERE?"—let him first look from the window. There he sees hills of heather rolling away eastward, at middle distance beginning to rise into mountains, and farther yet, on the horizon, showing snow on their crests—though that may disappear and return several times before settling down for the winter. It is a solemn and very still region—not a PRETTY country at all, but great—beautiful with the beauties of colour and variety of surface; while, far in the distance, where the mountains and the clouds have business together, its aspect rises to grandeur. To his first glance probably not a tree will be discoverable; the second will fall upon a soli-

tary clump of firs, like a mole on the cheek of one of the hills not far off, a hill steeper than most of them, and green to the top.

Is my reader seized with that form of divine longing which wonders what lies over the nearest hill? Does he fancy, ascending the other side to its crest, some sweet face of highland girl, singing songs of the old centuries while yet there was a people in these wastes? Why should he imagine in the presence of the actual? why dream when the eyes can see? He has but to return to the table to reseat himself by the side of one of the prettiest of girls!

She is fair, yet with a glowing tinge under her fairness which flames out only in her eyes, and seldom reddens her skin. She has brown hair with just a suspicion of red and no more, and a waviness that turns to curl at the ends. She has a good forehead, arched a little, not without a look of habitation, though whence that comes it might be hard to say. There are no great clouds on that sky of the face, but there is a soft dimness that might turn to rain. She has a straight nose, not too large for the imperfect yet decidedly Greek contour; a doubtful, rather straight, thin-lipped mouth, which seems to dissolve into a bewitching smile, and reveals perfect teeth—and a good deal more to the eyes that can read it. When the mouth smiles, the eyes light up, which is a good sign. Their shape is long oval—and their colour when unlighted, much that of an unpeeled almond; when she smiles, they grow red. She has an object in life which can hardly be called a mission. She is rather tall, and quite graceful, though not altogether natural in her movements. Her dress gives a feathery impression to one who rather receives than notes the look of ladies. She has a good hand—not the doll hand so much admired of those who can judge only of quantity and know nothing of quality, but a fine sensible hand,—the best thing about her: a hand may be too small just as well as too large.

Poor mother earth! what a load of disappointing women, made fit for fine things, and running all to self and show, she carries on her weary old back! From all such, good Lord deliver us!—except it be for our discipline or their awaking.

Near her at the breakfast table sits one of aspect so different, that you could ill believe they belonged to the same family. She is younger and taller—tall indeed, but not ungraceful, though by no

means beautiful. She has all the features that belong to a face—among them not a good one. Stay! I am wrong: there were in truth, dominant over the rest, TWO good features—her two eyes, dark as eyes well could be without being all pupil, large, and rather long like her sister's until she looked at you, and then they opened wide. They did not flash or glow, but were full of the light that tries to see—questioning eyes. They were simple eyes—I will not say without *arriere pensee*, for there was no end of thinking faculty, if not yet thought, behind them,—but honest eyes that looked at you from the root of eyes, with neither attack nor defence in them. If she was not so graceful as her sister, she was hardly more than a girl, and had a remnant of that curiously lovely mingling of grace and clumsiness which we see in long-legged growing girls. I will give her the advantage of not being further described, except so far as this—that her hair was long and black, that her complexion was dark, with something of a freckly unevenness, and that her hands were larger and yet better than her sister's.

There is one truth about a plain face, that may not have occurred to many: its ugliness accompanies a condition of larger undevelopment, for all ugliness that is not evil, is undevelopment; and so implies the larger material and possibility of development. The idea of no countenance is yet carried out, and this kind will take more developing for the completion of its idea, and may result in a greater beauty. I would therefore advise any young man of aspiration in the matter of beauty, to choose a plain woman for wife—IF THROUGH HER PLAINNESS SHE IS YET LOVELY IN HIS EYES; for the loveliness is herself, victorious over the plainness, and her face, so far from complete and yet serving her loveliness, has in it room for completion on a grander scale than possibly most handsome faces. In a handsome face one sees the lines of its coming perfection, and has a glimpse of what it must be when finished: few are prophets enough for a plain face. A keen surprise of beauty waits many a man, if he be pure enough to come near the transfiguration of the homely face he loved.

This plain face was a solemn one, and the solemnity suited the plainness. It was not specially expressive—did not look specially intelligent; there was more of latent than operative power in it—while her sister's had more expression than power. Both were lady-

like; whether they were ladies, my reader may determine. There are common ladies and there are rare ladies; the former MAY be countesses; the latter MAY be peasants.

There were two younger girls at the table, of whom I will say nothing more than that one of them looked awkward, promised to be handsome, and was apparently a good soul; the other was pretty, and looked pert.

The family possessed two young men, but they were not here; one was a partner in the business from which his father had practically retired; the other was that day expected from Oxford.

The mother, a woman with many autumnal reminders of spring about her, sat at the head of the table, and regarded her queendom with a smile a little set, perhaps, but bright. She had the look of a woman on good terms with her motherhood, with society, with the universe—yet had scarce a shadow of assumption on her countenance. For if she felt as one who had a claim upon things to go pleasantly with her, had she not put in her claim, and had it acknowledged? Her smile was a sweet white-toothed smile, true if shallow, and a more than tolerably happy one—often irradiating THE GOVERNOR opposite—for so was the head styled by the whole family from mother to chit.

He was the only one at the table on whose countenance a shadow—as of some end unattained—was visible. He had tried to get into parliament, and had not succeeded; but I will not presume to say that was the source of the shadow. He did not look discontented, or even peevish; there was indeed a certain radiance of success about him—only above the cloudy horizon of his thick, dark eyebrows, seemed to hang a thundery atmosphere. His forehead was large, but his features rather small; he had, however, grown a trifle fat, which tended to make up. In his youth he must have been very nice-looking, probably too pretty to be handsome. In good health and when things went well, as they had mostly done with him, he was sweet-tempered; what he might be in other conditions was seldom conjectured. But was that a sleeping thunder-cloud, or only the shadow of his eyebrows?

He had a good opinion of himself—on what grounds I do not know; but he was rich, and I know no better ground; I doubt if there

is any more certain soil for growing a good opinion of oneself. Certainly, the more you try to raise one by doing what is right and worth doing, the less you succeed.

Mr. Peregrine Palmer had finished his breakfast, and sat for a while looking at nothing in particular, plunged in deep thought about nothing at all, while the girls went on with theirs. He was a little above the middle height, and looked not much older than his wife; his black hair had but begun to be touched with silver; he seemed a man without an atom of care more than humanity counts reasonable; his speech was not unlike that of an Englishman, for, although born in Glasgow, he had been to Oxford. He spoke respectfully to his wife, and with a pleasant playfulness to his daughters; his manner was nowise made to order, but natural enough; his grammar was as good as conversation requires; everything was respectable about him-and yet-he was one remove at least from a gentleman. Something hard to define was lacking to that idea of perfection.

Mr. Peregrine Palmer's grandfather had begun to make the family fortune by developing a little secret still in a remote highland glen, which had acquired a reputation for its whisky, into a great super-terrene distillery. Both he and his son made money by it, and it had "done well" for Mr. Peregrine also. With all three of them the making of money had been the great calling of life. They were diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving Mammon, and founding claim to consideration on the fact. Neither Jacob nor John Palmer's worst enemy had ever called him a hypocrite: neither had been suspected of thinking to serve Mammon and God. Both had gone regularly to church, but neither had taught in a Sunday school, or once gone to a week-day sermon. Peregrine had built a church and a school. He did not now take any active part in the distillery, but worked mainly in money itself.

Jacob, the son of a ship-chandler in Greenock, had never thought about gentleman or no gentleman; but his son John had entertained the difference, and done his best to make a gentleman of Peregrine; and neither Peregrine nor any of his family ever doubted his father's success; and if he had not quite succeeded, I would have the blame laid on Peregrine and not on either father or grandfather. For a man

to GROW a gentleman, it is of great consequence that his grandfather should have been an honest man; but if a man BE a gentleman, it matters little what his grandfather or grandmother either was. Nay—if a man be a gentleman, it is of the smallest consequence, except for its own sake, whether the world counts him one or not.

Mr. Peregrine Palmer rose from the table with a merry remark on the prolongation of the meal by his girls, and went towards the door.

"Are you going to shoot?" asked his wife.

"Not to-day. But I am going to look after my guns. I daresay they've got them all right, but there's nothing like seeing to a thing yourself!"

Mr. Palmer had this virtue, and this very gentlemanlike way—that he always gave his wife as full an answer as he would another lady. He was not given to marital brevity.

He was there for the grouse-shooting—not exactly, only "as it were." He did not care VERY much about the sport, and had he cared nothing, would have been there all the same. Other people, in what he counted his social position, shot grouse, and he liked to do what other people did, for then he felt all right: if ever he tried the gate of heaven, it would be because other people did. But the primary cause of his being so far in the north was the simple fact that he had had the chance of buying a property very cheap—a fine property of mist and cloud, heather and rock, mountain and moor, and with no such reputation for grouse as to enhance its price. "My estate" sounded well, and after a time of good preserving he would be able to let it well, he trusted. No sooner was it bought than his wife and daughters were eager to visit it; and the man of business, perceiving it would cost him much less if they passed their autumns there instead of on the continent, proceeded at once to enlarge the house and make it comfortable. If they should never go a second time, it would, with its perfect appointments, make the shooting there more attractive!

They had arrived the day before. The journey had been fatiguing, for a great part of it was by road; but they were all in splendid health, and not too tired to get up at a reasonable hour the next day.



## CHAPTER II.

### A SHORT GLANCE OVER THE SHOULDER.

Mr. Peregrine was the first of the Palmer family to learn that there was a Palmer coat of arms. He learned it at college, and on this wise.

One day a fellow-student, who pleased himself with what he called philology, remarked that his father must have been a hit of a humorist to name him Peregrine:—"except indeed it be a family name!" he added.

"I never thought about it," said Peregrine. "I don't quite know what you mean."

The fact was he had no glimmer of what he meant.

"Nothing profound," returned the other. "Only don't you see Peregrine means pilgrim? It is the same as the Italian pellegrino, from the Latin, peregrinus, which means one that goes about the fields,—what in Scotland you call a LANDLOUPER."

"Well, but," returned Peregrine, hesitatingly, "I don't find myself much wiser. Peregrine means a pilgrim, you say, but what of that? All names mean something, I suppose! It don't matter much."

"What is your coat of arms?"

"I don't know."

"Why did your father call you Peregrine?"

"I don't know that either. I suppose because he liked the name."

"Why should he have liked it?" continued the other, who was given to the Socratic method.

"I know no more than the man in the moon."

"What does your surname mean?"

"Something to do with palms, I suppose."

"Doubtless."

"You see I don't go in for that kind of thing like you!"

"Any man who cares about the cut of his coat, might have a little curiosity about the cut of his name: it sits to him a good deal closer!"

"That is true—so close that you can't do anything with it. I can't pull mine off however you criticize it!"

"You can change it any day. Would you like to change it?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Stokes!" returned Peregrine dryly.

"I didn't mean with mine," growled the other. "My name is an historical one too—but that is not in question.—Do you know your crest ought to be a hairy worm?"

"Why?"

"Don't you know the palmer-worm? It got its name where you got yours!"

"Well, we all come from Adam!"

"What! worms and all?"

"Surely. We're all worms, the parson says. Come, put me through; it's time for lunch. Or, if you prefer, let me burst in ignorance. I don't mind."

"Well, then, I will explain. The palmer was a pilgrim: when he came home, he carried a palm-branch to show he had been to the holy land."

"Did the hairy worm go to the holy land too?"

"He is called a palmer-worm because he has feet enough to go any number of pilgrimages. But you are such a land-louper, you ought to blazon two hairy worms saltier-wise."

"I don't understand."

"Why, your name, interpreted to half an ear, is just PILGRIM PILGRIM!"

"I wonder if my father meant it!"

"That I cannot even guess at, not having the pleasure of knowing your father. But it does look like a paternal joke!"

His friend sought out for him the coat and crest of the Palmers; but for the latter, strongly recommended a departure: the fresh family-branch would suit the worm so well!—his crest ought to be two worms crossed, tufted, the tufts ouches in gold. It was not heraldic language, but with Peregrine passed well enough. Still he did not take to the worms, but contented himself with the ordinary crest. He was henceforth, however, better pleased with his name, for he fancied in it something of the dignity of a doubled surname.

His first glance at his wife was because she crossed the field of his vision; his second glance was because of her beauty; his third because her name was SHELLEY. It is marvellous how whimsically sentimental commonplace people can be where their own interesting personality is concerned: her name he instantly associated with SCALLOP-SHELL, and began to make inquiry about her. Learning that her other name was Miriam, one also of the holy land—

"A most remarkable coincidence!—a mere coincidence of course!" he said to himself. "Evidently that is the woman destined to be the companion of my pilgrimage!"

When their first child was born, the father was greatly exercised as to a fitting name for him. He turned up an old botany book, and sought out the scientific names of different palms. CHAMAEROPS would not do, for it was a dwarf-palm; BORASSUS might do, seeing it was a boy—only it stood for a FAN-PALM; CORYPHA would not be bad for a girl, only it was the name of a heathen goddess, and would not go well with the idea of a holy palmer. COCOA, PHOENIX, and ARECA, one after the other, went in at his eyes and through his head; none of them pleased him. His wife, however, who in her smiling way had fallen in with his whim, helped him out of his difficulty. She was the daughter of nonconformist parents in

Lancashire, and had been encouraged when a child to read a certain old-fashioned book called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which her husband had never seen. He did not read it now, but accepting her suggestion, named the boy Christian. When a daughter came, he would have had her *Christiana*, but his wife persuaded him to be content with *Christina*. They named their second son *Valentine*, after *Mr. Valiant-for-truth*. Their second daughter was *Mercy*; and for the third and fourth, *Hope* and *Grace* seemed near enough. So the family had a cool glow of puritanism about it, while nothing was farther from the thoughts of any of them than what their names signified. All, except the mother, associated them with the crusades for the rescue of the sepulchre of the Lord from the pagans; not a thought did one of them spend on the rescue of a live soul from the sepulchre of low desires, mean thoughts, and crawling selfishness.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GIRLS' FIRST WALK.

The Governor, Peregrine and Palmer as he was, did not care about walking at any time, not even when he HAD to do it because other people did; the mother, of whom there would have been little left had the sweetness in her moral, and the house-keeping in her practical nature, been subtracted, had things to see to within doors: the young people must go out by themselves! They put on their hats, and issued.

The temperature was keen, though it was now nearly the middle of August, by which time in those northern regions the earth has begun to get a little warm: the house stood high, and the atmosphere was thin. There was a certain sense of sadness in the pale sky and its cold brightness; but these young people felt no cold, and perceived no sadness. The air was exhilarating, and they breathed deep breaths of a pleasure more akin to the spiritual than they were capable of knowing. For as they gazed around them, they thought, like Hamlet's mother in the presence of her invisible husband, that they saw all there was to be seen. They did not know nature: in the school to which they had gone they patronized instead of revering her. She wrought upon them nevertheless after her own fashion with her children, unheedful whether they knew what she was about or not. The mere space, the mere height from which they looked, the rarity of the air, the soft aspiration of earth towards heaven, made them all more of children.

But not one of them being capable of enjoying anything by herself, together they were unable to enjoy much; and, like the miser who, when he cannot much enjoy his money, desires more, began to desire more company to share in the already withering satisfaction of their new possession—to help them, that is, to get pleasure out of it, as out of a new dress. It is a good thing to desire to share a good thing, but it is not well to be unable alone to enjoy a good thing. It is our enjoyment that should make us desirous to share. What is there to share if the thing be of no value in itself? To enjoy alone is to be able to share. No participation can make that of value which in itself is of none. It is not love alone but pride also, and often only pride, that leads to the desire for another to be present with us in possession.

The girls grew weary of the show around them because it was so quiet, so regardless of their presence, so moveless, so monotonous. Endless change was going on, but it was too slow for them to see; had it been rapid, its motions were not of a kind to interest them. Ere half an hour they had begun to think with regret of Piccadilly and Regent street—for they had passed the season in London. There is a good deal counted social which is merely gregarious. Doubtless humanity is better company than a bare hill-side; but not a little depends on how near we come to the humanity, and how near we come to the hill. I doubt if one who could not enjoy a bare hill-side alone, would enjoy that hill-side in any company; if he thought he did, I suspect it would be that the company enabled him, not to forget himself in what he saw, but to be more pleasantly aware of himself than the lone hill would permit him to be;—for the mere hill has its relation to that true self which the common self is so anxious to avoid and forget. The girls, however, went on and on, led mainly by the animal delight of motion, the two younger making many a diversion up the hill on the one side, and down the hill on the other, shrieking at everything fresh that pleased them.

The house they had just left stood on the projecting shoulder of a hill, here and there planted with firs. Of the hardy trees there was a thicket at the back of the house, while toward the south, less hardy ones grew in the shrubbery, though they would never, because of the sea-breezes, come to any height. The carriage-drive to the house joined two not very distant points on the same road, and there was