CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

# The Devil's Pool

**George Sand** · *1846 · Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick*

The author first sets a quaint old French verse, written under one of Holbein's pictures, before the reader, and calls it profoundly melancholy: a laborer, a sinking sun, and death as a plowboy. Then the tale itself is a country courtship. The hosted text is Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick's English. For grades 8–12.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What kind of marriage can a young widower make in a hard country, and how should a school read Sand's pastoral without forgetting the Holbein picture she sets at the door?

*"Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."*

Germain

Germain, twenty-eight, a widower, is thought rather old to marry by the country people, and is still the best-looking man in the neighborhood. He is sent toward a practical widow, and on the way little Marie, a girl of sixteen going out to be a shepherdess, is trusted to his care. The book is a pastoral, and it is also a serious choosing. Teach the labor, the kindness, and the courtship, for grades 8–12. Quote the Sedgwicks, and quote the tale, not only the opening essay.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Germain**
*A widower of twenty-eight, thought old to marry, still the best-looking man in the neighborhood*

**Little Marie**
*Mother Guillette's daughter, sixteen, going out to be a shepherdess*

**Father and Mother Maurice**
*The farm, and the plan of a practical second marriage*

A PLOWMAN, AND A YOUNG WIDOWER

> *"Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."*
>
> Germain

**Grades 8–12**
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### The Author to the Reader

THE OPENING ESSAY

*Sand sets Holbein's plowman before us: a hard day's work, a stony field, a skeleton with a whip. The verse is in French; her comment is in the translators' English. The melancholy is the weather of the book, even when the tale turns gentle.*

- This essay is Sand's, not a modern introduction only. It is still not the narrative of Germain. Use it as a door, not as the whole map.
- Keep the translators: Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick.
- The French verse is printed first; do not pretend the book opens on a love scene.
- For grades 8–12.

> *"This quaint old French verse, written under one of Holbein's pictures, is profoundly melancholy. The engraving represents a laborer driving his plow through the"*
>
> The Author to the Reader

02

### Germain, Twenty-Eight

THE NARRATIVE

*He is a widower, thought rather old to marry, and still the best-looking man in the neighborhood. Toil has not yet wrinkled him as it does most peasants after ten years.*

- The first portrait is exact, including his age.
- A mother would not, in that community, think of trusting a girl of sixteen to a man of twenty-eight without a reason; the book itself says so.
- He is still ready to do a kindness to a neighbor.
- Quote the Sedgwicks.

> *"Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."*
>
> Germain

03

### A Practical Marriage, and a Road

THE JOURNEY

*He is sent to see a widow whose discretion and dollars would help the farm. The road also carries little Marie, going to be a shepherdess at Ormeaux. The two errands will not stay separate.*

- The widow at Fourche is a plan, not yet a love.
- Marie is Mother Guillette's little Marie. Keep the name as printed.
- Teach the journey as a moral test, not only as a pretty night in the fields.
- Tact: the girl is sixteen; the book is careful, and the lesson should be too.

> *"Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."*
>
> Germain

04

### A Country Choosing

THE LATER CHAPTERS

*The pastoral leads toward a wedding. An appendix in this file even describes country wedding customs. The choosing should be taught as loyalty and as labor, not as decoration.*

- Finish the courtship; do not stop at the Holbein door.
- The appendix on a country wedding is part of this file; label it honestly if you use it.
- Kindness, not only picturesqueness, is the virtue to name.
- Catalogue 8–12.

> *"Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."*
>
> Germain

05

### This Translation

THE EDITION

*The hosted English is Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick's. Quote it, not a later version, and not only the French epigraph.*

- The title is The Devil's Pool.
- The author-to-the-reader essay is Sand's door; Germain is the tale.
- Do not treat the book as a children's idyll only.
- Complete hosted text.

> *"This quaint old French verse, written under one of Holbein's pictures, is profoundly melancholy. The engraving represents a laborer driving his plow through the"*
>
> The Author to the Reader

Labor | A Second Choosing | Kindness | A Hard Country | Death at the Plow

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

1. Sand's own door is "The Author to the Reader," with a French verse under a Holbein picture, called profoundly melancholy. Then the tale of Germain begins.
2. This is Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick's English. For grades 8–12.
3. "Germain was really but twenty-eight, and although according to the notions of the country people he was considered rather old to marry, he was still the best-looking man in the neighborhood."
4. Little Marie is sixteen, going to be a shepherdess. The book is careful; the lesson should be too. Tact.
5. An appendix on a country wedding is in this file; label it honestly if you use it. Do not treat the book as decoration only.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the Jane Minot Sedgwick and Ellery Sedgwick, Project Gutenberg #21993, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-devils-pool/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.