LORNA · ③ · ③ DOONE A ROMANCE Ø EXMORØR · D· BLACKMORE·



LONDON & TORONTO PUBLISHED BYJMDENT & SONS IP & IN NEW YORK BY E P DUTTON & CO



INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH it is hardly true to say, as one critic said when "Lorna Doone" first appeared, in 1869, that the Doones are "strictly historical personages," we may claim Blackmore's book as another of those novels which genuinely serve as the apparitors of history. The time is the time of James II., when Devonshire was a long journey from London, and when the farm and country life had the rude and hearty independence and the traditional lineaments that Blackmore loved and loved to draw. He found in Exmoor a region imaginatively congenial to him; and out of a few rocks and stones in one wild glen, he made himself a race of creatures, the Doones, who resumed and expressed, and in a sense personified, the native wildness of its character.

There had been much in his own early circumstance and boyish history to contribute to his strong feeling for this countryside. In his boyhood, after the breaking-up of his home that followed the death of his mother and others of the same circle, by a typhoid epidemic, he had been sent to live at Newton Nottage on the coast of Glamorganshire. There his mother's people, the Knights, had a country-seat— Newton Court—and there his grandmother took charge of the boy. It was on this side, it may be remarked, that he claimed the distant connection with Doddridge, the preacher, that gave him his second name.

Now, as the present writer can say from personal experience of that coast, the effect of the opposite shores of Somerset and Devon, and the dark heights of Exmoor, viewed across the Sea of Severn, is one to arouse the highest speculative interest in a boy's mind. There is no doubt at all of its effect on Blackmore while he was a boy there, strolling over the Kenfig Sands, fishing in Kenfig Pool, or birds-nesting in Margam Woods; for the first story he began to write was "The Maid of Sker," in which the romance and the wild commerce of the two coasts are most effectively pictured. However, in the end he finished "Lorna Doone" before "The Maid of Sker;" and the former just as clearly embodies his feeling for the country. Over this distant prospect he must have speculated a hundred times in his Newton Nottage days.

The next chapter in his life that affects his education as a west-country romancer is that which deals with his later school-days. At eleven years old he left Newton as a permanent home, and his father decided to send him to Blundell's school at Tiverton. This means a kind of indoctrinating in a special west-country faith plus a notable classic tradition. Blackmore had a notable aptitude for classics which helped to carry him on, with a scholarship from Blundell's, to his father's college at Oxford-Exeter. There he did well, but not too well. He sucked the good of the old poets and idyllists, whom he afterwards did something to translate; but did not take any special academic honours at the end of his 'varsity career. He left indeed with a distinct reputation as a classical man who might have done still better had he chose. It was intended that he should go in for law, and he was duly initiated; but in the second year after leav ing college he became a classical master at a Twickenham school. It was important that he should find work, for he had already, unknown to his father, married a lady of Portuguese birth, who was a Roman Catholic, and whom he had met in Jersey when one of a reading-party. His wife afterwards joined his own church, and lived to see only the first years of his great success, for she was a delicate creature. Her loss affected him profoundly, so much so that he always kept his house at Twickenham, after her death, in the very order in which she had arranged it.

This was the house that he built on retiring definitely from Devonshire, where his "Lorna Doone" fame caused him, who was in some respects a shy being, to be made an object of inquisitive curiosity to the idle. While a schoolmaster at Twickenham he had cast longing eyes on a plot of ground, some eleven acres in extent, which he afterwards acquired, and turned into a wonderful fruit-garden, with a house for himself in its midst.

This, too, the success of "Lorna Doone" enabled him to do. But it is well to remember, while we trace his literary career, that he did not at once find his mark as a novelist. He began by writing verse, and published a series of slender books, including "Epullia," which may be described as interesting failures. Some of his translations, including that of Virgil's "Georgics," published in 1864, are of their kind excellent; but rarely in his original poems does he show any impulsive sense of metrical effect. Still it is important to realise what he did in this way, especially in the way of classical translation, for it is part of the explanation of his treatment of English country life that he came to it at last, viewing its pastoral and idyllic elements with a distinct sense of Theocritus and Virgil. He was a robust Englishman first of all, no doubt, in his hearty English romance-writing; but he was an Englishman who had steeped himself in classic literature. This is a significant fact in his literary biography.

"Lorna Doone" was his third novel, in order of actual publication. There is no need to dwell anew on its qualities and the curious topical power that Blackmore displays when he paints the confines of Bagworthy forest, the stronghold of the Doones, or Plover Barrow Farm. But it is interesting to note that in John Ridd we have a mixture of an Homeric strong-man—a Hercules, and of an English folk-tale hero—a Tom Hickathrift. And in the comparative failure of the local evidence for any family or tribe like the Doones in Exmoor, one is strongly tempted to suspect that Blackmore may have transferred thither some of the stories he heard in boyhood on the other side of the Severn Sea, about the Red Thieves of Mawddwy, or their wild prototypes in the Glamorgan hill-country.

However he came by them, the Doones were a genuine creation and product at last of the Exmoor region; and the story of Lorna and John Ridd is as good a love-story of its generous kind as we have had in west-country romance. It is sent out now in its new form to travel, with the novels of Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, into the uttermost parts of the world that is Everyman's Country.

E. R.

January 1908.

The following is the list of Blackmore's published works:-

Poems by Melanter, 1853; Epullia (poems), 1854; The Bugle of the Black Sea (poem), 1855; The Fate of Franklin (poem), 1860; The Farm and Fruit of Old (translation of Virgil's first and second Georgic), 1862; Clara Vaughan, 1864, revised, 1872; Cradock Nowell, 1866, revised, 1873; Lorna Doone, 1869; Maid of Sker, 1872; Alice Lorraine, 1875; Cripps the Carrier, 1876; Erema, or My Father's Sin, 1877; Mary Anerley, 1880; Christowell, a Dartmoor Tale, 1882; The Remarkable History of Tommy Upmore, 1884; Fringilla (poems), 1885; Springhaven, 1887; Kit and Kitty, 1889; Perlycross, 1894; Tales from the Telling House, 1896; Dariel, 1897.

PREFACE

THIS work is called a "romance," because the incidents, characters, time, and scenery are alike romantic. And in shaping this old tale, the Writer neither dares, nor desires, to claim for it the dignity, or cumber it with the difficulty of an historic novel.

And yet he thinks that the outlines are filled in more carefully, and the situations (however simple) more warmly coloured and quickened, than a reader would expect to find in what is called a "legend."

And he knows that any son of Exmoor, chancing on this volume, cannot fail to bring to mind the nurse-tales of his childhood—the savage deeds of the outlaw Doones in the depth of Bagworthy Forest, the beauty of the hapless maid brought up in the midst of them, the plain John Ridd's Herculean power, and (memory's too congenial food) the exploits of Tom Faggus.

March, 1869.

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PREFACE

TO THE SIXTH EDITION

Few things have surprised me more, and nothing has more pleased me, than the great success of this simple tale.

For truly it is a grand success, to win the attention and kind regard, not of the general public only, but also of those who are at home with the scenery, people, life, and language, wherein a native cannot always satisfy the natives.

Therefore any son of Devon may imagine, and will not grudge, the writer's delight at hearing from a recent visitor to the west, that, "' Lorna Doone,' to a Devonshire man, is as good as clotted cream, almost!"

Although not half so good as that, it has entered many a tranquil, happy, pure, and hospitable home; and the author, while deeply grateful for this genial reception, ascribes it partly to the fact that his story contains no word, or thought, disloyal to its birthright in the fairest county of England.

January, 1873.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THIS EDITION REPRINTED

1908

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1909, 1909, 1911, 1912 1914, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1921 1923, 1924, 1927, 1929

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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LORNA DOONE A ROMANCE OF EXMOOR

CHAPTER I

ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION

IF anybody cares to read a simple tale told simply, I, John Ridd, of the parish of Oare, in the county of Somerset, yeoman and churchwarden, have seen and had a share in some doings of this neighbourhood, which I will try to set down in order, God sparing my life and memory. And they who light upon this book should bear in mind, not only that I write for the clearing of our parish from ill-fame and calumny, but also a thing which will, I trow, appear too often in it, to wit—that I am nothing more than a plain unlettered man, not read in foreign languages, as a gentleman might be, nor gifted with long words (even in mine own tongue), save what I may have won from the Bible, or Master William Shakespeare, whom, in the face of common opinion, I do value highly. In short, I am an ignoramus, but pretty well for a yeoman.

My father being of good substance, at least as we reckon in Exmoor, and seized in his own right, from many generations, of one, and that the best and largest, of the three farms into which our parish is divided (or rather the cultured part thereof), he, John Ridd, the elder, churchwarden and overseer, being a great admirer of learning, and well able to write his name, sent me his only son to be schooled at Tiverton, in the county of <u>Devon</u>. For the chief boast of that ancient town (next to its woollenstaple) is a worthy grammar-school, the largest in the west of England, founded and handsomely endowed in the year 1604, by Master Peter Blundell, of that same place, clothier.

Here, by the time I was twelve years old, I had risen into the upper school, and could make bold with Eutropius and Cæsarby aid of an English version—and as much as six lines of Ovid. Some even said that I might, before manhood, rise almost to the third form, being of a persevering nature; albeit, by full consent of all (except my mother), thick-headed. But that would

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have been, as I now perceive, an ambition beyond a farmer's son; for there is but one form above it, and that made of masterful scholars, entitled rightly "monitors." So it came to pass, by the grace of God, that I was called away from learning, whilst sitting at the desk of the junior first in the upper school, and beginning the Greek verb $\tau \upsilon \pi \tau \omega$.

My eldest grandson makes bold to say that I never could have learned $\phi \iota \lambda \dot{\epsilon} \omega$, ten pages further on, being all he himself could manage, with plenty of stripes to help him. I know that he hath more head than I—though never will he have such body; and am thankful to have stopped betimes, with a meek and wholesome head-piece.

But if you doubt of my having been there, because now I know so little, go and see my name, "John Ridd," graven on that very form. Forsooth, from the time I was strong enough to open a knife and to spell my name, I began to grave it in the oak, first of the block whereon I sate, and then of the desk in front of it, according as I was promoted from one to other of them: and there my grandson reads it now, at this present time of writing, and hath fought a boy for scoffing at it—" John Ridd his name,"—and done again in " winkeys," a mischievous but cheerful device, in which we took great pleasure. This is the manner of a " winkey," which I here set down, lest

child of mine, or grandchild, dare to make one on my premises; if he does, I shall know the mark at once, and score it well upon him. The scholar obtains, by prayer or price, a handful of saltpeter, and then with the knife, wherewith he should rather be trying to mend his pens, what does he do but scoop a hole where the desk is some three inches thick. This hole should be left with the middle exalted, and the circumfere dug more deeply. Then let him fill it with salt-peter, all save a little space in the midst, where the boss of the wood is. Upon that boss (and it will be the better if a splinter of timber rise upward) he sticks the end of his candle of tallow, or "rat's tail," as we called it, kindled and burning smoothly. Anon, as he reads by that light his lessons, lifting his eyes now and then it may be, the fire of candle lays hold of the peter with a spluttering noise and a leaping. Then should the pupil seize his pen, and, regardless of the nib, stir bravely, and he will see a glow as of burning mountains, and a rich smoke, and sparks going merrily; nor will it cease if he stir wisely, and there be good store of peter, until the wood is devoured through, like the sinking of a well-shaft. Now well may it go with the head of a boy intent upon his primer, who betides to sit thereunder! But, above all things

have good care to exercise this art, before the master strides up to his desk, in the early grey of the morning.

Other customs, no less worthy, abide in the school of Blundell, such as the singeing of nightcaps; but though they have a pleasant savour, and refreshing to think of, I may not stop to note them, unless it be that goodly one at the incoming of a The school-house stands beside a stream, not very large, flood. called "Lowman," which flows into the broad river of Exe, about a mile below. This Lowman stream, although it be not fond of brawl and violence (in the manner of our Lynn), yet is wont to flood into a mighty head of waters when the storms of rain provoke it; and most of all when its little co-mate, called the "Taunton brook "-where I have plucked the very best cresses that ever man put salt on-comes foaming down like a great roan horse, and rears at the leap of the hedge-rows. Then are the grey stone walls of Blundell on every side encompassed, the vale is spread over with looping waters, and it is a hard thing for the day-boys to get home to their suppers.

And in that time, the porter, old Cop (so called because he hath copper boots to keep the wet from his stomach, and a nose of copper also, in right of other waters), his place it is to stand at the gate, attending to the flood-boards grooved into one another, and so to watch the torrent's rise, and not be washed away, if it please God he may help it. But long ere the flood hath attained this height, and while it is only waxing, certain boys of deputy will watch at the stoop of the drain-holes, and be apt to look outside the walls when Cop is taking a cordial. And in the very front of the gate, just without the archway, where the ground is paved most handsomely, you may see in copy-letters done a great P. B. of white pebbles. Now, it is the custom and the law that when the invading waters, either fluxing along the wall from below the road-bridge, or pouring sharply across the meadows from a cut called "Owen's ditch "-and I myself have seen it come both ways-upon the very instant when the waxing element lips though it be but a single pebble of the founder's letters, it is in the licence of any boy, soever small and undoctrined, to rush into the great school-rooms, where a score of masters sit heavily, and scream at the top of his voice, "P. B."

Then, with a yell, the boys leap up, or break away from their standing; they toss their caps to the black-beamed roof, and haply the very books after them; and the great boys vex no more the small ones, and the small boys stick up to the great ones. One with another, hard they go, to see the gain of the waters, and the tribulation of Cop, and are prone to kick the day-boys out, with words of scanty compliment. Then the masters look at one another, having no class to look to, and (boys being no more left to watch) in a manner they put their mouths up. With a spirited bang they close their books, and make invitation the one to the other for pipes and foreign cordials, recommending the chance of the time, and the comfort away from cold water.

But, lo! I am dwelling on little things and the pigeons' eggs of infancy, forgetting the bitter and heavy life gone over me since then. If I am neither a hard man nor a very close one, God knows I have had no lack of rubbing and pounding, to make stone of me. Yet can I not somehow believe that we ought to hate one another, to live far asunder, and block the mouth each of his little den; as do the wild beasts of the wood, and the hairy outangs now brought over, each with a chain upon him. Let that matter be as it will. It is beyond me to unfold, and mayhap of my grandson's grandson. All I know is that wheat is better than when I began to sow it.

CHAPTER II

AN IMPORTANT ITEM

Now the cause of my leaving Tiverton school, and the way of it, were as follows. On the 29th day of November, in the year of our Lord 1673, the very day when I was twelve years old, and had spent all my substance in sweetmeats, with which I made treat to the little boys, till the large boys ran in and took them, we came out of school at five o'clock, as the rule is upon Tues-According to custom, we drove the day-boys in brave davs. rout down the causeway, from the school-porch even to the gate where Cop has his dwelling and duty. Little it recked us and helped them less, that they were our founder's citizens, and haply his own grand-nephews (for he left no direct descendants), neither did we much inquire what their lineage was. For it had long been fixed among us, who were of the house and chambers, that these same day-boys were all "caddes," as we had discovered to call it, because they paid no groat for their schooling, and brought their own commons with them. In consumption of these we would help them, for our fare in hall fed appetite; and while we ate their victuals we allowed them freely to talk to us. Nevertheless, we could not feel, when all the victuals

were gone, but that these boys required kicking from the premises of Blundell. And some of them were shop-keepers' sons, young grocers, fellmongers, and poulterers, and these, to their credit, seemed to know how righteous it was to kick them. But others were of high family, as any need be, in Devon—Carews, and Bouchiers, and Bastards, and some of these would turn sometimes, and strike the boy that kicked them. But to do them justice, even these knew that they must be kicked for not paying.

After these "charity-boys" were gone, as in contumely we called them—" If you break my bag on my head," said one, "whence will you dine, to-morrow?"—and after old Cop with clang of iron had jammed the double gates in under the scruffstone archway, whereupon are Latin verses, done in brass of small quality, some of us who were not hungry, and cared not for the supper-bell, having sucked much parliament and dumps at my only charges-not that I ever bore much wealth, but because I had been thrifting it for this time of my birth,-we were leaning quite at dusk against the iron bars of the gate, some six, or it may be seven of us, small boys all, and not conspicuous in the closing of the daylight and the fog that came at eventide, else Cop would have rated us up the green, for he was churly to little boys when his wife had taken their money. There was plenty of room for all of us, for the gate will hold nine boys closepacked, unless they be fed rankly, whereof is little danger; and now we were looking out on the road and wishing we could get there; hoping, moreover, to see a good string of pack-horses come by, with troopers to protect them. For the day-boys had brought us word that some intending their way to the town had lain that morning at Sampford Peveril, and must be in ere nightfall, because Mr. Faggus was after them. Now Mr. Faggus was my first cousin, and an honour to the family, being a Northmolton man, of great renown on the highway, from Barum town even to London. Therefore, of course, I hoped that he would catch the packmen, and the boys were asking my opinion, as of an oracle, about it.

A certain boy leaning up against me would not allow my elbow room, and struck me very sadly in the stomach part, though his own was full of my parliament. And this I felt so unkindly, that I smote him straightway in the face without tarrying to consider it, or weighing the question duly. Upon this he put his head down, and presented it so vehemently at the middle of my waistcoat, that for a minute or more my breath seemed dropped, as it were, from my pockets, and my life seemed to stop from great want of ease. Before I came to myself again, it had been settled for us that we should move to the "Ironingbox," as the triangle of turf is called, where the two causeways coming from the school-porch and the hall-porch meet, and our fights are mainly celebrated; only we must wait until the convoy of horses had passed, and then make a ring by candlelight, and the other boys would like it. But suddenly there came round the post where the letters of our founder are, not from the way of Taunton, but from the side of Lowman bridge, a very small string of horses, only two indeed (counting for one the pony), and a red-faced man on the bigger nag.

"Plaise ye, worshipful masters," he said, being feared of the gateway, "carn 'e tull whur our Jan Ridd be?"

"Hyur a be, ees fai, Jan Ridd," answered a sharp little chap, making game of John Fry's language.

"Zhow un up, then," says John Fry, poking his whip through the bars at us; "Zhow un up, and putt un aowt."

The other little chaps pointed at me, and some began to holla; but I knew what I was about.

"Oh, John, John," I cried; "what's the use of your coming now, and Peggy over the moors, too, and it is so cruel cold for her? The holidays don't begin till Wednesday fortnight, John. To think of your not knowing that!"

John Fry leaned forward in the saddle, and turned his eyes away from me; and then there was a noise in his throat, like a snail crawling on a window-pane.

"Oh, us knaws that wull enough, Maister Jan; reckon every Oare-man knaw that, without go to skoo-ull, like you doth. Your moother have kept arl the apples up, and old Betty toorned the black puddens, and none dare set trap for a blagbird. Arl for thee, lad; every bit of it now for thee!"

He checked himself suddenly, and frightened me. I knew that John Fry's way so well.

"And father, and father—oh, how is father?" I pushed the boys right and left as I said it. "John, is father up in town! He always used to come for me, and leave nobody else to do it."

"Vayther 'll be at the crooked post, t'other side o' tellinghouse.¹ Her coodn't lave 'ouze by raison of the Christmas bakkon comin' on, and zome o' the cider welted."

He looked at the nag's ears as he said it; and, being up to John Fry's ways, I knew that it was a lie. And my heart fell, like a lump of lead, and I leaned back on the stay of the gate,

¹ The "telling-houses" on the moor are rude cots where the shepherds meet, to "tell" their sheep at the end of the pasturing season.

and longed no more to fight anybody. A sort of dull power hung over me, like the cloud of a brooding tempest, and I feared to be told anything. I did not even care to stroke the nose of my pony Peggy, although she pushed it in through the rails, where a square of broader lattice is, and sniffed at me, and began to crop gently after my fingers. But whatever lives or dies, business must be attended to; and the principal business of good Christians is, beyond all controversy, to fight with one another.

"Come up, Jack," said one of the boys, lifting me under the chin; "he hit you, and you hit him, you know."

"Pay your debts before you go," said a monitor, striding up to me, after hearing how the honour lay; "Ridd, you must go through with it."

"Fight, for the sake of the junior first," cried the little fellow in my ear, the clever one, the head of our class, who had mocked John Fry, and knew all about the aorists, and tried to make me know it; but I never went more than three places up, and then it was an accident, and I came down after dinner. The boys were urgent round me to fight, though my stomach was not up for it; and being very slow of wit (which is not chargeable on me), I looked from one to other of them, seeking any cure for it. Not that I was afraid of fighting, for now I had been three years at Blundell's, and foughten, all that time, a fight at least once every week, till the boys began to know me; only that the load on my heart was not sprightly as of the hay-field. It is a very sad thing to dwell on; but even now, in my time of wisdom, I doubt it is a fond thing to imagine, and a motherly to insist upon, that boys can do without fighting. Unless they be very good boys, and afraid of one another.

"Nay," I said, with my back against the wrought-iron stay of the gate, which was socketed into Cop's house-front; "I will not fight thee now, Robin Snell, but wait till I come back again."

"Take coward's blow, Jack Ridd, then," cried half-a-dozen little boys, shoving Bob Snell forward to do it; because they all knew well enough, having striven with me ere now, and proved me to be their master,—they knew, I say, that without great change, I would never accept that contumely. But I took little heed of them, looking in dull wonderment at John Fry, and Smiler, and the blunderbuss, and Peggy. John Fry was scratching his head, I could see, and getting blue in the face, by the light from Cop's parlour-window, and going to and fro upon Smiler, as if he were hard set with it. And all the time he was looking briskly from my eyes to the fist I was clenching, and