

# Dictionary of Literary Biography

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Volume 18:

Victorian  
Novelists  
After 1885

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Eighteen

# Victorian Novelists After 1885

Edited by

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and

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A Bruccoli Clark Book

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## Foreword

This volume of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, a companion to *Victorian Novelists Before 1885*, contains thirty-three entries that record the later development of Victorian fiction. In the work of Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, and George Moore, as well as in that of Miss Broughton, William Morris, and Mrs. Humphry Ward, a variety of new themes and situations begin to dominate the novel. These include the confrontation with spiritual crisis, as in Mrs. Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888); the problems of the independent woman, as in Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885); and the conflict between sexual frankness and the values of a new age, as in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In addition there appears a stronger recognition of the dualities of the self, as in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and a vitriolic critique of the Victorian family, as in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903). But no single event or sudden development marks what various critics have called the emergence of the "problem novel."

Nonetheless, there is one significant transformation in the history of English fiction associated with the year 1885 that was to alter dramatically the character of the Victorian novel: the decline of the three-volume form of publication known as the triple-decker which, beginning with *Kenilworth* by Sir Walter Scott in 1821 and lasting for nearly seventy-five years, dominated nineteenth-century fiction.

Though three-volume publication remained common until 1894 and continued at least as late as 1897—the date of Algernon Gissing's *The Scholar of Bygate* (Hutchinson), the latest of the triple-deckers in the famous and massive collection of Robert Lee Wolff at Harvard—the affordable, one-volume novel quickly found new readers and achieved unprecedented sales.

This change ended the circulating libraries' control over public taste and publishing practices, which had begun in the early 1840s. By encouraging publishers to produce "library editions" of fiction, three-volume novels with an average of 325 pages per volume and with a total cost of thirty-one shillings and sixpence (approximately \$40 today), the circulating libraries had maintained an iron grip on a form of publishing much criticized for the limited access it provided readers. Since the libraries charged only a guinea a year per volume (about \$1.25 today), it made economic sense for readers to maintain subscriptions to them rather

However, the lending libraries exercised more than merely a business control over authors and publishers of fiction. In 1883, the largest and most formidable of these institutions, Mudie's Select Library, refused to stock George Moore's *A Modern Lover*, claiming that its title was offensive and its subject scandalous. Incensed, Moore retaliated by arranging to publish his next novel, *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), as a single volume; and in 1885 he brought out a one-volume revised edition of *A Modern Lover*. Priced at six shillings, both novels sold briskly, but Mudie's continued to refuse to stock Moore's work, notwithstanding the strong financial appeal of the one-volume novel, which had already begun to gain in popularity.

It was thus over the issue of censorship rather than that of format that Moore launched his famous attack on the circulating libraries, which signaled the death of the triple-decker—roughly within a decade. In the 1885 pamphlet *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals* (reprinted in the appendix to this volume), Moore exposed the lending library's hypocrisy by printing a collection of carefully chosen passages from works freely circulated by Mudie's, many of which were more offensive than those sections in his own novels on which the library's rejection had been based. Each selection in Moore's pamphlet is followed by the reiterated refrain "tell me, Mr. Mudie, if there be not in this doll just a little too much bosom showing, if there be not too much ankle appearing from under this skirt?" Moore concludes by arguing that the circulating libraries, by virtue of the enormous power they exert over novelists and publishers, have inhibited both the talent of English writers and the development of British morals.

The move to publishing novels in an inexpensive, one-volume format led to manifest changes in writing, printing, and distribution. No longer was the cost of novels prohibitive; no longer was a membership in a circulating library necessary for one who wanted to read fiction, though libraries attempted to accommodate themselves to the new trend. In 1894, Arthur Mudie, son of the founder of Mudie's, explained to Richard Bentley, the best-known publisher of triple-deckers, that "with the one volume novel I can satisfy my subscribers much better, can keep within my margin, & can give them also which I am most anxious to do a far better supply of literature of *all* sorts." But the popularity of the lending library was already on the decline



before Moore's attack, due to the phenomenal growth of reprints and novels in cheap series, which had started in the 1840s with the appearance of railway fiction generally called "yellow backs." As prices fell and new methods for the manufacturing of books appeared in the 1880s and later, more and more inexpensive editions began to be found in bookstalls. In 1896, George Newnes began the Penny Library of Famous Books, unabridged versions of favorite novels by Mayne Reid, Frederick Marryat, and Dickens. During this same period, J. M. Dent began to publish the Temple Shakespeare, inexpensive editions of the Cambridge text of the playwright, and by 1906 Dent had founded the still-flourishing Everyman series. At the end of the Victorian era, the common reader had readier access to a greater supply of fiction than at any other time in the century.

The advent of single-volume fiction had important aesthetic consequences as well. Novelists were no longer required to pad their works with excessive dialogue, intricate plots, or wooden descriptions in order to meet the demands of publishers or printers. The art of "spreading out" a story so that it might fill three volumes gradually disappeared. Readers no longer had reason to complain with the writer Israel Zangwill that

One idea makes one paragraph  
Two paragraphs make one page  
Twenty pages make one chapter  
Twelve chapters make one volume  
Three volumes make one tired.

In general novelists appear to have welcomed this shift in the mode of publication, which allowed them to write more concentrated stories focusing on better character development and scenes with significant detail, symbol, and limited dialogue. In 1885, the year of Moore's pamphlet attacking Mudie's, George Meredith, then reader of manuscripts for Chapman and Hall, advised George Gissing to revise *Isabel Clarendon* into two volumes. Gissing responded: "It is fine to see how the old three-vol. tradition is being broken through. Chapman tells me he much prefers two vols. & one vol. is becoming commonest of all. It is the new school, due to continental influence. Thackeray and Dickens wrote . . . with profusion and detail . . . to tell everything, & leave nothing to be divined. Far more artistic, I think, is the later method, of merely suggesting; of dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies . . .—hinting, surmising, telling in detail what *can* so be told, & no more. In fact, it

approximates to the dramatic mode of presentment." Illustrating this alteration to a more condensed form of storytelling are such novels as Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), all published in inexpensive one-volume editions.

Of course, publication practices alone did not reshape the late-Victorian novel. The year 1885, while marking a revolutionary change in publishing history, was also notable for a series of events which altered permanently the artistic quality of Victorian and later fiction. Naturalism, soon to affect English novelists, solidified its place in France with the publication of *Germinal* by Émile Zola, and aestheticism was effectively launched in the English novel with the publication of Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. The year also saw the deaths of Victor Hugo and General Gordon; the births of D. H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound; the start of the publication of Ruskin's autobiography, *Praeterita*; and the publication of the first volume of the monumental *Dictionary of National Biography*. Gilbert and Sullivan premiered the *Mikado* and Richard Burton produced the first volume of his *Arabian Nights*, while British imperialism was put to a crucial test at Khartoum.

Epitomizing these changes, two years before the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, is James McNeill Whistler's 1885 lecture, "The Ten O'Clock." In this witty plea to sever art from its commitment to social reform, Whistler indicts the age for its timidity and conventionality. Radically, he declares that art is "selfishly occupied with her own perfection only—having no desire to teach—seeking and finding the beautiful in all conditions. . . ." Those Victorian novelists who lived beyond 1885 had to face the challenge of this new direction in art. In an 1886 article, Oscar Wilde admonished critics for prescribing to the public what to read: "to tell people what to read is as a rule either useless or harmful, for the true appreciation of literature is a question of temperament not of teaching." Such a precept was as upsetting as it was refreshing for the late-Victorian novelist, who, in his quest for readers, had to readjust his themes while he struggled with his form.

To our contributors, from several countries and three continents, and to the editorial staff of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, all of whom have cooperated to make this volume a truly Victorian enterprise, the editors wish to express their sincere thanks.

—Ira B. Nadel and W. E. Fredeman

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# Contents

Foreword.....	vii	Henry Mayhew (1812-1887).....	167
Acknowledgments.....	ix	<i>Anne Humpherys</i>	
R. D. Blackmore (1825-1900).....	3	George Meredith (1828-1909).....	172
<i>Max Keith Sutton</i>		<i>Michael Collie</i>	
Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) .....	6	George Moore (1852-1933).....	191
<i>Winifred Hughes</i>		<i>Susan Dick</i>	
Rhoda Broughton (1840-1920).....	15	William Morris (1834-1896) .....	204
<i>R. C. Terry</i>		<i>Joseph R. Dunlap</i>	
Robert Buchanan (1841-1901).....	18	John Henry Newman (1801-1890) .....	226
<i>Christopher D. Murray</i>		<i>Lionel Adey</i>	
Samuel Butler (1835-1902) .....	23	Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888).....	231
<i>Lee E. Holt</i>		<i>Tom Winnifrith</i>	
Lewis Carroll (1832-1898).....	43	Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897).....	234
<i>Kathleen Blake</i>		<i>Tom Winnifrith</i>	
Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) .....	61	Ouida (1839-1908).....	239
<i>Ira B. Nadel</i>		<i>Roy B. Stokes</i>	
Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (see Lewis Carroll)		James Payn (1830-1898).....	246
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930).....	77	<i>R. C. Terry</i>	
<i>George Grella and Philip B. Dematteis</i>		Marie Louise de la Ramée (see Ouida)	
James Anthony Froude (1818-1894) .....	95	Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919).....	251
<i>Craig Turner</i>		<i>Barbara J. Dunlap</i>	
George Gissing (1857-1903).....	103	Mark Rutherford (1831-1913).....	258
<i>Jacob Korg</i>		<i>Catherine Harland</i>	
Thomas Hardy (1840-1928).....	119	Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) .....	270
<i>Norman Page</i>		<i>Joyce Avrech Berkman</i>	
G. A. Henty (1832-1902).....	142	Joseph Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903) .....	278
<i>Patrick A. Dunae</i>		<i>Frederick J. Wagner</i>	
Thomas Hughes (1822-1896).....	148	Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894).....	281
<i>George J. Worth</i>		<i>Robert Kiely</i>	
Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898) .....	153	Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851-1920).....	297
<i>Dorothea M. Thompson</i>		<i>Esther M. G. Smith</i>	
George MacDonald (1824-1905).....	158	William Hale White (see Mark Rutherford)	
<i>Marjory Lang</i>		Mrs. Henry Wood (1814-1887).....	303
W. H. Mallock (1849-1923).....	164	<i>Lionel Adey</i>	
<i>Barry V. Qualls</i>			

---

Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901).....308	The Present State of the English Novel, 1892
<i>Barbara J. Dunlap</i>	.....346
	<i>George Saintsbury</i>
Appendix	The Place of Realism in Fiction
Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals	.....357
.....329	<i>George Gissing</i>
<i>George Moore</i>	The Future of the Novel.....358
From "The Decay of Lying" .....338	<i>Henry James</i>
<i>Oscar Wilde</i>	
Candour in English Fiction .....342	Contributors.....365
<i>Thomas Hardy</i>	Cumulative Index .....369



Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Eighteen

# Victorian Novelists After 1885



# Dictionary of Literary Biography

## R. D. Blackmore

(7 June 1825-20 January 1900)

Max Keith Sutton

University of Kansas

SELECTED BOOKS: *Poems by Melanter* (London: Hardwicke, 1854);

*Epullia*, as Melanter (London: Hope, 1854);

*The Bugle of the Black Sea; or, The British in the East*, as Melanter (London: Hardwicke, 1855);

*The Fate of Franklin* (London: Hardwicke, 1860);

*Clara Vaughan: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Macmillan, 1864; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1866);

*Cradock Nowell: A Tale of the New Forest* (3 volumes, London: Chapman & Hall, 1866; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1866);

*Lorna Doone: A Romance of Exmoor* (3 volumes, London: Low & Marston, 1869; 1 volume, Philadelphia: Jacobs, 1869);

*The Maid of Sker* (3 volumes, Edinburgh & London: Blackwood, 1872; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1872);

*Alice Lorraine: A Tale of the South Downs* (3 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1875; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1875);

*Cripps, the Carrier: A Woodland Tale* (3 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1876; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1876);

*Erēma; or, My Father's Sin* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1877; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1877);

*Mary Anerley: A Yorkshire Tale* (3 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1880; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1880);

*Christowell: A Dartmoor Tale* (1 volume, New York: Harper, 1881; 3 volumes, London: Low,

Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1882);

*The Remarkable History of Sir Thomas Upmore Bart MP, Formerly Known as "Tommy Upmore"* (2 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1884; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1884);

*Springhaven: A Tale of the Great War* (3 volumes,



R. D. Blackmore, 1882

London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1887; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1887);  
*Kit and Kitty: A Story of West Middlesex* (New York: Harper, 1889; 3 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890);  
*Perlycross: A Tale of the Western Hills* (3 volumes, London: Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1894; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1894);  
*Fringilla: Some Tales in Verse* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1895; Cleveland: Burrows, 1895);  
*Slain by the Doones* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1895); republished as *Tales from the Telling House* (London: Low, Marston, 1896);  
*Dariel: A Romance of Surrey* (London & Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1897; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897).

Blackmore's one famous story gave a name to a brand of cookies, to several British pubs, and to hundreds of baby girls born throughout the English-speaking world near the turn of the century. *Lorna Doone* (1869) even caused a legendary place—the "Doone Valley"—to appear on the official maps of Exmoor in southwestern England. A window in Exeter Cathedral pictures the heroine, the rustic hero, and the outlaw-villain in miniature;

tourists still come by the busload each year to visit the little church at Oare where Lorna was supposedly shot down at the altar. The story has appeared as a movie, a BBC television serial, and a classic comic. Yet the author of this "Romance of Exmoor" remains obscure, with most of his other books out of print and unread, even though they once gave him a claim to be considered with George Eliot and Thomas Hardy as an important novelist of the English countryside.

Blackmore was born in 1825 in the Berkshire village of Longworth, the second surviving son of a country curate, John Blackmore, whose father was a clergyman in North Devon. Richard's mother, Anne Bassett Knight, was the daughter of the Vicar of Tewkesbury. Christened Richard Doddridge in memory of his only notable literary ancestor, the hymn-writer Philip Doddridge, the boy lost his mother when he was three months old and was cared for by her sister, first at the Knights' family home at Newton Nottage on the south coast of Wales and later at Elsfield, outside of Oxford. He attended school at Bruton in Somerset and at South Molton in Devon before entering Blundell's School at Tiverton in Devon. There, under rough treatment from his schoolmates, he began to suffer from



*Sker House on the Glamorganshire Coast near the ancestral home of Blackmore's mother's family.  
 Sker House provided the setting for The Maid of Sker.*

epilepsy; but he distinguished himself in classical studies and went on to Exeter College, Oxford, receiving his B.A. in 1847 without first-class honors. Admitted to the Middle Temple in London in 1849, he studied law under John Warner of the Inner Temple and was called to the bar in 1852. Fear of epilepsy kept him from seeking employment as a solicitor in the courtroom; he tried instead to make a living as a conveyancer, preparing legal documents for the few clients who requested his services. Without a steady income, he nonetheless married an Irish Catholic, Lucy Maguire, in November 1853; and although she soon became an Anglican, he kept the marriage secret from his family for many months afterwards. During this time he tried to gain recognition and income as a poet, but his three thin volumes of 1854 and 1855 failed to win any encouraging reviews. So he began teaching classics at the Wellesley House Grammar School, Twickenham, in 1855 and continued teaching until 1857, when an uncle's legacy allowed him to purchase sixteen acres of land for a home, orchard, and gardens at Teddington, which was then a village apart from London. For the rest of his life he raised fruit for the London market, but he soon began writing fiction to cover his losses from gardening. Fruit-growing remained his first love: to his publisher he wrote, "Anyone looking at my vines would say 'this is your role my good fellow, stick to it; any ass can write novels. . . .'"

Blackmore's novels (or "tales" or "romances" as he often called them) typically celebrate rural life in specific regions of southern England, although *Mary Anerley* (1880) is set in Yorkshire, *Erēma* (1877) has scenes in California and Virginia, and part of *Dariel* (1897) takes place in the Caucasus. His pastoral themes are offset by melodramatic plotting, with moments of violence and romantic adventure that helped to make *Lorna Doone* one of the best-sellers of the century. After a slow start in 1869, the book went through edition after edition in England and America. The cheap edition of 1897 prompted an advance order of 100,000 copies, and a steady demand has persisted through at least the first half of this century. The story itself develops from the hero's passion for a beautiful girl and his effort to free her from a band of outlaws on seventeenth-century Exmoor. The action begins with adolescent trauma when the hero, John Ridd, comes home from Blundell's School to find that his father has been shot by the Doones. Crossing Exmoor in the mist, he glimpses the outlaws with the little girl whom they have abducted and will call "Lorna



Richard Doddridge Blackmore  
1893

Doone." The next spring he finds her at the edge of the Doone Valley; at twenty-one he returns and falls in love with her, knowing that the chief outlaw, Carver Doone, wants to make her his bride. To deliver Lorna from this monster becomes the young farmer's heroic task. He succeeds in the dead of winter, only to lose her when she is called to London to join the court of James II. Before they can be reunited, John must endure more ordeals: arrest after the Battle of Sedgemoor during the collapse of Monmouth's rebellion; a second attack on the Doone Valley; and a climactic hand-to-hand battle with the villain, who has shot the heroine at the altar. The romance ends with life in place of death, love in place of threatened despair. Conventional as the surprise ending is, *Lorna Doone* achieves distinction through the rustic narrator's mingling of humor and lyricism, earthy detail and poetic description. His tone makes the book so unique that Blackmore could never give his readers another one like it.

Still, his later fiction can reward anyone interested in the rural past. *The Maid of Sker* (1872)

treats life in southern Wales and northern Devon from the roguish point of view of a Welsh fisherman in the eighteenth century. *Alice Lorraine* (1875) anticipates Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major* (1880) with its scenes from the Napoleonic era; Blackmore returned to this period in *Mary Anerley*, one of his best books for characterization and humor, and again in *Springhaven* (1887), a full-scale historical novel which won inclusion in the Everyman's Library series. Three studies of village life reveal a talent comparable to Hardy's in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). These include *Cripps, the Carrier* (1876), set in the countryside around Oxford; *Christowell* (1881), set mainly upon Dartmoor; and *Perlycross* (1894), set in his father's parish of Culmstock in East Devon. Though flawed in plot, tone, and dialogue (for the genteel characters), these novels are rich in rustic character and tradition, in dialect and detailed observation of nature. As portrayals of village communities, they rank with *Mary Anerley* and *Springhaven* among the neglected achievements of "the author of *Lorna Doone*."

#### Other:

*The Georgics of Virgil*, translated by Blackmore (Lon-

don: Low & Marston, 1871).

#### References:

- Kenneth Budd, *The Last Victorian: R. D. Blackmore and His Novels* (London: Centaur, 1960);  
Waldo Hilary Dunn, *R. D. Blackmore: The Author of "Lorna Doone"* (London: Hale, 1956);  
Max Keith Sutton, *R. D. Blackmore* (Boston: Twayne, 1979).

#### Papers:

Blackmore's papers are divided among several libraries: the University of Exeter Library (holdings include notebooks and manuscripts and proofs of several novels); the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (Blackmore's correspondence with a major publisher is found in the Blackwood Collection); the Scripps College Library, Claremont, California (holdings include letters and manuscripts used by Dunn in writing the standard biography); the Huntington Library, San Marino, California (holdings include important manuscripts and letters also used by Dunn); and the University of Virginia Library (holdings include a large file of Blackmore letters, many unpublished, and some manuscript material).

## Mary Elizabeth Braddon

(4 October 1835-4 February 1915)

Winifred Hughes

Princeton University

BOOKS: *Garibaldi and Other Poems* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1861);

*Three Times Dead; or, The Secret of the Heath* (in parts, London: W. & M. Clark/Beverley: Empson, 1860); republished as *The Trail of the Serpent; or, The Secret of the Heath* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1861);

*The Lady Lisle* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1861; New York: Munro, 1877);

*Lady Audley's Secret* (3 volumes, London: Tinsley, 1862; 1 volume, New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1863);

*Captain of the Vulture* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1863);

*Aurora Floyd* (3 volumes, London: Tinsley, 1863; 1

volume, New York: Harper, 1863);

*Eleanor's Victory* (3 volumes, London: Tinsley, 1863; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1863);

*John Marchmont's Legacy* (3 volumes, London: Tinsley, 1863; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1864);

*Henry Dunbar: The Story of an Outcast* (2 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1864; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1877);

*The Doctor's Wife* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1864);

*Only a Clod* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1865; 1 volume, New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865);

*Sir Jasper's Tenant* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1865; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1885);



*The Lady's Mile* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1866; 1 volume, New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1876);  
*Ralph the Bailiff and Other Tales* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1867);  
*Rupert Godwin* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1867; 1 volume, New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1867);  
*Birds of Prey* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1867; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1867);  
*Charlotte's Inheritance* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1868; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1868);  
*Run to Earth* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1868);  
*Dead Sea Fruit* (3 volumes, London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1868; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1868);  
*Fenton's Quest: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Ward,



M. E. Braddon

Lock & Tyler, 1871; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1871);  
*The Lovels of Arden* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1871; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1872);  
*Robert Ainsleigh* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1872; 2 volumes, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1872);  
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*Milly Darrell and Other Tales* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1873; 1 volume, New York: Carleton, 1877);  
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*Lucius Davoren; or, Publicans and Sinners: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1873);  
*Taken at the Flood: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1874; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1874);  
*Lost for Love: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Chatto & Windus, 1874; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1875);  
*A Strange World* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1875; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1885);  
*Hostages to Fortune* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1875; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1875);  
*Dead Men's Shoes* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1876; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1876);  
*Joshua Haggard's Daughter* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1876; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1877);  
*Weavers and Weft, and Other Tales* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1877; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1877);  
*An Open Verdict* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1878; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1878);  
*Vixen: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1879; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1879);  
*The Cloven Foot: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1879; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1879);  
*The Missing Witness: An Original Drama in Four Acts* (London: Maxwell, 1880);  
*The Story of Barbara: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1880);  
*Just as I Am: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1880; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1880);  
*Asphodel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1881; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1881);  
*Dross, or the Root of Evil: A Comedy in Four Acts* (London: Maxwell, 1882);  
*Married beneath Him: A Comedy in Four Acts* (London: Maxwell, 1882);

- Flower and Weed* (New York: Harper, 1882);  
*Marjorie Daw: A Household Idyl in Two Acts* (London: Maxwell, 1882; New York: De Witt, 1885);  
*Mount Royal: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1882; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1882);  
*Phantom Fortune* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1883; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1883);  
*The Golden Calf: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1883; 1 volume, New York: Lovell, 1883);  
*Under the Red Flag* (New York: Harper, 1883);  
*Ishmael* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1884; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1884);  
*Flower and Weed, and Other Tales* (London: Maxwell, 1884);  
*Wyllard's Weird* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1885; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1885);  
*Cut by the County* (New York: Munro, 1885; London: Maxwell, 1886);  
*One Thing Needful: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1886; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1886);  
*Under the Red Flag, and Other Tales* (London: Maxwell, 1886);  
*Mohawks* (3 volumes, London: Maxwell, 1886; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1886);  
*Like and Unlike* (3 volumes, London: Blackett, 1887; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1887);  
*The Fatal Three* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1888; 1 volume, New York: Lovell, 1888);  
*The Day Will Come* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1889; 1 volume, New York: Munro, 1889);  
*One Life, One Love* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1890);  
*Gerard; or, the World, the Flesh and the Devil: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1891);  
*The Venetians* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1892; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1892);  
*All along the River: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1893; 1 volume, New York: Cassell, 1893);  
*Thou Art the Man*, 3 volumes (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1894);  
*Sons of Fire* (3 volumes, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1896);  
*London Pride; or, When the World was Younger* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1896);  
*Under Love's Rule* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1897);  
*In High Places* (London: Hutchinson, 1898);  
*Rough Justice* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1898);  
*His Darling Sin* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1899; New York: Harper, 1899);  
*The Infidel: A Story of the Great Revival* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1900; New York: Harper, 1900);  
*The Conflict* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1903);  
*A Lost Eden* (London: Hutchinson, 1904);  
*The Rose of Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1905; New York: Brentano's, 1905);  
*The White House* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1906);  
*Dead Love Has Chains* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1907);  
*Her Convict* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1907);  
*During Her Majesty's Pleasure* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1908);  
*Our Adversary* (London: Hutchinson, 1909);  
*Beyond These Voices* (London: Hutchinson, 1910);  
*The Green Curtain* (London: Hutchinson, 1911);  
*Miranda* (London: Hutchinson, 1913);  
*Mary* (London: Hutchinson, 1916).
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, later Mrs. John Maxwell, is still best known as "the author of *Lady Audley's Secret*," to quote the standard publisher's rubric that followed her around on title pages throughout her long career. Although she eventually wrote at least seventy-nine other novels, along with innumerable plays, short stories, occasional pieces, and blood-curdling anonymous serials for the penny press, it was with *Lady Audley's Secret*, composed and published somewhat erratically in 1861-1862, that she achieved her first notoriety, establishing a reputation as a sensation novelist that clung to her persistently, if rather unfairly, for the next half-century. Praised by Henry James as "a magnificent benefactress to the literary estate," she was a popular writer of remarkable vitality, resilience, and longevity who tirelessly chronicled the fashions and foibles of a changing English society from the heart of the Victorian era to the opening days of the First World War. Before her death in 1915, she had not only bought herself a motor car, but had seen the silent movie version of her own early melodrama *Aurora Floyd* (1863).
- Born in 1835 (a date she later falsified; even her tombstone reads 1837), Mary Elizabeth Braddon passed a typical Victorian girlhood, sewing, reading, waiting eagerly for the yellow-covered

monthly installments of *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848), trying her hand precociously at fairy tales, domestic stories, and historical novels. In an unpublished memoir written during the last months of her life, she recalled "the quiet and safety of that shabby London where the muffin bell tinkled in the dusk at tea time, and where Punch could be heard two streets off." Her father, Henry Braddon, was a less-than-flourishing solicitor, the black sheep of a prosperous and well-established family from Cornwall; her adored mother, Fanny White Braddon, was the daughter of a ne'er-do-well Irishman. In the first days of their marriage, her parents were authors themselves after a fashion, collaborating on articles for Pitman's *Sporting Magazine* under the pseudonyms "Rough Robin" and "Gilbert Forester." Her brother, Edward, later a colonial civil servant and prime minister of Tasmania, and her sister, Margaret, were so much older that Mary Elizabeth spent her earliest years at home virtually as an only child.

The dark cloud of her childhood was associated with the misadventures of her charmingly irresponsible father. After he had finally deserted her mother, Mary Elizabeth, then in her early twenties, sought economic independence by taking to the stage under an assumed name like one of her own sensational heroines, in bold defiance of the usual Victorian restrictions on young women of respectable middle-class background. This theatrical interlude culminated in the production of her comedietta, *The Loves of Arcadia*, which opened at the Strand in March 1860. During that same spring she embarked on two other literary enterprises, a lengthy narrative poem on Garibaldi's Sicilian campaign, commissioned by an eccentric Yorkshire squire named John Gilby, and *Three Times Dead*, a cheerfully lurid potboiler originally brought out by an obscure provincial publisher and quickly republished as *The Trail of the Serpent* (1861) to capitalize on her sudden celebrity.

Before the end of the year, she was on her own in London, serving her apprenticeship as a writer of fiction while churning out highly spiced thrillers for the barely literate audience of the *Halfpenny Journal* and *Reynolds's Miscellany*. It was at this time that she met John Maxwell, a rising magazine publisher, who, like Jane Eyre's Mr. Rochester, was already possessed of a legal wife in a mental institution. For the next fourteen years, the period of her greatest fame, Miss Braddon's nonfictional secret was her domestic life with Maxwell, which eventually included their five illegitimate children. Scandal was

with difficulty kept at bay; when Maxwell quietly inserted a line in the newspapers to the effect that they had recently been married, a brother-in-law of the legal Mrs. Maxwell published clamorous denials.

Through all the social and personal strain of this early period, through the numerous pregnancies and the much-lamented loss of an infant son, Braddon continued to write furiously, averaging two triple-deckers a year for the mainstream market as well as founding the monthly *Belgravia* and keeping up her anonymous connection with the penny dreadfuls. Most of the time she worked under intense pressure, as she confided to her literary mentor, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, with whom she maintained a regular correspondence: "I know that my writing teems with errors, absurdities, contradictions, and inconsistencies; but I have never written a line that has not been written against time—sometimes with the printer waiting outside the door." In a futile attempt to salvage one of

## LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.

BY

M. E. BRADDON,

AUTHOR OF "AURORA FLOYD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS,

8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1862.

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*Title page for the novel that established Braddon's reputation*