

LORNA DOONE

B. R. D. BLACKMORE. CHAPTER XLVII JEREMY IN DANGER

Nothing very long abides, as the greatest of all writers (in whose extent I am forever lost in raptured wonder, and yet forever quite at home, as if his heart were mine, although his brains so different), in a word, as Mr. William Shakespeare, in every one of his works, insists with a humored melancholy. And if my journey to London led to nothing else of advancement, it took me a hundred years in front of what I might else have been, by the most simple accident.

Two women were scolding one another across the road, very violently, both from upstairs windows; and I, in my hurry for quiet life, and not knowing what might come down upon me, quickened my step for the nearest corner. But suddenly something fell on my head; and at first I was afraid to look, especially as it weighed heavily. But hearing no breakage of ware, and only the other scold laughing heartily, I turned me about and espied a book, which one had cast at the other, hoping to break her window. So I took the book, and tendered it at the door of the house from which it had fallen; but the watchman came along just then, and the man at the door declared that it never came from their house, and begged me to say no more. This I promised readily, never wishing to make mischief; and I said, "Good sir, now take the book, and I will go on to my business." But he answered that he would do no such thing, for the book alone, being hurled so hard, would convict his people of a lewd assault; and he begged me, if I would do a good turn, to put the book under my coat and go. And so I did—in part, at least. For I did not put the book under my coat, but went along with it openly, looking for any to challenge it. Now this book, so acquired, has been not only the joy of my younger days, and main delight of my manhood, but also the comfort, and even the hope, of my now declining years. In a word, it is next to my Bible to me, and written in equal English; and if you espy any goodness whatever in my own loose style of writing, you must not thank me, John Ridd, for it, but the writer, who holds the champion's belt in wit, as I once did in wrestling.

Now, as nothing very long abides, it cannot be expected that a woman's anger should last very long, if she be at all of the proper sort. And my mother being one of the very best, could not long retain her wrath against the Squire Faggus, especially when she came to reflect upon Annie's suggestion, how natural, and, one might say, how inevitable it was that a young man fond of adventure and change, and winning good profits by jeopardy, should not settle down without some regret to a fixed abode and a life of sameness, however safe and respectable. And even as Annie put the case, Tom deserved the greater credit for vanquishing so nobly these yearnings of his nature; and it seemed very hard to upbraid him, considering how good his motives were; neither could Annie understand how mother could reconcile it with her knowledge of the Bible, and the one sheep that was lost, and the hundredth piece of silver, and the man that went down to Jericho.

Whether Annie's logic was good and sound, I am sure I can not tell; but it seemed to me that she ought to have left the Jericho traveler alone, inasmuch as he rather fell among Tom Faggus than resembled them. However, her reasoning was too much for mother to hold out against; and Tom was replaced, and more than that, being regarded now as an injured man. But how my mother contrived to know, that because she had been too hard upon Tom, he must be right about the necklace is a point which I never could clearly perceive, though no doubt she could explain it.

To prove herself right in the conclusion, she went herself to fetch Lorna, that the trinket might be examined before the day grew dark. My darling came in, with a very quick glance and smile at my Aunt's logic, who was having the third by this time, to keep things in amity; and I waved it toward her, as much as to say, "You see I can do it." And then mother led her up to the light, for Tom to examine her necklace. On the shapely curve of her neck it hung, like dewdrops upon a white hyacinth; and I was vexed that Tom should have the chance to see it there. But even as if she had read my thoughts, or outrun them with their own, Lorna turned away, and softly took the jewels from the place which so much adorned them. And as she turned away, they sparkled through the rich dark waves of hair. Then she laid the glittering ornament in my mother's hands, and Tom Faggus took it eagerly, and bore it to the window.

"Don't you go out of sight," I said; "you can not resist me to things as those, if they be what you think them."

"Jack, I shall have to trounce these yet. I am now a man of honor, and entitled to the duello. What will you take for it, Mistress Lorna? At a hazard, say, now."

"I am not accustomed to sell things, sir," replied Lorna, who did not like him much, else she would have answered sportively, "What is it worth, in your opinion?"

"Do you think it is worth five pounds, now?"

"Oh no! I never had so much money as that in all my life. It is very bright, and very pretty; but it cannot be worth five pounds, I am sure."

"What a chance for a bargain! Oh, if they were not for Annie, I could make my fortune."

"But, sir, I would not sell it to you, not for twenty times five pounds. My grandfather was so kind about it, and I think it belonged to my mother."

seems to me one of the worst in a woman. But even before my sigh was finished, I had cause to condemn myself. For Lorna took the necklace very quietly from the hand of Squire Faggus, who had not half done with admiring it, and she went up to my mother with the sweetest smile I ever saw.

"Dear kind mother, I am so glad," she said in a whisper, coaxing mother out of sight of all but me; "now you will have it, won't you, dear? And I shall be so happy; for a thousandth part of your kindness to me no jewels in the world can match."

I can not lay before you the grace with which she did it, all the air of seeking favor, rather than conferring it, and the high bred fear of giving offense, which is of all fears the noblest. Mother knew not what to say. Of course she would never dream of taking such a gift as that; and yet she saw how sadly Lorna would be disappointed. Therefore mother did from habit what she almost always did—she called me to help her.

But knowing that my eyes were full— for anything noble moves me so, quite as rashly as things pitiful—I pretended not to hear my mother, but to see a wild cat in the dairy.

Therefore I cannot tell what mother said in reply to Lorna; for when I came back quite eager to let my love know how I worshipped her, and how deeply I was ashamed of myself for meanly wronging her in my heart, behold Tom Faggus had gotten again the necklace which had such charms for him, and was delivering all around (but especially to Annie, who was wondering at his learning) a dissertation on precious stones, and his sentiments about those in his hand. He said that the work was very ancient, but undoubtedly very good; the cutting of every line was true, and every angle was in its place. And this he said made all the difference in the lustre of the stone, and therefore in its value. For if the facets were ill-matched, and the points of light so ever little out of perfect harmony, all the lustre of the jewel would be loose and wavering, and the central fire dulled, instead of answering, as it should, to all possibilities of gaze, and overpowering any eye intent on its deeper mysteries. We laughed at the Squire's dissertation; for how should we know all these things, being nothing better, and indeed much worse, than a mere Northmolton blacksmith? He took our laughter with much good-nature, having Annie to squeeze his hand and convey her grief at our ignorance; but he said that of one thing he was quite certain, and therein I believed him: to wit, that a trinket of this kind never could have belonged to any ignoble family, but to one of the very highest and most wealthy in England. And, looking at Lorna, I felt that she must have come from a higher source than the very best of diamonds.

Tom Faggus said that the necklace was made, he would answer for it, in Amsterdam, two or three hundred years ago, long before London jewelers had begun to meddle with diamonds; and on the gold clasp he found some letters, done in some inverted way, the meaning of which was beyond him; also a bearing of some kind, which he believed was a mountain-cat. And thereupon he declared that now he had earned another glass of schnapps, and would Mistress Lorna mix it for him?

I was amazed at his impudence; and Annie, who thought this her business, did not look best pleased; and I hoped that Lorna would tell him at once to go and do it for himself. But instead of this she rose to do it with a soft humbleness, which went direct to the heart of Tom; and he leaped up with a curse at himself, and took the hot water from her, and would not allow her to do anything except to put the sugar in; and then he bowed to her grandly. I knew what Lorna was thinking of; she was thinking all the time that her necklace had been taken by the Doones with violence upon some great robbery, and that Squire Faggus knew it, though he would not show his knowledge; and that this was perhaps the reason why mother had refused it.

We said no more about the necklace for a long time afterward; neither did my darling wear it, now that she knew its value, but did not know its history. She came to me the very next day, trying to look cheerful, and begged me, if I loved her (as I did, with all my heart), to take charge of it again, as I once had done before, and not even to let her know in what place I stored it. I told her that this last request I could not comply with; for having been round her neck so often, it was now a sacred thing, more than a million pounds could be. Therefore it should dwell for the present in the neighborhood of my heart, and so could not be far from her. At this she smiled her own sweet smile, and touched my forehead with her lips, and wished that she could only learn how to deserve such love as mine.

Tom Faggus took his good departure, which was a kind farewell to me, on the very day I am speaking of, the day after his arrival. Tom was a thoroughly upright man, according to his own standard; and you might rely upon him in any way, up to a certain point, I mean, to be there or thereabouts. But sometimes things were too many for Tom, especially with ardent spirits and then he judged, perhaps too much, with only himself for the jury. At any rate, I would trust him fully, for candor and for honesty, in almost every case in which he himself could have no interest. And so we got on very well together; and he thought me a fool, and I tried my best not to think anything worse of him.

Scarcely was Tom clean out of sight, and Annie's tears not dry yet (for she always made a point of crying upon his departure) when in came Jeremy Stickle, splashed with mud from head to foot, and not in the very best of humors, though happy to get back again.

"Curse those fellows!" he cried, with a stamp which sent the water hissing from his boot among the embers; "a pretty plight you may call this, for his Majesty's Commissioner to return to his headquarters in! Annie, my dear, for he was always very affable with Annie, 'will you help me off with my overalls, and then turn your pretty hand to the gridiron? Not a blessed morsel have I touched for more than twenty-four hours."

"The fire is clear!" But Lizzie, who happened to be there, said, with her peculiar smile:

"Master Stickle's must be used to it; for he never comes back without telling us that."

"Hush!" cried Annie, quite shocked with her; "how would you like to be used to it? Now, Betty, be quick with the things for me. Pork or mutton, or deer's meat, sir? We have some cured since the autumn."

"Oh, deer's meat, by all means," Jeremy Stickle answered; "I have tasted none since I left you, though dreaming of it often. Well, this is better than being chased over the moors for one's life, John. All the way from Lynton Bridge, I have ridden a race for my precious life, at the neck of my limbs and neck. Three great Doones galloping after me, and a good job for me that they were so big, and they must have overtaken me. Just go and see to my horse, John, that's an excellent lad. He deserves a good turn, this day, from me; and I will render it to him."

However, he left me to do it, while he made himself comfortable; and in truth, the horse required care; he was blown so that he could hardly stand, and plastered with mud, and steaming so that the stable was quite full with it. By the time I had put the poor fellow to rights, his master had finished dinner, and was in a more pleasant humor, having even offered to kiss Annie, out of pure gratitude, as he said; but Annie answered with spirit that gratitude must not be shown by increasing the obligation. Jeremy made reply to this that his only way to be grateful then was to tell us his story; and so he did, at greater length than I can here repeat it; for it does not bear particularly upon Lorna's fortunes.

It appears that as he was riding towards from the town of Southmolton, in Devonshire, he found the roads very soft and heavy, and the floods out in all directions; but met with no other difficulty until he came to Landacre Bridge. He had only a single trooper with him—a man not of the militia but of the King's army, whom Jeremy had brought from Exeter. As these two descended toward the bridge, they observed that both the Kensford water and the River Barle were pouring down in mighty floods from the melting of the snow. So great indeed was the torrent, after they united, that only the parapets of the bridge could be seen above the water, the road across either bank being covered, and very deep, on the hither side. The trooper did not like the look of it, and proposed to ride back again, and round by way of Simonsbath, where the stream is smaller. But Stickle would not have it so, and, dashing into the river, swam his horse for the bridge, and gained it with some little trouble; and there he found the water not more than up to his horse's knees, perhaps.

On the crown of the bridge he turned his horse, to watch the trooper's passage, and to help him with directions; when suddenly he saw him fall headlong into the torrent, and heard the report of a gun from behind, and felt a shock to his own body, such as lifted him out of the saddle. Turning round, he beheld three men rise up from behind the hedge on one side of his onward road, two of them ready to load, and one with his gun unfired, waiting to get good aim at him. Then Jeremy did a gallant thing, for which I doubt whether I should have had the presence of mind in the danger. He saw that to swim his horse back again would be almost certain death; as affording such a target where even a wound must be fatal. Therefore he struck the spurs into the nag, and rode through the water straight at the man who was pointing the long gun at him. If the horse had been carried off by his legs, there must have been an end of Jeremy; for the other men were getting ready to have another shot at him. But luckily the horse galloped right on, without any need for swimming, being himself excited, no doubt, by all he had seen and heard of it. And Jeremy lay almost flat on his neck, so as to give little space for good aim, with the mane tossing wildly in front of him. Now if that young fellow with the gun had had his brains as ready as his flint was, he would have shot the horse at once, and then had Stickle at his mercy; but instead of that he let fly at the man, and missed him altogether, being scared, perhaps, by the pistol which Jeremy showed him the mouth of. And galloping by at full speed, Master Stickle tried to leave his mark behind him; for he changed the aim of his pistol to the biggest man, who was loading his gun and cursing like ten cannons. But the pistol missed fire, no doubt from the flood which had gurgled in over the holsters; and Jeremy seeing three horses tethered at a gate just up the hill, knew that he had not yet escaped, but was more in danger behind him. He tried his other great pistol at one of the horses tethered there, so as to lessen (if possible) the number of his pursuers. But the powder again failed him; and he durst not stop to cut the bridles, hearing the men coming up the hill. So he even made the most of his start, thanking God that his weight was light, compared at least to what theirs was.

And another thing he had noticed which gave him some hope of escaping—to wit, that the horses of the Doones, although very handsome animals, were suffering still from the bitter effects of the late long frost and scarcity of fodder. "If they do not catch me up, or shoot me, in the course of the first two miles, I may see my home again," this was what he said to himself, as he turned to mark what they were about from the brow of the steep hill. He saw the flooded valley shining with the breadth of water, and the trooper's horse on the other side, shaking his drenched flanks, and neighing; and half-way down the hill he saw the three Doones mounting hastily. And they knew that their only chance lay in the stoutness of his steed.

The horse was in pretty good condition; and the rider knew him thoroughly, and how to make the most of him; and though they had travelled some miles that day through very heavy ground, the bath in the river had washed the mud off, and been some refreshment. Therefore, Stickle encouraged his nag, and put him into a good hand gallop, heading away toward Withycombe. At first he had thought of turning to the right, and making off for Withypool, a mile or so down the valley; but his good sense told him that no one there would dare to protect him against the Doones, so he resolved to go on his way, yet faster than he had intended.

The three villains came after him with all the speed they could muster, making sure, from the badness of the road, that he must stick fast ere long, and so be at their mercy. And this was Jeremy's chiefest fear; for the ground being soft and thoroughly rotten, after so much frost and snow, the poor horse had terrible work of it, with no time to pick the way; and even more good luck than skill was needed to keep him from foundering. How Jeremy prayed for an Exmoor fog (such as he had often sworn at), that he might turn aside and lurk, while his pursuers went past him! But no fog came, nor did a storm to damp the pruned of their guns; neither was wood or coppice nigh, nor any place to hide in; only hills, and moor, and valleys, with flying shadows over them, and great banks of snow in the corners. At one time poor Stickle was quite in despair; for after leaping a little brook which crosses the track at Newland, he stuck fast in a "dane bog," as we call them upon Exmoor. The horse had broken through the crust of moss, and sedge, and marish-weed, and could do nothing but wallow and sink, with black water spouting over him. And Jeremy, struggling with all his might, saw the three villains now topping the crest less than a furlong behind him, and heard them shout in their savage delight. With the calmness of despair, he yet resolved to have one more try for it; and scrambling over the horse's head, gained firm land, and tugged at the bridle. The poor nag replied with all his power to the call upon his courage, and reared his fore feet out of the slough, and with straining eyeballs gazed at him. "Now," said Jeremy, "now, my fine fellow!" lifting him with the bridle; and the brave beast gathered the roll of his loins, and sprang from his quagmired haunches. One more spring, and he was on earth again, instead of being under it; and Jeremy leaped on his back, and stopped, for he knew that they would fire. Two bullets whistled over him, as the horse, mad with fright, dashed forward, and in five minutes more he had come to the Exe, and the pursuers had fallen behind him. The Exe, though a much smaller stream than the Barle, now ran in a foaming torrent, unbridged, and too wide for leaping. But Jeremy's horse took the water well; and both he and his rider were lightened, as well as comforted by it. And as they passed toward Lucott hill, and struck upon the founts at Lynn, the horses of the three pursuers began to tire under them. Then Jeremy Stickle knew that if he could only escape the sloughs, he was safe for the present; and so he stood up in his stirrups, and gave them a loud halloo, as if they had been so many foxes.

Their only answer was to fire the remaining charge at him; but the distance was too great for any aim from horse-back; and the dropping bullet idly plowed the sod upon one side of him. He acknowledged it with a wave of his hat, and laid one thumb to his nose, in the manner fashionable in London for expression of contempt. However, they followed him very closely, hoping to make him pay out dearly, if he should only miss the track or fall upon morasses. But the neighborhood of our Lynn stream is not so very boggy; and the King's messenger now knew his way as well as any of his pursuers did; and so he arrived at Plovers Barrows, thankful and in rare appetite.

"But was the poor soldier drowned?" asked Annie; "and you never went to look for him! Oh, how very dreadful!"

"Shot or drowned, I know not which. Thank God, it was only a trooper. But they shall pay for it as dearly as if it had been a captain."

"And how was it you were struck by a bullet, and only shaken in your saddle? Had you a coat of mail on, or of Milanese chain-armor? Now, Master Stickle, had you?"

"No, Mistress Lizzie; we do not wear things of that kind nowadays. You are apt, I perceive, at romances. But I happened to have a little flat bottle of the best stoneware slung beneath my saddle-cloak, and filled with the very best eau de vie, from the George Hotel at Southmolton. The brand of it now is upon my back, Oh, the murderous scoundrels, what a brave spirit they have spilled!"

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"You had better set to and thank God," said I, "that they have not spilled a braver one."

CHAPTER XLVIII

EVERY MAN MUST DEFEND HIMSELF

It was only right in Jeremy Stickle, and of the simplest common sense, that he would not tell before our girls what the result of his journey was. But he led me aside in the course of the evening, and told me all about it, saying that I knew as well as he did, that it was not woman's business. This I took, as it was meant, for a gentle caution that Lorna (whom he had not seen as yet) must not be informed of his doings. Herein I quite agreed with him; not only for his furtherance, but because I always think that women, of whatever mind, are best when least they meddle with the things that appertain to men.

Master Stickle complained that the weather had been against him bitterly, closing all the roads around him; even as it had done with us. It had taken him eight days, he said, to get from Exeter to Plymouth; whither he found that most of the troops had been drafted off from Exeter. When all were told, there was but a battalion of one of the King's horse regiments, and two companies of foot soldiers; and their commanders had orders, later than the date of Jeremy's commission, on no account to quit the southern coast and march inland. Therefore, although they would gladly have come for a brush with the celebrated Doones, it was more than they durst attempt, in the face of their instructions. However, they spared him a single trooper, as a companion of the road, and to prove to the justices of the country, and lord-lieutenant, that he had their approval.

To these authorities Master Stickle now was forced to address himself, although he would rather have had one trooper than a score from the very best train-bands had afforded very good soldiers in the time of the civil wars,

and for some years afterward; but now their discipline was gone, and the younger generation had seen no real fighting. Each would have his own opinion, and would want to argue it; and if he were not allowed, he went about his duty in such a temper as to prove that his own way was the best.

Neither was this the worst of it; for Jeremy made no doubt but what (if he could only get the militia to turn out in force) he might manage, with the help of his own men, to force the stronghold of the enemy; but the truth was that the officers, knowing how hard it would be to collect their men at that time of the year, and in that state of the weather, began with one accord to make every possible excuse. And especially they pressed this point, that Bagworthy was not in their county; the Devonshire people affirming vehemently that it lay in the shire of Somerset, and the Somersetshire folk averring, even with imprecations, that it lay in Devonshire. Now I believe the truth to be that the boundary of the two counties, as well as of Orre and Brendon parishes, is defined by the Bagworthy river; so that the disputants on both sides were both right and wrong.

Upon this, Master Stickle suggested and as I thought very sensibly, that the two counties should unite, and equally contribute to the extirpation of this pest, which shamed and injured them both alike. But hence arose another difficulty: for the men of Devon said they would march when Somerset had taken the field; and the sons of Somerset replied that indeed they were quite ready, but what were their cousins of Devonshire doing? And so it came to pass that the King's Commissioner returned without any army whatever, but with promise of two hundred men when the roads should be more passable. And meanwhile, what were we to do, abandoned as we were to the mercies of the Doones, with only our own hands to help us? And herein I grieved at my own folly in having let Tom Faggus go, whose wit and courage would have been worth at least half a dozen men to us? Upon this matter I held long council with my good friend Stickle; telling him all about Lorna's presence, and what I knew of her history. He agreed with me that we could not hope to escape an attack from the outlaws, and the more especially now that they knew himself to be returned to us. Also he praised me for my forethought in having thrashed out all our corn, and hidden the produce in such a manner that they were not likely to find it. Furthermore, he recommended that at the entrance to the house should be once strengthened and a watch must be maintained at night; and he thought it wiser that I should go (late as it was) to Plymouth, if a horse could pass the valley, and fetch every one of his mounted troopers who might now be quartered there. Also, if any men of courage, though capable only of handling a pitchfork, could be found in the neighborhood, I was to try to summon them. But our district is so thinly peopled, that I had little faith in this; however, my errand was given me, and I set forth upon it, for John Fry was afraid of the waters.

Knowing how fiercely the floods were out, I resolved to travel the higher road; by Cosgate and through Countisbury; therefore I swam my horse through the Lynn at the ford below our house (where sometimes you may step across), and thence galloped up and along the hills. I could see all the inland valleys ribbed with broad waters, and in every winding crook the banks of snow that fed them; while on my right the turbid sea was flaked with April showers. But when I descended the hill toward Lynnmouth, I feared that my journey was all in vain.

For the East Lynn (which was our river) was ramping and roaring frightfully, lashing whole trunks of trees on the rocks, and rending them, and grinding them. And into it rushed from the opposite side a torrent even madder, upsetting what it came to aid; shattering wave with boiling billow, and scattering wrath with fury. It was certain death to attempt the passage, and the little wooden footbridge had been carried away long ago. And the men I was seeking must be, of course, on the other side of this deluge, for on my side there was not a single house.

I followed the bank of the flood to the beach, some two or three hundred yards below, and there had the luck to see Will Watcombe on the opposite side, calking an old boat. Though I could not make him hear a word, from the deafening roar of the torrent, I got him to understand at last that I wanted to cross over. Upon this he fetched another man, and the two of them launched a boat; and paddling well out to sea, fetched round the mouth of the frantive river. The other man proved to be Stickle's chief mate; and so he went back and fetched his comrades, bringing their weapons, but leaving their horses behind. As it happened, there were but four of them. However, to have even these was a help; and I started again at full speed for my home, for the men must follow afoot, and cross our river high up on the moorland.

This took them a long way round, and the track was rather bad to find, and the sky already darkening; so that I arrived at Plovers Barrows more than two hours before them. But they had done a sagacious thing, which was well worth the delay; for by hoisting their flag upon the hill, they fetched the two watchmen from the Foreland, and added them to their number.

It was lucky that I came home so soon; for I found the house in a great commotion, and all the women trembling. When I asked what the matter was, Lorna, who seemed the most self-possessed, answered that it was all her fault; for she alone had frightened them. And this in the following manner: She had stolen out to the garden toward dusk, to watch some favorite hyacinths just pushing up, like a baby's teeth, and just attracting the fatal notice of a great house-snail at night-time. Lorna at last had discovered the glutton, and was bearing him off in triumph to the tribunal of the ducks, when she desisted two glittering eyes glaring at her steadfastly from the elder brush beyond the stream. The elder was smooching its wrinkled leaves, being at least two months behind time; and among them this calm cruel face appeared, and she knew it was the face of Carver Doone.

The maiden, although so used to terror (as she told me once before), lost all presence of mind hereat, and could neither shriek nor fly, but only gaze, as if bewitched. Then Carver Doone, with his deadly smile, gloating upon her horror, lifted his long gun, and pointed full at Lorna's heart. In vain she strove to turn away; fright had stricken her stiff as stone. With the inborn love of life, she tried to cover the vital part wherein the winged death must lodge—for she knew Carver's certain aim—but her hands hung numbed and heavy; in nothing but her eyes was life.

With no sign of pity in his face, no quiver of relenting, but a well-pleased grin at all the charming palsy of his victim, Carver Doone lowered, inch by inch, the muzzle of his gun. When it pointed to the ground, between her delicate arched insteps, he pulled the trigger, and the bullet flung the mould all over her. It was a refinement of bullying, for which I swore to God that night upon my knees, in secret, that I would smite down Carver Doone, or else he should smite me down. Base beast! what largest humanity, or what dreams of divinity, could make a man put up with this?

My darling (the loveliest and most harmless in the world of maidens) fell away (on a bank of grass, and wept at her own cowardice; and trembled and wondered where I was, and what I would think of this. Good God! What could I think of it? She overated my slow nature, to admit the question.

While she leaned there, quite unable yet to save herself, Carver came to the brink of the flood, which alone was between them; and then he stroked his jet-black beard, and waited for Lorna to begin. Very likely he thought that she would thank him for his kindness to her. But she was now recovering the power of her nimble limbs; and ready to be off like hope, and wonder at her own cowardice.

"I have spared you this time," he said, in his deep calm voice, "only because it suits my plans, and I never yield to temper. But unless you come back to-morrow, pure, and with all you took away, and teach me to destroy that fool, who has destroyed himself for you, your death is here, your death is here, where it has long been waiting."

Although his gun was empty, he struck the breach of it with his finger; and then he turned away, not deigning even once to look back again; and Lorna saw his giant figure striding across the meadow-land as if the Ridds were nobodies, and he the proper owner. Both mother and I were greatly hurt at hearing of this insolence; for we had owned that meadow from the time of the great Alfred; and even when that good king lay in the Isle of Athelney, he had a Ridd along with him.

Now I spoke to Lorna gently, seeing how much she had been tried; and I praised her for her courage in not having run away, when she was so unable; and my darling was pleased with this, and smiled upon me for saying it, though she knew right well that in this matter my judgment was not impartial. But you may take this as a general rule, that a woman likes praise from the man whom she loves, and cannot stop always to bemoan it.

Now expecting a sharp attack that night—which Jeremy Stickle's more expected after the words of Carver, which seemed to be meant to mislead us—we prepared a great quantity of knuckles of pork, and a ham in full out, and a fillet of hung mutton. For we would almost surrender rather than keep our garrison hungry. And all our men were exceedingly brave, and counted their rounds of the house in half-pints.

Before the maidens went to bed, Lorna made a remark which seemed to me a very clever one, and then I wondered how on earth it had never occurred to me before. But first she had done a thing which I could not in the least approve of: for she had gone up to my mother, and thrown herself into her arms, and begged to be allowed to return to Glen Doone.

"My child, are you unhappy here?" mother asked her very gently, for she had begun to regard her now as a daughter of her own.

"Oh, no! Too happy—by far too happy, Mrs. Ridd. I never knew rest or peace before, or met with kind kindness. But I can not be so ungrateful, I cannot be so wicked, as to bring you all into deadly peril for my sake alone. Let me go; you must not pay this great price for my happiness."

"Dear child, we are paying no price at all," replied my mother, embracing her, "we are not threatened for your sake only. Ask John; he will tell you. He knows every bit about politics, and this is a political matter."

doubt whether he would have fared so well, even though he was a visitor. However, she knew that something was doing, and something of importance; and she trusted in God for the rest of it. Only she used to tell me, very seriously on an evening, "The very least that can give you, dear John, is a coat of arms. Be sure you take nothing less, dear; and the farm can well support it."

But lo! I have left Lorna ever so long, anxious to consult me upon political matters. She came to me, and her eyes alone asked a hundred questions, which I rather had answered upon her lips, than troubled her pretty ears with them. Therefore I told her nothing at all, save that the attack (if any should be) would not be made on her account; and that if she should hear by any chance a trifle of a noise in the night, she was to wrap the clothes around her, and shut her beautiful eyes again. On no account, whatever she did, was she to go to the window. She liked my expression about her eyes, and promised to do the very best she could; and then she crept so very close, that I needs must have her closer; and, with her head on my breast, she asked:

"Can't you keep out of this fight, John?"

"My own one," I answered, gazing through the long black lashes at the depths of radiant love; "I believe there will be nothing; but what there is I must see out."

"Shall I tell you what I think, John? It is only a fancy of mine, and perhaps it is not worth telling."

"Let us have it, dear, by all means. You know so much about their ways."

"What I believe is this, John. You know how high the rivers are—higher than ever they were before, and twice as high, you have told me. I believe that Glen Doone is flooded, and all the houses are under water."

"You little witch," I answered; "what a fool I must be not to think of it! Of course it is: it must be. The torrent from all the Bagworthy forest, and all the valleys above it, and the great drifts in the glen itself, never could have outlet down my famous water-slide. The valley must be under water twenty feet at