

PERLYCROSS

A Novel

BY

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"LORNA DOONE" "SPRINGHAVEN" ETC.



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PERLYCROSS

CHAPTER I

THE LAP OF PEACE

IN the year 1835, the Rev. Philip Penniloe was Curate-in-charge of Perlycross, a village in a valley of the Black-down Range. It was true that the rector, the Rev. John Chevithorne, M.A., came twice every year to attend to his tithes; but otherwise he never thought of interfering, and would rather keep his distance from spiritual things. Mr. Penniloe had been his college tutor, and still was his guide upon any points of duty less cardinal than discipline of dogs and horses.

The title of "Curate-in-charge" as yet was not invented generally; but far more curates held that position than hold it in these stricter times. And the shifting of curates from parish to parish was not so frequent as it is now, theological views having less range and rage, and curates less divinity. Moreover, it cost much more to move.

But the Curate of Perlycross was not of a lax or careless nature. He would do what his conscience required, at the cost of his last penny; and he thought and acted as if this world were only the way to a better one. In this respect he differed widely from all the people of his parish, as well as from most of his clerical brethren. And it is no little thing to say of him that he was beloved in spite of his piety.

Especially was he loved and valued by a man who had known him from early days, and was now the squire and