

**THE WORKS OF GEORGE
MEREDITH, VOL.
IX: RHODA FLEMING, A
STORY, VOL. I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649205400

The Works of George Meredith, Vol. IX: Rhoda Fleming, a story, Vol. I by George Meredith

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GEORGE MEREDITH

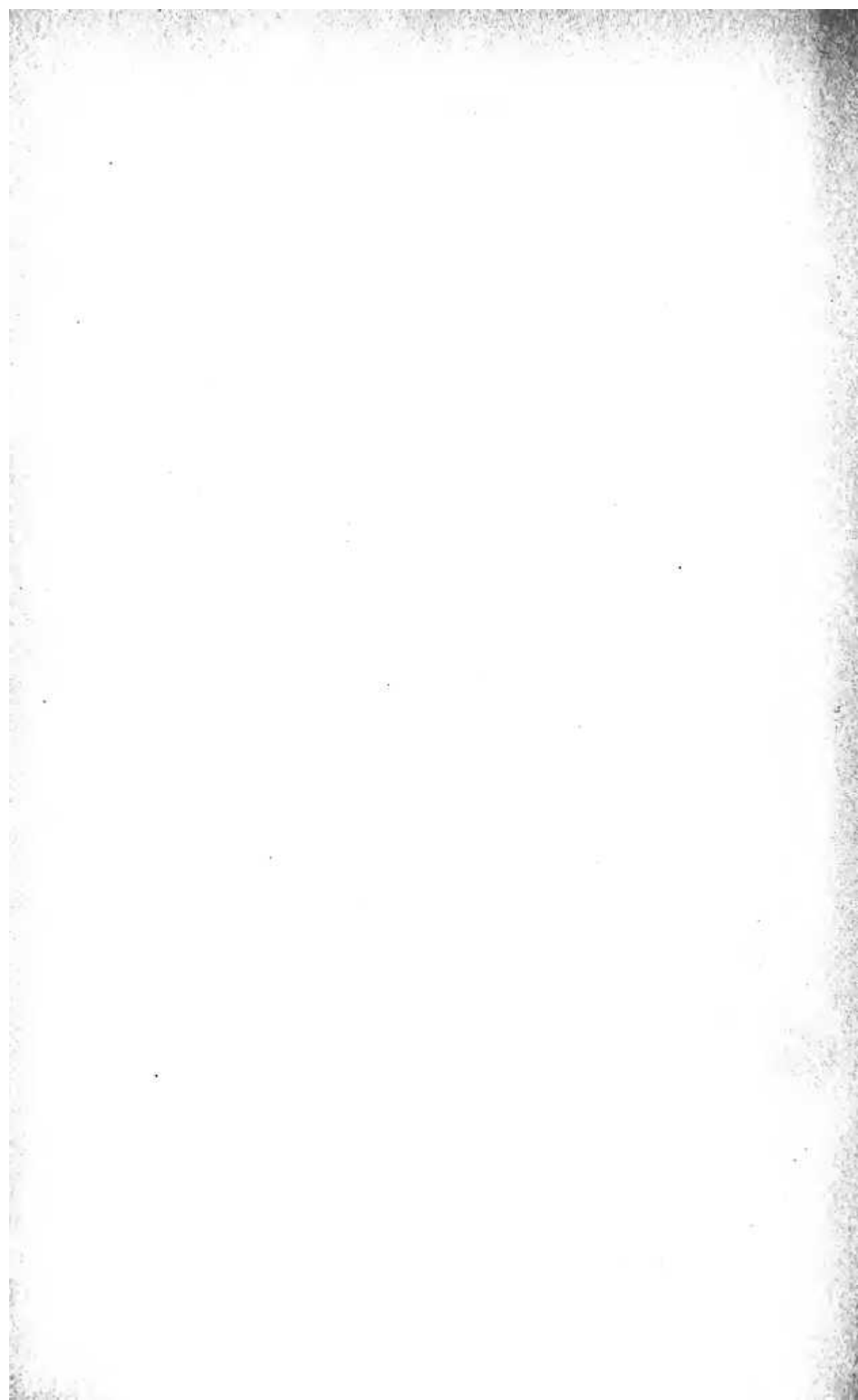
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THE WORKS OF
GEORGE MEREDITH

VOLUME IX



WESTMINSTER
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO.
2 WHITEHALL GARDENS
1897



**RHODA
FLEMING**

A STORY

VOLUME

I

Originally published
3 vols.: London 1865

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RHODA FLEMING

CHAPTER I

The Kentish Family

Remains of our good yeomanry blood will be found in Kent, developing stiff, solid, unobtrusive men, and very personable women. The distinction survives there between Kentish women and women of Kent, as a true South-eastern dame will let you know, if it is her fortune to belong to that favoured portion of the county where the great battle was fought, in which the gentler sex performed manful work, but on what luckless heads we hear not; and when garrulous tradition is discreet, the severe historic Muse declines to hazard a guess. Saxon, one would presume, since it is thought something to have broken them.

My plain story is of two Kentish damsels, and runs from a home of flowers into regions where flowers are few and sickly, on to where the flowers which breathe sweet breath have been proved in mortal fire.

Mrs. Fleming, of Queen Anne's Farm, was the wife of a yeoman-farmer of the county. Both were of sound Kentish extraction, albeit varieties of the breed. The farm had its name from a tradition, common to many other farmhouses within a circuit of the metropolis, that the ante-Hanoverian lady had used the place in her day as a nursery-hospital for the royal little ones. It was a square three-storied building of red-