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George Eliot

George Eliot's first biographer, Mathilde Blind (1841-96), was herself a poet and writer. Born in Germany, Blind moved with her family to London when she was still a child, and it was there that she established her literary reputation, writing poetry, essays, biographies, and a novel. In 1883, three years after Eliot's death, Blind's *George Eliot* was published. It is the first full-length biography of Eliot; while biographical articles about her had appeared in 1881, Blind's work corrected mistakes and enlarged the knowledge of Eliot's early life. Indeed, what sets her biography apart is the extent of private sources that Blind sought out, returning to Eliot's home and engaging with family and friends to accrue extensive information hitherto unknown to the public. Organized first around her personal life and latterly around her works, this biography will interest Eliot scholars, students of nineteenth-century criticism, and scholars of feminism.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108019606

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1883
This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-01960-6 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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GEORGE ELIOT

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GEORGE ELIOT

BY

MATHILDE BLIND

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN AND CO.
13, WATERLOO PLACE
1883.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

DETAILED accounts of GEORGE ELIOT'S life have hitherto been singularly scanty. In the dearth of published materials a considerable portion of the information contained in this biographical study has, necessarily, been derived from private sources. In visiting the places connected with GEORGE ELIOT'S early life, I enjoyed the privilege of meeting her brother, Mr. Isaac Evans, and was also fortunate in gleaning many a characteristic fact and trait from old people in the neighbourhood, contemporaries of her father, Mr. Robert Evans. For valuable help in forming an idea of the growth of GEORGE ELIOT'S mind, my warm thanks are especially due to her oldest friends, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray, and Miss Hennell of Coventry. Miss Jenkins, the novelist's schoolfellow, and Mrs. John Cash, also generously afforded me every assistance in their power.

A great part of the correspondence in the present volume has not hitherto appeared in print, and has been kindly placed at my disposal by Mrs. Bray, Mrs. Gilchrist, Mrs. Clifford, Miss Marks, Mr. William

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 Mathilde Blind
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

iv

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M. Rossetti, and the late James Thomson. I have also quoted from letters addressed to Miss Phelps which were published in *Harper's Magazine* of March 1882, and from one or two other articles that have appeared in periodical publications. For permission to make use of this correspondence my thanks are due to Mr. C. L. Lewes.

By far the most exhaustive published account of GEORGE ELIOT'S life and writings, and the one of which I have most freely availed myself, is Mr. Call's admirable essay in the *Westminster Review* of July 1881. Although this, as indeed every other article on the subject, states GEORGE ELIOT'S birthplace incorrectly, it contains many important *data* not mentioned elsewhere. To the article on GEORGE ELIOT in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February 1881, I owe many interesting particulars, chiefly connected with the beginning of GEORGE ELIOT'S literary career. Amongst other papers consulted may be mentioned a noticeable one by Miss Simcox in the *Contemporary Review*, and an appreciative notice by Mr. Frederick Myers in *Scribner's Magazine*, as well as articles in *Harper's Magazine* of May 1881, and *The Century* of August 1882. Two quaint little pamphlets, 'Seth Bede: the Methody,' and 'George Eliot in Derbyshire,' by Guy Roslyn, although full of inaccuracies, have also furnished some curious items of information.

MATHILDE BLIND.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
INTRODUCTORY	I
CHAPTER II.	
CHILDHOOD AND EARLY HOME	9
CHAPTER III.	
YOUTHFUL STUDIES AND FRIENDSHIPS	22
CHAPTER IV.	
TRANSLATION OF STRAUSS AND FEUERBACH -- TOUR ON THE CONTINENT	44
CHAPTER V.	
THE "WESTMINSTER REVIEW"	59
CHAPTER VI.	
GEORGE HENRY LEWES	77
CHAPTER VII.	
SCENES OF CLERICAL LIFE	91
CHAPTER VIII.	
ADAM BEDE	106

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-01960-6 - George Eliot
 Mathilde Blind
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

vi

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER IX.	
THE MILL ON THE FLOSS	123
CHAPTER X.	
SILAS MARNER	137
CHAPTER XI.	
ROMOLA	148
CHAPTER XII.	
HER POEMS	161
CHAPTER XIII.	
FELIX HOLT AND MIDDLEMARCH	175
CHAPTER XIV.	
DANIEL DERONDA	192
CHAPTER XV.	
LAST YEARS	204