

Written for the Loyalist.

THE PREDESTINED;  
A TALE OF BRENTOR.

(Continued.)

## CHAPTER III.

"Here are chaste wives, pure lives; here people pay  
But what they please; and if that things be dear,  
'Tis only that they love to throw away  
Their cash, to show how much they have a-year.  
Here laws are all inviolate; none lay  
Traps for the traveller, every highway's clear:  
Here——" he was interrupted by a knife,  
With "Damn your eyes! your money or your life!"

BYRON.

Several years elapsed before I again visited Poltavy, but in the mean time I had kept up a regular correspondence with my brother, and was gratified to learn that Lucy, as she diverged towards womanhood, was all her fond parents could wish. Nor did I forget to inquire after the gallant but wayward boy. "He is a strange character," said my brother, in answer to my inquiries, "and I am afraid somehow or other that no good will come of his acquaintance with Lucy—or rather their attachment, for I need not tell you that it is mutual. He is brave to rashness, frank, generous, noble and daring. If any act of disinterested kindness is rendered to the old, the poor, the maimed, it is Harry Tresilian performs it. If any hazardous feat is performed by any of the village youths, which requires more than ordinary agility and courage, it is still Harry—none but Harry. But on the other hand he is certainly sensitive, and, I fear—vindictive,—in fact he seems to be wholly governed by conflicting passions; the good, I must own, usually predominates—but not always. About a month ago, seeing him playing with Lucy, I hinted gently that the conduct of a young man of eighteen towards a girl in her fifteenth year ought to be a little more deferential and reserved than what is usually tolerated in children. His cheeks reddened immediately, and his eye fired, when, darting on me a look either of wounded pride, or defiance—I know not which—he arose, bowed, and immediately left the house, nor has he since visited us; although I suspect he corresponds with Lucy. This I tolerate at present, but doubt whether I should do so, for notwithstanding his virtues, I fear it may not be well to suffer a mild and timid girl to unite her destiny with a spirit so fierce and uncontrollable as his."

In the spring following the receipt of this letter, Lucy and her father paid us a visit, he to proceed thence to Barnstable on business, and thence to return home, and Lucy to spend some months in our humble retreat. She had grown up to womanhood, and a more delicate flower never expanded beneath the genial climate of South Down. She was rather above the middle height, slender although well-formed, with all the freshness and plumpness of youthful health: her flaxen locks hung in rich profusion over a neck of snow, beautifully curved as that of the high-mettled Arabian courser; her cheeks, nose, mouth and chin were cast in nature's finest mould, and her massy forehead, unrelieved by her light eye-brows, would have given an air of heaviness to her features, were they not lighted up by a pair of the most intelligent hazel eyes mortal ever beheld. To my daughter, whose senior she was by three or four years, she became at once a tender and beloved companion, and a valuable instructress. No wonder Harry Tresilian loved her, for I verily believe her appearance in Church on Sundays turned the heads of half the young men in our parish, although her modesty never led her to suspect it, much less to desire to make conquests by the arts of coquetry. Neither did the gentle girl feel proud of her lover's sighs; and I have since been told by my daughter, whom she had made her confidant, that she breathed not a wish for the future in which Harry was not included.

Lucy's visit took place in the summer of 1808. Nelson had fallen at Trafalgar about two years and a half before, and our navy had completely swept their foes from the ocean. Prisoners of war had accumulated so fast that the naval prison at Plymouth could not contain all who were landed at that port, and Government was obliged to build a new prison for that express purpose. The site chosen, on account of the salubrity of the air, the cheapness of fuel, (peat) and other reasons, was on Dartmoor Common, about sixteen miles inland from Plymouth, eight from Tavistock, and thirteen from Moretonhamstead, and near the junction of the road from Plymouth to Moreton with that from Tavistock to the same place. A large number of French prisoners were at this time confined in the newly-erected prison, while the officers, on their parole, were to be found in considerable numbers in all the towns and villages situated within twelve or fifteen miles, some of whom were quite wealthy, and spent the incomes arising from estates formerly belonging to noble French families, but confiscated since the revolution, with all the gaiety and sang froid for which they are so distinguished. The rough, uncultivated, but warm-hearted peasantry, were unaccustomed to such a lavish display of wealth, accompanied as it was by a manner which could accommodate itself to any society and any circumstances; and much idleness and debauchery was the consequence. Many an unsophisticated youth imbibed at once the infidelity of the prisoners, and a thirst for gold by means from which, had they been better educated, they must have shrunk from, and had they not been simple and unsophisticated when their visitors came among them, they could not have been blinded to the fatal consequences. Many an unsuspecting girl who, in ordinary times, would have adorned the middle ranks of life, and gone down to the grave with honour, fell a prey to the wiles of the seducer. Many a gallant fellow, who might have won laurels in the Army or Navy, or filled an humble station in his native place happy and contented, without a wish for more than he possessed, tempted by the gold the prisoners at large scattered with such a lavish hand, and which they said they had earned by a life of adventure, were ready to become smugglers, privateersmen, or perhaps worse—*Pirates!* The greater part of the troops

of the line were abroad, some guarding the Indies and our Colonial possessions from the invader, and others accompanying Sir John Moore in Spain; while the fortified towns along the coast were garrisoned by militia companies and local volunteers. A small detachment of soldiers were stationed at Tavistock, from which a piquet was detached to guard the French Prison, and to this handful of men, and the keepers, were entrusted the care of not less than three thousand prisoners! This fact was known to the officers on parole, and it is not to be wondered at that there were men among them who hesitated not to form plans for breaking the prison and liberating their countrymen. Those who entertained this project found auxiliaries ready made to their hands, as I shall proceed to show.

In addition to the insidious influence of the French officers on the rude peasantry, there were other influences having a tendency to corrupt them. Money, when too easily attainable by the ignorant, serves but to engender habits of idleness and debauchery. Now at the period of which we treat tin and copper ores fetched extravagant prices, and this, added to the scarcity of labourers, induced the agents of the Beeralston mines (about twelve miles distant from the French Prison,) to offer very high wages. The granite works too, in the immediate vicinity of the prison, were carried on with much spirit, several new works being about to be erected at Plymouth. Among the hundreds—nay, the thousands—employed on these works there were many, very many, who, as they could earn enough to subsist on by working three days in a week, spent the other three days in gambling, shooting, poaching, and other idle practices. Smuggling was also carried on to a great extent, and at length the "Moors" were reported to be unsafe for travellers at night. In a tract of country from twenty-five to thirty miles in diameter, upon which very few inhabitants resided, with the exception of those we have already described, and tavern-keepers dependant on them for a living,—where not a soldier was to be seen but a sergeant's piquet stationed at the prison, and a constabulary force was not known, it must be evident that no check whatever to the evil practices of the lawless set existed. The people of the adjoining towns shook their heads ominously whenever the "Moors" were alluded to, but as the men who infested them never visited their neighbours unless it were to offer them a good bargain in smuggled goods, or upon an excursion of pleasure, when they scattered their money with lavish hands, it was not the interest of their neighbours to find fault with their mode of life, or to lodge informations against them. I have briefly adverted to these facts in order that you may properly understand the character of the wild region so intimately connected with my tale. Now for an adventure which befel myself upon the same ground.

After Lucy had spent a few months with my family, she set out on her return, accompanied by myself and my daughter.—After passing through Bridport, Lyme Regis and Colyton we crossed the Ex a few miles below Exeter, struck across the turnpike road leading from that city to Plymouth, near Chudleigh, intending to pass the second night at the house of Lucy's maternal uncle, in Moretonhamstead, and visit the potteries of Bovey Tracey on our route. The sun had passed the meridian before we crossed the Ex, and we pushed our horses across the country at a brisk pace, for as Bovey Tracey and Moretonhamstead are both situated on the edge of the common we feared to be benighted, lest we should fall in with some of the lawless spirits about whom we had heard of late so many wild reports. But the traveller who avoids a great road and attempts by cutting across the country to shorten the distance, will in nine cases out of ten find himself mistaken. This was our lot. Although the course we took appears much shorter on the map, the numberless turns and crooks, and the wretched state of some of the bye-roads, to say nothing of having more than once been under the necessity of riding up to a farm house to enquire the way, rendered our journey tedious and unpleasant, and ere we looked down into the deep valley in which Bovey is situated our lengthened shadows were to be seen far behind us.

We alighted at an Inn, and when I ordered the horses to be baited Lucy remarked that by the time they had done we should be ready to proceed, in which I acquiesced; but what will not woman's curiosity accomplish? Neither Lucy nor my daughter had ever seen a pottery before, and long and earnestly did they gaze on the interesting process by which clay is moulded into so many useful, beautiful, and fantastic shapes. Among other articles peculiar to the place which attracted their attention, was the famous Bovey pipe.\* Then the bell rang—the signal for all hands that their day's work was over, when the girls—smart, healthy-looking girls, dressed in straw hats, short-sleeved gowns, and white aprons—came frolicking, gamboling from the scene of their labours, joking and playing with each other, as though their ten hour's work was but an ordeal they had to pass through before their minds could be in a proper state to enjoy life and the beauties of nature. It was quite an interesting sight, and I, as well as my juvenile companions, had forgotten that we had yet to travel several miles on a rough bye-road, a part of which crossed an angle of the common, and through a country of bad repute. As they passed they regarded us with a mixture of modesty and curiosity, and suspended their frolics, when I accosted them as follows:

"Well, my blooming girls! your employment seems to be a healthy one, and rather gives you a taste for the enjoyment of such a fine evening as this than disqualifies you; but it affords me matter for surprise that the young men—and they say they are very numerous in this neighbourhood—should suffer so many of you to remain single, and so many fine specimens among you too."

"Fine as the weather is" said one of them, "you will get a wet jacket before you reach Moreton and if you have any regard

\* Bovey pipes are celebrated all over England; they have extremely long stems, curled round several times in a circle, something like the tube of a French horn.

to the safety of your niece and daughter you had better stop in Bovey to-night, where you have friends.

"Niece and daughter!" muttered I; how should she know anything about us, or that we are bound to Moreton? This is very odd?"

"I am thinking" said a little vivacious looking girl with sandy locks and eyes so sparkling that you could scarcely tell whether they were of a deep blue colour or black, "that you pay us but an equivocal sort of a compliment when you allude to us 'and the nice young men' of the neighbourhood in one breath, as though they are fitting matches for us! Upon my word I am much obliged to you!—Let's hear your opinion of the station I should fill, should I marry one of the bold smugglers, and live in a cave with Gin for breakfast, Brandy for dinner and Rum for a night-cap? or one of the sly ones who keeps himself not more than half-drunk the whole time, and minds number one while all around him is recklessness and prodigality? I faith! were I to get one of them I would make him build a turf cabin in the wildest part of the Moors,—a place of refuge for the fraternity—where I'd act the hostess, with a bunch of keys fastened round my wrist, and two pockets in my apron, one for the silver and the other for the copper; and my cap should be trimmed with Brussel's lace, and my ears and fingers decked with French Jewelry, the former the gift of some bold smuggler, and the other a tribute to my charms from a prisoner on parole, who, having once strayed to my cottage accidentally, loses his way ever afterwards at least once a week, and never thinks of returning until the day he has to report himself to the authorities; while, if my 'old man' should show signs of jealousy, or too strict watchfulness, I'd stuff him so with home-brewed ale and poached venison that when sitting in his easy chair in the chimney corner he should not be able to see what was doing over his huge corporation, nor have power to rise from his seat without help! Or perhaps you intend me for a light o'love of one of these foreign gentlemen? No matter, I'd follow him to France—for the war I suppose will not last for ever—and *who* would know that we were not married? No?—Stop Suckey—I know what you were going to say, that *he* could tell! Would he though! If he did I'd tear his eyes out.—a lean, cavadgerous, wasp-waisted, parley voo, mimicking, frog-eating jackanapes! I'd teach him to mind his *own* business and let me alone!—I would!"

This speech was so whimsical, and the passion into which the fair speaker worked herself at its close so truly ludicrous, that all hands (with the exception of the first speaker,) burst into a fit of laughter, with which the little rogue joined so quickly that it was impossible to tell whether the rage had been real or affected. The eyes of the first speaker were bent on her with an intense scrutiny, and at first the proud lip curled with a bitter sneer, expressive of that contempt, mingled with regret, we feel on witnessing an act of folly committed by a person in whose welfare we are deeply interested. But no sooner had the little gypsy joined in the laugh than this look of scorn in her companion gave place to a smile, and over the features, which a moment before displayed considerable agitation, spread a calm—a look of satisfaction.

"So miss," said I, "you have drawn a nice picture, although rather highly coloured, and although I would not wish to see that pretty face spoiled again, even by a *mock* passion, I must run the hazard so far as to tell you that although the 'parley voo's,' as you call them, may not win you and carry you off to France, still I wonder they do not find you out here in your retreat, and persecute you with their proposals. That rich lip, bright eye, and musical voice—those sunny locks, and above all that sparkling vivacity—so much like their own country-women—must be sorely tempting should any one of them chance to fall into your company. However, I should be sorry to see you carried over to France, for the picture you have drawn of 'love in a (turf) cottage' becomes you so well that I think you must have made it the study of your heart,—I would not disappoint you. Then there's your neighbour there, whom you call 'Suckey,'—with her mild hazel eyes and saintly countenance, looking as though she would become any thing for the sake of ease and quietude—she surely might induce some French Catholic to change his religion and tarry in England for her sake, or if she failed she might—pin her faith to his, accompany him to France, and if he should die, or forsake her, her demure looks would well adorn a nunnery. (Here I was interrupted by shouts of laughter.) Then there is that tall and comely brunette that prophesied rain to-night, (of which I can perceive no signs as yet,) with her tenor voice, curly locks of dark brown, jet-black eyes, and looks of proud determination; she would make an excellent wife for a brigand,—beauty for his cave and an assistant on the high way. She would be worth a dozen men. By Heavens I can picture to myself the terror of a traveller—a benighted traveller—when, with just light enough to distinguish the outlines of her figure, he sees her brawny arm uplifted with a naked sabre, as the words are thundered in his ear 'Stand or deliver!'"

"Good! Excellent!" exclaimed my fair auditors, "that's what you get, Miriam, for prophesying bad luck to a stranger!"

"Stranger!" I muttered; "true, I never recollect seeing her before, but it appears I am no stranger to her!"

Miriam took my joke apparently in good part, saying as she approached me, "You do me honour, sir, allow me to take a lesson!" she then drew something from her bosom, and presenting it close to my head exclaimed, in tones piercingly clear, "Deliver or die!" I started back much frightened, taken as I was by surprise, and that instant the weapon, whatever it might have been, was lowered and concealed under the apron; what it was I could not exactly tell, so sudden and unexpected was the movement, I only knew by the ray of light which shot from it that it was of some metallic substance, and, that her back being turned towards her companions, they had not witnessed it, although they must have heard the words. Before I had time to inquire the reason for this strange conduct, she passed close to my side,