

Written for the Loyalist.

THE PREDESTINED ;

A TALE OF BRENTOR.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER V.

"Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake :
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble."—SHAKESPEARE.

When I missed the girls from the rock under which we had been sheltered from the rain, it never occurred to me that they could have found a friend in a spot so desolate ; yet so it was ? Scarcely had the sounds of my horses' hoofs died away (the report of the pistols did not reach them,) when they heard the voices of people approaching ; they stopped outside the entrance, and one of them was heard distinctly to say, "Do come in, sir, and stop until the shower is over ; your clothes will be drenched to the skin, and what account shall I give to your mother if you take a fever in consequence ?" "Pho," replied the other, "I am no longer a child, that my mother should require me at her hands ! But what signifies a wet jacket ? I tell you that there are dark deeds on foot to-night which requires *watching* ! go in and do as I desire you ; if I am not here in half an hour you will find me at the pond." The last speaker disappeared, and the other sought the shelter of the rock, but on turning the angle was heard to mutter, "Hillo ! a fire here ! what does this mean ?" The new-comer advanced a few steps further, when both parties started back with mutual surprise—it was the girl Miriam. A few words from Lucy and my daughter sufficed to explain their situation, but when they questioned Miriam as to the cause of her appearance in such a place, and in such an hour, she was either silent or evaded their enquiries ; neither would she tell with whom she had been but a few moments before engaged in conversation. This was a question Lucy would have no need to ask were it not that the noise of the storm rendered the tones of the voice she had heard indistinct.

As soon as the storm was over Miriam represented to the girls the improbability that I should be able to retrace my steps to the spot where I had left them, and offered to guide them to the road we had missed, and so direct them that they would have no difficulty in reaching Moreton. After waiting so long that all hopes of my return until morning fled, they accepted her proposals and set off on their journey. They reached Moreton and the residence of Lucy's kinsman in safety, and I had not travelled far before I met two of the servants belonging to the family despatched in search of me. I reached Moreton without further adventure, where I was gratified in embracing once more my niece and my daughter, safe from the perils of this horrible night ; but the tears fell fast on Lucy's head as I bent over her and thought on the blighted hopes which must follow the intelligence I now felt it to be my duty to impart.

Procuring the loan of a horse from Lucy's uncle, the next day we proceeded to Poltavy. After having fairly got upon the Moors I commanded my daughter to ride on before, for I had something to communicate to Lucy. Her features immediately assumed the appearance of marble, and without waiting for me to commence the conversation, she exclaimed, "Dear Uncle, can it be possible that I heard Tresilian's voice last night ! or can you tell me who is this Miriam ?"

"As to the first part of your question, my dear, the probability is so great that it almost amounts to a certainty ; but as to the latter part I can give no information,—if a *woman* she is probably some low creature with whom Tresilian has found an unfortunate connection, but I have my suspicions that it is a man in disguise."

"A man !" she exclaimed, the blood rushing to her temples as she again hoped for the best. But when I began to disclose my suspicions that both Tresilian and Miriam belonged to a gang of outlaws, and related how I had been shot at by the latter—how I had met with them both when I descended by the rope—Tresilian's threat if he suspected me of being a spy—his entrance into the turf-tavern, where he was hailed as their Lieutenant—the disclosures I had overheard between Mother Grimp and her husband—and finally the fatal rencontre at the pond, she listened with breathless attention until I had done, when she exclaimed :

"I will not believe it ! Never, NEVER ! will I believe that Tresilian is the Lieutenant of a gang of robbers ! No, though all the world should pronounce him guilty my heart will acquit him, for I know his purity—the loftiness of his soul, which will never suffer him to degrade himself by the perpetration of anything mean or dishonest !"

I attempted to reason with her, when, the first burst of her enthusiasm being over, she replied with comparative calmness, "You suppose, sir, this Miriam to be an accomplice of Tresilian's, and assert that it was the voice of this mysterious person which commanded you to 'deliver' last night. Now, sir, if such were the case the probability would have been that Tresilian was present ; but from the distance between the spot where you were attacked, and the overhanging rock where you left us, it is impossible that either of the parties engaged in that outrage could have visited us almost immediately after your departure. Besides, you did not observe that the person who seized your reins was dressed in woman's clothes, and where during such a storm could Miriam have resumed her female habiliments ? You also struck the villain who accosted you with your loaded whip, and felled him to the ground, yet neither you nor us perceived any mark on Miriam, which could hardly have been the case if she had been the person you struck. Then again you say she was concealed in the kitchen of the tavern, and nobly interfered to prevent Grimp from abusing his wife ? Also that Miriam, once in com-

pany with Tresilian, and once alone, conducted you safely to the road which led to Moreton, as the girl also conducted us thither ; and lastly that Miriam was attacked by two of the gang to which you supposed her to belong—which is not at all likely—and only escaped being murdered by her own determination and your timely assistance !"

"I confess this is very perplexing, Lucy, but if Miriam is not a robber in disguise, what connection but a dishonourable one can exist betwixt her and Tresilian ?"

"Miriam may still be a man, although no robber. Tresilian may have some object in view in which Miriam can render him more effectual aid by assuming a disguise."

"Still, Lucy, I cannot divest myself of the idea that it was this Miriam's voice which bade me 'deliver or die !'—although from what fell from mother Grimp it is evident I was mistaken for another person—and the fact of Tresilian being received as the Lieutenant of the gang renders all excuses for his conduct idle."

"Yet, Uncle, he may have taken this step that he may the more effectually penetrate and defeat their designs. Not even were Tresilian taken and tried for his life—not even were he pronounced *guilty* by a jury of his countrymen—would I believe him so !"

"And that he soon will be," said a shrill voice from the roadside. We turned our heads in the direction of the speaker, and there stood a woman whom at first sight I thought was Mother Grimp, but on closer inspection I perceived she was older, taller and somewhat bent, leaning heavily on a stick, her figure not so full, rather evincing abstemiousness than good living. The features were much the same, but so malignant was the expression of her eye that I dared not meet the second glance ! I needed not to be told who it was that had thus unceremoniously mingled with our conversation,—I knew at first sight—it was the Witch of Brentor. To Lucy she was personally known, and with a trembling voice she accosted her as follows :—

"Why, Mother Eyres, what makes you perdiet an occurrence so unlikely to happen !"

"Unlikely or not it will come to pass," repeated the beldam, "Sir Thomas A——d is not the man to put up with the robbery and murder of his steward, and not prosecute the murderers,—if you want to know more you will find me at home on Friday next." And she turned her face and began with a hobbling gait to cross the common.

"The steward murdered !" I muttered as we moved on : "last night was indeed a night of crime ?"

We reached Poltavy in due time, but it would be in vain to attempt to depict the grief of the heart-stricken maiden. She was received with rapture from her parents, whose quick eyes at once detected that something had gone wrong with her, but they knew not that her altered appearance was all the effect of one night's adventures. I soon sought an opportunity of speaking to my brother in private, and related to him all which I have now told you, but with respect to Lucy's mother my lips were sealed. She had doted on Tresilian, and Lucy could not bear that she should now have reason to suspect him, she had therefore made me promise not to mention any thing about our last night's adventures to her mother.

The day after our arrival we had been out taking a stroll in the cool of the evening, I was walking arm in arm with my brother on our return, while Lucy and my daughter followed us at a short distance, when we were alarmed by a shriek. We turned around quickly and beheld Tresilian supporting the fainting form of Lucy, who had thrown herself into his arms. My brother was the first to recover from his surprise, and bounding forward he caught his daughter from the arms of the youth, at the same time rudely pushing him aside.

"What now, minion !" he exclaimed, "dost thou think that the arms which two nights since enfolded a wanton are now fitting support for one as pure as the air she breathes, or that the companion of midnight assassins and vagabonds is a fitting mate for my daughter ?"

"Were any other man but Lucy's father to use these words" replied the youth, "I would chastise him for his insolence."

"Softly young flippant" said I, "dost thou forget the night before last ? or the girl Miriam, or——"

"It is *you* then who have thus destroyed my happiness,—*you* whom I conducted from a scene of danger—where, had you been found your life would not have been worth a groat—to the road you had strayed from ? Ah ! Sir, you will know one day how grossly you have injured—how *terribly* you have wronged me !"

By this time Lucy had recovered from her swoon, and as she struggled to escape from her father's grasp she said "Oh, let me go, father ; let me tell him that there is still one heart which confides in him and believes him innocent !"

"Why, Lucy, this is worse than madness ! If you are not really convinced of his guilt—which to me appears plain—treat him distantly—do not associate with him while there is a doubt.—And you, young man, if you are not entirely lost to all sense of shame, you should have sufficient decorum to bring this scene to a close by withdrawing."

"I comply with your wishes, sir." Then addressing himself to Lucy he said, "Good bye, Lucy : God bless thy sweet lips for pronouncing me innocent,—I will endeavour to see you soon and disclose what will *prove* that I am so ; but in the minds of others I fear I shall be stigmatized as a villain for some time to come. God bless you,—good bye."

"Did you hear the news, sir ?" said a servant accosting my brother as we were about to enter the house.

"No ; what is it ?"

"Why, Lor bless you, sir, there's been the duce to pay on the Moors ; the old man has gotten into 'em at last, sure enough !—The night afore last Sir Thomas A——d's steward and some other people were a-coming across the Moors from Bovey, when they were attacked by the highwaymen and had to fight for't or

surrender. The steward had been away collecting rents and had the money in his pocket, so he *shot the horse* of one of the highwaymen, and then they all rode for their lives. Pistols and muskets were fired after them at a great rate, but the night was so dark that nobody was hit. Then the robbers chased them, but they took different roads and all escaped but the steward ; but his horse came home about two o'clock in the morning without him, and Sir Thomas got up himself, and took his servants with him, and started in search of his steward. And sure enough they found him—found him murdered, sir,—shot through the head ! and just as they came in sight of the dead body, lying all alone by the side of a path, they saw a man as if he was searching for something, and as soon as he saw them he ran. Then they gave chase and caught him—you know him, sir, well enough,—who was it but that fellow you caught a-poaching one night, and whom you said would never come to good—*Bill Jones* ! When they asked him what he was doing there, he was sulky, and would tell them nothing only that he was searching for something he had lost. Then they began to suspect what it was, and when they searched the corpse and found the money gone, Sir Thomas ordered them to search for it where they had seen Bill searching before he ran ; and sure enough they found it, thrown in a puddle of water ! Then they brought the dead body and the prisoner down to A——d Park, where they held a Coroner's inquest, and examined the prisoner ; then, sir, he acknowledged that he was searching for the money, but said that he was perfectly innocent of the murder, as they might have known, for if he had hid the money he would have known where to find it ! He also told them that he knew who did commit the murder and robbery, and if they would promise him his life he would turn King's evidence. And folks are saying, sir, that *one* of the young gentlemen in our neighbourhood—who was absent from home that night—had a hand in it ! and—but what ails Miss Lucy ?"

"Peace, foolish fellow ! Thy gabble—half of it lies, I dare say—has disturbed her ; she is not accustomed to hear of crimes like this being committed in our own neighbourhood."

We passed a sad and silent evening together after the events I have just recorded, but the next morning when I returned from a ramble with my brother through the fields, where I had left him superintending some agricultural operations, I found Lucy, though pale and evidently suffering, quite calm and collected, and both her and my daughter dressed as for an excursion.

"Uncle, will you not accompany us in our morning's ride ?" said Lucy, making me a significant gesture ; "we were about to take one of the servants for our guide, but if *you* will go we will dispense with his services."

I accepted the invitation, and we set off. I neither asked nor was told the road she wished to take ; I recollected that it was *Friday*, and we were no sooner mounted than our horses' heads were directed towards Brentor. In about half an hour's canter we reached the foot of the huge mountain, when reining in our steeds we began slowly to ascend. A rough narrow lane led us for some distance up between two farms ; we passed the farmhouse on either side, the fields becoming as we ascended more and more stony and broken, and the hedges which in the valley were covered with hazel and thorn were now overhung with the green furze and yellow broom. Ascending still higher we came upon the open common ; nothing was now to be seen before us but the winding road, and the dark grass and heather covering the sandy soil, with here and there a moss-covered rock, or a bunch of the dwarf furze. But when at length our sweating beasts, blowing and panting with the toilsome ascent, bore us to the summit, a scene of indelible grandeur burst upon our sight. To the north nought was to be seen but a succession of wild craggy hills, among which winded the valley of the Tamar, and glimpses of the stream were here and there visible, enlivening with its shining face the dark foliage which grew in the interstices of the rugged cliffs by which it was bound. The view in this direction terminated with the source of this river. On the north and north-east, looking across the hollow of Poltavy, which appeared like a large basin in the midst of the hills, the view was confined by the lofty peaks of Dartmoor, cap'd with masses of grey granite. To the east the sea was visible, as well as a great part of the south-east portion of Devonshire ; and to the south-east the eye was delighted with a full view of the most fertile part of the county, generally termed South Down, and famed for its hams and cider. In this direction glimpses of Torbay and Start Bay (near Dartmouth) were visible, with the English channel in the distance. To the south the scenery was exquisitely rich. The deep and smooth Tamar winding majestically along, receiving tributaries at every bend, until it expanded into a fine bay, (the Haomaze) where "the Battle Flag of England" was seen proudly unfolded to the breeze. The scenery on the banks was magnificent ; at first Sand Hill House on the right, next Monk's Buckland with its fine old parks on the left ; then a succession of noble mansions, country seats, and neat villas belonging to naval officers, rivalling each other in beauty and splendour, until the eye rested on the broad panorama at its mouth—Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse spread out over a fine undulating plain, bounded on the east by the Catwater and the little river Plym, the fine cast-iron bridge across the former, and Saltram House and grounds reposing on the banks of the latter—numerous merchant vessels lying at anchor in the basin, the Catwater, the Sound and the Hamoaze ; the citadel on the Hoe, the fortifications on Mount Wise, the Dock-yard of the Royal Navy, and the beautiful and romantic seat of Mount Edgcombe on the opposite shore, with its pleasure grounds, gardens, plantations and deer-park stretching out over a vast tract of ascending ground, until terminated at the top by Maker Church and Tower. To the west the eye rested on the central and northern portion of Cornwall, broken, mountainous, and in its general character sterile, although relieved by many an intervening valley, whose green slopes appeared to better advantage from the contrast.—But even the most wild and rugged districts appeared to have