

## Wyllard's Weird: A Novel

Mary Elizabeth Braddon

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There are some travellers who think when they cross the Tamar, over that fairy bridge of Brunel's, hung aloft between the blue of the river and the blue of the sky, that they have left England behind them on the eastern shore—that they have entered a new country, almost a new world. This land of quiet woods and lonely valleys, and bold brown hills, barren, solitary—these wild commons and large moorlands of Cornwall seem to stand apart, as they did in the days gone by, when this province was verily a kingdom, complete in itself, and owning no sovereignty but its own. It is a beautiful region which the traveller sees, perchance for the first time, as the train skims athwart the quaint little waterside village of Saltash, and pierces the rich depths of the woodland, various, enchanting. Now the line seems strung like a thread of iron in mid-air above a deep gorge, now winds sinuous as a snake through a labyrinth of hills. A picturesque bit of road, this between Plymouth and Bodmin Road, at all times; but, perhaps, loveliest in the still evening hour, when the summer sunset steeps the land in golden light, while the summer wind scarcely stirs the woods. In the mellow light of a July eventide the express from Paddington swept with slackened speed round the curve which marked the approach to a viaduct between Saltash and Bodmin Road—a heavy wooden structure, spanning a vale of Alpine beauty. An exquisite little bit of scenery, upon which the stranger is apt to look with some touch of fear mingled in the cup of his delight: but to the dweller in the district, familiar with every yard of the journey, the transit is as nothing. He is carried through the air serenely, as he smokes his cigar and reads his paper, and the notion of peril never occurs to him. One man, sitting by the window of a third-class carriage near the end of the train, looked out at the familiar scene dreamily to-night. He was an elderly, gray-headed man, a parish doctor, hard-worked and poorly paid; but he had a keen eye for the beautiful in Nature, dead or living, and familiar as this spot was to his eye, it always impressed him. He sat with his face to the engine, puffing lazily at his black briarwood, and gazing at the landscape, in that not unpleasant condition of bodily and mental fatigue, when the mind seems half asleep, and the external world is little more than a dreampicture.

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