

MABEL LYNDWOOD  
BY  
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AINSWORTH

# Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

## I.

How the Earl of Surrey and the Fair Geraldine met in King  
James's Bower in the Moat—And how they were surprised by  
the Duke of Richmond.

IN order to preserve unbroken the chain of events with which the last book of this chronicle concluded, it was deemed expedient to disturb the unity of time, so far as it related to some of the less important characters; and it will now be necessary, therefore, to return to the middle of June, when the Earl of Surrey's term of captivity was drawing to a close.

As the best means of conquering the anxiety produced by the vision exhibited to him by Herne, increased as it was by the loss of the relic he had sustained at the same time, the earl had devoted himself to incessant study, and for a whole month he remained within his chamber. The consequence of his unremitting application was that, though he succeeded in his design and completely regained his tranquillity, his strength gave way under the effort, and he was confined for some days to his couch by a low fever.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to venture forth, he mounted to the summit of the Round Tower, in the hope that a walk round its breezy battlements might conduce to his restoration to health. The day was bright and beautiful, and a gentle wind was stirring; and as Surrey felt the breath of heaven upon his cheek, and gazed upon the glorious prospect before him, he wondered that his imprisonment had not driven him mad. Everything around him, indeed, was calculated to make the sense of captivity painful. The broad and beautiful meads, stretching out beneath him, seemed to invite a ramble over them; the silver river courted a plunge into its waves, the woods an hour's retirement into their shady recesses, The bells of Eton College rang out merrily, but their sound saddened rather than elated him. The road between Eton and Windsor, then marked by straggling cottages with gardens between them, with here and there a dwelling of a better kind, was thronged with herds of cattle and their drivers, for a fair was held that day in the town of Windsor, to which they were hastening. Then there were country maidens and youthful hinds in their holiday apparel, trooping towards the bridge. Booths were erected, near which, in the Brocas meads, the rustic sports of wrestling, running, and casting the bar were going forward, while numbers of boats shot to and fro upon the river, and strains of music proceeded from a large gilt barge moored to its banks. Nearer, and in the broad green plain lying beneath the north terrace, were a company of archers shooting at the butts. But these sights, instead of affording pleasure to Surrey, only sharpened the anguish of his feelings by the contrast they offered to his present position.

To distract his thoughts, he quitted the near view, and let his eye run along the edge of the horizon, until it rested upon a small speck, which he knew to be the lofty spire of Saint Paul's Cathedral. If, as he supposed, the Fair Geraldine was in attendance upon Anne Boleyn, at the palace at Bridewell, she must be under the shadow of this very spire; and the supposition, whether correct or not, produced such quick and stifling emotions, that the tears rushed to his eyes.

Ashamed of his weakness, he turned to the other side of the tower, and bent his gaze upon the woody heights of the great park. These recalled Herne the Hunter; and burning with resentment at the tricks practised upon him by the demon, he determined that the first use he would make of his liberty should be to seek out, and, if possible, effect the capture of this mysterious being. Some of the strange encounters between Herne and the king had been related to him by the officer on guard at the Norman Tower but these only served as stimulants to the adventure. After a couple of hours thus passed on the keep, he descended refreshed and invigorated. The next day he was there again, and the day after that; when, feeling that his restoration was well-nigh complete, he requested permission to pass the following evening in the dry moat of the donjon. And this was readily accorded him.

Covered with green sod, and shaded by many tall trees growing out of the side of the artificial mound on which the keep was built, the fosse offered all the advantages of a garden to the prisoners who were allowed to take exercise within it. Here, as has been mentioned, King James the First of Scotland first beheld, from the battlements above, the lovely Jane Beaufort take her solitary walk, and by his looks and gestures contrived to make her sensible of the passion with which she inspired him; and here at last, in an arbour which, for the sake of the old and delightful legend connected with it, was kept up at the time of this chronicle, and then bore the name of the royal poet, they had secretly met, and interchanged their vows of affection.

Familiar with the story, familiar also with the poetic strains to which the monarch's passion gave birth, Surrey could not help comparing his own fate with that of the illustrious captive who had visited the spot before him. Full of such thoughts, he pensively tracked the narrow path winding between the grassy banks of the fosse—now casting up his eyes to the keep—now looking towards the arbour, and wishing that he had been favoured with such visitings as lightened the captivity of the Scottish king. At last, he sought the bower—a charming little nest of green leaves and roses, sheltering a bench which seemed only contrived for lovers—and taking out his tablets, began to trace within them some stanzas of that exquisite poem which has linked his name for ever with the Round Tower. Thus occupied, the time stole on insensibly, and he was not aware that he had over-stayed the limits allowed him, till he was aroused by the voice of the officer, who came to summon him back to his prison.

"You will be removed to your old lodging, in the Round Tower, to-morrow night, my lord," said the officer.

"For what reason?" demanded the earl, as he followed his conductor up the steep side of the mound. But receiving no reply, he did not renew the inquiry.

Entering a door in the covered way at the head of the flight of steps communicating with the Norman Tower, they descended them in silence. Just as they reached the foot of this long staircase, the earl chanced to cast back his eyes, and, to his inexpressible astonishment, perceived on the landing at the head of the steps, and just before the piece of ordnance commanding the ascent, the figure of Herne the Hunter.

Before he could utter an exclamation, the figure retreated through the adjoining archway. Telling the officer what he had seen, Surrey would fain have gone in quest of the fiendish spy; but the other would not permit him; and affecting to treat the matter as a mere creation of fancy, he hurried the earl to his chamber in the Curfew Tower.

The next day, Surrey was removed betimes to the Round Tower, and the cause of the transfer was soon explained by the discharge of ordnance, the braying of trumpets and the rolling of drums, announcing the arrival of the king. From the mystery observed towards him, Surrey was led to the conclusion that the Fair Geraldine accompanied the royal party; but he in vain sought to satisfy himself of the truth of the surmise by examining, through the deep embrasure of his window, the cavalcade that soon afterwards entered the upper quadrangle. Amid the throng of beautiful dames surrounding Anne Boleyn he could not be certain that he detected the Fair Geraldine; but he readily distinguished the Duke of Richmond among the nobles, and the sight awakened a pang of bitter jealousy in his breast.

The day wore away slowly, for he could not fix his attention upon his books, neither was he allowed to go forth upon the battlements of the tower. In the evening, however, the officer informed him he might take exercise within the dry moat if he was so inclined, and he gladly availed himself of the permission.

After pacing to and fro along the walk for a short time, he entered the arbour, and was about to throw himself upon the bench, when he observed a slip of paper lying upon it. He took it up, and found a few lines traced upon it in hurried characters. They ran thus:—"The Fair Geraldine arrived this morning in the castle. If the Earl of Surrey desires to meet her, he will find her within this arbour at midnight."

This billet was read and re-read by the young earl with feelings of indescribable transport; but a little reflection damped his ardour, and made him fear it might be a device to ensnare him. There was no certainty that the note proceeded in any way from the Fair Geraldine, nor could he even be sure that she was in the castle. Still, despite these misgivings, the attraction was too powerful to be resisted, and he turned over the means of getting out of his chamber, but the scheme seemed wholly impracticable. The window was at a considerable height above the ramparts of the keep, and even if he could reach them, and escape the notice of the sentinels, he should have to make a second descent into the fosse. And supposing all this accomplished how was he to return? The impossibility of answering this latter mental interrogation compelled him to give up all idea of the attempt.

On returning to his prison-chamber, he stationed himself at the embrasure overlooking the ramparts, and listened to the regular tread of the sentinel below, half resolved, be the consequences what they might, to descend. As the appointed time approached, his anxiety became almost intolerable, and quitting the window, he began to pace hurriedly to and fro within the chamber, which, as has been previously observed, partook of the circular form of the keep, and was supported in certain places by great wooden pillars and cross-beams. But instead of dissipating his agitation, his rapid movements seemed rather to increase it, and at last, wrought to a pitch of uncontrollable excitement, he cried aloud— "If the fiend were to present himself now, and offer to lead me to her, I would follow him."

Scarcely were the words uttered than a hollow laugh broke from the farther end of the chamber, and a deep voice exclaimed—"I am ready to take you to her." "I need not ask who addresses me," said Surrey, after a pause, and straining his eyes to distinguish the figure of the speaker in the gloom.

"I will tell you who I am," rejoined the other. "I am he who visited you once before—who showed you a vision of the Fair Geraldine—and carried off your vaunted relic—ho! ho!"

"Avoid thee, false fiend!" rejoined Surrey, "thou temptest me now in vain."

"You have summoned me," returned Herne; "and I will not be dismissed. I am ready to convey you to your mistress, who awaits you in King James's bower, and marvels at your tardiness."

"And with what design dost thou offer me this service?" demanded Surrey.

"It will be time enough to put that question when I make any condition," replied Herne.

"Enough, I am willing to aid you. Will you go?"

"Lead on!" replied Surrey, marching towards him.

Suddenly, Herne drew a lantern from beneath the cloak in which he was wrapped, and threw its light on a trap-door lying open at his feet.

"Descend!"

Surrey hesitated a moment, and then plunged down the steps. In another instant the demon followed. Some hidden machinery was then set in motion, and the trap-door returned to its place. At length, Surrey arrived at a narrow passage, which appeared to correspond in form with the bulwarks of the keep. Here Herne passed him, and taking the lead, hurried along the gallery and descended another flight of steps, which brought them to a large vault, apparently built in the foundation of the tower. Before the earl had time to gaze round this chamber, the demon masked the lantern, and taking his hand, drew him through a narrow passage, terminated by a small iron door, which flew open at a touch, and they emerged among the bushes clothing the side of the mound.

"You can now proceed without my aid," said Herne: "but take care not to expose yourself to the sentinels."

Keeping under the shade of the trees, for the moon was shining brightly, Surrey hastened towards the arbour, and as he entered it, to his inexpressible delight found that he had not been deceived, but that the Fair Geraldine was indeed there.

"How did you contrive this meeting?" she cried, after their first greetings had passed. "And how did you learn I was in the castle, for the strictest instructions were given that the tidings should not reach you."

The only response made by Surrey was to press her lily hand devotedly to his lips.

"I should not have ventured hither," pursued the Fair Geraldine, "unless you had sent me the relic as a token. I knew you would never part with it, and I therefore felt sure there was no deception."

"But how did you get here?" inquired Surrey.

"Your messenger provided a rope-ladder, by which I descended into the moat," she replied.

Surrey was stupefied.

"You seem astonished at my resolution," she continued; "and, indeed, I am surprised at it myself; but I could not overcome my desire to see you, especially as this meeting may be our last. The king, through the Lady Anne Boleyn, has positively enjoined me to think no more of you and has given your father, the Duke of Norfolk, to understand that your marriage without the royal assent will be attended by the loss of all the favour he now enjoys."

"And think you I will submit to such tyranny?" cried Surrey.

"Alas!" replied the Fair Geraldine in a mournful tone, "I feel we shall never be united. This conviction, which has lately forced itself upon my mind, has not made me love you less, though it has in some degree altered my feelings towards you."

"But I may be able to move the king," cried Surrey. "I have some claim besides that of kindred on the Lady Anne Boleyn—and she will obtain his consent."

"Do not trust to her," replied the Fair Geraldine. "You may have rendered her an important service, but be not too sure of a return. No, Surrey, I here release you from the troth you plighted to me in the cloisters."

"I will not be released from it!" cried the earl hastily; "neither will I release you. I hold the pledge as sacred and as binding as if we had been affianced together before Heaven."

"For your own sake, do not say so, my dear lord," rejoined the Fair Geraldine; "I beseech you, do not. That your heart is bound to me now, I well believe—and that you could become inconstant I will not permit myself to suppose. But your youth forbids an union between us for many years; and if during that time you should behold some fairer face than mine, or should meet some heart you may conceive more loving—though that can hardly be—I would not have a hasty vow restrain you. Be free, then—free at least for three years—and if at the end of that time your affections are still unchanged, I am willing you should bind yourself to me for ever."

"I cannot act with equal generosity to you," rejoined Surrey in a tone of deep disappointment. "I would sooner part with life than relinquish the pledge I have received from you. But I am content that my constancy should be put to the test you propose. During the long term of my probation, I will shrink from no trial of faith. Throughout Europe I will proclaim your beauty in the lists, and will maintain its

supremacy against all comers. But, oh! sweet Geraldine, since we have met in this spot, hallowed by the loves of James of Scotland and Jane Beaufort, let us here renew our vows of eternal constancy, and agree to meet again at the time you have appointed, with hearts as warm and loving as those we bring together now."

And as he spoke he drew her towards him, and imprinted a passionate kiss on her lips.

"Let that ratify the pledge," he said.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed a deep voice without.

"What was that?" demanded the Fair Geraldine in a tone of alarm.

"You have the relic, have you not?" inquired the earl in a low tone.

"No!" she replied, "your messenger merely showed it to me. But why do you ask? Ah! I understand. The fiendish laughter that just now sounded in my ears proceeded from—"

"Herne the Hunter," replied Surrey, in a whisper. "But fear nothing. I will defend you with my life. Ah! accursed chance! I have no weapon."

"None would avail against him," murmured the Fair Geraldine. "Lead me forth; I shall die if I stay here."

Supporting her in his arms, Surrey complied, but they had scarcely gained the entrance of the harbour, when a tall figure stood before them. It was the Duke of Richmond. A gleam of moonlight penetrating through the leaves, fell upon the group, and rendered them distinctly visible to each other.

"Soh!" exclaimed the duke, after regarding the pair in silence for a moment, "I have not been misinformed. You have contrived a meeting here."

"Richmond," said Surrey sternly, "we once were dear and loving friends, and we are still honourable foes. I know that I am safe with you. I know you will breathe no word about this meeting, either to the Fair Geraldine's prejudice or mine.

"You judge me rightly, my lord," replied the duke, in a tone of equal sternness. "I have no thought of betraying you; though, by a word to my royal father, I could prevent all chance of future rivalry on your part. I shall, however, demand a strict account from you on liberation."

"Your grace acts as beseems a loyal gentleman," replied Surrey. "Hereafter I will not fail to account to you for my conduct in any way you please."

"Oh! let me interpose between you, my lords," cried the Fair Geraldine, "to prevent the disastrous consequences of this quarrel. I have already told your grace I cannot love you, and that my heart is devoted to the Earl of Surrey. Let me appeal to your noble nature—to your generosity—not to persist in a hopeless suit."

"You have conquered madam," said the duke, after a pause. "I have been to blame in this matter. But I will make amends for my error. Surrey, I relinquish her to you."

"My friend!" exclaimed the earl, casting himself into the duke's arms.

"I will now endeavour to heal the wounds I have unwittingly occasioned," said the Fair Geraldine. "I am surprised your grace should be insensible to attractions so far superior to mine as those of the Lady Mary Howard."

"The Lady Mary is very beautiful, I confess," said the duke; "and if you had not been in the way, I should assuredly have been her captive."

"I ought not to betray the secret, perhaps," hesitated the Fair Geraldine, "but gratitude prompts me to do so. The lady is not so blind to your grace's merits as I have been."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the duke. "If it be so, Surrey, we may yet be brothers as well as friends."

"And that it is so I can avouch, Richmond," rejoined the earl, "for I am in my sister's secret as well as the Fair Geraldine. But now that this explanation has taken place, I must entreat your grace to conduct the Fair Geraldine back to her lodgings, while I regain, the best way I can, my chamber in the Round Tower."

"I marvel how you escaped from it," said Richmond; "but I suppose it was by the connivance of the officer."

"He who set me free—who brought the Fair Geraldine hither—and who, I suspect, acquainted you with our meeting, was no other than Herne the Hunter," replied Surrey.

"You amaze me!" exclaimed the duke; "it was indeed a tall dark man, muffled in a cloak, who informed me that you were to meet at midnight in King James's bower in the moat, and I therefore came to surprise you."

"Your informant was Herne," replied Surrey.

"Right!" exclaimed the demon, stepping from behind a tree, where he had hitherto remained concealed; "it was I—I, Herne the Hunter. And I contrived the meeting in anticipation of a far different result from that which has ensued. But I now tell you, my lord of Surrey, that it is idle to indulge a passion for the Fair Geraldine. You will never wed her."

"False fiend, thou liest!" cried Surrey.

"Time will show," replied Herne. "I repeat, you will wed another—and more, I tell you, you are blinder than Richmond has shown himself—for the most illustrious damsel in the kingdom has regarded you with eyes of affection, and yet you have not perceived it."

"The Princess Mary?" demanded Richmond.

"Ay, the Princess Mary," repeated Herne. "How say you now, my lord?—will you let ambition usurp the place of love?"

"No," replied Surrey. "But I will hold no further converse with thee. Thou wouldst tempt to perdition. Hence, fiend!"

"Unless you trust yourself to my guidance, you will never reach your chamber," rejoined Herne, with a mocking laugh. "The iron door in the mound cannot be opened on this side, and you well know what the consequence of a discovery will be. Come, or I leave you to your fate." And he moved down the path on the right.

"Go with him, Surrey," cried Richmond.

Pressing the Fair Geraldine to his breast, the Earl committed her to the charge of his friend, and tearing himself away, followed the steps of the demon. He had not proceeded far when he heard his name pronounced by a voice issuing from the tree above him. Looking up, he saw Herne in one of the topmost branches, and at a sign, instantly



climbed up to him. The thick foliage screened them from observation, and Surrey concluded his guide was awaiting the disappearance of the sentinel, who was at that moment approaching the tree. But such apparently was not the other's intentions; for the man had scarcely passed than Herne sprang upon the ramparts, and the poor fellow turning at the sound, was almost scared out of his senses at the sight of the dreaded fiend. Dropping his halbert, he fell upon his face with a stifled cry Herne then motioned Surrey to descend, and they marched together quickly to a low door opening into the keep. Passing through it, and ascending a flight of steps, they stood upon the landing at the top of the staircase communicating with the Norman Tower, and adjoining the entrance to Surrey's chamber.

Apparently familiar with the spot, Herne took down a large key from a nail in the wall, against which it hung, and unlocked the door.

"Enter," he said to Surrey, "and do not forget the debt you owe to Herne the Hunter." And as the earl stepped into the chamber, the door was locked behind him.

## Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

### II.

How Sir Thomas Wyat found Mabel in the Sandstone Cave, and what happened to him there

A week after the foregoing occurrence, the Earl of Surrey was set free. But his joy at regaining his liberty was damped by learning that the Fair Geraldine had departed for Ireland. She had left the tenderest messages for him with his sister, the Lady Mary Howard, accompanied with assurances of unalterable attachment.

But other changes had taken place, which were calculated to afford him some consolation. Ever since the night on which he had been told the Lady Mary was not indifferent to him, Richmond had devoted himself entirely to her; and matters had already proceeded so far, that he had asked her in marriage of the Duke of Norfolk, who, after ascertaining the king's pleasure on the subject, had gladly given his consent, and the youthful pair were affianced to each other. Surrey and Richmond now became closer friends than ever; and if, amid the thousand distractions of Henry's gay and festive court, the young earl did not forget the Fair Geraldine, he did not, at least, find the time hang heavily on his hands.

About a week after Wolsey's dismissal, while the court was still sojourning at Windsor, Surrey proposed to Richmond to ride one morning with him in the great park. The Duke willingly assented, and mounting their steeds, they galloped towards Snow Hill, wholly unattended. While mounting this charming ascent at a more leisurely pace, the earl said to his companion, "I will now tell you why I proposed this ride to you, Richmond. I have long determined to follow up the adventure of Herne the Hunter, and I wish to confer with you about it, and ascertain whether you are disposed to join me."

"I know not what to say, Surrey," replied the duke gravely, and speaking in a low tone. "The king, my father, failed in his endeavours to expel the demon, who still lords it in the forest."

"The greater glory to us if we succeed," said Surrey.

"I will take counsel with Lady Mary on the subject before I give an answer," rejoined Richmond.

"Then there is little doubt what your grace's decision will be," laughed Surrey. "To speak truth, it was the fear of your consulting her that made me bring you here. What say you to a ride in the forest to-morrow night?"

"I have little fancy for it," replied Richmond; "and if you will be ruled by me, you will not attempt the enterprise yourself."

"My resolution is taken," said the earl; "but now, since we have reached the brow of the hill, let us push forward to the lake."

A rapid ride of some twenty minutes brought them to the edge of the lake, and they proceeded along the verdant path leading to the forester's hut. On arriving at the dwelling, it appeared wholly deserted, but they nevertheless dismounted, and tying their horses to the trees at the back of the cottage, entered it. While they were examining the lower room, the splash of oars reached their ears, and rushing to the window, they descried the skiff rapidly approaching the shore. A man was seated within it, whose attire, though sombre, seemed to proclaim him of some rank, but as his back was towards them, they could not discern his features. In another instant the skiff touched the strand, and the rower leaping ashore, proved to be Sir Thomas Wyat. On making this discovery they both ran out to him, and the warmest greetings passed between them. When these were over, Surrey expressed his surprise to Wyat at seeing him there, declaring he was wholly unaware of his return from the court of France.

"I came back about a month ago," said Wyat. "His majesty supposes me at Allington; nor shall I return to court without a summons."

"I am not sorry to hear it," said Surrey; "but what are you doing here?"

"My errand is a strange and adventurous one," replied Wyat. "You may have heard that before I departed for France I passed some days in the forest in company with Herne the Hunter. What then happened to me I may not disclose; but I vowed never to rest till I have freed this forest from the weird being who troubles it."

"Say you so?" cried Surrey; "then you are most fortunately encountered, Sir Thomas, for I myself, as Richmond will tell you, am equally bent upon the fiend's expulsion. We will be companions in the adventure."

"We will speak of that anon," replied Wyat. "I was sorry to find this cottage uninhabited, and the fair damsel who dwelt within it, when I beheld it last, gone. What has become of her?"

"It is a strange story," said Richmond. And he proceeded to relate all that was known to have befallen Mabel.

Wyat listened with profound attention to the recital, and at its close, said, "I think I can find a clue to this mystery, but to obtain it I must go alone. Meet me here at midnight to-morrow, and I doubt not we shall be able to accomplish our design."

"May I not ask for some explanation of your scheme?" said Surrey.

"Not yet," rejoined Wyat. "But I will freely confess to you that there is much danger in the enterprise—danger that I would not willingly any one should share with me, especially you, Surrey, to whom I owe so much. If you do not find me here, therefore, to-morrow night, conclude that I have perished, or am captive."

"Well, be it as you will, Wyat," said Surrey; "but I would gladly accompany you, and share your danger."

"I know it, and I thank you," returned Wyat, warmly grasping the other's hand; "but much—nay, all—may remain to be done to-morrow night. You had better bring some force with you, for we may need it."

"I will bring half a dozen stout archers," replied Surrey—"and if you come not, depend upon it, I will either release you or avenge you."

"I did not intend to prosecute this adventure further," said Richmond; "but since you are both resolved to embark in it, I will not desert you."

Soon after this, the friends separated,—Surrey and Richmond taking horse and returning to the castle, discoursing on the unlooked—for meeting with Wyatt, while the latter again entered the skiff, and rowed down the lake. As soon as the hut was clear, two persons descended the steps of a ladder leading to a sort of loft in the roof, and sprang upon the floor of the hut.

"Ho! ho! Ho!" laughed the foremost, whose antlered helm and wild garb proclaimed him to be Herne; "they little dreamed who were the hearers of their conference. So they think to take me, Fenwolf—ha!"

"They know not whom they have to deal with," rejoined the latter.

"They should do so by this time," said Herne; "but I will tell thee why Sir Thomas Wyatt has undertaken this enterprise. It is not to capture me, though that may be one object that moves him. But he wishes to see Mabel Lyndwood. The momentary glimpse he caught of her bright eyes was sufficient to inflame him."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fenwolf, "think you so?"

"I am assured of it," replied Herne. "He knows the secret of the cave, and will find her there."

"But he will never return to tell what he has seen," said Fenwolf moodily.

"I know not that," replied Herne. "I have my own views respecting him. I want to renew my band."

"He will never join you," rejoined Fenwolf.

"What if I offer him Mabel as a bait?" said Herne.

"You will not do so, dread master?" rejoined Fenwolf, trembling and turning pale. "She belongs to me."

"To thee, fool!" cried Herne, with a derisive laugh. "Thinkest thou I would resign such a treasure to thee? No, no. But rest easy, I will not give her to Wyatt."

"You mean her for yourself, then?" said Fenwolf.

"Darest thou to question me?" cried Herne, striking him with the hand armed with the iron gyves. "This to teach thee respect."

And this to prove whether thou art mortal or rejoined Fenwolf, plucking his hunting-knife from his belt, and striking it with all his force against the other's breast. But though surely and forcibly dealt, the blow glanced off as if the demon were cased in steel, and the intended assassin fell back in amazement, while an unearthly laugh rang in his ears. Never had Fenwolf seen Herne wear so formidable a look as he at that moment assumed. His giant frame dilated, his eyes flashed fire, and the expression of his countenance was so fearful that Fenwolf shielded his eyes with his hands.

"Ah, miserable dog!" thundered Herne; "dost thou think I am to be hurt by mortal hands, or mortal weapons? Thy former experience should have taught thee differently. But since thou hast provoked it, take thy fate!"

Uttering these words, he seized Fenwolf by the throat, clutching him with a terrific gripe, and in a few seconds the miserable wretch would have paid the penalty of his rashness, if a person had not at the moment appeared at the doorway. Flinging his prey hastily backwards, Herne turned at the interruption, and perceived old Tristram Lyndwood, who looked appalled at what he beheld.

"Ah, it is thou, Tristram?" cried Herne; "thou art just in time to witness the punishment of this rebellious hound."

"Spare him, dread master! oh, spare him!" cried Tristram imploringly.

"Well," said Herne, gazing at the half-strangled caitiff, "he may live. He will not offend again. But why hast thou ventured from thy hiding-place, Tristram?"

"I came to inform you that I have just observed a person row across the lake in the skiff," replied the old man. "He appears to be taking the direction of the secret entrance to the cave."

"It is Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Herne, "I am aware of his proceedings. Stay with Fenwolf till he is able to move, and then proceed with him to the cave. But mark me, no violence must be done to Wyat if you find him there. Any neglect of my orders in this respect will be followed by severe punishment. I shall be at the cave ere long; but, meanwhile, I have other business to transact."

And quitting the hut, he plunged into the wood.

Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Wyat, having crossed the lake, landed, and fastened the skiff to a tree, struck into the wood, and presently reached the open space in which lay the secret entrance to the cave. He was not long in finding the stone, though it was so artfully concealed by the brushwood that it would have escaped any uninstructed eye, and removing it, the narrow entrance to the cave was revealed.

Committing himself to the protection of Heaven, Wyat entered, and having taken the precaution of drawing the stone after him, which was easily accomplished by a handle fixed to the inner side of it, he commenced the descent. At first, he had to creep along, but the passage gradually got higher, until at length, on reaching the level ground, he was able to stand upright. There was no light to guide him, but by feeling against the sides of the passage, he found that he was in the long gallery he had formerly threaded. Uncertain which way to turn, he determined to trust to chance for taking the right direction, and drawing his sword, proceeded slowly to the right.

For some time he encountered no obstacle, neither could he detect the slightest sound, but he perceived that the atmosphere grew damp, and that the sides of the passage were covered with moisture. Thus warned, he proceeded with great caution, and presently found, after emerging into a more open space, and striking off on the left, that he had arrived at the edge of the pool of water which he knew lay at the end of the large cavern.

While considering how he should next proceed, a faint gleam of light became visible at the upper end of the vault. Changing his position, for the pillars prevented him from seeing the source of the glimmer, he discovered that it issued from a lamp borne by a female hand, who he had no doubt was Mabel. On making this discovery, he sprang forwards, and called to her, but instantly repented his rashness, for as he uttered the cry the light was extinguished.

Wyat was now completely at a loss how to proceed. He was satisfied that Mabel was in the vault; but in what way to guide himself to her retreat he could not tell, and it was evident she herself would not assist him. Persuaded, however, if he could but make himself known, he should no longer be shunned, he entered one of the lateral passages, and ever and anon, as he proceeded, repeated Mabel's name in a low, soft tone. The stratagem was successful. Presently he heard a light footstep approaching him, and a gentle voice inquired—"Who calls me?"

"A friend," replied Wyatt.

"Your name?" she demanded.

"You will not know me if I declare myself, Mabel," he replied, "but I am called Sir Thomas Wyatt."

"The name is well known to me," she replied, in trembling tones; "and I have seen you once—at my grandfather's cottage. But why have you come here? Do you know where you are?"

"I know that I am in the cave of Herne the Hunter," replied Wyatt; "and one of my motives for seeking it was to set you free. But there is nothing to prevent your flight now."

"Alas! there is," she replied. "I am chained here by bonds I cannot break. Herne has declared that any attempt at escape on my part shall be followed by the death of my grandsire. And he does not threaten idly, as no doubt you know. Besides, the most terrible vengeance would fall on my own head. No,—I cannot—dare not fly. But let us not talk in the dark. Come with me to procure a light. Give me your hand, and I will lead you to my cell."

Taking the small, trembling hand offered him, Wyatt followed his conductress down the passage. A few steps brought them to a door, which she pushed aside, and disclosed a small chamber, hewn out of the rock, in a recess of which a lamp was burning. Lighting the lamp which she had recently extinguished, she placed it on a rude table.

"Have you been long a prisoner here?" asked Wyatt, fixing his regards upon her countenance, which, though it had lost somewhat of its bloom, had gained much in interest and beauty.

"For three months, I suppose," she replied; "but I am not able to calculate the lapse of time. It has seemed very—very long. Oh that I could behold the sun again, and breathe the fresh, pure air!"

"Come with me, and you shall do so," rejoined Wyatt.

"I have told you I cannot fly," she answered. "I cannot sacrifice my grandsire."

"But if he is leagued with this demon he deserves the worst fate that can befall him," said Wyat. "You should think only of your own safety. What can be the motive of your detention?"

"I tremble to think of it," she replied; "but I fear that Herne has conceived a passion for me."

"Then indeed you must fly," cried Wyat; "such unhallowed love will tend to perdition of soul and body."

"Oh that there was any hope for me!" she ejaculated.

"There is hope," replied Wyat. "I will protect you—will care for you—will love you."

"Love me!" exclaimed Mabel, a deep blush overspreading her pale features. "You love another."

"Absence has enabled me to overcome the vehemence of my passion," replied Wyat, "and I feel that my heart is susceptible of new emotions. But you, maiden," he added coldly, "you are captivated by the admiration of the king."

"My love, like yours, is past," she answered, with a faint smile; "but if I were out of Herne's power I feel that I could love again, and far more deeply than I loved before—for that, in fact, was rather the result of vanity than of real regard."

"Mabel," said Wyat, taking her hand, and gazing into her eyes, "if I set you free, will you love me?"

"I love you already," she replied; "but if that could be, my whole life should be devoted to you. Ha!" she exclaimed with a sudden change of tone, "footsteps are approaching; it is Fenwolf. Hide yourself within that recess."

Though doubting the prudence of the course, Wyat yielded to her terrified and imploring looks, and concealed himself in the manner she had indicated. He was scarcely ensconced in the recess, when the door opened, and Morgan Fenwolf stepped in, followed by her grandfather. Fenwolf gazed suspiciously round the little chamber, and then glanced significantly at old Tristram, but he made no remark.

"What brings you here?" demanded Mabel tremblingly.

"You are wanted in the cave," said Fenwolf.

"I will follow you anon," she replied.

"You must come at once," rejoined Fenwolf authoritatively. "Herne will become impatient."

Upon this Mabel rose, and, without daring to cast a look towards the spot where Wyat was concealed, quitted the cell with them. No sooner were they all out, than Fenwolf, hastily shutting the door, turned the key in the lock, and taking it out, exclaimed, "So we have secured you, Sir Thomas Wyat. No fear of your revealing the secret of the cave now, or flying with Mabel—ha! ha!" to here.

## Mabel Lyndwood by William Harrison Ainsworth

### III

In what manner Herne declared his Passion for Mabel.

Utterly disregarding her cries and entreaties, Fenwolf dragged Mabel into the great cavern, and forced her to take a seat on a bench near the spot where a heap of ashes showed that the fire was ordinarily lighted. All this while, her grandfather had averted his face from her, as if fearing to meet her regards, and he now busied himself in striking a light and setting fire to a pile of fagots and small logs of wood.

"I thought you told me Herne was here," said Mabel in a tone of bitter reproach, to Fenwolf, who seated himself beside her on the bench.

"He will be here ere long," he replied sullenly.

"Oh, do not detain Sir Thomas Wyat!" cried Mabel piteously; "do not deliver him to your dread master! Do what you will with me—but let him go."

"I will tell you what I will do," replied Fenwolf, in a low tone; "I will set Sir Thomas at liberty, and run all risks of Herne's displeasure, if you will promise to be mine."

Mabel replied by a look of unutterable disgust.

"Then he will await Herne's coming where he is," rejoined Fenwolf.

Saying which he arose, and, pushing a table near the bench, took the remains of a huge venison pasty and a loaf from a hutch standing on one side of the cavern.

By this time Old Tristram, having succeeded in lighting the fire, placed himself at the farther end of the table, and fell to work upon the viands with Fenwolf. Mabel was pressed to partake of the repast, but she declined the offer. A large stone bottle was next produced and emptied of its contents by the pair, who seemed well contented with their regale.

Meanwhile Mabel was revolving the possibility of flight, and had more than once determined to make an attempt, but fear restrained her. Her grandsire, as has been stated, sedulously avoided her gaze, and turned a deaf ear to her complaints and entreaties. But once, when Fenwolf's back was turned, she caught him gazing at her with peculiar significance, and then comprehended the meaning of his strange conduct. He evidently only awaited an opportunity to assist her.

Satisfied of this, she became more tranquil, and about an hour having elapsed, during which nothing was said by the party, the low winding of a horn was heard, and Fenwolf started to his feet, exclaiming—

"It is Herne!"

The next moment the demon huntsman rode from one of the lateral passages into the cave. He was mounted on a wild-looking black horse, with flowing mane and tail, eyes glowing like carbuncles, and in all respects resembling the sable steed he had lost in the forest.



Springing to the ground, he exchanged a few words with Fenwolf in a low tone, and delivering his steed to him, with orders to take it to the stable, signed to Tristram to go with him, and approached Mabel.

"So you have seen Sir Thomas Wyat, I find," he said, in a stern tone.

Mabel made no answer, and did not even raise her eyes towards him.

"And he has told you he loves you, and has urged you to fly with him—ha?" pursued Herne.

Mabel still did not dare to look up, but a deep blush overspread her cheek.

"He was mad to venture hither," continued Herne; "but having done so, he must take the consequences."

"You will not destroy him?" cried Mabel imploringly.

"He will perish by a hand as terrible as mine," laughed Herne—"by that of famine. He will never quit the dungeon alive unless—"

"Unless what?" gasped Mabel.

"Unless he is leagued with me," replied Herne. "And now let him pass, for I would speak of myself. I have already told you that I love you, and am resolved to make you mine. You shudder, but wherefore? It is a glorious destiny to be the' bride of the wild hunter—the fiend who rules the forest, and who, in his broad domain, is more powerful than the king. The old forester, Robin Hood, had his maid Marian; and what was he compared to me? He had neither my skill nor my power. Be mine, and you shall accompany me on my midnight rides; shall watch the fleet stag dart over the moonlight glade, or down the lengthened vista. You shall feel all the unutterable excitement of the chase. You shall thread with me the tangled grove, swim the river and the lake, and enjoy a thousand pleasures hitherto unknown to you. Be mine, and I will make you mistress of all my secrets, and compel the band whom I will gather round me to pay you homage. Be mine, and you shall have power of life and death over them, as if you were absolute queen. And from me, whom all fear, and all obey, you shall have love and worship."

"And he would have taken her hand; but she recoiled from horror.

"Though I now inspire you with terror and aversion," pursued "the time will come when you will love me as passionately as I was beloved by one of whom you are the image."

And she is dead?" asked Mabel, with curiosity.

"Dead!" exclaimed Herne. "Thrice fifty years have flown since she dwelt upon earth. The acorn which was shed in the forest has grown into a lusty oak, while trees at that time in their pride have fallen and decayed away. Dead!—yes, she has passed from all memory save mine, where she will ever dwell. Generations of men have gone down to the grave since her time—a succession of kings have lodged within the castle but I am still a denizen of the forest. For crimes I then committed I am doomed to wander within it, and I shall haunt it, unless released, till the crack of doom."

"Liberate me!" cried Mabel; "liberate your other prisoner and we will pray for your release."

"No more of this!" cried Herne fiercely. "If you would not call down instant and terrible punishment on your head—punishment that I cannot avert, and must inflict—you will mention nothing sacred in my hearing, and never allude to prayer, I am beyond the reach of salvation."

"Oh, say not so!" cried Mabel, in a tone of commiseration. "I will tell you how my doom was accomplished," rejoined Herne wildly. "To gain her of whom I have just spoken, and who was already vowed to Heaven, I invoked the powers of darkness. I proffered my soul to the Evil One if he would secure her to me, and the condition demanded by him was that I should become what I am—the fiend of the forest, with power to terrify and to tempt, and with other more fearful and fatal powers besides."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel.

"I grasped at the offer," pursued Herne. "She I loved became mine. But she was speedily snatched from me by death, and since then I have known no human passion except hatred and revenge. I have dwelt in this forest, sometimes alone, sometimes at the head of a numerous band, but always exerting a baneful influence over mankind. At last, I saw the image of her I loved again appear before me, and the old passion was revived within my breast. Chance has thrown you in my way, and mine you shall be, Mabel."

"I will die rather," she replied, with a shudder.

"You cannot escape me," rejoined He me, with a triumphant laugh; "you cannot avoid your fate. But I want not to deal harshly with you. I love you, and would win you rather by persuasion than by force. Consent to be mine, then, and I give Wyat his life and liberty."

"I cannot—I cannot!" she replied.

"Not only do I offer you Wyat's life as the price of your compliance," persevered Herne; "but you shall have what ever else you may seek—jewels, ornaments, costly attire, treasure—for of such I possess a goodly store."

"And of what use would they be to me here?" said Mabel.

"I will not always confine you to this cave," replied Herne. "You shall go where you please, and live as you please, but you must come to me whenever I summon you."

"And what of my grandsire?" she demanded.

"Tristram Lyndwood is no relative of yours," replied Herne. "I will now clear up the mystery that hangs over your birth. You are the offspring of one who for years has exercised greater sway than the king within this realm, but who is now disgraced and ruined, and nigh his end. His priestly vows forbid him to own you, even if he desired to do so."

"Have I seen him?" demanded Mabel.

"You have," replied Herne; "and he has seen you—and little did he know when he sought you out, that he was essaying to maintain his own power, and overturn that of another, by the dishonour of his daughter—though if he had done so," he added, with a scoffing laugh, "it might not have restrained him."

"I know whom you mean," said Mabel. "And is it possible he can be my father?"

"It is as I have told you," replied Herne. "You now know my resolve. To-morrow at midnight our nuptials shall take place."

"Nuptials!" echoed Mabel.

"Ay, at that altar," he cried, pointing to the Druid pile of stones; "there you shall vow yourself to me and I to you, before terrible witnesses. I shall have no fear that you will break your oath. Reflect upon what I have said."

With this he placed the bugle to his lips, blew a low call upon it, and Fenwolf and Tristram immediately answering the summons, he whispered some instructions to the former, and disappeared down one of the side passages.

Fenwolf's deportment was now more sullen than before. In vain did Mabel inquire from him what Herne was about to do with Sir Thomas Wyat. He returned no answer, and at last, wearied by her importunity, desired her to hold her peace. Just then, Tristram quitted the cavern for a moment, when he instantly changed his manner, and 'said to her quickly, "I overheard what passed between you and Herne. Consent to be mine, and I will deliver you from him."

"That were to exchange one evil for another," she replied, "If you would serve me, deliver Sir Thomas Wyat."

"I will only deliver him on the terms I have mentioned," replied Fenwolf.

At this moment, Tristram returned, and the conversation ceased.

Fresh logs were then thrown on the fire by Fenwolf, and, at his request, Tristram proceeded to a hole in the rock, which served as a sort of larder, and brought from it some pieces of venison, which were broiled upon the embers.

At the close of the repast, of which she sparingly partook, Mabel was conducted by Morgan Fenwolf into a small chamber opening out of the great cavern, which was furnished like the cell she had lately occupied, with a small straw pallet. Leaving her a lamp, Fenwolf locked the door, and placed the key in his girdle.

## Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

### IV.

How Sir Thomas Wyat was visited by Herne in the Cell.

Made aware by the clangour of the lock, and Fenwolf's exulting laughter, of the snare in which he had been caught, Sir Thomas Wyat instantly sprang from his hiding-place, and rushed to the door; but being framed of the stoutest oak, and strengthened with plates of iron, it defied all his efforts, nerved as they were by rage and despair, to burst it open. Mabel's shrieks, as she was dragged away, reached his ears, and increased his anguish; and he called out loudly to her companions to return, but his vociferations were only treated with derision.

Finding it useless to struggle further, Wyatt threw himself upon the bench, and endeavored to discover some means of deliverance from his present hazardous position. He glanced round the cell to see whether there was any other outlet than the doorway, but he could discern none, except a narrow grated loophole opening upon the passage, and contrived, doubtless, for the admission of air to the chamber. No dungeon could be more secure.

Raising the lamp, he examined every crevice, but all seemed solid stone. The recess in which he had taken shelter proved to be a mere hollow in the wall. In one corner lay a small straw pallet, which, no doubt, had formed the couch of Mabel; and this, together with the stone bench and rude table of the same material, constituted the sole furniture of the place.

Having taken this careful survey of the cell, Wyat again sat down upon the bench with the conviction that escape was out of the question; and he therefore endeavoured to prepare himself for the worst, for it was more than probable he would be allowed to perish of starvation. To a fiery nature like his, the dreadful uncertainty in which he was placed was more difficult of endurance than bodily torture. And he was destined to endure it long. Many hours flew by, during which nothing occurred to relieve the terrible monotony of his situation. At length, in spite of his anxiety, slumber stole upon him unawares; but it was filled with frightful visions.

How long he slept he knew not, but when he awoke, he found that the cell must have been visited in the interval, for there was a manchet of bread, part of a cold neck of venison, and a flask of wine on the table. It was evident, therefore, that his captors did not mean to starve him, and yielding to the promptings of appetite, he attacked the provisions, determined to keep strict watch when his gaoler should next visit him.

The repast finished, he again examined the cell, but with no better success than before; and he felt almost certain, from the position in which the bench was placed, that the visitor had not found entrance through the door.

After another long and dreary interval, finding that sleep was stealing upon him fast, he placed the bench near the door, and leaned his back against the latter, certain that in this position he should be awakened if any one attempted to gain admittance in that way. His slumber was again disturbed by fearful dreams; and he was at length aroused by a touch upon the shoulder, while a deep voice shouted his own name in her ears.

Starting to his feet, and scarcely able to separate the reality from the hideous phantasms that had troubled him, he found that the door was still fastened, and the bench unremoved, while before him stood Herne the Hunter.

"Welcome again to my cave, Sir Thomas Wyat!" cried the demon, with a mocking laugh. "I told you, on the night of the attempt upon the king, that though you escaped him, you would not escape me. And so it has come to pass. You are now wholly in my power, body and soul—ha! ha!"

"I defy you, false fiend," replied Wyat. "I was mad enough to proffer you my soul on certain conditions; but they have never been fulfilled."

"They may yet be so," rejoined Herne.

"No," replied Wyat, "I have purged my heart from the fierce and unhallowed passion that swayed it. I desire no assistance from you."

"If you have changed your mind, that is nought to me," rejoined the demon derisively—"I shall hold you to your compact."

"Again I say I renounce you, infernal spirit!" cried Wyat; "you may destroy my body—but you can work no mischief to my soul."

"You alarm yourself without reason, good Sir Thomas," replied Herne, in a slightly sneering tone. "I am not the malignant being you suppose me; neither am I bent upon fighting the battles of the enemy of mankind against Heaven. I may be leagued with the powers of darkness, but I have no wish to aid them; and I therefore leave you to take care of your soul in your own way. What I desire from you is your service while living. Now listen to the conditions I have to propose. You must bind yourself by a terrible oath, the slightest infraction of which shall involve the perdition of the soul you are so solicitous to preserve, not to disclose aught you may see, or that may be imparted to you here. You must also swear implicit obedience to me in all things—to execute any secret commissions, of whatever nature, I may give you—to bring associates to my band—and to join me in any enterprise I may propose. This oath taken, you are free. Refuse it, and I leave you to perish."

"I do refuse it," replied Wyat boldly. "I would die a thousand deaths rather than so bind myself. Neither do I fear being left to perish here. You shall not quit this cell without me."

"You are a stout soldier, Sir Thomas Wyat," rejoined the demon, with a scornful laugh; "but you are scarcely a match for Herne the Hunter, as you will find, if you are rash enough to make the experiment. Beware!" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, observing the knight lay his hand upon his sword, "I am invulnerable, and you will, therefore, vainly strike at me. Do not compel me to use the dread means, which I could instantly

employ, to subject you to my will. I mean you well, and would rather serve than injure you. But I will not let you go, unless you league yourself with me. Swear, therefore, obedience to me, and depart hence to your friends, Surrey and Richmond, and tell them you have failed to find me."

"You know, then, of our meeting?" exclaimed Wyatt.

"Perfectly well," laughed Herne. "It is now eventide, and at midnight the meeting will take place in the forester's hut. If you attend it not, I will. They will be my prisoners as well as you. To preserve yourself and save them, you must join me."

"Before I return an answer," said Wyatt, "I must know what has become of Mabel Lyndwood."

"Mabel Lyndwood is nought to you, Sir Thomas," rejoined Herne coldly.

"She is so much to me that I will run a risk for her which I would not run for myself," replied Wyatt. "If I promise obedience to you, will you liberate her? will you let her depart with me?"

"No," said Herne peremptorily. "Banish all thoughts of her from your breast. You will never behold her again. I will give you time for reflection on my proposal. An hour before midnight I shall return, and if I find you in the same mind, I abandon you to your fate."

And with these words he stepped back towards the lower end of the cell. Wyatt instantly sprang after him, but before he could reach him a flash of fire caused him to recoil, and to his horror and amazement, he beheld the rock open, and yield a passage to the retreating figure.

When the sulphureous smoke, with which the little cell was filled, had in some degree cleared off, Wyatt examined the sides of the rock, but could not find the slightest trace of a secret outlet, and therefore concluded that the disappearance of the demon had been effected by magic.

## Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

### V.

How Mabel escaped from the Cave with Sir Thomas Wyat.

The next day Mabel was set at liberty by her gaoler, and the hours flew by without the opportunity of escape, for which she sighed, occurring to her. As night drew on, she became more anxious, and at last expressed a wish to retire to her cell. When about to fasten the door, Fenwolf found that the lock had got strained, and the bolts would not move, and he was therefore obliged to content himself with placing a bench against it, on which he took a seat.

About an hour after Mabel's retirement, old Tristram offered to relieve guard with Fenwolf, but this the other positively declined, and leaning against the door, disposed himself to slumber. Tristram then threw himself on the floor, and in a short time all seemed buried in repose.

By-and-by, however, when Fenwolf's heavy breathing gave token of the soundness of his sleep, Tristram raised himself upon his elbow, and gazed round. The lamp placed upon the table imperfectly illumined the cavern, for the fire which had been lighted to cook the evening meal had gone out completely. Getting up cautiously, and drawing his hunting-knife, the old man crept towards Fenwolf, apparently with the intent of stabbing him, but he suddenly changed his resolution, and dropped his arm.

At that moment, as if preternaturally warned, Fenwolf opened his eyes, and seeing the old forester standing by, sprang upon him, and seized him by the throat.

"Ah traitor!" he exclaimed; "what are you about to do?"

"I am no traitor," replied the old man. "I heard a noise in the passage leading to Wyat's cell, and was about to rouse you, when you awakened of your own accord, probably disturbed by the noise."

"It may be," replied Fenwolf, satisfied with the excuse, and relinquishing his grasp. "I fancied I heard something in my dreams. But come with me to Wyat's cell. I will not leave you here."

And snatching up the lamp, he hurried with Tristram into the passage. They were scarcely gone, when the door of the cell was opened by Mabel, who had overheard what had passed; and so hurriedly did she issue forth that she over-turned the bench, which fell to the ground with a considerable clatter. She had only just time to replace it, and to conceal herself in an adjoining passage, when Fenwolf rushed back into the cavern.

"It was a false alarm," he cried. "I saw Sir Thomas Wyat in his cell through the loop-hole, and I have brought the key away with me. But I am sure I heard a noise here."

"It must have been mere fancy," said Tristram. "All is as we left it."

"It seems so, certes," replied Fenwolf doubtfully. "But I will make sure."

While he placed his ear to the door, Mabel gave a signal to Tristram that she was safe. Persuaded that he heard some sound in the chamber, Fenwolf nodded to Tristram that all was right, and resumed his seat.

In less than ten minutes he was again asleep. Mabel then emerged from her concealment, and cautiously approached Tristram, who feigned, also, to slumber. As she approached him, he rose noiselessly to his feet.

"The plan has succeeded," he said in a low tone. "It was I who spoiled the lock. But come with me. I will lead you out of the cavern."

"Not without Sir Thomas Wyat," she replied; "I will not leave him here."

"You will only expose yourself to risk, and fail to deliver him," rejoined Tristram.

"Fenwolf has the key of his cell. Nay, if you are determined upon it, I will not hinder you. But you must find your own way out, for I shall not assist Sir Thomas Wyat."

Motioning him to silence, Mabel crept slowly, and on the points of her feet, towards Fenwolf.

The key was in his girdle. Leaning over him, she suddenly and dexterously plucked it forth.

At the very moment she possessed herself of it, Fenwolf stirred, and she dived down, and concealed herself beneath the table. Fenwolf, who had been only slightly disturbed, looked up, and seeing Tristram in his former position, which he had resumed when Mabel commenced her task, again disposed himself to slumber.

Waiting till she was assured of the soundness of his repose, Mabel crept from under the table, signed to Tristram to remain where he was, and glided with swift and noiseless footsteps down the passage leading to the cell.

In a moment, she was at the door—the key was in the lock—and she stood before Sir Thomas Wyat.

A few words sufficed to explain to the astonished knight how she came there, and comprehending that not a moment was to be lost, he followed her forth.

In the passage, they held a brief consultation together in a low tone, as to the best means of escape, for they deemed it useless to apply to Tristram. The outlet with which Sir Thomas Wyat was acquainted lay on the other side of the cavern; nor did he know how to discover the particular passage leading to it.

As to Mabel, she could offer no information, but she knew that the stable lay in an adjoining passage.

Recollecting, from former experience, how well the steeds were trained, Sir Thomas Wyat eagerly caught at the suggestion, and Mabel led him farther down the passage, and striking off through an opening on the left, brought him, after a few turns, to a large chamber, in which two or three black horses were kept.

Loosening one of them, Wyat placed a bridle on his neck, sprang upon his back, and took up Mabel beside him. He then struck his heels against the sides of the animal, who needed no further incitement to dash along the passage, and in a few seconds brought them into the cavern.



The trampling of the horse wakened Fenwolf, who started to his feet, and ran after them, shouting furiously. But he was too late. Goaded by Wyat's dagger, the steed dashed furiously on, and plunging with its double burden into the pool at the bottom of the cavern, disappeared.

## Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

### VI.

Of the Desperate Resolution formed by Tristram and Fenwolf,  
and how the Train was laid.

Transported with rage at the escape of the fugitives, Fenwolf turned to old Tristram, and drawing his knife, threatened to make an end of him. But the old man, who was armed with a short hunting-sword, stood upon his defence, and they remained brandishing their weapons at each other for some minutes, but without striking a blow.

"Well, I leave you to Herne's vengeance," said Fenwolf, returning his knife to his belt. "You will pay dearly for allowing them to escape."

"I will take my chance," replied Tristram moodily: "my mind is made up to the worst. I will no longer serve this fiend."

"What! dare you break your oath?" cried Fenwolf. "Remember the terrible consequences."

"I care not for them," replied Tristram. "Harkee, Fenwolf: I know you will not betray me, for you hate him as much as I do, and have as great a desire for revenge. I will rid the forest of this fell being."

"Would you could make good your words, old man!" cried Fenwolf. "I would give my life for vengeance upon him."

"I take the offer," said Tristram; "you shall have vengeance."

"But how?" cried the other. "I have proved that he is invulnerable and the prints of his hands are written in black characters upon my throat. If we could capture him, and deliver him to the king, we might purchase our own pardon."

"No, that can never be," said Tristram. "My plan is to destroy him."

"Well, let me hear it," said Fenwolf.

"Come with me, then," rejoined Tristram.

And taking up the lamp, he led the way down a narrow lateral passage. When about half-way down it, he stopped before a low door, cased with iron, which he opened, and showed that the recess was filled with large canvas bags.

"Why, this is the powder-magazine," said Fenwolf. "I can now guess how you mean to destroy Herne. I like the scheme well enough; but it cannot be executed without certain destruction to ourselves."

"I will take all the risk upon myself," said Tristram, "I only require your aid in the preparations. What I propose to do is this. There is powder enough in the magazine, not only to blow up the cave, but to set fire to all the wood surrounding it. It must be scattered among the dry brush-wood in a great circle round the cave, and connected by a train with this magazine. When Herne comes hack, I will fire the train."

"There is much hazard in the scheme, and I fear it will fail," replied Fenwolf, after a pause, "nevertheless, I will assist you."

"Then, let us go to work at once," said Tristram, "for we have no time to lose. Herne will be here before midnight, and I should like to have all ready for him."

Accordingly, they each shouldered a couple of the bags, and returning to the cavern, threaded a narrow passage, and emerged from the secret entrance in the grove.

While Fenwolf descended for a fresh supply of powder, Tristram commenced operations. Though autumn was now far advanced, there had been remarkably fine weather of late; the ground was thickly strewn with yellow leaves, the fern was brown and dry, and the brushwood crackled and broke as a passage was forced through it. The very trees were parched by the long-continued drought. Thus favoured in his design, Tristram scattered the contents of one of the bags in a thick line among the fern and brushwood, depositing here and there among the roots of a tree, several pounds of powder, and covering the heaps over with dried sticks and leaves.

While he was thus employed, Fenwolf appeared with two more bags of powder, and descended again for a fresh supply. When he returned, laden as before, the old forester had already described a large portion of the circle he intended to take.

Judging that there was now powder sufficient, Tristram explained to his companion how to proceed; and the other commenced laying a train on the left of the secret entrance, carefully observing the instructions given him. In less than an hour, they met together at a particular tree, and the formidable circle was complete.

"So far, well!" said Tristram, emptying the contents of his bag beneath the tree, and covering it with leaves and sticks, as before; "and now to connect this with the cavern."

With this, he opened another bag, and drew a wide train towards the centre of the space. At length, he paused at the foot of a large hollow tree.

"I have ascertained," he said, "that this tree stands immediately over the magazine; and by following this rabbit's burrow, I have contrived to make a small entrance into it. A hollow reed introduced through the hole, and filled with powder, will be sure to reach the store below."

"An excellent ideal," replied Fenwolf. "I will fetch one instantly."

And starting off to the side of the lake, he presently returned with several long reeds, one of which was selected by Tristram and thrust into the burrow. It proved of the precise length required; and as soon as it touched the bottom, it was carefully filled with powder from a horn. Having connected this tube with the side train, and scattered powder for several yards around, so as to secure instantaneous ignition, Tristram pronounced that the train was complete.

"We have now laid a trap from which Herne will scarcely escape," he observed, with a moody laugh, to Fenwolf.

They then prepared to return to the cave, but had not proceeded many yards, when Herne, mounted on his sable steed, burst through the trees.

"Ah! what make you here?" he cried, instantly checking his career. "I bade you keep a strict watch over Mabel. Where is she?"

"She has escaped with Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Fenwolf, "and we have been in search of them."

"Escaped!" exclaimed Herne, springing from his steed, and rushing up to him; "dogs! you have played me false. But your lives shall pay the penalty of your perfidy."

"We had no hand in it whatever," replied Fenwolf doggedly. "She contrived to get out of a chamber in which I placed her, and to liberate Sir Thomas Wyat. They then procured a steed from the stable, and plunged through the pool into the lake."

"Hell's malison upon them, and upon you both!" cried Herne. "But you shall pay dearly for your heedlessness,—if, indeed, it has not been something worse. How long have they been gone?"

"It may be two hours," replied Fenwolf.

"Go to the cave," cried Herne, "and await my return there; and if I recover not the prize, woe betide you both!"

And with these words, he vaunted upon his steed and disappeared.

"And woe betide you too, false fiend!" cried Fenwolf. "When you come back you shall meet with a welcome you little expect. Would we had fired the train, Tristram, even though we had perished with him!"

"It will be time enough to fire it on his return," replied the old forester; "it is but postponing our vengeance for a short time. And now to fix our positions. I will take my station in yon brake."

"And I in that hollow tree," said Fenwolf. "Whoever first beholds him shall fire the train."

"Agreed!" replied Tristram. "Let us now descend to the cave and see that all is right in the magazine, and then we will return and hold ourselves in readiness for action."

## Mabel Lyndwood By William Harrison Ainsworth

### VII.

How the Train was fired, and what followed the Explosion.

About ten o'clock in the night under consideration, Surrey and Richmond, accompanied by the Duke of Shoreditch, and half a dozen other archers, set out from the castle, and took their way along the great park, in the direction of the lake.

They had not ridden far, when they were overtaken by two horsemen who, as far as they could be discerned in that doubtful light, appeared stalwart personages, and well mounted, though plainly attired. The new-comers very unceremoniously joined them.

"There are ill reports of the park, my masters," said the foremost of these persons to Surrey, "and we would willingly ride with you across it."

"But our way may not be yours, friend," replied Surrey, who did not altogether relish this proposal. "We are not going farther than the lake."

"Our road lies in that direction," replied the other, "and, if you please, we will bear you company as far as we go. Come, tell me frankly," he added, after a pause, "are you not in search of Herne the Hunter?"

"Why do you ask, friend?" rejoined the earl somewhat angrily.

"Because if so," replied the other, "I shall be right glad to join you, and so will my friend, Tony Cryspyn, who is close behind me. I have an old grudge to settle with this Herne, who has more than once attacked me, and I shall be glad to pay it."

"If you will take my advice, Hugh Dacre, you will ride on, and leave the achievement of the adventure to these young galliards," interposed Cryspyn.

"Nay, by the mass! that shall never be," rejoined Dacre, "if they have no objection to our joining them. If they have, they have only to say so, and we will go on."

"I will be plain with you, my masters," said Surrey. "We are determined this night, as you have rightly conjectured, to seek out Herne the Hunter; and we hope to obtain such clue to him as will ensure his capture. If, therefore, you are anxious to join us, we shall be glad of your aid. But you must be content to follow, and not lead—and to act as you are directed—or you will only be in the way, and we would rather dispense with your company."

"We are content with the terms—are we not, Tony?" said Dacre.

His companion answered somewhat sullenly in the affirmative.

"And now that the matter is arranged, may I ask when you propose to go?" he continued.

"We are on our way to a hut on the lake, where we expect a companion to join us," replied Surrey.

"What! Tristram Lyndwood's cottage?" demanded Dacre.

"Ay," replied the earl, "and we hope to recover his fair granddaughter from the power of the demon."

"Ha! say you so?" cried Dacre; "that were a feat, indeed!"

The two strangers then rode apart for a few moments, and conversed together in a low tone, during which Richmond expressed his doubts of them to Surrey, adding that he was determined to get rid of them.

The new-comers, however, were not easily shaken off. As soon as they perceived the duke's design, they stuck more pertinaciously to him and the earl than before, and made it evident they would not be dismissed.

By this time they had passed Spring Hill, and were within a mile of the valley in which lay the marsh, when a cry for help was heard in the thicket on the left, and the troop immediately halted. The cry was repeated, and Surrey, bidding the others follow him, dashed off in the direction of the sound.

Presently, they perceived two figures beneath the trees, whom they found, on a nearer approach, were Sir Thomas Wyat, with Mabel in a state of insensibility in his arms.

Dismounting by the side of his friend, Surrey hastily demanded how he came there, and what had happened?

"It is too long a story to relate now," said Wyat; "but the sum of it is, that I have escaped, by the aid of this damsel, from the clutches of the demon. Our escape was effected on horseback, and we had to plunge into the lake. The immersion deprived my fair preserver of sensibility, so that as soon as I landed, and gained a covert where I fancied myself secure, I dismounted, and tried to restore her. While I was thus occupied, the steed I had brought with me broke his bridle, and darted off into the woods. After a while, Mabel opened her eyes, but she was so weak that she could not move, and I was fain to make her a couch in the fern, in the hope that she would speedily revive. But the fright and suffering had been too much for her, and a succession of fainting-fits followed, during which I thought she would expire. This is all. Now, let us prepare a litter for her, and convey her where proper assistance can be rendered."

Meanwhile, the others had come up, and Hugh Dacre, flinging himself from his horse, and pushing Surrey somewhat rudely aside, advanced towards Mabel, and, taking her hand, said, in a voice of some emotion, "Alas! poor girl! I did not expect to meet thee again in this state."

"You knew her, then?" said Surrey.

Dacre muttered an affirmative.

"Who is this man?" asked Wyat of the earl.

"I know him not," answered Surrey. "He joined us on the road hither."

"I am well known to Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Dacre, in a significant tone, "as he will avouch when I recall certain matters to his mind. But do not let us lose time here. This damsel claims our first attention. She must be conveyed to a place of safety, and where she can be well tended. We can then return to search for Herne."

Upon this, a litter of branches were speedily made, and Mabel being laid upon it, the simple conveyance was sustained by four of the archers. The little cavalcade then quitted the thicket, and began to retrace its course towards the castle. Wyat had been

accommodated with a horse by one of the archers, and rode in a melancholy manner by the side of the litter.

They had got back nearly as far as the brow of Spring Hill, when a horseman, in a wild garb, and mounted on a coal black steed, lashed suddenly and at a furious pace, out of the trees on the right. He made towards the litter, over-turning Sir Thomas Wyat, and before any opposition could be offered him, seized the inanimate form of Mabel, and placing her before him on his steed, dashed off as swiftly as he came, and with a burst of loud, exulting laughter.

"It is Herne! it is Herne!" burst from every lip. And they all started in pursuit, urging the horses to their utmost speed. Sir Thomas Wyat had instantly remounted his steed, and he came up with the others.

Herne's triumphant and demoniacal laugh was heard as he scoured with the swiftness of the wind down the long glade. But the fiercest determination animated his pursuers, who, being all admirably mounted, managed to keep him fully in view.

Away! away! he speeded in the direction of the lake; and after him they thundered, straining every sinew in the desperate chase. It was a wild and extraordinary sight, and partook of the fantastical character of a dream.

At length Herne reached the acclivity, at the foot of which lay the waters of the lake glimmering in the starlight; and by the time he had descended to its foot, his pursuers had gained its brow.

The exertions made by Sir Thomas Wyat had brought him a little in advance of the others. Furiously goading his horse, he dashed down the hillside at a terrific pace.

All at once, as he kept his eye on the flying figure of the demon, he was startled by a sudden burst of flame in the valley. A wide circle of light was rapidly described, a rumbling sound was heard like that preceding an earth-quake, and a tremendous explosion followed, hurling trees and fragments of rock into the air.

Astounded at the extraordinary occurrence, and not knowing what might ensue, the pursuers reined in their steeds. But the terror of the scene was not yet over. The whole of the brushwood had caught fire, and blazed up with the fury and swiftness of lighted flax. The flames caught the parched branches of the trees, and in a few seconds the whole grove was on fire.

The sight was awfully grand, for the wind, which was blowing strongly, swept the flames forward, so that they devoured all before them.

When the first flash was seen the demon had checked his steed and backed him, so that he had escaped without injury, and he stood at the edge of the flaming circle watching the progress of the devastating element; but at last, finding that his pursuers had taken heart and were approaching him, he bestirred himself, and rode round the blazing zone. Having by this time recovered from their surprise, Wyat and Surrey dashed after him, and got so near him that they made sure of his capture. But at the very moment they expected to reach him, he turned his horse's head, and forced him to leap over the blazing boundary.

In vain the pursuers attempted to follow. Their horses refused to encounter the flames; while Wyat's steed, urged on by its frantic master, reared bolt upright, and dislodged him.

But the demon held on his way, apparently unscathed in the midst of the flames, casting a look of grim defiance at his pursuers. As he passed a tree, from which volumes of fire were bursting, the most appalling shrieks reached his ear, and he beheld Morgan Fenwolf emerging from a hole in the trunk. But without bestowing more than a glance upon his unfortunate follower, he dashed forward, and becoming involved in the wreaths of flame and smoke, was lost to sight.

Attracted by Fenwolf's cries, the beholders perceived him crawl out of the hole, and clamber into the upper part of the tree, where he roared to them most piteously for aid. But even if they had been disposed to render it, it was impossible to do so now; and after terrible and protracted suffering, the poor wretch, half stifled with smoke, and unable longer to maintain his hold of the branch to which he crept, fell into the flames beneath, and perished.

Attributing its outbreak to supernatural agency, the party gazed on in wonder at the fire, and rode round it as closely as their steeds would allow them. But though they tarried till the flames had abated, and little was left of the noble grove but a collection of charred and smoking stumps, nothing was seen of the fiend or of the hapless girl he had carried off. It served to confirm the notion of the supernatural origin of the fire, in that it was confined within the mystic circle, and did not extend farther into the woods.

At the time that the flames first burst forth, and revealed the countenances of the lookers—on, it was discovered that the self-styled Dacre and Cryspyn were no other than the king and the Duke of Suffolk.

"If this mysterious being is mortal, he must have perished now," observed Henry; "and if he is not, it is useless to seek for him further."

Day had begun to break as the party quitted the scene of devastation. The king and Suffolk, with the archers, returned to the castle; but Wyat, Surrey, and Richmond rode towards the lake, and proceeded along its banks in the direction of the forester's hut.

Their progress was suddenly arrested by the sound of lamentation, and they perceived, in a little bay overhung by trees, which screened it from the path, an old man kneeling beside the body of a female, which he had partly dragged out of the lake. It was Tristram Lyndwood, and the body was that of Mabel. Her tresses were dishevelled, and dripping with wet, as were her garments; and her features white as marble. The old man was weeping bitterly.

With Wyat, to dismount and grasp the cold hand of the hapless maiden was the work of a moment.

"She is dead!" he cried, in a despairing voice, removing the dank tresses from her brow, and imprinting a reverent kiss upon it. "Dead! lost to me forever!"



"I found her entangled among those water-weeds," said Tristram, in tones broken by emotion, "and had just dragged her to shore when you came up. As you hope to prosper, now and hereafter, give her a decent burial. For me all is over."

And, with a lamentable cry, he plunged into the lake, struck out to a short distance, and then sank to rise no more.

***Free***editorial 