

THE CARDINAL
WOLSEY
BY
WILLIAM HARRISON
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I.

Of the Interview between Henry and Catherine of Arragon in the Urswick Chapel—And how it was interrupted.

IT was now the joyous month of June; and where is June so joyous as within the courts and halls of peerless Windsor? Where does the summer sun shine so brightly as upon its stately gardens and broad terraces, its matchless parks, its silver belting river and its circumference of proud and regal towers? Nowhere in the world. At all seasons Windsor is magnificent: whether, in winter, she looks upon her garnitures of woods stripped of their foliage—her river covered with ice—or the wide expanse of country around her sheeted with snow—or, in autumn, gazes on the same scene—a world of golden-tinted leaves, brown meadows, or glowing cornfields. But summer is her season of beauty—June is the month when her woods are fullest and greenest; when her groves are shadiest; her avenues most delicious; when her river sparkles like a diamond zone; when town and village, mansion and cot, church and tower, hill and vale, the distant capital itself—all within view—are seen to the highest advantage. At such a season it is impossible to behold from afar the heights of Windsor, crowned, like the Phrygian goddess, by a castled diadem, and backed by lordly woods, and withhold a burst of enthusiasm and delight. And it is equally impossible, at such a season, to stand on the grand northern terrace, and gaze first at the proud pile enshrining the sovereign mistress of the land, and then gaze on the unequalled prospect spread out before it, embracing in its wide range every kind of beauty that the country can boast, and not be struck with the thought that the perfect and majestic castle—"In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit Worthy the owner, and the owner it,"—together with the wide, and smiling, and populous district around it, form an apt representation of the British sovereign and her dominions. There stands the castle, dating back as far as the Conquest, and boasting since its foundation a succession of royal inmates, while at its foot lies a region of unequalled fertility and beauty—full of happy homes, and loving, loyal hearts—a miniature of the old country and its inhabitants. What though the smiling landscape may be darkened by a passing cloud!—what though a momentary gloom may gather round the august brow of the proud pile!—the cloud will speedily vanish, the gloom disperse, and the bright and sunny scene look yet brighter and sunnier from the contrast.

It was the chance of the writer of these lines upon one occasion to behold his sovereign under circumstances which he esteems singularly fortunate. She was taking rapid exercise with the prince upon the south side of the garden-terrace. All at once the royal pair paused at the summit of the ascent leading from George the Fourth's gateway. The

prince disappeared along the eastern terrace, leaving the queen alone. And there she stood, her slight, faultless figure sharply defined against the clear sky. Nothing was wanting to complete the picture: the great bay-windows of the Victoria Tower on the one hand—the balustrade of the terrace on the other—the home park beyond. It was thrilling to feel that that small, solitary figure comprehended all the might and majesty of England—and a thousand kindling aspirations were awakened by the thought.

But it was, as has been said, the merry month of June, and Windsor Castle looked down in all its magnificence upon the pomp of woods, and upon the twelve fair and smiling counties lying within its ken. A joyous stir was within its courts—the gleam of arms and the fluttering of banners was seen upon its battlements and towers, and the ringing of bells, the beating of drums, and the fanfares of trumpets, mingled with the shouting of crowds and the discharge of ordnance.

Amidst this tumult a grave procession issued from the deanery, and took its way across the lower quadrangle, which was thronged with officers and men-at-arms, in the direction of the lower gate. Just as it arrived there a distant gun was heard, and an answering peal was instantly fired from the culverins of the Curfew Tower, while a broad standard, emblazoned with the arms of France and England within the garter, and having for supporters the English lion crowned and the red dragon sinister, was reared upon the keep. All these preparations betokened the approach of the king, who was returning to the castle after six weeks' absence.

Though information of the king's visit to the castle had only preceded him by a few hours, everything was ready for his reception, and the greatest exertions were used to give splendour to it.

In spite of his stubborn and tyrannical nature, Henry was a popular monarch, and never showed himself before his subjects but he gained their applauses; his love of pomp, his handsome person, and manly deportment, always winning him homage from the multitude. But at no period was he in a more critical position than the present. The meditated divorce from Catherine of Arragon was a step which found no sympathy from the better portion of his subjects, while the ill-assorted union of Anne Boleyn, an avowed Lutheran, which it was known would follow it, was equally objectionable. The seeds of discontent had been widely sown in the capital; and tumults had occurred which, though promptly checked, had nevertheless alarmed the king, coupled as they were with the disapprobation of his ministers, the sneering remonstrances of France, the menaces of the Papal See, and the open hostilities of Spain. But the characteristic obstinacy of his nature kept him firm to his point, and he resolved to carry it, be the consequences what they might.

All his efforts to win over Campeggio proved fruitless. The legate was deaf to his menaces or promises, well knowing that to aid Anne Boleyn would be to seriously affect the interests of the Church of Rome.

The affair, however, so long and so artfully delayed, was now drawing to a close. A court was appointed by the legates to be holden on the 18th of June, at Blackfriars, to try the

question. Gardiner had been recalled from Rome to act as counsel for Henry; and the monarch, determining to appear by proxy at the trial, left his palace at Bridewell the day before it was to come on, and set out with Anne Boleyn and his chief attendants for Windsor Castle.

Whatever secret feelings might be entertained against him, Henry was received by the inhabitants of Windsor with every demonstration of loyalty and affection. Deafening shouts rent the air as he approached; blessings and good wishes were showered upon him; and hundreds of caps were flung into the air. But noticing that Anne Boleyn was received with evil looks and in stern silence, and construing this into an affront to himself, Henry not only made slight and haughty acknowledgment of the welcome given him, but looked out for some pretext to manifest his displeasure. Luckily none was afforded him, and he entered the castle in a sullen mood.

The day was spent in gentle exercise within the home park and on the terrace, and the king affected the utmost gaiety and indifference; but those acquainted with him could readily perceive he was ill at ease. In the evening he remained for some time alone in his closet penning despatches, and then summoning an attendant, ordered him to bring Captain Bouchier into his presence.

"Well, Bouchier," he said, as the officer made his appearance, "have you obeyed my instructions in regard to Mabel Lyndwood?"

"I have, my liege," replied Bouchier. "In obedience to your majesty's commands, immediately after your arrival at the castle I rode to the forester's hut, and ascertained that the damsel was still there."

"And looking as beautiful as ever, I'll be sworn!" said the king.

"It was the first time I had seen her, my liege," replied Bouchier; "but I do not think she could have ever looked more beautiful."

"I am well assured of it," replied Henry. "The pressure of affairs during my absence from the castle had banished her image from my mind; but now it returns as forcibly as before. And you have so arranged it that she will be brought hither to-morrow night?"

Bouchier replied in the affirmative.

"It is well," pursued Henry; "but what more?—for you look as if you had something further to declare."

"Your majesty will not have forgotten how you exterminated the band of Herne the Hunter?" said Bouchier.

"Mother of Heaven, no!" cried the king, starting up; "I have not forgotten it. What of them?—Ha! have they come to life again?—do they scour the parks once more? That were indeed a marvel!"

"What I have to relate is almost as great a marvel," returned Bouchier. "I have not heard of the resurrection of the band though for aught I know it may have occurred. But Herne has been seen again in the forest. Several of the keepers have been scared by him—travellers have been affrighted and plundered—and no one will now cross the great park after nightfall."

"Amazement!" cried Henry, again seating himself; "once let the divorce be settled, and I will effectually check the career of this lawless and mysterious being."

"Pray heaven your majesty may be able to do so!" replied Bouchier. "But I have always been of opinion that the only way to get rid of the demon would be by the aid of the Church. He is unassailable by mortal weapons."

"It would almost seem so," said the king. "And yet I do not like to yield to the notion."

"I shrewdly suspect that old Tristram Lyndwood, the grandsire of the damsel upon whom your majesty has deigned to cast your regards, is in some way or other leagued with Herne," said Bouchier. "At all events, I saw him with a tall hideous-looking personage, whose name I understand to be Valentine Hagthorne, and who, I feel persuaded, must be one of the remnants of the demon hunter's band."

"Why did you not arrest him?" inquired Henry.

"I did not like to do so without your majesty's authority," replied Bouchier. "Besides, I could scarcely arrest Hagthorne without at the same time securing the old forester, which might have alarmed the damsel. But I am ready to execute your injunctions now."

"Let a party of men go in search of Hagthorne to-night," replied Henry; "and while Mabel is brought to the castle to-morrow, do you arrest old Tristram, and keep him in custody till I have leisure to examine him."

"It shall be done as you desire, my liege," replied Bouchier, bowing and departing.

Shortly after this Henry, accompanied by Anne Boleyn, proceeded with his attendants to Saint George's Chapel, and heard vespers performed. Just as he was about to return, an usher advanced towards him, and making a profound reverence, said that a masked dame, whose habiliments proclaimed her of the highest rank, craved a moment's audience of him.

"Where is she?" demanded Henry.

"In the north aisle, an't please your majesty," replied the usher, "near the Urswick Chapel. I told her that this was not the place for an audience of your majesty, nor the time; but she would not be said nay, and therefore, at the risk of incurring your sovereign displeasure, I have ventured to proffer her request."

The usher omitted to state that his chief inducement to incur the risk was a valuable ring, given him by the lady.

"Well, I will go to her," said the king. "I pray you, excuse me for a short space, fair mistress," he added to Anne Boleyn.

And quitting the choir, he entered the northern aisle, and casting his eyes down the line of noble columns by which it is flanked, and seeing no one, he concluded that the lady must have retired into the Urswick Chapel. And so it proved; for on reaching this exquisite little shrine he perceived a tall masked dame within it, clad in robes of the richest black velvet. As he entered the chapel, the lady advanced towards him, and throwing herself on her knees, removed her mask—disclosing features stamped with sorrow and suffering, but still retaining an expression of the greatest dignity. They were those of Catherine of Arragon.

Uttering an angry exclamation, Henry turned on his heel and would have left her, but she clung to the skirts of his robe.

"Hear me a moment, Henry—my king—my husband—one single moment—hear me!" cried Catherine, in tones of such passionate anguish that he could not resist the appeal.

"Be brief, then, Kate," he rejoined, taking her hand to raise her.

"Blessings on you for the word!" cried the queen, covering his hand with kisses. "I am indeed your own true Kate—your faithful, loving, lawful wife!"

"Rise, madam!" cried Henry coldly; "this posture beseems not Catherine of Arragon."

"I obey you now as I have ever done," she replied, rising; "though if I followed the prompting of my heart, I should not quit my knees till I had gained my suit."

"You have, done wrong in coming here, Catherine, at this juncture," said Henry, "and may compel me to some harsh measure which I would willingly have avoided."

"No one knows I am here," replied the queen, "except two faithful attendants, who are vowed to secrecy; and I shall depart as I came."

"I am glad you have taken these precautions," replied Henry. "Now speak freely, but again I must bid you be brief."

"I will be as brief as I can," replied the queen; "but I pray you bear with me, Henry, if I unhappily weary you. I am full of misery and affliction, and never was daughter and wife of king wretched as I am. Pity me, Henry—pity me! But that I restrain myself, I should pour forth my soul in tears before you. Oh, Henry, after twenty years' duty and to be brought to this unspeakable shame—to be cast from you with dishonour—to be supplanted by another—it is terrible!"

"If you have only come here to utter reproaches, madam, I must put an end to the interview," said Henry, frowning.

"I do not reproach you, Henry," replied Catherine meekly, "I only wish to show you the depth and extent of my affection. I only implore you to do me right and justice—not to bring shame upon me to cover your own wrongful action. Have compassion upon the princess our daughter—spare her, if you will not spare me!"

"You sue in vain, Catherine," replied Henry. "I lament your condition, but my eyes are fully opened to the sinful state in which I have so long lived, and I am resolved to abandon it."

"An unworthy prevarication," replied Catherine, "by which you seek to work my ruin, and accomplish your union with Anne Boleyn. And you will no doubt succeed; for what can I, a feeble woman, and a stranger in your country, do to prevent it? You will succeed, I say—you will divorce me and place her upon the throne. But mark my words, Henry, she will not long remain there."

The king smiled bitterly

"She will bring dishonour upon you," pursued Catherine. "The woman who has no regard for ties so sacred as those which bind us will not respect other obligations."

"No more of this!" cried Henry. "You suffer your resentment to carry you too far."

"Too far!" exclaimed Catherine. "Too far!—Is to warn you that you are about to take a wanton to your bed—and that you will bitterly repent your folly when too late, going too far? It is my duty, Henry, no less than my desire, thus to warn you ere the irrevocable step be taken."

"Have you said all you wish to say, madam?" demanded the king.

"No, my dear liege, not a hundredth part of what my heart prompts me to utter," replied Catherine. "I conjure you by my strong and tried affection—by the tenderness that has for years subsisted between us—by your hopes of temporal prosperity and spiritual welfare—by all you hold dear and sacred—to pause while there is yet time. Let the legates meet to-morrow—let them pronounce sentence against me and as surely as those fatal words are uttered, my heart will break."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Henry impatiently, "you will live many years in happy retirement."

"I will die as I have lived—a queen," replied Catherine; "but my life will not be long. Now, answer me truly—if Anne Boleyn plays you false—"

"She never will play me false!" interrupted Henry.

"I say if she does," pursued Catherine, "and you are satisfied of her guilt, will you be content with divorcing her as you divorce me?"

"No, by my father's head!" cried Henry fiercely. "If such a thing were to happen, which I hold impossible, she should expiate her offence on the scaffold."

"Give me your hand on that," said Catherine.

"I give you my hand upon it," he replied.

"Enough," said the queen: "if I cannot have right and justice I shall at least have vengeance, though it will come when I am in my tomb. But it will come, and that is sufficient."

"This is the frenzy of jealousy, Catherine," said Henry.

"No, Henry; it is not jealousy," replied the queen, with dignity. "The daughter of Ferdinand of Spain and Isabella of Castile, with the best blood of Europe in her veins, would despise herself if she could entertain so paltry a feeling towards one born so much beneath her as Anne Boleyn."

"As you will, madam," rejoined Henry. "It is time our interview terminated."

"Not yet, Henry—for the love of Heaven, not yet!" implored Catherine. "Oh, bethink you by whom we were joined together!—by your father, Henry the Seventh—one of the wisest princes that ever sat on a throne; and by the sanction of my own father, Ferdinand the Fifth, one of the justest. Would they have sanctioned the match if it had been unlawful? Were they destitute of good counsellors? Were they indifferent to the future?"

"You had better reserve these arguments for the legates' ears tomorrow, madam," said Henry sternly.

"I shall urge them there with all the force I can," replied Catherine, "for I will leave nought untried to hinder an event so fraught with misery. But I feel the struggle will be hopeless."

"Then why make it?" rejoined Henry.

"Because it is due to you—to myself—to the princess our daughter—to our illustrious progenitors—and to our people, to make it," replied Catherine. "I should be unworthy to be your consort if I acted otherwise—and I will never, in thought, word, or deed, do aught derogatory to that title. You may divorce me, but I will never assent to it; you may wed Anne Boleyn, but she will never be your lawful spouse; and you may cast me from your palace, but I will never go willingly."

"I know you to be contumacious, madam," replied Henry. "And now, I pray you, resume your mask, and withdraw. What I have said will convince you that your stay is useless."

"I perceive it," replied Catherine. "Farewell, Henry—farewell, loved husband of my heart—farewell for ever!"

"Your mask—your mask, madam!" cried Henry impatiently. "God's death! footsteps are approaching. Let no one enter here!" he cried aloud.

"I will come in," said Anne Boleyn, stepping into the chapel just as Catherine had replaced her mask. "Ah! your majesty looks confused. I fear I have interrupted some amorous conference."

"Come with me, Anne," said Henry, taking her arm, and trying to draw her away—"come with me."

"Not till I learn who your lady—love is," replied Anne pettishly. "You affect to be jealous of me, my liege, but I have much more reason to be jealous of you. When you were last at Windsor, I heard you paid a secret visit to a fair maiden near the lake in the park, and now you are holding an interview with a masked dame here. Nay, I care not for your gestures of silence. I will speak."

"You are distraught, sweetheart," cried the king. "Come away."

"No," replied Anne. "Let this dame be dismissed."

"I shall not go at your bidding, minion!" cried Catherine fiercely.

"Ah!" cried Anne, starting, "whom have we here?"

"One you had better have avoided," whispered Henry.

"The queen!" exclaimed Anne, with a look of dismay.

"Ay, the queen!" echoed Catherine, unmasking. "Henry, if you have any respect left for me, I pray you order this woman from my presence. Let me depart in peace."

"Lady Anne, I pray you retire," said Henry. But Anne stood her ground resolutely.

"Nay, let her stay, then," said the queen; "and I promise you she shall repent her rashness. And do you stay too, Henry, and regard well her whom you are about to make your spouse. Question your sister Mary, sometime consort to Louis the Twelfth and now Duchess of Suffolk—question her as to the character and conduct of Anne Boleyn when she was her attendant at the court of France—ask whether she had never to reprove her for levity—question the Lord Percy as to her love for him—question Sir Thomas Wyatt, and a host of others."

"All these charges are false and calumnious!" cried Anne Boleyn.

"Let the king inquire and judge for himself," rejoined Catherine; "and if he weds you, let him look well to you, or you will make him a scoff to all honourable men. And now, as you have come between him and me—as you have divided husband and wife—for the intent, whether successful or not, I denounce you before Heaven, and invoke its wrath upon your head. Night and day I will pray that you may be brought to shame; and when I shall be called hence, as I maybe soon, I will appear before the throne of the Most High, and summon you to judgment."

"Take me from her, Henry!" cried Anne faintly; "her violence affrights me."

"No, you shall stay," said Catherine, grasping her arm and detaining her; "you shall hear your doom. You imagine your career will be a brilliant one, and that you will be able to wield the sceptre you wrongfully wrest from me; but it will moulder into dust in your hand—the crown unjustly placed upon your brow will fall to the ground, and it will bring the head with it."

"Take me away, Henry, I implore you!" cried Anne.

"You shall hear me out," pursued Catherine, exerting all her strength, and maintaining her grasp, "or I will follow you down yon aisles, and pour forth my malediction against you in the hearing of all your attendants. You have braved me, and shall feel my power. Look at her, Henry—see how she shrinks before the gaze of an injured woman. Look me in the face, minion—you cannot!—you dare not!"

"Oh, Henry!" sobbed Anne.

"You have brought it upon yourself," said the king.

"She has," replied Catherine; "and, unless she pauses and repents, she will bring yet more upon her head. You suffer now, minion, but how will you feel when, in your turn, you are despised, neglected, and supplanted by a rival—when the false glitter of your charms having passed away, Henry will see only your faults, and will open his eyes to all I now tell him?"

A sob was all the answer Anne could return.

"You will feel as I feel towards you," pursued the queen—"hatred towards her; but you will not have the consolations I enjoy. You will have merited your fate, and you will then think upon me and my woes, and will bitterly, but unavailingly, repent your conduct. And now, Henry," she exclaimed, turning solemnly to him, "you have pledged your royal word to me, and given me your hand upon it, that if you find this woman false to you she shall expiate her offence on the block. I call upon you to ratify the pledge in her presence."

"I do so, Catherine," replied the king. "The mere suspicion of her guilt shall be enough."

"Henry!" exclaimed Anne.

"I have said it," replied the king.

"Tremble, then, Anne Boleyn!" cried Catherine, "tremble! and when you are adjudged to die the death of an adulteress, bethink you of the prediction of the queen you have injured. I may not live to witness your fate, but we shall meet before the throne of an eternal Judge."

"Oh, Henry, this is too much!" gasped Anne, and she sank fainting into his arms.

"Begone!" cried the king furiously. "You have killed her!"

"It were well for us both if I had done so," replied Catherine. "But she will recover to work my misery and her own. To your hands I commit her punishment. May God bless you, Henry!"

With this she replaced her mask, and quitted the chapel.

Henry, meanwhile, anxious to avoid the comments of his attendants, exerted himself to restore Anne Boleyn to sensibility, and his efforts were speedily successful.

"Is it then reality?" gasped Anne, as she gazed around. "I hoped it was a hideous dream. Oh, Henry, this has been frightful! But you will not kill me, as she predicted? Swear to me you will not!"

"Why should you be alarmed?" rejoined the king. "If you are faithful, you have nothing to fear."

"But you said suspicion, Henry—you said suspicion!" cried Anne.

"You must put the greater guard upon your conduct," rejoined the king moodily. "I begin to think there is some truth in Catherine's insinuations."

"Oh no, I swear to you there is not," said Anne—"I have trifled with the gallants of Francis's court, and have listened, perhaps too complacently, to the love-vows of Percy and Wyat, but when your majesty deigned to cast eyes upon me, all others vanished as the stars of night before the rising of the god of day. Henry, I love you deeply, devotedly—but Catherine's terrible imprecations make me feel more keenly than I have ever done before the extent of the wrong I am about to inflict upon her—and I fear that retributive punishment will follow it."

"You will do her no wrong," replied Henry. "I am satisfied of the justice of the divorce, and of its necessity; and if my purposed union with you were out of the question, I should demand it. Be the fault on my head."

"Your words restore me in some measure, my liege," said Anne. "I love you too well not to risk body and soul for you. I am yours for ever—ah!" she exclaimed, with a fearful look.

"What ails you, sweetheart?" exclaimed the king.

"I thought I saw a face at the window," she replied—"a black and hideous face like that of a fiend."

"It was mere fancy," replied the king. "Your mind is disturbed by what has occurred. You had better join your attendants, and retire to your own apartments."

"Oh, Henry!" cried Anne—"do not judge me unheard—do not believe what any false tongue may utter against me. I love only you and can love only you. I would not wrong you, even in thought, for worlds."

"I believe you, sweetheart," replied the king tenderly.

So saying, he led her down the aisle to her attendants. They then proceeded together to the royal lodgings, where Anne retired to her own apartments, and Henry withdrew to his private chamber.

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II.

How Herne the Hunter appeared to Henry on the Terrace.

Henry again sat down to his despatches, and employed himself upon them to a late hour. At length, feeling heated and oppressed, he arose, and opened a window. As he did so, he was almost blinded by a vivid flash of forked lightning. Ever ready to court danger, and convinced, from the intense gloom without, that a fearful storm was coming on, Henry resolved to go forth to witness it. With this view he quitted the closet, and passed through a small door opening on the northern terrace. The castle clock tolled the hour of midnight as he issued forth, and the darkness was so profound that he could scarcely see a foot before him. But he went on.

"Who goes there?" cried a voice, as he advanced, and a partisan was placed at his breast. "The king!" replied Henry, in tones that would have left no doubt of the truth of the assertion, even if a gleam of lightning had not at the moment revealed his figure and countenance to the sentinel.

"I did not look for your majesty at such a time," replied the man, lowering his pike. "Has your majesty no apprehension of the storm? I have watched it gathering in the valley, and it will be a dreadful one. If I might make bold to counsel you, I would advise you to seek instant shelter in the castle."

"I have no fear, good fellow," laughed the king. "Get thee in yon porch, and leave the terrace to me. I will warn thee when I leave it."

As he spoke a tremendous peal of thunder broke overhead, and seemed to shake the strong pile to its foundations. Again the lightning rent the black canopy of heaven in various places, and shot down in forked flashes of the most dazzling brightness. A rack of clouds, heavily charged with electric fluid, hung right over the castle, and poured down all their fires upon it.

Henry paced slowly to and fro, utterly indifferent to the peril he ran—now watching the lightning as it shivered some oak in the home park, or lighted up the wide expanse of country around him—now listening to the roar of heaven's artillery; and he had just quitted the western extremity of the terrace, when the most terrific crash he had yet heard burst over him. The next instant a dozen forked flashes shot from the sky, while fiery coruscations blazed athwart it; and at the same moment a bolt struck the Wykeham Tower, beside which he had been recently standing. Startled by the appalling sound, he turned and beheld upon the battlemented parapet on his left a tall ghostly figure, whose antlered helm told him it was Herne the Hunter. Dilated against the flaming sky, the proportions of the demon seemed gigantic. His right hand was stretched forth towards

the king, and in his left he held a rusty chain. Henry grasped the handle of his sword, and partly drew it, keeping his gaze fixed upon the figure.

"You thought you had got rid of me, Harry of England," cried Herne, "but were you to lay the weight of this vast fabric upon me, I would break from under it—ho! ho!"

"What wouldst thou, infernal spirit?" cried Henry.

"I am come to keep company with you, Harry," replied the demon; "this is a night when only you and I should be abroad. We know how to enjoy it. We like the music of the loud thunder, and the dance of the blithe lightning."

"Avaunt, fiend!" cried Henry. "I will hold no converse with thee. Back to thy native hell!"

"You have no power over me, Harry," rejoined the demon, his words mingling with the rolling of the thunder, "for your thoughts are evil, and you are about to do an accursed deed. You cannot dismiss me. Before the commission of every great crime—and many great crimes you will commit—I will always appear to you. And my last appearance shall be three days before your end—ha! ha!"

"Darest thou say this to me!" cried Henry furiously.

"I laugh at thy menaces," rejoined Herne, amid another peal of thunder—"but I have not yet done. Harry of England! your career shall be stained in blood. Your wrath shall descend upon the heads of those who love you, and your love shall be fatal. Better Anne Boleyn fled this castle, and sought shelter in the lowliest hovel in the land, than become your spouse. For you will slay her—and not her alone. Another shall fall by your hand; and so, if you had your own will, would all!"

"What meanest thou by all?" demanded the king.

"You will learn in due season," laughed the fiend. "But now mark me, Harry of England, thou fierce and bloody kin—thou shalt be drunken with the blood of thy wives; and thy end shall be a fearful one. Thou shalt linger out a living death—a mass of breathing corruption shalt thou become—and when dead the very hounds with which thou huntedst me shall lick thy blood!"

These awful words, involving a fearful prophecy, which was afterwards, as will be shown, strangely fulfilled, were so mixed up with the rolling of the thunder that Henry could scarcely distinguish one sound from the other. At the close of the latter speech a flash of lightning of such dazzling brilliancy shot down past him, that he remained for some moments almost blinded; and when he recovered his powers of vision the demon had vanished.

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III.

How Mabel Lyndwood was taken to the Castle by Nicholas

Clamp—And how they encountered Morgan Fenwolf by the way.

THE storm which had fallen so heavily on the castle had likewise visited the lake, and alarmed the inmates of the little dwelling on its banks. Both the forester and his granddaughter were roused from their beds, and they sat together in the chief apartment of the cottage, listening to the awful rolling of the thunder, and watching the blue flashing of the lightning. The storm was of unusually long duration, and continued for more than an hour with unintermitted violence. It then paused; the thunder rolled off, and the flashes of lightning grew fainter and less frequent. During the storm Mabel continued on her knees, addressing the most earnest prayers to the Virgin for her preservation and that of her grandfather; but the old forester, though evidently much alarmed, uttered not a single supplication, but remained sitting in his chair with a sullen, scared look. As the thunder died away, he recovered his composure, and addressed himself to soothe the fears of his granddaughter. In this he had partially succeeded, and was urging her again to seek her couch, when the storm recommenced with fresh fury. Mabel once more fell on her knees, and the old man resumed his sullen posture. Another dreadful half-hour, marked by a succession of terrible peals and vivid flashes, succeeded, when, amidst an awful pause, Mabel ventured to address her old relative.

"Why do you not pray, grandfather?" she said, regarding him uneasily. "Sister Anastasia and good Father Anselm always taught me to utter an Ave and cross myself during a thunderstorm. Why do you not pray, grandfather?"

"Do not trouble me. I have no fear."

"But your cheeks and lips are blanched," rejoined Mabel; "and I observed you shudder during that last awful crash. Pray, grandfather, pray!"

"Peace, wench, and mind your own business!" returned the old man angrily. "The storm will soon be over—it cannot last long in this way."

"The saints preserve us!" cried Mabel, as a tremendous concussion was heard overhead, followed by a strong sulphureous smell. "The cottage is struck!"

"It is—it is!" cried Tristram, springing to his feet and rushing forth.

For a few minutes Mabel continued in a state of stupefaction. She then staggered to the door, and beheld her grandfather occupied with two dark figures, whom she recognised as Valentine Hagthorne and Morgan Fenwolf, in extinguishing the flames, which were bursting from the thatched roof of the hut. Surprise and terror held her silent, and the others were so busily engaged that they did not notice her.

At last, by their united efforts, the fire was got under without material damage to the little building, and Mabel retired, expecting her grandsire to return; but as he did not do so, and as almost instantly afterwards the splash of oars was heard on the lake, she flew to the window, and beheld him, by the gleam of the lightning, seated in the skiff with Morgan Fenwolf, while Valentine Hagthorne had mounted a black horse, and was galloping swiftly away. Mabel saw no more. Overcome by fright, she sank on the ground insensible. When she recovered the storm had entirely ceased. A heavy shower had fallen, but the sky was now perfectly clear, and day had begun to dawn. Mabel went to the door of the hut, and looked forth for her grandfather, but he was nowhere to be seen. She remained gazing at the now peaceful lake till the sun had fairly risen, when, feeling more composed, she retired to rest, and sleep, which had been banished from them during the greater part of the night, now fell upon her lovely eyelids.

When she awoke, the day was far advanced, but still old Tristram had not returned; and with a heavy heart she set about her household concerns. The thought, however, of her anticipated visit to the castle speedily dispelled her anxiety, and she began to make preparations for setting out, attiring herself with unusual care. Bouchier had not experienced much difficulty in persuading her to obey the king's behest, and by his artful representations he had likewise induced her grandfather to give his consent to the visit—the old forester only stipulating that she should be escorted there and back by a falconer, named Nicholas Clamp, in whom he could put trust; to which proposition Bouchier readily assented.

At length five o'clock, the appointed hour, arrived, and with it came Nicholas Clamp. He was a tall, middle-aged man, with yellow hair, clipped closely over his brows, and a beard and moustaches to match. His attire resembled that of a keeper of the forest, and consisted of a doublet and hose of green cloth; but he did not carry a bugle or hunting-knife. His sole weapon was a stout quarter-staff. After some little hesitation Mabel consented to accompany the falconer, and they set forth together.

The evening was delightful, and their way through the woods was marked by numberless points of beauty. Mabel said little, for her thoughts were running upon her grandfather, and upon his prolonged and mysterious absence; but the falconer talked of the damage done by the thunderstorm, which he declared was the most awful he had ever witnessed; and he pointed out to her several trees struck by the lightning. Proceeding in this way, they gained a road leading from Blacknest, when, from behind a large oak, the trunk of which had concealed him from view, Morgan Fenwolf started forth, and planted himself in their path. The gear of the proscribed keeper was wild and ragged, his locks matted and disordered, his demeanour savage, and his whole appearance forbidding and alarming.

"I have been waiting for you for some time, Mabel Lyndwood," he said. "You must go with me to your grandfather."

"My grandfather would never send you for me," replied Mabel; "but if he did, I will not trust myself with you."

"The saints preserve us!" cried Nicholas Clamp. "Can I believe my eyes!—do I behold Morgan Fenwolf!"

"Come with me, Mabel," cried Fenwolf, disregarding him.

But she returned a peremptory refusal.

"She shall not stir an inch!" cried the falconer. "It is thou, Morgan Fenwolf, who must go with me. Thou art a proscribed felon, and thy life is forfeit to the king. Yield thee, dog, as my prisoner!"

"Thy prisoner!" echoed Fenwolf scornfully. "It would take three such as thou art to make me captive! Mabel Lyndwood, in your grandfather's name, I command you to come with me, and let Nick Clamp look to himself if he dares to hinder you."

"Nick will do something more than hinder her," rejoined the falconer, brandishing his staff, and rushing upon the other. "Felon hound! I command thee to yield!"

Before the falconer could reach him, Morgan Fenwolf plucked a long hunting-knife from his girdle, and made a desperate stab at his assailant. But Clamp avoided the blow, and striking Fenwolf on the shins, immediately afterwards closed with him.

The result was still doubtful, when the struggle was suddenly interrupted by the trampling of horse approaching from the side of Windsor; and at the sound Morgan Fenwolf disengaged himself from his antagonist and plunged into the adjoining wood. The next moment Captain Bouchier rode up, followed by a small band of halberdiers, and receiving information from the falconer of what had occurred, darted with his men into the wood in search of the fugitive. Nicholas Clamp and his companion did not await the issue of the search, but proceeded on their way.

As they walked at a brisk pace, they reached the long avenue in about half-an-hour, and took their way down it. When within a mile of the castle they were overtaken by Bouchier and his followers, and the falconer was much disappointed to learn that they had failed in tracking Morgan Fenwolf to his lair. After addressing a few complimentary words to the maiden, Bouchier rode on.

Soon after this the pair quitted the great park, and passing through a row of straggling houses, divided by gardens and closes, which skirted the foot of Castle Hill, presently reached the lower gate. They were admitted without difficulty; but just as they entered the lower ward the falconer was hailed by Shoreditch and Paddington, who at the moment issued from the doorway of the guard-room.

Clamp obeyed the call and went towards them, and it was evident, from the gestures of the archers, that they were making inquiries about Mabel, whose appearance seemed to interest them greatly. After a brief conversation with the falconer they approached her, and, respectfully addressing her, begged leave to attend her to the royal lodgings, whither they understood she was going. No objection being made to the proposal by Mabel, the party directed their course towards the middle ward.

Passing through the gateway of the Norman Tower, they stopped before a low portal in a picturesque Gothic wing of the castle, with projecting walls and bay-windows, which had

been erected in the preceding reign of Henry the Seventh, and was consequently still in all its freshness and beauty.

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

IV.

How Mabel was received by the Party in the Kitchen—And of the Quarrel between the two Jesters.

Addressing himself to a stout-built yeoman of the guard, who was standing within the doorway, Nicholas Clamp demanded admittance to the kitchen, and the man having detained them for a few moments, during which he regarded Mabel with a very offensive stare, ushered them into a small hall, and from thence into a narrow passage connected with it. Lighted by narrow loopholes pierced through the walls, which were of immense thickness, this passage described the outer side of the whole upper quadrangle, and communicated with many other lateral passages and winding stairs leading to the chambers allotted to the household or to the state apartments. Tracking it for some time, Nicholas Clamp at length turned off on the right, and, crossing a sort of ante-room, led the way into a large chamber with stone walls and a coved and groined roof, lighted by a great window at the lower end. This was the royal kitchen, and in it yawned no fewer than seven huge arched fireplaces, in which fires were burning, and before which various goodly joints were being roasted, while a number of cooks and scullions were congregated round them. At a large table in the centre of the kitchen were seated some half-dozen yeomen of the guard, together with the clerk of the kitchen, the chief bargeman, and the royal cutler, or bladesmith, as he was termed.

These worthies were doing ample justice to a chine of beef, a wild-boar pie, a couple of fat capons, a peacock pasty, a mess of pickled lobsters, and other excellent and inviting dishes with which the board was loaded. Neither did they neglect to wash down the viands with copious draughts of ale and mead from great pots and flagons placed beside them. Behind this party stood Giovanni Joungevello, an Italian minstrel, much in favour with Anne Boleyn, and Domingo Lamellino, or Lamelyn—as he was familiarly termed—a Lombard, who pretended to some knowledge of chirurgery, astrology, and alchemy, and who was a constant attendant on Henry. At the head of the bench, on the right of the table, sat Will Sommers. The jester was not partaking of the repast, but was chatting with Simon Quanden, the chief cook, a good-humoured personage, round-bellied as a tun, and blessed with a spouse, yclept Deborah, as fond of good cheer, as fat, and as good-humoured as himself. Behind the cook stood the cellarman, known by the appellation of Jack of the Bottles, and at his feet were two playful little turnspits, with long backs, and short forelegs, as crooked almost as sickles.

On seeing Mabel, Will Sommers immediately arose, and advancing towards her with a mincing step, bowed with an air of mock ceremony, and said in an affected tone,

"Welcome, fair mistress, to the king's kitchen. We are all right glad to see you; are we not, mates?"

"Ay, that we are!" replied a chorus of voices.

"By my troth, the wench is wondrously beautiful!" said Kit Coe, one of the yeomen of the guard.

"No wonder the king is smitten with her," said Launcelot Rutter, the bladesmith; "her eyes shine like a dagger's point."

"And she carries herself like a wafter on the river," said the bargeman.

"Her complexion is as good as if I had given her some of my sovereign balsam of beauty," said Domingo Lamelyn.

"Much better," observed Joungevello, the minstrel; "I shall write a canzonet in her praise, and sing it before the king."

"And get flouted for thy pains by the Lady Anne," said Kit Coe.

"The damsel is not so comely as I expected to find her," observed Amice Lovekyn, one of the serving-women, to Hector Cutbeard, the clerk of the kitchen.

"Why, if you come to that, she is not to be compared to you, pretty Amice," said Cutbeard, who was a red-nosed, red-faced fellow, with a twinkling merry eye.

"Nay, I meant not that," replied Amice, retreating.

"Excuse my getting up to receive you, fair mistress," cried Simon Quanden, who seemed fixed to his chair; "I have been bustling about all day, and am sore fatigued—sore fatigued. But will you not take something? A sugared cate, and a glass of hypocras jelly, or a slice of capon? Go to the damsel, dame, and prevail on her to eat."

"That will I," replied Deborah. "What shall it be, sweetheart? We have a well-stored larder here. You have only to ask and have."

"I thank you, but I am in want of nothing," replied Mabel.

"Nay, that is against all rule, sweetheart," said Deborah; "no one enters the king's kitchen without tasting his royal cheer."

"I am sorry I must prove an exception, then," returned Mabel, smiling; "for I have no appetite."

"Well, well, I will not force you to eat against your will," replied the good dame "But a cup of wine will do you good after your walk."

"I will wait upon her," said the Duke of Shoreditch, who vied with Paddington and Nick Clamp in attention to the damsel.

"Let me pray you to cast your eyes upon these two dogs, fair Mabel," said Will Sommers, pointing to the two turn-spits, "they are special favourites of the king's highness. They are much attached to the cook, their master; but their chief love is towards each other, and nothing can keep them apart."

"Will Sommers speaks the truth," rejoined Simon Quanden. "Hob and Nob, for so they are named, are fast friends. When Hob gets into the box to turn the spit, Nob will watch beside it till his brother is tired, and then he will take his place. They always eat out of the same platter, and drink out of the same cup. I once separated them for a few hours

to see what would happen, but they howled so piteously, that I was forced to bring them together again. It would have done your heart good to witness their meeting, and to see how they leaped and rolled with delight. Here, Hob," he added, taking a cake from his apron pocket, "divide this with thy brother."

Placing his paws upon his master's knees, the nearest turnspit took the cake in his mouth, and proceeding towards Nob, broke it into two pieces, and pushed the larger portion towards him.

While Mabel was admiring this display of sagacity and affection a bustling step was heard behind her, and turning, she beheld a strange figure in a parti-coloured gown and hose, with a fool's cap and bells on his head, whom she immediately recognised as the cardinal's jester, Patch. The new-comer recognised her too, stared in astonishment, and gave a leering look at Will Sommers.

"What brings you here, gossip Patch?" cried Will Sommers. "I thought you were in attendance upon your master, at the court at Blackfriars."

"So I have been," replied Patch, "and I am only just arrived with his grace."

"What! is the decision pronounced?" cried Will Sommers eagerly. "Is the queen divorced? Is the king single again? Let us hear the sentence."

"Ay, the sentence!—the sentence!" resounded on all hands.

Stimulated by curiosity, the whole of the party rose from the table; Simon Quanden got out of his chair; the other cooks left their joints to scorch at the fire; the scullions suspended their work; and Hob and Nob fixed their large inquiring black eyes upon the jester.

"I never talk thirsting," said Patch, marching to the table, and filling himself a flagon of mead. "Here's to you, fair maiden," he added, kissing the cup to Mabel, and swallowing its contents at a draught. "And now be seated, my masters, and you shall hear all I have to relate, and it will be told in a few words. The court is adjourned for three days, Queen Catherine having demanded that time to prepare her allegations, and the delay has been granted her."

"Pest on it!—the delay is some trick of your crafty and double-dealing master," cried Will Sommers. "Were I the king, I know how I would deal with him."

"What wouldst thou do, thou scurril knave?" cried Patch angrily.

"I would strip him of his ill-gotten wealth, and leave him only thee—a fitting attendant—of all his thousand servitors," replied Will.

"This shall to his grace's ears," screamed Patch, amid the laughter of the company—"and see whether your back does not smart for it."

"I fear him not," replied Will Sommers. "I have not yet told the king my master of the rare wine we found in his cellar."

"What wine was that, Will?" cried Jack of the Bottles.

"You shall hear," replied Will Sommers, enjoying the disconcerted look of the other jester. "I was at the palace at Hampton, when this scant-witted knave invited me to taste some of his master's wine, and accordingly to the cellar we went. 'This wine will surprise

you,' quoth he, as we broached the first hogshead. And truly it did surprise me, for no wine followed the gimlet. So we went on to another, and another, and another, till we tried half a score of them, and all with the same result. Upon this I seized a hammer which was lying by and sounded the casks, but none of them seeming empty, I at last broke the lid of one—and what do you think it contained?"

A variety of responses were returned by the laughing assemblage, during which Patch sought to impose silence upon his opponent. But Will Sommers was not to be checked.

"It contained neither vinegar, nor oil, nor lead," he said, "but gold; ay, solid bars of gold-ingots. Every hogshead was worth ten thousand pounds, and more."

"Credit him not, my masters," cried Patch, amid the roars of the company; "the whole is a mere fable—an invention. His grace has no such treasure. The truth is, Will Sommers got drunk upon some choice Malmsey, and then dreamed he had been broaching casks of gold."

"It is no fable, as you and your master will find when the king comes to sift the matter," replied Will. "This will be a richer result to him than was ever produced by your alchemical experiments, good Signor Domingo Lamelyn."

"It is false!—I say false!" screamed Patch, "let the cellars be searched, and I will stake my head nothing is found."

"Stake thy cap, and there may be some meaning in it," said Will, plucking Patch's cap from his head and elevating it on his truncheon. "Here is an emblem of the Cardinal of York," he cried, pointing to it.

A roar of laughter from the company followed this sally, and Hob and Nob looked up in placid wonderment.

"I shall die with laughing," cried Simon Quanden, holding his fat sides, and addressing his spouse, who was leaning upon his shoulder.

In the meantime Patch sprang to his feet, and, gesticulating with rage and fury, cried, "Thou hast done well to steal my cap and bells, for they belong of right to thee. Add my folly to thy own, and thou wilt be a fitting servant to thy master; or e'en give him the cap, and then there will be a pair of ye."

"Who is the fool now, I should like to know?" rejoined Will Sommers gravely. "I call you all to witness that he has spoken treason."

While this was passing Shoreditch had advanced with a flagon of Malmsey to Mabel, but she was so interested in the quarrel between the two jesters that she heeded him not; neither did she attend to Nicholas Clamp, who was trying to explain to her what was going forward. But just as Patch's indiscreet speech was uttered an usher entered the kitchen and announced the approach of the king.

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V.

Of the Combat between Will Sommers and Patch—And how it terminated.

Mabel's heart fluttered violently at the usher's announcement, and for a moment the colour deserted her cheek, while the next instant she was covered with blushes. As to poor Patch, feeling that his indiscretion might place him in great jeopardy and seriously affect his master, to whom he was devotedly attached, he cast a piteous and imploring look at his antagonist, but was answered only by a derisive laugh, coupled with an expressive gesture to intimate that a halter would be his fate. Fearful that mischief might ensue, the good-natured Simon Quanden got out of his chair and earnestly besought Will not to carry matters too far; but the jester remained implacable.

It was not unusual with Henry to visit the different offices of the castle and converse freely and familiarly with the members of his household, but it was by no means safe to trust to the continuance of his good humour, or in the slightest degree to presume upon it. It is well known that his taste for variety of character often led him, like the renowned Caliph Haroun Al Raschid, to mix with the lower classes of his subjects in disguise, at which times many extraordinary adventures are said to have befallen him. His present visit to the kitchen, therefore, would have occasioned no surprise to its occupants if it had not occurred so soon after the cardinal's arrival. But it was this circumstance, in fact, that sent him thither. The intelligence brought by Wolsey of the adjournment of the court for three days, under the plea of giving the queen time for her allegations, was so unlooked for by Henry that he quitted the cardinal in high displeasure, and was about to repair to Anne Boleyn, when he encountered Bouchier, who told him that Mabel Lyndwood had been brought to the castle, and her grandsire arrested. The information changed Henry's intentions at once, and he proceeded with Bouchier and some other attendants to the kitchen, where he was given to understand he should find the damsel.

Many a furtive glance was thrown at the king, for no one dared openly to regard him as he approached the forester's fair granddaughter. But he tarried only a moment beside her, chucked her under the chin, and, whispering a word or two in her ear that heightened her blushes, passed on to the spot where the two jesters were standing.

"What dost thou here, knave?" he said to Will Sommers.

"I might rather ask that question of your majesty," replied Will; "and I would do so but that I require not to be told."

"I have come to see what passeth in my household," replied the king, throwing himself into the chair lately occupied by the chief cook. "Ah, Hob and Nob, my merry rascals,"

he cried, patting the turnspits, who ran towards him and thrust their noses against his hand, "ye are as gamesome and loving as ever, I see. Give me a manchet for them, Master Cook, and let not the proceedings in the kitchen be stayed for my presence. I would not have my supper delayed, or the roasts spoiled, for any false ceremony. And now, Will, what hast thou to say that thou lookest so hard at me?"

"I have a heavy charge to bring against this knave, an' please your majesty," replied Will Sommers, pointing to Patch.

"What! hath he retorted upon thee too sharply?" replied the king, laughing. "If so, challenge him to the combat, and settle the grievance with thy lathen dagger. But refer not the matter to me. I am no judge in fools' quarrels."

"Your own excepted," muttered Will. "This is not a quarrel that can be so adjusted," he added aloud. "I charge this rascal Patch with speaking disrespectfully of your highness in the hearing of the whole kitchen. And I also charge his master the cardinal with having secreted in his cellars at Hampton a vast amount of treasure, obtained by extortion, privy dealings with foreign powers, and other iniquitous practices, and which ought of right to find its way to your royal exchequer."

"And which shall find its way thither, if thou dost not avouch a fable," replied the king.

"Your majesty shall judge," rejoined Will. And he repeated the story which he had just before related.

"Can this be true?" exclaimed Henry at its close.

"It is false, your highness, every word of it," cried Patch, throwing himself at the king's feet, "except so far as relates to our visits to the cellar, where, I shame to speak it, we drank so much that our senses clean forsook us. As to my indiscreet speech touching your majesty, neither disrespect nor disloyalty were intended by it. I was goaded to the rejoinder by the sharp sting of this hornet."

"The matter of the treasure shall be inquired into without delay," said Henry. "As to the quarrel, it shall be settled thus. Get both of you upon that table. A flour-bag shall be given to each; and he who is first knocked off shall be held vanquished."

The king's judgment was received with as much applause as dared be exhibited by the hearers; and in an instant the board was cleared, and a couple of flour-bags partly filled delivered to the combatants by Simon Quanden, who bestirred himself with unwonted activity on the occasion.

Leaping upon the table, amid the smothered mirth of the assemblage, the two jesters placed themselves opposite each other, and grinned such comical defiance that the king roared with laughter. After a variety of odd movements and feints on either side, Patch tried to bring down his adversary by a tremendous two-handed blow; but in dealing it, the weight of the hag dragged him forward, and well-nigh pitched him head foremost upon the floor. As it was, he fell on his face upon the table, and in this position received several heavy blows upon the prominent part of his back from Will Sommers. Ere long, however, he managed to regain his legs, and, smarting with pain, attacked his opponent furiously in his turn. For a short space fortune seemed to favour him. His bag had

slightly burst, and the flour, showering from it with every blow, well-nigh blinded his adversary, whom he drove to the very edge of the table. At this critical juncture Will managed to bring down his bag full upon his opponent's scone, and the force of the blow bursting it, Patch was covered from crown to foot with flour, and blinded in his turn. The appearance of the combatants was now so exquisitely ridiculous, that the king leaned back in his chair to indulge his laughter, and the mirth of the spectators could no longer be kept within decorous limits. The very turnspits barked in laughing concert.

"Well fought on both sides!" cried Henry; "it were hard to say which will prove the victor. Now, knaves, to it again—ha! ha!—to it again!"

Once more the bags were wielded, descended, and the blows were so well directed on either side, that both combatants fell backwards. Again the king's laughter rose loud and long. Again the merriment of the other beholders was redoubled. Again Hob and Nob barked joyously, and tried to spring on to the table to take part in the conflict. Amid the general glee, the combatants rose and renewed the fight, dealing blows thick and fast—for the bags were now considerably lightened of their contents—until they were completely hidden from view by a cloud of white dust.

"We cannot see the fray," remarked Henry; "but we can hear the din of battle. Which will prove the victor, I marvel?"

"I am for Will Sommers," cried Bouchier.

"And I for Patch," said Simon Quanden. "Latterly he hath seemed to me to have the advantage."

"It is decided!" cried the king, rising, as one of the combatants was knocked off the table, and fell to the floor with a great noise. "Who is it?"

"Patch," replied a faint voice. And through the cloud of dust struggled forth the forlorn figure of the cardinal's jester, while Will Sommers leaped triumphantly to the ground.

"Get thee to a wash-tub, knave, and cleanse thyself," said Henry, laughing. "In consideration of the punishment thou hast undergone, I pardon thee thy treasonable speech."

So saying, he rose, and walked towards Mabel, who had been quite as much alarmed as amused by the scene which had just taken place.

"I hope you have been as well cared for, damsel," he said, "since your arrival at the castle, as you cared for the Duke of Suffolk and myself when we visited your cottage?"

"I have had everything I require, my liege," replied Mabel timidly.

"Dame Quanden will take charge of you till to-morrow," rejoined the king, "when you will enter upon the service of one of our dames."

"Your majesty is very considerate," said Mabel, "but I would rather go back at early dawn to my grandsire."

"That is needless," rejoined the king sternly. "Your grandsire is in the castle."

"I am glad to hear it!" exclaimed Mabel. And then, altering her tone, for she did not like the expression of the king's countenance, she added, "I hope he has not incurred your majesty's displeasure."

"I trust he will be able to clear himself, Mabel," said Henry, "but he labours under the grave suspicion of leaguings with lawless men."

Mabel shuddered, for the thought of what she had witnessed on the previous night during the storm rushed forcibly to her recollection. The king noticed her uneasiness, and added, in a gentler tone, "If he makes such confession as will bring the others to justice, he has nothing to fear. Dame Quanden, I commit this maiden to your charge. To-morrow she will take her place as attendant to the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald."

So saying, he moved off with Bouchier and the rest of his attendants, leaving Mabel to the care of the cook's good humoured spouse, who seeing her eyes filled with tears, strove to cheer her, and led her towards a small side-table, where she pressed wine and cakes upon her.

"Be of good cheer, sweetheart," she said, in a soothing tone; "no harm will befall your grandfather. You are much too high in favour with the king for that."

"I liked the king much better as I saw him at our cottage, good dame," replied Mabel, smiling through her tears, "in the guise of a Guildford merchant. He seemed scarcely to notice me just now."

"That was because so many eyes were upon you, sweet-heart," replied Deborah; "but sooth to say, I should be better pleased if he did not notice you at all."

Mabel blushed, and hung her head.

"I am glad you are to be an attendant on the Lady Fitzgerald," pursued Deborah, "for she is the fairest young lady at court, and as good and gentle as she is fair, and I am sure you will find her a kind mistress. I will tell you something about her. She is beloved by the king's son, the Duke of Richmond, but she requites not his passion, for her heart is fixed on the youthful Earl of Surrey. Alack-a-day! the noble rivals quarrelled and crossed swords about her; but as luck would have it, they were separated before any mischief was done. The king was very wroth with Lord Surrey, and ordered him to be imprisoned for two months in the Round Tower, in this castle, where he is now, though his term has very nearly expired."

"How I pity him, to be thus harshly treated!" remarked Mabel, her eyes swimming with tears, "and the Lady Elizabeth too! I shall delight to serve her."

"I am told the earl passes the whole of his time in poring over books and writing love-verses and sonnets," said Deborah. "It seems strange that one so young should be a poet; but I suppose he caught the art from his friend Sir Thomas Wyatt."

"Is he a friend of Sir Thomas Wyatt?" asked Mabel quickly.

"His close friend," replied Deborah; "except the Duke of Richmond, now his rival, he had none closer. Have you ever seen Sir Thomas, sweetheart?"

"Yes, for a few moments," replied Mabel confusedly.

"I heard that he lingered for a short time in the forest before his departure for Paris," said Dame Quanden. "There was a strange rumour that he had joined the band of Herne the Hunter. But that must have been untrue."

"Is he returned from France?" inquired Mabel, without heeding the remark.

"I fancy not," replied the good dame. "At all events, he is not come to the castle. Know you not," she added, in a low confidential tone, "that the king is jealous of him? He was a former suitor to the Lady Anne Boleyn, and desperately in love with her; and it is supposed that his mission to France was only a pretext to get him out of the way."

"I suspected as much," replied Mabel. "Alas! for Sir Thomas; and alas! for the Earl of Surrey."

"And alas! for Mabel Lyndwood, if she allows her heart to be fixed upon the king," said Deborah.

While this was passing the business of the kitchen, which had been interrupted by the various incidents above related, and especially by the conflict between the two jesters, was hurried forward, and for some time all was bustle and confusion.

But as soon as the supper was served, and all his duties were fully discharged, Simon Quanden, who had been bustling about, sat down in his easy-chair, and recruited himself with a toast and a sack posset. Hob and Nob had their supper at the same time, and the party at the table, which had been increased by the two archers and Nicholas Clamp, attacked with renewed vigour a fresh supply of mead and ale, which had been provided for them by Jack of the Bottles.

The conversation then turned upon Herne the Hunter; and as all had heard more or less about him, and some had seen him, while few knew the legend connected with him, Hector Cutbeard volunteered to relate it; upon which all the party gathered closer together, and Mabel and Deborah left off talking, and drew near to listen.

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VI.

The Legend of Herne the Hunter.

"Nearly a century and a half ago," commenced Cutbeard, about the middle of the reign of Richard the Second, there was among the keepers of the forest a young man named Herne. He was expert beyond his fellows in all matters of woodcraft, and consequently in great favour with the king, who was himself devoted to the chase. Whenever he stayed at the castle, King Richard, like our own royal Harry, would pass his time in hunting, hawking, or shooting with the long-bow; and on all these occasions the young keeper was his constant attendant. If a hart was to be chased, Herne and his two black hounds of Saint Hubert's breed would hunt him down with marvellous speed; if a wild boar was to be reared, a badger digged out, a fox unkennelled, a marten bayed, or an otter vented, Herne was chosen for the task. No one could fly a falcon so well as Herne—no one could break up a deer so quickly or so skilfully as him. But in proportion as he grew in favour with the king, the young keeper was hated by his comrades, and they concerted together how to ruin him. All their efforts, however, were ineffectual, and rather tended to his advantage than injury.

"One day it chanced that the king hunted in the forest with his favourite, the Earl of Oxford, when a great deer of head was unharboured, and a tremendous chase ensued, the hart leading his pursuers within a few miles of Hungerford, whither the borders of the forest then extended. All the followers of the king, even the Earl of Oxford, had by this time dropped off, and the royal huntsman was only attended by Herne, who kept close behind him. At last the hart, driven to desperation, stood at bay, and gored the king's horse as he came up in such a manner that it reared and threw its rider. Another instant, and the horns of the infuriated animal would have been plunged into the body of the king, if Herne had not flung himself between the prostrate monarch and his assailant, and received the stroke intended for him. Though desperately wounded, the young hunter contrived slightly to raise himself, and plunged his knife into the hart's throat, while the king regained his feet.

"Gazing with the utmost concern at his unfortunate deliverer, King Richard demanded what he could do for him.

"'Nothing, sire—nothing,' replied Herne, with a groan. I shall require nothing but a grave from you, for I have received a wound that will speedily bring me to it.'

"'Not so, I trust, good fellow,' replied the king, in a tone meant to be encouraging, though his looks showed that his heart misgave him; 'my best leech shall attend you.'

"No skill will avail me now," replied Herne sadly. 'A hurt from hart's horn bringeth to the bier.'

"I hope the proverb will not be justified in thy case," rejoined the king; 'and I promise thee, if thou dost recover, thou shalt have the post of head keeper of the forest, with twenty nobles a year for wages. If, unhappily, thy forebodings are realised, I will give the same sum to be laid out in masses for thy soul.'

"I humbly thank your highness," replied the young man, 'and I accept the latter offer, seeing it is the only one likely to profit me.'

"With this he put his horn to his lips, and winding the dead mot feebly, fell back senseless. Much moved, the king rode off for succour; and blowing a lusty call on his bugle, was presently joined by the Earl of Oxford and some of his followers, among whom were the keepers. The latter were secretly rejoiced on hearing what had befallen Herne, but they feigned the greatest affliction, and hastened with the king to the spot where the body was lying stretched out beside that of the hart.

"It is almost a pity his soul cannot pass away thus," said King Richard, gazing compassionately at him, 'for he will only revive to anguish and speedy death.'"

"Your highness is right," replied the chief keeper, a grim old man named Osmond Crooke, kneeling beside him, and half drawing his hunting-knife; 'it were better to put him out of his misery.'

"What! slay the man who has just saved my own life!" cried the king. 'I will consent to no such infamous deed. I would give a large reward to any one who could cure him.'

"As the words were uttered, a tall dark man, in a strange garb, and mounted on a black wild-looking steed, whom no one had hitherto observed, sprang to the ground and advanced towards the king.

"I take your offer, sire," said this personage, in a harsh voice. 'I will cure him.'

"Who art thou, fellow?" demanded King Richard doubtfully.

"I am a forester," replied the tall man, 'but I understand somewhat of chirurgery and leechcraft.'

"And woodcraft, too, I'll be sworn, fellow," said the king 'Thou hast, or I am mistaken, made free with some of my venison.'

"He looks marvellously like Arnold Sheafe, who was outlawed for deer-stealing," said Osmond Crooke, regarding him steadfastly.

"I am no outlaw, neither am I called Arnold Sheafe," replied the other. 'My name is Philip Urswick, and I can render a good account of myself when it shall please the king's highness to interrogate me. I dwell on the heath near Bagshot, which you passed today in the chase, and where I joined you.'

"I noted you not," said Osmond.

"Nor I—nor I!" cried the other keepers.

"That may be; but I saw you," rejoined Urswick contemptuously; 'and I tell you there is not one among you to be compared with the brave hunter who lies there. You have all

pronounced his case hopeless. I repeat I can cure him if the king will make it worth my while.'

"'Make good thy words, fellow,' replied the king; 'and thou shalt not only be amply rewarded, but shalt have a free pardon for any offence thou mayest have committed.'

"'Enough,' replied Urswick. And taking a large, keen-edged hunting-knife from his girdle, he cut off the head of the hart close to the point where the neck joins the skull, and then laid it open from the extremity of the under-lip to the nuke. 'This must be bound on the head of the wounded man,' he said.

"The keepers stared in astonishment. But the king commanded that the strange order should be obeyed. Upon which the bleeding skull was fastened upon the head of the keeper with leathern thongs.

"'I will now answer for his perfect cure in a month's time,' said Urswick to the king; 'but I shall require to watch over him myself till all danger is at an end. I pray your highness to command these keepers to transport him to my hut.'

"'You hear what he says, knaves?' cried the king; 'do his bidding, and carefully, or ye shall answer to me with your lives.'

"Accordingly a litter was formed with branches of trees, and on this the body of Herne, with the hart's head still bound to it, was conveyed by the keepers to Urswick's hut, a small dwelling, situated in the wildest part of Bagshot Heath. After placing the body upon a bed of dried fern, the keepers were about to depart, when Osmond Crooke observed to the forester, 'I am now certain thou art Arnold Sheafe.'

"'It matters not who I am, since I have the king's pardon,' replied the other, laughing disdainfully.

"'Thou hast yet to earn it,' said Osmond.

"'Leave that to me,' replied Urswick. 'There is more fear that thou wilt lose thy post as chief keeper, which the king has promised to Herne, than that I shall fail.'

"'Would the deer had killed him outright!' growled Osmond.

"And the savage wish was echoed by the other keepers. "'I see you all hate him bitterly,' said Urswick. 'What will you give me for revenge?'

"'We have little to give, save a fat buck on occasions,' replied Osmond; 'and, in all likelihood, thou canst help thyself to venison.'

"'Will you swear to grant the first request I may make of you—provided it shall be in your power?' demanded Urswick.

"'Readily' they replied.

"'Enough' said Urswick. 'I must keep faith with the king. Herne will recover, but he will lose all his skill as an archer, all his craft as a hunter.'

"'If thou canst accomplish this thou art the fiend himself' cried Osmond, trembling.

"'Fiend or not,' replied Urswick, with a triumphant laugh, 'ye have made a compact with me, and must fulfil it. Now begone. I must attend to the wounded man.'

"And the keepers, full of secret misgiving, departed.

"At the precise time promised, Herne, attended by Urswick, presented himself to the king. He looked thin and pale, but all danger was past. King Richard gave the forester a purse full of nobles, and added a silver bugle to the gift. He then appointed Herne his chief keeper, hung a chain of gold round his neck, and ordered him to be lodged in the castle.

"About a week after this, Herne, having entirely regained his strength, accompanied the king on a hunting expedition to the forest, and they had scarcely entered it when his horse started and threw him. Up to that moment such an accident had never happened to him, for he was an excellent horseman, and he arose greatly discomfited, while the keepers eyed each other askance. Soon after this a buck was started, and though Herne was bravely mounted on a black steed bestowed on him on account of its swiftness by the king, he was the last in the chase.

"'Thou art out of practice,' said the king, laughing, as he came up.

"'I know not what ails me,' replied Herne gloomily.

"'It cannot be thy steed's fault,' said the king, 'for he is usually as fleet as the wind. But I will give thee an opportunity of gaining credit in another way. Thou seest yon buck. He cannot be seventy yards off, and I have seen thee hit the mark at twice the distance. Bring him down.'

"Herne raised his crossbow, and let fly the bolt; but it missed its mark, and the buck, startled by the noise, dashed down the brake wholly uninjured.

"King Richard's brow grew dark, and Herne uttered an exclamation of rage and despair.

"'Thou shalt have a third and yet easier trial,' said the king. Old Osmond Croke shall lend thee his bow, and thy quarry shall be yon magot-pie.'

"As he spoke, the arrow sped. But it quivered in the trunk of the tree, some yards from the bird. The unfortunate shooter looked distracted; but King Richard made no remark, until, towards the close of the day, he said to him, 'Thou must regain thy craft, friend Herne, or I cannot continue thee as my chief keeper.'

"The keepers congratulated each other in secret, for they felt that their malice was about to be gratified.

"The next day Herne went forth, as he thought, alone, but he was watched by his enemies. Not a shaft would go true, and he found that he had completely lost his mastery over hound and horse. The day after that he again rode forth to hunt with the king, and his failures made him the laughing-stock of the party. Richard at length dismissed him with these words, 'Take repose for a week, and then thou shalt have a further trial. If thou dost not then succeed, I must perforce discharge thee from thy post.'

"Instead of returning to the castle, Herne rode off wildly into the forest, where he remained till eventide. He then returned with ghastly looks and a strange appearance, having the links of a rusty chain which he had plucked from a gibbet hanging from his left arm, and the hart's antlered skull, which he had procured from Urswick, fixed like a helm upon his head. His whole demeanour showed that he was crazed; and his

condition, which might have moved the compassion of his foes, only provoked their laughter. After committing the wildest extravagances, he burst from all restraint, and disappeared among the trees of the home park.

"An hour after this a pedlar, who was crossing the park from Datchet, found him suspended by a rope from a branch of the oak-tree which you have all seen, and which bears his name. Despair had driven him to the dreadful deed. Instead of cutting him down, the pedlar ran to the castle to relate what he had witnessed; and the keepers, satisfied that their revenge was now fully accomplished, hastened with him to the tree. But the body was gone; and all that proclaimed it had been there, was the rope hanging from the branch. Search was everywhere made for the missing body, but without effect. When the matter was related to the king he was much troubled, and would fain have had masses said for the repose of the soul of the unfortunate keeper, but the priests refused to perform them, alleging that he had 'committed self-destruction, and was therefore out of the pale of the Church.

"On that night, a terrible thunderstorm occurred—as terrible, it may be, as that of last night—and during its continuance, the oak on which Herne had hanged himself was blasted by the lightning.

"Old Osmond was immediately reinstated in his post of chief keeper; but he had little time for rejoicing, for he found that the same spell that had bound Herne had fallen upon him. His bolts and arrows went wide of their mark, his hounds lost their scent, and his falcon would not be lured back. Half frantic, and afraid of exposing himself to the taunts of his companions, he feigned illness, and left his comrade, Roger Barfoot, to take his place. But the same ill-luck befell Barfoot, and he returned in woeful plight, without a single head of game. Four others were equally unfortunate, and it was now clear that the whole party were bewitched.

"Luckily, the king had quitted the castle, but they felt certain they should be dismissed on his return, if not more severely punished. At last, after taking counsel together, they resolved to consult Urswick, who they doubted not could remove the spell. Accordingly, they went to Bagshot Heath, and related their story to him. When they had done, he said, 'The curse of Herne's blood is upon you, and can only be removed in one way. As you return to the castle, go to the tree on which he destroyed himself, and you may learn how to act.'

"The keepers would have questioned him further, but he refused to answer, and dismissed them.

"The shades of evening had fallen as they quitted Bagshot; and it was midnight as they entered the home park, and proceeded towards the fatal oak. It was pitchy dark, and they could only distinguish the tree by its white, scathed trunk. All at once, a blue flame, like a will-o'-the-wisp, appeared, flitted thrice round the tree, and then remained stationary, its light falling upon a figure in a wild garb, with a rusty chain hanging from its left arm, and an antlered helm upon its head. They knew it to be Herne, and instantly fell down before him, while a burst of terrible laughter sounded in their ears.

"Without heeding them further, the spirit darted round the tree, rattling its chain, and uttering appalling imprecations. It then stopped, and turning to the terrified beholders, bade them, in a hollow voice, bring hounds and horses as for the chase on the following night and vanished.

"Filled with dread, the keepers returned home, and the next day Old Osmond again sought the forester, and told him what had occurred.

"'You must obey the spirit's injunctions, or worse mischief will befall you,' said Urswick. 'Go to the tree, mounted as for a hunting-party, and take the black steed given to Herne by the king, and the two black hounds with you. You will see what will ensue.' And without another word he dismissed him.

"Osmond told his comrades what the forester had said, and though they were filled with alarm, they resolved upon compliance. At midnight, therefore, they rode towards the tree with the black hounds in leash, and leading Herne's favourite horse, saddled and bridled. As they drew near, they again saw the terrible shape stalking round the tree, and heard the fearful imprecations.

"His spells ended, Herne called to Osmond to bring him his steed; and the old man tremblingly obeyed. In an instant the mysterious being vaulted on its back, and in a voice of resistless authority cried, 'To the forest!—to the forest!' With this, he dashed forward, and the whole party, hounds and men, hurried after him.

"They rode at a furious pace for five or six miles over the great park, the keepers wondering where their unearthly leader was taking them, and almost fancying they were hurrying to perdition, when they descended a hillside leading to the marsh, and halted before a huge beech-tree, where Herne dismounted and pronounced certain mystic words, accompanying them with strange gestures.

"Presently, he became silent and motionless. A flash of fire then burst from the roots of the tree, and the forester Urswick stood before him. But his aspect was more terrible and commanding than it had seemed heretofore to the keepers.

"'Welcome, Herne,' he cried; 'welcome, lord of the forest. And you his comrades, and soon to be his followers, welcome too. The time is come for the fulfilment of your promise to me. I require you to form a band for Herne the Hunter, and to serve him as leader. Swear to obey him, and the spell that hangs over you shall be broken. If not, I leave you to the king's justice.'

"Not daring to refuse compliance, the keepers took the oath proposed—and a fearful one it was! As soon as it was Urswick vanished, as he came, in a flash of fire. Herne, then commanded the others to dismount, and made them prostrate themselves before him, and pay him homage.

"This done, he blew a strike on his horn, rode swiftly up the hillside, and a stag being unharboured, the chase commenced. Many a fat buck was hunted and slaughtered that night; and an hour before daybreak, Herne commanded them to lay the four finest and fattest at the foot of the beech-tree, and then dismissed them, bidding them meet him at midnight at the scathed oak in the home park.

"They came as they were commanded; but fearful of detection, they adopted strange disguises, not unlike those worn by the caitiffs who were put to death, a few weeks ago, by the king in the great park. Night after night they thus went forth, thinning the herds of deer, and committing other outrages and depredations. Nor were their dark proceedings altogether unnoticed. Belated travellers crossing the forest beheld them, and related what they had seen; others watched for them, but they were so effectually disguised that they escaped detection.

"At last, however, the king returned to the castle, and accounts of the strange doings in the forest were instantly brought to him. Astonished at what he heard, and determined to ascertain the truth of the statement, he ordered the keepers to attend him that night in an expedition to the forest, when he hoped to encounter the demon huntsman and his hand. Much alarmed, Osmond Crooke, who acted as spokesman, endeavoured, by representing the risk he would incur, to dissuade the king from the enterprise; but he would not be deterred, and they now gave themselves up for lost.

"As the castle clock tolled forth the hour of midnight, Richard, accompanied by a numerous guard, and attended by the keepers, issued from the gates, and rode towards the scathed oak. As they drew near the tree, the figure of Herne, mounted on his black steed, was discerned beneath it. Deep fear fell upon all the beholders, but chiefly upon the guilty keepers, at the sight. The king, however, pressed forward, and cried, 'Why does thou disturb the quietude of night, accursed spirit?'

"Because I desire vengeance!' replied Herne, in a hollow voice. 'I was brought to my present woeful condition by Osmond Crooke and his comrades.'

"But you died by your own hand,—did you not?' demanded King Richard.

"Yea,' replied Herne; 'but I was driven to the deed by an infernal spell laid upon me by the malice of the wretches I have denounced. Hang them upon this tree, and I will trouble these woods no longer whilst thou reignest!'

"The king looked round at the keepers. They all remained obdurate, except Roger Barfoot, who, falling on his knees, confessed his guilt, and accused the others.

"It is enough,' cried the king to Herne; 'they shall all suffer for their offence.'

"Upon this a flash of fire enveloped the spirit and his horse, and he vanished.

"The king kept his word. Osmond and his comrades were all hanged upon the scathed tree, nor was Herne seen again in the forest while Richard sat upon the throne. But he reappeared with a new band at the commencement of the rule of Henry the Fourth, and again hunted the deer at night. His band was destroyed, but he defied all attempts at capture; and so it has continued to our own time, for not one of the seven monarchs who have held the castle since Richard's day have been able to drive him from the forest."

"Nor will the present monarch be able to drive him thence," said a deep voice. "As long as Windsor Forest endures, Herne the Hunter will haunt it."

All turned at the exclamation and saw that it proceeded from a tall dark man, in an archer's garb, standing behind Simon Quanden's chair.

"Thou hast told thy legend fairly enough, good clerk of the kitchen," continued this personage; "but thou art wrong on many material points."

"I have related the story as it was related to me," said Cutbeard somewhat nettled at the remark; "but perhaps you will set me right where I have erred."

"It is true that Herne was a keeper in the reign of Richard the Second," replied the tall archer. "It is true also that he was expert in all matters of woodcraft, and that he was in high favour with the king; but he was bewitched by a lovely damsel, and not by a weird forester. He carried off a nun and dwelt with her in a cave in the forest where he assembled his brother keepers, and treated them to the king's venison and the king's wine.

"A sacrilegious villain and a reprobate!" exclaimed Launcelot Rutter.

"His mistress was fair enough, I will warrant her," said Kit Coe.

"She was the very image of this damsel," rejoined the tall archer, pointing to Mabel, "and fair enough to work his ruin, for it was through her that the fiend tempted him. The charms that proved his undoing were fatal to her also, for in a fit of jealousy he slew her. The remorse occasioned by this deed made him destroy himself."

"Well, your version of the legend may be the correct one, for aught I know, worthy sir," said Cutbeard; "but I see not that it accounts for Herne's antlers so well as mine, unless he were wedded to the nun, who you say played him false. But how came you to know she resembled Mabel Lyndwood?"

"Ay, I was thinking of that myself," said Simon Quenden. "How do you know that, master?"

"Because I have seen her picture," replied the tall archer.

"Painted by Satan's chief limner, I suppose?" rejoined Cutbeard.

"He who painted it had seen her," replied the tall archer sternly. "But, as I have said, it was the very image of this damsel."

And as he uttered the words, he quitted the kitchen.

"Who is that archer?" demanded Cutbeard, looking after him. But no one could answer the question, nor could any one tell when he had entered the kitchen.

"Strange!" exclaimed Simon Quenden, crossing himself. "Have you ever seen him before, Mabel?"

"I almost think I have," she replied, with a slight shudder.

"I half suspect he is Herne himself," whispered the Duke of Shoreditch to Paddington.

"It may be," responded the other; "his glance made my blood run cold."

"You look somewhat fatigued, sweetheart," said Deborah, observing Mabel's uneasiness.

"Come with me and I will show you to a chamber."

Glad to escape Mabel followed the good dame out of the kitchen, and they ascended a winding staircase which brought them to a commodious chamber in the upper part of Henry the Seventh's buildings, where Deborah sat down with her young charge and volunteered a great deal of good advice to her, which the other listened to with becoming attention, and promised to profit by it.

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

VII.

Of the Mysterious Noise heard in the Curfew Tower.

On quitting the kitchen, Henry, having been informed by Bouchier that Tristram Lyndwood was lodged in the prison-chamber in the lower gateway, proceeded thither to question him. He found the old man seated on a bench, with his hands tied behind him; but though evidently much alarmed at his situation, he could not be brought either by threats or proffers to make any confession.

Out of patience, at length, the king ordered him to be conveyed to the dungeon beneath the Curfew Tower, and personally superintended his removal.

"I will find a means of shaking his obstinacy," said Henry, as he quitted the vault with Bouchier. "If I cannot move him by other means, I may through his granddaughter I will interrogate him in her presence to-night."

"To-night, sire!" exclaimed Bouchier.

"Ay, to-night," repeated the king. "I am resolved, even if it should cost the life of this maiden, whose charms have moved me so, to break the infernal machinery woven around me. And now as I think it not unlikely the miscreant Herne may attempt the prisoner's deliverance, let the strictest watch be kept over the tower. Station an arquebusier throughout the night at the door of the dungeon, and another at the entrance to the chamber on the ground floor. Your own post must be on the roof of the fortification, that you may watch if any attempt is made to scale it from the town side, or to get in through the loopholes. Keep a sharp lookout Bouchier, for I shall hold you responsible if any mischance occurs."

"I will do my best, my liege," replied Bouchier; "and were it with a mortal foe I had to contend, I should have no fear. But what vigilance can avail against a fiend?"

"You have heard my injunctions, and will attend to them," rejoined the king harshly. "I shall return anon to the examination."

So saying, he departed.

Brave as a lion on ordinary occasions, Bouchier entered upon his present duty with reluctance and misgiving; and he found the arquebusiers by whom he was attended, albeit stout soldiers, equally uneasy. Herne had now become an object of general dread throughout the castle; and the possibility of an encounter with him was enough to daunt the boldest breast. Disguising his alarm, Bouchier issued his directions in an authoritative tone, and then mounted with three arquebusiers to the summit of the tower. It was now dark, but the moon soon arose, and her beams rendered every object as distinguishable as daylight would have done, so that watch was easily kept. But

nothing occurred to occasion alarm, until all at once, a noise like that of a hammer stricken against a board, was heard in the chamber below.

Drawing his sword, Bouchier hurried down the steps leading into this chamber, which was buried in darkness, and advanced so precipitately and incautiously into the gloom, that he struck his head against a crossbeam. The violence of the blow stunned him for a moment, but as soon as he recovered, he called to the guard in the lower chamber to bring up a torch. The order was promptly obeyed; but, meanwhile, the sound had ceased, and, though they searched about, they could not discover the occasion of it.

This, however, was not so wonderful for the singular construction of the chamber, with its numerous crossbeams, its deep embrasures and recesses, its insecure and uneven floor, its steep ladder-like staircases, was highly favourable to concealment, it being utterly impossible, owing to the intersections of the beams, for the searchers to see far before them, or to move about quickly. In the midst of the chamber was a large wooden compartment enclosing the cumbrous and uncouth machinery of the castle clock, and through the box ran the cord communicating with the belfry above. At that time, pieces of ordnance were mounted in all the embrasures, but there is now only one gun, placed in a porthole commanding Thames Street, and the long thoroughfare leading to Eton. The view from this porthole of the groves of Eton, and of the lovely plains on the north-west, watered by the river, is enchanting beyond description.

Viewed from a recess which has been partly closed, the appearance of this chamber is equally picturesque and singular; and it is scarcely possible to pass beneath its huge beams or to gaze at the fantastic yet striking combinations they form in connection with the deep embrasures, the steep staircases and trap-doors, and not feel that the whole place belongs to romance, and that a multitude of strange and startling stories must be connected with it. The old architects were indeed great romancers, and built for the painter and the poet.

Bouchier and his companion crept about under the great meshwork of beams-peered into all the embrasures, and beneath the carriages of the culverins. There was a heap of planks and beams lying on the floor between the two staircases, but no one was near it.

The result of their investigations did not tend to decrease their alarm. Bouchier would fain have had the man keep watch in the chamber, but neither threats nor entreaties could induce him to remain there. He was therefore sent below, and the captain returned to the roof. He had scarcely emerged upon the leads when the hammering recommenced more violently than before. In vain Bouchier ordered his men to go down. No one would stir; and superstitious fear had by this time obtained such mastery over the captain, that he hesitated to descend alone. To add to his vexation, the arquebusier had taken the torch with him, so that he should have to proceed in darkness.

At length he mustered up courage to make the attempt; but he paused between each step, peering through the gloom, and half fancying he could discern the figure of Herne near the spot where the pile of wood lay. Certain it was that the sound of diabolical laughter, mingled with the rattling of the chain and the sharp blows of the hammer,

smote his ears. The laughter became yet louder as Bouchier advanced, the hammering ceased, and the clanking of the chain showed that its mysterious wearer was approaching the foot of the steps to meet him. But the captain had not nerve enough for the encounter. Invoking the protection of the saints, he beat a precipitate retreat, and closed the little door at the head of the steps after him.

The demon was apparently satisfied with the alarm he had occasioned, for the hammering was not renewed at that time.

VIII.

Showing the Vacillations of the King between Wolsey and Anne Boleyn.

Before returning to the state apartments, Henry took a turn on the ramparts on the north side of the castle, between the Curfew Tower and the Winchester Tower, and lingered for a short time on the bastion commanding that part of the acclivity where the approach, called the Hundred Steps, is now contrived. Here he cautioned the sentinels to be doubly vigilant throughout the night, and having gazed for a moment at the placid stream flowing at the foot of the castle, and tinged with the last rays of the setting sun, he proceeded to the royal lodgings, and entered the banquet chamber, where supper was already served.

Wolsey sat on his right hand, but he did not vouchsafe him a single word, addressing the whole of his discourse to the Duke of Suffolk, who was placed on his left. As soon as the repast was over, he retired to his closet. But the cardinal would not be so repulsed, and sent one of his gentlemen to crave a moment's audience of the king, which with some reluctance was accorded.

"Well, cardinal," cried Henry, as Wolsey presented himself, and the usher withdrew.

"You are playing a deep game with me, as you think; but take heed, for I see through it."

"I pray you dismiss these suspicions from your mind, my liege," said Wolsey. "No servant was ever more faithful to his master than I have been to you."

"No servant ever took better care of himself," cried the king fiercely. "Not alone have you wronged me to enrich yourself, but you are ever intriguing with my enemies. I have nourished in my breast a viper; but I will cast you off—will crush you as I would the noxious reptile."

And he stamped upon the floor, as if he could have trampled the cardinal beneath his foot.

"Beseech you calm yourself, my liege," replied Wolsey, in the soft and deprecatory tone which he had seldom known to fail with the king. "I have never thought of my own aggrandisement, but as it was likely to advance your power. For the countless benefits I

have received at your hands, my soul overflows with gratitude. You have raised me from the meanest condition to the highest. You have made me your confidant, your adviser, your treasurer, and with no improper boldness I say it, your friend. But I defy the enemies who have poisoned your ears against me, to prove that I have ever abused the trust placed in me. The sole fault that can be imputed to me is, that I have meddled more with temporal matters than with spiritual, and it is a crime for which I must answer before Heaven. But I have so acted because I felt that I might thereby best serve your highness. If I have aspired to the papal throne—which you well know I have—it has been that I might be yet a more powerful friend to your majesty, and render you what you are entitled to be, the first prince in Christendom."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the king, who was, nevertheless, moved by the artful appeal.

"The gifts I have received from foreign princes," pursued Wolsey, seeing the effect he had produced, "the wealth I have amassed, have all been with a view of benefiting your majesty." "Humph!" exclaimed the king.

"To prove that I speak the truth, sire," continued the wily cardinal, "the palace at Hampton Court, which I have just completed—"

"And at a cost more lavish than I myself should have expended on it," interrupted the king angrily.

"If I had destined it for myself, I should not have spent a tithe of what I have done," rejoined Wolsey. "Your highness's unjust accusations force me to declare my intentions somewhat prematurely. Deign," he cried, throwing at the king's feet, "deign to accept that palace and all within it. You were pleased, during your late residence there, to express your approval of it. And I trust it will find equal favour in your eyes, now that it is your own."

"By holy Mary, a royal gift!" cried Henry. "Rise, You are not the grasping, selfish person you have been represented."

"Declare as much to my enemies, sire, and I shall be more content. You will find the palace better worth acceptance than at first sight might appear."

"How so?" cried the king.

"Your highness will be pleased to take this key," said the cardinal; "it is the key of the cellar."

"You have some choice wine there," cried Henry significantly; "given you by some religious house, or sent you by some foreign potentate, ha!"

"It is wine that a king might prize," replied the cardinal. "Your majesty will find a hundred hogsheads in that cellar, and each hogshead filled with gold."

"You amaze me!" cried the king, feigning astonishment. "And all this you freely give me?"

"Freely and fully, sire," replied Wolsey. "Nay, I have saved it for you. Men think I have cared for myself, whereas I have cared only for your majesty. Oh! my dear liege, by the devotion I have just approved to you, and which I would also approve, if needful, with my life, I beseech you to consider well before you raise Anne Boleyn to the throne. In

giving you this counsel, I know I hazard the favour I have just regained. But even at that hazard, I must offer it. Your infatuation blinds you to the terrible consequences of the step. The union is odious to all your subjects, but most of all to those not tainted with the new heresies and opinions. It will never be forgiven by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, who will seek to avenge the indignity offered to his illustrious relative; while Francis will gladly make it a pretext for breaking his truce with you. Add to this the displeasure of the Apostolic See, and it must be apparent that, powerful as you are, your position will be one of infinite peril."

"Thus far advanced, I cannot honourably abandon the divorce," said Henry.

"Nor do I advise its abandonment, sire," replied Wolsey; "but do not let it be a means of injuring you with all men. Do not let a mal-alliance place your very throne in jeopardy; as, with your own subjects and all foreign powers against you, must necessarily be the case."

"You speak warmly, cardinal," said Henry.

"My zeal prompts me to do so," replied Wolsey. "Anne Boleyn is in no respect worthy of the honour you propose her."

"And whom do you think more worthy?" demanded Henry.

"Those whom I have already recommended to your majesty, the Duchess d'Alencon, or the Princess Renee," replied Wolsey; "by a union with either of whom you would secure the cordial co-operation of Francis, and the interests of the see of Rome, which, in the event of a war with Spain, you may need."

"No, Wolsey," replied Henry, taking a hasty turn across the chamber; "no considerations of interests or security shall induce me to give up Anne. I love her too well for that. Let the lion Charles roar, the fox Francis snarl, and the hydra-headed Clement launch forth his flames, I will remain firm to my purpose. I will not play the hypocrite with you, whatever I may do with others. I cast off Catherine that I may wed Anne, because I cannot otherwise obtain her. And shall I now, when I have dared so much, and when the prize is within my grasp, abandon it?—Never! Threats, expostulations, entreaties are alike unavailing."

"I grieve to hear it, my liege," replied Wolsey, heaving a deep sigh. "It is an ill-omened union, and will bring woe to you, woe to your realm, and woe to the Catholic Church."

"And woe to you also, false cardinal," cried Anne Boleyn, throwing aside the arras, and stepping forward. "I have overheard what has passed; and from my heart of hearts I thank you, Henry, for the love you have displayed for me. But I here solemnly vow never to give my hand to you till Wolsey is dismissed from your counsels."

"Anne!" exclaimed the king.

"My own enmity I could forego," pursued Anne vehemently, "but I cannot forgive him his duplicity and perfidy towards you. He has just proffered you his splendid palace of Hampton, and his treasures; and wherefore?—I will tell you: because he feared they would be wrested from him. His jester had acquainted him with the discovery just made of the secret hoard, and he was therefore compelled to have recourse to this desperate

move. But I was apprized of his intentions by Will Sommers, and have come in time to foil him."

"By my faith, I believe you are right, sweetheart," said the king.

"Go, tell your allies, Francis and Clement, that the king's love for me outweighs his fear of them," cried Anne, laughing spitefully. "As for you, I regard you as nothing."

"Vain woman, your pride will be abased," rejoined Wolsey bitterly.

"Vain man, you are already abased," replied Anne. "A few weeks ago I would have made terms with you. Now I am your mortal enemy, and will never rest till I have procured your downfall."

"The king will have an amiable consort, truly," sneered Wolsey.

"He will have one who can love him and hate his foes," replied Anne; "and not one who would side with them and thee, as would be the case with the Duchess d'Alencon or the Princess Renee. Henry, you know the sole terms on which you can procure my hand."

The king nodded a playful affirmative.

"Then dismiss him at once, disgrace him," said Anne.

"Nay, nay," replied Henry, "the divorce is not yet passed. You are angered now, and will view matters more coolly to-morrow."

"I shall never change my resolution," she replied.

"If my dismissal and disgrace can save my sovereign, I pray him to sacrifice me without hesitation," said Wolsey; "but while I have liberty of speech with him, and aught of power remaining, I will use it to his advantage. I pray your majesty suffer me to retire."

And receiving a sign of acquiescence from the king, he withdrew, amid the triumphant laughter of Anne.

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

IX.

How Tristram Lyndwood was interrogated by the King.

Anne Boleyn remained with her royal lover for a few minutes to pour forth her gratitude for the attachment he had displayed to her, and to confirm the advantage she had gained over Wolsey. As soon as she was gone, Henry summoned an usher, and giving him some instructions respecting Mabel Lyndwood, proceeded to the Curfew Tower.

Nothing was said to him of the strange noise that had been heard in the upper chamber, for the arquebusiers were fearful of exciting his displeasure by a confession of their alarm, and he descended at once to the dungeon.

"Well, fellow," he cried, sternly regarding the captive, who arose at his entrance, "you have now had ample time for reflection, and I trust are in a better frame of mind than when I last spoke with you. I command you to declare all you know concerning Herne the Hunter, and to give me such information respecting the proscribed felon, Morgan Fenwolf, as will enable me to accomplish his capture."

"I have already told your highness that my mouth is sealed by an oath of secrecy," replied Tristram, humbly, but firmly.

"Obstinate dog! thou shalt either speak, or I will hang thee from the top of this tower, as I hanged Mark Fytton the butcher," roared Henry.

"You will execute your sovereign pleasure, my liege," said the old man. "My life is in your hands. It is little matter whether it is closed now or a year hence. I have well nigh run out my term."

"If thou carest not for thyself, thou mayest not be equally indifferent to another," cried the king. "What ho! bring in his granddaughter."

The old man started at the command, and trembled violently. The next moment, Mabel was led into the dungeon by Shoreditch and Paddington. Behind her came Nicholas Clamp. On seeing her grandsire, she uttered a loud cry and would have rushed towards him, but she was held back by her companions.

"Oh grandfather!" she cried, "what have you done?-why do I find you here?"

Tristram groaned, and averted his head.

"He is charged with felony and sorcery," said the king sternly, "and you, maiden, come under the same suspicion."

"Believe it not, sire," cried the old man, flinging himself at Henry's feet; "oh, believe it not. Whatever you may judge of me, believe her innocent. She was brought up most devoutly, by a lay sister of the monastery at Chertsey; and she knows nothing, save by report, of what passes in the forest."

"Yet she has seen and conversed with Morgan Fenwolf," the king.

"Not since he was outlawed," said Tristram.

"I saw him to—day, as I was brought to the castle," cried Mabel, "and—" but recollecting that she might implicate her grandfather, she suddenly stopped.

"What said he?—ha!" demanded the king.

"I will tell your majesty what passed," interposed Nicholas Clamp, stepping forward, "for I was with the damsel at the time. He came upon us suddenly from behind a great tree, and ordered her to accompany him to her grandsire."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king.

"But he had no authority for what he said, I am well convinced," pursued Clamp. "Mabel disbelieved him and refused to go, and I should have captured him if the fiend he serves had not lent him a helping hand."

"What says the prisoner himself to this?" observed the king. "Didst thou send Fenwolf on the errand?"

"I did," replied Tristram. "I sent him to prevent her from going to the castle."

Mabel sobbed audibly.

"Thou art condemned by thy own confession, caitiff," said the king, "and thou knowest upon what terms alone thou canst save thyself from the hangman, and thy granddaughter from the stake."

"Oh, mercy, sire, mercy!" shrieked Mabel.

"Your fate rests with your grandsire," said the king sternly. "If he chooses to be your executioner he will remain silent."

"Oh, speak, grandsire, speak!" cried Mabel. "What matters the violation of an unholy vow?"

"Give me till to-morrow for consideration, sire," said the old man.

"Thou shalt have till midnight," replied the king; "and till then Mabel shall remain with thee."

"I would rather be left alone," said Tristram.

"I doubt it not," replied the king; "but it shall not be." And without bestowing a look at Mabel, whose supplications he feared might shake his purpose, he quitted the vault with his attendants, leaving her alone with her grandsire.

"I shall return at midnight," he said to the arquebusier stationed at the door; "and meanwhile let no one enter the dungeon—not even the Duke of Suffolk—unless," he added, holding forth his hand to display a ring, "he shall bring this signet."

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

X.

Of the Brief Advantage gained by the Queen and the Cardinal.

As the king, wholly unattended—for he had left the archers at the Curfew Tower—was passing at the back of Saint George's Chapel, near the north transept, he paused for a moment to look at the embattled entrance to the New Commons—a structure erected in the eleventh year of his own reign by James Denton, a canon, and afterwards Dean of Lichfield, for the accommodation of such chantry priests and choristers as had no place in the college. Over the doorway, surmounted by a niche, ran (and still runs) the inscription—

"AEDES PRO SACELLANORUM CHORISTARUM COVIVIIS EXTRUCTA, A.D. 1519."

The building has since been converted into one of the canons' houses.

While he was contemplating this beautiful gateway, which was glimmering in the bright moonlight, a tall figure suddenly darted from behind one of the buttresses of the chapel, and seized his left arm with an iron grasp. The suddenness of the attack took him by surprise; but he instantly recovered himself, plucked away his arm, and, drawing his sword, made a pass at his assailant, who, however, avoided the thrust, and darted with inconceivable swiftness through the archway leading to the cloisters. Though Henry followed as quickly as he could, he lost sight of the fugitive, but just as he was about to enter the passage running between the tomb-house and the chapel, he perceived a person in the south ambulatory evidently anxious to conceal himself, and, rushing up to him and dragging him to the light he found it was no other than the cardinal's jester, Patch.

"What does thou here, knave?" cried Henry angrily.

"I am waiting for my master, the cardinal," replied the jester, terrified out of his wits.

"Waiting for him here!" cried the king. "Where is he?"

"In that house," replied Patch, pointing to a beautiful bay-window, full of stained glass, overhanging the exquisite arches of the north ambulatory.

"Why, that is Doctor Sampson's dwelling," cried Henry; "he who was chaplain to the queen, and is a strong opponent of the divorce. What doth he there?"

"I am sure I know not," replied Patch, whose terror increased each moment. "Perhaps I have mistaken the house. Indeed, I am sure it must be Doctor Voysey's, the next door."

"Thou liest, knave!" cried Henry fiercely; "thy manner convinces me there is some treasonable practice going forward. But I will soon find it out. Attempt to give the alarm, and I will cut thy throat."

With this he proceeded to the back of the north ambulatory, and finding the door he sought unfastened, raised the latch and walked softly in. But before he got half-way down the passage, Doctor Sampson himself issued from an inner room with a lamp in his hand. He started on seeing the king, and exhibited great alarm.

"The Cardinal of York is here—I know it," said Henry in a deep whisper. "Lead me to him."

"Oh, go not forward, my gracious liege!" cried Sampson, placing himself in his path.

"Wherefore not?" rejoined the king. "Ha! what voice is that I heard in the upper chamber? Is she here, and with Wolsey? Out of my way, man," he added, pushing the canon aside, and rushing up the short wooden staircase.

When Wolsey returned from his interview with the king, which had been so unluckily interrupted by Anne Boleyn, he found his ante-chamber beset with a crowd of suitors to whose solicitations he was compelled to listen, and having been detained in this manner for nearly half an hour, he at length retired into an inner room.

"Vile sycophants!" he muttered, "they bow the knee before me, and pay me greater homage than they render the king, but though they have fed upon my bounty and risen by my help, not one of them, if he was aware of my true position, but would desert me. Not one of them but would lend a helping hand to crush me. Not one but would rejoice in my downfall. But they have not deceived me. I knew them from the first—saw through their hollowness and despised them. While power lasts to me, I will punish some of them. While power lasts!" he repeated. "Have I any power remaining? I have already given up Hampton and my treasures to the king; and the work of spoliation once commenced, the royal plunderer will not be content till he has robbed me of all; while his minion, Anne Boleyn, has vowed my destruction. Well, I will not yield tamely, nor fall unavenged."

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Patch, who had waited for a favourable moment to approach him, delivered him a small billet carefully sealed, and fastened with a silken thread. Wolsey took it, and broke it open; and as his eye eagerly scanned its contents, the expression of his countenance totally changed. A flash of joy and triumph irradiated his fallen features; and thrusting the note into the folds of his robe, he inquired of the jester by whom it had been brought, and how long.

"It was brought by a messenger from Doctor Sampson," replied Patch, "and was committed to me with special injunctions to deliver it to your grace immediately on your return, and secretly."

The cardinal sat down, and for a few moments appeared lost in deep reflection; he then arose, and telling Patch he should return presently, quitted the chamber. But the jester, who was of an inquisitive turn, and did not like to be confined to half a secret, determined to follow him, and accordingly tracked him along the great corridor, down a winding staircase, through a private door near the Norman Gateway, across the middle ward, and finally saw him enter Doctor Sampson's dwelling, at the back of the north ambulatory. He was reconnoitring the windows of the house from the opposite side of

the cloisters in the hope of discovering something, when he was caught, as before mentioned, by the king.

Wolsey, meanwhile, was received by Doctor Sampson at the doorway of his dwelling, and ushered by him into a chamber on the upper floor, wainscoted with curiously carved and lustrously black oak. A silver lamp was burning on the table, and in the recess of the window, which was screened by thick curtains, sat a majestic lady, who rose on the cardinal's entrance. It was Catherine of Arragon.

"I attend your pleasure, madam," said Wolsey, with a profound inclination.

"You have been long in answering my summons," said the queen; "but I could not expect greater promptitude. Time was when a summons from Catherine of Arragon would have been quickly and cheerfully attended to; when the proudest noble in the land would have borne her message to you, and when you would have passed through crowds to her audience-chamber. Now another holds her place, and she is obliged secretly to enter the castle where she once ruled, to despatch a valet to her enemy, to attend his pleasure, and to receive him in the dwelling of an humble canon. Times are changed with me, Wolsey—sadly changed."

"I have been in attendance on the king, madam, or I should have been with you sooner," replied Wolsey. "It grieves me sorely to see you here."

"I want not your pity," replied the queen proudly. "I did not send for you to gratify your malice by exposing my abject state. I did not send for you to insult me by false sympathy; but in the hope that your own interest would induce you to redress the wrongs you have done me."

"Alas! madam, I fear it is now too late to repair the error I have committed," said Wolsey, in a tone of affected penitence and sorrow.

"You admit, then, that it was an error," cried Catherine. "Well, that is something. Oh! that you had paused before you began this evil work—before you had raised a storm which will destroy me and yourself. Your quarrel with my nephew the Emperor Charles has cost me dear, but it will cost you yet more dearly."

"I deserve all your reproaches, madam," said Wolsey, with feigned meekness; "and I will bear them without a murmur. But you have sent for me for some specific object, I presume?"

"I sent for you to give me aid, as much for your own sake as mine," replied the queen, "for you are in equal danger. Prevent this divorce—foil Anne—and you retain the king's favour. Our interests are so far leagued together, that you must serve me to serve yourself. My object is to gain time to enable my friends to act. Your colleague is secretly favourable to me. Pronounce no sentence here, but let the cause be removed to Rome. My nephew the emperor will prevail upon the Pope to decide in my favour."

"I dare not thus brave the king's displeasure, madam;" replied Wolsey.

"Dissembler!" exclaimed Catherine. "I now perceive the insincerity of your professions. This much I have said to try you. And now to my real motive for sending for you. I have in my possession certain letters, that will ruin Anne Boleyn with the king."

"Ha!" exclaimed the cardinal joyfully; "if that be the case, all the rest will be easy. Let me see the letters, I pray you, madam."

Before Catherine could reply, the door was thrown violently open, and the king stood before them.

"Soh!" roared Henry, casting a terrible look at Wolsey, "I have caught you at your treasonable practices at last! And you, madam," he added, turning to Catherine, who meekly, but steadily, returned his gaze, "what brings you here again? Because I pardoned your indiscretion yesterday, think not I shall always be so lenient. You will leave the castle instantly. As to Wolsey, he shall render me a strict account of his conduct."

"I have nothing to declare, my liege," replied Wolsey, recovering himself, "I leave it to the queen to explain why I came hither."

"The explanation shall be given at once," said Catherine. "I sent for the cardinal to request him to lay before your majesty these two letters from Anne Boleyn to Sir Thomas Wyatt, that you might judge whether one who could write thus would make you a fitting consort. You disbelieved my charge of levity yesterday. Read these, sire, and judge whether I spoke the truth."

Henry glanced at the letters, and his brow grew dark.

"What say you to them, my liege?" cried Catherine, with a glance of triumph. "In the one she vows eternal constancy to Sir Thomas Wyatt, and in the other—written after her engagement to you—he tells him that though they can never meet as heretofore, she will always love him."

"Ten thousand furies!" cried the king. "Where got you these letters, madam?"

"They were given to me by a tall dark man, as I quitted the castle last night," said the queen. "He said they were taken from the person of Sir Thomas Wyatt while he lay concealed in the forest in the cave of Herne the Hunter."

"If I thought she wrote them," cried Henry, in an access jealous fury, "I would cast her off for ever."

"Methinks your majesty should be able to judge whether they are true or false," said Catherine. "I know her writing well—too well, alas!—and am satisfied they are genuine."

"I am well assured that Wyatt was concealed in the Lady Anne's chamber when your majesty demanded admittance and could not obtain it—when the Earl of Surrey sacrificed himself for her, and for his friend," said Wolsey.

"Perdition!" exclaimed the king, striking his brow with his clenched hand. "Oh, Catherine!" he continued, after a pause, during which she intently watched the workings of his countenance, "and it was for this light-hearted creature I was about to cast you off."

"I forgive you, sire—I forgive you!" exclaimed the queen, clasping his hands, and bedewing them with grateful tears. "You have been deceived. Heaven keep you in the same mind!"

"You have preserved me," said Henry, "but you must not tarry here. Come with me to the royal lodgings."

"No, Henry," replied Catherine, with a shudder, "not while she is there."

"Make no conditions, madam," whispered Wolsey. "Go."

"She shall be removed to-morrow," said Henry.

"In that case I am content to smother my feelings," said the queen.

"Come, then, Kate," said Henry, taking her hand. "Lord cardinal, you will attend us."

"Right gladly, my liege," replied Wolsey. "If this mood will only endure," he muttered, "all will go well. But his jealousy must not be allowed to cool. Would that Wyatt were here!"

Doctor Sampson could scarcely credit his senses as he beheld the august pair come forth together, and a word from Wolsey explaining what had occurred, threw him into transports of delight. But the surprise of the good canon was nothing to that exhibited as Henry and Catherine entered the royal lodgings, and the king ordered his own apartments to be instantly prepared for her majesty's reception.

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

XI.

How Tristram Lyndwood and Mabel were liberated.

Intelligence of the queen's return was instantly conveyed to Anne Boleyn, and filled her with indescribable alarm. All her visions of power and splendour seemed to melt away at once. She sent for her father, Lord Rochford, who hurried to her in a state of the utmost anxiety, and closely questioned her whether the extraordinary change had not been occasioned by some imprudence of her own. But she positively denied the charge, alleging that she had parted with the king scarcely an hour before on terms of the most perfect amity, and with the full conviction that she had accomplished the cardinal's ruin. "You should not have put forth your hand against him till you were sure of striking the blow," said Rochford. "There is no telling what secret influence he has over the king; and there may yet be a hard battle to fight. But not a moment must be lost in counteracting his operations. Luckily, Suffolk is here, and his enmity to the cardinal will make him a sure friend to us. Pray Heaven you have not given the king fresh occasion for jealousy! That is all I fear."

And quitting his daughter, he sought out Suffolk, who, alarmed at what appeared like a restoration of Wolsey to favour, promised heartily to co-operate with him in the struggle; and that no time might be lost, the duke proceeded at once to the royal closet, where he found the king pacing moodily to and fro.

"Your majesty seems disturbed," said the duke.

"Disturbed!—ay!" exclaimed the king. "I have enough to disturb me. I will never love again. I will forswear the whole sex. Harkee, Suffolk, you are my brother, my second self, and know all the secrets of my heart. After the passionate devotion I have displayed for Anne Boleyn—after all I have done for her—all I have risked for her—I have been deceived."

"Impossible, my liege?" exclaimed Suffolk.

"Why, so I thought," cried Henry, "and I turned a deaf ear to all insinuations thrown out against her, till proof was afforded which I could no longer doubt."

"And what was the amount of the proof, my liege?" asked Suffolk.

"These letters," said Henry, handing them to him, "found on the person of Sir Thomas Wyatt."

"But these only prove, my liege, the existence of a former passion—nothing more," remarked Suffolk, after he had scanned them.

"But she vows eternal constancy to him!" cried Henry; "says she shall ever love him—says so at the time she professes devoted love for me! How can I trust her after that?"

Suffolk, I feel she does not love me exclusively; and my passion is so deep and devouring, that it demands entire return. I must have her heart as well as her person; and I feel I have only won her in my quality of king."

"I am persuaded your majesty is mistaken," said the duke. "Would I could think so!" sighed Henry. "But no—no, I cannot be deceived. I will conquer this fatal passion. Oh, Suffolk! it is frightful to be the bondslave of a woman—a fickle, inconstant woman. But between the depths of love and hate is but a step; and I can pass from one to the other."

"Do nothing rashly, my dear liege," said Suffolk; "nothing that may bring with it after-
repentance. Do not be swayed by those who have inflamed your jealousy, and who could practise upon it. Think the matter calmly over, and then act. And till you have decided, see neither Catherine nor Anne; and, above all, do not admit Wolsey to your secret counsels."

"You are his enemy, Suffolk," said the king sternly.

"I am your majesty's friend," replied the duke. "I beseech you, yield to me on this occasion, and I am sure of your thanks hereafter."

"Well, I believe you are right, my good friend and brother," said Henry, "and I will curb my impulses of rage and jealousy. To-morrow, before I see either the queen or Anne, we will ride forth into the forest, and talk the matter further over."

"Your highness has come to a wise determination," said the duke.

"Oh, Suffolk!" sighed Henry, "would I had never seen this siren! She exercises a fearful control over me, and enslaves my very soul."

"I cannot say whether it is for good or ill that you have met, my dear liege," replied Suffolk, "but I fancy I can discern the way in which your ultimate decision will be taken. But it is now near midnight. I wish your majesty sound and untroubled repose."

"Stay!" cried Henry, "I am about to visit the Curfew Tower, and must take you with me. I will explain my errand as we go. I had some thought of sending you there in my stead. Ha!" he exclaimed, glancing at his finger, "By Saint Paul, it is gone!"

"What is gone, my liege?" asked Suffolk.

"My signet," replied Henry, "I missed it not till now. It has been wrested from me by the fiend, during my walk from the Curfew Tower. Let us not lose a moment, or the prisoners will be set free by him,—if they have not been liberated already."

So saying, he took a couple of dags—a species of short gun—from a rest on the wall, and giving one to Suffolk, thrust the other into his girdle. Thus armed, they quitted the royal lodgings, and hurried in the direction of the Curfew Tower. Just as they reached the Horseshoe Cloisters, the alarm-bell began to ring.

"Did I not tell you so?" cried Henry furiously; "they have escaped. Ha! it ceases!—what has happened?"

About a quarter of an hour after the king had quitted the Curfew Tower, a tall man, enveloped in a cloak, and wearing a high conical cap, presented himself to the arquebusier stationed at the entrance to the dungeon, and desired to be admitted to the prisoners.

"I have the king's signet," he said, holding forth the ring. On seeing this, the arquebusier, who recognised the ring, unlocked the door, and admitted him. Mabel was kneeling on the ground beside her grandsire, with her hands raised as in prayer, but as the tall man entered the vault, she started to her feet, and uttered a slight scream.

"What is the matter, child?" cried Tristram..

"He is here!—he is come!" cried Mabel, in a tone of the deepest terror.

"Who—the king?" cried Tristram, looking up. "Ah! I see! Herne is come to deliver me."

"Do not go with him, grandsire," cried Mabel. "In the name of all the saints, I implore you, do not."

"Silence her!" said Herne in a harsh, imperious voice, "or I leave you."

The old man looked imploringly at his granddaughter.

"You know the conditions of your liberation?" said Herne.

"I do—I do," replied Tristram hastily, and with a shudder.

"Oh, grandfather!" cried Mabel, falling at his feet, "do not, I conjure you, make any conditions with this dreaded being, or it will be at the expense of your salvation. Better I should perish at the stake—better you should suffer the most ignominious death, than this should be."

"Do you accept them?" cried Herne, disregarding her supplications.

Tristram answered in the affirmative.

"Recall your words, grandfather—recall your words!" cried Mabel. "I will implore pardon for you on my knees from the king, and he will not refuse me."

"The pledge cannot be recalled, damsel," said Herne; "and it is to save you from the king, as much as to accomplish his own preservation, that your grandsire consents. He would not have you a victim to Henry's lust." And as he spoke, he divided the forester's bonds with his knife. "You must go with him, Mabel," he added.

"I will not!" she cried. "Something warns me that a great danger awaits me."

"You must go, girl," cried Tristram angrily. "I will not leave you to Henry's lawless passion."

Meanwhile, Herne had passed into one of the large embrasures, and opened, by means of a spring, an entrance to a secret staircase in the wall. He then beckoned Tristram towards him, and whispered some instructions in his ear.

"I understand," replied the old man.

"Proceed to the cave," cried Herne, "and remain there till I join you."

Tristram nodded assent.

"Come, Mabel!" he cried, advancing towards her, and seizing her hand.

"Away!" cried Herne in a menacing tone.

Terrified by the formidable looks and gestures of the demon, the poor girl offered no resistance, and her grandfather drew her into the opening, which was immediately closed after her.

About an hour after this, and when it was near upon the stroke of midnight, the arquebusier who had admitted the tall stranger to the dungeon, and who had

momentarily expected his coming forth, opened the door to see what was going forward. Great was his astonishment to find the cell empty! After looking around in bewilderment, he rushed to the chamber above, to tell his comrades what had happened.

"This is clearly the work of the fiend," said Shoreditch; "it is useless to strive against him."

"That tall black man was doubtless Herne himself," said Paddington. "I am glad he did us no injury. I hope the king will not provoke his malice further."

"Well, we must inform Captain Bouchier of the mischance," said Shoreditch. "I would not be in thy skin, Mat Bee, for a trifle. The king will be here presently, and then—"

"It is impossible to penetrate through the devices of the evil one," interrupted Mat. "I could have sworn it was the royal signet, for I saw it on the king's finger as he delivered the order. I wish such another chance of capturing the fiend would occur to me."

As the words were uttered, the door of a recess was thrown suddenly open, and Herne, in his wild garb, with his antlered helm upon his brow, and the rusty chain depending from his left arm, stood before them. His appearance was so terrific and unearthly that they all shrank aghast, and Mat Bee fell with his face on the floor.

"I am here!" cried the demon. "Now, braggart, wilt dare to seize me?"

But not a hand was moved against him. The whole party seemed transfixed with terror.

"You dare not brave my power, and you are right," cried Herne—"a wave of my hand would bring this old tower about your ears—a word would summon a legion of fiends to torment you."

"But do not utter it, I pray you, good Herne—excellent Herne," cried Mat Bee. "And, above all things, do not wave your hand, for we have no desire to be buried alive,—have we, comrades? I should never have said what I did if I had thought your friendship within hearing."

"Your royal master will as vainly seek to contend with me as he did to bury me beneath the oak-tree," cried Herne. "If you want me further, seek me in the upper chamber."

And with these words he darted up the ladder-like flight of steps and disappeared.

As soon as they recovered from the fright that had enchained them, Shoreditch and Paddington rushed forth into the area in front of the turret, and shouting to those on the roof told them that Herne was in the upper room—a piece of information which was altogether superfluous, as the hammering had recommenced, and continued till the clock struck twelve, when it stopped. Just then, it occurred to Mat Bee to ring the alarm-bell, and he seized the rope, and began to pull it; but the bell had scarcely sounded, when the cord, severed from above, fell upon his head.

At this juncture, the king and the Duke of Suffolk arrived. When told what had happened, though prepared for it, Henry burst into a terrible passion, and bestowed a buffet on Mat Bee, that well nigh broke his jaw, and sent him reeling to the farther side of the chamber. He had not at first understood that Herne was supposed to be in the upper room; but as soon as he was made aware of the circumstance, he cried out—"Ah,

dastards! have you let him brave you thus? But I am glad of it. His capture is reserved for my own hand."

"Do not expose yourself to this risk, my gracious liege," said Suffolk.

"What! are you too a sharer in their womanish fears, Suffolk?" cried Henry. "I thought you had been made of stouter stuff. If there is danger, I shall be the first to encounter it. Come," he added, snatching a torch from an arquebusier. And, drawing his dag, he hurried up the steep steps, while Suffolk followed his example, and three or four arquebusiers ventured after them.

Meanwhile Shoreditch and Paddington ran out, and informed Bouchier that the king had arrived, and was mounting in search of Herne, upon which the captain, shaking off his fears, ordered his men to follow him, and opening the little door at the top of the stairs, began cautiously to descend, feeling his way with his sword. He had got about half-way down, when Henry sprang upon the platform. The light of the torch fell upon the ghostly figure of Herne, with his arms folded upon his breast, standing near the pile of wood, lying between the two staircases. So appalling was the appearance of the demon, that Henry stood still to gaze at him, while Bouchier and his men remained irresolute on the stairs. In another moment, the Duke of Suffolk had gained the platform, and the arquebusiers were seen near the head of the stairs.

"At last, thou art in my power, accursed being!" cried Henry. "Thou art hemmed in on all sides, and canst not escape!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Herne.

"This shall prove whether thou art human or not," cried Henry, taking deliberate aim at him with the dag.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Herne. And as the report rang through the room, he sank through the floor, and disappeared from view.

"Gone!" exclaimed Henry, as the smoke cleared off; "gone! Holy Mary! then it must indeed be the fiend. I made the middle of his skull my aim, and if he had not been invulnerable, the bullet must have pierced his brain.

"I heard it rebound from his horned helmet, and drop to the floor," said Bouchier.

"What is that chest?" cried Henry, pointing to a strange coffin-shaped box, lying, as it seemed, on the exact spot where the demon had disappeared.

No one had seen it before, though all called to mind the mysterious hammering; and they had no doubt that the coffin was the work of the demon.

"Break it open," cried Henry; "for aught we know, Herne may be concealed within it."

The order was reluctantly obeyed by the arquebusiers. But no force was required, for the lid was not nailed down; and when it was removed, a human body in the last stage of decay was discovered.

"Pah! close it up," cried Henry, turning away in disgust. "How came it there?"

"It must have been brought by the powers of darkness," said Bouchier; "no such coffin was here when I searched the chamber two hours ago. But see," he suddenly added,

stooping down, and picking up a piece of paper which had fallen from the coffin, "here is a scroll."

"Give it me!" cried Henry; and holding it to the light, he read the words, "The body of Mark Fytton, the butcher, the victim of a tyrant's cruelty."

Uttering a terrible imprecation, Henry flung the paper from him; and bidding the arquebusiers burn the body at the foot of the gallows without the town, he quitted the tower without further search.

The Cardinal Wolsey By William Harrison Ainsworth

XII.

How Wolsey was disgraced by the King.

On the following day, a reconciliation took place between the king and Anne Boleyn. During a ride in the great park with his royal brother, Suffolk not only convinced him of the groundlessness of his jealousy, but contrived to incense him strongly against Wolsey. Thus the queen and the cardinal lost the momentary advantage they had gained, while Anne's power was raised yet higher. Yielding to her entreaties not to see Catherine again, nor to hold further conference with Wolsey until the sentence of the court should be pronounced, Henry left the castle that very day, and proceeded to his palace of Bridewell. The distress of the unhappy queen at this sudden revolution of affairs may be conceived. Distrusting Wolsey, and putting her sole reliance on Heaven and the goodness of her cause, she withdrew to Blackfriars, where she remained till the court met. As to the cardinal himself, driven desperate by his situation, and exasperated by the treatment he had experienced, he resolved, at whatever risk, to thwart Henry's schemes, and revenge himself upon Anne Boleyn.

Thus matters continued till the court met as before in the Parliament-chamber, at Blackfriars. On this occasion Henry was present, and took his place under a cloth of estate,—the queen sitting at some distance below him. Opposite them were the legates, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole of the bishops. The aspect of the assemblage was grave and anxious. Many eyes were turned on Henry, who looked gloomy and menacing, but the chief object of interest was the queen, who, though pale as death, had never in her highest days of power worn a more majestic and dignified air than on this occasion.

The proceedings of the court then commenced, and the king being called by the crier, he immediately answered to the summons. Catherine was next called, and instead of replying, she marched towards the canopy beneath which the king was seated, prostrated herself, and poured forth a most pathetic and eloquent appeal to him, at the close of which she arose, and making a profound reverence, walked out of the court, leaning upon the arm of her general receiver, Griffith. Henry desired the crier to call her back, but she would not return; and seeing the effect produced by her address upon the auditory, he endeavoured to efface it by an eulogium on her character and virtues, accompanied by an expression of deep regret at the step he was compelled to take in separating himself from her. But his hypocrisy availed him little, and his speech was received with looks of ill-disguised incredulity. Some further discourse then took place between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rochester; but as the queen

had absented herself, the court was adjourned to the next day, when it again met, and as she did not then appear, though summoned, she was pronounced contumacious. After repeated adjournments, the last session was held, and judgment demanded on the part of the king, when Campeggio, as had been arranged between him and Wolsey, declined to pronounce it until he had referred the matter to the Pope, and the court was dissolved.

About two months after this event, during which time the legate's commission had been revoked, while Henry was revolving the expediency of accomplishing the divorce through the medium of his own ecclesiastical courts, and without reference to that of Rome, a despatch was received from the Pope by the two cardinals, requiring them to cite the king to appear before him by attorney on a certain day. At the time of the arrival of this instrument, Campeggio chanced to be staying with Wolsey at his palace at Esher, and as the king was then holding his court at Windsor, they both set out for the castle on the following day, attended by a retinue of nearly a hundred horsemen, splendidly equipped.

It was now the middle of September, and the woods, instead of presenting one uniform mass of green, glowed with an infinite variety of lovely tints. And yet, despite the beauty of the scene, there was something melancholy in witnessing the decline of the year, as marked by those old woods, and by the paths that led through them, so thickly strewn with leaves. Wolsey was greatly affected. "These noble trees will ere long bereft of all their glories," he thought, "and so, most likely, will it be with me, and perhaps my winter may come sooner than theirs!"

The cardinal and his train had crossed Staines Bridge, and passing through Egham, had entered the great park near Englefield Green. They were proceeding along the high ridge overlooking the woody region between it and the castle, when a joyous shout in the glades beneath reached them, and looking down, they saw the king accompanied by Anne Boleyn, and attended by his falconers and a large company of horsemen, pursuing the sport of hawking. The royal party appeared so much interested in their sport that they did not notice the cardinal and his train, and were soon out of sight. But as Wolsey descended Snow Hill, and entered the long avenue, he heard the trampling of horses at a little distance, and shortly afterwards, Henry and Anne issued from out the trees. They were somewhat more than a bow-shot in advance of the cardinal; but instead of halting till he came up, the king had no sooner ascertained who it was, than, despatching a messenger to the castle, who was seen galloping swiftly down the avenue, he rode off with Anne Boleyn towards the opposite side of the park. Though deeply mortified by the slight, Wolsey concealed his vexation from his brother cardinal, and pursued his way to the castle, before which he presently arrived. The gate was thrown open at his approach, but he had scarcely entered the lower ward when Sir Henry Norris, the king's groom of the stole, advanced to meet him, and, with a sorrowful expression of countenance, said that his royal master had so many guests at the castle, that he could not accommodate him and his train.

"I understand your drift, sir," replied Wolsey; "you would tell me I am not welcome. Well, then, his eminence Cardinal Campeggio and myself must take up our lodging at some hostel in the town, for it is necessary we should see the king."

"If your grace is content to dismiss your attendants," said Norris in a low tone, "you and Cardinal Campeggio can be lodged in Henry the Third's Tower. Thus much I will take upon me; but I dare not admit you to the royal lodgings."

Wolsey tried to look unconcerned, and calling to his gentleman usher, George Cavendish, gave him some instructions in a low voice, upon which the other immediately placed himself at the head of the retinue, and ordered them to quit the castle with him, leaving only the jester, Patch, to attend upon his master. Campeggio's attendants being comparatively speaking, few in number, were allowed to remain, and his litter was conveyed to Henry the Third's Tower—a fortification standing, as already stated, in the south side of the lower ward, near the edge of the dry moat surrounding the Round Tower. At the steps of this tower Wolsey dismounted, and was about to follow Campeggio into the doorway, when Will Sommers, who had heard of his arrival, stepped forward, and with a salutation of mock formality, said, "I am sure it will grieve the king, my master, not to be able to accommodate your grace's train; but since it is larger than his own, you will scarce blame his want of hospitality."

"Nor the courtesy of his attendants," rejoined Wolsey sharply. "I am in no mood for thy jesting now. Stand aside, sirrah, or I will have the rod applied to thy back!"

"Take care the king does not apply the rod to your own, lord cardinal," retorted Will Sommers. "If he scourges you according to your deserts, your skin will be redder than your robe." And his mocking laugh pursued Wolsey like the hiss of a snake into the tower.

Some two hours after this, Henry and his attendants returned from the chase. The king seemed in a blithe humour, and Wolsey saw him laugh heartily as Will Sommers pointed with his bauble towards Henry the Third's Tower. The cardinal received no invitation to the royal banquet; and the answer to his solicitation for an interview was, that he and Campeggio would be received in the presence-chamber on the following morning, but not before.

That night a great revel was held in the castle. Masquing, dancing, and feasting filled up the evening, and the joyous sounds and strains reached Wolsey in his seclusion, and forced him to contrast it with his recent position, when he would have been second only to the king in the entertainment. He laid his head upon his pillow, but not to rest, and while tossing feverishly about his couch, he saw the arras with which the walls were covered, move, and a tall, dark figure step from behind it. The cardinal would have awakened his jester, who slept in a small truckle-bed at his feet, but the strange visitor motioned him to be still.

"You may conjecture who I am, cardinal," he said, "but in case you should doubt, I will tell you. I am Herne the Hunter! And now to my errand. There is a damsel, whom you

once saw in the forest near the great lake, and whom you promised to befriend. You can assist her now—to-morrow it may be out of your power."

"I have enough to do to aid myself, without meddling with what concerns me not," said Wolsey.

"This damsel does concern you," cried Herne. "Read this, and you will see in what way."

And he tossed a letter to Wolsey, who glanced at it by the light of the lamp.

"Ha! is it so?" he exclaimed. "Is she—"

"Hush!" cried Herne, "or you will wake this sleeper. It is as you suppose. Will you not aid her now? Will you not bestow some of your treasure upon her before it is wholly wrested from you by the king? I will do aught you wish, secretly and swiftly."

"Go, then, to my palace at Esher," cried the cardinal. "Take this key to my treasurer—it is the key of my coffers. Bid him deliver to you the six caskets in the cabinet in the gilt chamber. Here is a token by which he will know that you came from me," he added, delivering him a small chain of gold, "for it has been so agreed between us. But you will be sure to give the treasure to Mabel."

"Fear nothing," replied Herne. And stretching forth his hand to receive the key and the chain, he glided behind the tapestry, and disappeared.

This strange incident gave some diversion to Wolsey's thought; but ere long they returned to their former channel. Sleep would not be summoned, and as soon as the first glimpse of day appeared, he arose, and wrapping his robe around him, left his room and ascended a winding staircase leading to the roof of the tower.

The morning promised to be fine, but it was then hazy, and the greater part of the forest was wrapped in mist. The castle, however, was seen to great advantage. Above Wolsey rose the vast fabric of the Round Tower, on the summit of which the broad standard was at that moment being unfurled; while the different battlements and towers arose majestically around. But Wolsey's gaze rested chiefly upon the exquisite mausoleum lying immediately beneath him; in which he had partly prepared for himself a magnificent monument. A sharp pang shook him as he contemplated it, and he cried aloud, "My very tomb will be wrested from me by this rapacious monarch; and after all my care and all my cost, I know not where I shall rest my bones!"

Saddened by the reflection, he descended to his chamber, and again threw himself on the couch.

But Wolsey was not the only person in the castle who had passed a sleepless night. Of the host of his enemies many had been kept awake by the anticipation of his downfall on the morrow; and among these was Anne Boleyn, who had received an assurance from the king that her enmity should at length be fully gratified.

At the appointed hour, the two cardinals, proceeded to the royal lodgings. They were detained for some time in the ante-chamber, where Wolsey was exposed to the taunts and sneers of the courtiers, who had lately so servilely fawned upon him. At length, they were ushered into the presence chamber, at the upper end of which beneath a canopy emblazoned with the royal arms woven in gold, sat Henry, with Anne Boleyn on his right

hand. At the foot of the throne stood Will Sommers, and near him the Dukes of Richmond and Suffolk. Norfolk, Rochford, and a number of other nobles, all open enemies of Wolsey, were also present. Henry watched the advance of the cardinals with a stern look, and after they had made an obeisance to him, he motioned them to rise.

"You have sought an interview with me, my lords," he said, with suppressed rage. "What would you?"

"We have brought an instrument to you, my liege," said Wolsey, "which has just been received from his holiness the Pope."

"Declare its nature," said Henry.

"It is a citation," replied Wolsey, "enjoining your highness to appear by attorney in the papal court, under a penalty of ten thousand ducats."

And he presented a parchment, stamped with the great seal of Rome, to the king, who glanced his eye fiercely over it, and then dashed it to the ground, with an explosion of fury terrible to hear and to witness.

"Ha! by Saint George!" he cried; "am I as nothing, that the Pope dares to insult me thus?"

"It is a mere judicial form your majesty," interposed Campeggio, "and is chiefly sent by his holiness to let you know we have no further jurisdiction in the matter of the divorce."

"I will take care you have not, nor his holiness either," roared the king. "By my father's head, he shall find I will be no longer trifled with."

"But, my liege," cried Campeggio.

"Peace!" cried the king. "I will hear no apologies nor excuses. The insult has been offered, and cannot be effaced. As for you, Wolsey—"

"Sire!" exclaimed the cardinal, shrinking before the whirlwind of passion, which seemed to menace his utter extermination.

"As for you, I say," pursued Henry, extending his hand towards him, while his eyes flashed fire, "who by your outrageous pride have so long overshadowed our honour—who by your insatiate avarice and appetite for wealth have oppressed our subjects—who by your manifold acts of bribery and extortion have impoverished our realm, and by your cruelty and partiality have subverted the due course of justice and turned it to your ends—the time is come when you shall receive due punishment for your offences."

"You wrong me, my dear liege," cried Wolsey abjectly. "These are the accusations of my enemies. Grant me a patient hearing, and I will explain all."

"I would not sharpen the king's resentment against you, lord cardinal," said Anne Boleyn, "for it is keen enough; but I cannot permit you to say that these charges are merely hostile. Those who would support the king's honour and dignity must desire to see you removed from his counsels."

"I am ready to take thy place, lord cardinal," said Will Sommers; "and will exchange my bauble for thy chancellor's mace, and my fool's cap for thy cardinal's hat."

"Peace!" thundered the king. "Stand not between me and the object of my wrath. Your accusers are not one but many, Wolsey; nay, the whole of my people cry out for justice

against you. And they shall have it. But you shall hear the charges they bring. Firstly, contrary to our prerogative, and for your own advancement and profit, you have obtained authority legatine from the Pope; by which authority you have not only spoiled and taken away their substance from many religious houses, but have usurped much of our own jurisdiction. You have also made a treaty with the King of France for the Pope without our consent, and concluded another friendly treaty with the Duke of Ferrara, under our great seal, and in our name, without our warrant. And furthermore you have presumed to couple yourself with our royal self in your letters and instructions, as if you were on an equality with us."

"Ha! ha! 'The king and I would have you do thus!' 'The king and I give you our hearty thanks!' Ran it not so, cardinal?" cried Will Sommers. "You will soon win the cap and bells."

"In exercise of your legatine authority," pursued the king, "you have given away benefices contrary to our crown and dignity, for the which you are in danger of forfeiture of your lands and goods."

"A premunire, cardinal," cried Will Sommers. "A premunire!—ha! ha!"

"Then it has been your practice to receive all the ambassadors to our court first at your own palace," continued Henry, "to hear their charges and intentions, and to instruct them as you might see fit. You have also so practised that all our letters sent from beyond sea have first come to your own hands, by which you have acquainted yourself with their contents, and compelled us and our council to follow your devices. You have also written to all our ambassadors abroad in your own name concerning our affairs, without our authority; and received letters in return from them by which you have sought to compass your own purposes. By your ambition and pride you have undone many of our poor subjects; have suppressed religious houses, and received their possessions; have seized upon the goods of wealthy spiritual men deceased; constrained all ordinaries yearly to compound with you; have gotten riches for yourself and servants by subversion of the laws, and by abuse of your authority in causing divers pardons of the Pope to be suspended until you, by promise of a yearly pension, chose to revive them; and also by crafty and untrue tales have sought to create dissention among our nobles."

"That we can all avouch for," cried Suffolk. "It was never merry in England while there were cardinals among us."

"Of all men in England your grace should be the last to say so," rejoined Wolsey; "for if I had not been cardinal, you would not have had a head upon your shoulders to utter the taunt."

"No more of this!" cried the king. "You have misdemeaned yourself in our court by keeping up as great state in our absence as if we had been there in person, and presumptuously have dared to join and imprint your badge, the cardinal's hat, under our arms, graven on our coins struck at York. And lastly, whenever in open Parliament allusion hath been made to heresies and erroneous sects, you have failed to correct and

notice them, to the danger of the whole body of good and Christian people of this our realm."

"This last charge ought to win me favour in the eyes of one who professes the Opinions of Luther," said Wolsey to Anne. "But I deny it, as I do all the rest."

"I will listen to no defence, Wolsey," replied the king. "I will make you a terrible example to others how they offend us and our laws hereafter."

"Do not condemn me unheard!" cried the cardinal, prostrating himself.

"I have heard too much, and I will hear no more!" cried the king fiercely. "I dismiss you from my presence forever. If you are innocent, as you aver, justice will be done you.. If you are guilty, as I believe you to be, look not for leniency from me, for I will show you none." And, seating himself, he turned to Anne, and said, in a low tone, "Are you content, sweetheart?"

"I am," she replied. "I shall not now break my vow. False cardinal," she added aloud, "your reign is at an end."

"Your own may not be much longer, madam," rejoined Wolsey bitterly. "The shadow of the axe," he added, pointing to the reflection of a partisan on the floor, "is at your feet. Ere long it may rise to the head."

And, accompanied by Campeggio, he slowly quitted the presence-chamber.

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