

**HERNE THE HUNTER, OR,
THE DAYS OF THE BLUFF
KING HAL: AN HISTORICAL
IMPROBABILITY**

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THOS. F. PLOWMAN

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THE DAYS OF THE BLUFF KING HAL.

An Historical Improbability.

BY

THOS. F. PLOWMAN,

Author of *Isaac of York, or Normans and Saxons at Home; In Re Becca; A Very New Version of Acls and Galathea, or the Beau, the Belle, and the Blacksmith; Zampa, or the Buccaneer and the Little Deer; Arion, or a Leap for Life; Isaac Abroad, or Ivanhoe Settled and Rebecca Righted; &c.*

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1879.

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PROLOGUE.

"I remember, I remember,"—the quotation I'll admit
Is p'raps a trifle hackneyed, but it happens just to fit,
So doubtless you'll consent to lend your sanction to its use,
And my inventive poverty I'll plead as an excuse.
Then, by your leave and courtesy, I'll start as I propose—
"I remember, I remember," 'twas about—how fast time goes—
It couldn't be so long—but 'tis no use oneself to flatter,
And so it must be nearly—let me see—Ah, well, no matter ;
Suffice it—and 'twill answer every purpose of my rhyme—
'Twas just about that era known as "once upon a time ;"
Before I'd had experience of this world's toil and racket ;
When I wore a turn-down collar, tasselled cap, and rounded jacket ;
When everything seemed genuine—how much since I've found sham --
When buns were buns and penny tarts to me were "real jam ;"
When alley-taws and peg-tops did one's anxious thoughts engage.
We'd life's sweets, without its bitters in that toffee-loving age.
How many fond delusions does old Chronos overthrow ;
Their trustful confidence they lose as people older grow ;
And tarts and toffee now no more are sources of delight,—
The thought that they're adulterated spoils our appetite.

So 'tis with mental food—the sentiment on which we fed
Can't satisfy us now—the gilt's worn off the gingerbread.
In those days—not in summer, but when the nights were long—
What feasts we had of fiction, which we liked both "hot and strong !"
The literature which never failed our young minds to entrance
Was a high-spiced form of novel—the historical romance ;
And first and primest favourite, who furnished forth such fare,
Was *Almsworth* ; his weird mysteries were grand beyond compare.
A circulating library—a well-spring of delight—
Supplied us with material to spoil our rest at night,
And caused us oft to start up in an agony of dread,
As Imagination pictured spectral headmen round our bed.
What visionary horrors every title now recalls—
Guy Fawkes, *The Tower of London*, *Jack Sheppard*, *Old St. Paul's*
The Miser's Daughter, *Rookwood*, and last, although not least,
Was *Windsor Castle*—there we had of horrors quite a feast.
At night, instead of letting our young minds in sleep lie fallow,
Illumined by the dim light of the surreptitious "tallow,"
We gloated o'er its pages, and our youthful bosoms thrilled
At the deeds of *Herse the Hunter*, which our very marrow chilled.
And as we heard the iron tongue proclaim from belfry tower,
In solemn tones, the awful fact—the witching midnight hour,
We feared, as every minute every drop of blood ran colder,
That the grim and ghostly huntsman was p'raps peeping o'er our
shoulder.



So when I'm asked to find a play, and look out for a theme,
 I'm haunted by the shalowy forms, suggestive of a dream,
 Of the demon of the forest and his ghostly crew, who stand
 As Cruickshank has depicted 'em, a fearful-looking band;
 And then I see King Henry with Anne Bullen at his side,
 Sir Thomas Wyatt, Surrey, in their panoply and pride,
 Fair Mabel, Tristram Lyndwood, Morgan Fenwolf, and the rest,
 Who in the golden age of youth raised tumults in my breast.
 Sweet days of trustful innocence! They're gone for evermore.
 Romance seems at a discount now compared with times of yore.
 If I get sentimental, friends invariably laugh
 And consider it a fitting opportunity for chaff.
 And when I talk of tragedies they say—cold blooded creatures!—
 "They *would* be fun"—and ghastly smiles at once o'erspread their
 features.
 They mildly hint, "Your line you know's the comic and grotesque,"
 And so, perforce, my play, alas, ends in—a broad burlesque.

The ghostly attributes of Herne I've been obliged to drop;
 Folks don't believe in spirits now unless they go to shop
 And buy 'em, and of late I've heard it very often stated
 E'en *then* they don't believe in 'em—they're so adulterated,
 In fact, folks so prosaic are in this enlightened age
 They're very apt to laugh if you put ghosts upon the stage.
 They pla their faith so firmly to the tangible and real,
 They won't believe in anything that they can't see and feel,
 And so I've renovated Herne and modernized his crimes
 To suit the present altered circumstances of the times.
 Some characters, fresh to the plot, I've added to the story,
 And trust they may obtain from you a modicum of glory.
 You'll find p'raps, too, some incidents you wouldn't quite expect,
 And some historians may hint they *must* be incorrect.
 But modern thought on past events of late has thrown much light,
 And clever folks, you know, are not invariably right;
 And now that we're assisted by that very gay young spark—
 Th' electric light—it's useless to attempt to keep things dark.
 You'll learn that who embarks in love is launched on stormy billows;
 How even monarchs are not free from some few peccadilloes.
 And, *entre nous*, we're most of us occasionally liable
 To lapses in our rule of life not, p'raps, quite justifiable.
 So if King Hal some failings had he's only like the rest of us;
 We're none of us infallible, not e'en the very best of us.
 I'll say no more, because my best intentions 'twould be foiling
 To drop a hint that might thereby the interest be spoiling,
 I only hope you'll think my piece, at any rate, the pains worth,
 And if you do I'm much obliged to you and Mr. Ainsworth.

First performed at the Theatre Royal, Oxford, by the Oxford Amateur Dramatic Society, on Jan. 14 and 15, 1879, in aid of the Funds of the Oxford Volunteer Fire Brigade.

CHARACTERS.

VALENTINE HAGTHORNE, *alias* HERNE THE HUNTER (a regular Radical).
MORGAN FENWOLF (his First Lieutenant).
MARK FYTTON (Second ditto).
HENRY VIII. (an absolute Monarch—in his wife's absence).
SIR THOS. WYATT (poet, swell, and arch-traitor combined).
EARL OF SURREY (courtier of the usual stage-type).
TRISTRAM LYNDWOOD (beadle, town-crier, and "stern parient").
RICHARD LANGDALE (the virtuous peasant).
ANNE BOLEYN (the better half—by a long way—of Henry).
MABEL LYNDWOOD (the belle of the *Royal Borough*—in the estimation of the young man who *wins her*).
MADGE (Valentine's mamma).
COURTIERS, BEEF-EATERS, BEER-DRINKERS, MEMBERS OF HERNE'S BAND, VILLAGERS, &c., &c., *ad libitum*.

SCENERY.

SCENE I. HERNE'S OAK.

"Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head."

"There is an old tale goes, that Herne the Hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragged horns."

"There want not many that do fear
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak."
Shakespeare.

SCENE II. TRISTRAM LYNDWOOD'S COTTAGE.

SCENE III. CAVERN BENEATH HERNE'S OAK.

DATE OF ACTION—*v.* Pinnock's Catechism.

LOCALITY—Windsor.

COSTUMES—*v.* Harrison Ainsworth's "Windsor Castle," illustrated by Cruikshank.



HERNE THE HUNTER,
OR
THE DAYS OF THE BLUFF KING HAL.

SCENE I.—*Forest Glade, Windsor Castle in far distance. Herne's Oak, practicable, in centre of stage, and ladder leaning against trunk. As curtain rises to quick music, MORGAN FENWOLF, MARK FYTTON, and other members of Herne's Band emerge from out of trunk of tree, and come down ladder to front.*

OPENING CHORUS : *Air*—"D'ye ken John Peel."

Mark We've been up all night, so we don't feel gay.
When the cat's asleep then the mice will play,
And the keepers snore in their beds far away
Till their wives lug 'em out in the morning.

Morgan Herne the Hunter's horn rouses us from our beds
At an hour when respectable householders' heads
Recline on their pillows near the tiles or the leads
Where the cats serenade till the morning.

Chorus Herne the Hunter's horn, &c.

MADGE HAGTHORNE *issues from trunk and stands at head of ladder, arms akimbo.*

Madge (ironically) I s'pose you think your singing's a
sweet boon.

(angrily) You have been goin' it to a pretty tune.

Morgan (chaffingly) I'm glad you like the *tune*.

Madge (sharply) I'll let you see, sir,
If you come any of your *airs* with me, sir.

(*indignantly*) Breaking one's rest, just as I'd be a
snorer!

Why need you each at *day-dawn* be a *roarer*?
It's worse than cats or Wagner—

Mark Hold your row!

The piece is opened, so it's over now.

Madge I think your conduct anything but laudable,
Down in the cave below (*pointing down*) each
note's quite audible.

Morgan We're jolly dogs, we are, and like to show it,
We also want the audience to know it.
Helped by the *band*, our *ditty*, sweet and pretty,
Suggests that we're the Windsor Park *banditti*.

Madge (*contemptuously*) *You*, jolly dogs, indeed! Your
early squallings
Suggestive rather were of *caterwaulings*.

(*Blast on penny trumpet heard off n.*)

Hark to the welcome and triumphant sound
Borne on the *wind*—

Morgan Our chief his horn has *wound*,

Madge (*rapturously*) His signal 'tis—how well I know it—
Joy!

Victorious from the chase returns my boy.
(*to band*) Prepare to welcome him—My son—

Morgan Oh, bother!

Madge It's very clear *you* never were a mother.
As for the cave he's pretty sure to make fast,
I'd better go below and get his breakfast.

(*Disappears down trunk.*)

Triumphal March. Enter VALENTINE HAGTHORNE, *alias* HERNE
THE HUNTER, R., grotesquely attired and with antlered helmet,
as in illustrations to Ainsworth's "Windsor Castle." He
mounts ladder, stands on trunk of tree, and strikes attitude.
Music ceases.

Val. Friends, sons of freedom, fellow citizens—

Morgan Hear, hear!

Val. Thanks, noble pal, for that approving cheer.

Know that our efforts have been crowned with
 luck,
 At property another blow is struck.
 Our independence have we proved again.
(calling off) What ho, compatriots, bring in the
 slain.
 Heaven smiles upon us—Fate repays our toil—
 Tyrants ter'rible ! See the victor's spoil !

Quick March. A diminutive rabbit, tied by its feet to a pole, and with a cross-bolt sticking through it, is brought in in triumph on the shoulders of two of the band, &c., amid general cheering.

Val. 'Twas this head planned the deed, 'twas this
 heart dared it,
 'Twas this hand killed the brute, *(aside)* having
 first snared it.
 Hie to our larder, bid our queen prepare it ;
 We'll feast at midnight on it, all shall share it.
 It shall be portioned equally—I swear it.

Lively music as bearers of rabbit ascend ladder and enter trunk of oak.

But higher game we'll fly at—Revolution !
 Death to all rabbits and the Constitution.
 A day will come, ha ! ha ! we're close upon it,
 When every British bobby, we will bonnet,
 No longer slaves, we'll all be free—

All Hooray !
Val. Look out then for Emancipation Day.

SONG : *Air*—"Emancipation Day."

Too long we've groaned beneath the yoke ;
 To vengeance now we're spurred.
 We mean to strike with sword and pike,
 And make our voices heard.
 We'll all be equal, down with kings ;
 We'll sweep 'em clean away,
 And I will be your emperor
 On Emancipation Day.