

# **STORIES OF ROBIN HOOD**



Then, still bareheaded, he stood up and swore an oath.

**STORIES OF**  
**ROBIN HOOD**

**TOLD TO THE CHILDREN BY**

**H. E. MARSHALL**

**WITH PICTURES BY**

**A. S. FORREST**



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**TO**  
**GRAHAM AND ROBIN**



DEAR JOS,—Robin Hood was a real man. The stories about him are very old. They were written many, many years ago by men whose names have been forgotten. The old letters in which they were printed are very difficult to read, but now, in this little book, you will find the stories easy both to read and to understand. The poetry is in the same words as it was in those old books.

Robin Hood lived in times very different from ours. In the first chapter of this book I have told you about those times, and how and why Robin came to live in the Green Wood, and to have all his wonderful adventures.

If you do not care about the “how and why,” you must begin the book at its second chapter, but I hope you will begin at the beginning, for the more you know about brave Robin, the more you will love and admire him.—  
Your loving Aunt,

H.E. MARSHALL





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## HOW ROBIN HOOD CAME TO LIVE IN THE GREEN WOOD

Very many years ago there ruled over England a king, who was called Richard Cœur de Lion. Cœur de Lion is French and means lion-hearted. It seems strange that an English king should have a French name. But more than a hundred years before this king reigned, a French duke named William came to England, defeated the English in a great battle, and declared himself king of all that southern part of Britain called England.

He brought with him a great many Frenchmen, or Normans, as they were called from the name of the part of France over which this duke ruled. These Normans were all poor though they were very proud and haughty. They came with Duke William to help him fight because he promised to give them money and lands as a reward. Now Duke William had not a great deal of money nor many lands of his own. So when he had beaten the English, or Saxons, as they were called in those days, he stole lands and houses, money and cattle from the Saxon nobles and gave them to the Normans. The

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Saxon nobles themselves had very often become the servants of these proud Normans. Thus it came about that two races lived in England, each speaking their own language, and each hating the other.

This state of things lasted for a very long time. Even when Richard became king, more than a hundred years after the coming of Duke William, there was still a great deal of hatred between the two races.

Richard Cœur de Lion, as his name tells you, was a brave and noble man. He loved danger; he loved brave men and noble deeds. He hated all mean and cruel acts, and the cowards who did them. He was ever ready to help the weak against the strong, and had he stayed in England after he became king he might have done much good. He might have taught the proud Norman nobles that true nobility rests in being kind and gentle to those less strong and less fortunate than ourselves, and not in fierceness and cruelty.

Yet Richard himself was neither meek nor gentle. He was indeed very fierce and terrible in battle. He loved to fight with people who were stronger or better armed than himself. He would have been ashamed to hurt the weak and feeble.

But Richard did not stay in England. Far, far over the seas there is a country called Palestine. There our Lord was born, lived, and died. Christian people in all ages must think tenderly and gratefully of that far-off country. But at this time it had fallen into the hands of the heathen. It seemed to Christian

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people in those days that it would be a terrible sin to allow wicked heathen to live in the Holy Land. So they gathered together great armies of brave men from every country in the world and sent them to try to win it back. Many brave deeds were done, many terrible battles fought, but still the heathen kept possession.

Then brave King Richard of England said he too would fight for the city of our Lord. So he gathered together as much money as he could find, and as many brave men as would follow him, and set out for the Holy Land. Before he went away he called two bishops who he thought were good and wise men, and said to them: "Take care of England while I am gone. Rule my people wisely and well, and I will reward you when I return." The bishops promised to do as he asked. Then he said farewell and sailed away.

Now King Richard had a brother who was called Prince John. Prince John was quite different from King Richard in every way. He was not at all a nice man. He was jealous of Richard because he was king, and angry because he himself had not been chosen to rule while Richard was in Palestine. As soon as his brother had gone, John went to the bishops and said, "You must let me rule while the king is away." And the bishops allowed him to do so. Deep down in his wicked heart John meant to make himself king altogether, and never let Richard come back any more.

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A sad time now began for the Saxons. John tried to please the haughty Normans because they were great and powerful, and he hoped they would help to make him king. He thought the best way to please them was to give them land and money. So as he had none of his own (he was indeed called John Lackland) he took it from the Saxons and gave it to the Normans. Thus many of the Saxons once more became homeless beggars, and lived a wild life in the forests, which covered a great part of England at this time.

Now among the few Saxon nobles who still remained, and who had not been robbed of their lands and money, there was one called Robert, Earl of Huntingdon. He had one son also named Robert, but people called him Robin. He was a favourite with every one. Tall, strong, handsome, and full of fun, he kept his father's house bright with songs and laughter. He was brave and fearless too, and there was no better archer in all the countryside. And with it all he was gentle and tender, never hurting the weak nor scorning the poor.

But Robert of Huntingdon had a bitter enemy. One day this enemy came with many soldiers behind him, determined to kill the earl and take all his goods and lands. There was a fierce and terrible fight, but in the end Robert and all his men were killed. His house was burned to the ground and all his money stolen. Only Robin was saved, because he was such a splendid archer that no soldier would go near him, either to kill him or take him prisoner. He fought bravely till the last, but when he saw that his

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father was dead and his home in flames, he had no heart to fight any longer. So taking his bow and arrows, he fled to the great forest of Sherwood.

Very fast he had to run, for Prince John's men were close behind him. Soon he reached the edge of the forest, but he did not stop there. On and on he went, plunging deeper and deeper under the shadow of the trees. At last he threw himself down beneath a great oak, burying his face in the cool, green grass.

His heart felt hot and bitter. He was full of rage and fierce thoughts of revenge. Cruel men in one day had robbed him of everything. His father, his home, servants, cattle, land, money, his name even, all were gone. He was bruised, hungry, and weary. Yet as he lay pressing his face against the cool, green grass, and clutching the soft, damp moss with his hands, it was not sorrow or pain he felt, but only a bitter longing for revenge.

The great, solemn trees waved gently overhead in the summer breeze, the setting sun sent shafts of golden light into the cool, blue shadows, birds sang their evening songs, deer rustled softly through the underwood, and bright-eyed squirrels leaped noiselessly from branch to branch. Everywhere there was calm and peace except in poor Robin's angry heart.

Robin loved the forest. He loved the sights and scents, and the sounds and deep silences of it. He felt as if it were a tender mother who opened her wide arms to him. Soon it comforted him, and at last the tears came hot and fast, and sobs shook him as

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he lay on the grass. The bitterness and anger had all melted out of his heart; only sorrow was left.

In the dim evening light Robin knelt bareheaded on the green grass to say his prayers. Then, still bareheaded, he stood up and swore an oath. This was the oath:—

“I swear to honour God and the King,  
To help the weak and fight the strong,  
To take from the rich and give to the poor,  
So God will help me with His power.”

Then he lay down on the grass under the trees with his good long bow beside him, and fell fast asleep.

And this is how Robin Hood first came to live in the Green Wood and have all his wonderful adventures.



## II

# THE MEETING OF ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN

When Robin first came to live in Sherwood Forest he was rather sad, for he could not at once forget all he had lost. But he was not long lonely. When it became known that he had gone to live in the Green Wood, other poor men, who had been driven out of their homes by the Normans, joined him. They soon formed a band and were known as the “Merry Men.”

Robin was no longer Robin of Huntingdon, but Robin of Sherwood Forest. Very soon people shortened Sherwood into Hood, though some say he was called Hood from the green hoods he and his men wore. How he came to have his name does not matter much. People almost forgot that he was really an earl, and he had become known, not only all over England, but in many far countries, as Robin Hood.

Robin Hood was captain of the band of Merry Men. Next to him came Little John. He was called Little John because he was so tall, just as Midge the miller’s son was called Much because he was so small.

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Robin loved Little John best of all his friends. Little John loved Robin better than any one else in all the world. Yet the first time they met they fought and knocked each other about dreadfully.

“How they came acquainted, I’ll tell you in brief,  
If you will but listen a while;  
For this very jest, among all the rest,  
I think it may cause you to smile.”

It happened on a bright, sunshiny day in early spring. All through the winter Robin and his men had had a very dull time. Nearly all their fun and adventures happened with people travelling through the forest. As there were no trains, people had to travel on horseback. In winter the roads were so bad, and the weather so cold and wet, that most people stayed at home. So it was rather a quiet time for Robin and his men. They lived in great caves during the winter, and spent their time making stores of bows and arrows, and mending their boots and clothes.

This bright, sunshiny morning Robin felt dull and restless, so he took his bow and arrows, and started off through the forest in search of adventure.

He wandered on for some time without meeting any one. Presently he came to a river. It was wide and deep, swollen by the winter rains. It was crossed by a very slender, shaky bridge, so narrow, that if two people tried to pass each other on it, one would certainly fall into the water.

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Robin began to cross the bridge, before he noticed that a great, tall man, the very tallest man he had ever seen, was crossing too from the other side.

“Go back and wait till I have come over,” he called out as soon as he noticed the stranger.

The stranger laughed, and called out in reply, “I have as good a right to the bridge as you. *You* can go back till *I* get across.”

This made Robin very angry. He was so accustomed to being obeyed that he was very much astonished too. Between anger and astonishment he hardly knew what he did.

He drew an arrow from his quiver and fitting it to his bow, called out again, “If you don’t go back I’ll shoot.”

“If you do, I’ll beat you till you are black and blue,” replied the stranger.

“Quoth bold Robin Hood, Thou dost prate like an ass,  
For, were I to bend my bow,  
I could send a dart quite through thy proud heart,  
Before thou couldst strike a blow.”

“If I talk like an ass you talk like a coward,” replied the stranger. “Do you call it fair to stand with your bow and arrow ready to shoot at me when I have only a stick to defend myself with? I tell you, you are a coward. You are afraid of the beating I would give you.”

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Robin was not a coward, and he was not afraid. So he threw his bow and arrows on the bank behind him.

“You are a big, boastful bully,” he said. “Just wait there until I get a stick. I hope I may give you as good a beating as you deserve.”

The stranger laughed. “I won’t run away; don’t be afraid,” he said.

Robin Hood stepped to a thicket of trees and cut himself a good, thick oak stick. While he was doing this, he looked at the stranger, and saw that he was not only taller but much stronger than himself.

However that did not frighten Robin in the least. He was rather glad of it indeed. The stranger had said he was a coward. He meant to prove to him that he was not.

Back he came with a fine big stick in his hand and a smile on his face. The idea of a real good fight had made his bad temper fly away, for, like King Richard, Robin Hood was rather fond of a fight.

“We will fight on the bridge,” said he, “and whoever first falls into the river has lost the battle.”

“All right,” said the stranger. “Whatever you like. I’m not afraid.”

Then they fell to, with right good will.

It was very difficult to fight standing on such a narrow bridge. They kept swaying backwards and forwards trying to keep their balance. With every stroke the bridge bent and trembled beneath them as

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Bang! smash! their blows fell fast and thick as if they had been threshing corn.

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if it would break. All the same they managed to give each other some tremendous blows. First Robin gave the stranger such a bang that his very bones seemed to ring.

“Ah, ha!” said he, “I’ll give you as good as I get,” and crack he went at Robin’s crown.

Bang, smash, crack, bang, they went at each other. Their blows fell fast and thick as if they had been threshing corn.

“The stranger gave Robin a knock on the crown,  
Which caused the blood to appear,  
Then Robin enraged, more fiercely engaged,  
And followed with blows more severe.

So thick and fast did he lay it on him,  
With a passionate fury and ire,  
At every stroke he made him to smoke,  
As if he had been all on fire.”

When Robin’s blows came so fast and furious, the stranger felt he could not stand it much longer. Gathering all his strength, with one mighty blow he sent Robin backwards, right into the river. Head over heels he went, and disappeared under the water.

The stranger very nearly fell in after him. He was so astonished at Robin’s sudden disappearance that he could not think for a minute or two where he had vanished to. He knelt down on the bridge, and stared into the water. “Hallo, my good man,” he called. “Hallo, where are you?”

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He thought he had drowned Robin, and he had not meant to do that. All the same he could not help laughing. Robin had looked so funny as he tumbled into the water.

“I’m here,” called Robin, from far down the river. “I’m all right. I’m just swimming with the tide.”

The current was very strong and had carried him down the river a good way. He was, however, gradually making for the bank. Soon he caught hold of the overhanging branches of a tree and pulled himself out. The stranger came running to help him too.

“You are not an easy man to beat or to drown either,” he said with a laugh, as he helped Robin on to dry land again.

“Well,” said Robin, laughing too, “I must own that you are a brave man and a good fighter. It was a fair fight, and you have won the battle. I don’t want to quarrel with you any more. Will you shake hands and be friends with me?”

“With all my heart,” said the stranger. “It is a long time since I have met any one who could use a stick as you can.”

So they shook hands like the best of friends, and quite forgot that a few minutes before they had been banging and battering each other as hard as they could.

Then Robin put his bugle horn to his mouth, and blew a loud, loud blast.

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“The echoes of which through the valleys did ring,  
At which his stout bowmen appeared,  
And clothèd in green, most gay to be seen,  
So up to their master they steered.”

When the stranger saw all these fine men, dressed in green, and carrying bows and arrows, come running to Robin he was very much astonished. “O master dear, what has happened?” cried Will Stutely, the leader, as he ran up. “You have a great cut in your forehead, and you are soaked through and through,” he added, laying his hand on Robin’s arm.

“It is nothing,” laughed Robin. “This young fellow and I have been having a fight. He cracked my crown and then tumbled me into the river.”

When they heard that, Robin’s men were very angry. “If he has tumbled our master into the river, we will tumble him in,” said they. “We will see how he likes that,” and they seized him, and would have dragged him to the water to drown him, but Robin called out, “Stop, stop, it was a fair fight. He is a brave man, and we are very good friends now.”

Then turning to the stranger, Robin bowed politely to him, saying, “I beg you to forgive my men. They will not harm you now they know that you are my friend, for I am Robin Hood.”

The stranger was very much astonished when he heard that he had actually been fighting with bold Robin Hood, of whom he had heard so many tales.



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“If you will come and live with me and my Merry Men,” went on Robin, “I will give you a suit of Lincoln green. I will teach you how to use bow and arrows as well as you use your good stick.”

“I should like nothing better,” replied the stranger. “My name is John Little, and I promise to serve you faithfully.”

“John Little!” said Will Stutely laughing. “John Little! what a name for a man that height! John Little! why he is seven feet tall if he is an inch!”

Will laughed and laughed, till the tears ran down his face. He thought it was such a funny name for so big a man.

Robin laughed because Will laughed. Then John Little laughed because Robin laughed. Soon they were all laughing as hard as they could. The wind carried the sound of it away, till the folk in the villages round about said, “Hark, how Robin Hood and his Merry Men do laugh.”

“Well,” said Robin at last, “I have heard it said, ‘Laugh and grow fat,’ but if we don’t get some dinner soon I think we will all grow very lean. Come along, my little John, I’m sure you must be hungry too.”

“Little John,” said Will Stutely, “that’s the very name for him. We must christen him again, and I will be his godfather.”

Back to their forest home they all went, laughing and talking as merrily as possible, taking John Little along with them. Dinner was waiting for

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them when they arrived. The head cook was looking anxiously through the trees saying, "I do wish Master Robin would come, or the roast venison will be too much cooked and the rabbits will be stewed to rags."

Just at that moment they appeared. The cook was struck dumb at the sight of the giant, stalking along beside Robin. "Where has master gotten that Maypole?" he said, laughing to himself, as he ran away to dish the dinner.

They had a very merry dinner. Robin found that John was not only a good fighter but that he had a wise head and a witty tongue. He was more and more delighted with his new companion.

But Will and the others had not forgotten that he was to be christened again. Seven of them came behind him, and in spite of all his kicking and struggling wrapped him up in a long, green cloak, pretending he was a baby.

It was a very noisy christening. The men all shouted and laughed. John Little laughed and screamed in turn, and kicked and struggled all the time.

"Hush, baby, hush," they said. But the seven foot baby wouldn't hush.

Then Will stepped up beside him and began to speak.

"This infant was called John Little, quoth he,  
Which name shall be changed anon,

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The words we'll transpose, so wherever he goes,  
His name shall be called Little John."

They had some buckets of water ready. These they poured over poor Little John till he was as wet as Robin had been after he fell into the river. The men roared with laughter. Little John looked so funny as he rolled about on the grass, trying to get out of his long, wet, green robe. He looked just like a huge green caterpillar.

Robin laughed as much as any one. At last he said, "Now, Will, don't you think that is enough?"

"Not a bit," said Will. "You wouldn't let us duck him in the river when we had him there so we have brought the river to him."

At last all the buckets were empty, and the christening was over. Then all the men stood round in a ring and gave three cheers for Little John, Robin's new man.

"Then Robin he took the sweet pretty babe,  
And clothed him from top to toe  
In garments of green, most gay to be seen,  
And gave him a curious long bow."

After that they sang, danced, and played the whole afternoon. Then when the sun sank and the long, cool shadows fell across the grass they all said "good night" and went off into their caves to sleep.

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From that day Little John always lived with Robin. They became very, very great friends and Little John was next to Robin in command of the men.

“And so ever after as long as he lived,  
Although he was proper and tall,  
Yet, nevertheless, the truth to express,  
Still Little John they did him call.”