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ROBIN HOOD AND MAID MARIAN

I.

IN the days when Richard, the lion-hearted, was yet a prince, Roger Gamewell, a Saxon belonging to a noble family in the north of England, was waging a ceaseless struggle against a Norman Baron who had robbed his people of their holdings. Only a few acres of land remained to the Saxon, for the use of which the Norman conqueror demanded each year a number of hogs, hides, rush, and provender for the cattle. When these were not forthcoming, Gamewell's home was burned to the ground and his cattle stolen.

Though Roger had made peace with the Norman, he had managed to incur the displeasure of very powerful enemies, and the chief object he had in view in rebuilding his house was to defend himself from them. These enemies were the king's foresters. From a long line of ancestors who had enjoyed the privilege of supplying their table from the forest, as they chose, Roger inherited a strong love for chasing and shooting the deer. Under the regulations introduced by the Conquest all deer were claimed by the king, and the punishment for killing one was cutting off the ears. There were many unfortunate Saxons mutilated in this way on all the lands bordering on the forests. Some of them lived with Roger, and as he was known to supply his own wants and those of his retainers from amongst the forest wild-stock, he and his family lived in continual fear of assaults from the Norman foresters.

On completing his house, Roger gave a feast to which he invited his Saxon neighbors. Among these were his sister, Dame Hood, and her son Robin; Ivy Harper and his daughter Marian, Deerfoot, Hinderhead and Limpfoot, as well as Friar Goodby, of Narrowflask Abbey.

Marian Harper was a comely maiden, a favorite in many households, loved for her kindness and welcome for her knowledge of herbs and her skill in dressing hurts. This she had derived from her mother, and from her, too, she had inherited that outward grace of form and beauty of face which made her a belle among the Saxons. Marian was also skilled with the bow, and could shoot a running deer, or a bird on the wing. The forest had been her nursery and school; and the birds, the beasts and the flowers had been her teachers. She had grown