



The Lives and Exploits of the Banditti and Robbers of All Nations (Volume 2)

Charles MacFarlane

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ENGLISH ROBBERS. ROBIN HOOD. When tradition is resorted to in default of history, it commonly happens that the latter is superseded altogether; and, indeed, when we consider the times in which our celebrated outlaw, Robin Hood, lived, and the course of adventure which it was either his fate or his inclination to pursue, and the remarkable silence or utter extinction of contemporary writers, we shall not be surprised to find that the fame or infamy of our hero has only been preserved in the slender custody of an old ballad, and committed to the tender mercies of the ingenious commentator. Fancy, however, when it leans on fact, is in no danger of falling; and so long as the throng sings in "merry Sherwood," and the sun shall kindle the spires of Nottingham, will the name of Robin Hood be a household word in the mouths of the people of England. Robin Hood was born at Locksley, in the county of Nottingham, a place no longer in existence, in the year 1160, and in the reign of King Henry II. He is commonly reputed to have been Earl of Huntingdon, a title to which, it is said, he had no small pretension. It is certain, however, that his lineage was noble, and his true name Robert Fitzooth, which a pliant commentator conjectures was easily corrupted by vulgar pronunciation into Robin Hood. Another avers that Hood is only a corruption of "o' th' wood,"--of Sherwood; while a third supposes that it may, probably, be referred to a particular sort of hood worn by him, either by way of distinction or with a view to disguise. This last supposition is favoured by the fact, that Hugh Capet, the first king of France, obtained his surname from a similar circumstance; it is, at the same time, almost set aside by the improbability of the twofold designation. Robin Hood appe...



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