

ENGLISH BALLADS

The 15th century is known in English literature as the century of folklore. Many songs called ballads- were composed then by the common people of the country.

A favourite legendary hero of the English people is Robin Hood. Many ballads have been composed about him and his friends.

Popular ballads show Robin Hood as a tireless enemy of the Norman oppressors, of the Church and the tradesmen. They sing about, his courage, his readiness to help the poor and the needy. They tell about the love of the poor people for their legendary hero and their great, gratitude to him.

These melodious ballads were sung from generation to generation. In the 18th century they were collected and printed for the first time. Thus they became part of the wealth of English literature.

ROBIN HOOD

Robin Hood is a legendary hero who lived in Sherwood Forest, in Nottingham, with his band of followers. Stories about him and his adventures began to appear in the fourteenth century, but the facts behind the legend are uncertain. One writer thinks Robin was born in 1160, at a time when there were many robbers living in the woods, stealing from the rich but only killing in self- defense.

Everyone knows that Robin Hood robbed the rich to give the poor. He chose to be an outlaw, that is someone who lives outside the law, but he had his own ideas of wrong and right. He fought against injustice and tried to give the ordinary people a share of the riches owned by people in the authority and the Church. He had many qualities: he was a great sportsman, a brave fighter, and was very good with his bow and arrow.

He dressed in green, lived in the forest with his wife, Maid Marion and his men. For food they killed the king's deer, and many days they spent eating, drinking and playing games. He robbed the rich by capturing them as they travelled through the forest and inviting them to eat with him. During the supper, someone looked in their bags to see how much money they had. Having finished the supper, Robin asked them to pay for the meal, and of course he knew how much to ask for.

His main enemy was the Sheriff of Nottingham, who was always trying to capture Robin but never managed to do it. Some stories say that he killed Robin poisoning him. In his dying moments, he shot a final arrow from his famous bow, and asked his men to bury him where the arrow landed.