

THE  
**HISTORY**  
OF  
THE FOUR  
**Kings**

OF  
Canterbury, Colchester,  
Cornwall, & Cumberland,

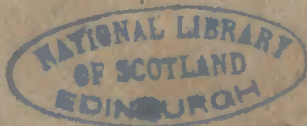
*Their Queens and Daughters.*

BEING  
The Merry Tales of TOM HODGE  
And his School-Fellows.

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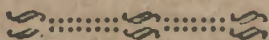
THE  
P R E F A C E.

NOT to detain the reader with many words to little purpose, I shall only here observe. That Tom Hodge, with the rest of his old companions belonging to the school of Cockermouth, were walking on a very pleasant morning in May, and having tired themselves with pranks and intrigues, towards evening they sat themselves down on a green bank, beneath a lovely oak, where they agree amongst themselves that every one should tell a Tale, or pay a fine; and because Tom was the eldest scholar, it was concluded and agreed upon that he should begin first.

*Says Tom, with all my heart,*

*So I'll begin my part.*

THE  
MERRY TALES  
OF  
Tom Hodge.



ONCE upon a time, when the opinion was common in England that those whose age and experience enabled them to determine the consequences of certain actions were wizards and witches; there was a *Queen* in this realm, whose name was Elizabeth; and, by reason that the famous town of Lancaster was strangely pestered with witches the *Queen* sent some judges down to arraign and try them in order to bring them to justice.

Now the news of this court being to be kept in Lancaster, spread through all the country, so that a husbandman living near forty miles from that place, hearing of this news, and believing they were come to tell the folks whether they were witches or not, resolved to go to be satisfied in himself, for he was possessed with a fear that he was a witch, because he had a wart grew on his neck, which he imagined to be a dug.

His wife, who had a friend in a corner, and was therefore glad of his absence, did not only give her consent, but also left him in his best leathern suit and broad brim'd hat.—So taking leave of his good wife Joan, he trudged on day and night until he came to the place where the court was kept: so pushing on and pressing through the crowd, the crier of the court believing him to be some evidence, immediately gave orders that they should let him in; which was soon done, and he was required to speak what he had to say. Why, says the countryman, d'ye see, I've a dug upon my neck, which makes me afraid I am a witch, and volks tell me, that these vine gentlemen, pointing to the judges, can tell a body whether one is a witch or no.—The crier of the court seeing the simplicity of the man, said, No, no, my friend, I can assure thee thou art no witch: thou lookest more like a cuckold than a witch or a conjuror. I thank you zar; and so says these vine gentlemen. Then having given three or four scrapes, and half a dozen congees, he came back as wise as Valtham's calf. The next day he was met by his wife, who waited for his return at the town's end, to whom she said,  
Well

Well husband, what do the gentlemen say? are you a witch or no? A witch, sweet wife, no; they tells a body one looks more like a cuckold than a witch or a conjuror. Why say you so, replied she I prithee go back and have them taken up for witches; for except they had been so, they would not have known you were a cuckold.

This merry tale so pleased them, that they set up a hearty laugh, which being ended, the second boy began his tale in the following manner.

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## T A L E II.

In the days of yore, when this land was governed by many kings, among the rest the king of Canterbury had an only daughter, and she was wise, fair, and beautiful. Her father sent forth a decree, that whoever would watch one night with his daughter, and neither sleep nor slumber, he should have her the next day in marriage; but if he did either, he should lose his head. Many Knights and Squires attempted it, but lost their heads.

Now it happened, a young shepherd grazing his flock near the road, said to his master, Zar, I see many gentlemen ride to the court at Canterbury, but ne'er see 'em return again. O shepherd! said his master, I know not how you should; for they attempt to watch with the King's daughter, according to the decree and not performing it, they are all beheaded. Well, said the shepherd, I'll try my vorton; so now vor a king's daughter or a headless shepherd. And taking his bottle and bag, he trudg'd to court. Now, in his way he was to cross a river, over which lay a plank down he sits, and pulls off his shoes and stockings to wash his feet. lest the smell of his toes might be the means of keeping her awake: while he was washing his feet, a fish came smelling and biting his toes, he caught it and put it into his bag: after which came a second, a third, and a fourth, which he caught and put in his bag likewise; this done, and dried his feet, he put on his stockings and shoes, and pursued his journey till he came to the palace, where he knocked loudly with his crook: he was no sooner let in, and having told his business, but he was conducted to a hall, prepared for that purpose, where the king's daughter sat ready

to receive him; and the better to lull his senses, he was placed in a rich easy chair, having delicious wines for his supper, with many fine dishes of fruit, &c. of which the shepherd eat and drank plentifully, insomuch that he began to slumber before midnight. O shepherd, said the lady, I have caught you napping? No, sweet ally, I was busy: at what? said she: Was a-fishing. Nay shepherd, there is no fish-pond in the hall. No matter vor that, I have been fishing. Says the lady, where do you fish? O quoth he, in my bag. O me have you catch'd e'er a one? Ay, lady, said he. I'd willingly see it, replied she. Ay, an't please you, you shall with all my heart. This said, he flyly drew one of the fishes out of the bag at the sight of which she was greatly pleased and praised it for a pretty fish; and, withal said Dear Shepherd, do you think you could catch one in mine too? Ay, ay, doubtless I can. Then she being according to his directions, he fell to fishing, and, in a short time drew a second fish out of the bag pretending he drew it from her. The king's daughter was so pleased with it, that she kissed it, declaring it was the finest she ever saw. And about half an hour after, she said, Shepherd, do you think you could get me  
 one



One more? He answered, May hap I may, whe: I ave baited my hook. Then make haste for I am impatient till I have another: Then she, the shepherd staid as before, and so presented her with another fish, which she also extolled and praised, saying, It was ten times finer than the other; and then gave him leave to sleep, promising to excuse him to her father.

In the morning, the king came into the hall as usual, followed by the headsmen, with a hatchet; but the lady cried out, You may return with your hatchet, here is no work for you. How so, said the king, has he neither slumber'd nor slept? No, royal father he has not. How has he employed himself? In fishing.— Why, there is never a fish-pond; where did he catch them! One in his own bag, and two in this one of mine. Say you so? Well, friend, dost thou think thou canst catch one in mine? An't please you, my liege, I believe I can. Then directing him to lie on his belly, he poked him with a packing needle, which made him cry out exceedingly; at which time he drew the other fish out of the bag, and shewed it to the king. His Majesty said, He never knew such sort of fishing before, however, take my daughter, according to my royal decree:

decree: and so they were married, and the wedding kept in great triumph, and the shepherd became a king's son.

O that was mighty well, said the third boy, he had wonderful good fortune — This puts me in mind of a story, which I will now tell in my turn.

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### T A L E III.

IF I may believe my old grand mother, there lived in the county of Cumberland, a nobleman, who had three sons, two of them were comely and tall youths, wise and learned: the third a merry fool, and went often in a party-coloured coat and steeple-crowned hat, at the top of which was a tassel: in this dress he made a comical figure. At this time the king of Canterbury had a fine daughter, adorned with all the gifts of nature, joined to an ingenious education, she being very ripe witted, as appeared by her ready answers, and the comical questions she put forth. The king her father published a decree, that whoever should come to the court, and answer his daughter three questions, without studdy or  
 dumb-

tumbling, should have her in marriage,  
 and also be heir to the crown at his decease.  
 On publishing this decree, the said gentle-  
 man's two sons agreed between themselves  
 to go and try how favourable fortune might  
 be to them in this undertaking; but all  
 their care was, what they should do with  
 their silly brother Jack; for, as they said,  
 if he follows us, he will out with some  
 foolish bolt, and so spoil our business. At  
 length it was agreed on going to the court,  
 to go out of the back door, which led to  
 the road over several fields, about a mile  
 from the house. They did so, but were  
 no sooner got into the highway, but look-  
 ing behind, they saw their brother Jack  
 coming capering and dancing after them,  
 saying, with a loud laughter, So you are  
 going to get a king's daughter, but I will  
 pursue you. They saw there was no way  
 to get rid of him, but by walking fast, and  
 leaving him behind, hoping thereby to get  
 a distance before Jack, and then have the  
 gates shut against him. They had not  
 gone half a mile before Jack set up a great  
 shout of laughter; at which one of his broth-  
 ers said, What's the fool found out now?  
 Why, I've found an egg. Put it in thy  
 pocket,

pocket, said his brothers. Adad, and so I will, says Jack. Presently after he was taken with another fit of laughter. What's the fool found now? What have I found, says Jack! why a crooked stick. They bid him put that in his pocket also. Ay, marry, will I. They had not walked much farther, before Jack burst into a greater fit of laughter than before. His brothers said, What's the fool found now? Found, why an orange: Put that in your pocket likewise. I intend it, says Jack. Now, by this time they were come near the palace-gate, at which they no sooner knocked but they were admitted. But Jack never stood for ceremonies, but ran through the midst of the court, and as the wise brothers were making their addresses, Jack was laughing at the ladies; unto whom he said What a troop of fair ladies are got here! O yes, yes, said the King's daughter, who was among them; we are fair ladies, for we carry fire in our bosom. Do you? said Jack: then roast me an egg How will you get it out again? By a crooked stick which I have. Ay you will said she. I have it in my pocket, says Jack. In this Jack answered the three questions proposed. Then he was preferred to that honour which was mentioned in the decree.

His

His two wife brothers then went home like two fools, and left foolish Jack to be reverenced at court, with the King's fair daughter.

Said the fourth boy, This verifies the old Proverb, *Fools have Fortune*; besides, it has put me in mind of a story that was told me by my aunt.

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#### TALE IV.

LONG before Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table, here reigned in the easterly part of this land, a King who kept his court at Colchester: He was witty, strong and valiant, by which means he subdued his enemies abroad, and planted peace among his subjects at home.

Nevertheless, in the midst of all his earthly glory, his queen died, leaving behind her an only daughter, about fifteen years of age, under the care of her royal husband. This lady, from her courtly carriage, beauty and affability, was the wonder of all that knew her; but, as covetousness is the root of all evil, so it happened here.

The king hearing of a Lady who had likewise an only daughter, for the sake of her riches, had a mind to marry her; though she was old ugly, hook-nos'd and hump-back'd, yet all could not deter him from marrying her. The daughter of the said piece of deformity was a yellow dowdy, full of envy and ill-nature; and, in short, was much of the same mould as her mother. This signified nothing, for in a few weeks the king, attended by the nobility and gentry, brought the said piece of deformity to his palace, where the marriage-rites were performed. Long they had not been in the court, before they set the king against his own beautiful daughter, which was done by false reports and accusations. The young princess having lost her father's love, grew weary of the court, and on a certain day meeting with her father in the garden, she desired him with tears in her eyes, to give her a small subsistence, and she would go and seek her fortune; to which the king consented, and ordered her mother-in-law to make up a small sum, according to her discretion. To her she went, who gave her a canvas bag of brown bread, a hard cheese, with a bottle of beer; though this was but a very pitiful dowry for a king's daughter,

She

She took it, returned thanks. and so proceeded, passing through groves, woods, and valleys till at length she saw an old man sitting on a stone, at the mouth of a cave, who said, Good-morrow, fair maiden whither away so fast? Aged father, says she, I am going to seek my fortune. What hast thou in thy bag and bottle? In my bag I have got bread and cheefe; and in my bottle good small beer; will you please to partake of either? Yes, said he, with all my heart. With that the lady pull'd out her provision, and bid him eat and welcome. He did, and gave her many thanks, telling her there was a thick thorny hedge before her, which will appear to you impassable, but take this wand in your hand, strike three times, and say, Pray hedge, let me come through; and it will open immediately: Then a little further you will find a well, sit down on the brink of it, and there will come up three golden heads which will speak: and what they require, that do. Then promising she would, she took her leave of him. Coming to the hedge, and following the old man's directions, the hedge divided, and gave her a passage: Then coming to the well, she had no sooner sit-ten down, but a golden head came up with

a lingering note, Wash me, comb me lay me down softly: Yes, said the young lady: then putting forth her hand, with a silver comb performed the office placing it upon a primrose bank. Then came up a second, and a third, saying as the former, which she complied with; and then pulling out her provision, ate her dinner. Then said the Heads one to another, What shall we do for this lady, who hath used us so very kindly? The first said, I will cause such addition to her beauty as shall charm the most powerful prince in the world. The second said, I will endow her with such perfume, both in body and breath, as shall far exceed the sweetest flowers. The third said, My gift shall be none of the least, for as she is a king's daughter; I'll make her so fortunate, that she shall become queen to the greatest prince that reigns. This done, at their request she let them down into the wall again, and so proceeded on her journey. She had not travelled long, before she saw a king hunting in the park with his nobles; she would have shunned him, but the king having a sight of her, made towards her, and between her beauty and perfumed breath, was so powerfully smitten that he was not able to subdue his passion, but proceeded.



ceeded on his courtship, where, after some compliments and kind embraces, he gained her love. And bringing her to his palace, he caused her to be clothed in the most magnificent manner.

This being ended, and the king finding that she was the king of Colchester's daughter, ordered for a chariot to be got ready, that he might pay him a visit. The chariot, in which the king and queen rode, was beautified with rich ornamental gems of gold. The king her father was at first astonished that his daughter had been so fortunate as she was till the young king made him sensible of all that happened. Great was the joy at court among the nobility, except the queen and her club-footed daughter, who were ready to burst with malice, and envied her happiness; and the greater was their madness because she was now above them all. Great rejoicings, with feasting and dancing, continued many days. Then at length, with the dowry her father gave her they returned home.

Well, said the fifth boy, had she not been kind and beautiful, such good fortune had never come to her lot. And pray what became of her hump-back'd sister-in-law? Indeed I do not know. Why then, said the fifth boy, I can tell you something of her.

## T A L E V.

SHE perceiving that her sister was so happy in seeking her fortune, would needs do the same; so disclosing her mind to her mother, all preparations were made; not only rich apparel but sweet-meats, sugar, almonds, &c. in great quantities, and a large bottle of Malaga sack. Thus furnished, she went the same road as her sister, and coming near the cave, there sat the old man, who said, Young woman whither so fast? What is that to you, said she? Then said he, What have you in your bag and bottle? She answered, Good things, which you shall not be troubled with. Won't you give me some said he? No, not a bit nor a drop, unless it would choke you. The old man frowned, saying Evil fortune attend thee. Going on, she came to the hedge, through which she espied a gap, where she thought to pass, but going in the hedge closed, and the thorns run into her flesh, so that with great difficulty she got out. Being now in a bloody condition, she looks for water to wash herself, and looking round she saw a well, and sitting down, one of the Heads came up to her

her, saying Wash me, comb me, lay me down softly. But she bang'd it with her bottie, saying Hang you take this for your washing. So the second and third Heads came up, and met with no better welcome than the first. Whereupon the Heads consulted among themselves, what evils to plague her with for such usage. The first said, Let her be struck with leprosy in her face. The second said, Let an additional stink be added to her breath. The third bestowed on her a husband, tho' but a poor country-cobler. This done, she goes on till she came to a market-town, and it being market-day, the people met'd a stink, and seeing such a mangy face, all fled, but a poor cobbler who not long before had mended the shoes of an old hermit, who having no money, gave him a box of ointment for the cure of the leprosy, and a bottle of spirits for a stinking breath. Now the cobbler having a mind to do an act of charity, was minded to try an experiment; so going up to her, ask'd her who she was? I am, laid she, the King of Colchester's daughter-in-law. Well, said the Cobbler. If I restore you to your natural complexion, and make a sound cure both in face and breath, will you in reward take me for a husband? Yes, friend,

replied

replied she, with all my heart. With this the Cobler applied the remedies and they worked the effect in a few weeks, which being done, they were married. After some few days spent in town, they set forward for the court at Colchester. At length coming there, and the queen understanding she had married nothing but a poor Cobler, fell into distraction, and in wrath hanged herself. The death of the queen pleased the king much, who was glad he had got rid of her so soon. Having buried her, he gave the Cobler one hundred pounds, on condition that he and his lady would quit the Court. The Cobler received it, and promised he would: then setting up his trade in a remote part of the kingdom, they lived many years, he mending shoes, and she spinning thread.

Quoth the sixth boy, I think for a king's daughter she hath spun a very fine thread,  
But now for my story.

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## T A L E VI.

A Tinker in our town had but one daughter, whose name was Tib, and because her father would not let her marry a miller's man named Jobson, nothing would

would serve her but she must go and seek her fortune; so over hills and mountains, through groves and lonesome woods she passed, till at length she met with an old woman, who said unto Tib. Where are you going? To seek service. says Tib. Will you live with me, replied the old woman? my family is small, myself, my cat, and my dog. Tib answered, with all my heart. So home they went to her cottage, which stood by the side of a grove on the bank of a pleasant river. She no sooner entered in at the door, than she beheld the shelves furnished with abundance of earthen ware and glasses. She had not lived long with her, before Tib had committed a fault, for which the old woman was resolved to break every bone in her skin. To that end, she put her into a sack, and having tied the mouth of the same, she went to the grove to cut a stick; but while she was gone, Tib, with a pen-knife opened the sack, and got out; and put the dog and cat into it, filling it up with pans, pipkins, &c then dragged it to the door, that the old woman might not come in to miss them, who on her return, thinking that Tib had rowled thither, began to lay on like a fury; when the dog howled, the cat mewed, and the

pip-

pipkins cracked; while the old woman cries out, Ah! howl if you will and be p-x'd; for before you come out of this sack I'll thrash your bones to chaff.— Now Tib stood at a distance, laughing to see how busy she was in destroying her own furniture, then fled for it, and never after returned.

It was well she did replied the seventh boy or else the old woman would certainly have been revenged on Tib at last. But now for my story, which shall be the last at this meeting.

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## T A L E VII.

A young man having found a purse in which was five pounds, he made a proclamation that if any one would lay any just claim to it, to come to such a tavern, and they would have it again. To the tavern he went, where, in meat and drink, he spent a crown. At last when the young man was ready to go, the owner came and demanded the purse, which he was ready to surrender; but the owner, on knowing a crown was spent, he would  
not

not receive it, unless he made up the whole sum. The young man told him, he could not; so an officer was sent for: but before he came, the youth took to his heels, and ran for it with that swiftness, that, an ass standing in his way, he took hold of his tail to swing himself by, and twitched it off. A little farther he overthrew a woman with-child and caused her to miscarry. At length he was taken and brought before a Justice by the three sufferers. Having heard their complaints, he turned to the young man, and said, Young man, several complaints are here laid against you, which I shall clear up: First, keep the money you have found, and trade with it till you have improved it so far as to make him satisfaction, and then let him have it. You take the ass, and work him till a new tail grows, then give him to his owner. And you take the woman home till she is as far gone with child as she was before, and then send her home to her husband. So with these determinations he dismissed them.

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### T A L E VIII.

In the reign of King Arthur, near the Londend of England, namely, the county of Cornwall, there lived a wealthy farmer,

er, who had one only son, commonly known by the name of Jack Hornby.— He was brisk, and of a ready wit, so that whatever he could not perform by strength, he compleated by ingenious wit and policy.

For instance, when he was no more than seven years of age, his father sent him into the field to look after his oxen: The laird by chance coming across the field, asked Jack severa<sup>l</sup> questions, particularly, How many commands there wer<sup>e</sup>? Jack told him there were nine. The laird replied there were ten. Nay, quoth Jack, Sir, you are out of that, it is true there were ten, but you broke one of them, when you coveted my father's bull. The landlord replied, Thou art an arch wag, Jack.

But, sir, says Jack, can you tell me how many sticks goes to build a crow's nest? Why, says the landlord, there are as many goes as are sufficient for the size of the nest. Oho, you are out again, Sir, quoth Jack, there is none goes, they are all carried.

The landlord finding himself so fooled, trudged away, leaving Jack in a fit of laughter.