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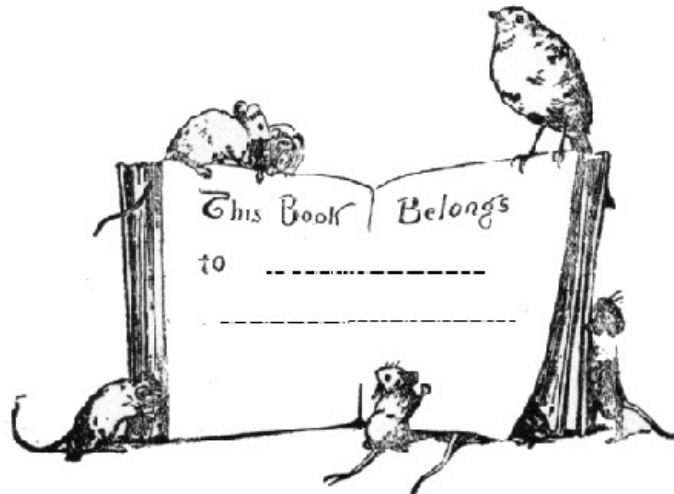
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# ROBIN'S RAMBLES

By MAY BYRON



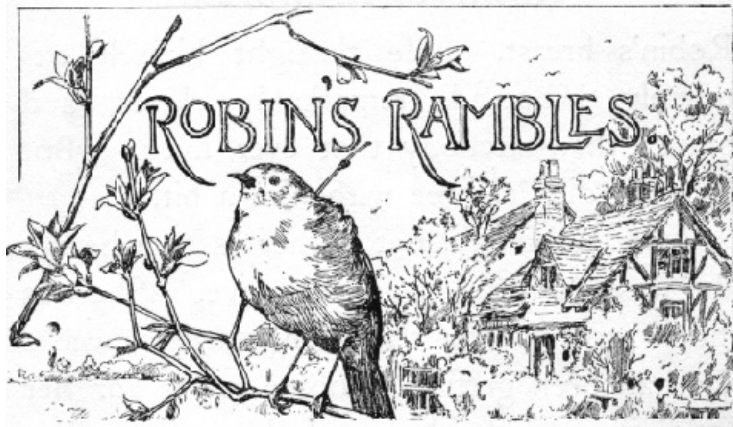
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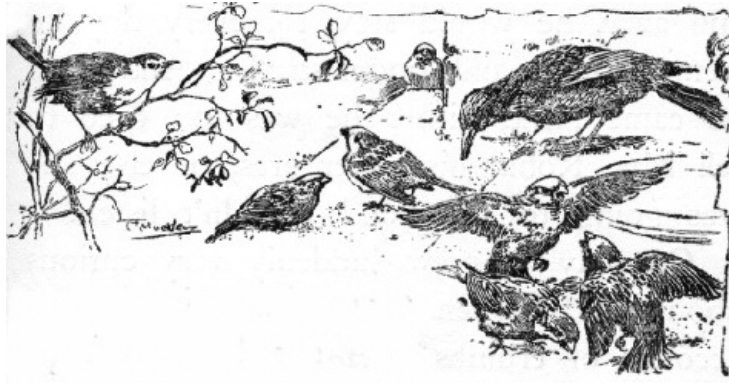
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## ROBIN'S RAMBLES

**R**obin was a very spick and span little person: always neat and dapper, in fact a wee bit dandified, you might say. He lived in the East Country in a nice little garden belonging to a nice little house, beside a stream that went slowly through fields. The house was white-washed pink, and the roof was tiled with red like Robin's breast. He thought himself extremely beautiful, remarkably clever, and braver than anybody that ever lived. But his wife didn't agree with him a bit.

Mrs. Robin did not bother as to whether she was beautiful, clever, or brave. She was much too busy for that. For several weeks she had been getting a home ready for her little ones, and when you have to collect your home brick by brick, or twig by twig, it takes a good deal of thought and trouble. Mrs. Robin was now sitting on her nest (which was in a hole in the ground against the back of the stable), upon five red-speckled eggs; so she had a bit of a rest; but it was rather dull and uninteresting for her. Robin, of course, ought to have stayed there to keep her company and chat a bit, and bring her little tempting titbits for lunch. But he was so curious and inquisitive about other people's affairs that he took very little notice of his own. Besides, he was a born rambler.



### Fighting for Crumbs

So every morning Mrs. Robin would say to him, "What is the latest news, my dear?" And he would say, "Really, my love, there is very little doing. I will just take a little stroll and see what news I can pick up that will amuse you!" And off he would go—and away he would stay, for every day he went a longer and longer stroll. And when he came back, either he was too tired to tell Mrs. Robin his adventures, or else she was going to sleep and wouldn't listen.

One day he grew suddenly very curious about the kitchen. This was partly on account of crumbs. He knew the crumbs came out from there, because he saw the Sparrow family and the Starling household fighting for them. "I can't be mixed up with people like these," said Robin to himself. "Squabbling over food—disgusting I call it! I shall take my meals in private like a gentleman." And he was just going in through the scullery when he saw a surprised pair of green eyes staring at him as he stood in the doorway. This was young Missy Kitten, and she wanted to make friends with him: she was a cheerful little soul and would have liked to play. But just as she put out a fat soft paw to pat him, old Mother Tabbykins jumped up from beside the kitchen fire, and came to stop Missy Kitten playing with strangers. Robin departed more suddenly than he had come, but Mother Tabbykins kept a bit of his tail-feather.

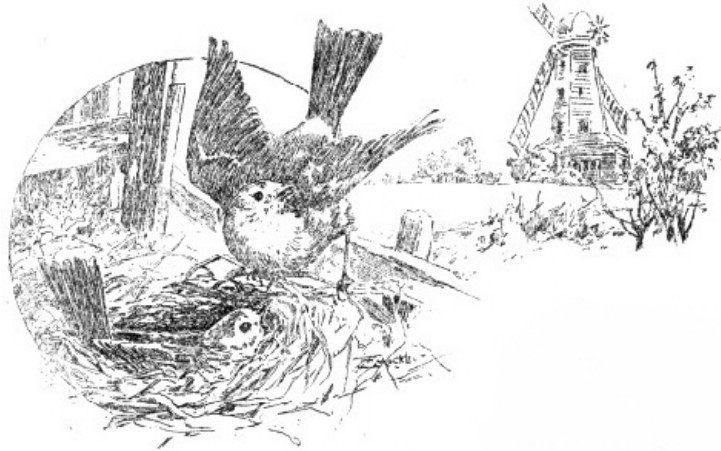


Old Mother  
Tabbykins  
jumped up



### Missy Kitten wants to Play

Next day he went along the stream, till he came to the windmill. It was standing still, and Robin was quite fidgetty with curiosity. He hopped in through the dusty door, and the mice who lived there were very glad to see him. They were humble, dingy sort of people, and they thought him very lively and quite grand, because of the airs he gave himself. But, while he was telling them wonderful traveller's tales about himself and the things he had seen, suddenly the windmill sails began to turn, and everything started creaking and whirring. Robin went off so fast that he got home perfectly breathless. "My dear—the end of the world is come!" he puffed and panted. "Nothing of the sort," replied Mrs. Robin sharply. "You wait till you hear!" he exclaimed, and he told her all about it. But she didn't sympathise one bit.



### He got home perfectly breathless

"I shall be out longer to-day," said Robin next morning. "I want to see more of the world. It's a stupid, humdrum life, just pecking and flapping round a stable." "Maybe you'll go farther and fare worse," replied Mrs. Robin. "Nonsense," said he, "it's all very well for you, leading the lazy life you do, just sitting on a lot of eggs. But there, I can't expect you to understand. Ta-ta!" and he disappeared.



### Mr. Red Vole came out

He crept along a blackthorn hedge, which ran through a field full of cowslips; at the foot of the hedge there was a dyke, or wide ditch with reeds and bulrushes in it every here and there. This was quite a delightful ramble for Robin, at first: but soon his curiosity began to get him into trouble. He came across a little hole and wanted to explore it—he simply loved poking and prying into other people's holes,—and Mr. Red Vole came out very snappish and snarlish. "What do you want here?" said Mr. Red Vole. "Didn't you see the notice outside: 'No tramps or hawkers'? Nobody is admitted except on business!"—"But I am on business," said Robin resentfully. "Whose?" enquired Mr. Red Vole. "Your own, or somebody else's?"—"I will give you the answer to-morrow," said Robin with a perky air, and he flew away rather quickly, for Mr. Red Vole had most disagreeable-looking teeth.

"Don't you mind him," said Tom Sedge-Warbler, who was swinging on a tall bulrush hard by. "His bark is worse than his bite. I've known him as cross as two sticks with me, because he said I kept him awake at night. I said, 'Well, here's a bit of willow-down. Stuff your ears with that.' And, would you believe it, he called me names!"

"Oh, you sing at night, do you?" said Robin.





**Tom Sedge-Warbler was swinging on a tall bulrush**

"I sing whenever I feel like it," said Tom Sedge-Warbler. "I hate doing things at stated times. I haven't got one of your neat and tidy minds that go by the clock."



**The Family at the Mill**

"But there's nobody to hear you at night," said Robin, who thought it was waste of a song unless there was someone near to admire it. Tom Sedge-Warbler told him, "Bless you, yes, there is—heaps of 'em. Why, only last night the Water-Lady—hold hard—I'm going to sing now—it's coming on—I can't stop!" And he suddenly burst forth like a musical box that has been wound up to go on for ever. Robin said impatiently, "Do stop for half a second!—I want to know several things." But Tom Sedge-Warbler only shook his cheerful head and went on, on, on, on, on.... And at this moment there came a fierce and furious wind, a perfectly enormous wind, all wild and whirling. It goes about in the East Country and nowhere else, and it is called the "Roger." And it caught up Master Robin and whiffed him right away, as if he had been a little bit of straw, along with all sorts of other things,—real bits of straw, and broken leaves, and old egg shells. Away and away it took him, and at last it let him fall, most dreadfully alarmed, into a marshy bank beside a broad, where he had never been in his life before. A broad is another East Country thing. It is a large wide sheet of water. It's not a lake and not a pond—it's a broad, that's all you can say,—with reeds, and rushes, and sedges, and lovely water plants all along the shore. And it goes along till it comes to another broad.

Well, there was Robin, far away from the pink-washed house, in this outlandish place, as he thought it. Nobody saw him except Bill the Weasel. But Bill the Weasel knew him for a stranger, and decided to follow him all the way.



**Nobody saw him except Bill the Weasel**



**Old Mother Snipe flounced up**

As soon as Robin had recovered his breath, he also recovered his curiosity. He set about rambling at once. To begin with, he tracked the noises. The place was full of strange noises. There was an extraordinary bleating, for one thing, which he thought was his old friend Dame Nanny-goat who lived in a field at home. But when he had tracked the bleating right up to where it began, in a tussock of rushes, old Mother Snipe flounced up out of the rushes, and shrieked, "You impertinent little Jackanapes! What are you poking after here?" And she drove him out of the rushes with angry words. But Bill the Weasel followed him all the way.

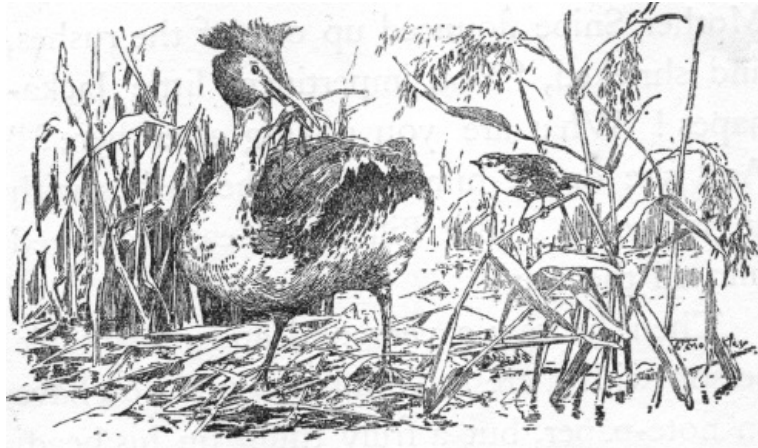


**Bill the Weasel welcomes the Stranger**

Then he saw a very odd and remarkable person with a crest. Not the kind you have on note-paper, but a frilly thing on his head. The crested person was very busy diving, and Robin went and waited on the shore till he should come up again. "Could you kindly inform me as to the best way home?" shouted Robin between the dives. The crested person was Gaffer Grebe, who was collecting wet water-weeds to make his floating nest with, for he couldn't endure dry nests that stay still in one place. "I have no time for gossiping," mumbled Gaffer Grebe, with his mouth full of building material. "It isn't gossiping! it's thirst for knowledge," said Robin. Gaffer Grebe didn't trouble himself to answer. He flapped his wings very loudly and aimed some of the wet water-



weeds at the stranger.



**Gaffer Grebe was collecting wet water-weeds**

"Great rude ugly thing!" said Robin to himself as he made his way towards another noise. It did seem very strange that anyone so beautiful, so clever and brave as he, should be treated like a little street-urchin and ordered off. He went sulkily along the edge of the broad; and Bill the Weasel followed him all the way.



**The Battle of the Beaks**

Then he came upon a fearfully exciting scene. Robin Ruff and Richard Ruff were fighting together furiously, just like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. For they were so exactly alike that he couldn't tell which was which: only the magnificent frill around Robin Ruff's neck was a slightly different colour from the magnificent frill round the neck of Richard Ruff. They had worn off all the grass underfoot with fighting, but there were plenty of scraps of feather flying about. And little Miss Reeve stood by watching them. "Most unladylike of her!" thought Robin. "Why doesn't she try and make peace?" So he boldly edged in and called out, "Oh, I say, you fellows! this is coming it a leettle too strong. Stop! I tell you, stop!" Then they turned upon him with flaming eyes and slashing beaks, and he had to scramble away as best he could. It never does to interfere in a fight between friends. They would much rather fight you than each other. Robin just escaped in time. But Bill the Weasel was so close behind them that he nearly got skewered by the beaks of the two Ruffs. And at this moment Hob, the Marsh Harrier, caught sight of Robin from where he was hovering, high in the air above.



**Scraps of feather flying about**



Hob, the Marsh Harrier, was hovering high in the air above

Meanwhile it was getting dark, and more extraordinary noises were to be heard,—more than ever. The Nooper Swans and the Brent Geese, and other mysterious families whom Robin did not know, were calling overhead continually, and there was a constant boom-boom-boom going on among the reed-beds. Robin was a trifle scary and nervous now; this ramble had had so many adventures in it. But still he was eaten up by curiosity, and he tried to explore the reed-bed where the boom-boom was. And he pushed his way between the roots of the bulrushes, and flew a little here and there, while the sunset gradually faded out of the sky, until he came to a most wonderful place.



The Brent Geese were calling overhead

But Bill the Weasel was just behind him: and Hob the Marsh Harrier was above him in mid-air.

This place was all fenced round with tall bulrushes, and inside you could see a green marshy spot, with cuckoo flowers and king-cups growing, and Somebody was booming there all alone. Then a beautiful fairy person who was the Water-Lady slid down a bulrush and said, "You musn't go in there: trespassers will be prosecuted. No admittance except on business. That's the law of the broad."

"Why not?" said Robin. "Whose place is it?"



A beautiful fairy person slid down a bulrush

"That," said the Water-Lady, "is the Home of the Last-of-the-Bitterns, and he must never be spoken to by anybody but me. He wants to do all the talking himself."

"How does he do the boom-boom?" said Robin, wild with curiosity. For he thought he would like to learn how to boom-boom himself. It would silence Mrs. Robin when she scolded him.

But the Water-Lady said, "Sh-s-s-h, go away!" and disappeared inside. She was all in pale pink and gold, like the cuckoo-flowers and king-cups.

Robin wouldn't go away. He suddenly became very obstinate, and determined to find out what the Last-of-the-Bitterns looked like. And he squeezed, and shoved, and slithered between the bulrushes. And he was just inside, and just saw the Last-of-the-Bitterns standing there, humped-up and dreadfully old, when three things happened at once.



Bill the Weasel made a grab at his neck, and missed.

Hob the Marsh Harrier dropped upon him from above—but fell by accident into the water, owing to the Last-of-the-Bitterns suddenly shifting his position.

And the Water-Lady seized Robin in her arms, and flung her pink and gold scarf about him.

"Don't move!" she screamed in a high, thin shrill voice, just like wind among the reeds. "Don't move! Don't speak! Don't wriggle!"



**The Water-Lady seized Robin in her arms**



**The Home of the Last-of-the-Bitterns**

"Do these folk know who-who-who I am?" rumbled the Last-of-the Bitterns. "Do they suppose there is room-room-room for them in the same place as Me?"

Then the Last-of-the-Bitterns gave Bill a peck which it took him a month to get over. And he gave Hob another peck, so that he went away very wet and with a headache. And then he boomed a song of victory, so loud that the whole broad trembled.

Meanwhile the Water-Lady, with Robin still in her arms, rose up out of the reed-beds and flew miles and miles and miles—or so it seemed. By this time Robin was quite sure that he was neither very brave nor very clever. And as to being very beautiful, for once he never thought about that at all. The Water-Lady stopped in the middle of a turnip-field, where the Bunnies were playing by moonlight. And she gave Robin a good shaking. "Let this be a lesson to you," said she, "to keep yourself to yourself." And she departed.



**The Bunnies were playing by moonlight**

Then the Bunnies very politely escorted Robin home, which was really just round the corner. He thought he had been hundreds of years away, but it was only half a day. And he expected a terrific lecture from Mrs. Robin, and had made up his mind to promise never to ramble any more.



**The Bunnies Politely Escorted him Home**

But Mrs. Robin was so happy that she had nothing in the world but smiles for him. "Come in, dear," she called to him, all beaming. For the five little Robins were hatched: and they were the finest children ever seen! They were also (so Mrs. Robin said) the most beautiful, the dearest and the bravest.

As for Robin, he does nothing now from morning to night but look after them. They are always hungry, and always saying so. There isn't a moment's time for anything but meal-times. Robin's rambles are over for the present.



\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROBIN'S RAMBLES \*\*\*

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