



# Ririro

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## Havelok Married Against His Will

*F. J. H. Darton*

Grim was a skilful fisherman, and caught many good fish. Great baskets did he make, and others his sons made; and they carried the fish inland in these baskets, and sold them. All over the country did Grim go with his fish, and came home always with store of bread, or corn, or beans, against their need. Much he sold in the fair town of Lincoln, and counted many a coin after his sales there.

Thus Grim fared for many winters; and Havelok worked with the rest, thinking it no shame to toil like any thrall, though he was a king's son born.

There came at last a year of great dearth. Corn was so scarce that all men were in poverty, and Grim did not know how to feed all his family. For Havelok he had great dread, for he was strong and lusty, and would eat more than he could earn. And soon the fish in the sea also began to fail them, so that they were in sore straits. But Grim cared more for Havelok than for all his own family; all his thoughts ran on Havelok.

"Dear son Havelok," he said at last, "we shall die of hunger anon; all our food is gone. It is better for you to go hence, and strive for yourself only, and not try to help us here. You are stout and strong; go to Lincoln; there is many a man of substance there, who might take you in service. It were better for you to serve there than to see us starve here and to starve along with us. Would that I could clothe you fitly! Alas I am too poor. Yet for your sake I will cut up the sail of my boat and make you a cloak of it to cover your rags."

He took the sail from his boat, and cut it up rudely into a cloak for Havelok. Then Havelok bade him God-speed, and set out, and came in time to the city of Lincoln.

He had no friend in Lincoln, and knew no man. For two days he went to and fro, fasting; no man had work or food for him. But on the third day he heard a cry, "Porters, porters, hither quickly!" He sprang forward like a spark from coal, and thrust aside all who stood in his path; sixteen stout lads did he knock down, and came to where fish was being laden into carts for Earl Godrich of Cornwall. There stood the earl's cook, calling for men to load the carts; and Havelok fell to work with a will at his bidding.

When all was done, "Will you take service with me?" said the cook to Havelok. "I will pay you good hire and feed you well."

"Give me enough to eat, good sir," answered Havelok, "and I care not what you pay me. I will blow your fire, and fetch wood and water; I can wash dishes, and cleave faggots, and clean eels, and do all that you need."

"You shall be my man," answered the cook.

So Havelok took service in Earl Godrich's household, and drew water and cut wood. Strong and large was he of body, and fair to look on.

Earl Godrich was lord of all England; it lay as it were in his hand. Many men were wont to come to him at Lincoln to talk of great things; and they held a parliament there, and came thither with a great train of men-at-arms and followers, so that the town was always full of folk coming and going.

It chanced one day that eight or ten young men began to play together near where Havelok was at work; they fell to throwing a great stone, huge and heavy. He must needs be a stout man who could so much as lift it to his knee. But those who threw it now were champions, and could cast it many a foot.

Havelok looked on and longed to throw against them; and his master, seeing his looks, bade him go and try what he could do. He took the stone and poised it well; and at the first effort he threw it twelve feet or more farther than any other man.

"We have been here too long," said the rest. "This lad is mightier than any of us; it is time for us to go hence."

They went away, and spread the news that there was at Lincoln a lad mightier than any man of that day; and Havelok's fame grew and was known far and wide. It came at last to Earl Godrich's ears.

"This is a stout knave," thought the earl, when he heard of Havelok's strength. "I would that he were wedded to Goldborough; he is the fairest and strongest man in England, and if I gave Goldborough to him, I should keep my word to Athelwold in some sort, for there is none like Havelok: no better man could she desire. And if she were wedded to him, she would be out of my way, and I should be secure in my rule, and my son should reign in England after me."

Thus he thought and planned secretly. Anon he sent for Goldborough, and brought her to Lincoln. At her coming he caused bells to be rung, and there was great rejoicing; but he was nevertheless full of craft. "You shall have the fairest man alive for husband," he said to Goldborough; "therefore have I sent for you."

"I will wed no man but a king or a king's son, be he ever so fair," she answered boldly.

"Would you gainsay me as if you were queen and lady over me?" cried Godrich in great wrath. "You shall have a churl for husband, and no other. My cook's knave shall wed you; he shall be your lord. To-morrow shall you be wedded to him."

Goldborough wept and prayed his mercy, but it was of no avail. On the morrow the church-bell was rung, and Godrich sent for Havelok. "Master, are you minded to marry?" he asked.



"Nay, by my life," quoth Havelok. "What should I do with a wife? I cannot feed her or clothe her; I have no house and no possessions. The very clothes I wear are the cook's, and I am his servant."

"If you do not take to wife her whom I will give you," said Godrich, "I will hang you high aloft, or thrust out your eyes."

At that Havelok was sore afraid, and granted all that Godrich bade. Then Godrich sent for Goldborough. "You will take this man for husband," he said, "or you go to the gallows, unless rather I burn you at the stake."

She was afraid at his threats, and dared not refuse, though she liked it ill. So they two were wedded perforce, and neither took joy in it.

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